

## The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Effect of Perceived Social Support and Psychological Resilience on Adolescents' Emotional and Behavioural Problems

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the effect of perception of social support and psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. The research is a study in the relational screening model. This study, which was carried out in 2022, consists of a total of 650 adolescents, 395 girls and 255 boys, who were seen in high schools with different programs in a province in the Mediterranean Region of Turkey. The data of the study were obtained with the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale, Psychological Resilience Attitude Skill Scale, Emotional Intelligence Trait Scale-Adolescent Short Form, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. The data were analyzed with Linear Regression and Hayes (Process) Analysis. According to the results of the study, it was found that perception of social support and psychological resilience predicted emotional and behavioural problems negatively and significantly; emotional intelligence had a full mediating role in the effect of perception of social support and psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems. According to the findings, perception of social support and psychological resilience have a significant effect on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents and emotional intelligence has a mediating role in this effect.

**Keywords:** *Adolescence, social support, emotional and behavioural problems, emotional intelligence, psychological resilience*

## Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by significant emotional and social changes, during which individuals are particularly vulnerable to emotional and behavioural problems. Schools play a crucial role in supporting adolescent mental health by providing an accessible environment for early detection and intervention. Effective school-based psychological counselling and guidance programs are essential for enhancing emotional intelligence, increasing perceived social support, and strengthening psychological resilience among adolescents. These protective factors serve as key elements in preventing the onset and escalation of emotional and behavioural difficulties, which, if left unaddressed, may have lasting negative effects on academic achievement, social relationships, and overall quality of life. Therefore, the integration of comprehensive mental health services within educational settings is vital to meet adolescents' needs and promote positive developmental outcomes.

### ***Adolescence Development***

Adolescence, which is considered a critical period of human development, starts at the age of 9-10 and continues until the age of 18-19. In adolescence, in addition to rapid physical changes, social and cognitive maturation, social relationship building and becoming independent, moving away from the family, wanting to take responsibility, and logical thinking are increasingly prominent (Santrock, 2021). During this period, while adolescents try to adapt to their disproportionately and rapidly developing body, they also try to cope with developmental tasks such as being accepted by their peers, preparing for their choice of profession and adulthood, and forming their personality (Ercan, 2001). The most prominent feature of adolescents is that they experience imbalance in their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and have emotional ups and downs in this stormy process (Aydın, 2010). Changes in emotional development are experienced more prominently in adolescents with the secretion of hormones that affect rapid growth and sexual development (Çakmak & Pektaş, 2020). In this period, while adolescents sometimes want to be alone and alone with themselves, they also often experience opposite emotional states such as spending time with their friends and wanting to belong to a group (Yavuzer, 2018).

### ***Adolescence' Problem Behaviours***

On the other hand, one of the most prominent issues related to adolescence is problem behaviours. Problem behaviours, also defined as behavioural problems (Jessor, 1991), are classified as emotional and behavioural problems (Achenbach & Edelbroch, 1979) and internalized and externalized problems (Achenbach & Edelbroch, 1979; Austin & Sciarra, 2021). Internalized problems include mental problems that are difficult to observe, such as shyness, obsessive-compulsive disorders, depression, and anxiety, while externalized problems include behaviours that are visible and developed in response to the outside, such as impulsive behaviours, destructive behaviours, and aggressive behaviours (Achenbach & Edelbroch, 1979; Austin & Sciarra, 2021). In another classification, emotional problems and behavioural problems are grouped as somatic complaints, introversion, social anxiety, anxiety, depressive problems, thought and attention problems, involvement in crime, and aggressive behaviours (Muris et al., 2003). Jessor (1991) stated that problem behaviours create dangerous situations in the physical health of the adolescent as well as problems in their development and social adaptation, and grouped these behaviours as school failure, breaking the law, alcohol, substance, smoking, early sexual intercourse and anti-social behaviours (Jessor, 1991). It is indicated that children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural

problems also have difficulties in their social interactions, self-control, and regulating their emotions and behaviours (Huberty, 2017).

