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A Study on Developing a Fantastic Book Attitude Scale for Gifted Middle School Students

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Abstract

This research aimed to the develop a scale about measuring the attitudes of gifted middle school students towards fantastic books. Data were collected from 243 gifted students attending middle school. To establish the scale's validity and reliability, both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were employed. EFA results identified a structure consisting of 20 items grouped under four factors: "importance," "rejection," "comparison," and "behavior." The CFA findings indicated that the factor structure was a strong fit with the data. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficients demonstrated that both the overall scale and its sub-dimensions exhibited high internal consistency.

In the process of developing the scale, a pool of items was created through an extensive review of the literature and insights from experts, followed by a pilot application. Factor analysis revealed item loadings between 0.536 and 0.878, indicating that the items possess strong discriminatory power. These results suggest that the scale is a dependable and valid tool for assessing the attitudes of gifted students toward fantastic books, highlighting the critical role of attitudes in forecasting behavior.

Keywords: Attitude, Fantastic Book, Gifted Student, Scale Development.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, fantastic literature, a genre that has become rapidly widespread both abroad and in our country, has managed to attract individuals from all walks of life. With the rise of visual media, fantastic literature works that have found their place on the silver screen are increasing their readership every day. Especially the Game of Thrones, Lord of the Rings, and Harry Potter series have been widely read and then adapted into movies. Those who have not read these works have decided to read them after watching them in the cinema.

Born in France in the 18th century, fantastic literature is a literary genre that includes supernatural events, unreal places, ghosts, magic, spirits and creatures (Dıvarcı and Şengül, 2023). Although the origins of fantastic literature date back to very old times, the birth of fantastic literature in Europe corresponds to the second half of the 18th century. This genre, which we begin to see in Hoffmann's works, manifests itself in literary products such as novels, tales and stories (Aydın, 2019). The sources of fantastic literature are mostly myths, tales, epics, legends and folk tales (Yonar, 2011, p. 10). Supernatural and surreal events, people, places and time elements specific to these genres have provided resources for the fantastic genre. These sources, which were previously passed down orally from generation to generation and were written down over time, are now encountered in written, visual and auditory forms with the advancement of science and technology (Özdemir, 2019). In the fantastic literature genre, extraordinary beings such as ghosts, vampires, monsters and actions such as magic-flying-displacement are handled together. In Harry Potter, one of the best-selling series in world literature, we see a young wizard's struggle with evil. Harry, who is educated at Hogwarts, a mysterious school founded by wizards and witches, struggles with Lord Voldemort, the main villain, throughout the series. In this work, many actions seen in fantastic literature such as magic, flying, displacement and disguise are at the forefront (Dıvarcı and Şengül, 2023). Tzvetan Todorov, who has important studies on fantastic literature, makes the following definition about this genre: "Fantastic is the indecision experienced by a subject who knows no law other than his own natural laws in the face of a seemingly supernatural event." (Todorov, 2012, p.31). As can be seen in his definition, Todorov accepts fantastic literature as a special genre and suggests three characteristics for a work to be fantastic: "the indecision between the real and the extraordinary, the hero's awareness of this indecision, and the development of an idea about the text in the reader's mind" (Todorov, 2012, p.39).

Although it does not have a long history in our country, the development of fantastic literature as a genre is similar to that in western societies.It has also gained momentum in our country. There has been an increase in fantastic children's literature books, especially from 1980 to the present. Authors such as Gülten Dayıoğlu, Aslı Der, Tuncel Altınköprü, Ayla Çınaroğlu, Bilgin Adalı have produced many works in this field. The relationship between the media and the literary world after the

1990s has contributed to the authors producing works in this field. With the previously mentioned fantastic works finding a place in the media, publishing houses have started to take action regarding these works. For this reason, it is considered certain that fantastic literature will continue in both children's literature and adult literature today and in the future (Hatipoğlu, 2019). Although activities in this field have accelerated recently, studies on the fantastic genre in Turkish literature are insufficient. While the quality of the value of this genre in world literature shows itself in the theoretical studies carried out on this genre, this situation is insufficient in Turkish literature (Dıvarcı and Şengül, 2023).

Especially readers in childhood empathize with fantastic characters and take them as examples (Fidan, 2019). These features of fantastic heroes can be used positively in the education of students. When we consider that some authors in our country try to provide values education with the fantastic characters they create, the importance of fantastic literature in education increases even more. According to Özdemir (2019); fantastic texts are one of the most suitable lesson tools that can be used in comparing cultures because they bear traces of the culture they emerged from. The use of fantastic texts is seen as a valuable way to solve the problems encountered by children in middle school in terms of transition to the abstract learning period. In particular, the use of such texts in textbooks can provide significant benefits in terms of reading skills (Hatipoğlu, 2019).

