



| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi |

## The Investigation of University Students Social Problem-solving Skills in Terms of Perceived Parental Attitudes and Cognitive Flexibility Levels<sup>1</sup>

### Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sosyal Problem Çözme Becerilerinin Algılanan Anne-Baba Tutumu Ve Bilişsel Esneklik Düzeyleri Açısından İncelenmesi

Beyza Tuğçe Sucu<sup>2</sup> Ahmet Bedel<sup>3</sup>

#### Keywords

1. university students
2. social problem-solving
3. parental attitude
4. cognitive flexibility

#### Anahtar Kelimeler

1. üniversite öğrencileri
2. sosyal problem çözme
3. anne-baba tutumu
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#### Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine whether social problem-solving skills and perceived parental attitudes and cognitive flexibility levels differ according to gender, to examine the relationships between these variables and to determine the level of predicting the social problem-solving skill of university students by parental attitude and cognitive flexibility. For this purpose, data was obtained by applying Personal Information Form, Social Problem-solving Inventory-Short Form (SPÇE-KF), Parental Attitude Scale (ABTÖ), Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (BEE) to 574 university students. For statistical analysis, Independent Groups T Test, the Pearson Product-Moments Correlation Analysis, Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis were used. According to the results of the study, it was seen that the negative orientation to the problem, democratic, protective and authoritarian parental attitude mean scores were significantly different by gender. Significant correlations were found between the total scores from the Social Problem-solving Inventory and the predictive variables Parental Attitude Scale sub-dimensions and the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory sub-dimensions. Democratic parental attitude, authoritarian parental attitude, cognitive flexibility sub-dimensions which are alternatives and control are significant predictors of social problem-solving total score. Independent variables explain 46% of the total variance related to social problem-solving inventory total score.

#### Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, sosyal problem çözme becerileri ile algılanan anne baba tutumları ve bilişsel esneklik düzeylerinin cinsiyete göre farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığını belirlemek, bu değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri incelemek ve üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyal problem çözme becerisinin, anne baba tutumu ve bilişsel esneklik tarafından yordama düzeyini belirlemektir. Bu amaçla 574 üniversite öğrencisine Kişisel Bilgi Formu, Sosyal Problem Çözme Envanteri- Kısa Formu (SPÇE-KF), Anne-Baba Tutum Ölçeği (ABTÖ) ve Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri (BEE) uygulanmıştır. İstatistiksel analiz için, Bağımsız Gruplar İçin T Testi, Pearson Momentler Çarpımı Korelasyon Analizi, Çoklu Hiyerarşik Regresyon Analizi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre probleme olumsuz yönelimin, demokratik, koruyucu ve otoriter anne baba tutumunun cinsiyete göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılaştığı görülmüştür. Sosyal Problem Çözme Envanterinden alınan toplam puanlar ve yordayıcı değişkenlerden Anne-Baba Tutum Ölçeği alt boyutları, Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri alt boyutları arasında anlamlı ilişkilerin olduğu görülmüştür. Sosyal problem çözme becerisinin; demokratik anne baba tutumu, otoriter anne baba tutumu, bilişsel esneklik alt boyutları olan alternatifler ve kontrol tarafından yordandığı görülmüştür. Sosyal problem çözme envanteri toplam puanına ilişkin toplam varyansın %46'sı bağımsız değişkenler tarafından açıklanmaktadır.