### ***Protective and Risk Factors for Problem Behaviours***

It is important to determine protective and risk factors for the prevention of problem behaviours in adolescence (Siyez & Aysan, 2007). According to Jessor et al., Donovan and Costa (1994), protective factors consist of personality, perceived environment, social environment and behavioural systems while these protective factors are also considered as risk factors in terms of problem behaviours (cited by Siyez, 2006). Achieving personal and social control (Jessor, 1987) and perception of adequate social support, and psychological resilience (Carbonell et al., 1998; Savi Çakar, 2018) stand out in reducing problem behaviours in adolescents, while it has also been suggested that these elements are important protective factors on emotional and behavioural problems (Koohsar & Bonab, 2011; Davis & Humphrey, 2012).

According to Jessor (1991), individual needs the support of environmental factors throughout his life. For the adolescent, the presence of perceived social support from the family, the fact that the family environment is open to communication and harmonious, is very important in terms of emotional and behavioural problems (Carbonell et al., 1998). While the perception of social support includes information, emotional, instrumental and social assistance provided by the people around the individual in situations where the individual has difficulty coping (Cohen, 2004), it is emphasized that adequate social support during adolescence has an important function in protecting the adolescent from mental problems (İkiz & Savi Çakar, 2010; Savi Çakar, 2013).

During adolescence, the support provided by the social environment is a basic need for adolescents to continue their social relationship environment, not to feel alone, to accept the changes in their body, to adapt to their environment and at the same time to maintain their psychological well-being (Kozaklı, 2006). Although the social support that adolescents perceive from their friends is important, it is also indicated that they also need enough support from their family (Yörükoğlu, 2019; Yıldırım, 1997), parental support is important for emotional problems (Helsen et al., 2000), and adolescents who does not receive the social support they need from their friends and family when faced with difficult situations may feel lonely. It is observed that this situation may be a factor in turning to problem/risky behaviours to feel good, and adolescents who do not have friends and social environment experience more problem behaviours (Yörükoğlu, 2019; Tanrıverdi, 2012). In this context, while the adolescent's perception of insufficient social support from his social environment plays a role in the emergence of many mental problems (Savi Çakar, 2013), not actively participating in daily activities, isolating himself from social environments, lack of daily routines, reinforcement of negative behaviours, lack of attention and approval from the social environment, lack of a safe environment and effective communication are among the factors that trigger emotional problems and behavioural problems in adolescents (Austin & Sciarra, 2021).

Accordingly, in studies conducted so far, it has been shown that as the perception of social support increases in adolescents, self-esteem (İkiz & Savi Çakar, 2010) and the level of coping with stress (Yıldız, 2021) increase, while experiencing health problems (Geckova et al., 2003), the level of exposure to peer bullying (Gürsoy, 2010; Sönmezay, 2010), self-harm (Değerli, 2015), cyberbullying (Akar Çelik, 2015), aggression (Gündoğan, 2016), violent tendency (Davli Temel, 2018), age level (Savi Çakar, 2020) and social media addiction (Yazan, 2021) decrease.

In another study, it was determined that adolescents' levels of psychological resilience and attachment to school, attachment to friends and attachment to teachers significantly predicted behavioural problems, emotional problems, attention deficit and hyperactivity, peer problems and social behaviours (Savi Çakar, 2018).

Psychological resilience, which is considered as an important protective factor in terms of emotional and behavioural problems, is defined as trying to overcome difficult situations in life and being resilient in this process (Mandleco & Peery, 2000). The adolescent needs an adequate level of psychological resilience in order to cope with the physical, psychological and social changes of this period (Masten, 2001). Studies have shown that behavioural problems decrease as the level of psychological resilience and life skills increase (Ziaian et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2019). However, the effort to individualize in a difficult and turbulent period for the adolescent, an increase in risky behaviours, and the perception of insufficient social support are among the reasons that negatively affect psychological resilience (Gürkan, 2018).

