

Social Emotional Well-Being, Psychological Resilience and Behavioural Problems in Preschool Children: The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation

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Abstract

Problems related to social, emotional and psychological well-being in children at an early age may cause behavioural problems. Previous studies show that the development of emotion regulation strengthens social-emotional well-being, and psychological resilience and reduces behavioural problems in children. This study aims to test the possible mediating role of emotion regulation and to gain a better perspective on the association between social and emotional well-being, resilience, and behavioural problems. 250 children aged 4-6 years (122 boys, 48.8%; 128 girls, 51.2%; mean age = 4.93) studying in kindergartens in Turkey were included in the study. Data on children's behavioural problems and emotion regulation skills were obtained from mothers, and data on social-emotional well-being, and psychological resilience levels were obtained from teachers. Social and emotional well-being, and psychological resilience indirectly significantly predicted behavioural problems through emotion regulation. Emotion regulation has a partial mediator role in the relationship between social and emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems. In line with the results, the importance of supporting the development of emotion regulation skills in the preschool period was emphasized.

Keywords : preschool children, social and emotional well-being, resilience, emotion regulation, behavioural problems, mediating role

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Introduction

Emotion regulation has been defined as the ability to initiate, maintain, and modulate emotional arousal in order to achieve individual goals and facilitate adaptation to the social environment (Thompson, 1994). Acquiring emotion regulation skills is one of the key developmental tasks in early childhood (Kopp, 1989). During this period, children comprehend emotion regulation strategies and learn to use them to manage their emotions (Cole et al., 2009). Understanding and regulating emotions, along with the ability to express their own emotions appropriately, are important aspects of emotional competence that contribute to young children's social and academic adjustment over time (Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace, 2016). The development of cognitive skills during the preschool years strongly influences progress in emotion regulation. Although they are not consciously aware of this process, the development of children's understanding of emotions during this period increases their capacity to regulate emotions (Sala, Pons & Molina, 2014). However, especially considering the importance of the regulation of negative emotions, it is important to investigate emotion regulation in order to understand emotions and factors related to the development of emotion regulation skills in children (Feng et al., 2008).

One of the important factors in the preschool period is social-emotional and psychological well-being. Social well-being requires the skills to establish positive relationships with other individuals and is related to avoiding certain behavioural problems, such as destructive aggression and bullying (Mayr & Ulich, 2009). Positive emotional experiences serve as building blocks for the development of social and emotional well-being in infants and young children (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005). It affects the social and emotional well-being of preschool children, indicating behavioural problems, adaptation to school and academic success (Durmuş Saltalı et al., 2018). Therefore, assessment of social and emotional well-being in young children is critical for understanding developmental progress and informing parents (Ravitch, 2013). Psychological well-being includes specific abilities, such as problem-solving, emotion management, autonomy, empathy, and resilience. It has been shown that those with psychologically sound personality traits can express their emotions more easily (Mayr & Ulich, 2009). It is important to understand how to develop psychological resilience in order to facilitate children's adaptation to new developmental tasks and school life in the

preschool period and to support children at this point (Özbey, 2019).

Supporting children's social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience is of critical importance in terms of developing their emotion regulation skills before and after school (Prout et al., 2019). Although studies revealing this relationship are limited, it has been proven that social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience have significant relationships with emotion regulation skills (Aguilar, 2018). However, studies show that there is a negative relationship between social-emotional well-being and psychological well-being and behavioural problems (Çelik, 2021; Kındıroğlu & Ekici, 2019). In addition, it is stated that as children's emotion regulation skills increase, behavioural problems decrease (Haslam et al., 2020; Şahin, 2019). Considering these relationships, it can be said that emotion regulation will play a mediating role between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems. This study aims to test a mediation model that investigates the direct and indirect effects of social-emotional well-being and resilience on behavioural problems in preschool children.

Social and emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems

In the study, well-being was discussed in terms of being related to psychological functioning. Social-emotional well-being is a concept closely related to psychological resilience (Kındıroğlu, & Ekici, 2019). According to Mayr and Ulich (2009), who revealed the theoretical structure of the scale used in the research, social and emotional well-being is one of the important concepts examined in the eudaimonic approach. According to this approach, social-emotional well-being includes social and emotional well-being as well as some aspects of psychological resilience and mental health. While emotional well-being includes feelings of happiness and security and psychological resilience; It includes certain abilities such as problem-solving, emotion management, autonomy, empathy and endurance (Durmuş Saltalı et al., 2018). Social emotional well-being; It includes optimism, confidence, happiness, self-worth, success, having a meaning and purpose, establishing supportive and satisfying relationships with others, understanding oneself, and responding effectively to the emotions of others (Weare, 2015). Psychological resilience, despite the individual's encounter with difficult life conditions; It can be defined as being able to overcome these

difficult living conditions and return to one's former self.

