



## Do the Emotional Intelligence Levels of Prospective Teachers and Their Gestalt Contact Styles Predict Being Solution-Focused?

Research Article

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### ABSTRACT

The levels of empathy in teacher-student relationships and problem solving levels of teachers have been among the most studied subjects in educational environments. There was no study in which teachers' emotional intelligence, whether they had a solution-oriented approach and the ways of making contact were examined together. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and Gestalt contact styles and possessing a solution-focused point of view. Additionally, whether or not the aforementioned variables differentiated based on the type of teaching education the participants received was investigated. 840 prospective teachers participated in the study. The Solution-Focused Inventory, Emotional Intelligence Scale and Gestalt Contact Scale were utilised. It was determined that the students from education faculties were more solution-focused and scored significantly higher points in communication contact style in comparison to those who were in the formation groups. Moreover, it was concluded that emotional intelligence and gestalt contact styles predicted being solution-focused at a rate of 22%.

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### Keywords:

Emotional intelligence, problem-solving, solution-focused, gestalt contact styles

### Introduction

Emotional intelligence, styles of establishing healthy relationships and having adequate points of view on problems may be accepted as the leading ones among terminal behaviours. It is an indisputable fact that the adequacy of the teacher is the most important condition for acquisition of terminal behaviours in the relationship to be established between the teacher and the student (Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014). When it comes to investigating the psychological aspects of teacher adequacy, it must be accepted that a quite complicated investigation is supposed to start. Within the extensive review by Austin and Vancouver (1996), the authors

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asserted that it was a quite difficult process to understand psychological structures, form target structures and make a scientific assessment.

The concept of emotional intelligence was firstly used by Salovey and Mayer (1990), and it was defined as “the skill of a person to manage their own emotions.” Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (1999) later revised their studies regarding the concept, and they redefined it as “feeling emotions, revealing emotions for supporting ideas, the skills of managing emotions effectively in order to increase emotional knowledge, mental and emotional development.” Goleman (2015) defined emotional intelligence as “putting self in action, proceeding on one’s way despite difficulties, controlling impulses, arranging mental state, not allowing problems to prevent thinking, putting self in somebody else’s position and cherishing hope.”

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), there is a high correlation between the Emotional Intelligence (EI) levels of children and the environmental conditions in which they grow up and the people whom they consider as role models. Students that are aware of their emotions and can separate them who can control their behaviours, act flexibly against problems, find reasonable solutions and keep calm in difficult situations are able to carry out their duties more successfully. Additionally, it was determined that their academic success and social interest levels were higher (Justice and Espinozo, 2007; Bucich, and MacCann, 2019b). The study by Drew (2010) determined four themes within the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence and determinants within the evaluation of student and teacher performance as: Assertiveness, Interpersonal Relationships, Social Responsibility and Flexibility.

Studies have revealed that general emotional intelligence, emotional perception and emotional arrangement explain individual cognition-based performance incomparably beyond and above the level that can be attributed to general intelligence (Lam, & Kirby, 2002; 2008; Erdem, İlğan, & Çelik, 2013). Emotional intelligence requires the individual to be interested in emotional issues, participate in interpersonal relationships and possess the skills of making effective decisions (Maree, & Fernandes, 2003). Additionally, there are several studies regarding the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and critical thinking (Dutoğlu, & Tuncel, 2008; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Nelson & Nelson, 2003). Moreover, there are certain studies that indicated low-level relationships between emotional intelligence and ethical reasoning (Kılıç, & Önen, 2009).

Sen (2008) stated that there is a direct relationship between the social skill sub-dimension of emotional intelligence and contact adequacy. Schutte et al. (2001) carried out seven concurrent analyses with students and working people whose ages ranged from 20 to 54 and examined the effects of emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships. As a result of their study, it was determined that the people who possessed high emotional intelligence also possessed high levels of empathy, self-monitoring, social skills, collaboration, skills of establishing more close and affectionate relationships, marital satisfaction and satisfaction expectancy.