### ***Emotional Intelligence and its Mediating Role***

Emotional intelligence is the ability of the individual to act, not to give up in negative situations, to control his desires, and to empathize (Goleman, 2011). At the same time, it is mentioned that emotional intelligence, which is the movement of mind and emotion together and mutually, contributes to the individual's ability to perceive, to be aware of his emotions, to manage his emotions, and to facilitate thoughts of emotions (Mayer et al., 2001). In studies on emotional intelligence in adolescents, emotional intelligence is considered an important variable in terms of emotional and behavioural problems (Poulou, 2010) while its positive effect on an individual's mental and physical health (Koohsar & Bonab, 2011; Davis & Humphrey, 2012) and its protective role in mental health (Koohsar & Bonab, 2011) are emphasized. In addition, while emotional intelligence plays an important role in coping with social, psychological and behavioural problems in adolescents (Yeşilyaprak, 2001), it is seen that problems such as committing crimes, truancy, violence, anxiety, depression, and shame are more common in adolescents with low emotional intelligence scores (Akboy & İkiz, 2007; Goleman, 2011). In some studies, it was found that the level of emotional intelligence and peer social support for male and female students significantly predicted academic success, and that perceived social support from the family contributed significantly to female students (Hogan et al., 2010), that both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional intelligence were negatively and significantly associated with problem behaviours, and that intrinsic emotional intelligence significantly explained the problem behaviours of adolescents (Yap et al., 2019). In studies with similar results, it was found that there was a high level of positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience (Özkan, 2019), that anxiety levels decreased as adolescents' emotional intelligence and social skills increased (Yılmaz, 2019), that emotional intelligence significantly predicted the perception of social support (Jimenez Rosario et al., 2020), that people with high intelligence and cognitive skills had lower levels of depression symptoms and psychological distress (Nyarko et al., 2020), that individuals with low emotional intelligence had higher psychological problems (Piqueras et al., 2020). In addition to these findings, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in the overall personality development of individuals. Women with high emotional intelligence tend to express their emotions effortlessly, maintain a positive outlook, find meaning in life, exhibit cheerfulness, adapt quickly to stressful situations, and communicate their feelings appropriately. Similarly, men with high emotional intelligence are often characterized by cheerfulness, courage, sociability, a balanced mindset, responsibility, strong ethical values, compassion, and inner

peace both with themselves and others (Goleman, 2011). As a valuable skill, emotional intelligence significantly contributes to adolescents' emotional and social adjustment and serves as a protective factor against behavioural problems.

### ***Aim of Study***

In the light of existing literature, perceived social support, psychological resilience, and emotional intelligence emerge as important protective factors against emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. In school counselling practices, identifying adolescents at risk for problem behaviours, planning school-based prevention and intervention programs, and explaining both the direct and indirect effects of these factors are of great importance. The findings obtained from this study are expected to contribute to the development of school-based psychological support strategies for adolescents. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to examine the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the effect of perceived social support and psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents.

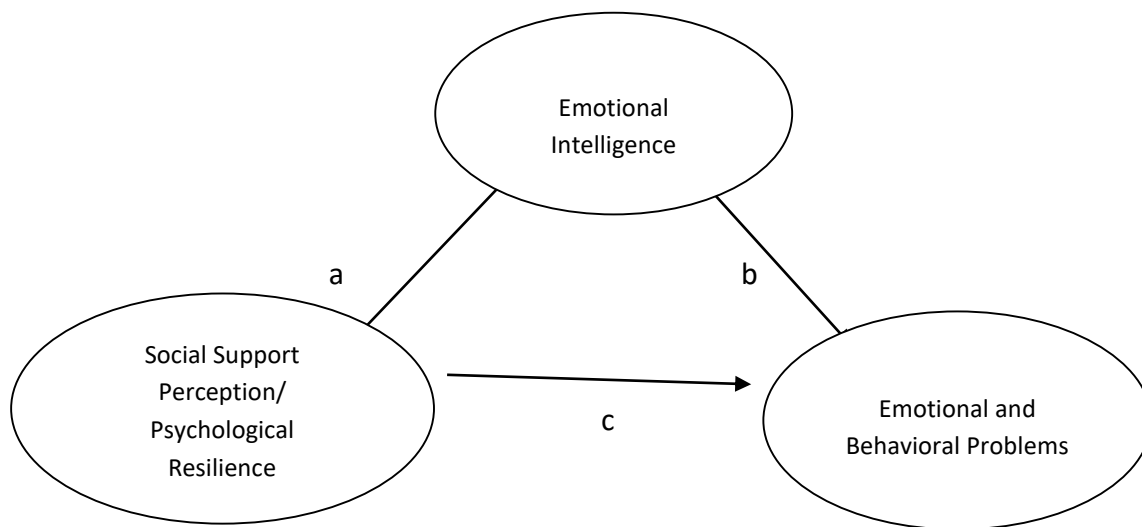
Research questions towards achieving the purpose of the study are as follows;