Both well-being and resilience are rooted in early childhood. These competencies that children acquire minimize the possibility of displaying behavioural problems (Alzahrani, Alharbi & Alodwani, 2019). The concept of “psychological resilience” has drawn attention, especially in the fields of both mental health and education. In the school context, it is a key focus for both academic functioning (for example, coping with failure in a challenging task) and emotional health and well-being (Banerjee et al., 2016). It is also characterized by resilience, the ability to bounce back from negative emotional experiences, and the ability to adapt flexibly to the changing demands of stressful experiences (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). Based on these explanations, it can be said that children's well-being and psychological resilience are effective factors in reducing behavioural problems.

Social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience, and emotion regulation

Emotion regulation is defined as the ability to manage, control and modulate emotional responses in productive ways, changing them according to context as needed. Thus, emotions make it easier to cope with changing situations (Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace, 2016). This competence can affect the child's social, and emotional well-being and psychological resilience. Emotional understanding in early childhood has been associated with a child's general socio-emotional competence (Cole et al., 2009). Adequate emotion regulation is generally considered to be a prerequisite for social-sensory and psychological well-being (Nykliček, Vingerhoets & Zeelenberg, 2011).

The ability to adaptively regulate emotions is crucial to healthy functioning, and many psychological disorders include some form of emotion regulation disorder. This finding has generated attention on the impact of various emotion regulation techniques on psychological and physical health (De Castella et al., 2013). Emotion regulation keeps psychological constructive features in check by acting quickly and effectively to adapt to changing circumstances. Emotion regulation includes the ability to accurately detect and evaluate cues related to physiological responses to stressful events (Price & Hooven, 2018). Resilience, which is related to emotion regulation, alleviates the negative effects of stress factors (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, as a

theoretical framework, argues that developing positive emotions is beneficial for building resilience against stressful events (Fredrickson et al., 2003). In this respect, identifying activities that improve emotion regulation strategies can be effective in shaping positive interventions aimed at improving psychological well-being and resilience (Chen & Rickard, 2014; Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Troy, Shallcross & Mauss, 2013).

Emotion regulation and behavioural problems

In the preschool period, children need to learn to regulate these emotions as well as express their positive and negative emotions for their social development. It is an important attempt to explain individual differences in emotion regulation that arise in early childhood; because children who have difficulty in managing emotions (for example, anger) are at risk of developing behavioural disorders (Carlson & Wang, 2007). Those who have difficulties in emotion regulation (e.g., inappropriate regulation of negative emotions, mood swings, and inflexibility in emotional responses) are more likely to display behaviourally inadequate or excessive control problems (Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace, 2016). In particular, children who have difficulty regulating their negative emotions are more often rejected by their peers (Coie, Dodge & Kupersmith, 1990), and may be prone to behavioural problems and aggression (Helmsen, Koglin, & Petermann, 2012). It has been proven that children with a high level of emotion regulation demonstrate various aspects of adequate social functioning, including social competence, popularity among peers and teachers, adaptability, sympathy, and academic achievement (Carlson & Wang, 2007; Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace, 2016; Fabes et al., 1999). It is seen that children who can cope with intense emotions such as excitement and anger are more successful in continuing their games, in solving problems in situations of conflict and humiliation in the game, and in social interaction accordingly (Hubbard & Coie, 1994).

Emotion regulation as a mediator between social and emotional well-being, resilience and behavioural problems

The effect of social and emotional well-being and psychological resilience on reducing

behavioural problems was explained above. In this section, the mediating effect of emotion regulation is discussed. It is stated that emotions are not regulated in isolation from people. On the contrary, they are regulated by important social networks and social interactions that surround the individual throughout life (Saricaoglu & Avcı, 2021). At this point, the interpersonal emotion regulation model developed by Zaki & Williams (2013) comes to the fore. This model provides a valuable framework for describing interpersonal emotion regulation processes in mood and anxiety disorders (Hofmann, 2014). Contemporary emotion regulation research emphasizes internal processes such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, but people with affect often prefer not to do it alone (Zaki & Williams, 2013). While internal processes are effective in regulating emotions, the social environment also plays an important role. In other words, it can be said that the child's social-emotional support and psychological well-being are effective factors in the regulation of emotions. Attachment figures, friends, parents, spouses, children, and other significant others constitute valuable interpersonal resources for coping with emotions. Expectations of their accessibility, helpfulness, and responsiveness can significantly increase their capacity to manage emotional arousal (Thompson, 1994). Thus, children can feel better socially and emotionally. However, emotion regulation strategies can significantly affect the course of social interaction and the development of social relationships. When children cannot regulate their emotions, problems may arise in their peer relationships and managing their behaviours. This result indicates the mediating effect of emotion regulation. From this point of view, it can be said that the interpersonal emotion regulation model forms the basis for the relationship between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience, and behavioural problems.