There is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and the capacity to make contact, which plays an important role in interpersonal relationships. It may be stated that the Gestalt approach has an extreme humanistic characteristic (Daş, 2017). The Gestalt therapy approach, which considers the individual with their interaction within the interpersonal field, defines the interaction between the environment and the organism as “contact”. Contact is the meeting of the organism (self) with others (no self) and the physical-social environment in the border. The contact must not only be between the individual and the environment, but it should also be able to be experienced as the interaction of the individual with themselves and must be in a rhythmic cycle (Sezgin, 2002). The mechanisms that sustain the Gestalt contact cycle are defined as “introjection, projection, confluence, retroflexion, deflection, self-monitoring and desensitisation.” They are also named contact styles (Aktaş, & Daş, 2002). According to Perls (1969), these mechanisms can make the individual neurotic when they are constantly and inappropriately used. It is possible to find several studies that investigated the relationship and effectiveness of contact styles and therapy practices in prospective

teachers (cited: Öztürk, & Yüksel, 2015; Akça, Şahin, & Vazgeçer, 2011; Özgür, Büyükbayram, & Atalay, 2018; Hen & Sharabi-Nov, 2014; McAvoy, 2014).

The movements that started in 1960s with brief psychological counselling, similar to the technological movement which requests quick replies, presently reveal themselves in many fields (Cape, Whittington, Buszewicz, Wallace, & Underwood, 2010). The brief solution-focused approach, which was developed under the guidance of Milton H. Erickson and then became the centre of attention for certain people and groups, continues to gain acceptance especially because of its positive results (Sklare, 1997). The solution-focused approach is an approach which is based on endurance and emphasises people's resources and power for recovery, as well as how to use these on the way to purposeful and positive change (Grant et al., 2012). De Shazer (1994) attempted to relate the solution-focused paradigm to a series of theoretical frameworks and accomplished these results; the theory of self-determination, positive psychology hope theory and discursive psychology theory.

The study by Newsome (2005) utilised the solution-focused approach, and considering the results of the observations of teachers and parents, the effectiveness of children who were under risk was determined. A revision study that was conducted through SFBT (Solution-Focused Brief Therapy) included students who were under risk at schools. It was concluded that it was a useful approach for the students to decrease the insensitivity of negative emotions and manage and eliminate their behavioural problems (Kim, & Franklin, 2009). Another study determined that solution-focused group counselling was effective in decreasing school burnout; however, it was not effective within the sub-dimensions of family-based burnout and inadequacy at school, which are sub-dimensions of school burnout (Nedim Bal & Kaya, 2017). Siyez and Tan (2014) examined the effects of an anger management psycho-education program based on solution-focused psychological counselling on the anger management and communication skills of high school students.

When the literature was reviewed, we found a limited number of studies that included both the dependent and independent variables of our study. In the study by Deniz and Yılmaz (2005), a negative and significant correlation was found between the avoiding dealing with problems sub-scale, which is a style of overcoming stress, and using emotional intelligence. In a similar study, positive and significant relationships were discovered among the overcoming stress, emotional intelligence and productivity characteristics of prospective teachers (Önen, 2012). Based on Grant's (2011) taxonomy study, which was carried out on problem disengagement, goal orientation and resource activation that are the three sub-dimensions of insight and solution-focused thinking, a question was asked; Do high levels of insight make solution-focused thinking easier? It was determined that those who considered themselves adequate for solving problems were more sociable within their interpersonal relationships, they possessed more positive self-perception, and they displayed more appropriate studying methods and statuses in academic aspects (Şahin, Şahin, & Heppner, 1993; Cohen, 2006).

It is believed that this study will provide us with information on whether or not prospective teachers use their solution-focused characteristics within the problems they encounter, how their contact styles are and on what level they are in terms of using their emotional intelligence. Psychological counsellors or branch teachers of the future, who will guide students personally, vocationally and educationally, are supposed to possess not only these characteristics but also several other competencies. Additionally, it is believed that questioning the relationship between these variables will set an example for practices in education and form a basis for theoretical inquiry.

The research questions that were investigated in this study are given below:

RQ1: Do prospective teachers differentiate in terms of emotional intelligence, Gestalt contact styles and solution-focused points of view based on the type of education they receive?

RQ2: Are there significant relationships among prospective teachers' emotional intelligence, Gestalt contact styles and solution-focused points of view?

RQ3: Do emotional intelligence and Gestalt contact styles predict solution-focused points of view significantly?