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<sup>2</sup> **Corresponding Author**, Beyza Tuğçe Sucu, Maltepe University, Faculty of Education, Istanbul, TURKEY; beyzasucu@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8018-0165>

<sup>3</sup> Doç. Dr. Ahmet Bedel, Maltepe University, Faculty of Education, Istanbul, TURKEY, [ahmetbedel@maltepe.edu.tr](mailto:ahmetbedel@maltepe.edu.tr), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4215-9290>

## INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a term which is used to name the passing process from adolescence to adulthood. This period covers ages between 18 to 25. There is both continuity and change in the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Santrock, 2012). One of these change characteristics is close relationships. In this period, it is seen that social relations begin to take a larger and more important place in the life of young adults. Making friends with people of different ages, genders and social circles, being a part of a group, participating in social activities are important for social development. However, problems such as difficulty in establishing and maintaining friendship relations, shyness in relations with individuals of the opposite sex, and inability to express emotions are frequently encountered (Uzamaz, 2000). Social relations, interactions and social problems that have become increasingly complex and increasing in this period act as a stimulant for young adults to find new problem-solving ways. The proficiency and effectiveness of young adults in social problem-solving skills gain importance in solving various problems encountered in this developmental period.

In order for young adults to solve the problems they face constructively and functionally, they need to demonstrate their social problem-solving skills. Social problem-solving skill refers to the cognitive and behavioral process that operates in the face of problems encountered in one's daily life (Eskin, 2018; Nezu, Nezu ve D'Zurilla, 2012). According to the social problem-solving model, social problem-solving consists of two basic elements: problem orientation and problem-solving styles. The "Problem Orientation" dimension consists sub-dimensions as positive orientation to the problem and negative orientation to the problem. Positive orientation to the problem enables the person to see problems as a natural part of life, to perceive the problem correctly, and to act decisively for a solution without ignoring the problem. Individuals who are positively oriented towards the problem have the belief that they can overcome the problems, self-efficacy and positive expectations about the result. Individuals who are negatively oriented towards the problem perceive the problem as a threat and experience insecurity about the solution. These people have difficulty identifying the problem or may not see it at all. They have concerns about solving the problem, low self-efficacy perceptions, and beliefs that the problem cannot be solved (Çekici, 2009; D'Zurilla ve Nezu, 2010; Eskin, 2018). The second dimension of the model, "Problem-solving Styles", was classified as rational problem solving, avoidant problem solving, and impulsive/careless problem solving. People with a rational problem-solving style are expected to be able to define the problem correctly, produce alternative solutions, have decision-making skills, and apply and evaluate the solution (D'Zurilla ve Nezu, 2007). People who use careless/impulsive approach in problem-solving are expected to use problem-solving strategies and techniques in a limited way, to act carelessly without producing enough alternative solutions, and to be careless not only during the implementation phase of the solution but also during the evaluation phase (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2007). In the use of avoidant problem-solving approach, which is another dysfunctional problem-solving style, it can be seen that the person cannot be active in solving the problem, remain unresponsive, stick to the solutions of others or delay the solution. Instead of taking responsibility for the solution of their problems, these people expect the problem to be solved by themselves or others to solve the problem for them (Eskin, 2018; Eşigül, 2013). According to this model, it is predicted that the most effective way of problem-solving can be reached as a result of positive orientation to the problem and the use of rational/rational problem-solving style. It is predicted that as a result of using negative orientation to the problem, careless/impulsive approach and avoidant approach problem-solving styles, the probability of failure of the problem-solving process will increase (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2007).