Gifted students are students whose intelligence is highly developed and who have the potential to use this in one or more of their talent areas and turn it into performance or who turn it into performance (Clark, 2015, p. 30). The development of verbal language skills in gifted students is faster and more qualified than their typically developing peers. Thus, these students are at an advanced level in reading compared to their typically developing peers and are more willing to read different literary genres (There are studies in the literature showing that half of the gifted students learned to read on their own before starting primary school and read books that are 1-3 levels above their grade level (Bonds & Bonds, 1983; VanTassel-Baska, Johnson, Hughes, & Boyce, 1996; Vosslamber, 2022). Studies on the reading habits of gifted students reveal that these students enjoy reading fantastic, science fiction and action-adventure books (Karadayı, 2019; Okur & Özsoy, 2017; Swanton, 1984; Ünal et al., 2018).

Attitude refers to a person's tendency to react to any phenomenon or object in their environment. A person's behavior in response to a specific situation, event, or phenomenon can often be predicted based on their attitude (İnceoğlu, 2010). Attitudes contribute to the person's creation of a harmonious and consistent relationship with their environment by creating a cognitive system. Therefore, it can be said that attitudes have a directing effect on people's behavior and actions (İnceoğlu, 2010). Arkonaç (2001) states that attitudes affect behavior, therefore attitudes can be

considered as a guide for behavior and changing attitudes in order to create a change in behavior will contribute to studies. For this reason, it is important to determine the attitudes of people towards the event, phenomenon or object in question (Yalçın et al., 2021).

Many scales have been developed in different fields in order to measure attitudes. Although there is a literary genre for middle school students, such as story (story) (Kaya and Bindak, 2020), there is no scale for different literary genres in the literature. Although various scales exist in the literature for assessing attitudes toward literary genres such as stories, tales, novels, and articles, no specific scale has been developed to evaluate the attitudes of gifted students toward these genres. For this reason, the primary goal of this study is to create a reliable and valid attitude scale specifically designed to measure the perspectives of gifted middle school students toward fantastic books.

METHOD

This research was conducted to examine the attitudes of gifted middle school students toward fantastic books and was designed within the framework of a descriptive survey model, a widely used quantitative research method. This approach focuses on accurately capturing and reflecting the current state of a particular situation (Karasar, 2013). The main purpose of the study was to determine how gifted middle school students perceive and approach fantastic books. Accordingly, the descriptive survey model was chosen as the most suitable method for the study.The research process was carried out meticulously by following certain stages. These stages, respectively, include scanning the literature, interviews with students, creating an item pool, obtaining expert opinions, carrying out a pilot application, evaluating the construct validity and conducting reliability studies.

Research Universe and Sample

The study employed a purposeful sampling method. Following this approach, the research group included 243 gifted students enrolled in the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades at science and art centers (BİLSEM). The scale was applied in digital environment (n=131) and in paper environment (n=112). Of the students who participated in the research, 138 were male (%56.8), 105 were female (%43.2). 50 of the participants were at the 5th grade level (%20.6), 77 were at the 6th grade level (%31.7), 50 were at the 7th grade level (%20.6), and 66 were at the 8th grade level (%27.2). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on a separate group of 115 gifted middle school students, distinct from those involved in the exploratory factor analysis.

Validity and Reliability Studies

The process of developing the attitude scale for this research was completed through several structured stages.

1. Preparation of Items: At this stage, the researchers reviewed the literature on fantastic literature, as well as the traits of gifted students and their reading habits, and subsequently developed an item pool of 34 items grounded in theoretical principles.

2. Expert Opinion: The item pool created at this stage was sent to an academician, one of whom is a Turkish academician and the other an expert in measurement and evaluation. Based on expert feedback, 4 items were excluded from the scale, resulting in a finalized version consisting of 30 items.

3. Rating of Scale Items: A 30-item scale was created and structured for evaluation using a 5-point Likert format. The response categories included: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly Agree. Of the items, 7 were formulated as negative statements, while 23 were positive. Positive and negative items were given in the scale as mixed and negative items were reverse coded in SPSS-24 package program before analysis.

The scale was administered to 243 students attending the selected BİLSEMs. Upon review, it was confirmed that all items on the scale were fully completed by the participants. The following steps were followed regarding data analysis.