## Method

### Participants

840 prospective teachers, who studied at different undergraduate programs, participated in this study which was carried out as a relational screening model. Studies carried out as relational screening models aim to describe inclination, attitudes and views quantitatively or numerically (Creswell, 2016) by examining the relationships and connections to understand and define a phenomenon better (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2013). Within the context of the study, 67 forms were not evaluated because of reasons such as choosing more than one option or leaving some items blank without marking. 619 (73.7%) of the participants were female, and 221 (26.3%) were male. The age range was from 18 to 40, and the mean age was 25.11. Additionally, 201 (23.9%) of the students were in their first year, 70 (8.3%) were in their second year, 191 (22.7%) were in their third year, 217 (25.8%) were in their fourth year, and 161 (19.2%) were graduates. The graduated students, who received education from different faculties except from an education faculty, were students registered at the pedagogic formation program (Pedagogical Formation Training, 2014). 481 (57.3%) of the students consisted of prospective teachers who attended an education faculty, and 359 (42.7%) were taking pedagogic formation training.

### Instruments

**Solution-Focused Inventory (SFI):** The scale was developed by Grant et al. (2012). The validity and the reliability studies of the Turkish version of the scale were carried out by Karahan and Hamarta (2015). SFI is a 6-point Likert-type scale which consists of 12 items. As a result of the analyses performed for the language equivalence of SFI, the correlations between the Turkish and the original form scores were observed as .92 for Problem Disengagement, .94 for Goal Orientation and .91 for Resource Activation. The fit indices in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis were found as RMSEA= .072 CFI= .94, IFI= .94, TLI=.91, GFI=.93 and AGFI=.87. The 16-week test-retest reliability was found as .84. As a result of the Cronbach's alpha test, the reliability coefficients were determined as .74 for the general SFI, while these values for the problem disengagement, goal orientation and resource activation sub-scales were “.70, .80 and .73” respectively.

**Revised Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS-R):** The Revised Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale was developed by Schutte et al. (1998) and reorganised by Austin, Saklofske, Huang and McKenney (2004) in the form of 41 items (Tatar, Tok, & Saltukoğlu 2011). It is a three-factor (optimism/mood adjustment, evaluation of emotions and use of emotions) 5-point Likert-type scale. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the factors were determined as .75 for optimism/mood adjustment, .39 for use of emotions and .76 for evaluation of emotions. For this study, these values were .84 for the general Revised Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, .71 for optimism, .68 for use of emotions and .75 for evaluation of emotions.

**Gestalt Contact Styles Questionnaire - Revised Form (GCSQ-RF):** GCSQ-RF is a self-evaluation scale which consists of 61 items and can be performed in groups. It is scored as a 6-point (1-5) Likert-type scale. For each sub-dimension of the scale, separate scores are obtained. High scores point out that the concerned contact styles are used more often. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Aktaş and Daş (2002). As a result of the analyses regarding the scale's factorial structure, it was seen that GCSQ-RF consisted of 5 factors as “retroreflection, deflection, contact, confluence and desensitisation.” The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient

of the scale ranged between .53 and .84 (Aktaş, & Daş, 2002). For this study, the reliability coefficients of the sub-scales that form the Gestalt Contact Styles were calculated as .81 for retroflexion, .74 for deflection, .71 for contact, .65 for confluence and .65 for desensitisation.

### Procedure

The study was carried out for three weeks in the Spring semester of 2018 with all participants in a group. The questionnaire forms were distributed to the students, and the students were informed about the purpose and significance of the study. Those who volunteered participated in the study, and all students replied to the items in the questionnaire in approximately 20 minutes.

### Data Analysis

The comparison of the groups was carried out with a parametric t-test. Additionally, on the basis of the relational level and direction of the three scales to each other and sub-dimensions, these were analysed by multilinear correlation, while hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the prediction level of the Solution-Focused Inventory, Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Contact Styles and for identifying the prediction power of each variable.

### Findings

Table 1 shows the results of the t-test based on the type of education received by the participants in terms of their results on being solution-focused, emotional intelligence and Gestalt contact styles.