The first place where the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in the face of problems are learned is the family environment. The individual learns how to develop an orientation and style in problem situations, primarily from his/her family's attitudes towards events. Attitude includes the emotional relationship and control that the mother and father establish with the child. Parental attitudes are named in different ways according to the abundance of the emotional relationship and control factors in the mother, father and child relationship (Yavuzer, 2019; 1990). The attitude of the parents plays an important role on the personality development and social development of the child. The child gains social experience by establishing his/her first relationships in the family, where he/she learns about life for the first time. Studies show that parental attitudes have a significant impact on individuals' lives in many areas such as peer relationships, subjective well-being, marital adjustment, self-esteem, academic performance, and problem-solving skills (Çağdaş ve Seçer, 2010; Çakır, 2017; Oğuz, 2016; Özkan, 2014). Democratic parental attitude is defined as a secure and determined parental attitude, in which parents unconditionally accept, love and respect the child, support the child to make decisions about himself/herself in accordance with his age, and respect their decisions (Sezer ve Oğuz, 2010). In families that adopt this attitude, it is important to meet the needs of children, and while controlling them, they are freed within certain limits and the child's sense of responsibility is supported. Parents are consistent and determined in their behavior and the limits they set (Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak ve Nasıroğlu, 2012). Children who grow up in families with a democratic parental attitude become self-confident, entrepreneurial, responsible, creative and have strong friendships, and impulse control individuals. Adolescents living in a democratic family environment consider themselves valuable, do not have difficulty in expressing themselves, and can establish social relations with other individuals that include love and respect (Yavuzer, 2019). There is tolerance up to negligence in families that show a protective-demanding attitude. The child has the freedom to make their own decisions, but these decisions are not supervised by the family. A parent has little or no control over their child. It is seen that children who grow up under this attitude often want their own wishes to be done and do not give importance to the wishes of others. These children cannot find an environment where they can develop themselves in being responsible, controlling their own behavior, obeying the rules, and they may be overly dependent individuals with self-confidence problems (Sezer ve Oğuz, 2010; Yavuzer, 2005). There is an environment in which there is a lot of control in the authoritarian

parental attitude and the child's need for love is not adequately met. In cases where the child behaves as expected and shows absolute obedience, the child wins love; otherwise, the parents choose to resort to punishment to provide discipline (Yavuzer, 2019). It is seen that children who grow up in these families are anxious, have low tolerance for uncertainty, have low self-confidence and are extremely submissive, have difficulty developing an independent personality and establishing healthy social relationships (Yavuzer, 2019; 2003). These children also have feelings of inadequacy, negative judgments about themselves, and distrust towards themselves and other people (Kuzgun & Eldeleklioğlu, 1999). Children growing up in authoritarian families are generally obedient and prone to being dominated, but they can also show passive or active aggressive behaviors (Berns, 1993).

It is thought that it would be appropriate to examine the cognitive flexibility skill, which is another variable that is thought to be related to social problem-solving skills, on university students who experience many innovations and changes in social relations. According to Piaget's view, it is emphasized that young adults have more knowledge in thinking processes than adolescents (Santrock, 2012). Cognitive flexibility plays an important role in creative thinking in this period. Cognitive flexibility can be defined as the ability to adapt to new situations and adapt their behaviors to new situations by trying different solutions. Being aware of alternative ways and options, willing to be flexible and adapt to new situations, and believing that one is sufficient and flexible to perform the behavior necessary to adapt to change are the three basic characteristics expected of a person with cognitive flexibility (Dennis & VanderWal, 2010; Martin and Anderson, 1998). People with a high level of cognitive flexibility are responsible, assertive, caring, have a high perception of self-efficacy in their interpersonal relationships and are competent in making sense of their experiences. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that the high level of cognitive flexibility is effective on interpersonal relations and social problem-solving skills (Akçay Özcan, 2016; Bedel & Ulubey, 2015; Buğa, Özkamalı, Altunkol, & Çekiç, 2018; Çelikkaleli, 2014; Esen-Aygün, 2018). University students often experience problems such as social, emotional, academic and/or economic problems and in subjects such as close relationships and adaptation (Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya, & Terzi, 2012). Considering that problems are inevitable in young adults' daily lives, it is thought to be extremely important to investigate the factors that will contribute to solving these problems in a healthy way. In this study, parental attitudes and cognitive flexibility levels, which are thought to be effective in coping with these problems, are discussed in young adults. It is expected that the findings obtained from the research will guide individual and group preventive and developmental psychological counseling services to be prepared by experts working on university students and young adulthood. The aim of this study is to determine whether social problem-solving skills and perceived parental attitudes and cognitive flexibility levels differ according to gender, to examine the relationships between these variables, and to determine the level of prediction of university students' social problem-solving skills by parental attitudes and cognitive flexibility.

