



**THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY ON THE  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTALIZATION AND  
PARENTAL EMOTION REGULATION**

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Master's Thesis

Graduate School  
Izmir University of Economics  
İzmir  
2021

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# ABSTRACT

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August, 2021

Parents' behaviors are affected by how they manage their own and their children's difficult emotions, and the parent's cognitive and social skills serve a function in this process. Also, more recently, studies have begun to pay attention to the underlying emotional and cognitive dynamics rather than focusing only on the attitudes of parents. For this reason, the study was conducted to examine the mediating effect of cognitive flexibility on the relationship between mentalization and parental emotion regulation. The study was conducted with the participation of 105 mothers and 69 fathers with children between the ages of 8 and 11. The Reflective Functioning Scale was used to measure the mentalizing capacity of the participants, the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory to measure their cognitive flexibility, and the Parent Emotion Regulation Scale to measure the emotion regulation in the relationship of parents with their children. Firstly, the relationship between mentalization, cognitive flexibility, and parental emotion regulation was examined through Pearson correlation analysis. Then, the mediating role of cognitive flexibility was analyzed with PROCESS (Hayes, 2013).

The results of the study show that cognitive flexibility plays a mediating role in the relationship between mentalization and parental emotion regulation.

Keywords: parental emotion regulation, mentalization, cognitive flexibility



# ÖZET

## BİLİŞSEL ESNEKLİĞİN ZİHİNSELLEŞTİRME VE EBEVEYN DUYGU DÜZENLEMESİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİDEKİ ROLÜ

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Ağustos, 2021

Ebeveynlerin davranışları, kendi ve çocuklarının zorlu duygularını nasıl yönettiklerinden etkilenmekte ve ebeveynin bilişsel, sosyal becerileri bu süreçte devreye girmektedir. Ayrıca son zamanlarda çalışmalar, ebeveynlerin yalnızca tutumlarına odaklanmaktansa, altta yatan duygusal ve bilişsel dinamiklere önem vermeye başlamıştır. Bu sebeple çalışma, bilişsel esnekliğin zihinselleştirme ve ebeveynin duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkide aracı etkisini incelemek için yürütülmüştür. Çalışma, 8 ile 11 yaşları arasında çocuğu olan 105 anne ve 69 babanın katılımı ile gerçekleşmiştir. Katılımcıların zihinselleştirme kapasitelerini ölçmek için Yansıtıcı İşleyiş Ölçeği, bilişsel esnekliklerini ölçmek için Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri ve ebeveynlerin çocukları ile ilişkisindeki duygu düzenlemeleri ölçmek için Ebeveyn Duygu Düzenleme Ölçeği verilmiştir. İlk olarak zihinselleştirme, bilişsel esneklik ve ebeveyn duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişki Pearson korelasyon analizi aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Daha sonra PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) ile bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolü analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları zihinselleştirme ve ebeveynin duygu düzenlemesi arasındaki ilişkide bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolü olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ebeveyn duygu d¼zenleme, zihinselleřtirme, biliřsel esneklik



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Assoc. Prof. Seda Can, for trying to give the theoretical information necessary for my academic journey in the best way possible and for her guidance and support throughout the thesis period.

I am grateful to my father, Sami Kutlu, and my mother, Harika Kutlu, who did not spare their support in the steps I took to improve myself, who always supported me to continue my career, and whose faith I have always felt.

I would also like to thank my esteemed classmates and friends, Simge Kısa and Sevgi Mestçi, for their cooperation, who accompanied me throughout the graduate program and did not spare their help during the difficult times I faced.

Also, I would like to thank my dear friend Büşra Erzurumlu for her help and support during this difficult and intense process and for always being there for me.

Finally, I would like to thank all the valuable Department of Clinical Psychology academicians at Izmir University of Economics, whom I feel very happy and lucky to be with, and who contributed to my academic and spiritual development.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CFA : Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFI : The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory

PCA : Principal Component Analysis

PERS : Parent Emotion Regulation Scale

RFQ : The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire

RFQ\_C : The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire – Certainty Dimension

RFQ\_U : The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire – Uncertainty Dimension



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Emotions emerge immediately after an event and allow us to adapt to the challenges we face in life and to manage our reactions thus it has vital importance. According to the perspective that emphasizes the functional aspect of emotions; emotions shape the learning process that keeps us alive, what to choose, our behavioral repertoire, and our relationships with others (Campbell-Sills and Barlow, 2007). Moreover, emotions guide what is important to individuals and provide motivation in the context of relationships and in life (Berry et al., 2002). When emotional experience is more difficult than one can manage, it disrupts harmony and negatively affects functionality (Denollet, Nyklicek and Vingerhoets, 2008; Werner and Gross, 2010). Some situations that affect us or events that we pay attention to cause emotional arousal, and maladaptive responses to emotional arousal might cause many psychopathologies, social maladjustment, and physical disorders (Eisenberg, Hofer and Vaughan, 2007; Mullin and Hinshaw, 2007; Sapolsky, 2007).

While emotions are so important, it is important to regulate them and keep them stable. Therefore, some strategies are used for this arrangement in daily life. The impact of emotional experience changes over time depending on the meaning of the event, and the nature of these emotional experiences regulates our behavioral responses. Sometimes we ignore our emotions, and sometimes we try to understand from more realistic perspective to regulate the results of emotional experience (Calkins and Leerkes, 2011). Thus, due to the various emotions, people can plan according to own wishes more easily in daily life. Emotion regulation involves managing the consequences of physical and cognitive arousal after an emotional event (Gross, 2014). Although this process is an effort made by the person himself/herself or the effect of the experience is shaped by getting outside help. As a result of this adaptive adjustment, the characteristics of the emotional life change and the person becomes more tolerable to emotions. Due to this arrangement, the person may encounter undesired results. It was stated that adults often handle by resorting to its own internal resources, but a crying baby needs an outside intervention like her/his mother or father to calm down (Gross and Thompson, 2007). This regulation process includes not only negative emotions but also positive emotions, and it takes place with a change in emotional dynamics rather than the complete disappearance of emotion (Gross, 2014). Furthermore, another important point in the management of emotions includes

regulating the reactions according to the wishes of the person and having a flexible repetition in this regulation process. (Cole, Michel and Teti, 1994).

Our adaptive behaviors are determined according to what our understanding of emotions is and how we assist them (Thompson, 1994). This process includes different strategies which occur as a result of conscious or unconscious effort. For example, emotions are regulated by changing the interpretation of the emotional stimulus or by using mechanisms such as ignoring, trivializing, providing more realistic explanations (Case et al., 1988). The person uses some ways to increase the effect of a positive emotional experience or to reduce the effect of a negative one. The other two most common strategies used in regulating emotions are reappraisal and suppression. Reappraisal includes trying to reduce the result of the event by explaining the events that make us sad or angry from different aspects, rather than whether they harm us. Suppression, on the other hand, involves ignoring or trivializing by changing the direction of attention in order to reduce the impact of a difficult experience or strong emotion. Research shows that reappraisal is a more functional strategy than suppression. It was also suggested that suppression does not modify with the emotional process while it interferes the behavioral outcome (Gross, 2001).

Regulation strategies of each person may differ at all ages. For example, a child whose parents are fighting with her/him may try to cope by continuing to watch television as if nothing was happening, or an adult person who has a problem with their boss at work interprets this situation as a part of their job. In addition, according to developmental approach, our emotional beliefs and emotional reactions are characteristics that emerge as a result of learning with family, cultural, social influences and it was also focused on how emotions are experienced depending on these influences (Saarni, 1999). Thus, understanding the concept of emotional regulation in different age groups or social environments has recently attracted the attention of researchers (e.g., Castro et al., 2016; Crandall, Deater-Deckard and Riley, 2015; Eisenberg et al., 2004; Morris et al., 2007).

The most important relationship for our emotional understanding that develops in social context is the parent-child relationship. There are many positive and negative emotions in the parent-child relationship. Parents try to calm their children's stress, to accompany their excitement, to relieve their fears, to enable them to live their enthusiasm in a more controlled manner in daily life, they guide their children's experiences like a regulator system (Thompson and Meyer, 2007). Therefore, parent's

beliefs about emotions and how they regulate emotions are important determinants in the context of parenting. Thompson and Meyer (2007) emphasized that parents' emotional awareness, regulation strategies and the quality of emotional communication in the family environment are predictors in completing the goals they have set for parenting. For this reason, the current study is focused on the factors that affect the emotional regulation of parents.

The literature on the parental functioning, it was suggested that cognitive capacities such as determining appropriate parenting goals and choices, ability of focusing on the child's needs, and learning may be protective factors for adaptive parenting practices (Sonuga-Barke, Daley and Thompson, 2002). In addition, it was found that parents with cognitive capacities can be more responsive and flexible even when they encounter challenging situations in their relationships with their children (Barrett and Fleming, 2011; Kienhuis et al., 2010). As seen in similar studies, it has recently been suggested to use the cognitive approach to understand parenting and to evaluate family dynamics in the light of parents' cognitive dynamics (Bugental and Goodnow, 1998). However, our cognitive potential is closely related to how we experience our emotions. Undoubtedly, many theories and studies in the literature have focused on the direct links between cognitions and emotions (e.g., Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003; Gross, 2002; Lazarus, 1991). Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to examine cognitive factors that would be important in the emotional regulation capacity of parents. Howieson and Priddis (2011) emphasized that mentalization is an effective cognitive mechanism in the outcome of emotional experience in an adaptive direction. This mechanism also provides ability of understanding and predicting inner experiences including one's own and other's feelings, thoughts, and motives. Contingent on the mentalizing capacity, the parents react to behaviors by interpreting child's intentions, needs, or feelings (Grusec and Mammone, 1995). However, if the parent has wrong or biased views about the child's intentions, it is difficult to manage their behavior and feelings towards the child, and in this case, it may cause maltreatment (Bradley and Peters, 1991). Thus, cognitive flexibility is considered as a protective factor for risks in parenting.

Cognitive flexibility, on the other hand, includes the individual's ability to make different evaluations of the event in the problem-solving process and to try to apply these evaluations in an appropriate way (Dajani and Uddin, 2015). Such cognitive efforts like focusing on cognitions or producing different solutions on events seem

important in shifting the results of the emotional event (Joormann, Yoon and Siemer, 2010). Also, this mental process contributes to parents' own emotions and emotional experiences in the relationship with their children. For this reason, the study examined mediating role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between emotion regulation and mentalization in parents.

In the current study, the first chapter includes the introduction with purpose of the study and the literature review on parental emotion regulation, mentalization, cognitive flexibility, and associations among these variables. This chapter also presents the aim and hypotheses of the present study. The second chapter consist of detailed information about the characteristics of the participants and measurements. Then, the results of the analyses that were performed to test relations between parental emotion regulation, mentalization and cognitive flexibility in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, a discussion of the results is presented with limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies and the final chapter gives implications about the study.

### ***1.1. Parental Emotion Regulation***

Emotional development in the first years of life varies according to the quality of attachment between primary caregiver and infant. As infant grows up, he/she begins to learn strategies for regulating emotions through the relationship with caregiver (Santrock, 1997). Physiological and neurological arousals are regulated by the caregiver like as external regulators and shape development of children's emotional world (Thompson and Goodman, 2010). The needs or wishes are expressed to others through crying, laughing, and body movements in early childhood (Kaplan et al., 1994). For example, if a toddler whines or cries a lot, it may be a sign to seek support from parents (Gross, 2006). As cognitive development progresses, the child begins to look for ways to cope with emotional experiences not only by asking parents for help or crying, but also by herself/himself, and these regulation strategies are diversified (Zeman and Garber, 2006). Consequently, children's emotion regulation skills have a new complexion based on the acquisition of language development. During this period, caregivers can understand and direct children's emotional reactions verbally (Thompson, 1994). Our reactions, beliefs, attitudes change according to how we experience our emotions. This process occurs in different ways in every relationship from infancy to the end of life and affects the quality of life.



While raising a child, needs change depending on the growth process of the child. Sometimes there are situations such as starting school or the birth of a sibling, and parents and children try to adapt to this changing events. As a result of these events, many positive and negative emotions are experienced. Due to the emotional experience created by these events, their parents adapt to the changes and try to find new solutions for their family system. How parents evaluate and manage their own emotions affects the emotional communication within the family, their reaction of their children's emotions, and the quality of the relationship between parents and children (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). For instance, some parents see negative emotions such as embarrassment and disappointment as things that need to be eliminated immediately. They may try to cope with these feelings, often by suppressing or ignoring them, believing that these feelings will harm the child (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996). In these cases, how parents are directed to emotions is very important in parenting behaviors and learning the child's regulation process.

With the variability of emotion regulation strategies, the emotional climate in the family has a critical effect for both the child's development and the adult's parenting process. There is also a functional feature in how parents manage their emotions, such as their children's changing demands with their age, providing the guidance they need and educating them (Sanders and Mazzuchelli, 2013). Daily routines, rules and boundaries are also affected by the emotional atmosphere of the home. What reactions will be given while regulating or trying to change the child's behavior is through this emotional communication, and it was thought that the disruptions experienced in this process stem from this emotional skill. Other function of emotions in family is that parents, through emotions, have the opportunity for intimacy in relationship with their children. Being with them in difficult emotions, calming their anger, participating in their happiness causes a deeper sense of parenthood. Thus, understanding the mind of children causes them to develop emotional bonds with them. But some parents cannot use the opportunity because they cannot struggle with negative feelings. Therefore, they can distance themselves from their children or some parents divert their attention to something else when there is a stressful situation, or because they think that their child cannot cope with a difficult event, they may prefer to tell or hide information in a different way (Miller and Green, 1985).

According to Dix's model (1991), parents' emotions are important indicators in shaping their reactions to their children. Through emotions, parents take important steps for parenting, and these can motivate, even if these are sometimes compelling emotions. The function of emotions in the parenting process varies according to how parents experience and regulate emotions and what they think about emotions. The coping styles of parents with negative emotions in their interaction with their children contain some dimensions in literature; the parent's sensitivity and understanding of the child's feelings, the ability to accepting negative emotions, the ability to tolerate negative emotions without avoiding them, and functionalizing negative emotions for parenting purpose (Pereira et al., 2017).

### ***1.1.1. Parental Emotion Regulation and Parenting***

Emotions that are important in parenting are sometimes found in the caring and sometimes punishing attitudes of the parents towards their children (Baumrind, 1971). Adaptive adjustment of emotions enables to understand the child's feelings and instead of punishing or ignoring the child (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996). Literature in developmental psychology focuses more on disciplinary methods in parenting including warmth, control, authoritarian or authoritative styles, and responsiveness. Due to the limited number of studies on emotion and cognition dimensions of parenting, it recently has shifted to these dimensions. It is now being asked what the dynamics under parenting styles are rather than only focusing discipline strategies. Similarly, other researchers suggest that in studies of child development that looking at the emotional climate of the family is more important to understand parenting context than to examine parenting styles (Paterson and Sanson, 1999). Ginott (1965) also suggested that identifying the underlying motivations for solving problems, rather than describing what style of parenting parents do, contributes to maintaining parenting functionality.