**Table 1.** The t-Test Results on Being Solution-Focused, Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Contact Styles Based on the Type of Teaching Education Received by the Participants.

| Scale                         | Program   | N   | $\bar{X}$ | ss  | sd  | t      | p      | $\eta^2$ | Cohen's <i>d</i> |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----|--------|--------|----------|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|--------|------|------|-----------|-----|------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|--------|------|------|-----------|-----|------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|--------|------|------|-----------|-----|------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|--------|------|------|-----------|-----|------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|-------|------|------|-----------|-----|------|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|--------|-------|
| <b>Solution Focused</b>       | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.95      | .56 | 838 | -2.526 | .012*  | .008     | -.18             |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 4.06      | .65 |     |        |        |          |                  | <b>Emotional Intelligence</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.74 | .39 | 838 | .712   | .477   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.72 | .41 | <b>Retroflexion</b>    | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.96 | .23 | 838 | .984   | .325   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.00 | .26 | <b>Deflection</b>      | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.91 | .58 | 838 | .886   | .376   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 2.87 | .60 | <b>Contact</b>         | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.54 | .62 | 838 | -3.287 | .001** | .013 | -.23 | Formation | 359 | 2.50 | .66 | <b>Confluence</b>      | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.49 | .51 | 838 | -.982  | .326  | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.61 | .57 | <b>Desensitisation</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36 | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040* |
| <b>Emotional Intelligence</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.74      | .39 | 838 | .712   | .477   | -        | -                |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 3.72      | .41 |     |        |        |          |                  | <b>Retroflexion</b>           | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.96 | .23 | 838 | .984   | .325   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.00 | .26 | <b>Deflection</b>      | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.91 | .58 | 838 | .886   | .376   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 2.87 | .60 | <b>Contact</b>         | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.54 | .62 | 838 | -3.287 | .001** | .013 | -.23 | Formation | 359 | 2.50 | .66 | <b>Confluence</b>      | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.49 | .51 | 838 | -.982  | .326   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.61 | .57 | <b>Desensitisation</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36 | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040* | .005 | -.14 | Formation | 359 | 3.39 | .43 |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
| <b>Retroflexion</b>           | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.96      | .23 | 838 | .984   | .325   | -        | -                |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 3.00      | .26 |     |        |        |          |                  | <b>Deflection</b>             | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.91 | .58 | 838 | .886   | .376   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 2.87 | .60 | <b>Contact</b>         | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.54 | .62 | 838 | -3.287 | .001** | .013 | -.23 | Formation | 359 | 2.50 | .66 | <b>Confluence</b>      | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.49 | .51 | 838 | -.982  | .326   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.61 | .57 | <b>Desensitisation</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36 | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040*  | .005 | -.14 | Formation | 359 | 3.39 | .43 |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
| <b>Deflection</b>             | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.91      | .58 | 838 | .886   | .376   | -        | -                |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 2.87      | .60 |     |        |        |          |                  | <b>Contact</b>                | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.54 | .62 | 838 | -3.287 | .001** | .013 | -.23 | Formation | 359 | 2.50 | .66 | <b>Confluence</b>      | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.49 | .51 | 838 | -.982  | .326   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.61 | .57 | <b>Desensitisation</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36 | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040*  | .005 | -.14 | Formation | 359 | 3.39 | .43 |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
| <b>Contact</b>                | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 2.54      | .62 | 838 | -3.287 | .001** | .013     | -.23             |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 2.50      | .66 |     |        |        |          |                  | <b>Confluence</b>             | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.49 | .51 | 838 | -.982  | .326   | -    | -    | Formation | 359 | 3.61 | .57 | <b>Desensitisation</b> | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36 | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040*  | .005 | -.14 | Formation | 359 | 3.39 | .43 |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
| <b>Confluence</b>             | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.49      | .51 | 838 | -.982  | .326   | -        | -                |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 3.61      | .57 |     |        |        |          |                  | <b>Desensitisation</b>        | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36 | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040*  | .005 | -.14 | Formation | 359 | 3.39 | .43 |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
| <b>Desensitisation</b>        | Edu. Fac. | 481 | 3.36      | .42 | 838 | -2.057 | .040*  | .005     | -.14             |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |
|                               | Formation | 359 | 3.39      | .43 |     |        |        |          |                  |                               |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |        |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |      |      |           |     |      |     |                        |           |     |      |     |     |        |       |

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

As a result of the t-test based on the variable of type of education, a significant difference was detected in favour of the education faculty graduates in the general Solution-Focused Inventory ( $t = -3.287$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and the contact sub-scale, which is one of the Gestalt contact styles, while a significant difference was found in favour of those who were receiving formation education within the context of desensitisation ( $t = -2.057$ ;  $p < .05$ ), which is one of the Gestalt contact styles