1. What is the level of social support perception predicting emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents?
2. What is the level of psychological resilience predicting emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents?
3. Is there a mediating role of emotional intelligence in the effect of social support perception on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents?
4. Is there a mediating role of emotional intelligence in the effect of psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This research is a study in the survey model, and the relationship between variables and their mediation role are examined. The mediation model is the examination of the relationship between the independent variable, which is the third variable, and the mediating variable, and the dependent variable, and the definition of the role of full or partial mediator. Full brokerage reflects the entire relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Partial mediation, on the other hand, reflects part of the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Yılmaz & İlhan Dalbudak, 2018). The model of this study is designed to reveal the direct effect of social support perception and psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems and the mediating role of emotional intelligence in this effect. The models of this study is shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Research Model Created to Examine the Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Effect of Social Support Perception and Psychological Resilience on Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents.

While establishing the model of the research, and by considering that the relationship between emotional intelligence, social support perception and psychological resilience with emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents is frequently emphasized in the literature, it is aimed to determine the role of mediator variables that may affect the direct and indirect relationship between these variables. Here, emotional intelligence is considered to play an important role as an intermediary variable, and it will be beneficial to focus on the mediating role of emotional intelligence as well as social support perception and psychological resilience in the prevention and intervention studies of emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents.

### Participants

Participants of this research consists of a total of 650 adolescents, 395 females and 255 males, between the ages of 14-16, who are studying high school in Türkiye/Antalya. The participants were adolescents with moderate socio-economic incomes, the vast majority of whom lived with their parents. While selecting the participants, random sampling method was used from the schools with the highest number of students in the regions with the highest number of schools in the city centre. The distribution of the adolescents participating in the study according to gender was 60.8% female, 39.2% male; according to age, 24.8% were 14 years old, 52.3% were 15 years old, 22.9% were 16 years old; according to grade level, 58.3% were in the 9th grade, 41.7% were in the 10th grade; 33.4% of the adolescents had low family income, 38.8% had medium income, and 27.8% had high income. While 87.8% of adolescents live with their parents, 9.5% live only with their mother, 1.4% live only with their father and 1.2% live separately from their parents.

### Data Collection Tools

**Personal Data Form.** With the personal information form used in the study, data on the demographic information of adolescents, namely gender, age, school type, grade level, family income level and family status, were obtained.

**Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.** This questionnaire, developed by Robert Goodman (1997), includes positive and negative behavioural traits of adolescents. The scale



was prepared in 3-point Likert-type and consisted of 25 items and 5 sub-dimensions. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Güvenir et al. (2008). Cronbach's alpha values for all scales and sub-dimensions obtained in this study were determined as .52 for attention deficit and hyperactivity; .30 for peer problems; .27 for social behaviours; .54 for emotional problems; .46 for behavioural problems in the behavioural problems sub-dimension, and .64 for the total score of the scale.

**Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale.** The scale was developed by Zimmet et al. (1988) to assess the perception of social support. The sub-dimensions of this scale, which consists of 12 items and three sub-dimensions, are family, friends and special people. The items are made on a 7-point scale. The validity and reliability study of the scale was first conducted by Eker and Arkar (1995) (Eker & Arkar, 1995). However, the validity and reliability study by Eker, Arkar and Yaldiz (2001) was later reviewed. Cronbach's alpha values for all scales and sub-dimensions obtained in this study were determined as .85 for family; .87 for friends and .92 for the special person subscales; finally, as .84 in the total score of the scale.

**Resiliency Attitudes and Skill Profile (RASP).** This scale, developed by Hurtes (1999), is a 4-point Likert type that measures adolescents' psychological resilience attitudes and skill levels. The original scale consisted of 40 items and 7 sub-dimensions, but 34 items and four sub-dimensions were obtained in the adaptation of the scale to Turkish. The sub-dimensions are relationships and values orientation, insight and creativity, independence and entrepreneurship, and humour (Akar ve Aktan, 2020). The Cronbach's alpha values for the whole scale and its sub-dimensions obtained in this study were as follows: .80 for relationships and values orientation; .81 for insight and creativity; .78 for independence; .69 for humour sub-dimension; and .91 for total scale score.

**Trait Emotional Intelligence Scale- Adolescent Short Form.** This scale, developed by Petrides (2009), consists of 15 items. The scale consists of 3 sub-dimensions: subjective well-being, emotionality, sociability and self-control, and is in 7-point Likert type. Adaptation of the scale was implemented by Ergin (2017). The Cronbach's alpha values for the whole scale and its sub-dimensions obtained in this study were determined as follows: .80 for subjective well-being; .53 for emotionality; .62 for self-control, .47 for sociability sub-dimension; and .81 for total scale score.

### Data Collection

The data of this research were collected from 9th and 10th grade adolescents studying in 5 high school types that implement different programs, namely Science High School, Anatolian High School, Anatolian Imam Hatip High School, Vocational Technical Anatolian High School and Private High School, affiliated with the Kepez District National Education Directorate in Antalya province, in the second semester of the 2021-2022 academic year.

Written informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians of all participants, and informed assent was obtained directly from the students prior to participation. All responses were collected through face-to-face pen-and-paper questionnaires administered only to participants who provided both parental consent and student assent. Participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process. No monetary compensation was provided for participation in the study.

### Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data of this study, Linear Regression test was used to examine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable, Hayes (Process) Analysis (Hayes, 2013) was used to determine the mediation roles, and the importance level was determined as 95%

for all tests. It was determined that the skewness and kurtosis values made to examine the normality distributions of the scales and scale sub-dimensions were in the range of  $1.00\pm$  and showed normal distribution. Büyüköztürk (2011) states that the values in the range of  $\pm 1.00$  are acceptable measures for normal distribution. The data analysis of the study was continued with parametric tests.

### Findings

This study was conducted on the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the effect of social support perception and psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. First, multiple linear regression analysis was applied to examine whether adolescents' perception of social support and psychological resilience had an effect on their emotional and behavioural problems. In the data analysis, firstly, it was examined whether there were multiple connections for multiple linear regression analysis and the correlation coefficient was determined as  $r=0.352$ . In addition, the *VIF* value was found to be 1.141, and it was seen that there were no multiple connections in line with these results.

#### ***What is the Level of Social Support Perception and Psychological Resilience Predicting Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents?***

The findings obtained according to the results of the multiple linear regression analysis of this study are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Regression Analysis Results on the Predictive Level of Social Support Perception and Psychological Resilience of Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents.*

|                           | Non-Standard Coefficients |            | Standardized coefficients | <i>T</i> | <i>P</i> | <i>VIF</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------|---------------------------|----------|----------|------------|
|                           | <i>B</i>                  | Std. Error | Beta                      |          |          |            |
| (Constant)                | 2.322                     | 0.082      |                           | 28.168   | 0.000    |            |
| Social support perception | -0.025                    | 0.009      | -0.111                    | -2.715   | 0.007    | 1.141      |
| Psychological resilience  | -0.131                    | 0.028      | -0.191                    | -4.695   | 0.000    | 1.141      |