- The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Sphericity test were conducted to determine whether the data were appropriate for principal component analysis.
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out to confirm the construct validity of the scale.
- Cronbach's alpha (Cr α) coefficients were calculated for both the overall scale and its sub-dimensions to assess reliability.
- Item-test correlations were examined to assess the validity of individual items.
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to ensure that the scale's structure remained consistent across different groups.

FINDINGS

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Sphericity Test. Detailed results of these assessments are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett Test Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Fit		**.95**
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	X2	5603.79
	Sd	435
	P	.000

As shown in Table 1, the calculated KMO value is 0.95. According to Leech, Barrett, and Morgan (2005), a critical threshold of 0.50 is required, below which factor analysis is not recommended (Tavşancıl, 2010). When comparing the scale's KMO value with these thresholds, it was determined that a range of "0.90-1.00" indicates a very high level of suitability. Additionally, the Bartlett's Sphericity Test produced a significant chi-square value ($x^2 = 5603.79$; $df = 435$; $p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that the data obtained during the trial phase are appropriate for performing factor analysis.

Table 2. Factor Eigenvalues and Explanatory Variances

Factor	Initial Eigenvalue			Eigenvalue after Rotation		
	Total	%Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.267	47.555	47.555	14.267	47.555	47.555
2	2.762	9.206	56.762	2.762	9.206	56.762
3	1.440	4.801	61.563	1.440	4.801	61.563
4	1.247	4.158	65.721	1.247	4.158	65.721
5	.988	3.292	69.012			
6	.854	2.846	71.859			
7	.792	2.641	74.499			
8	.627	2.092	76.591			
9	.619	2.063	78.654			
10	.558	1.860	80.513			
11	.523	1.743	82.256			
12	.510	1.699	83.955			
13	.465	1.549	85.504			
14	.438	1.461	86.966			
15	.403	1.342	88.308			
16	.375	1.249	89.557			
17	.341	1.138	90.694			
18	.331	1.103	91.797			
19	.305	1.018	92.815			
20	.289	.963	93.778			
21	.271	.905	94.683			
22	.257	.856	95.539			
23	.229	.763	96.302			
24	.213	.709	97.010			
25	.177	.591	97.601			
26	.169	.565	98.166			
27	.159	.530	98.696			
28	.141	.469	99.165			
29	.136	.454	99.619			
30	.114	.381	100.000			

Table 2 indicates that four factors have eigenvalues exceeding 1.0. These four factors collectively explain 65.72% of the total variance for the scale. The distribution of the initial eigenvalues is illustrated in Figure 1.