**Table 2.** Multilinear Correlation Analysis Specific to Sub-Scales among Being Solution-Focused, Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Contact Styles.

| Scales                                 | 1.1. | 1.2. | 1.3.   | 2.1.   | 2.2.   | 2.3.   | 3.1.    | 3.2.    | 3.3.    | 3.4.   | 3.5.    |
|--|------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| <b>1.1. Problem Disengagement</b>      |      | .052 | .009   | .040   | -.057  | .025   | .102**  | .021    | .107**  | .059   | -.048   |
| <b>1.2. Goal Orientation</b>           |      |      | .410** | .443** | .103** | .294** | -.324** | -.455** | .387**  | .081*  | .061    |
| <b>1.3. Resource Activation</b>        |      |      |        | .386** | .054   | .178** | -.270** | -.246** | .313**  | .118** | .075*   |
| <b>2.1. Optimism</b>                   |      |      |        |        | .362** | .478** | -.373** | -.426** | .460**  | .202** | -.053   |
| <b>2.2. The Use of the Emotions</b>    |      |      |        |        |        | .375** | -.074*  | -.247** | .054    | .054   | -.202** |
| <b>2.3. The Evaluation of Emotions</b> |      |      |        |        |        |        | -.408** | -.480** | .348**  | .042   | -.082*  |
| <b>3.1. Confluence</b>                 |      |      |        |        |        |        |         | .627**  | -.288** | .051   | -.251** |
| <b>3.2. Contact</b>                    |      |      |        |        |        |        |         |         | -.259** | .051   | -.112** |
| <b>3.3. Deflection</b>                 |      |      |        |        |        |        |         |         |         | .123** | .043    |
| <b>3.4. Retroreflection</b>            |      |      |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |        | -.226** |
| <b>3.5. Desensitisation</b>            |      |      |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |        |         |

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

There were positive correlations between goal orientation and contact ( $r=.46$ ,  $p<.01$ ), optimism ( $r=.44$ ,  $p<.01$ ), deflection ( $r=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and confluence ( $r=.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ), between resource activation and optimism ( $r=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and deflection ( $r=.31$ ,  $p<.01$ ), between optimism and deflection ( $r=.46$ ,  $p<.01$ ), contact ( $r=.43$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and confluence ( $r=.37$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and between evaluation of emotions and contact ( $r=.48$ ,  $p<.01$ ), confluence ( $r=.41$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and deflection ( $r=.35$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

**Table 3.** Hierarchical Regression Analysis on the Predictive Power of Emotional Intelligence and Gestalt Contact Styles for Being Solution-Focused.

| Solution Focused | B     | SHB  | $\beta$ | t        | p    | R <sup>2</sup> | R <sup>2</sup> change | F      | F change |
|------------------|-------|------|---------|----------|------|----------------|-----------------------|--------|----------|
| <b>Model 1</b>   | 2.350 | .186 |         | 12.662** | .000 | .09            | .087                  | 79.826 | 79.826   |
| Emotional        | .442  | .049 | .295    | 8.935**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| <b>Model 2</b>   | 1.737 | .187 |         | 9.313**  | .000 | .18            | .095                  | 92.845 | 96.744   |
| Emotional        | .254  | .051 | .169    | 5.018**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Contact          | .371  | .038 | .332    | 9.836**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| <b>Model 3</b>   | 2.796 | .256 |         | 10.904** | .000 | .21            | .033                  | 75.956 | 34.702   |
| Emotional        | .122  | .054 | .082    | 2.244*   | .025 |                |                       |        |          |
| Contact          | .349  | .037 | .312    | 9.385**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Deflection       | -.194 | .033 | -.205   | -5.891** | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| <b>Model 4</b>   | 2.531 | .270 |         | 9.357**  | .000 | .22            | .008                  | 59.702 | 8.808    |
| Emotional        | .095  | .055 | .063    | 1.727    | .085 |                |                       |        |          |
| Contact          | .339  | .037 | .304    | 9.135**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Deflection       | -.208 | .033 | -.221   | -6.294** | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Confluence       | .130  | .044 | .093    | 2.968**  | .003 |                |                       |        |          |
| <b>Model 5</b>   | 2.484 | .281 |         | 8.824**  | .000 | .22            | .000                  | 47.797 | .363     |
| Emotional        | .095  | .055 | .064    | 1.733    | .084 |                |                       |        |          |
| Contact          | .343  | .038 | .307    | 9.109**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Deflection       | -.222 | .040 | -.235   | -5.576** | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Confluence       | .129  | .044 | .092    | 2.933**  | .003 |                |                       |        |          |
| Retroreflection  | .024  | .040 | .024    | .603     | .547 |                |                       |        |          |
| <b>Model 6</b>   | 2.180 | .344 |         | 6.337**  | .000 | .22            | .002                  | 40.288 | 2.355    |
| Emotional        | .127  | .059 | .085    | 2.163*   | .031 |                |                       |        |          |
| Contact          | .336  | .038 | .301    | 8.891**  | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Deflection       | -.218 | .040 | -.230   | -5.472** | .000 |                |                       |        |          |
| Confluence       | .141  | .045 | .100    | 3.157**  | .002 |                |                       |        |          |
| Retroreflection  | .040  | .042 | .040    | .965     | .335 |                |                       |        |          |
| Desensitisation  | .044  | .029 | .053    | 1.535    | .125 |                |                       |        |          |