*Dependent Variable: Emotional and behavioural problems;  $F(2-643) = 21.898$ ;  $R^2=0.064$ ;*

*Adj.  $R^2=0.061$ ; Durbin-Watson: 1.957.  $p<0.05$*

As can be seen in Table 1, it was observed that the perception of social support and psychological resilience predicted emotional and behavioural problems negatively and significantly. In other words, if adolescents' perception of social support and psychological resilience increase, emotional and behavioural problems are significantly reduced. Examining the average for emotional and behavioural problems, it was found that while the perception of social support increases by 1 point, emotional and behavioural problems decrease by 0.025 points, and while psychological resilience increases by 1 point, emotional and behavioural problems decrease by 0.131 points.



### ***Is There a Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Effect of Social Support Perception on Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents?***

The findings of the Hayes (Process) Analysis (Hayes, 2013), which was conducted to determine the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the effect of social support on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents, are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Effect of Social Support Perception on Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents.*

| Model                          | Independent variable(s)  | Dependent variable                 | <i>B</i> | <i>S. H.</i> | <i>P</i>     | %95 Confidence interval ( <i>b</i> ) |        |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------|
|                                |  |                                    |          |              |              | Min.                                 | Max.   |
| (1) Pre-intermediary variable  | Social support perception  | Emotional and behavioural problems | -0.040   | 0.009        | <b>0.000</b> | -0.057                               | -0.023 |
|                                | <i>Model summary: R=0.178; R<sup>2</sup>=0.032; F (1-644) =21.066</i>  |                                    |          |              |              |                                      |        |
|                                | Social support perception  | Emotional intelligence             | 0.327    | 0.029        | <b>0.000</b> | 0.270                                | 0.384  |
| (2) Post-intermediary variable | <i>Model summary: R=0.407; R<sup>2</sup>=0.066; F (1-644) =128.216</i> |                                    |          |              |              |                                      |        |
|                                | Social support perception  | Emotional and behavioural problems | 0.001    | 0.009        | 0.887        | -0.016                               | 0.018  |
|                                | Emotional intelligence   | Emotional and behavioural problems | -0.127   | 0.011        | <b>0.000</b> | -0.148                               | -0.105 |
|                                | <i>Model summary: R=0.448; R<sup>2</sup>=0.201; F (2-643) =80.738</i>  |                                    |          |              |              |                                      |        |

(*p*<0.00)

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that social support had a negative and significant effect on emotional and behavioural problems before the emotional intelligence tool was included as a variable in model 1. The strength of this effect is indicated by the value *b* = -0.040. When emotional intelligence tool is included in the model as a variable (model 2), it is seen that the perception of social support has a positive (*b*=0.327) and significant effect on emotional intelligence. Again, it is observed that emotional intelligence has a negative (*b*= -0.127) and significant effect on emotional and behavioural problems. According to the findings obtained, in order for emotional intelligence to be an intermediary variable, it is necessary to transfer the necessary meaningful effect through itself. In addition, it was concluded that the direct effect of the perception of social support on emotional and behavioural problems was insignificant. According to these results, it was concluded that emotional intelligence has a full mediating role in the effect of social support perception on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents.

### ***Is There a Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Effect of Psychological Resilience on Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents?***

