Investigating the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety Levels of University Students

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety levels of university students. The study data consisted of a total of 212 university students, 64% female (N=136) and 36% (N=76) male and data were collected from a state university in the west of Turkey. The relational model, one of the general models, was used in the research. The "Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale" was used to determine the emotional intelligence levels of the students, and the "Social Anxiety Scale" was used to determine the social anxiety problems experienced by university students. SPSS 23.0 package program was used for the analyzes. Research findings revealed the positive effects of emotional intelligence in reducing the social anxiety levels of university students. In addition, it was concluded that emotional intelligence predicts social anxiety in university students in a statistically significant way. It was observed that the subscales of optimism, use of emotions and evaluation of emotions which constitute emotional intelligence in university students significantly predicted social anxiety together.

1. Introduction

Humankind is positioned at the highest level among living things in the universe with the ability to think, reason, judge and draw conclusions from all these. For this reason, academic intelligence comes to mind most of the time when it comes to intelligence. However, this perception has gradually changed from the past to the present, and academic intelligence (IQ) has begun to share its top place with emotional intelligence (EQ). The importance of emotional intelligence is increasing day by day, as people are more than a robot or machine that solves their problems by using all their cognitive abilities appropriately (Kılıç et al., 2007). Therefore, in the 1940s, Weschler (1949) stated that an intelligence scale that does not contain emotional aspects would not be functional. A study that supports this argument has emerged with Gardner's suggestion of interpersonal intelligence. Although Payne (1985) published a thesis on emotional intelligence in the following years, Daniel Goleman is the first name that comes to mind when it comes to emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence to the world through his book. Goleman (1995) emphasized that academic intelligence cannot work efficiently without emotional intelligence, and these two types of intelligence will develop as they accompany each other. The ability to use emotions as the capacity to develop thinking and reason refers to emotional intelligence. The abilities related to recognizing and perceiving the emotions of one's own and others, accessing emotions to improve thinking and regulating emotions reflectively by making sense of emotional information include emotional intelligence capacity (Mayer et al., 2004). Emotional intelligence; it is about the capacity to recognize the emergence of emotion, understand the

meaning expressed by emotion, manage emotions, and reason and solve problems based on these (Salovey et al., 2004).

In the four-branched model of emotional intelligence developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), the individual is aware of the emotions of himself and others, uses emotions to develop thinking, makes sense of emotions, and manages his emotions. Perceiving emotions is related to being aware of what you are feeling. For example, when the individual has a pleasant time with his family, he may describe the changes in his body and feelings as happiness or realize that the tension in another person's face, tremor means anger. Understanding the deep meanings of emotions is important for an individual's relationship with himself and with others. The awareness of emotions step also provides an important starting point for reaching deep emotions (Elfenbein & MacCann, 2017). Emotional responses are reactions that grab our attention and make us think. For example, an individual with a good sensory input system also can directly think about important issues. In other words, emotions literally enter the cognitive system and guide thoughts. Thus, the capacity for thinking through emotions is enhanced. Almost all emotions have a message that they want to convey to us. For example, information may indicateindicating that I am being blocked, restricted, and stuck under the anger I feel.

For this reason, it is very important to understand the message conveyed by each emotion. The answer to the questions of what this emotion is trying to tell me or what makes me feel this emotion helps us to make sense of emotions. Thus, understanding the message conveyed by the emotion makes it possible to manage emotions (Davis et al., 2020; Salovey et al., 2004). We can think of this whole process, which includes the components of emotional intelligence, as a ladder. Realizing the emotion I'm feeling, I take the first step up the ladder by giving it a name. In the second step, I have to connect feelings and thoughts and add emotions to cognition. Being able to understand the message conveyed to me by the emotion that I realize and use to develop thinking allows me to take the third step. The last step that brings me to my destination and to my destination comes with the regulation and management of emotions.