## METHOD

### Research Model

This research, which aims to examine the social problem-solving skills of university students in terms of perceived parental attitudes and cognitive flexibility levels, was conducted in accordance with the relational screening model, one of the general screening models. Relational screening models are research models that aim to determine the existence and/or degree of covariance between two or more variables (Karasar, 2016).

### Study Group of The Research

The study group of the research was selected through simple random sampling, which offers an equal chance of being selected to all members of the population, among university students studying at Erciyes and Nuh Naci Yazgan Universities in Kayseri in the 2018-2019 academic year (Karasar, 2016). Demographic characteristics of the research group are given in Table-1. The research group consists of a total of 574 university students.

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of students participated in the research**

Demographic Characteristic	Group	f	%
Gender	Female	326	56.8
	Male	248	43.2
Class	1st Grade	204	35.5
	2nd Grade	141	24.6
	3rd Grade	99	17.2
	4th Grade	130	22.6
Where They Live	With Family	253	44.1
	Out-of-Town	321	55.9

### Data Collecting Tools and Process

Data were collected with a personal information form, Social Problem-solving Inventory-Short Form (D'Zurilla et al., 2002), Parent Attitude Scale (Kuzgun & Eldeleklioğlu, 1999) and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (Dennis & VanderWal, 2010). Detailed information about data collection tools is given below.

### Personal Information Form:

Personal information form which prepared by researcher, used to gather information about participants' socio-demographic features (gender, grade, studying while living with family/studying while living out-of-town).

### Social Problem-solving Inventory- Revised (SPSI-R/SPÇE- KF):

The Social Problem-solving Inventory-Short Form developed by D'Zurilla et al. (2002) was used to measure the social problem-solving skills of the participants. The adaptation study of the SPÇE Short Form into Turkish, its reliability and validity analyzes were performed by Çekici (2009). Social Problem-solving Inventory (SPSI), which is a self-defining measurement tool, consists of 25 items and 2 sub-dimensions and 5 sub-scales within these sub-dimensions. Sub-dimensions of SPÇE named as Problem Orientation and Problem-solving Style. Positive Orientation to the Problem and Negative Orientation to the Problem subscales are in the Problem Orientation sub-dimension; Problem-solving Styles sub-dimension includes Rational Problem Solving, Careless/Impulsive Style and Avoidant Style subscales. There are 5 items for each subscale with a 5-point Likert-type rating (0 = Not Appropriate at all, 4 = Totally Appropriate). A separate score can be obtained for each subscale, as well as a total social problem-solving score from the scale. The total score ranges from 20 to 80 points. The high score indicates that the relevant feature is high. The internal consistency coefficients obtained for each subscale were .81 for RPÇ and POY, .76 for POSY, .74 for KT, and .61 for DDT. As a result of the reliability analysis made with the test-retest method, the reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .85. In the analyzes conducted within the scope of this study, the internal consistency coefficients of the subscales were RPÇ .71, POY .75, POSY .64, KT .62 and DDT .57, respectively.

### The Parental Attitude Scale (PAS/ABTÖ):

The Parental Attitude Scale developed by Kuzgun and Eldeleklioğlu was used to determine the parental attitudes perceived by the students. The scale evaluates parental attitude in 3 sub-dimensions. Subscales; Democratic Parental Attitude, Authoritarian Parental Attitude and Protective-Demanding Parent Attitude. Parental Attitude Scale consisting of 40 items in total; Democratic and Protective-Demanding Parental Attitudes have 15 items each; Authoritarian Parental Attitude have 10 items. Scale items have a 5-point Likert-type rating (1 = Not suitable at all, 5 = Totally Appropriate). In the internal consistency tests, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated as .89 for the democratic attitude sub-dimension, .82 for the protective/demanding attitude sub-dimension, and .78 for the authoritarian attitude. Test-retest reliability was found with Pearson Product Moments Coefficients, and it was calculated as .92 for democratic attitude sub-dimension, .75 for protective/demanding attitude sub-dimension, and .79 for authoritarian attitude sub-dimension (Kuzgun, Eldeleklioğlu, 1999). In the analyzes conducted within the scope of this study, the internal consistency coefficients of the subscales were calculated as DABT .80, KABT .63 and OABT .67, respectively.