The findings of this analysis are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Effect of Psychological Resilience on Emotional and Behavioural Problems in Adolescents.*

| Model                          | Independent variable(s)   | Dependent variable                 | B      | S. H. | P     | %95 Confidence interval (b) |        |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|--------|
|                                |   |                                    |        |       |       | Min.                        | Max.   |
| (1) Pre-intermediary variable  | Psychological resilience  | Emotional and behavioural problems | -0.157 | 0.026 | 0.000 | -0.209                      | -0.106 |
|                                | <b>Model summary: <math>R=0.230</math>; <math>R^2=0.053</math>; <math>F(1-644)=36.070</math></b>  |                                    |        |       |       |                             |        |
|                                | Psychological resilience  | Emotional intelligence             | 1.240  | 0.082 | 0.000 | 1.079                       | 1.402  |
| (2) Post-intermediary variable | <b>Model summary: <math>R=0.511</math>; <math>R^2=0.261</math>; <math>F(1-644)=227.016</math></b> |                                    |        |       |       |                             |        |
|                                | Psychological resilience  | Emotional and behavioural problems | -0.001 | 0.028 | 0.958 | -0.056                      | 0.053  |
|                                | Emotional intelligence  | Emotional and behavioural problems | -0.126 | 0.012 | 0.000 | -0.148                      | -0.103 |
|                                | <b>Model summary: <math>R=0.448</math>; <math>R^2=0.201</math>; <math>F(2-643)=80.727</math></b>  |                                    |        |       |       |                             |        |

( $p<0.00$ )

Examining Table 3, it is seen that psychological resilience had a negative and significant effect on emotional and behavioural problems before the emotional intelligence tool was included as a variable in model 1. The strength of this effect is indicated by the value  $b = -0.157$ . After emotional intelligence is included in the model as a mediating variable (model 2), it is seen that psychological resilience has a positive ( $b=1,240$ ) and significant effect on emotional intelligence. On the other hand, it was found that emotional intelligence had a negative ( $b=-0.126$ ) and significant effect on emotional and behavioural problems. When the findings obtained are evaluated, the condition of transferring the significant effect required for emotional intelligence to be a mediating variable through itself is met. It was also found that the direct effect of psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems was insignificant. According to these results, it was concluded that emotional intelligence has a full mediating role in the effect of psychological resilience on emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents.

### **Discussion**

These findings align with previous research indicating that higher levels of psychological resilience are associated with fewer emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents (Lee & Cranford, 2008; Ziaian et al., 2012; Kim & Im, 2013; Huang et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020;

Grazzani et al., 2022; Martinsone et al., 2022). Psychological resilience has been consistently identified as a key protective factor that prevents the onset and escalation of such problems (Rew & Horner, 2003; Wang et al., 2023). Supporting this view, Savi Çakar (2018) reported that adolescents with higher psychological resilience cope more effectively with emotional and behavioural difficulties, which positively contributes to their mental health. Furthermore, Rutter (2006) emphasized the crucial role of psychological resilience in facilitating recovery following adverse life events, underscoring its protective function against negative outcomes. Taken together, these results suggest that strengthening psychological resilience can play a vital role in reducing emotional and behavioural problems and enhancing coping mechanisms in adolescents.

This study revealed that higher levels of perceived social support are significantly associated with lower levels of emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the protective role of social support in adolescent mental health (Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996; Rockhill et al., 2009; Savi Çakar, 2018; Sahar et al., 2021). Colarossi and Eccles (2003) highlighted that social support plays a crucial role in protecting against depression and emotional difficulties. Similarly, Savi Çakar (2013) reported that family support significantly predicts behavioural problems in adolescents, with increased perceived family support associated with lower levels of anxiety-depression, attention and thought problems, physical complaints, social difficulties, aggression, destructive behaviours, and both internalized and externalized problems. Garnefski and Diekstra (1996) also underlined the importance of family support in preventing emotional and behavioural difficulties. These findings collectively demonstrate that social support—particularly from family, peers, and school—serves as a key protective factor, contributing positively to adolescents' psychological well-being and healthy social development.

Another important finding of this study is that higher levels of psychological resilience are associated with fewer emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. This result is in line with previous research indicating that psychological resilience functions as a major protective factor against emotional and behavioural difficulties (Lee & Cranford, 2008; Ziaian et al., 2012; Kim & Im, 2013; Huang et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020; Grazzani et al., 2022; Martinsone et al., 2022). Supporting this view, Savi Çakar (2018) found that adolescents with higher psychological resilience cope more effectively with emotional and behavioural challenges, which positively contributes to their mental health. Similarly, Rutter (2006) emphasized the critical role of psychological resilience in recovery following adverse life events, underscoring its protective function. Taken together, these findings suggest that strengthening adolescents' psychological resilience is vital for preventing emotional and behavioural problems and for enhancing adaptive coping skills.