Previous studies showed that emotional dynamics within the family are underlying the parents' disciplinary strategies and attitudes. It was suggested that it is highly correlated with parents' attitudes to their children and how they response emotional demands (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996). Rutherford et al. (2015) suggested that the parent's sensitive orientation to the child's distress depends on the parent's emotion regulation. Previous studies showed that parents who are susceptible to their own inner arousal and able to confront the child's unregulated emotions contain

better with their children (Kim, Teti and Cole, 2012; Leerkes et al., 2015). In a study conducted with mothers in Turkey, it was found that how parents tolerate negative emotions is associated with how they perform their parenting roles in their children's attitudes. (Altan-Aytun et al., 2013). It has been found that parents who do not know how to manage their emotions tend to be more damaging in their children's reactions and have difficulty in realizing their parenting goals (Morelen et al., 2016). Strategies used by parents to manage their emotions also predict parents' behaviors. For instance, it has been also found that mothers who use rumination, which is one of the maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, have difficulties in meeting the needs of their children (Wu et al., 2020). Besides, it was found that parents with impulsivity and control problems in their behaviors towards their children have poor emotional regulation skills (Bridgett et al., 2015).

Finally, the parents' emotion regulation skills are predictive of parenting behaviors in the difficulties they face in daily life as well as parental attitudes. Also, there are some situations that make parental care difficult. These are growth in damaging environmental condition, low socio-cultural level, low economic level, family problems which become stress factors for the parent. In a study, it was found that the high level of emotional skills of mothers like their ability to regulate their emotions, and their awareness of their emotions, have a protective effect against these negative conditions. However, on the contrary, it was found that parents with weak emotional control could not cope with difficulties and parents were more reactive towards children (Skowron and Friedlander, 1998). As a result, many studies revealed that parents' emotion regulation capacities and negative emotional expression to their children are related to hostile and unsupportive behaviors (Hughes and Gullone, 2010; Wang, Deater-Deckard and Bell, 2016). However, the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics of the parents show themselves in the relationship with the child, and they predict the child's well-being in many ways and cause important results.

### ***1.1.2. Parental Emotion Regulation and Child Outcomes***

During the emotional intensity, the reaction of the environment will make it difficult or easy to manage the emotion. For instance, the presence of attitudes such as not accepting or ignoring emotions in the environment causes the emotional experience to be suppressed or, on the contrary, to turn into an uncontrolled reaction. For this reason, as children grow up, how the adults around them relate to their

challenging or enthusiastic times affects the emotional capacity of the child (Thompson, Flood and Goodvin, 2006). Besides, Calkins and Hill (2017) proposed that children develop emotional coping skills by monitoring their parents' emotional reactions and engaging in emotional relationships with them. For instance, in a study conducted with mothers, it was observed that children whose feeling are suppressed by their mothers regulate their emotions by suppressing them like their caregivers (Karnilowicz, Waters and Mendes, 2019). However, depending on the nature of these emotional interactions, the child either develops adaptive methods or behavioral, social, and academic problems arise due to emotional dysregulation (Thompson, 1994). Goleman (1996) also stated that the emotions that parents express to their children in the interaction of parents with their children in the family, and the behavior patterns through these emotions are very important in the development of children. In this sense, one of the ways in which the child learns about the skills in the emotional field is following adults' emotional expression.

Eisenberg et al. (1998) recommended that parents talk to their children about emotions, react to and express their emotions so that they can contribute to emotion socialization. The concept of emotion socialization means that children can recognize, verbalize, and adjust emotions in different social environments including school, family, peer relationship. In other words, how parents express their emotions affects children's emotional understanding of others (Halberstadt et al. 1995). A previous study, which was based on information received from teachers, showed that children whose emotions are accepted by their mothers were evaluated as their emotional capacity more developed (Denham, 1997). Consistent with this study, it was found that children whose mothers expressed more positive emotions had higher tolerance for emotional strain (Eisenberg et al., 2001). The way, frequency, and intensity of parents' expression of their feelings in family interaction contribute not only to the emotional development of children, but also to their social development (Eisenberg et al. 1998). It was found that families who react negatively to children's challenging emotions such as sadness and anger are more reactive in their children's relationships with their peers (Fabes et al., 2001). In another study conducted with mothers, it was found that when mothers expressed their negative emotions frequently, their children had difficulty in regulating their emotions (Garner, 1995; Garner and Power, 1996).

Gottman, Katz and Hooven (1996) suggested the emotion coaching in the context of parenting which is a concept related to how parents teach and guide to

children about emotions. Parents with these skills are aware of both their own and their children's positive and negative emotions, they see these feelings as an opportunity to get closer, they approve and help the children to identify their emotions, and they seek solutions for the emotional situation that causes arousal. There are many studies in which the concept of emotional coaching, which is a similar concept with parents' emotion regulation, predicts the dynamics of families and child well-being. Studies on emotion coaching show that parents who do emotion coaching have fewer behavioral problems in their children than those who do not. Additionally, children with behavioral difficulties were investigated to have less conflict with their peers when emotionally guided by their primary caregivers (Katz and Windecker-Nelson, 2004). In a study conducted with parents who emotionally guide their children, it was found that their children are less affected by the problems between parents, and that this parental skill also protects the child from academic, emotional, and social problems (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1997). In the longitudinal study conducted with boys between the ages of 9-13 and their mothers who grew up in inappropriate environmental conditions, the emotional training of mothers caused decrease in emotional, social problems and development in social skills in children, together with the mediator role of emotion regulation in the follow-up results in 6 months later (Cunningham et al., 2009). Consequently, many studies showed that the emotional skills of the mother and father underlie child health or problems.

Studies demonstrated that children's emotional development is related to social competence, internalizing and externalizing problems, academic success, peer relationship depending on parents' emotional potentials (Blair et al., 2011; Cook, Greenberg and Kusché, 1994; Denham et al., 2012; Rothman and Nowicki, 2004). In addition to, a previous research showed that socialization capacity has been found as a protective factor against children's oppositional problems that include discordant, defiant, and aggressive behaviors (Dunsmore et al., 2016). Research showed that the containing and soothing capacity of parents continues to affect not only childhood but also adulthood. In a study conducted with adults in Turkey, it was found that being able to establish emotional bonds with their mothers and fathers is related to factors such as the way of establishing relationships in the adulthood, emotion regulation, and well-being (Gökçe, 2013). Moreover, considering that children's emotion regulation skills are also related to many problems. For this reason, it was thought that the emotional understanding of parents or the emotional atmosphere in the family is

important for child development. Fabes and colleagues (2001) also stated that it is important to examining regulation styles of distressing emotions in families because the needs and development of the child depend on their parents. For this reason, this study was conducted on the factors that affect the emotional capacity of the parent, namely parental emotion regulation which predicts the development of the child in various areas. Generally, studies have focused on earlier periods. However, emotional skills were thought to be important in parents of older children, and parents with school-aged children were included in the study.

### ***1.1.3. Parenting to School-Aged Children***

As children grow, they have different challenges and demands with different developmental stages. Emotional responses to these challenges vary. Although emotional changes and reactions are mostly examined in relationships with young children and their mothers, this emotional interaction continues in the following years according to the changing needs of the child (Halberstadt et al., 2013; Pazzagli et al., 2018). How children handle emotions changes according to their cognitive and emotional development. For instance, preschool children struggle to cope with their emotions by choosing to get parent support in coping, as well as resorting to coping methods such as escaping, ignoring and displacement to regulate their emotions.

The growing child is in different environments with school age, have different relationships and gains various experiences without her/his family. In this period, the child who needs to feel safe also tries to establish healthy and successful relationships in these new experiences. Thus, in this process when the child is alone, she/he develops their own coping skills, or some problems are experienced in case of difficulties, such as anxiety, depression, school failure, peer problems (Atalar, 2014; Cole et al., 1994). During this period, the child, who develops physically, cognitively, and emotionally, also begins to develop in dealing with emotions. In this period, with a better language skill, child can name feelings and express it to parents and people around him/her. With this developing cognitive resource, the child begins to realize and interpret not only his/her own feelings but also the feelings of others. Thus, the child begins to better understand the relationship between his/her own mind and the mind of others (Zeman and Garber, 2006).

With the emotional and social skills that develop during this period, children face different responsibilities such as starting school, being a part of a group, making

friends, and adapting to others. During this period, the child begins to comprehend and experience the skills necessary for harmony and cooperation by interacting with both her/his peers and adults. Along with school, children begin to attach importance to tasks, and they attach great importance to friendships with the desire to belong to a group (Yavuzer, 2016). In this period, although the child's attention is on topics such as friends and school, when the child returns home, he or she needs the guidance of the family and the help of the family to cope with these new challenges (Freitag et al., 1996). On the other hand, studies of parental emotional capacity have been examined mostly in preschool years, but previous studies show that emotional abilities of the school-age child, who has started to gain more experience and who is in different environments, still develops (Camras et al., 1990; Larsen, To, and Fireman, 2007).

As a result, with the school, the child begins to experience the gains for the family that he/she has learned before in new experiences, in other environments, away from family. During this period, the child encounters many social figures, such as teachers and peers. In this period, it is thought that the child's ability to overcome these new difficulties and adapt to new roles is critical for the emotional orientation of the family. Considering the lack of literature, the present study was aimed to examine psychological resources affecting emotional attitudes of parents who have school-age children.

#### ***1.1.4. Possible Factors Affecting Parenting and Parental Emotion Regulation***

Research on parental behavior has increased in recent years due to the increase in domestic maltreatment and the effects of family attitudes on the development and well-being of the child. Previous research has shown that unsupportive parental behaviors may be caused by psychological, environmental, and cultural factors (Abidin, 1992). One of the areas Belsky (1984) examines to understand parenting in studies is the characteristics of parenting arguing that there are not many studies on the parent's psychological potential and personality. It has been focused on the parents' emotional, cognitive resources and personality to understand why parents develop different styles of parenting. It was suggested these internal resources of parents are the most important determinants of parenting. Studies on parental attitudes that harm the unsupportive child have found that the parent's own childhood experience and how they perceive it affect the personality of the parent, and therefore predict the parental behaviors (Belsky, 1984).

Regarding to the studies on emotional dimension of parenting, in a study related to personality and parenting, it was found that the parents who believe they can control their problems, feel secure in their relationships with others, and have advanced solution skills display a warm and accepting relationship with young children (Mondell, Tyler and Freeman, 1981). In another study conducted with adults with attention problems, it was found that the relationships with their children in the context of parenting experience difficulties in areas required for childcare, such as decision-making, time management and solution-oriented approach. Moreover, it has been found that parents who have this difficulty are less emotionally focused on their communication with their children (Johnston et al., 2012). In their study, Bakel and Reiksen-Walraven (2002) found that parents' ability to maintain their sense of self in the face of challenges and distress and to have a high intellectual level explain an important part of supportive parenting behaviors.

Studies have found that positive sense of self in adults, the dynamics of their own family relationships, as well as cultural, economic, and educational characteristics are important factors of understanding parental behaviors (Biringen, 1990; Crowell and Feldman, 1989). It has been found that the economic status of the family has a significant effect on the punishing and non-accepting dynamics that parents apply to their children. In this relationship, it was found that what the parent's attributions about their child and how they deal with stress have mediating effects (Pinderhughes et al., 2000). As mentioned above, it is stated that parents who can use effective ways to regulate their own emotions can guide their children to express their emotions by noticing and understanding their emotions and to cope with their children's strong emotions. In this sense, it is stated that parents' own emotion regulation skills and attitudes are associated with their psychological potentials (Gotmann et al., 1996).

There are many difficulties in the child-parent relationship, many exciting and challenging events such as the child's starting to walk, learning to eat by himself/herself, starting school. In this process, parents should have both emotional and cognitive skills in order to provide the necessary education for the achievement of children's skills and to provide them with the necessary support in their emotional difficulties. For instance, in this process, parents' problem-solving and self-regulation capacities and the ability to mentalize different perspectives enable them to overcome these changes more harmoniously (Crandall, Deactor-Deckard and Riley, 2015). For instance, a study was conducted focusing on the relationship between cognitive skills



and child-rearing behaviors in families where environmental conditions are unfavorable and parents are more likely to behave to their children negatively due to their economic and intellectual capacities. One group was given a training aimed at improving cognitive skills such as cognitive assessment, planning, awareness of their own thoughts and behaviors. As a result of the research, it was found that mothers who receive education were more supportive and less punitive in their attitudes towards their children compared to those who did not (Bugental and Schwartz, 2009). As a continuation of this research, it was found that parents who have skills such as keeping information in memory, recalling when necessary, and adapting to solutions in an appropriate way, cope better with the difficult emotions they encounter in parenting (Deater-Deckard et al., 2010). In the literature, along with cognitive flexibility, other different cognitive areas contribute to parenting. One of them is the mentalization skill that is needed to maintain parenthood both in the parent's own well-being and in relationship with child. Mentalization, which is a social cognitive construct, includes understanding one's own inner experiences and interpreting the minds of others as well. Many studies show that primary caregivers' awareness of these internal states is a necessary step for positive parenting behaviors (e.g., Ensink et al. 2016; Nijssens et al., 2018). For this reason, in this study, it is aimed to examine the role of mentalization, which is effective in the regulation of emotions in parents.

### ***1.2. Mentalization***

Mentalization includes being aware of one's own actions, attitudes, intentions, ideas and maintaining this awareness in others (Fonagy et al., 2016). Another expression of mentalization is thinking these intellectual experiences of others, paying attention to others and own inner life, being able to empathize and is also characterized ability of following own internal changes. However, this process expresses the individual's effort to understand oneself and others, rather than carrying fully certainty about mental situations. This effort requires a cognitive skill and is also experienced as a result of a tendency without being aware of it (Fonagy, 2006).

Mentalization also has been previously explained with the constructs of 'metacognition' and theory of mind (Fonagy et al., 1991). Metacognition, which was considered a significant construct in activating the cognitive processes required in interaction with others, was defined as thinking about thinking (Holmes, 2006). It includes the mental activity in the dimension of thought from the inner experiences of

the person and is seen as a close concept with mentalization. Another concept corresponding to similar skills, theory of mind, includes the experience of others' own emotions, motivations, and beliefs both as a living person and having an observing side (Allen et al., 2013). The concept of mentalization was also accepted as an interesting concept in understanding the impact of unexpected events in people's childhood experiences, understanding how mental states affect them and what the consequences may be in the coming years. In addition to this, previous literature discussed when mentalization experiences in infancy and childhood are important in the growth process and how to acquire this skill (Hagelquist, 2016).

The beginning of mentalization is gained through the dynamic of the relationship with the primary caregiver. Due to this ability, the child begins to know the world by mentalizing it. The reflective function skill is related to the caregiver's awareness of mental situations in the relationship with the child and the ability to mirror the inner experiences in contact with the child. For instance, by understanding child's hunger and discomfort, the child begins to understand what is happening in their inner world, through understanding, meeting, and the needs (Fonagy, 2018). The baby is born into an environment prepared by the caregiver. Baby needs the emotional, physical, and behavioral signals of the caregiver in order to recognize its surroundings, to make sense of complex signals and to cope with it (Klennert et al., 1983). Thus, the baby begins to know others, the world and self through the environment in which he/she was born. This mental skill, which begins to be acquired from this relationship, shapes one's perception of self, and helps to imagine and make sense of the intentions of others, which serve to maintain relationships in interaction with others (Fonagy and Luyten, 2018). Thus, children whose feelings, motives and hopes are reflected by their caregivers have the potential to understand the inner experiences of others (Bateman and Fonagy, 2008). Consequently, the quality of attachment between primary caregiver and infant is also important for the infant's mentalizing capacity. On the other hand, as the child's abilities change, so does how they handle and express mental states. For instance, as the children start talking, they start to interpret and verbalize about themselves and others' feelings (Fonagy et al., 1991). Considering the ongoing mentalization ability of all children, young and old, these social relations are considered vital, regardless of the period.