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

Within the hierarchical regression analysis, the first step included emotional intelligence, the second step included contact, the third step included deflection, the fourth step included confluence, the fifth step included retroreflection, and the last step included desensitisation in the equation. According to the 6th model, the regression equation regarding the prediction of being solution-focused was as being solution-focused = (.336 contact) + (-.218 x deflection) + (.141x confluence) + (.127 x emotional intelligence) + (.044x emotional desensitisation) + (.040 x retroreflection) + (.2180). It was seen that emotional intelligence explained 9% of the total variance, and with the addition of contact into the equation, this rate became 18%. Moreover, it became 21% after adding deflection and 22% after adding confluence, while it remained unchanged at 22% after addition of retroreflection in the fifth step and addition of desensitisation in the final step.

### Discussion

According to the findings of our research, the prospective teachers who studied at education faculties were significantly more solution-focused in comparison to those who took formation education, and they used contact styles more. Similar findings were encountered in the studies by Genç and Kalafat (2010) and Kırallı (2017). It may be stated that this situation was a result of the courses of the prospective teachers, who attended education faculties, especially vocational courses extended to their four years of education. Additionally, the significant difference in contact styles may be a result of the students at education faculties attending their applied courses starting from their second year, and this situation may be an advantage for them. This is because, in education faculties, the available courses are practice-based, and they are taught in pedagogical quality. In many studies carried out with formation students, it is known that the participants consisted of emotionally more naive and worried people concerned with finding a job (Güneş & Gökçek, 2012). It is believed that this result occurred due to their more sensitive nature because of life events (unemployment) and developmental factors regarding their age. One of the findings in this part was that the groups resembled each other in terms of the variable of emotional intelligence. This finding may be explained with the fact that the participants were coming from the same education system in Turkey.

Some of the important findings of the study were the relationships among the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence, being solution-focused and Gestalt contact styles scales. There were positive and significant relationships between the goal orientation and resource activation skills of the prospective teachers and between their optimism and ability to use emotions effectively. This result is quite valuable because this relationship indicates that the prospective teachers possessed all these necessary traits at the same time when they encountered a problem: not giving up, not quitting and the ability to use either internal or external resources effectively. Similar to these findings, Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2008) found a significant relationship between self-efficacy of teachers and the personal skills sub-scale of emotional intelligence. Likewise, Ekinci Vural (2010) reported a positive and significant relationship between problem solving scores and the adaptability sub-scale of the Emotional Intelligence Scale. Another study observed that there was a positive relationship between prospective teachers' leadership styles and the optimism sub-dimension of emotional intelligence, and a negative relationship was found between leadership styles and the expression of emotions dimension (Yıldızbaşı 2017). The study by Beard (2008) determined a positive relationship between teachers' flow experience and academic optimism.