### The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI/BEE):

The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (BEE), developed by Dennis and VanderWal (2010), aims to determine the ability of individuals to produce appropriate, compatible and alternative thoughts in difficult situations. The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory aims to measure 3 main areas. These; 1: The tendency to perceive difficult situations as controllable, 2: The ability to perceive that there may be alternatives to situations encountered in life and human behaviors, 3: The ability to produce a large number of solutions to solve difficult situations. The Turkish adaptation, validity and reliability study of the scale was carried out by Gülüm and Dağ (2012). The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory, which is a self-defining type measurement tool, consists of 20 items and 2 sub-dimensions, and these 2 sub-dimensions named as alternatives and control. The scale has a 5-point Likert-type rating (1= Not Appropriate at all, 5= Completely Appropriate), and there are 10 items for each subscale. The lowest score that can be obtained from BEE is 20, and the highest score is 100. While the scores of the subscales can be calculated separately, the total cognitive flexibility score can also be calculated. The internal consistency coefficients of the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory and its subscales of alternatives and control sub-dimensions were .90, .89, .85, respectively, and the correlations with the scales used for validity testing were found to be between -.13 and -.48 (Gülüm & Dağ, 2012). According to the data obtained, it is appropriate to use the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory to measure the cognitive flexibility levels of university students. In the analyzes conducted within the scope of this research, the internal consistency coefficients of the subscales were calculated as .75 for the alternatives and .76 for the control, respectively.

### Analysis of Data

The analysis of the obtained data of the research was carried out with the "IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0" package program. "T-Test for Independent Groups" analysis was used to reveal whether there was a significant difference between the sexes in the social problem solving, parental attitude, and cognitive flexibility scores of the research group. "Pearson Product Moments Correlation Coefficient" was used to determine the relationship between Social Problem-solving total score and Parental Attitude Scale subscale scores, Cognitive Flexibility Inventory subscale scores and gender variable. It was determined that all correlation coefficient values related to the variables used in the study were linear, and when the Normal P-P plot (Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual) and double scatter plot (Scatterplot) were examined, it was concluded that the distribution was normal. Standardized estimation values of standardized errors for variance homogeneity assumptions and binary scatter plots were reviewed and it was observed that there was no obvious structure. After it was seen that the prerequisites for the regression analysis were met, "Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis" was applied to test the predictive effects of the gender variable, Parental Attitude sub-dimensions and Cognitive Flexibility sub-dimensions on students' social problem-solving skills.

## FINDINGS

The T-Test results for Independent Groups regarding whether the mean scores of the students' Social Problem-solving Inventory, Parental Attitude Scale and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory differ according to gender are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Results of T-Test for independent groups by gender**

Dimensions	Gender	N	X	Ss	T	P
Positive Orientation	Female	326	12.60	3.62	-1.847	.065
	Male	248	13.17	3.70		
Negative Orientation	Female	326	9.03	4.30	<b>2.451*</b>	<b>.015</b>
	Male	248	8.18	3.88		
Rational problem solving	Female	326	13.74	3.51	1.193	.233
	Male	248	13.37	3.83		
Careless problem solving	Female	326	7.98	3.16	-.654	.514
	Male	248	8.16	3.38		
Avoidant problem solving	Female	326	6.38	4.27	-.737	.462
	Male	248	6.64	4.01		
Social problem-solving (Total)	Female	326	62.94	12.18	-.603	.547
	Male	248	63.56	12.08		
Democratic parental attitude	Female	326	59.58	12.30	<b>3.496*</b>	<b>.001</b>
	Male	248	56.08	11.36		
Protective parental attitude	Female	326	34.43	10.65	<b>3.286*</b>	<b>.001</b>
	Male	248	37.25	9.49		
Authoritarian parental attitude	Female	326	20.56	7.65	<b>-3.498*</b>	<b>.001</b>
	Male	248	22.77	7.28		
Alternatives	Female	326	48.64	8.47	-.377	.706
	Male	248	48.91	8.68		
Control	Female	326	25.77	5.51	-1.647	.100
	Male	248	26.51	5.01		
Cognitive Flexibility (Total)	Female	326	74.42	11.42	-1.049	.295
	Male	248	75.43	11.38		