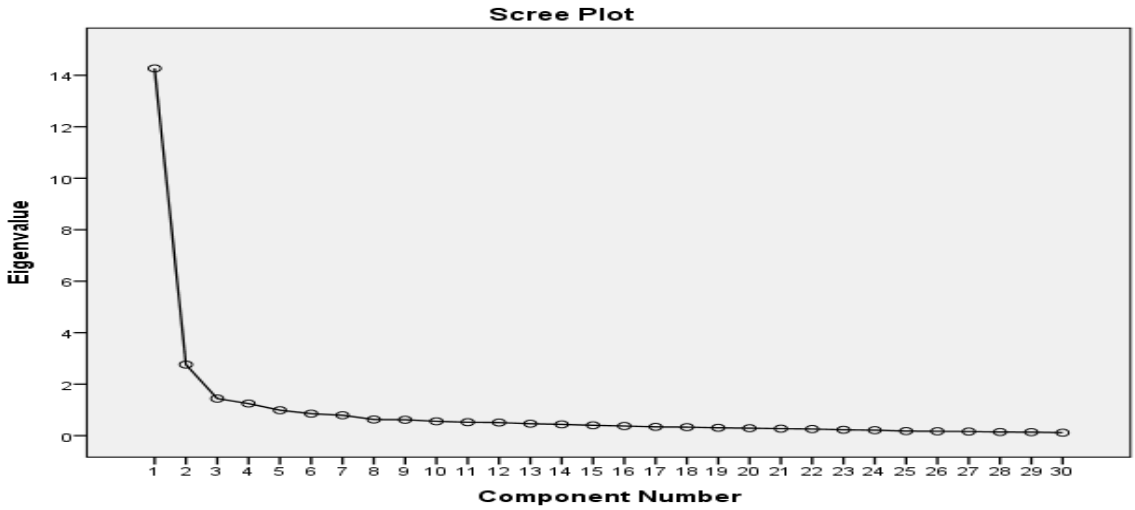

Figure 1. Eigenvalue Graph of the 30-Item Scale

In the first step, items with factor loadings below 0.40 (e.g., M25) were excluded from the scale (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). In the second step, items that had cross-loadings greater than 0.25 on multiple factors (e.g., M3, M6, M8, M13, M16, M22, M26, M27, M29) were also removed. Following these adjustments, the scale was finalized with 20 items distributed across 4 factors. The factor loadings for the items in the first factor ranged from 0.536 to 0.795, the second factor from 0.773 to 0.854, the third factor from 0.781 to 0.878, and the fourth factor from 0.603 to 0.802. The eigenvalue table for the revised 4-factor scale is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Eigenvalues and Explanatory Variances of the Four-Factor Scale

Factor	Initial Eigenvalue		
	Total	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.369	46.846	46.846
2	1.960	9.800	56.647
3	1.176	5.878	62.524
4	1.138	5.690	68.214

In Table 3, the first factor, with a notably high eigenvalue, accounts for 46.84% of the total variance and includes 9 items. The second factor explains 9.80% of the variance with 4 items, the third factor accounts for 5.87% with 3 items, and the fourth factor contributes 5.69% with 4 items. Together, these four factors explain 68.21% of the total variance with 20 items. Explaining more than half of the total variance indicates a strong representative power of the factor structure, making it significant that this percentage exceeds 50% for factor analysis purposes (Erkuş, 2012; Tavşancıl, 2014, p. 48; Yaşlıoğlu, 2017, p. 77). Upon reviewing the attitude items within each factor, the first factor was labeled "importance," the second "rejection," the third "comparison," and the fourth "action." The scatter plot illustrating the four-factor structure is presented in Figure 2.

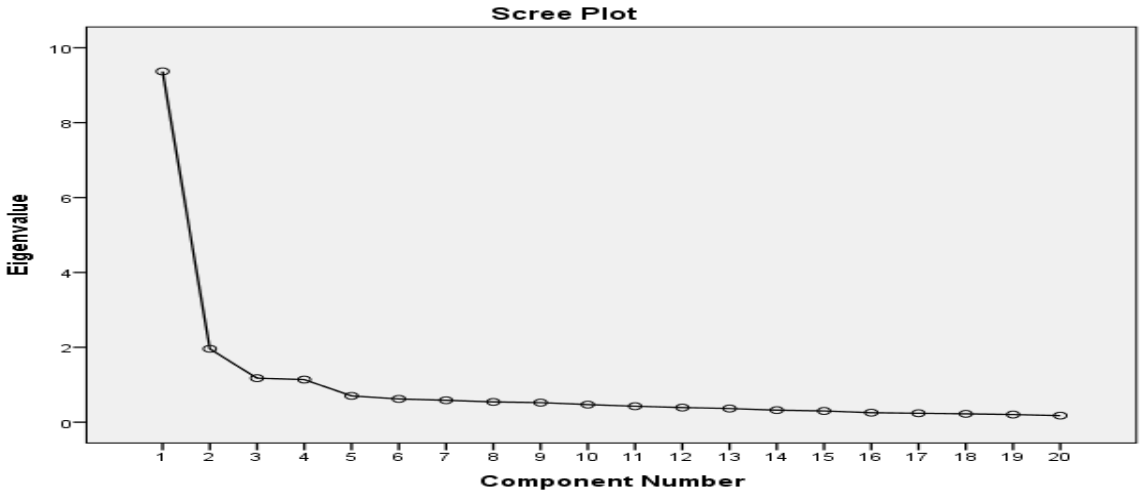

Figure 2. Eigenvalue Graph of 20-Item Scale

The distribution of the scale items across sub-factors and their factor loadings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Factor Loadings of the Items in the Scale

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
17	.795			
21	.734			
30	.710			
2	.693			
18	.655			
9	.640			
24	.608			
23	.578			
5	.536			
12		.854		
11		.853		
4		.780		
1		.773		
7			-.878	
15			-.837	
28			-.781	
14				.802
10				.753
20				.714
19				.603

The connections between the scale's sub-dimensions were analyzed within the same study group. Table 5 presents the correlation coefficients for these sub-dimensions. The findings revealed that the sub-dimensions were positively and significantly associated with one another at the $p < .01$ level.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficients Between Sub-Dimensions

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	1.000	.456	-.504	.462
2	.456	1.000	-.441	.207
3	-.504	-.441	1.000	-.360
4	.462	.207	-.360	1.000

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the four-factor, 20-item structure of the scale identified through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). CFA is used to assess how well the hypothesized factorial model, defined by the observed variables, fits the actual data. Several fit indices are commonly utilized to evaluate model validity in CFA, with frequently used ones being the Chi-Square Fit Test, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Non-Normalized Fit Index (NNFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) (Cole, 1987; Sümer, 2000).