Finally, it was determined that the participants focused on solutions at the point of mobilising their resources, while they were using the deflection and retroreflection contact styles at the same time. Kepner (1982) stated that those who use the deflection contact style are in an emotional ambiguity, they avoid focusing on their emotions, and they also do not take the responsibility of their emotions, thoughts and behaviours. On the other hand, Korb, Gorrell and van De Riet (1989) stated that conscious use of deflection in the fields of politics, science and business would be healthier and more functional. In the light of these assessments, the

existence of a positive relationship of deflection, which is one of the findings of the research, and optimism with the dimension of evaluation of emotions gains meaning. In other words, the prospective teachers, who used the deflection contact style more often, possessing high emotional intelligence scores, may appear as a result of protecting themselves from the environment styles. However, within the interpersonal relationship dimension, considering the finding of Kepner (1982), it may be stated that the results we encountered were not good for prospective teachers at all. Hence, since these people will be closed to all the feedback coming to them, they will be far from the awareness that will increase the optimistic points of view for their lives.

Among the correlation findings of the study, another prominent result was about the negative relationship that was found between the confluence and contact sub-scales and all sub-scales of emotional intelligence. It is known that individuals who use the confluence contact style are less optimistic, and they have difficulty in evaluating and managing their emotions more correctly (Daş, 2017). Considering that people who use this contact style often have low emotional intelligence scores, it may be stated that these people are dominant in their relationships, and they bring their self-esteem traits to the forefront.

Within the correlation part of the findings, the final prominent finding was the negative relationship between the desensitisation contact style and the sub-scales of emotional intelligence. Emotional insensitivity is quite a risky trait especially for occupational groups working with people (Daş, 2017). Likewise, since these individuals are insensitive against themselves and possess low social interest for their environment, their potential for being damaging is very high. Appropriately for our findings, in the studies of Aslan and Özata (2008) and Güllüce and İçcan (2010), negative relationships emerged between desensitisation and the dimensions of emotional intelligence (happiness, flexibility, realism, problem solving, social responsibility, empathy, independence, self-respect and emotional self-awareness).

It was determined that the emotional intelligence and contact styles that the prospective teachers had explained 22% of their status of being solution-focused. Yılmaz and Altınok (2014) determined that the emotional abilities of prospective teachers significantly predicted their self-respect and careful, avoidant, postponed and avoidant decision-making styles. Another study similarly examined the relationship between prospective teachers' subjective well-being and social problem-solving strategies. A positive relationship was found between the positive direction to the problem and rational problem-solving sub-dimensions, whereas a negative relationship was found between the negative direction to problem, avoidant style and carelessness without impulsiveness sub-dimensions (Yiğit, 2013). Bilge and Engin (2016) determined the effectiveness of solution-focused therapy on the interpersonal relationships theory with an experimental study. The findings of Otto and Lantermann (2005) were in parallel with the findings of our study. The researchers asserted that the participants who had high emotional accuracy indicated more convenient problem-solving behaviours in highly complicated problems and generally showed better performance in comparison to the participants who had low accuracy. The hierarchical regression analyses suggested that emotional accuracy was dependent on transaction capacity and foreseeing performance to the same extent. A recent projection suggested that new models to be established on emotional intelligence would be quite different from the models of Bar-On (1997) and Salovey and Mayer (1990) (cited: Petrides, & Furnham, 2000; Bucich and MacCann, 2019a).

While planning their classes, teachers must think about what they can do in terms of developing self-awareness, managing emotions, motivation and social relationships and how to integrate emotional intelligence into education, and they must ask questions to themselves. Özözen-Danacı and Pınarcık (2017) suggested that the emotional intelligence of prospective teachers has a full effect on their indomitableness and levels of hope for the future. Kiser and Piercy (1993) emphasised the importance of including emotions in the solution-focused approach. Attempts such as expressing and accepting emotions during therapy will provide the individual with the ability to act based on the solution rather than obstacles. The study by Schutte, Schuettpeitz and Malouff (2001) reported that individuals who have emotional intelligence showed better



performance in cognitive tasks and managed disappointment and despair that can be caused by encountering very difficult tasks in a better way. Justice and Espinoza (2007) determined that emotional intelligence training was effective in developing comfort, empathy, decision-making, time management, independence, self-respect, stress management and respect skills.

In this study, conclusions were reached upon emotional intelligence, solution-focused and gestalt contact styles. Besides special activities directly for students, experts might contribute to developing emotional intelligence in students indirectly by training teachers, administrators and parents on this issue. Future studies may be planned to include different variables and use quantitative or mixed methods regarding intermediary roles.

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