There are two prominent dimensions when examining the structuring of the mentalization dynamic (Fonagy et al., 2016). As mentioned before, when a newborn

baby is born, she/he has difficulty in distinguishing between her/his own inner experiences and the external stimuli around her/him. For this reason, infant is under the direct influence of the stimuli in the environment and uses the caregiver's emotional cues to cope with this process. This period is defined as the pre-reflective self. As the baby begins to grow, it begins to perceive the caregiver as a separate entity. With the capacity to distinguish between self and others, reflective self begins to form. Reflective self is to experience feelings, desires, and reactions by observing mind of self and others. While the reflective self has representations of actions and mental status of others and oneself, pre-reflective self represents a structure that is more reactive about events and does not develop a higher intellectual functioning (Fonagy, Moran and Target, 1993; Stern, 1985; Winnicott, 2012).

Developing mentalization skills contributes to one's own well-being and maintaining healthy relationships. However, if this skill does not develop or is disrupted for some reason, it manifests itself with significant problems. Disruptions in the mentalization process might cause many psychological problems (Fonagy et al., 2018). These disruptions are explained in two dimensions: hypo-mentalization and hyper-mentalization. Hypo-mentalization was described the deficiency to interpret the internal live of self and others and in other word the person also has difficulty in realizing abstract experiences. Hyper-mentalizing that has opposite tendency was described that one's inferences about emotional, cognitional dynamics are clearer and the person is precise in assessments about abstract events. This tendency also has kind of bias one's inferences and one believe too much one's own judgments about self and others without valid evidence. Also, these people have a strict stance in perceiving others and themselves. This stance can be intrusive, compelling, or destructive, as one gets stuck with certain assessments about the mind of the others (Fonagy et al., 2016).

Considering its relationship with psychological problems, it was stated that in individuals who are exposed to inadequate environment in the early childhood period, capacity of mentalization cannot develop and mentalization ability is suppressed, and this may have different effects on the following years, such as borderline personality disorder (Fonagy et al., 2018). In previous studies, it was also found that patients with unrealistic or very blurred inferences of abstract experiences were diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder and depression (Bateman and Fonagy, 2008; Hagelquist, 2017). In a comparative study conducted with patients diagnosed with depression, more impairment in ability to mentalize was observed in the diagnosis

group compared to the healthy group (Fischer-Kern et al., 2013). In the study conducted with people with borderline diagnosis, it was found that this skill developed as a result of educational interventions to improve their abilities about observing and predicting the lives of others and their own lives (Bateman and Fonagy, 2010). In addition, mentalization has been associated with many other pathologies, and it has been found that people who were diagnosed with anorexia nervosa had trouble estimating others and their own inner experiences (Fonagy et al., 1996). Furthermore, in a study conducted with mothers, it was found that mothers with eating problems had difficulties in this mentalization and had difficulty in controlling their eating problems (Ward, Turnbull and Steele, 2001). In another study, it was found that people with a diagnosis of substance addiction have low mentalization skills and weak emotional control (Suchman et al., 2010). Most studies have described the effect of mental ability in diagnosed groups, so this skill has emerged as an important function for psychological health.

It has been operationalized with the concept of reflective functioning in order to examine mentalization in the literature and studies and to study its importance in psychological disorders. Previous studies showed that this skill is used to resolve many emotional, relational conflicts (Bateman and Fonagy, 2006; Fonagy et al., 1998; Fonagy et al., 2016). For instance, it is a mechanism used to reduce the effect of anger-provoking situations and thus, it lessens the damage which the event provoking anger causes. Besides, this mechanism has the function of ensuring that one's own strength of ego is less damaged in contact with others. For instance, in an event where the person has to feel guilty and take responsibility, one tries to cope with the difficult feeling by somehow stopping the mentalization, ignoring what others might be feeling and thinking in order to protect himself from dealing with this feeling. In a different way, a person can calm one's anxiety about the situation by attributing the other's negative mood to different issues rather than own behaviors or attitudes (Brown, 2008). As a result, mentalization has been accepted as a capacity that shapes behaviors, attitudes, and relationships in daily life. For this reason, psychotherapy processes focus on this skill in a clinical sense, by encouraging the person to focus to inner experiences both oneself and others. Situations such as realizing that distorted perceptions and assumptions are being analyzed on through therapeutic relationship in the therapy sessions occur with the activation of the mentalization process (Allen et al., 2013).

As mentioned before, this reflective capacity includes not seeing others as an extension. Due to this skill, the person is aware that others have a separate life from herself/himself. This process is a dynamic that is experienced both within the person and reveals itself in the quality of the relationship with others (Fonagy et al., 2002). A person who has knowledge of the difference of others interprets the reactions of others from a more distant place, regulates her/his behavior towards others from a more realistic perspective, thus, relationships with less problematic are experienced (Allen, Bleiberg and Haslam-Hopwood, 2003). In close relationships, in contexts such as friendship, spousal relationship, parent-child relationship, a lot of emotional arousals occur. In these cases, the person may have difficulty in realizing the inner experiences because he/she has difficulty in maintaining the cognitive activity. Therefore, the person can act with more intense emotions and experience more reactive events in a more distorted way (Bateman and Fonagy, 2007). For this reason, it was recommended to focus on mentalization skills in order to experience less conflicts and maintain them in a healthy way in these close relationships (Hagelquist, 2016). The effects of this skill in the family environment are revealed in the interaction with the child. For instance, a parent's lack of curiosity or misinterpretation of the child's mind undermines this interaction. In this situation, mental experiences such as the child's thoughts and intentions are misinterpreted or not reflected. For this reason, the child has difficulty in acquiring this skill, and other developmental problems are experienced. As a process that affects the child's skills, this dynamic has also been associated with some difficulties experienced by the parent. Previous literature showed that growing up in disruptive environmental conditions and encountering unexpected events negatively affect the parental mentalization process (Howieson and Priddis, 2011). As a result, the reflective role of the family members is a factor that needs to be observed both for parent's own dynamics and for the quality of the relationship with the child.

### ***1.2.1. Mentalization and Parenting***

Parental reflective functioning is a concept used to examine the quality of understanding of parents' state of mind about their children in the context of parenting. It means recognizing the child's inner experiences by understanding and controlling the parent's own internal processes. Due to this understanding, the parent is able to comprehend that the child has inner life which includes intentions, emotions, and

opinions (Slade, 2005). In this way, the parent recognizes the child's reactions better, tries to regulate their own behavior accordingly and takes appropriate steps for parenthood. In addition, since the parent understands the needs of the child more clearly, environmental conditions with this awareness is arranged (Fonagy et al., 2005; Ordway et al., 2015).

The reflective parent tries to recognize, understand, and reflect what is happening in the child's inner world (Slade, 2005; Ordway et al., 2015). For instance, in the early period, the primary caregiver reflects the baby's inner world by mirroring her baby's facial expression, reactions and troubles (Fonagy et al., 2006). Also, parent with the capacity for reflective tries to find the underlying motives instead of immediately quelling the child's crying or anger. However, in the opposite situation, the difficulties of the parents to notice the child's reactions and to make correct predictions is described as pre-mentalizing (Luyten et al., 2017). It was also defined as having obscurity about the child's experiences and not being able to make valid assumptions about inner life (Fonagy et al., 2010; Luyten et al., 2017). In other words, parent has difficulty in predicting the reasons of behind of their child's emotions, responses and has the inability to recognize the child's personal life. For instance, in this mental state, parent may view the child's rage as a wrong behavior that needs to be stopped rather than as a response to failure.

Previous studies have shown that parents' own attachment characteristics affect these mentalization capacities. In a study that observed the relationship between the attachment styles of mothers with their own caregivers and their mentalization skills, it was found that mothers who developed a secure relationship performed better reflective roles towards their children compared to the group with the insecure style (Slade et al., 2005). Another study showed that mothers reporting a disorganized style in their relationship with their mothers had more problems in understanding and intellectualizing others life than mothers reporting insecure relationships (Pazzagli et al., 2018). These results in the literature show that the basis of mental development begins at early age and continues in many relationships in the following years.

Mentalization in parents contributes to the sensitivity required to fulfill the responsibilities for care of infant, and role of this ability also continues to be effective in the guidance and counseling tasks required for the parents in the future (Camoirano, 2017). Similarly, results revealed that the process of mentalization predicts parenting behaviors in early ages and childhood. It was observed that parents who talk more

about their babies' emotions and needs are more reflective in their interactions with their babies (Rosenblum et al., 2008). It has been emphasized that the mother's recognizing her baby's demands and responding quickly is associated with positive parenting characteristics (Ensink et al., 2016; Steele and Steele, 2008). In another study, it was investigated that parents' sensitivity to internal experiences was associated with responsive parent behaviors, and it also supported the harmony of the relationship between spouses (Jessee et al., 2018; Suchman et al. 2010).

Previous studies show that mentalization is effective in parental behaviors, and this relationship also seems to be important in child outcomes. In an environment where caregivers are responsive to needs, the child will feel that a positive bond occurs in these interactions. Because, if the caregiver is attentive to the child's troubles or any reactions and responds appropriately, the child will have the illusion that this reliable feeling is realized within self, not from the outside. Due to this interaction, both the quality of attachment is supported for the baby and the process of understanding the world of others begins to occur. Thus, it is seen that self-regulation skills of the babies whose needs are met and whose internal states are reflected will be supported (Senehi, Brophy-Herb and Vallotton, 2018). In studies, it was found that the reflective role of mothers is effective in the development of the mentalization skill in the child, and the mother's mentalization to be dysfunctional is associated with problems such as oppositional problems, depression, and anxiety disorders in childhood (Esbjörn et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2000; Rosso et al., 2015). Also, in a thesis study conducted in Turkey, it has been found that the mental ability of the parents towards their children is related to the use of more emotional expressions in the verbal expressions of the children (Ünal, 2019). In another study, it was found that parents' difficulties in this ability were also related to the behavioral problems seen in their sons (Dejko-Wanczyk et al., 2020).

It was suggested that people who have higher involvement of mental life has better coping skills towards to compelling affects (Fonagy et al., 1991; Gross, 2002). Considered from the context of parenting, when parents with mentalization problem experience emotional arousal, they react by overreacting or inactivating to the event. Also, the parent with such an inner preoccupation has difficulty meeting the child's needs (Slade, 2005). It is known that caregivers who have difficulty in predicting their own inner lives have difficulties in regulating their own emotions in addition to the emotions of their children (Rutherford et al., 2013). Therefore, it was seen that the

mentalizing capacity in parenting can also affect the sensitivity of the parents to the emotional needs of the child in terms of predicting positive parenting behaviors of the parents.

#### ***1.2.1.1. Mentalization and Parental Emotion Regulation***

In times of crisis, emotions are experienced intensely, and in this process, the person has difficulty maintaining their cognitive skills. With internal triggering, the person seeks faster solutions, and in this case the relevant awareness of the mental life of others can be impaired. For this reason, the mentalization skill has a critical importance in the form of the reaction that emerges as a result of the emotional event. On the other hand, because the person does not try to understand others or makes incorrect references, difficulties are experienced in emotional regulation and relational problems arise (Allen, Fonagy and Bateman, 2013; Ordway et al., 2015).

Fonagy and colleagues (2002) described the capacity to modify one's emotions because of self-observation as *mentalized affect*. The concept of mentalization affect includes the identification, adjustment, and verbalization of emotions (Allen, Fonagy and Bateman, 2013). The first stage involves the individual's ability to distinguish different emotions and to name them. The person tries to understand the emotional experience by naming diverse feelings. The second stage is the regulation of emotions, which means that the duration and intensity of the emotional experience is modified by the person. At the end of this process, the person can express their feelings or choose not to express them externally. Thus, the person creates a mental symbol by understanding, processing, and expressing (Fonagy et al., 2002).

Previous studies showed that the parent's sensitivity to inner experiences is related to how they handle emotions in the relationship with their child. A parent who does not have such sensitivity will not receive emotional signals from their child and cannot initiate the necessary emotional communication (Fonagy and Target, 1997; Slade et al., 2007). In this mental state, parents sometimes interpret their children's emotions as behaviors that occur in direct reaction to them. For instance, when the parent perceives that the child is crying to make him/her angry, parental behaviors would be more reactive and they would be able to regulate neither their own emotions nor the child's emotions. On the other hand, high-functioning parents use the child's emotional and behavioral responses as a tool to understand their child's inner world rather than dividing the child's behavior into good or bad. Instead of immediately labeling or



intervening in children's coercive behaviors, they try to recognize and appease the child's emotional needs. Thus, it was suggested that if parents view emotional processes as a natural internal experience, they will be more successful in tolerating the challenging emotions they encounter (Fonagy et al., 2002; Slade, 2005). In previous study, it was examined the relationship between the parent's reflective function and the parent's tolerance for infant's challenging emotions. After the information about reflective functioning received from the mothers, they were asked to soothe the crying baby simulator. Results showed that mothers who are interested and curious about the mind of their children cope better with distressing emotion (Rutherford et al., 2013). Consequently, it was expected that parents with mentalization skill would be more emotionally sensitive and expressive towards their children (Möller et al., 2017).

In a study conducted with parents of children with ADHD, the effect of parents' discipline strategy in the relationship between parents' ability of mentalize and emotional management skills was examined. It has been found that the reactions of parents who have difficulty in organizing their behaviors as a result of emotional arousal to their children are harsher and more punitive. Another result showed that mentalization skill has been found to have a protective effect against the parent's harsh, unsupportive behavior towards the child in parents who have difficulty in understanding the child's intense emotions. In conclusion, the study emphasized the importance of cognitive and emotional aspects in parental negative discipline strategy (Gershby and Gray, 2018). In the study conducted with mothers in the two years after the birth of their babies, the relationship between their emotional regulation schemes and their capacity to mentalize was examined. It has been observed that having difficulty in managing the effect of the emotional outcome after the event in mothers is also associated with difficulty in mentalization. For instance, it has been found that mothers who use strategies such as ignoring and underestimating the importance of the event while dealing with their emotions have difficulty in understanding their baby's inner life. The mother's emotional skills are associated with interest and awareness of mental states (Schultheis, Mayes and Rutherford, 2019). Rutherford et al. (2015) also suggested that the emotional capacity of parents is related to cognitive abilities other than mentalization. For instance, a person who is faced with a stressful situation has difficulty in improving his/her emotions and has difficulty in bringing new solutions to the event cognitively (Ensink, 2017). Therefore, the emotionally aroused parent

needs to have skills such as being flexible cognitively in order to regulate their reactions within adaptive parental boundaries.

### ***1.3. Cognitive Flexibility***

Cognitive flexibility refers striving to find a solution when faced with a problem, being able to think of different alternatives and being willing to apply them. At the same time, it expresses the ability of producing solution options against both the problems and changing life conditions (Martin and Anderson, 1998). In other words, it includes being open to different perspectives, learning different information and being motivated to use them in problem situations. Thus, the person will react more adaptively to challenging and unexpected events (Folke et al., 2010). Cognitive behavioral therapy practice focuses on the cognitive flexibility of individuals within sessions. As a treatment goal, it is aimed to bring different perspectives to thoughts and make them more flexible with alternative thoughts that are more appropriate. Moreover, the important thing here is to be aware of different alternatives and not to have a rigid way of thinking, rather than to find a single correct option (Dennis and Vander Wal, 2010; Martin and Anderson, 1998).