Current Study

This study was planned to test the mediating role of emotion regulation in the relationship between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems within the scope of the interpersonal emotion regulation model. It has been previously reported that social and emotional well-being (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl & Thomson, 2010) and resilience (Yurduşen, Erol & Gençöz, 2013) influence behavioural problems, and that emotion regulation reduces behavioural problems (Xiao, Spinrad & Carter, 2018).

specified. In studies on preschool children; shyness-social adjustment (Hipson, Coplan & Séguin, 2019), anger-physical and relational aggression (Ersan, 2020), family context-psychopathology (Morris et al., 2017), mothers' emotion regulation-children's behavioural problems (Crespo et al., 2017), school readiness-school success (Panlilio, Harden & Harring, 2018), sensory knowledge-adaptation (Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace, 2016), sexual abuse-behaviour problems (Langevin, Hébert & Cossette, 2015), the mediating role of mothers' reactions to children's negative emotions-aggression (Suh & Kang, 2020) was tested. No study has been found on which the mediating role of emotion regulation in the relationship between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience, and behavioural problems of preschool children has been found. Based on this idea, a mediation model was created and presented in Figure 1.

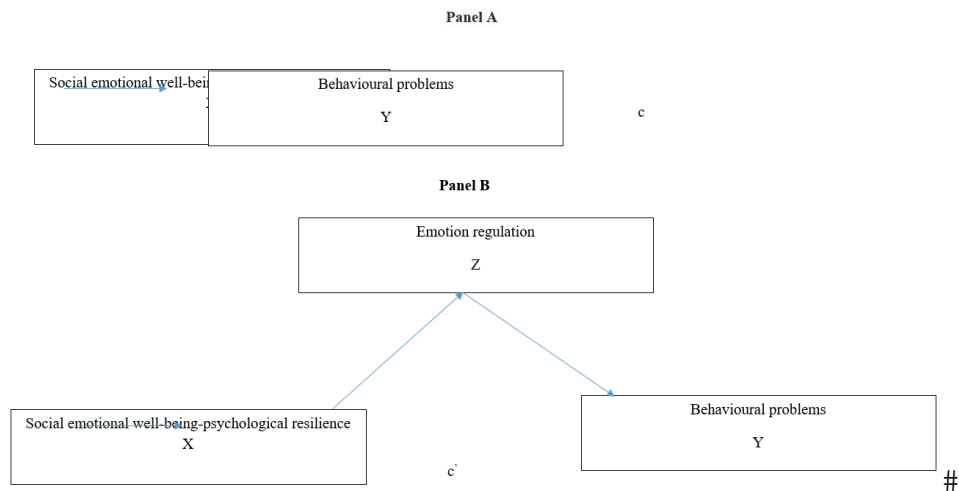


Figure 1. Social emotional well-being-psychological resilience and behavioural problems adjustment variables (Panel A) and suggested mediation model (Panel B)

Method

In this section, titles such as the research model, study group, data collection tools, data collection and data analysis are included.

Participants

The research was conducted in six independent kindergartens in the city centre of Erzincan, located in eastern Turkey. The number of children enrolled in these kindergartens is 372. Children whose mothers did not give their consent and who did not attend school due to the pandemic were not included in the study. There are a total of 24 classrooms in six independent kindergartens. The number of children included in the study from each class varies between 6-11. 250 children in the age group of 4-6, who were educated in these classes, were included in the study. 51.2% (n=128) of the children were girls, 33.6% (n=84) were four years old, 39.2% (n=98) were five years old, and 27.2% (n=68) were six years old. Of the children, 22% (n=55) had one sibling, 52% (n=130) had two siblings, 20% (n=50) had three siblings, and 6% (n=15) had four or more.

All 24 teachers who evaluated the children in the study were women. The ages of the teachers vary between 24-45 and 75% (n=18) have professional seniority of more than five years.

The ages of the mothers vary between 25-49, 64% (n=160) have secondary school education and above, and 70% (n=170) are not working.

Data Collection Tools

In the research, the data were obtained from the evaluations of teachers and parents. The collection of data from both teachers and parents helps to eliminate the evaluation based on subjective judgments. In addition, the evaluation of children by different people who know children closely is considered important in terms of the results of the research. Data on children's behavioural problems and emotion regulation skills were evaluated by their mothers, and data on social-emotional well-being and the level of psychological resilience were evaluated by their teachers. In this context, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Emotion Regulation Scale were filled in by the mothers. Teachers answered the Social Emotional Well-Being and Psychological Resilience Scale for Preschool Children. Information on measurement tools is given below.