Studies (Cobb & Mayer, 2000; Joseph et al., 2015; Mayer et al., 2004; Mayer et al., 2008) show that the emotional intelligence levels of individuals with wide social ties and high social support capacity that it is high. Individuals with high emotional intelligence scores tend to have higher other intelligence domains as well. Emotional intelligence levels of individuals who turn to professions that require social skills such as teaching and psychological counseling are higher than others. These individuals have better mental health and show higher success in the professional field. Problematic behaviors, such as being aggressive or prone to violence, are less common in individuals with high emotional intelligence. In fact, all these features can be improved, so the level of emotional intelligence can be increased. Emotional intelligence is an important building block for dealing with emotionally challenging periods and complex emotions. For example, the whole world has experienced difficult economic, political and psychological processes due to the COVID-19 virus that emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Hui et al., 2020). Such epidemics or even less severe diseases cause individuals' anxiety, anger, and depression (Alkhamees et al., 2020; Browning et al., 2021; Dai et al., 2020; Ho et al. 2020; Paulino et al., 2021).

To manage such a psychological crisis, it is necessary first to maintain the emotional stability of the person and then develop their coping skills by revealing their anxiety and fears (Zhang et al., 2020). Since the provision of all these steps is related to improving emotional intelligence, emotional intelligence appears as a protective factor even during the pandemic process (Moroń & Biolik-Moroń, 2021). It has also been determined that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on preventing emotional manipulation at work, coping with stress and providing a better performance (Gooty et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2020; O'Boyle et al., 2011). In a study conducted with 94 undergraduate and graduate students in India, it has been shown that students get away from boredom and depressive thoughts by using their emotional intelligence skills, thus they try to cope with the negative effects of the current pandemic situation (Chandra, 2020). The concept of academic buoyancy, which expresses the successful coping of students with academic problems and difficulties, is in a positive relationship with emotional intelligence (Thomas & Allen, 2021). In addition, emotional intelligence appears as a protective factor in mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression (Mahmoud et al., 2012; Moeller et al., 2020; Selkie et al., 2015).

Another mental health problem commonly experienced by university students is social anxiety (Karasu, 2020; Ürün & Öztürk, 2020). In its most general definition, social anxiety is defined as avoiding entering a social

environment. The individual feels constantly alert in these environments. He is afraid that others will ridicule him and be humiliated. These thoughts cause him to avoid social environments, thus the social development of the person is also interrupted (Heydrick, 2008). A person entering these environments may show physical reactions such as sweating, palpitations in the chest, tremor, rapid breathing, and facial flushing (Heimberg et al., 2014). As can be seen, social anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon that is affected by genetic and environmental factors that occur both physically and mentally (Aslan et al., 2020). Social anxiety is an intense and persistent fear that prevents an individual from growing socially (Inam et al., 2014). Our emotions play a key role for social functioning (Inam et al., 2014). The self-confidence levels of individuals who can regulate their emotions also increase, indirectly affecting social anxiety (Fernandez-Berocal et al., 2006). When individuals cannot use their emotional intelligence skills, their social anxiety levels may increase, which may lead to a decrease in their positive moods such as subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness (Doğan, 2016; Tezelli, 2019). In addition to preventing the individual from feeling good and happy, social anxiety can bring many negativities with it, for example, the increase of social anxiety also increases the incentive to use alcohol, individuals become prone to alcohol while experiencing social anxiety (Buckner et al., 2020; Buckner & Heimberg, 2010). In addition, studies have found that there is a negative and significant relationship between prospective teachers' emotional intelligence and levels of social anxiety (Tezelli & Dilmaç, 2021), while a weak positive correlation has been found between emotional intelligence and total social anxiety scores of individuals in young adulthood (Gençiri, 2020).Due to the contrast between these research findings, it is thought that it is important to carry out new studies. Age, family environment and gender are the most important factors affecting the development of emotional intelligence (Tuğrul, 1999). Although there are studies which show that emotional intelligence differs according to age (Sevindik et al., 2012), there are also studies that claim the opposite (İsmen, 2004). It is important to investigate the emotional intelligence levels of students according to age and gender, because the concept of age and gender is important for emotional intelligence and because of the controversial results in the literature. Similarly, there are controversial findings in social anxiety in terms of gender and age variables (Kocaoğlu & Çekiç, 2021; Ümmet, 2007). It is thought that revealing new findings that will help to understand this controversial situation will contribute to the literature.