This cognitive capacity is a part of executive functions such as planning and decision making that occur in the prefrontal lobe of the brain (Rende, 2000). The first stage of this concept involves remembering the acquired information from memory and the second part is the ability to use this information in different situations and times. This process, which was described as the information processing, depends on learning vital practices that enables to adapt for unexpected events (Canas et al., 2013).

Dennis and Vander Wal (2010) examined the concept of cognitive flexibility and, because of their studies, they defined two different extents which are alternatives and control. The dimension of alternatives involves the individual being aware of different options and refers to the ability to maintain this skill even in challenging situations. Having alternative options and realizing them means that cognitive flexibility is high. The control sub-dimension refers that the person feels self-confident for finding a solution in the face of events, that is, she/he have a feeling of control.

The characteristic of cognitions is the basis of personality traits, relationship style, goals, desires in life (Bandura, 1986). Ellis (1998) suggests that people's thoughts about events affect their emotions and behaviors, and that they react to events through their thoughts. Furthermore, the fact that people have unrealistic cognitions

affects their emotional state negatively. Therefore, individuals' high cognitive flexibility skills affect their emotional states positively. Beck (1967) also suggested that psychological disorders are rooted in dysfunctional thoughts and that these affect behaviors and believes that if a person's thinking structure is far from flexibility, schemas which are include cognitions, automatic thoughts, and basic beliefs will also be incapable of change.

We encounter two vital phases when maintaining goal-oriented behaviors. The first is that the person can keep his / her focus on external processes despite the changing conditions and events and the other one is the capacity to shift previously known behavioral or cognitive patterns (Dresbach and Goschke, 2004). Accordingly, people with high cognitive flexibility are able to focus on changing of life and adjust quickly, produce solutions, and organize their life according to their needs. In cases where this skill is weak, people have difficulty in changing their solution methods and thinking structures. It is observed resistance to some kind of change. This problem is defined as cognitive rigidity in the literature (Jonassen and Granowski, 1993). Also, cognitive flexibility and creativity concepts are considered together, and it was discussed as a part of creativity. It was emphasized that spontaneity and creativity should be together in order to be aware of different perspectives. A creative person realizes the lack of knowledge, develops different hypotheses, tests, and applies them appropriately (Torrance, 1995). In addition, to be able to adjust the appropriate reactions to the situations, the person must first determine the problem and then should not choose the dysfunctional behaviors and be willing to try different ways (Martin and Anderson, 1998; Erdener, 2003).

Previous studies have found that being open to different alternative thoughts and solutions supports a healthier relationship and communication with others (Martin and Anderson, 1998). It has been found that people who are not cognitively rigid are more sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of others, develop more positive relationships, and have a better level of resilience in the face of unexpected life events (Canas et al., 2003; Koesten, Schrodt and Ford, 2009; Martin and Anderson, 1998). In this direction, these people can change their perspectives by using their own personal resources against the difficulties of life, and they can balance their desires, needs and daily life demands. Therefore, it has been suggested that cognitive flexibility is necessary for psychological well-being and social skills (Kashdan and Rottenberg, 2010). Besides, cognitive flexibility encourages emotional and behavioral flexibility

in the process of adapting to differences (Çelikkaleli, 2014). When considered in the context of parenting, many pleasant or unpleasant changes are experienced, such as divorce, family member leaving home, birth of a sibling, change of caregiver. In these situations, the person's ability to maintain flexibility will positively affect the dynamics in family relationships.

### ***1.3.1. Cognitive Flexibility, Parenting and Parental Emotion Regulation***

Parenting behaviors are influenced by the parent's own family history, the quality of their relationships, their wishes, cognitions, the way they handle problems, and the characteristics of the environment in which they grew up. These characteristics primarily affect the internal dynamics of the individual and then shape the parenting characteristics positively or negatively (Abidin, 1992).

There are many studies examining the relationship between cognitions and emotions in social interaction. One of the important social interaction is the parent-child relationship. Parents' behaviors are influenced by their thoughts about themselves, others, and the world. According to the cognitive behavioral model of parenting, quality of cognitions play an important role in parenthood (Bugental and Schwartz, 2009). Milner (2003) suggested that there are some cognitive factors underlying destructive parental behaviors that are not supportive of the child. These factors were identified as the perception of child-rearing, the ability to understand the perspectives of others, the sense of control over life events, and the dynamics of the relationship with primary caregivers. The parent's unawareness of the connection between their own emotions and behaviors causes them to lose the perception of control over the relationship with their child. In this case, parents have feelings such as burnout, disappointment, and helplessness. Therefore, the fact that the parent's perception and beliefs about child-rearing practices are biased and unrealistic cognitions cause to treat the child in a non-adaptive way.

In parent-child relationship, where many compelling emotions are experienced, it was suggested that the solution-oriented approaches of the parents affect their care quality and contributes to a more positive family structure. It is important for parents to have a good level of problem-solving capacity in the child-rearing process and to be aware of their own emotions in terms of managing their reactions to the child. Due to the problem-solving skill, which is a concept similar to cognitive flexibility, parents evaluate the pros and cons of the solutions and try to implement the best option for

their children. It was also investigated in the literature that parents who experience failure in the problem-solving process have more punitive, malignant behaviors towards their children, and exhibit maladaptive parental behaviors compared to those who do not (Azar, 1999; Hanson and Conaway, 1989). Moreover, skills such as planning, decision making, and solution generation seem to be important for parenting behaviors, because disruptions in these areas have been found to be associated with negative parenting attitudes. Along with these skills, executive factors such as considering the emotions of others, adjusting their emotions, cognitive flexibility, and postponing their wishes seem to be important for a positive parent-child relationship (Gonzalez et al., 2012).

It was suggested that people should improve their cognitive skills in order to have a healthier life socially and mentally (Alloy and Riskind, 2006). Dennis and Vander Wal (2010) were suggested that improving cognitive flexibility is functional in reducing of unpleasant emotions. Walsh (2003) suggested that families should be flexible for family resilience and functionality. Cognitive flexibility in the family environment ensures that rules are set, and boundaries are protected against unexpected events and challenging situations. However, it was recommended to be neither too flexible nor too strict, since excessive flexibility or inflexibility in the family can lead to dysfunction in the family, the uncertainty of the rules or nonadaptive parental coping skills (Olson and Gorall, 2003). In parallel, studies conducted in the context of the family have found that people with high cognitive flexibility are also more careful and sensitive in parental roles. On the contrary, it was found that parents who are not sufficiently flexible have punitive and negative attitudes towards their children. In another study, it was seen that flexibility also affects the quality of communication in primary caregiver-child interactions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Additionally, flexibility has been found to be important not only in the relationship with the child but also in marital adjustment. The challenging emotions are more experienced in families whose children have developmental problems such as autism. In a study conducted with families who have children with autism, it was found that marital harmony and cognitive flexibility were related (Shahabi, Shahabi and Foroozandeh, 2020).

Previous studies showed an association between maternal flexibility and child outcomes. In a study conducted with the mother-child dyads, the relationship between the cognitive flexibility of the mother and the child's cognitive flexibility was

investigated, and the mediating role of the mother's behaviours towards the child in this relationship was examined. The solution-oriented approach of mothers was also found to be an important variable in the acquisition of this skill in their children. It was observed that the supportive attitude of the mother played a mediating role in this relationship. The quality of the bond and relationship between mother and child is important in the cognitive characteristics transferred from mother to child. Besides, it was estimated that mothers' ability to cope with stressful situations and to provide an appropriate environment for their children will positively affect the quality of attachment (Curran and Anderson, 2017).

The cognitive control is a concept used together with cognitive flexibility and includes skills such as producing solutions, making decisions, and adapting to changes (Dajani and Uddin, 2015; Ionescu, 2012; Rolls, 2000). It has been reported that these skills are important in emotion regulation (Gotlib and Joormann, 2010). Furthermore, it has been suggested that it is important to improve flexibility and cognitive control in depressed patients who are associated with difficulties in emotion regulation (Murphy et al., 2012). While negative emotional arousal provides motivation for the person to find adaptive solutions, prolonged arousal sometimes causes disruptions in the cognitive abilities (Okon-Singer et al., 2015). Since the person is faced with a stressful event, he/she will need to produce solutions to control emotional state. When this does not happen, there will be a cognitive disruption. Therefore, such a disruption will lead to non-functional solutions such as rumination in order to manage emotions. For this reason, it is concluded that cognitive flexibility is an effective tool in emotion regulation (Joormann et al., 2007).

Self-regulation, a concept like emotion regulation, which includes the ability to regulate one's own inner experiences, is also affected by cognitive flexibility (Gotlib and Joormann, 2010). It was found that people who have the capacity to evaluate options in difficult situations can soothe themselves better when faced with compelling emotions and tend to create a positive family environment. In addition, perspective taking, which is a similar concept to mentalization, enables the parent to behave more understanding by providing a more realistic interpretation of the child's behavior in the parent-child relationship. Because it is known that people with flexibility have higher tolerance to stressful situations (Martin and Anderson, 1998). On the other hand, it has been found that individuals with cognitive rigidity have low ability to find solutions to changing conditions, use more dysfunctional emotion

regulation styles, and consequently are more reactive to conflicts (Dennis and Vander Wal, 2010; Koesten, Schrod, and Ford, 2009; Martin et al., 1995). Therefore, cognitive flexibility, which has an important effect on family function, it will enable people to be curious about others' minds and themselves, to display a more distant stance to events and to protect their cognitive skills from being damaged.

### ***1.3.2. Cognitive Flexibility and Mentalization***

It has been found that thinking about the inner life of other people, being able to empathize and trying to understand are related to the ability to apply solution methods cognitively (Stein et al., 2000). Although Freud did not mention the reflective function in detail in his theory, he emphasized that it is important to follow one's own mental state to be able to recognize and regulate one's impulses (Allen, Fonagy and Bateman, 2013; Pribram and Gill, 1976). Also, as the definition of cognitive flexibility, the awareness of one's thoughts and the effort to examine these thoughts can be related to mentalization. Because in this state, the person identifies thoughts, tries to understand, and find to alternative ways by considering the reactions and feelings of others (Beck et al., 1979).

The ability of a person to modify ones' own cognitions in different situations is also associated with the ability to understand one's own internal processes. People who have a curiosity about their own internal processes will be willing to be more flexible. It has also been found that these people are more satisfied with their interpersonal relationships and tend to try different ways of communication (Lippeard and Justice, 1989). These people thus realize their intrinsic motivations for change and display harmonious behaviors (McCroskey and McCroskey, 1988). Similarly, Norton (1994) suggests that people with reflective functions are eager for a solution when faced with a problem, take decisions, and take actions that can be implemented, and re-evaluate the results. Finally, reflective functionality capacity includes being creative in order to produce new ideas and foreseeing the results related to solutions. Thus, Norton (1994) emphasized the importance of reflective functionality in the skills required for cognitive flexibility. In other words, for cognitive flexibility, a person must be able to develop a perspective on the thoughts that pass through his/her mind. It was suggested that this is also related to mentalization capacity.

In the literature, it was seen that the mother's sensitivity towards her child is related to some executive functions. Executive functions include some cognitive skills,

such as working memory, decision making, planning, cognitive flexibility, and emotional regulation (Pennington and Ozonoff, 1996). The capacity of parents in these areas was associated with more supportive and flexible parenting behaviors (Galinsky, 2010), better meeting the emotional needs of children (Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant and Reiser, 2007), and more adaptive parenting behaviors (Gonzalez et al., 2012). The fact that mothers also have low skills in these areas was associated with less emotional sensitivity and more difficult coping with stressful situations (Skowron and Friedlander, 1998). Therefore, it can be concluded that these skills are important areas for sensitive and responsive parenting. Moreover, mentalization were found to be positively associated with affect regulation and flexibility (Suchman et al., 2006). Another study was conducted with mothers diagnosed with substance abuse to examine relationship between executive functions and reflective functioning. It was found that reflective functioning capacities of mothers measured by Parental Parent Development Interview-Revised were associated with cognitive flexibility, working memory, inhibition, and planning (Håkansson et al., 2017). It was also suggested that mother's tolerance to negative emotions and affect regulation is a concept related to being flexible and reflective functioning in the literature (Fonagy, Gergely and Jurist, 2004). As a result, it has been emphasized by many studies that mentalization and cognitive flexibility skills are related with parenting.

#### ***1.4. Aim of the Present Study***

Studies have emphasized that emotion regulation is important in every period of life from early infancy to adulthood and it affects our behaviors and attitudes not only individually but also our interpersonal relationships in different contexts (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996; Gross and John, 2001; Shapiro et al., 1995). In family system, it was suggested that how parents cope with negative emotions contributes to family's emotional climate, child's emotion regulation, emotional communication, and parenting practices. Besides, it was also recommended that it is important to work with parents' emotions because parents guide to emotional development of their children (Thompson and Meyer, 2007). Also, many studies in the literature showed that parental behaviors, attitudes, and intentions are the determining factors for the development of children in many areas (e.g., Abidin, 2010; Dunsmore et al., 2013; Han et al., 2016). Thus, it was suggested that parents should provide their own psychological integrity for adaptive parenting, because inner discomfort of



parents leads to focus their own problems instead of child's needs (Zahn-Waxler et al., 2002). Therefore, this study shifts the focus to investigate parental factors.

Being aware of emotions, recognizing emotions and understanding of their relationship with behaviors in both parents and non-parents is related to the cognitive dynamics (Rutherford et al., 2015; Simons and Gaher, 2005). Mentalization which is a social cognitive construct has also been associated with emotional intelligence, which includes the capacity to understand, sense and manage one's and others' emotions (Fonagy, 2006). The quality of capacity to mentalize differs according to interpersonal relationships and the severity of emotional arousal. If emotional arousal is high, the person may show less controlled mentalization. In other words, they may have difficulty in emotion regulation and be more reactive to emotional stimuli. Besides, when people understand themselves and others, they will be able to better manage their emotions and establish healthier relationships (Oestergaard and Hagelquist, 2017). The literature showed that the valid attributions of the parents to the internal state of own and others are associated with parental responsiveness to the child emotional signals (e.g., Rutherford et al., 2013; Turner, Wittkowski and Hare, 2008). The correlational study was conducted investigating the relationships between the ability to mentalize of mothers, executive functions, and understanding the child's reactions. The positive correlation was found between the mentalization capacity of mothers and their understanding of their infant's emotional reactions. Here, the importance of mentalization is emphasized in the mother's interpretation of child signals and providing appropriate parenting (Turner, Wittkowski and Hare, 2008). Also, there are other components that will affect emotional understanding. The person who has difficulties in cognitive flexibility has difficulty in re-evaluating emotional events and has difficulty in regulation by giving more reactive and automatic responses and may cause negative results (Siemer and Reisenzein, 2007). For this reason, the role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship of hyper mentalization and hypo mentalization level with emotion regulation has been focused on the present study.