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the genders in the positive orientation, rational problem solving, careless problem solving, avoidant problem-solving sub-dimensions and the total score of social problem solving. The negative orientation levels of male students are significantly lower than that of female students. When the change in parental attitudes according to gender was examined, it was seen that the levels of democratic parental attitudes perceived by male students were significantly lower than female students, and the levels of protective and authoritarian parental attitudes perceived by male students were significantly higher than female students. It is seen that there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of gender in the total score of cognitive flexibility and the sub-dimensions of the scale.

The results of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis regarding the predicted variables (Parental Attitude Scale sub-dimensions, Cognitive Flexibility Inventory sub-dimensions, and Gender variable) used in the study and the predicted variable (Social Problem-solving Inventory) are given in Table 3.

**Table 3. Correlational analysis results between variables**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Social problem-solving (Total)	-						
2. Democratic parental attitude	.239**	-					
3. Protective parental attitude	-.150**	-.344**	-				
4. Authoritarian parental attitude	-.236**	-.628**	.676**	-			
5. Alternatives	.518**	.291**	-.076	-.213**	-		
6. Control	.571**	.246**	-.170**	-.218**	.314**	-	
7. Gender	.025	-.145**	.136**	.145**	.016	.069	-

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

When Table 3 is examined, there is a significant relationship between the social problem-solving inventory score which is the predicted variable, and the predictive variables which are the parent attitude scale sub-dimensions and the cognitive flexibility inventory sub-dimensions; and it was found that there was no significant relationship between the gender variable. Accordingly, there was a weak positive correlation between the social problem-solving inventory score and the democratic parental attitude of the parental attitude scale ( $r = .239$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p = .000$ ); and there is a weak negative relationship between protective parental attitude ( $r = -.150$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p = .000$ ); lastly it was observed that there was a weak negative relationship between authoritarian parental attitude ( $r = -.236$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p = .000$ ). There was a moderately positive correlation between the social problem-solving inventory score and the cognitive flexibility inventory alternatives sub-dimension ( $r = .518$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p = .000$ ); and it was observed that there was a moderate positive correlation between the control sub-dimension ( $r = .571$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p = .000$ ). It was observed that there

was a weak, insignificant positive relationship between the social problem-solving inventory score and the gender variable ( $r=.025$ ,  $p>.05$ ,  $p=.547$ ).

To determine the level of prediction of social problem-solving inventory total score by gender variable, parental attitudes scale sub-dimensions (democratic parental attitude, protective parenting attitude, authoritarian parental attitude) and cognitive flexibility inventory sub-dimensions (alternatives and control) Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis was performed for this purpose and the results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4. Results of multiple hierarchical regression analysis**

Predictive Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change ( $\Delta R^2$ )	F Change p	B	Standard Error (SH <sub>B</sub> )	$\beta$	T	P
<b>Standard</b>					62.331	1.551	-	40.197	.000
<b>Step 1</b>	.025	.001	.001	.547					
Gender					.617	1.023	.025	.603	.547
<b>Step 2</b>	.272	.074	.073	.000					
Democratic parental attitude					.159	.053	.158	3.003	.003
Protective parental attitude					-.013	.066	-.011	-.203	.840
Authoritarian parental attitude					-.224	.107	-.139	-2.091	.037
<b>Step 3</b>	.676	.457	.383	.000					
Alternatives					.524	.048	.370	10.987	.000
Control					1.017	.076	.445	13.301	.000
R=.676		R <sup>2</sup> =.457							
F <sub>(6, 567)</sub> = 79.611		p=.000							