Social Emotional Well-Being and Psychological Resilience Scale for Preschool Children

The scale was developed by Mayr & Ulich (2009). Validity-reliability studies on preschool children Durmuş Saltalı et al. (2018) designed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the stability of the original factor structure of the scale. It was concluded that the 36-item scale did not fit the data obtained from the Turkish sample, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed. EFA results revealed a 30-item structure with six factors. The subscales are “Social Relationship/Social Performance, Self-Control/Self-regulation, Self-Confidence/Assault, Coping with Stress/Emotional Stability, Consciousness of Responsibility/Task Orientation, Enjoyment of Exploration/Curiosity to Discover”. The scale is scored as “Always=5, Often=4, Sometimes=3, Rarely=2, Never=1”. There are five items on each subscale. The measurement tool is filled by preschool teachers. The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scale were found as .91, .91, .90, .74, .92 and .88, respectively. For this study, it was determined as .94, .94, .92, .65, .95 and .95, respectively.

Strengths and Challenges Questionnaire (Parent Form)

The questionnaire was developed by Goodman (1997) and by Güvenir et al. (2008) and adapted into Turkish. The questionnaire is used to measure mental problems in children and youth. The questionnaire comprises five scales: behavioural problems, emotional problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, and social behaviours. The scale, which has five questions in each subscale, consists of 25 questions in total. In the scale, questions can be answered with one of the options "not true (0 points), partially true (1 point), or absolutely true (2 points). The total difficulty score can be obtained by adding the first four sub-dimensions. The total difficulty score was used in this study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total difficulty score of the questionnaire was determined as .84. In this study, it was determined as .69.

Emotion Regulation Scale

The Emotion Regulation Scale was developed by Shields & Cicchetti (1997) and validity-reliability studies were conducted on preschool children by Yagmurlu-Altan (2010). The

scale assessing children's emotion regulation skills can be filled in by mothers and teachers. The scale consists of two subscales: variability/negativity, and emotion regulation. The emotion regulation subscale was used in this study. The emotion regulation subscale measures the child's ability to express their emotions in accordance with the environment. Using a Likert-type scale with a range of 1 to 4, mothers or teachers assess how frequently they witness the behaviours indicated on the scale. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as .75 in the evaluations of mothers (Yagmurlu & Altan, 2010). In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was determined as .61. It can be said that the reliability coefficient is acceptable (Kilic, 2016).

Data Collection

Before the data were collected, necessary permissions were obtained from the Erzincan Binali Yildirim University Humanitarian Research Ethics Research Ethics Committee (Protocol no: 03/30, Date: 30/03/2020). Afterwards, the managers of the institutions where the research would be conducted were interviewed and information was given about the research. In the study, the scale forms were distributed to the teachers, and they were asked to fill in the forms separately for each child. The Social Emotional Well-Being and Psychological Resilience Scale for Preschool Children were filled by 24 teachers who trained 250 children. Each teacher filled a form for the 10 to 12 students in their class. Teachers have been teaching children for at least seven months and know the children adequately. The Strengths and Challenges Questionnaire and the Emotion Regulation Scale were answered by the mothers of the children. The forms were distributed to the mothers when they came to school, and they were asked to submit them to the school administration after filling them out. Consent was obtained from the teachers and mothers of the children included in the study. Consent forms explain the study's objectives, methodology, potential dangers, and how to complete the scales.

Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the research were transferred to the SPSS package program and

prepared for the analysis process. In this context, in the first step, skewness, kurtosis and Mahalanobis and Cook's calculations were made for extreme value analysis, and no missing data were found in the data set. Normality values were examined with LISREL9 software and when the transformation process was applied, it was found that the data set showed normal and homogeneous distribution. After the parametric conditions were fulfilled, path analysis and structural equation modelling were applied to seek answers to the research questions. In the structural equation analysis, the conformity values between the variables were examined with the confirmatory measurement model, which is the prerequisite analysis. After the measurement model, three different models were constructed and tested for mediation analysis.

In Model 1, it was tested whether social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience directly predicted behavioural problems. In Model 2, the concept of emotion regulation was added between social-emotional well-being and resilience and behavioural problems, and in this case, both direct relationships were tested between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behaviour problems variable, and indirect relationship processes were tested through emotion regulation skills. . In Model 3, the full mediating role of emotion regulation between these variables was tested. In the structural equation model, the models that fit indices for RFI, TLI, CFI, NFI, NNFI and IFI should be $\geq .90$ for an acceptable fit and $\geq .95$ for a perfect fit, $\geq .85$ for an acceptable fit and perfect fit for GFI and AGFI. $\geq .90$ for RMR, REMSEA, and SRMR values of $\leq .08$ for acceptable fit and $\leq .50$ for the perfect fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Results

In this section, the results of the analysis regarding the mediating role of emotion regulation skills in the relationship between social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience and behavioural problems are given.

Pattern 1.

The Structural Equation Model was used to determine the predictive power of social and emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable to behavioural problems. For this purpose, a measurement model including 6 sub-dimensions and the total score of the social and emotional well-being and resilience scale, and a different measurement model including 4 sub-dimensions and the total score to determine the behavioural problems were established. In order to find an answer to the research question, the effect level of two latent variables obtained through measurement models was examined. For this purpose, only the structural model is included. The structural model is shown in Figure 2.