In the literature, while there are many studies on the practical aspect of parenting, there not enough studies on mentalization and emotion regulation (Gershy and Gray, 2018; Rutherford et al., 2015). However, previous studies on emotional dynamics have been mostly investigated with mothers, and studies with fathers are less common. Because of that, the literature indicated that there is a need for studies on mentalization and reflective functioning in fathers (Shulthes, Mayes and Rutherford,

2019). It was mostly conducted parental dynamics with preschool children; therefore, the study was conducted with parents who have children between the ages of 8-11. Because as children grow, their mental capacities and emotional needs change and begin to become more complicated for the understanding of the parent (Pazzagli et al., 2019). For this reason, this study was planned to be conducted with parents with older children.

Considering the above-mentioned theoretical knowledge and research, the current study hypothesized that cognitive flexibility may have a mediating role in the relationship between emotion regulation and mentalization in parents. It has been proposed that parents who can predict the feelings, thoughts, attitudes and desires of others and themselves will better cope with the compelling emotions that arise in their relations with their children. Besides, parents' flexibility capacity may also be necessary for response to their own and child's emotion regulation. It was hypothesized that parents who can use their mentalization capacity in this relationship will better struggle with emotional dynamics with their children by being aware of and evaluating different alternatives.

For this reason, the hypotheses of the research consist of the following.

### ***1.5. Hypothesis***

1. Mentalization would be positively associated with parental emotion regulation.
2. Cognitive flexibility would be positively associated with parental emotion regulation.
3. Cognitive flexibility would mediate the relationship between mentalization and emotion regulation among parents.

## **CHAPTER 2: METHOD**

### ***2.1. Participants***

The sample of the study consists of mothers and fathers. Not to violate the assumption of independency, participants were mothers and fathers from different families included in the sample. As the inclusion criteria, it was expected that parents have a child between the ages of 8 and 11. Participants with more than one child between the ages of 8 to 11 were informed to fill out the form considering only their one child. Exclusion criteria was indicated as having no psychiatric diagnosis of both parents and children. In the previous studies, it was found that reflective functioning, emotion regulation and flexibility can change during the psychotherapy process (Berking et al., 2008; Brandon et al., 2021; Karlsson and Kermott, 2006). Thus, those who received therapy during the parenting period were excluded from the study.

In the beginning of the current study, it consisted of 232 parents. In the later stages of the study because of exclusion criteria as mentioned above, 58 of the participants who did not meet the criteria and they were removed from the data. Eventually, the convenience sample includes 174 parents and the distribution of sample is 105 mothers (60.3%) and 69 (39.7%) fathers. Average age of the children of the participants was 9.57 ( $SD = 1.09$ ) and 46% ( $n = 80$ ) of the children were girls and 54% were boys. ( $n = 94$ ).

### ***2.2. Instruments***

The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ), Parent Emotion Regulation Scale (PERS), and The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI) were used in the study. In this section, these instruments and demographic information form was given in detail.

#### ***2.2.1. Demographic Information Form***

The Demographic Information Form was developed in accordance with the purpose of the research in order to provide data about parents' and their children's demographic background. The form contains questions such as, children's age, gender, birth order, any diagnosis and parent's family structure, education, economic state, any diagnosis (see Appendix D).

### **2.2.2. The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ)**

The potential to mentalize was evaluated by Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ) which was created by Fonagy et al. (2016) to assess one's skill to estimate about inner life of one's own and other's. It is a self-report scale comprising of 54 items scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 corresponding being disagreed in a strongly way and 7 corresponding being agreed in a strongly way. This scale measures two separate features which are hypermentalization (RFQ\_C/Certainty) and hypomentalization (RFQ\_U/Uncertainty). In the beginning of the scale's development, high scores for both factors corresponded to highly reflective functioning capacity, while moderate scores for both two subscales corresponded to moderate reflective functioning. Since this scoring failed in the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results, recoding was performed. While determining the scores, the scale items were scored differently as 3, 2, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0 to to detect high agreements in scoring. Hypermentalizing refers to the clarity of ideas in other people's lives, such as thoughts, feelings, and intentions. The high level of approval given to such statements indicates that people are very confident in their assumptions about inner experiences. On the other hand, hypomentalizing represent that unclear of perception about mental experiences includes the inability to predict these experiences. Responses to such items are re-coded as 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 2, 3 in order to determine the high scores given to this sub-dimension. Finally, getting a high score from the scale for both dimensions indicate deterioration in reflective functioning and getting a low score from the scale showed an acceptance of the opaqueness of one's own inner lives and those of others.

Statistical analyzes regarding the characteristics of the scale were carried out in three different steps. In the first study, it was carried out with a group of patients with Borderline Personality Disorder, Eating Disorder and control group. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in order to test construct validity of the scale by developers. The results of the analysis suggested a two-factor structure has good fit of the model of the data;  $\chi^2 / df = 1.82$ ;  $RMSEA = 0,05$  ( $CI = 0,03-0,06$ );  $CFI = 0.92$ ,  $NNFI = 0.90$  and that was invariant across the research and control groups. Internal consistency for hypomentalizing was .77 and .63 for the research group and the control group, respectively. Internal consistency scores in hypermentalizing were found to be .65 for research group and .67 for control group. When the first measurement and final measurement results are compared within a 3-week time frame,

the reliability analysis showed that that it has excellent temporal stability, for RFQ\_U;  $r_s = .84, p_s < .001$  and for RFQ\_C;  $r_s = .75, p_s < .001$ . It also was found that variables such as age, gender were not found to differ significantly in any dimension. Results showed that the RFQ\_C ( $t = -0.209, p < .04$ ) and RFQ\_U ( $t = 8.99, p < .001$ ) the scores of the diagnosed group and the control group from the sub-dimensions differed significantly from each other. Considering the relationship with the relevant structures; it was found RFQ\_U was positively correlated with borderline features, depression symptoms and impulsivity for all samples. Also, there was positive relationship with RFQ\_C and empathy ( $r = 0.30, p < .01$ ), mindfulness ( $r = 0.34, p < .01$ ) and RFQ\_U is negatively correlated with mindfulness ( $r = -0.33, p < .01$ ) and perspective taking ( $r = -0.18, p < .05$ ). The second study was designed to re-investigate at the factor structure and to compare the normal group with the personality disorder group. According to the confirmatory factor analysis results, the scale is best fit to the data;  $\chi^2/df = 1.59$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.04$  ( $CI = 0.03-0.05$ );  $CFI = 0.95$ ,  $NNFI = 0.92$ . Cronbach's alpha for RFQ\_C were .77/.78 and for RFQ\_U were .77/.54, respectively. RFQ\_C and RFQ\_U also showed different scores between patient and normal group ( $t = 5.98, p < .001$ , and  $t = -14.61, p < .001$ , respectively). The RFQ\_U has been associated with some of the clinical symptoms experienced by the patient group such as; self-harm ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), psychological impairment ( $r = -.36, p < .01$ ), well-being ( $r = -.41, p < .01$ ). The RFQ\_C was negatively correlated with trait anger ( $r = .36, p < .01$ ) and positively correlated with anger control ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ). In Study 3, which was conducted with mothers and their infants, the relationship between RFQ with parental reflective functioning questionnaire (PRFQ) and attachment was examined to support convergent validity. The significant relationships were found between RFQ and some dimensions of PRFQ, such as; RFQ\_C was negatively correlated with Prementalizing sub-dimension ( $r = -.29, p < .04$ ) of PRFQ and RFQ\_U was negative correlated with the Certainty of PRFQ ( $r = -.26, p < .04$ ). Also, it was found that RFQ\_C predicted infant attachment security ( $OR = 1.30, p < .05$ ).

The psychometric characteristics of the scale were provided from previous theses in which the RFQ was used in Turkey. The validity and reliability informations were obtained from these theses. Köksal's study (2017) indicated that there was significant positive relation between Uncertainty and Somatization,  $r = .189, p < .001$ . Also, positive correlation was found between Uncertainty and Attachment Avoidance,

$r = .246, p < .001$  and Attachment Anxiety,  $r = .261, p < .001$ . Certainty was found to be significant negative correlated with Uncertainty,  $r = -.493, p < .001$  as expected. The Cronbach's alpha was found for hypermentalization subscale was .90, and for hypomentalization subscale was .81. In the other study in which the scale was used, the result of Kızılkaya's study (2018) indicated that Cronbach's alpha for hypermentalization subscale was .90, and for hypomentalization subscale was .87.

### **2.2.3. Parent Emotion Regulation Scale (PERS)**

Parent Emotion Regulation Scale was developed by Pereira et al. (2017) to assess parents' regulation skills of negative emotion in interaction with children. The scale was administered to the parents of 3-15 year-old children and includes 20 questions, answered by self-report. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale from 0 (always) to 4 (never). It showed four sub-dimension in development of the PERS; orientation to child's emotions, avoidance of the child's emotions, emotional lack of control and acceptance of the child's and parent's emotions. There is no reverse scored question in the scale and high scores for each sub-dimension indicate the high level in that factors. To investigate the construct validity, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The results showed that, the four-factor represent an adequate model fit compared to other factorial models ( $\chi^2 = 248.26, p = .000, CFI = .91, TLI = .90, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .04, 90\% CI = [0.03, 0.05]$ ). In addition, as a result of the analyzes performed, it was found that the sub-dimensions did not differ according to the gender of the children. The construct validity was explored by examining relationships between PERS and The Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES). The significant correlations were found between many dimensions of PERS's subscales and CCNES which asses the parents' reactions to the child's negative emotions. The correlations in some subscales are as follows; significant negative correlation was found between distress reactions and orientation child's emotion,  $r = -.15, p < .005$ . Further, avoidance of the child's emotion was found to be positive correlated with emotion focused reactions,  $r = .22, p < .005$ . Cronbach's alpha of the sub-dimensions were .79 for the orientation of the parent's feelings towards the child's emotions, .73 for the parent's avoidance of the child's emotions, .69 for the lack of parental emotion control, and .62 for the acceptance of the child's and their own feelings.

Turkish translation and adaptation of the scale were carried by Gültekin-Ahçı et al. (2020). The results showed that dimension of emotional lack of control which include 7 items did not comply with Turkish sample. Therefore one factor and 7 questions were removed from scale and final version of the scale consisted of 3 factors and 13 questions, unlike its original form. These factors are parents' orientation to the child's emotions defined as an effort of parents to understand both their own and their child's feelings, parents' avoidance of the child's emotions defined as the parent's negative beliefs about child's negative emotions and other dimension is acceptance of emotions defined as the parent's capacity to tolerate child's negative emotions. According to the results of factor analysis for validity studies, the factor loadings of values were ranging from .36 to .83 and three factor model represented an adequate fit. The Turkish version of the scale has satisfactory internal consistency values; the subscales were .78, .79 and .75 and split-half coefficients were .73, .74 and .71, respectively (Gültekin-Ahçı et. al., 2020).

#### ***2.2.4. The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI)***

The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory was created by Dennis and Vander Wal (2010) to determine cognitive flexibility, which includes how individuals adapt and respond cognitively to changes they encounter in life events. It is based on self-report and consists of 20 items, 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It has two subscales; alternatives and control. The "alternatives" subscale measures how the individual evaluates the solutions when faced with stressful events or changes. The "control" subscale measures the extent to which individuals believe in their own control in the face of these difficult events. In the scale, a general cognitive flexibility is obtained from scores of the two sub-dimensions calculating and it can also be obtained from alternative and control scores. The total score obtained from the inventory corresponds to general cognitive flexibility, while the high scores obtained from the subscales represent the high flexibility in that skills. In the process of developing the scale, two studies were conducted. 196 university students participated in the study and applied the first form of the CFI and other measurement tools in the first step. In the second step, participants were invited again 7 weeks later, but 152 people readministered the same scales. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis result from the first and second studies showed that a two-factor structure that explained 39% of the total variance with factor loads ranging from .52 to .84 was

obtained. The significant relationship was found between the whole CFI and the "alternatives" subscale in the first study ( $r = .89, p < .001$ ) and in the second study ( $r = .90, p < .001$ ). There was significant relationship between the whole CFI and the "control" subscale in the first study ( $r = .79, p < .001$ ) and the second study ( $r = .80, p < .001$ ). The significant relationship was found between subscale in the first study ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ) and in the second study ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ). As a result of two studies conducted 7 weeks apart showed that for the whole scale ( $r = .81, p < .001$ ) for test-retest reliability. It was determined as ( $r = .75, p < .001$ ) for the "alternatives" subscale and ( $r = .77, p < .001$ ) for the "control" subscale. The empirical investigation of convergent validity was obtained by examining the relationship between the CFI and the Cognitive Flexibility Scale (CFS) and it was found that there were significant correlations ranging from .62 to .75. Also, as a result of analysis for further convergent construct validity, the correlation was found between subscales of Ways of Coping Checklist-Revised (WCCL-R) and CFI ranging from .32 to .49. In addition for concurrent criterion validity, considering correlations with Beck Depression Inventory, the significant inverse correlations were found with CFI ( $r = -.39, p < .001$ ,  $r = -.35, p < .001$ ). Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale is .90, the "alternatives" subscale is .91 and the "control" subscale is .89 for the first stage, and in the second stage it was found .91, .91 and .84, respectively (Dennis and Vander Wal, 2010).

Sapmaz and Doğan (2013) conducted the study to examine the validity and reliability of the scale. The correlations between CFI and Boratav Depression Scanning Scale (BORDEPSS), Cognitive Flexibility Scale (CFS) and Optimism Scale (OS) were examined within the scope of criterion-related validity. There was a significant correlation between CFI and OS ( $r = .49, p < .01, n=95$ ), "control" sub-dimension and OS ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ) and "alternatives" sub-dimension and OS ( $r = .45, p < .01$ ). A relation also was found between CFI and CFS ( $r = .46, p < .01, n=95$ ), "control" subscale and CFS ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ) and "alternatives" subscale and CFS ( $r = .50, p < .01$ ). In addition to these, there was relation between CFI and BORDEPSS ( $r = -.38, p < .01, n=119$ ), "control" subscale ( $r = -.34, p < .01$ ) and "alternatives" subscale ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ). The result of the study found that Cronbach's alpha for the Cognitive Flexibility Inventory was .90 for whole of the scale, .90 for "alternatives" subscale and .84 for "control" subscale. Test-retest reliability information was also found as .75 for whole of the scale, .78 for "alternatives" subscale and .73 for "control" subscale.



### ***2.3. Procedure***

Prior to the research, the necessary permission was first obtained from the Ethics Committee of Izmir University of Economics. Participants were reached via online and a google form was used. Parents who have children between 8 to 11 years old have been reached from e-mail and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram and Whatsapp. Mothers and fathers were informed that the study is completely voluntary, and no information is expected to reveal their identity. After participants' consent was received, participants were informed that the completion time of the measurements would be approximately 15 minutes. It was stated that participants could leave the survey whenever they wanted and were asked to fill in the demographic form containing information about their children and themselves. Afterwards, three scales measuring their own individual capacities (reflective functioning, psychological and cognitive flexibility) and a scale measuring parental emotion regulation capacity were administered to the parents.

### ***2.4. Statistical Analysis***

IBM SPSS Statistics used in order to analyze the data and descriptive statistics were performed in order to describe the data. The link between reflective functioning and parental emotion regulation was explored via Pearson correlation analysis. Also, mediational study was performed to explore whether cognitive flexibility mediate the association between reflective functioning and parental emotion regulation with PROCESS (Hayes, 2013).

## CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

### 3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Participants who have children between the ages of 8-11 were employed and the gender distribution of the participants is as follows 105 women (%60.3) and 69 men (%39.7). The results of demographic variables related to the participants were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	<i>N</i>	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Mother	105	60.3
Father	69	39.7
<b>Child's Age</b>		
8	36	20.7
9	47	27.0
10	43	24.7
11	48	27.6
<b>Child's Gender</b>		
Girl	81	46.6
Boy	93	53.4
<b>Birth Order</b>		
Only Child	46	26.4
First-Born	74	42.5
Second Born	41	23.6
Third-Born	10	5.7
Youngest Child	3	1.7
<b>Family Status</b>		
Married - Together	158	90.8
Married - Not Together	4	2.3
Divorced	12	6.9
<b>Education Status</b>		
Primary School	19	10.9
High School	50	28.7
University Graduation	74	42.5
Master's degree	27	15.5
PhD Degree	4	2.3

Table 1. (continued) Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Working Status		
Yes	124	71.3
No	50	28.7
Economic Status		
Middle - Lower Income	120	69.0
Middle - Upper Income	54	31.0
Caregiver		
Mother or Father	89	51.1
Nursing	27	15.5
Family Elders	55	31.6
Other	3	1.7
Early Childhood		
Normal	156	89.7
Distressed	18	10.3

As seen in Table 1, the mean age of participants' children was 9 years 5 months, and 81 children (46.6%) were girls, and 93 children (53.4%) were boys. Family status information showed that 158 participants (90.8%) were married and lived together, 4 participants (2.3%) were married but not living together and 12 participants (6.9%) were divorced. Fifty participants (28.7%) reported that they were not working, 124 participants (71.3%) reported that they were working. One hundred fifty-six participants (89.7%) described early childhood period of their children as comfortable / normal, and 18 participants (10.3%) reported as distressed. Considering their educational attainment, 19 participants (10.9%) were primary school graduates, and 50 participants (28.7%) were high school graduates. Seventy-four participants had university graduation (42.5%), 27 participants had master's degree (15.5%) and 4 participants (2.3%) had PhD degree. One hundred twenty participants (69%) stated that they were in the middle- and lower-income group and 54 participants (31%) stated that they were in the upper-middle income group. Looking at the information of caregivers during preschool period, 89 participants (51.1%) state that their children were cared for by their mother or father, 27 participants (15.5%) stated that they received nursing support, 55 participants (31.6%) stated that they received support from their family elders, and 3 participants (1.7%) marked the other option. According to birth order of participants' children, 46 children (26.4%) were only child, 14

children (42.5%) were first-born, 41 children (23.6%) were second-born, 10 children (5.7%) were third-born, and 3 children (1.7%) were youngest.

### 3.1.1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

As a first step, the scores of the participants from the scales and sub-dimensions and descriptive statistics results of the measurements were observed. Descriptive statistics for Reflective Functioning (RFQ), Parental Emotion Regulation Scale (PERS) and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory (CFI) were shown in Table 2 with means, standard deviations, minimum-maximum values, and values of Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Measures

<i>Measure</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.Dev.</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Cra</i>
<b>PERS</b>						
Avoidance	174	9.08	3.70	2.00	16.0	.753
Orientation	174	16.56	2.93	7.00	20.0	.816
Acceptance	174	8.72	2.23	2.00	12.0	.594
<b>RFQ</b>						
Certainty	174	33.97	13.35	8.00	69.0	.879
Uncertainty	174	10.41	7.03	1.00	32.0	.751
<b>CFI</b>						
Total	174	77.79	8.99	52.0	96.0	.843

*Notes.* PERS: Parental Emotional Regulation Scale, RFQ: Reflective Functioning Questionnaire, CFI: Cognitive Flexibility Inventory

Furthermore, as a result of the analyzes to examine the normality before starting the analysis of the study. It was revealed that the scales and sub-dimensions are normally distributed, and the results of skewness and kurtosis was in the appropriate range.

### 3.2. Correlational Analyses for Variables

The Pearson correlation analysis was performed to discover the associations between study variables which are certainty about mental states, uncertainty about mental states, parents' orientation to the child's emotions, parents' avoidance of the child's emotions, and parents' acceptance of the child's and their own emotions and cognitive flexibility before to observing the questions of the study. The findings of the links of the study variables that obtained because of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Study Variables

Variable Name	N	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Avoidance	174	---					
2.Orientation	174	.140	---				
3.Acceptance	174	-.184*	.272**	---			
4.Certainty	174	.039	.391**	.093	---		
5.Uncertainty	174	.163*	-.034	.055	-.399**	---	
6.Cognitive Flexibility	174	-.031	.377**	.012	.535**	-.237**	---

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

The results of correlational analysis showed that cognitive flexibility was significantly and positively related to orientation to the child's emotions;  $r = .38, p < .01$  which shows that as individuals' cognitive flexibility increases, their orientation to the children's emotion increases. According to another result, there was a significantly positive correlation between uncertainty about mental states and avoidance of the child's emotions;  $r = .16, p < .05$  which implies as individuals' uncertainty about mental states increases, their avoidance of their children's emotions increases. In addition, certainty about mental states was found significantly positive associated with orientation to the child's emotions,  $r = .39, p < .05$  which indicates that participants who have higher certainty about mental states had higher orientation to the child's emotions. Moreover, certainty about mental states was significant and positive linked to cognitive flexibility;  $r = .53, p < .01$ , the result shows participants who reported higher certainty about mental states had higher cognitive flexibility. As expected, the significant negative relationship was found between uncertainty about mental states and certainty about mental states;  $r = -.40, p < .01$ . In parallel with the results, the significant negative relationship was found between uncertainty about mental states and cognitive flexibility;  $r = -.24, p < .01$  which shows that as uncertainty of the individuals increases, their cognitive flexibility levels decrease. In addition, parent's acceptance of the child's and own emotions sub-dimension was not significantly associated with any of the variables.

### 3.3. Main Analysis

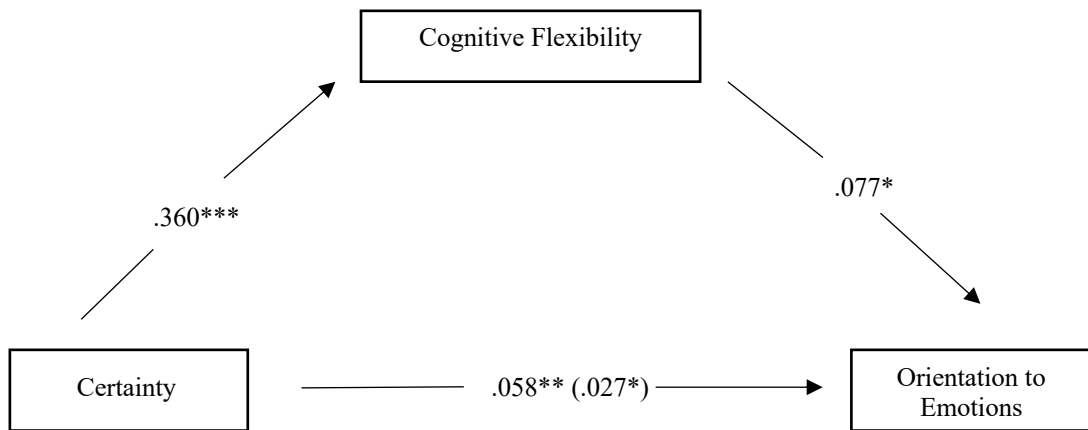
As the main analysis of the current study is that mediation analysis was conducted to determine mediating role of cognitive flexibility.

### 3.3.1. Mediation Analysis

The mediational role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between mentalization (certainty) and parental emotion regulation (orientation to child's emotions) was explored by conducting simple mediation analysis proposed by Hayes (2013) via Process Macro for SPSS. Also, bootstrapping technique with 5000 resample size was used for observing direct effects and indirect effects in mediation analysis.

Correlation analysis results revealed that orientation to child's emotions which is dimension of parental emotion regulation was significantly related to cognitive flexibility. One of the mentalization sub-dimensions, certainty about mental states was found to be significant related with orientation to child's emotions. For this reason, mediation analysis was carried out by examining the relationship between these two sub-dimensions. Finally, the hypothesis that the relationship between certainty and orientation to child's emotions is mediated by cognitive flexibility in parents was analyzed.

Results of analysis showed that there were significant association between cognitive flexibility and orientation to child's emotions (b-path;  $\beta = .077, t = 2.90, p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the indirect effect of certainty about mental states on parental emotion regulation through the mediator cognitive flexibility (ab-path) was estimated to lie between .008 and .051. The result indicated that a significant mediated pathway, because the 95% confidence interval for the indirect pathways between cognitive flexibility does not contain zero. When cognitive flexibility was included into the model, the direct effect of cognitive flexibility on orientation to child's emotions (c-path;  $\beta = 0.86, t = 5.57, p < .05$ ) declined but the significance continued (c'- path;  $\beta = .058, t = 3.25, p < .05$ ), showing partial mediation. The mediation model was significant,  $F(1, 172) = 31.00, p < .01$  and explains 15% of the variance in parental emotion regulation ( $R^2 = .15$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .39$ ) (see Table 4).



Notes: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

Figure 1. Mediation Model of Indirect Effect of Cognitive Flexibility on Mentalization and Parental Emotion Regulation.

Table 4. Mediation Results of Cognitive Flexibility

	Coefficient	SE	p	BC Bootstrap 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Total Effect of Certainty on Orientation to Emotions	.086	.015	.000	.055	.116
Direct Effect of Certainty on Orientation to Emotions	.058	.017	.001	.023	.093
Indirect Effect of Certainty on Orientation to Emotions through Cognitive Flexibility	.028	.011		.0078	.0513

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the mediator role of cognitive flexibility on the relation between mentalization and parental emotion regulation. With this purpose, links between cognitive flexibility, mentalization and parental emotion regulation were examined via Pearson correlation analysis. Then, mediation analysis which was developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) was performed for the mediation model. As a model, mediator role of cognitive flexibility on the relationship between mentalization and parental emotion regulation were examined.

The findings that emerged as a result of the analyses conducted between the variables in this section were examined and discussed considering the information in the literature and the outcomes of previous studies. First, the relational findings were reviewed, and then the mediation analysis findings were examined. In the light of these results and discussions, analyses on the limitations of this study, what should be considered in future research, and the practical importance of these results related to the clinical psychology literature will be given in the relevant sections.

### *4.1. Findings of Correlational Analysis*

Pearson's correlational analysis was conducted to explore associations between mentalization, cognitive flexibility and parental emotion regulation. While significant relationships were observed between some variables as assumed, some relationships were observed contrary to the hypothesis. These results will be discussed below, considering the findings in the literature.

As a first step, the relationship between mentalization and parents' emotion regulation was investigated. It was assumed that certainty and uncertainty about mental states which are mentalization dimension would be negatively related with emotion orientation and acceptance of emotions, and positively correlated with avoidance of emotions. Because, as mentioned before, these two factors are considered as excessive certainty or excessive uncertainty, which is seen as a psychological difficulty related to a mental state. The results of the analyses show that while the uncertainty dimension was positively related to emotional avoidance, no significant relationship was found with other emotion regulation dimensions. Interestingly, the certainty sub-dimension was found to have a significant positive relationship with emotional orientation, but not with other sub-dimensions. The fact that the caregiver of the child's mind acts as a



good mind reader in the first years of life has a very essential role for the child to continue to exist in life and for the self to grow as a whole without feeling threatened. However, as the child grows, it was assumed that the parent's effort to know and understand the child should not have a judgment feature, but rather important for the relationship to progress through moderate predictions. School-age children begin to gain experience in different fields from their parents. For this reason, it was thought that the parents' having an attitude of curiosity rather than certainty would cause them to be more understanding towards their child (Camoirano, 2017; Camras et al., 1990). The reason why the results are different from the expected may be the number of participants. For this reason, it is recommended to review the results again by increasing the number of parents participating in the study.

On the other hand, when we review at the previous studies, it has been found that the certainty dimension does not indicate dysfunction and was associated with positive features. For instance, our results on the relationships between mentalization and emotion regulation were consistent with the literature showing that people with certain attributions to mental states also have high levels of empathy. It has been suggested that people who have an effort of concerning on the minds of others will be more likely to understand the inner life of others, and therefore will better soothe their child's intense emotions (Schechter et al., 2006). When it comes to parenting, it can be predicted that the person's clearer predictions about mental states compared to other relationships may be positive for the parenting trait. Because, considering the role of the parent in the relationship as a caregiver, educator and guide, the fact that the assumptions about the child's mind are high may not indicate a negativity. As an explanation for this result, parents who have more valid predictions about the inner life of the others and due to understanding, they will feel more secure in their relationship with others. Mothers who are not sure about their child's feelings will perceive unpleasant emotions as a threat to security and avoid from distressful emotions (Bruch, 1973). Similarly, in other thesis studies conducted in Turkey, it was found that a high level of certainty of mental states skill was associated with predictive factors of psychological functionality such as with the capacity to regulate anger and lower somatic symptoms (Köksal, 2017; Hıdıroğlu, 2019). It can be said that these results are consistent with our findings on the relationship between mentalization and emotion regulation.

Surprisingly, no significant relationship was found between the other dimensions in mentalization and emotion regulation. However, looking at the previous literature, it was revealed that this variability was also present in other studies. The previous study also investigated that uncertainty of mental states was positively linked with alexithymia, while negatively correlated with empathy and mindfulness (Cucchi, Hampton and Moulton-Perkins, 2018). On the other hand, the study with an interview-based measure of mothers' mentalization capacities examined the relationship with parents' emotion regulation. It was found that no significant relationship was found between mentalization (certainty) and emotion regulation in parents (Gershy and Gray, 2018). Similarly, in another study conducted with patients diagnosed with borderline, no relationship was observed between mentalization and emotion regulation capacities. (Sharp et al., 2011). The literature and the results of our study also show the confusion of this concept. Considering that the concept of mentalization is a structure with a conscious and unconscious motivation, the results may vary (Fonagy et al., 2002). In addition, it was thought that people who have experienced mental uncertainty may have given a biased response to these answers. For instance, it may be necessary to have a mentalization capacity for items such as *'I can mostly predict what someone else will do.'* and *'People's thoughts are a mystery to me.'* Although self-report measurements are easy to apply, they have such bias. Therefore, it is recommended to use measurements based on transcript to capture the mentalization capacity, which is a complex structure (Shaw et al., 2020).

Another interpretation about nonsignificant results is the mentalization effort and emotional reactions may vary in different relationships. For instance, the person will have a different mental and emotional effort in the relationship with his/her colleague, and it will be different in the relationship with the child. Also, the literature emphasized that mentalization may have a different functioning when in the role of parenting and that it is a structure that can develop with child-parent interaction (Slade et al., 2005; Luyten et al., 2012). For this reason, it is necessary to be sensitive about measurement tools and choice of context for the future studies. As suggestion, in future studies, comparison studies also can be observed with parents in different contexts.

It was determined that cognitive flexibility would be associated with parental emotion regulation as another hypothesis. It was expected that cognitive flexibility would be positively related to accepting emotions and orientation to emotions, and negatively related to avoidance of emotions. The results show that while cognitive

flexibility has a positive association with emotion orientation, it has insignificant negative association with avoidance of emotions. Unexpectedly, no significant relationship was found between cognitive flexibility and acceptance of emotions. As an explanation, it is estimated that it may have a different dynamic than the relationships between other dimensions, since this dimension of emotion regulation involves the parent's acceptance of both their own and their child's emotions. The parent may be oriented differently towards their own feelings and the feelings of the child. When faced with the child's challenging emotion, the parent may have to choose between self-soothing and soothing to the child and may ignore their own emotions. In this way, the parent may try to cope with avoidance rather than accepting their own feelings (Eisenberg, Fabes and Murphy, 1996). As an alternative, it is recommended to measure the acceptance of the parent's own emotions and the child's emotions with different measurement tools, when examining the relationship between parental emotion regulation and other factors.