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the gender variable ( $\beta=.025$ ,  $p>.05$ ,  $p=.547$ ) entered into the model in step 1 is not a significant predictor of the social problem-solving inventory score. In step 2, the sub-dimensions of the parent attitude scale, democratic parent attitude ( $\beta=.158$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $p=.003$ ) and authoritarian parent attitude ( $\beta=-.139$ ,  $p\le.05$ ),  $p=.037$ ) was a significant predictor of the total score of the social problem-solving inventory, and the protective parental attitude ( $\beta=-.011$ ,  $p>.05$ ,  $p=.840$ ) did not contribute significantly to the model. In step 3, alternatives sub-dimension of cognitive flexibility inventory ( $\beta=.370$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and control sub-dimension ( $\beta=.445$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $p=.000$ ) were found to be significant predictors of social problem-solving inventory score. These findings show that the independent (predictive) variables explain approximately 46% of the total variance in the total score of the social problem-solving inventory.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, whether social problem-solving skills and perceived parental attitudes and cognitive flexibility levels differ according to gender, the relationships between these variables, and the predictive power of parental attitude and cognitive flexibility on social problem-solving skills were discussed. When the research findings were examined, it was observed that the negative orientation sub-dimension score averages of the students' differed according to gender; it was seen that the average score of male students was lower than the average of female students. It was determined that there was no significant difference according to gender in the positive orientation, rational problem solving, careless problem solving, avoidant problem-solving sub-dimensions and the total score of the social problem-solving scale. These findings are also supported by some previous studies. In the studies conducted by Arslan (2009) and Güneş (2011), it was found that the negative orientation to the problem was significantly higher in female students. This may be related to the fact that women perceive their problem situations as more of a threat and have problems in trusting their competence in problem solving. The fact that men have lower negative approach to problem scores than women may be related to more support for men in problem-solving and/or gender roles (Korkut, 2017; 2002). In some studies, which are examined, it was observed that gender did not cause a significant difference in social problem-solving scores (Terzi, 2000; Deniz, Arslan, & Hamarta, 2002; Arslan, Arslan, Hamarta, Saygin, 2010; Sarıkaya, 2019).

In the study, it was found that the democratic parental attitude of the students, which is one of the sub-dimensions of parental attitude, differs according to gender; It was seen that the democratic parental attitude perceived by female students was significantly higher than the average score of male students. In protective and authoritarian parental attitudes, male students' perceived protective and authoritarian parental attitudes were found to be significantly higher than female students. When studies with young adults and adults are examined, it is seen that there are different results. Oğuz (2016) and Erkan (2019) concluded that parental attitudes do not differ according to gender; Uysal (2019) found that men perceive their parents more protective than women and there is no significant difference in other attitudes; Çakır (2017) concluded that women perceive their parents as more protective and authoritarian, while men perceive them more democratic. Different results in different studies show that parental attitudes differ and are perceived differently by men and women.

In the study, it was determined that the alternatives and control, which are sub-dimensions of the cognitive flexibility scale and cognitive flexibility total scores of the students did not differ significantly according to gender. Diril (2011), Çelikkaleli (2014), and Bilgiç and Bilgin (2016) found that cognitive flexibility levels did not differ according to gender in their research conducted on high school students. This result is in line with the research findings. In the study of Asıcı and İkiz (2015), it was found that the control sub-dimension of cognitive flexibility differed in favor of men according to gender, but the alternatives sub-dimension did

not differ according to gender. Altunkol (2011), and Yelpaze & Yakar (2019) found that the mean cognitive flexibility scores of male students were higher in their studies with university students. Although Çuhadaroğlu (2011) states that gender alone cannot affect cognitive flexibility, gender roles may be the source of different results in studies.