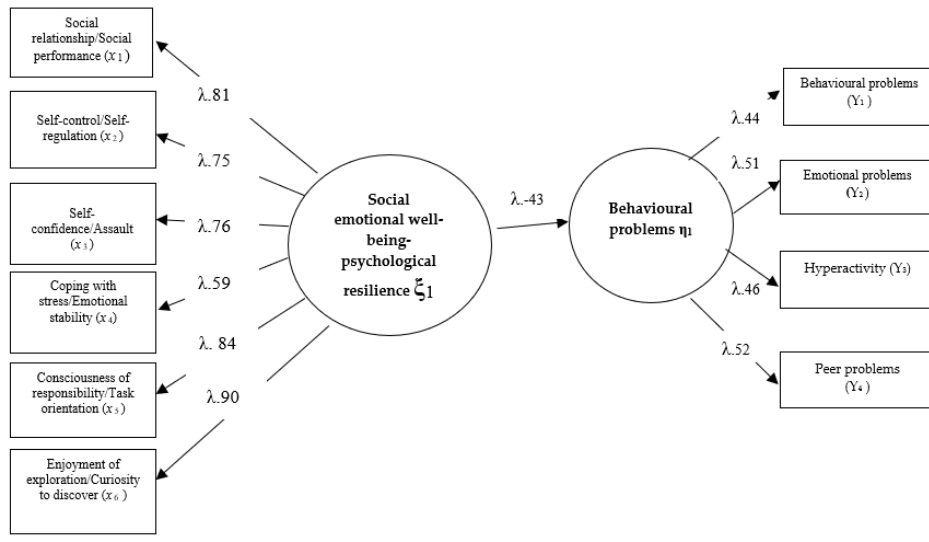


Figure 2. Structural model of the first research question

When Figure 2 was examined, it was determined that the variable of social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience explained 19% of the total variance in behavioural problems. The fit index values for Model 1 ($\chi^2/df = 3.78$, RMSEA: .068, CFI: .91, IFI: .91, NNFI: .93) indicate that the model has good fit values. The fact that 19% of the variance in behavioural problems was explained suggests that these variables may be possible mediating variables.

Pattern 2.

Model 2 was established to examine whether emotion regulation skills have a mediating role in the relationship between social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable and behavioural problems. In the previous model, emotion regulation skills were added to the variables whose relationship networks were examined, and in this case, both the direct relationships between the social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable and behavioural problems were tested, and the indirect relationship processes were tested through emotion regulation skills. There are two basic criteria to determine whether a variable plays a mediating role between other variables in mediation relationships. These; When the mediator variable is included in the model, the prediction coefficient among other variables becomes meaningless or shows a significant decrease (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, when the emotion regulation variable is included in the model, a significant change is expected in the correlation coefficient between the social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable and behavioural problems. Accordingly, the model tested and the findings related to the model are presented in Figure 3.

When Figure 3 is examined, it is seen that the model constructed after emotion regulation was included in the model fits well ($\chi^2/df = 4.44$, RMSEA: .072, CFI: .91, IFI: .92, NNFI: .91). When the correlation coefficients between the variables were examined, it was found that the social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable were on behavioural problems ($\beta = -.35$, $p < .01$, 12%) and emotion regulation ($\beta = .32$, $p < .01$, 10%); it is seen that emotion regulation has significant effects on behavioural problems ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .01$, 9%). It was observed that the explained variance between the social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable in Model 1 and behavioural problems decreased from 19% to 12% with the inclusion of emotion regulation skills in Model 2. Since both conditions are significant at the 0.01 level, it can be said that emotion regulation slightly changes the effect of social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience on behavioural problems.