Young people who come to university age enter into a brand new social environment that they have not experienced before. This environment requires them to engage and interact with many new individuals. However, university students with social anxiety may lack healthy relationships and communication. To prevent this, the emotional intelligence skills of the students, which include the ability to notice, make sense and organize their emotions, come to the fore. In light of all these mentioned, this study aims to investigate the relationship between the emotional intelligence and social anxiety levels of university students. The problem statements created based on this can be listed as follows:

- Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety levels of the participants?

- Is there a significant difference between the participants' emotional intelligence and social anxiety sub-dimensions according to gender?

- Is there a significant difference between the participants' emotional intelligence and social anxiety subscales according to age?

- Do emotional intelligence total scores and subscales significantly predict the participants' social anxiety levels?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

In this study, which investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety levels of university students, the relational model, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. In relational models, the existence and degree of change between two or more variables are determined (Cohen et al., 2000).

2.2. Research Sample

212 university students selected from a state university in western Turkey constituted the research group. The sample consisted of 136 participants (64.15%) who were women and 76 (35.85%) who were men. 55 of the participants (25.94%) were between 18 and 20 years old, 79 of them (37.25%) were between 20 and 22 years old, 29 of them (13.68%) were between 24 and 26 years old, and 49 of them (23.11%) were between 22 and 24 years old. The sample was randomly selected and participants were enrolled in the study on a voluntary basis.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale: This scale was developed by Shutte et al. (1998) and used by Austin et al. (2004) to determine emotional intelligence levels of the university students. The adaptation study of the scale into Turkish was carried out by Tatar et al. (2011). The scale consists of 41 items with 3 subscales and answered in 5-point Likert type. The first of the subscales is called optimism and mood regulation, the second subscale is the evaluation of emotions, and the third subscale is the use of emotions. The Emotional Intelligence Scale, which measures the students' emotional intelligence levels, had an alpha internal consistency coefficient of .80.

Social Anxiety Scale: Social Anxiety Scale that was developed by Özbay and Palancı (2001) was used to determine the social anxiety levels of university students. The scale consists of 30 items with 3 subscales and answered in a 5-point Likert type. As the score obtained from the scale increases, the social anxiety level of the person also increases. The first of the subscales, social avoidance, measures the person's hesitation to communicate and unwillingness to interact. The second subscale, anxiety about being criticized, measures the individual's effort to control himself because of fear of misbehavior. The third subscale, the individual's feeling of worthlessness, also aims to measure the extent to which the individual feels worthless. The three subscales explain 32.9% of the total variance. The internal consistency coefficient Cronbach's alpha of the scale was calculated to be .89.

2.4. Data Analysis

Analyzes SPSS 23.0 package program was used and analyzed at .05 significance level. The data were analyzed with Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test, one way ANOVA and regression model. In addition, the normality analysis of the data was examined by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and it was determined that it showed normal distribution.

2.5. Ethical

The data of the study were collected in 2019. Necessary permissions were obtained to use data collection tools applied within the scope of the research. Data collection tools were administered to the participants to be used in the research, and no additional information that would not be used in the research was included. Within the scope of the confidentiality of the research, the identity information of the students other than the general information was not taken, they were only numbered according to the order of filling the forms.