The study also found that emotional intelligence fully mediates the relationship between perceived social support, psychological resilience, and emotional and behavioural problems, further highlighting its key role in adolescent mental health. Emotional intelligence was shown to directly influence emotional and behavioural outcomes, a finding supported by prior research (Yeşilyaprak, 2001; Akboy & İkiz, 2007; Poulou, 2010; Downey et al., 2010; Goleman, 2011; Koohsar & Bonab, 2011; Poulou, 2013; Kumar & Singh, 2014; Pour et al., 2014; Yap et al., 2019; Piqueras et al., 2020). Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence are better able to regulate negative emotions, manage stress, and use emotions appropriately, which reduces the likelihood of developing emotional and behavioural problems (Koohsar & Bonab, 2011). Research has demonstrated that adolescents with high emotional intelligence and social skills

report fewer behavioural and psychological difficulties (Poulou, 2013; Piqueras et al., 2020) and are less vulnerable to emotional problems such as anxiety and depression (Koohsar & Bonab, 2011). Conversely, low emotional intelligence is associated with increased risk of behavioural problems such as aggression, delinquency, truancy, eating disorders, and emotional difficulties such as anxiety, depression, anger, shame, and guilt (Goleman, 2011; Kumar & Singh, 2014; Akboy & İköz, 2007). Yap et al. (2019) further found that both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional intelligence are negatively correlated with problem behaviours. Gender-based research suggests that developing emotional intelligence can help reduce aggression in male adolescents and self-injurious behaviours in female adolescents (Goleman, 2011). Moreover, Goleman (2011) emphasized that emotional intelligence is a teachable skill, indicating its potential utility in preventive and intervention programs. Consistently, studies have shown that interventions designed to enhance emotional intelligence improve emotional awareness, empathy, communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution skills while reducing emotional and behavioural difficulties in adolescents (Carr, 2016).

Taken together, these findings underscore the multifactorial nature of emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents and the importance of examining these issues within the framework of both direct and indirect interactions among multiple protective factors. The complex developmental challenges of adolescence, the variety of life events encountered during this period, and the degree to which adolescents are affected by these experiences should also be considered when assessing problem behaviours (Akdoğan, 2012).

### **Summary**

This study found a significant relationship between perceived social support, psychological resilience, and emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. As perceived social support and psychological resilience increase, emotional and behavioural problems decrease, with emotional intelligence fully mediating this relationship. Based on these findings, it is recommended to develop psychoeducational programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence, social support, and psychological resilience in adolescents. Additionally, expanding school-based prevention and intervention programs, providing individual and group psychological counselling for adolescents exhibiting problem behaviours, and involving teachers and families in these efforts will be important.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This study has several notable strengths. First, the inclusion of a large and diverse sample consisting of 650 adolescents from different high schools enhances the generalizability of the findings to adolescents living in similar socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, by simultaneously investigating perceived social support, psychological resilience, and emotional intelligence, the study provides a comprehensive and holistic understanding of protective factors influencing emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. Another significant strength is the examination of the mediating role of emotional intelligence, which offers novel insights into the indirect pathways through which these protective factors influence adolescent mental health. Lastly, the findings provide valuable practical implications for mental health professionals, guiding the design of effective intervention programs targeting adolescent emotional and behavioural problems.

However, the study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships between the variables, and longitudinal

research is needed to establish temporal and causal links. Additionally, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. The cultural specificity of the study, conducted only in Antalya, Türkiye, may also limit the generalizability of the findings to adolescents from different cultural or socio-economic backgrounds. Finally, the sample was restricted to adolescents aged 14-16 years, which may reduce the applicability of the results to younger children or older adolescents.

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