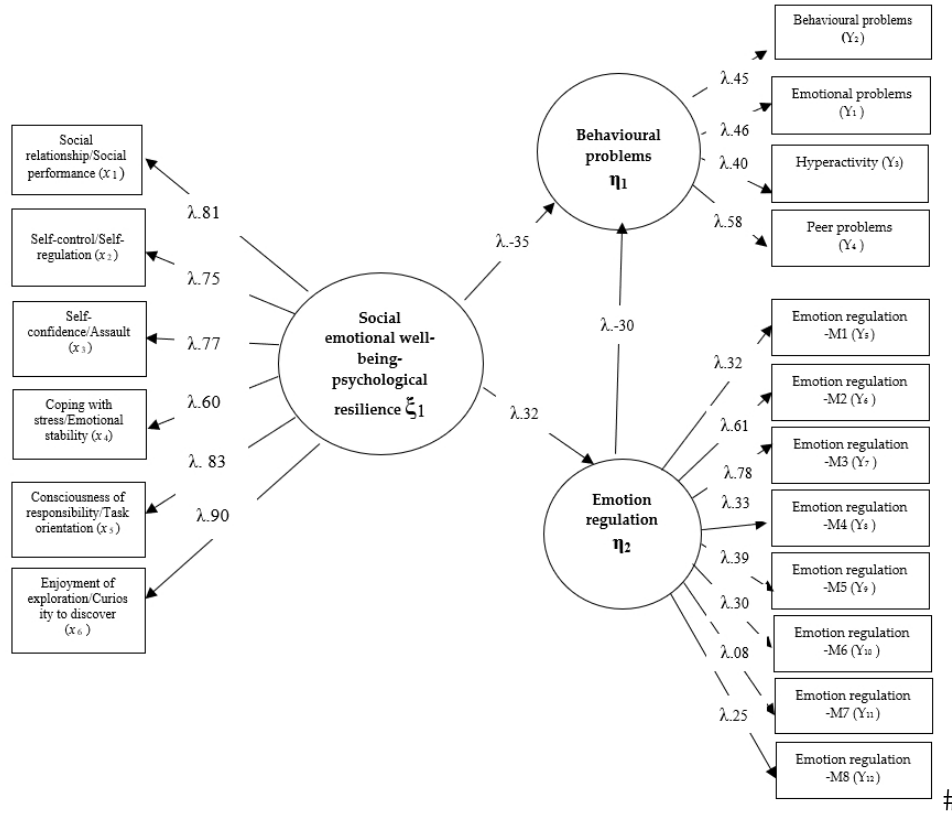


Figure 3. Structural model of the second research question

Pattern 3.

In Model 3, which was designed as a full mediation model, it was established that emotion regulation plays a mediating role in the relationship between social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable and behavioural problems. In this context, it was assumed that the effect of social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable on behavioural problems occurs indirectly through the emotion regulation variable. The findings regarding the full mediation model are presented in Figure 4.

When Figure 4 is examined, it is seen that emotion regulation has a partial mediator role in the relationship between social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience variable and behavioural problems. Accordingly, social-emotional well-being and resilience predicted

emotion regulation skills positively ($\beta = .36, p < .01, 13\%$), while emotion regulation predicted behavioural problems negatively ($\beta = -.46, p < .01, 21\%$). The fit index values for Model 3 were determined as ($\chi^2/df = 4.32$, RMSEA: .065, CFI: .92, IFI: .92, NNFI: .91). Therefore, it can be said that the constructed full mediator model has been validated. The effect of social-emotional well-being and resilience on emotion regulation and the effect of emotion regulation on behavioural problems increased slightly with the removal of direct relationships between social-emotional well-being and resilience from the model.

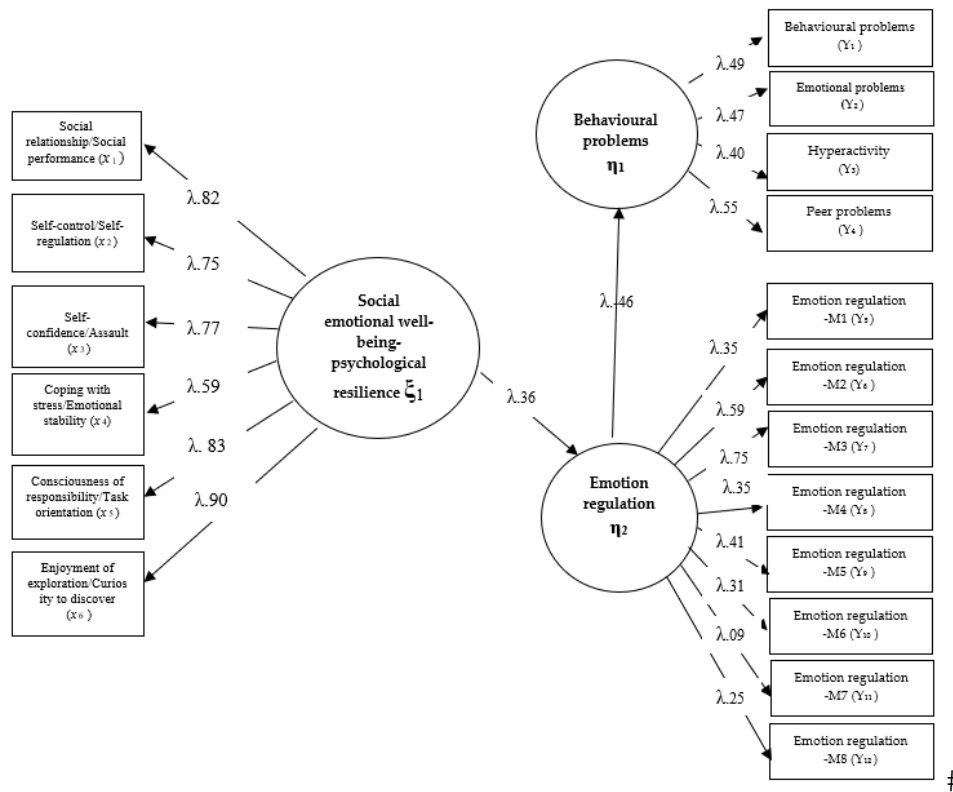


Figure 4. Structural model of the third research question

The significance of indirect effects in the mediation model was tested using the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman tests. The statistical significance of these test results indicates that a third variable (mediation variable) has an indirect effect on the relationship between the

independent variable and the dependent variable (Sobel, 1986). In the mediation model, with the mediation variables of the independent variables and the dependent variable; mediation variables should show a significant relationship with the dependent variable.