3. Findings

Pearson correlation analysis was computed to establish the relationship between the participants' emotional intelligence (Optimism and mood regulation, use of emotions and evaluation of emotions) and Social Anxiety (Social avoidance, being critized and worthlessness). The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, the result of the Pearson correlation test, a moderately negative significant relationship was found between emotional intelligence and social anxiety total scores (r =-.303, *p*<.05). Similarly, a moderately negative significant correlation was found between social anxiety total scores and the evaluation of emotions, one of the emotional intelligence subscales (r =-.329, *p*<.05). A weakly negative significant relationship was found between the social anxiety total scores and the other subscales of the emotional intelligence scale, optimism and mood regulation (r =-.242, *p*<.05) and use of emotions (r = -.158, *p*<.05). Based on these findings, it can be said that as emotional intelligence increases, a significant decrease is observed in the level of social anxiety.

Table 1. *Correlation Analysis Results Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Social anxiety total	1	.945*	.906*	.877*	-.303*	-.242*	-.158*	-.329
Social avoidance		1	.776*	.756*	-.301*	-.256*	-.159*	-.304*
Being critized			1	.697*	-.209*	-.169*	-.068	-.266*
Worthlessness				1	-.362*	-.261*	-.255*	-.352*
Emotional intelligence total					1	.784*	.637*	.785
Optimism and mood regulation						1	.302*	.458*
Use of emotions							1	.408*
Evaluation of emotions								1

* $p<.05$: *Note.* 1. Social anxiety total, 2. Social avoidance, 3. Being critized, 4. Worthlessness, 5. Emotional intelligence total, 6. Optimism and mood regulation, 7. Use of emotions, 8. Evaluation of emotions.

When the relationships between the subscales of the scales were imvestigated, a moderately negative significant relationship was found between the evaluation of emotions subscale and social avoidance (r=-.304, $p<.05$) and worthlessness (r=-.352, $p<.05$). In order to determine whether there is a difference between emotional intelligence and social anxiety subscales according to gender, independent samples t-test was performed and the results obtained are presented in Table 2. A weakly negative significant correlation was found with critical anxiety (r =-.266, p<.05). Based on this finding, it can be said that the evaluation of emotions subscale has a negative relationship with all dimensions of the social anxiety scale. While there was a weakly negative and significant relationship between the use of emotions subscale and social avoidance (r=-.159, p<.05) and worthlessness (r=-.255, p<.05), being critized (r=-.068, p>.05) was not found to be a statistically significant relationship. A weakly negative and significant relationship between optimism and social avoidance (r=-.256, p<.05), worthlessness (r=-.261, p<.05), and being critized (r=-.169, p<.05). Based on this finding, it can be said that the optimism subscale has a negative relationship with all dimensions of the social anxiety scale and also it can be said that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on reducing social anxiety.

Table 2. *T-Test Analysis Results Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Anxiety*

Variables		n	$\bar{x}$	sd	df	t	p
Social anxiety total	Female	136	69.71	19.05			
	Male	76	73.91	20.90	210	-1.448	.150
Social avoidance	Female	136	27.62	8.81			
	Male	74	29.78	9.05	208	-1.672	.097
Being critized	Female	136	24.96	6.65			
	Male	76	25.92	7.54	210	-.924	.357
Wortlessness	Female	136	17.13	5.56			
	Male	76	18.58	5.75	210	-1.785	.076
Emotional intelligence total	Female	135	147.05	15.42			
	Male	75	139.00	17.18	208	3.372	.001
Optimism and mood regulation	Female	136	45.28	6.21			
	Male	76	43.24	5.63	210	2.438	.056
Use of emotions	Female	136	20.54	3.65			
	Male	76	19.30	3.27	210	2.539	.052
Evaluation of emotions	Female	136	34.43	4.23			
	Male	75	32.40	5.87	209	2.643	.009

As the result of the t-test, social anxiety total scores were determined for ($\bar{x}$= 69.71) females and ($\bar{x}$=73.91) males as [t(-1.448)=.150, $p>.05$] and social avoidance subscale for ($\bar{x}$=27.62) females and ($\bar{x}$=29.78) males as [t(-1.672)=.097, $p>.05$]. Being critized subscale scores were determined for ($\bar{x}$=24.96) females and ($\bar{x}$= 25.92) males as [t(-.924) =.357, $p>.05$]. Worthlessness subscale scores were determined for ($\bar{x}$=17.13) females and ($\bar{x}$=18.58) males as [t(-1.785)=.076, $p>.05$]. The results indicate that social anxiety total scores and subscales do not differ according to gender.