Before the Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis, the correlation coefficients between the predicted (dependent) variable and the predictor (independent) variables were determined. It was concluded that there were significant relationships between the predicted variable, which is the Social Problem-solving Inventory total score, and the predictor variables which are the Parental Attitude Scale sub-dimensions, and the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory sub-dimensions. In the Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis applied in the study, it was determined that the predictor variables explained approximately 46% of the total variance for the Social Problem-solving Inventory total score. In Step-1, the level of predicting the total social problem-solving score of the gender variable was examined and it was seen that gender was not a significant predictor of the total score of SPSI. In Step-2, it was found that democratic parent attitude and authoritarian parent attitude scores, which are sub-dimensions of the parental attitude scale, significantly predicted the total score of the SPSI, but the protective parent attitude scores were not significantly predictive. When previous studies were examined, it was seen that overprotective parental attitude had a negative effect on problem-solving skills (Hamarta, 2007; Okur-Metwally & Köksal-Akyol, 2018; Kol, 2018). In other examined studies, it has been determined that democratic parental attitudes have a positive effect on problem-solving skills, while authoritarian parental attitudes have a negative effect (Basmacı 1998; Düzakın, 2004; Erden-İmamoğlu, 2013; Okur-Metwally & Köksal-Akyol, 2018; Kol, 2018; Tösten, Han & Anik, 2017). While the perceived democratic attitude increases problem-solving skills, it contributes to the reduction of tendencies towards violence (Kulakçı-Altıntaş & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2019). In this study, it is seen that as perceived democratic parental attitude increases, the social problem-solving skills of the individual also increase, while the social problem-solving skills of the individual decrease as the perceived authoritarian parental attitude increases. The data in the literature show that protective parental attitudes have a negative effect on social problem solving. In this study, among the possible reasons why the protective parental attitude did not have a role on social problem solving, may be related to the selected sample which consisted young adults, and 55.9% of the sample group was estranged from their parents who had protective attitudes because they studied far from their families.

In Step-3, Alternatives and Control, which are the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory sub-dimensions, significantly predicted the Social Problem-solving Inventory total score. Research results showing that cognitive flexibility increases constructive problem-solving skills, ability to evaluate problems more realistically, being aware of solution alternatives, self-confidence, self-efficacy, tolerance for uncertainty, and logical decision making skills (Bedel & Ulubey, 2015; Bilgiç & Bilgin, 2016; Bilgin, 2009; Esen-Aygün, 2018; Martin, Anderson and Thweat, 1998; Martin and Rubin, 1995; Martin and Anderson, 1998; Sarıkaya, 2019). These findings support the research findings. When cognitive flexibility is defined as adapting to new situations, attitudes towards the existence of alternatives, and the ability to produce solutions, it is significant that individuals with high cognitive flexibility have high social problem-solving skills. Cognitive flexibility contributes to the development of problem-solving skills.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the research findings, independent variables explain approximately 46% of the total variance in the total score of the social problem-solving inventory. The strong predictive effect on the total score of social problem solving, when sorted from high to low, is alternatives, control, democratic parental attitude and authoritarian parental attitude. In this case, it can be said that students with high cognitive flexibility and individuals who perceive their parents' attitudes as democratic can use their social problem-solving skills more effectively. The findings of this study show the importance of including studies on the development of cognitive flexibility skills in the studies to be conducted on the development of social problem-solving skills. It is suggested that the findings obtained in the research should also be tested experimentally. The sample of this research consisted of university students in Kayseri. In order to contribute to the reliability and generalizability of the research, it is recommended to conduct studies in different provinces and on samples excluded from this study, such as high school students and occupational groups. Social problem-solving skills and cognitive flexibility concepts have an important place in preventive and developmental psychological counseling services. Therefore, informative seminars, group counseling and/or psychoeducation programs can be organized for students on social problem-solving skills and cognitive flexibility skills.

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