The significance of the mediation effect was tested with the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman tests. The findings are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Significance of the mediation effect*

Mediation variable	Independent variable	Sobel		Aroian		Goodman	
		Value	p	Value	p	Value	p
Emotion regulation	Social emotional well-being, psychological resilience	5.47	0.001	5.45	0.001	5.49	0.001

According to the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman tests, in which the significance of the mediating effect was tested, it is a significant mediator variable at the 0.01 level in the effect of emotion regulation, social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience on behavioural problems.

The significance of the mediation effect was also examined by the VAF test. According to this test, which calculates the contribution of the mediating variable to the variance, it can be said that if the VAF value is less than 20%, there is no mediation effect, if it is between 20%-80%, partial mediation effect, and if there is a value greater than 80%, full mediation is achieved. VAF value was calculated with the formula $a*b/(a*b)+c'$. The obtained VAF value is 22%. In this case, it can be said that emotion regulation has a partial mediation in the established model.

Discussion and Conclusion

More research is needed to provide a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of children's social and emotional competencies and well-being, and to identify effective and systematic approaches that support early care and education professionals (Jennings, Jeon & Roberts, 2020). Based on this idea, in this study, whether emotion regulation plays a mediating role in the relationship between social-emotional well-being, psychological

resilience and behavioural problems of preschool children were examined by structural equation modelling. Within the framework of available resources, we observed that previous studies addressed directly related variables. In this respect, the results of this study are considered important in terms of showing whether emotion regulation plays a mediating role between social and emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems of preschool children.

It has been observed that there is a negative and significant relationship between children's social and emotional well-being-psychological resilience levels and behavioural problems. The results were consistent with the findings of previous studies (Atan & Invention, 2021; Baker, Blacher & Olsson, 2005). Young children with strong social and emotional skills can recognize and manage their behaviour in their environment (Alzahrani, Alharbi & Alodwani, 2019). Children who lack social and emotional skills, on the other hand, struggle with peer connections, which results in behavioural issues such as lower peer acceptance, hostility, and hyperactivity (Cohen & Mendez, 2009). Practices aimed at improving social-emotional competence reduce children's behavioural problems. For example, at the end of a program applied to preschool children to improve children's social-emotional competence, it was determined that children's relational aggression and hyperactive-impulsive problems decreased (Mihic et al., 2016). On the other hand, the high level of psychological resilience of children also has a reducing effect on behavioural problems (Bethell et al., 2016). Calkins et al. (2007) reported the reduced effect of resilience on children's internalizing and externalizing behaviours in their study on children aged 2-5. In another study, it was found that lower resilience was associated with higher behavioural problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer relationship problems (Doi et al., 2018). In this respect, the negative relationship between social and emotional well-being, psychological resilience levels and behavioural problems seems acceptable in the current study.

In this study, a positive and significant relationship was found between preschool children's social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience levels and their emotion regulation skills. Emotion regulation skills of children with high social-emotional well-being have developed. Similarly, emotion regulation is one of the most important emotional skills that a socially competent child should have (Nyklíček, Vingerhoets & Zeelenberg, 2011; Seçer, 2016). An example of this is that an education aimed at improving emotion regulation

skills increases the social problem-solving skills of preschool children (Mestci, Gkkaya & Ormankıran, 2019). When social and emotional well-being is evaluated within the scope of social and emotional development, it predicts skills such as identifying and understanding emotions, reading and understanding the emotional states of others correctly, and managing strong emotions (zbey, 2019). Another factor associated with emotion regulation is resilience. In a study conducted on preschool children, relations between psychological resilience and emotion regulation were determined (Zhang et al., 2021). Another regulation strategy is for children to console themselves when they encounter difficulties. Children's use of this strategy eliminates some negative situations. Thus, this competence provides children with a higher level of resilience (Graziano, Calkins & Keane, 2011). Bayındır, Balaban Dađal and nder (2018), in their research on 60-72 months old children, revealed that ego resilience, which is one of the important determinants of psychological resilience, affects emotion regulation skills.