The observed fit index ranges for the model are as follows: $X^2/d < 3$; $0 < RMSEA < 0.05$; $0.97 \leq NNFI \leq 1$; $0.97 \leq CFI \leq 1$; $0.95 \leq GFI \leq 1$; and $0.95 \leq NFI \leq 1$, indicating a perfect fit. Acceptable fit is represented by $4 < X^2/d < 5$; $0.05 < RMSEA \leq 0.08$; $SRMR \leq 0.08$; $0.95 \leq NNFI \leq 0.97$; $0.95 \leq CFI \leq 0.97$; $0.90 \leq GFI \leq 0.95$; and $0.90 \leq NFI \leq 0.95$ (Kline, 2005; Sümer, 2000).

CFA was applied to confirm the four-factor, 20-item structure of the scale. During the initial CFA, items with statistically insignificant t-values were reviewed. No such items were found within the scale. The path diagram representing the sub-dimensions of the scale—labeled as "importance," "rejection," "comparison," and "action"—is provided in Figure 3.

The fit indices obtained were $\chi^2 = 212.55$, df = 163, $X^2/df = 1.30$, CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.84, RMSEA = 0.052, and SRMR = 0.058. While most indices indicated an acceptable or excellent fit, the GFI value was slightly below acceptable thresholds. There is no universal consensus on which fit indices should be prioritized or considered standard in model evaluation, as noted by Engel, Moosbrugger, and Müller (2003, p. 52).

Examining error indices such as RMSEA and SRMR shows that they fall within acceptable limits. Based on the CFA fit statistics, it can be concluded that the four-factor structure identified through EFA exhibits a very high degree of fit with the data.

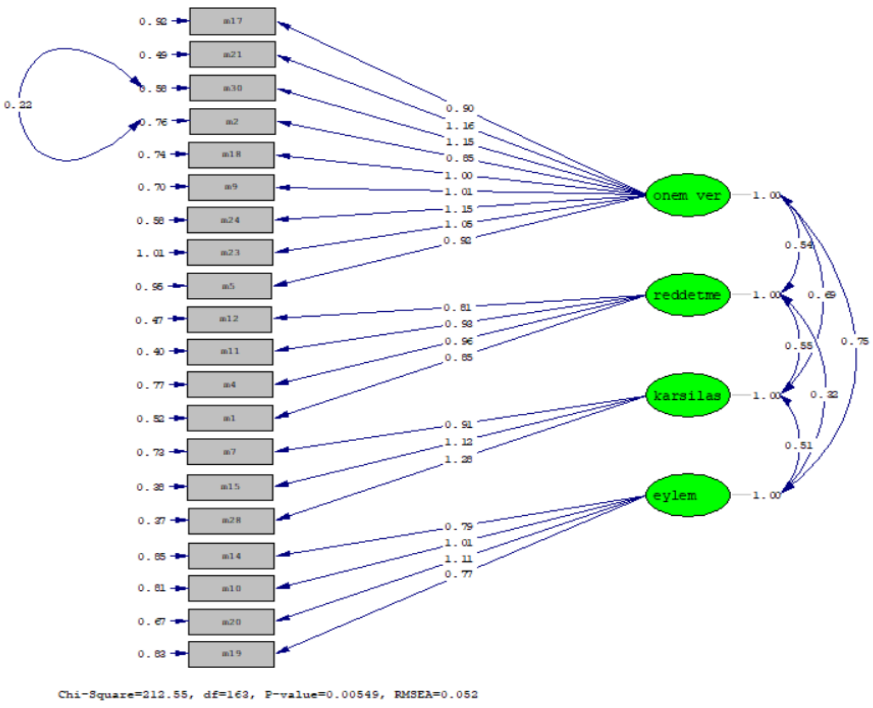

Figure 3. Path Diagram

An examination of Figure 3 reveals that the finalized scale comprises 20 items across 4 factors. The t-values for the attitude items in the model's path diagram range from 7.22 to 11.91, indicating that all items are statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. Additionally, the factor loadings for the items, which range from 0.67 to 0.87, demonstrate that each factor adequately represents the scale.