The relevant literature about cognitive flexibility and emotion regulation indicated that there was a significant relationship between these concepts. Studies showed that people who are aware of alternatives and have a sense of control over them more likely to cope better with stressful events (Goldfarb et al., 2017), are more patient towards to challenging situations (Gökçen, Arslan and Tıraş 2020), and have less difficulty in managing emotions (Zarei, Momeni and Mohammadkhani, 2018). It was also emphasized that the link between emotion regulation and cognitive flexibility is the willingness to notice emotions and not to ignore emotional experiences, and the ability of the individual to act in line with their goals instead of suppressing their emotions. According to Gratz and Roemer (2004), individuals can be flexible in deciding which of the adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation strategies to achieve their goals, and they can accept the emotion and regulate their emotions in a healthy way, without being stuck with a particular emotion. However, in a study conducted with mothers, it was found that mothers with cognitive reappraisal, which is a concept like cognitive flexibility, are more sensitive to their infants' emotional cues and can cope better (Martin et al., 2020). As a result, although the cognitive flexibility of parents was not found to be related to coping with their parent's own emotions in their interactions with their children, it was found to be related to their interest to child's emotions.

Consequently, when we examine the previous literature and the results of our study, it shows that the parents' awareness of her/his own inner life and child's emotions, thoughts and intentions contribute to the quality of the emotional interaction with the child (Hughes et al., 2017). For this reason, it was suggested that parents' cognitive and emotional skills that should be emphasized for parent-child emotional interaction.

#### ***4.2. Findings of Mediating Role of Cognitive Flexibility***

While testing the role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between mentalization and emotion regulation, the mediation analysis was conducted on relationship between certainty and orientation to emotions. There was a significant relationship between the mentalization dimensions of certainty and the emotional orientation sub-dimension of emotion regulation. According to our results, cognitive flexibility partially mediated the relationship between certainty about mental states and orientation to emotions in parents. The mediation analysis results also indicated that there was a significant total effect of mentalization on parental emotion regulation while cognitive flexibility affected the relationship indirectly. Finally, due to this mediation relationship, as the certainty of mental state increases, cognitive flexibility increases and thus an increase in the orientation to emotions occurs.

Looking at the literature and previous related studies, no study was found on the mediator role of cognitive flexibility between these two structures. Cognitive flexibility includes taking different perspectives while trying to cope with a problem (Dennis and Vander Wal, 2010). Similar to our results, a positive and significant relationship was found between certainty of mental state and perspective taking which similar concept with mentalization in a study (Fonagy et al., 2016). In the context of the parent-child relationship, cognitive impairment affects the quality of relationship and increases the risk for unsupportive and disruptive parental behaviors (Sheerin, 1998). The mother with this risk has difficulty in maintaining her cognitive abilities such as planning, making decisions, and time management. At this situation, it was also suggested that mentalization capacity may have a protective effect on mother-child relationship. Thus, cognitive abilities seem to predict parental behaviors and lead to neglectful or unsupportive parental behaviors related to regulation of emotions. As mentioned earlier, capacity to mentalize is a determining factor in our adjustment to our emotions and behaviors towards others in daily life. For this reason, it has been

assumed that sensitivity to inner experiences of own and other people may be related to being cognitively open to alternatives, and therefore to experiencing emotions more aware and controlled. On the other hand, consistent with our findings, it was suggested that the capacity to predict the thoughts and feelings of others will contribute to the intention to produce alternative solutions to the situations and support the adjustment of the emotional reactions of the person (Mesulam, 2002; Lezak et al., 2004). Additionally, it was known that the relationship between mentalization and executive functions which are flexibility, planning, solution-oriented approach, emotional skills. However, it is not known exactly how this relationship occurs (Bach et al., 2000) and further studies with different samples are needed.

#### ***4.3. Strengths of the Present Study***

The study's results need to be discussed along with the fact that this study has some strengths. As previously seen in the literature, the quality of the relationship between parent and child significantly affects physical and psychological health of the child. Therefore, it was focused to study parental emotional attitudes that are important for child's health or for preventing any interruptions in developmental process. One of the strengths of this study is that, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first study in the literature that studied the mediator roles of cognitive flexibility on the associations of mentalization with parental emotion regulation in parents. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the individual factors of parents have been examined very little in the literature. Although more studies consist of measurements in parent-child interaction, they do not reveal the contribution of the internal dynamics of the mother or father. Belsky (1984) stated that it is important to discover the mechanisms that negatively affect the functions of parents and that emphasizing the individual resources of the parents will contribute to the literature. Also, Abidin (2010) emphasized the importance of conducting research and developing models that include behavioral, personalities and cultural aspects of parenting.

Another strength of the study is that the age group studied consists of older children compared to other studies. As children grow, their emotional and social development continues to progress, and parent-child interactions begin to become more complex (Zeman et al., 2007; Halberstadt et al., 2013). In this study, it was emphasized that while children are in different experiences away from their parents, such as school, it is important for parents to be able to mentalize the child's

experiences, feelings, and thoughts and to be open to alternative ways in terms of emotion regulation. Studies on mentalization and emotion regulation have mostly been studied with younger children and their parents. Also, it was suggested that more studies investigating parents' mentalization of their children at different ages are needed (Pazzagli et al., 2018).

The involvement of both mothers and fathers in the study is an important strength of the study. Many studies on the emotional and cognitive capacities of parents in the literature have been conducted only with mothers, whereas there are few studies involving fathers (Crandall, Deactor-Deckard and Riley, 2015). Studies show that emotional and cognitive capacities of fathers predict parenting behaviors and contribute to children's well-being. For instance, fathers' suppression of their emotions was associated with negative parental behaviors, while fathers with high emotion regulation capacity were found to be more supportive towards their adolescent children (Hughes and Gullone, 2010). In addition, although there are studies in the literature showing that the effects and characteristics of parents are similar, it is stated that more comparative studies are needed. Considering the important role of fathers in the family context, their inclusion in the study makes this study significant. The results of this study are important as it includes both mothers and fathers, but it is recommended to perform comparative analyzes in future studies for further findings.

#### ***4.4. Limitations of the Present Study and Directions for Future Research***

Besides these strengths, this study has some limitations which need to be discussed. One of the limitations of this study is that it is based on a cross-sectional design. Although there were some associations found between mentalization, cognitive flexibility and parental emotion regulation, it is not possible to draw causal relations between the variables of the study. Future studies should include different types of data collection using experimental and/or longitudinal patterns.

Secondly, although the study was designed for the participation of parents, it mostly consisted of mothers due to the fact that mothers were more voluntary during the data collection process. For this reason, with the participation of more fathers, comparative analyzes with mothers could be made and better results could be obtained. In addition, as observed throughout the study, the reasons why fathers are less willing to participate in the survey can be answered as another research question, because this observation raises questions about paternal involvement in childcare.

The third limitation is about sample size. Even if the sample size of the study can be considered as sufficient in order for the research findings to provide stronger results, participants with more fathers and mothers are needed in future studies. In addition, it is recommended to increase this number by considering demographic characteristics. It is important both for the generalization of the results and for comparative analysis. For instance, having the same proportion of participants' children from all age groups and genders will lead more diverse results.

The other limitation is self-report measurement usage. The data about mentalization, cognitive flexibility and parental emotion regulation are based on online reports due to pandemic conditions. Therefore, if these conditions do not exist, it is recommended observer-rated measurements which provide more objective results.

Finally, it was known that positive or negative outcomes of the children depend on parental skills in the literature. But it is suggested that measuring the social, emotional, or cognitive ability of the children, to make the results stronger. For this reason, it would be valuable to include measurements related to children in the study. Furthermore, it may be necessary to conduct emotion-focused studies in family dynamics and to work parents with families of latent period children. This period is critical because of some dimensions, school aged children hide their feelings more, exhibit more adaptive behaviors, idealize their teachers or parents, but adaptation to school and social interactions in this period can shape adolescence period (Parman, 2013).

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

It has been proven by various studies that social, emotional, and cognitive skills of parents are important in childcare. Thus, the aim of this study is to take a closer look at the emotion regulation skills of parents, which is an important predictor of parental behaviors, and to focus on the factors that may affect emotional dynamics. Additionally, this study focused on the individual skills of parents and aimed to understand how they are related to emotion regulation. For this reason, the focus is on the relationship between parents' emotion regulation and parents' awareness of their inner experiences of self and others. Moreover, the mediating role of cognitive flexibility in this relationship was examined.

The relationship between parent and child is a context where dynamics are much different than other relationships, and difficult emotions or tensions are experienced much more frequently. Therefore, parents may need to have more precise mentalization skills to cope with these challenging emotions. In this context, no matter in which period of childhood they are, a caregiver relationship continues. The results of the current study showed that although mothers and fathers have difficulties in mentalization, cognitive flexibility skills contribute to their children's understanding of negative emotions. For this reason, it is recommended that clinicians consider parents' cognitive flexibility levels in education about emotions while working with parents.

Studies are mostly conducted on how parental behaviors and attitudes predict child outcomes. Differently, this study preferred to focus on the relationships and dynamics that exist in this challenging role due to the need to examine parental behaviors more closely. Besides, it is recommended to diversify such studies and investigate different variables that may predict parental factors or have a mediating relationship.

### ***5.1. Implications***

The results of the conducted study provided several implications for clinicians working with children and their families. Parents or caregivers are the most important factor in helping their children with their problems or maintaining their healthy development. Academic, social, and psychological problems experienced in childhood can be disturbing and require the attention and support of families (Kazak et al., 2010).



Eisenberg et al. (1999) suggested that children's behaviors and emotions are closely related to parents' responses to their emotions. Many studies in the literature show that parents have a positive understanding of emotions and emotion-focused communication with their children, affect children's emotional development (Morris et al., 2011), have a high tolerance for delaying their desires (Gottman, Katz and Hooven, 1996), reducing behavioral and emotional problems (Lunkenheimer et al., 2017; Hernandez et al., 2018). In addition, as mentioned above, parental attitudes, whether supportive or unsupportive behaviors, are also related to the emotional understanding of the parents.

It was suggested that parental characteristics are the best predictors for good outcomes of children therefore they should be included in treatment process (Cohen and Mannarino, 1998) Considering the literature, it is recommended that clinicians working with family and children should target the emotional capacities of parents. It is recommended to plan sessions to improve the cognitive and emotional skills of parents, rather than just making guiding explanations about attitudes. Because sometimes, although families have knowledge about child-rearing practices, there are underlying dynamics that prevent them from applying what they know when people face difficult situations (Wahler and Dumas, 1989).

The findings of this study provided an understanding of families who have difficulties in emotion regulation. Therefore, it is recommended that clinicians providing psychotherapy services to parents first evaluate their clients' cognitive flexibility levels, which may have positive effects on emotion regulation symptoms, and while doing this, it seems critical to consider the relationship between mentalization and cognitive flexibility, because cognitive flexibility capacity in parents may be a result of mentalization. Therefore, it may be an alternative goal for clinical psychologists to work with mentalization skills, which can have a positive effect on cognitive flexibility, instead of working directly on cognitive flexibility. Thus, a positive contribution will be made to the emotional atmosphere in the family, and it will be a solution for the problem behaviors of children. It is recommended that therapists benefit from The Mentalization Guidebook which provides a theoretical and practical framework to develop mentalization capacity (Hagelquist, 2018). In addition, when it is not possible to work with mentalization, cognitive flexibility can be targeted in therapy programs. Studies have shown that cognitive behavioral therapy techniques and exercises are effective in improving cognitive flexibility (Fazeli, Ehteshamzadeh

and Hashemi, 2015). Therefore, it is recommended that clinicians should apply cognitive behavioral techniques which are designed for parents to improve their emotional understanding.

In conclusion, the current study serves as the attempt to examine the role of mentalization and cognitive flexibility on emotion regulation of parent with school-aged children. As mentioned above, the examination of emotion regulation of parents is very important because it is directly related to parenting attitudes and children's functioning. Examining the individual factors that contribute to the emotional understanding of parents should also be considered to improve parental practices. Although this study approached it from a cognitive perspective, it revealed the importance of working with the individual processes of parents in parenting practice. Therefore, it is hoped that further studies shall try to increase the knowledge about emotional climate of family which is affected by parental factors in child-parent interactions.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A. Ethics Committee Approval*

SAYI : B.30.2.İEÜ.0.05.05-020-152

16.07.2021

KONU : Etik Kurul Kararı hk.

Sayın Doç. Dr. Seda Can ve Ayşe Gül Kutlu,

"**The Role of Cognitive Flexibility on the Relationship between Mentalization and Parental Emotion Regulation**" başlıklı projenizin etik uygunluğu konusundaki başvurunuz sonuçlanmıştır.

Etik Kurulumuz 16.07.2021 tarihinde sizin başvurunuzun da içinde bulunduğu bir gündemle toplanmış ve ve Etik Kurul üyeleri projeleri incelemiştir. Başvurunuzla ilgili olarak sosyal medyada ilan edilecek araştırmalarda sanal korsanlık tehlikesi olabileceğinden, kişisel bilgilerin güvenliği konusunda gerekli önlemlerin alınması önerilmektedir.

Sonuçta 16.07.2021 tarihinde "**The Role of Cognitive Flexibility on the Relationship between Mentalization and Parental Emotion Regulation**" konulu projenizin etik açıdan uygun olduğuna oy birliğiyle karar verilmiştir.

Gereği için bilgilerinize sunarım.


Saygılarımla,



**Prof. Dr. Murat Bengisu**

**Etik Kurul Başkanı**

## Appendix B: Master's Thesis Originality Report

 <b>İZMİR EKONOMİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ <b>IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS</b> GRADUATE SCHOOL		GS.02.05
<b>YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU/ MASTER'S THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT</b>		
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ PSİKOLOJİ ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA/TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF GRADUATE SCHOOL		
		Tarih/Date:30/07/2021
Adı Soyadı/ Name-Last Name:	AYŞE GÜL KUTLU	
Öğrenci Numarası/ Student ID Number:	20193557015	
Anabilim Dalı ve Programı / Department and Program:	PSİKOLOJİ	

Tez Başlığı ve Konusu/Thesis Title and Topic: Bilişsel Esnekliğin Zihinselleştirme ve Ebeveyn Duygu Düzenlemesi Arasındaki İlişkideki Rolü/ The Role of Cognitive Flexibility on the Relationship Between Mentalization and Parental Emotion Regulation

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 70 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 30/08/2021 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından TURNITIN adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 7 'dir./ The similarity index of my thesis, obtained by myself/my thesis advisor based on the originality report by using the TURNITIN plagiarism detection software and by applying the filtering options stated below on 30/08/2021 regarding my thesis of ....pages which includes a) Title Page, b) Introduction, c) Main Chapters, and d) Conclusion sections titled as above, is 7 %

Uygulanan filtrelemeler/ Filtering options applied \*:

Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç/ Approval and Declaration sections excluded

Kaynakça hariç/ Bibliography excluded

Alıntılar hariç/dâhil/ Citations excluded/included

5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç/ Match size up to 5 words excluded

Diğer/Other

.....