On the other hand, total emotional intelligence scores were determined for ($\bar{x}$=147.05) females and ($\bar{x}$=139.00) males as [t(3.372)=.001,p<.05]. Optimism subscale scores were determined for ($\bar{x}$=45.28) females ($\bar{x}$=43.24) males [t(2.438)=.056, p<.05]. Use of emotions subscale scores were determined as [t(2.539) = .052, p<.05) for ($\bar{x}$=20.54) females and ($\bar{x}$= 19.30) males. The difference between the total scores of the evaluation subscale of females ($\bar{x}$=34.43) and males ($\bar{x}$=32.40) was found to be statistically significant [t(2.643)=.009, p<.05]. This finding shows that emotional intelligence total scores and subscales differ in favor of females. In summary, it can be said that while social anxiety does not show a significant difference according to gender, emotional intelligence levels are higher in female students.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to determine whether the total scores and subscales of social anxiety differ according to age. The data obtained are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Between Social Anxiety Subdimensions*

	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	p
	3078.309	3	1026.103	2.683	.048
Social anxiety total	79561.139	208	382.505		
	82639.448	211			
	431.655	3	143.885	1.823	.144
Social avoidance	16257.869	206	78.922		
	16689.524	209			
	484.871	3	161.624	3.425	.058
Being critized	9814.200	208	47.184		
	10299.071	211			
	201.783	3	67.261	2.132	.097
Wortlessness	6562.684	208	31.551		
	6764.467	211			

As can be seen in Table 3, ANOVA results that in terms of age show that social anxiety total scores [F(3-211)=2.683, p<.05] and being critized subscale [F(3-211)=3.425, p<.05] had a significant difference. To determine the source of this difference between the groups, the Tukey HSD test was applied and the results obtained are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Tukey HSD Results Between Social Anxiety Total Score and Being Critized*

	(I) age	(J) age	Mean Dif. (I-J)	Std. Err.	p
Social anxiety total		18-20	2.832	3.435	.843
	20-22	22-24	10.025*	3.556	.027
		24-26	3.622	4.246	.829
Being critized		18-20	1.437	1.206	.633
	20-22	22-24	3.975*	1.249	.009
		24-26	2.051	1.491	.533

* p<.05

As shown in Table 4, social anxiety total scores of 20-22 years old (x = 74.76) and 22-24 years old ($\bar{x}$=64.73) had a significant difference. Similarly, the being critized subscale shows that the total scores of the age 20-22 ($\bar{x}$=26.87) are higher than the age 22-24 ($\bar{x}$=22.90) and this difference is also significant (p<.05). Accordingly, there is a significant difference in favor of the participants in the 20-22 age range. It can be said that those in this age range have higher levels of social anxiety than others. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine whether the total scores and the subscales of emotional intelligence differed according to age. The data obtained are presented in Table 5.

As can be seen in Table 5, the results of ANOVA, show that the total emotional intelligence scores [F(3-209)=11.039, p <.05[, the optimism subscale scores [F(3-211)=5.789, p <.05], the dealing with emotions subscale scores [F (3-211)=6.369, p <.05], and the rating emotions subscale scores [F (3-210)=5.871, p <.05] have a significant difference in relation to age.