The correlation values between the four factors, as derived from the CFA, were calculated as follows: 0.54 for importance-rejection, 0.69 for importance-comparison, 0.75 for importance-behavior, 0.55 for rejection-comparison, 0.32 for rejection-behavior, and 0.51 for comparison-behavior. These values indicate a relationship between the factors.

In summary, when the fit indices obtained from the CFA are evaluated collectively, it can be concluded that the measurement tool demonstrates strong overall fit values and is suitable for use.

Reliability Findings

The Cronbach's alpha (Cr α) coefficient, ranging from 0 to 1, rarely reaches either of these extreme values (DeVellis, 2014, p. 99). Higher values of Cr α, especially those nearing 1, signify strong internal consistency among the items on a scale, making such values preferable (Erkuş, 2017, p. 53). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was calculated as 0.934, indicating excellent reliability. For the sub-dimensions, the α value was 0.926 for the "importance" factor, 0.852 for the "rejection" factor, 0.873 for the "comparison" factor, and 0.806 for the "behavior" factor. These findings demonstrate that the scale has robust internal consistency. The finalized version of the scale can be found in Appendix-1.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study involved the creation of a five-point Likert-type scale comprising 20 items across 4 sub-dimensions to evaluate the attitudes of gifted middle school students toward fantastic books. Following an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the initial 30-item scale was refined and streamlined to 20 items based on the analysis results. The four sub-dimensions identified through EFA were found to effectively represent various aspects of students' attitudes toward fantastic books. Notably, the "caring" sub-dimension, with a variance explanation rate of 46.84%, highlights its critical role in understanding the overall attitudes of students towards fantastic books. The scale was finalized through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and the fit indices confirmed the high structural validity of the scale.

The analysis showed that item 7 (loading 0.878) contributed the most to the scale, while item 5 (loading 0.536) contributed the least. This finding underscores the importance of considering both the strengths and potential limitations of the scale. Reliability analyses, including Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale and its sub-dimensions (giving importance, rejecting, comparing, and behaving), as well as item discrimination tests based on the lower and upper 27% groups, demonstrated that the scale had high reliability. The overall reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.934, reflecting strong internal consistency.

Given the significant role of attitudes in predicting behaviors, this scale provides an important tool for measuring the attitudes of gifted middle school students toward fantastic books and for informing policies related to the use of fantastic books in their education. Consistent with the literature, it can be suggested that fantastic books have the potential to enhance students' creativity, foster their imagination, and support their cognitive development (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Robinson, 2011). Additionally, these materials are considered valuable for values education by helping students better understand cultural diversity (Tatar, 2009). In addition, the literature review revealed the existence of attitude scales developed for middle school students focusing on reading (Bozoklu, 2022; Karadağ, 2022; Udu, 2021; Ürün Karahan, 2018; Durmuş, 2017; Chotitham & Wongwanich, 2014; Özdemir & Akkaya, 2014; Conradi et al., 2013; Balcı, Uyar & Büyükikiz.). Altun et al. (2022) examined the reading attitudes of preschool children in their study. However, there is no specific attitude scale available for reading a particular literary genre, such as fantastic books.

Future studies are encouraged to reevaluate the validity and reliability of the scale using diverse sample groups to ensure its robustness and applicability across different populations. Furthermore, applying the scale to various educational levels, cultural contexts, and non-gifted students could provide a more comprehensive understanding of its general applicability. This scale may also serve as a foundation for developing strategies to promote the effective use of fantastic literature in education.

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APPENDIX-1

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I'm undecided	I agree	I totally agree
1. I think fantastic books are a waste of time.					
2. I believe that fantastic books improve my imagination.					
3. I don't buy fantastic books.					
4. I recommend the fantastic books I read to my friends.					
5. Fantastic books are more entertaining than other types of books.					
6. I enjoy discussing fantastic books.					
7. I do research on fantastic books.					
8. I believe fantastic books are ridiculous.					
9. Fantastic books make me uncomfortable.					
10. I participate in events such as fairs, book signings, talks, etc. about fantastic books.					
11. I prefer to buy fantastic books rather than other types of books.					
12. Fantastic books are important for literature.					
13. I believe that fantastic books improve reading habits.					
14. I give fantastic books to my friends on their birthdays.					
15. I follow newly published fantastic books.					
16. I discover new things thanks to fantastic books.					
17. The idea of using fantastic books in lessons excites me.					
18. I enjoy listening to conversations about fantastic books.					
19. I enjoy fantastic books more than other types of books.					
20. Fantastic books encourage me to think.					