\* Öğrencinin tezi ile ilgili yapmış olduğu yayınlar kapsam dışı bırakılabilir./ Publications regarding student's dissertation may not be included.

Izmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi TURNITIN adlı intihal tespit programı sonucunda; azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim./ I, hereby, declare that my thesis does not include any form of plagiarism based on Izmir University of Economics TURNITIN titled plagiarism detection software; that in any future detection of possible infringement of the regulations, I accept all legal responsibility; and that all the information I have provided above is correct to the best of my knowledge.

(Öğrenci, Adı Soyadı, İmza)/ (Student, Name Surname, Signature)

*Ayşe Gül Kutlu*

**TEZ DANIŞMANI ONAYI/ ADVISOR APPROVAL**

Bu tez çalışması; İEÜ Senatosu'nun, 12.03.2009 tarihli ve A/8 numaralı kararına dayanarak hazırlanan Etik Kurul Yönergesi kapsamında kurulan Etik Kurul tarafından oluşturulan işleyiş ve uygulama esaslarına göre hazırlanmıştır./ This thesis has been prepared in accordance with the operation and codes of practice established by the Ethics Committee set up as part of the IUE Regulation for Ethics Committee pursuant to the decision of IUE Senate dated 12 March 2009 and numbered A/8.

UYGUNDUR/ APPROVED  
(Ünvan, Ad Soyad, İmza)/ (Title, Name Surname, Signature)

*[Signature]*

### ***Appendix C: Informed Consent Form***

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu çalışma, İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans programı kapsamında, Doç. Dr. Seda Can danışmanlığında, Ayşe Gül Kutlu tarafından hazırlanan bir tez çalışmasıdır. Çalışmaya katılabilmemiz için 8-11 yaşları arasında bir çocuğa sahip olmanız gerekmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı; anne ve babaların bilişsel ve psikolojik esnekliklerinin, yansıtıcı işleyiş ve duygu düzenlemeleri arasındaki ilişkideki rolünü incelemektir.

Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, bu aşamada sizden yaklaşık 20 dakikanızı alacak anketimizi doldurmanız istenecektir. Soruların doğru ya da yanlış cevapları yoktur. Lütfen her bir ölçeğin yönergesini dikkatli okuyunuz ve sorulara sizi en iyi ifade eden cevabı vermeye çalışınız.

Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılmama veya katıldıktan sonra istediğiniz herhangi bir anda çalışmadan ayrılma hakkına sahipsiniz.

Çalışmayı yürütürken sizden hiçbir kimlik bilgisi talep edilmeyecektir. Cevaplarınız gizli tutulacak, yalnızca araştırma görevlisi tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Bu anketten elde edilen sonuçlar yalnızca bilimsel amaçlar doğrultusunda kullanılacaktır. Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ediyorum ve istediğim zaman araştırmadan ayrılabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

EVET  HAYIR

Çalışmaya yönelik sorularınız için Ayşe Gül Kutlu (aysglkutlu@gmail.com) ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Çalışmaya katılımınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.



## ***Appendix D: Demographic Information Form***

1. Formu Dolduran :

- Anne ( )
- Baba ( )

2. Formu Doldurduđunuz ocuđunuzun Yaşı:

- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11

3. Formu Doldurduđunuz ocuđunuzun Cinsiyeti:

- Kız
- Erkek

4. Formu Doldurduđunuz ocuđunuzun Dođum Sırası:

- Tek ocuk
- İlk ocuk
- İkinci ocuk
- Üincü ocuk
- Son ocuk

5. ocuklarınızın cinsiyetlerini ve yaşlarını sırası ile yazınız.

- 1. \_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_

6. Aile Durumunuz:

- Evli ve birlikte yaşıyoruz ( )
- Evli fakat birlikte yaşamıyoruz ( )
- Boşandık ( )
- Eşim vefat etti ( )

7. En son mezun olduđunuz okul ?

- İlkokul ( )
- Ortaokul ( )
- Lise ( )
- Lisans ( )
- Yüksek Lisans ( )
- Doktora ( )

8. Herhangi bir işte çalışıyor musunuz ?

- Çalışıyorum ( )
- Çalışmıyorum ( )

9. Herhangi bir işte çalışıyor musunuz ?

- Çalışmıyorum ( )
- Çalışıyorum ( )

10. Ekonomik durumunuzu nasıl tanımlarsınız ?

- Alt Gelir Grubu ( )
- Ortanın Altı Gelir Grubu ( )
- Orta Gelir Grubu ( )
- Ortanın Üstü Gelir Grubu ( )
- Üst Gelir Grubu ( )

11. Herhangi bir psikiyatrik tanınız var mı ?

- Evet ( )
- Hayır ( )

12. Okul öncesi eğitime başlamadan önce (bebeklik döneminde) çocuđunuzun evde bakımı kim/(ler) tarafından yapılmıştır?

- Yalnızca anne-baba ( )

- Bakıcı destekli ( )
- Aile büyükleri (büyükanne, büyükbaba vb) ( )
- Diğer...

13. Çocuğunuzun bebeklik dönemini genel olarak nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

- Rahat/Normal ( )
- Sorunlu/Sıkıntılı ( )

14. Çocuğunuzun fiziksel bir rahatsızlığı var mı ?

- Hayır ( )
- Evet ( )

15. Çocuğunuzun psikiyatrik bir tanısı var mı ?

- Evet ( )
- Hayır. ( )

16. Ebeveynlik sürecinde psikoterapi hizmeti aldınız mı?

- Evet. ( )
- Hayır. ( )

### Appendix E. Cognitive Flexibility Inventory

Aşağıda bilişsel esneklik ile ilgili bazı ifadeler yer almaktadır. Bu ifadeleri dikkatli bir şekilde okuyarak sizin durumunuzu en iyi yansıttığını düşündüğünüz seçeneği işaretleyiniz ve lütfen yanıtız ifade bırakmayınız.

1	2	3	4	5
Hiç uygun değil	Pek uygun değil	Kararsızım	Uygun	Tamamen uygun

Aşağıdaki ifadelerin size ne kadar uygun olduğunu göstermek için lütfen ifadelerin solunda yer alan ölçeği kullanınız.						
1	Durumları "tartma" konusunda iyiyimdir.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Zor durumlarla karşılaştığımda karar vermekte güçlük çekerim.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Karar vermeden önce çok sayıda seçeneği dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Zor durumlarla karşılaştığımda kontrolümü kaybediyormuşum gibi hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Zor durumlara değişik açılardan bakmayı tercih ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Bir davranışın nedenini anlamak için önce, elimdeki dışında ek bilgi edinmeye çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Zor durumlarla karşılaştığımda öyle strese girerim ki sorunu çözecek bir yol bulamam.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Olaylara başkalarının bakış açısından bakmayı denerim.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Zor durumlarla baş etmek için çok sayıda değişik seçeneğin olması beni sıkıntıya sokar.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Kendimi başkalarının yerine koymakta başarılıyım.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Zor durumlarla karşılaştığımda ne yapacağımı bilemem.	1	2	3	4	5
12	Zor durumlara farklı açılardan bakmak önemlidir.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Zor durumlarda nasıl davranacağıma karar vermeden önce birçok seçeneği dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Durumlara farklı bakış açılarından bakarım.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Hayatta karşılaştığım zorlukların üstesinden gelmeyi becerebilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
16	Bir davranışın nedenini düşünürken mevcut bütün bilgileri ve gerçekleri dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5

17	Zor durumlarda, şartları deęiřtirmek için gücümün olmadığını hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Zor durumlarda karşılařtıęında önce bir durup çözüm için farklı yollar düşünmeye çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Zor durumlarda karşılařtıęında birden çok çözüm yolu bulabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5
20	Zor durumlara tepki vermeden önce birçok seçeneęi dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5



## Appendix F. Reflective Functioning Questionnaire

Aşağıda zihinselleştirme kapasitesi ile ilgili bazı ifadeler yer almaktadır. Bu ifadeleri dikkatli bir şekilde okuyarak sizin durumunuzu en iyi yansıttığını düşündüğünüz seçeneği işaretleyiniz ve lütfen yanıtız ifade bırakmayınız.

Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
-------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------

1.	İnsanların düşünceleri benim için bir bilinmezdir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Bir başkasının ne düşündüğünü ya da nasıl hissettiğini anlamak benim için kolaydır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Ben değiştikçe ebeveynlerimin zihnimdeki resmi de değişir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	İnsanların duygu ve düşünceleri hakkında çok fazla endişelenirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Davranışlarımın başkalarının duyguları üzerindeki etkisine dikkat ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Başkalarının duygu ve düşüncelerini anlamam uzun zaman alır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Yakın arkadaşlarımla ne düşündüğünü tam olarak bilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Ne hissettiğimi her zaman bilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Kendimi nasıl hissettiğim, bir başkasının davranışını nasıl yorumladığımı kolayca etkileyebilir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Birisinin gözlerinin içine bakarak nasıl hissettiğini anlayabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	En iyi arkadaşlarımla tepkilerini bazen yanlış anlayabileceğimi fark ediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Ne hissettiğim konusunda sıklıkla kafam karışır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	Rüyalarımın anlamını merak ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	Bir başkasının aklından geçenleri anlamak benim için asla zor değildir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	Ebeveynlerimin bana karşı davranışlarının, onların yetiştirilme biçimiyle açıklanmaması gerektiğine inanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	Neyi neden yaptığımı her zaman bilmem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17.	İnsanların başkalarına verdiği tavsiyelerin, genellikle kendi yapmak istedikleri şeyler olduğunu fark ettim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	İnsanların aklından neler geçtiğini anlamak benim için gerçekten zordur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	Diğer insanlar bana iyi bir dinleyici olduğumu söyler.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	Sinirlendiğimde, neden söylediğimi gerçekten bilmediğim şeyler söylerim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	Sıklıkla başkalarının davranışlarının ardında yatan anlamı merak ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	Diğer insanların duygularını anlamlandırmak için gerçekten çok çabalarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	Sıklıkla, istediğim şeyleri yapmaları için insanları zorlamak zorunda kalırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	Genellikle yakınlarım, yaptığım şeyleri neden yaptığımı anlamakta zorluk çekerler.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	Eğer dikkatli olmazsam, bir başkasının hayatına çok fazla karışabileceğimi hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	Başkalarının duygu ve düşünceleri benim için kafa karıştırıcıdır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	Bir başkasının ne yapacağını çoğunlukla tahmin edebilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	Güçlü duygular genellikle düşüncelerimi bulanıklaştırır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	Anladım ki, birisinin tam olarak ne hissettiğini bilmek için bunu ona sormam gerekir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	Bir kişi hakkındaki sezgilerim neredeyse hiç yanlış çıkmaz.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	İnanıyorum ki, insanlar kendi inanç ve deneyimlerine bağlı olarak bir durumu çok farklı şekillerde görebilirler.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	Bazen kendimi bir şeyler söylerken bulurum ve onları neden söylediğim hakkında hiç fikrim olmaz.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	Davranışlarımın ardındaki nedenler üzerine düşünmeyi severim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	Normalde insanların aklından geçenleri tahmin etmede iyiyimdir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	Hislerime güvenirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	Sinirlendiğimde, sonradan pişman olacağım şeyler söylerim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	İnsanlar duyguları hakkında konuştuklarında kafam karışır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

37.	İyi bir zihin- okuyucuyumdur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	Sık sık zihnim boşmuş gibi hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	Eğer güvensiz hissedersen, diğerlerini sınırlendirecek şekilde davranırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	Başkalarının bakış açılarını anlamakta zorlanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	Genellikle diğer insanların tam olarak ne düşündüğünü bilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42.	Güçlü duygular beslediğim şeyler hakkındaki hislerimin bile zamanla değişebileceğini öngörebilirim	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43.	Bazen neden yaptığımı gerçekten bilmediğim şeyler yaparım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44.	Duygularımı dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45.	Bir tartışmada, diğer kişinin bakış açısını aklımda tutarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46.	Bir başkasının düşünceleri hakkındaki içgüdülerim genellikle çok doğrudur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47.	İnsanların davranışlarının nedenlerini anlamak onları affetmeme yardımcı olur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48.	Herhangi bir durumu değerlendirmenin DOĞRU bir yolu olmadığını düşünüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49.	İçgüdülerimden çok mantığımle hareket ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	Çocukluğuma dair çok şey hatırlamıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51.	Başkasının aklından geçenleri tahmin etmeye çalışmanın bir anlamı olmadığına inanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	Benim için insanın davranışları söylediklerinden daha önemlidir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	Diğer insanların, çözmeye kalkışmak için fazla karmaşık olduklarına inanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	İnsanların düşünceleri benim için bir bilinmezdir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



### Appendix G. Parental Emotion Regulation Scale

Aşağıda çocuğunuzla iletişim süreçlerinize ilişkin bazı ifadelere yer verilmektedir. Bu ifadeleri dikkatli bir şekilde okuyarak sizin durumunuzu en iyi yansıttığını düşündüğünüz seçeneği işaretleyiniz. Lütfen çocuğunuz ile şu andaki ilişkinizi düşünerek her bir maddede ifade edilen durumu ne kadar sıklıkla yaşadığınızı belirtiniz ve yanıtızsız ifade bırakmayınız. Yanıtlarınızı örnekteki gibi işaretleyebilirsiniz.

4	3	2	1
Her zaman ya da hemen her zaman	Sık sık	Bazen	Hiçbir zaman ya da hemen hiçbir zaman

1.	Çocuğumu gergin gördüğümde sakinliğimi koruyarak onun içinde bulunduğu durumla yüzleşmesini sağlarım.	4	3	2	1
2.	Her ne pahasına olursa olsun çocuğumu sinirli bir yapıda olmaktan alıkoymalıyım.	4	3	2	1
3.	Çocuğumu keyifsiz (üzgün, kızgın ya da gergin) görmeyi sevmesem de bu durumun onun yaşamının bir parçası olduğunu bilirim.	4	3	2	1
4.	Eğer elimden gelseydi çocuğumu bütün olumsuz duygulardan uzak tutardım.	4	3	2	1
5.	Gergin olduğu zamanlarda çocuğumun bu durumdan zarar göreceğini düşünürüm.	4	3	2	1
6.	Gergin olduğunu gördüğümde duruma çok hızlı müdahale etmem gerektiğini düşünürüm.	4	3	2	1
7.	Çocuğumu keyifsiz gördüğümde ne hissettiğini anlamaya çalışırım.	4	3	2	1
8.	Çocuğumun duygularına karşı hassas davranıp onu anlamaya çalışırım.	4	3	2	1
9.	Çocuğum keyifsiz olduğunda yaşadığı duyguları anlaması için ona yardım ederim.	4	3	2	1
10.	Çocuğum gergin olduğunda bunu kolayca fark ederim.	4	3	2	1
11.	Çocuğumun keyifsiz olduğunu gördüğümde ne hissettiğini daha iyi anlayabilmesi için onu konuşturmaya çalışırım.	4	3	2	1
12.	Çocuğumun bazı davranışlarıyla ilgili olarak üzüntü, hayal kırıklığı ya da kaygı hissetmemin normal olduğunu düşünürüm.	4	3	2	1
13.	Bütün ebeveynlerin ara sıra çocuklarıyla ilgili olumsuz duygular yaşamalarını yaşamın bir parçası olarak görürüm.	4	3	2	1