Table 5. *Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Between Emotional Intelligence Subdimensions*

	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	p
Emotinal Int.	7875.484	3	2625.161	11.039	.000
	48988.997	206	237.811		
	56864.481	209			
Optimism	600.986	3	200.329	5.789	.001
	7197.543	208	34.604		
	7798.528	211			
Use of Emotions	225.392	3	75.131	6.369	.000
	2453.528	208	11.796		
	2678.920	211			
Evaluation of Emo.	405.843	3	135.281	5.871	.001
	4769.522	207	23.041		
	5175.365	210			

To determine the cause of this difference between groups, Tukey HSD test was applied. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Tukey HSD Results Emotional Intelligence Subdimensions*

	(I) age	(J) age	Mean Dif. (I-J)	Std. Err.	p
Emotinal int. total	18-20	20-22	10.280*	2.723	.001
		22-24	13.930*	3.043	.000
		24-26	17.935*	3.591	.000
Optimism	18-20	20-22	2.809*	1.033	.035
		22-24	4.531*	1.156	.001
		24-26	3.819*	1.350	.026
Use of emotions	18-20	20-22	1.496	.603	.066
		22-24	1.693	.675	.061
		24-26	3.371*	.788	.000
Evaluation of emotions	18-20	20-22	2.319*	.843	.033
		22-24	2.800*	.943	.057
		24-26	4.300*	1.114	.001

As can be seen in Table 6, according to the Tukey HSD results, emotional intelligence total scores of the age 18-20 years old ($\bar{x}$=153.69) are higher than the others and this difference is significant (p<.05). Similarly, the optimism subscale shows that the total scores of the age 18-20 years old ($\bar{x}$=47.16) are higher than the others and this difference is also significant (p<.05). Similarly, the use of the emotions subscale shows that the total scores of the age 18-20 years old ($\bar{x}$=21.51) are higher than the 24-26 years old ($\bar{x}$=18.14) and this difference is significant too (p<.05). Finally, the evaluation of the emotions subscale shows that the total scores of the age 18-20 years old ($\bar{x}$=35.80) are higher than the others and this difference is also significant (p<.05). Accordingly, there is a statistical significant difference in favor of the participants in the 18-20 age range. It can be said that those in this age range have higher levels of emotional intelligence than all other students. The regression analysis results applied to determine the predictive power of the emotional intelligence total scores presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Regression Analysis Results*

Variables	B	S.E.	Beta	t	p	Tol.	VIF	R	R²
Emotional int. total	-.365	.080	-.303	-4.586	.000*	1.000	1.000	.303	.092
Optimism	-.363	.241	-.112	-1.506	.134	.774	1.292	.345	.119
Use of emotions	-.083	.401	-.055	-.207	.836	.816	1.225	.345	.119
Evaluation of emotions	-1.086	.409	-.272	-3.512	.001*	.711	1.407	.345	.119

* p<.05, *Note.* Predictor Variable: Emotional Intelligence Total Score And Subdimensions, Predicted Variable: Social Anxiety.

As seen in Table 7, considering the regression analysis performed to predict social anxiety by emotional intelligence total scores, it was concluded that emotional intelligence significantly predicted social anxiety (F=21.033, R=.303, R²=.092, p<.05). This result shows that as the participants' emotional intelligence increases,

their social anxiety decreases. It was found that all subscales of the emotional intelligence scale together explained %12 of the total variance in social anxiety. This result shows that as participants' emotional intelligence increases, their social anxiety decreases.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety was first examined. A negative relationship revealed the effect of variables on each other. According to the findings of a study conducted with teacher candidates, there is a negative and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social anxiety levels and this finding supports the current research results (Tezelli, 2019). When examining the literature, there are also contrary results to this finding (Gençiri, 2020). The presence of contradictory and negative correlations and results indicates the need to replicate emotional intelligence and social anxiety in different settings with different study groups. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability of an individual to act despite obstacles, regulate his mood, control his impulses, and empathize. Thus, the development of emotional intelligence appears as both a protective and a preventive factor on social anxiety. Studies in which anxiety and depression are related to emotional intelligence also support this finding (Russo et al.,2012). Individuals with high emotional intelligence can provide self-control, self-motivation, be determined and patient, and thus reduce social anxiety by guiding their feelings. Emotional intelligence can play a functional role in replacing negative emotions such as anxiety and stress with positive emotions. It has been stated that emotional intelligence develops during the interaction of individuals. These individuals have strong intuitions, can understand non-verbal rules, adapt to social life, and continue their lives more actively (Goleman, 2003). Having an effect on individuals' emotions is a sign that they are healthy. However, in the case of social anxiety, emotions dominate the person and the person loses control. The socially anxious individual, who is worried about the experience of all these fears and anxieties, starts to avoid social environments. Thoughts develop about whether he will be criticized and judged by those around him. The feeling of shyness and anxiety that the person feels prevents individual from showing the behaviors he/she wants to do. With the high level of emotional intelligence, it is thought that the person can regulate their emotions brought by unrealistic thoughts and control their emotions that cause social anxiety. Another important point of the study is related to the gender variable. Social anxiety does not show a significant difference according to gender. Studies conducted support this finding (Gençiri, 2020). When emotional intelligence was examined by gender, it was seen that female students had higher emotional intelligence levels than male students. In addition to studies that are in line with the research results, there are also opposite results (Eraslan, 2016; Gür et al., 2019; Yılmaz & Zembat, 2019). Emotional differences can be observed between the genders, as parents raise their boys and girls in different emotional styles. While researching the concept of emotional intelligence, which is thought to be related to the upbringing style, attention should be paid to the region's socio-cultural characteristics and gender roles.