Another result obtained from this study is that there is a negative and significant relationship between children's emotion regulation skills and behavioural problems. Therefore, since the development of emotion regulation skills contributes to better control of children's behaviour and adaptation to the social context, it can be said that as children's emotion regulation skills increase, their level of behavioural problems decreases. The ability to manage positive and negative emotions, prevent unwanted impulses and behaviours, and get rid of emotional problems is considered important in supporting children's emotion regulation skills. Considering this aspect, children with high emotion regulation skills can exhibit fewer behavioural problems (zbey, 2019). Children with better emotion regulation skills have more insight into their socio-emotional difficulties. Therefore, once these children realize emotional difficulties, they usually make more efforts to correct them (Dunsmore, Booker & Ollendick, 2013; Stegge & Terwogt, 2007). So much so that the regulation of negative emotions can also prevent the emergence of certain behaviours that may trigger these emotions (Ersan, 2020). On the other hand, weak emotion regulation skills reduce the possibility of children understanding how others feel, increasing the chance of choosing inappropriate responses, which may cause negative reactions (Schultz et al., 2001). As a result, it increases children's behavioural problems. This result has been proven in many studies. In this respect, it supports the results of the current research (Crespo et al., 2017;

Langevin, Hébert & Cossette, 2015; Suh & Kang, 2020).

The main point of this research was to explore emotion regulation strategies as mechanisms linking social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience to behavioural problems. Emotion regulation, which is largely consistent with the hypothesis, partially mediated the link between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problem indicators. Previous studies (Alzahrani, Alharbi & Alodwani, 2019; Özbey, 2019) reveal that social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience have a diminishing effect on behavioural problems. However, studies do not provide sufficient explanation for the reason for this effect. On the other hand, it is stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between children's social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and emotion regulation skills (De Castella et al., 2013; Nyklíček, Vingerhoets & Zeelenberg, 2011). Similarly, as children's emotion regulation skills increase, behavioural problems decrease (Özbey, 2019; Suh & Kang, 2020). However, adequate explanations have not yet been made about which emotions children regulate and what their relationship is with behavioural problems. This study goes beyond these direct relationships between variables and shows that emotion regulation has a partial mediating role between social-emotional well-being, resilience and behavioural problems.

When studies on the mediating role of emotion regulation are examined, no research has been found in the context of existing resources regarding the mediating role of emotion regulation between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems. However, it is stated that emotion regulation in the preschool period is related to social competence and behavioural problems (Morris et al., 2017). At this point, the effect of social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience on reducing behavioural problems is mediated by emotion regulation. Because when emotions cannot be managed, both externalization and internalization problems arise (Morris et al., 2011). Socially competent children have better emotion regulation skills (Seçer, 2017), social-emotional competence improves their understanding of emotion (Cole et al., 2009), and resilience plays a positive role in evoking positive emotions (Liu et al., 2021; Marroquín, Tennen and Stanton, 2017). These results point to the mediating role of emotion regulation. Emotion regulation is associated with adaptations (Di Maggio, Zappulla & Pace, 2016; Hipson, Coplan & Séguin, 2019;), aggression (Ersan, 2020; Suh & Kang, 2020), behavioural problems (Crespo et al.,

2017; Langevin, Hébert & Cossette, 2015) also support the results of our study.

Recommendations

Emotion regulation plays a protective role between social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience and behavioural problems for preschool children. Strengthening the emotion regulation skills of preschool children can provide the development of children's social-emotional well-being and psychological resilience skills. From this point of view, practices that will strengthen emotion regulation skills may be useful in intervention programs developed for preschool children who are socially and emotionally inadequate and have low psychological resilience. Families, psychological counsellors and preschool teachers can be trained to strengthen children's emotion regulation skills. In the longitudinal design, demonstrative studies can be conducted to examine the social-emotional well-being, psychological resilience, behavioural problems and emotion regulation skills of preschool children. In addition, it may be useful to examine the factors discussed in the study both cross-sectionally and longitudinally in other age groups.

Limitations

This study, in which structural equation modelling was used, has some limitations. The study has a cross-sectional design. Due to the correlational nature of the data, causal interpretations of these relationships could not be obtained and causality was limited. In addition, all information was collected from teachers and mothers, and self-reports could not be obtained from children. Relying on reports from mothers and teachers raises some concerns about shared method variance among observed relationships. Therefore, there may be information bias. The curriculum or educational program of the kindergarten and the general characteristics of children, teachers and parents may influence the research results. The characteristics of the participants were ignored in the research. When reporting subsequent research results, it should be examined whether the general characteristics of the participants affect the research results.

Abbreviations

RFI: Relative Fit Index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, NNFI: Non-Normed Fit Index, IFI: Incremental Fit Index, NFI: Normed Fit Index

Authorship contribution statement

F.G: Review, editing, investigation. **N.A:** supervision, investigation. **F.A:** Conceptualization, writing, methodology, data collecting and data analysis

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data availability

The datasets are not available due to the code of confidentiality as the authors assured the participants of the study to use their responses only for the purpose of the current study.

Ethical approval

Prior to carrying out the research, the approval obtained from Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Humanitarian Research Ethics Research Ethics Committee to conduct the research (Protocol no: 03/30, Date: 30/03/2020).

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