People with advanced emotional intelligence can understand and express themselves effectively, establish good relationships with other people, use effective coping methods against difficulties and obstacles, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, constructively express their opinions, cooperative, constructive and satisfying relationships can establish (Bar-On, 2006). In order for an individual to do all of these, must use emotions for own benefit, be sufficiently optimistic and adjust own motivation level (Bar-On, 2006). It is thought that the social anxiety of the individual who can do these will decrease with the development of relationships and communication. One of the study's important findings is related to the age variable. There are few studies on Turkish literature on emotional intelligence, social anxiety, and age variables. In this respect, it is thought that the current study will contribute to the literature. The findings show that university students between the ages of 20-22 have high criticism anxiety and social anxiety. It was found that the emotional intelligence abilities of university students between the ages of 18-20 were higher in optimism, utilization of emotions and appraisal of emotions. Emotional intelligence as a type of intelligence (Gardner, 1993; Sternberg, 1988; Wechsler, 1958) is the body's responses to a certain stimulus and the ability to regulate these responses can be increased depending on the individual (Gross, 1998; Gross & Thompson, 2007). While basic emotions such as being happy, sad, angry are seen from infancy, more complex feelings such as guilt and regret appear in later ages (Çelik et al., 2002). This emotional development includes the ability of the child to recognize his emotions, regulate and control his emotions, and establish empathy by transferring them to different situations (Bar-On, 2000). It can be said that emotional development has an impact on social development as well as its

biological bases (Denham, 1998). Sociobiologists stated that the feeling of angry protects us from the aggression of others, that pleasure and happiness prepare the ground for individuals to continue their species, and that the crying behavior of the individual in sadness and sorrow enables others to receive help (Cüceloğlu, 1991). Similarly, Ekman (1992) stated that emotions are a source of motivation for quality lifehelps the individual. It helps the individual adapt to nature and society by increasing the probability of survival. The last important finding is that all dimensions of the emotional intelligence scale together explain 12% of the total variance regarding social anxiety. Thus, it has been revealed that emotional intelligence is an important factor in reducing anxiety. Considering that emotions emerge at an early age and can be educated, it is thought that it will be effective to gain emotional awareness and empathy trainings starting from the preschool period and continuing in the following stages according to the developmental period of individuals. The learning environment and the role of the teacher are of great importance in gaining these skills.

For this reason, teachers should have sufficient knowledge about emotional intelligence and should be able to organize the environment in a developmental way. It is thought that the emotional literacy courses to be taught as elective courses in the education faculty will be effective in teachers' having this awareness. In addition, it is thought that providing psychological counselors as a consultation to other teachers and families and providing students with preventive and developmental guidance will contribute to students' cognitive and social development. All the training and activities that are carried out to improve emotional intelligence are important and necessary for students, and various studies on the subject will contribute to the field.

5. References

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