

## ON $\sigma$ -SUBNORMAL SUBGROUPS OF FINITE GROUPS

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**Abstract:** Let  $p$  be a prime and let  $\sigma = \{\{p\}, \{p\}'\}$  be a partition of the set  $\mathbb{P}$  of all primes. We prove the following conjecture by Skiba: If each complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in a finite group  $G$  is reducible to some subgroup  $H$  of  $G$  then  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ .

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### 1. Introduction

Answering a question of Kegel [1] and Wielandt [2], Kleidman proved in [3] that a subgroup  $H$  of a finite group  $G$  is subnormal in  $G$  if  $H \cap P$  is a Sylow  $p$ -subgroup in  $H$  for every Sylow  $p$ -subgroup  $P$  in  $G$  and every prime  $p$ .

This result led to the corresponding question for the  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroups of a finite group which was posed by Skiba in [4] as Question 19.86 (see also Question 7.2 in [5]).

**Problem 1.** Let  $\sigma = \{\sigma_i \mid i \in I\}$  be a partition of the set  $\mathbb{P}$  of all primes and let  $G$  be a finite group having a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup for each  $i \in I$ . Let  $H$  be a subgroup in  $G$  such that  $H \cap S_i$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $H$  for each  $i \in I$  and every Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup  $S_i$  in  $G$ . Is it true that  $H$  is a  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroup in  $G$ ?

It was Skiba who proposed in [7] the concept of  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroup which develops the idea of a subnormal subgroup from [6]. This concept bases on the following definitions:

Let  $\mathbb{P}$  be the set of primes,  $\pi \subseteq \mathbb{P}$ , and  $\pi' = \mathbb{P} \setminus \pi$ . If  $n$  is a natural then  $\pi(n)$  is the set of all primes dividing  $n$ ; in particular,  $\pi(G) = \pi(|G|)$  is the set of all primes dividing the order  $|G|$  of  $G$ . In what follows,  $\sigma$  is always a partition of  $\mathbb{P}$  into pairwise disjoint subsets  $\sigma_i$  ( $i \in I$ ), i.e.,  $\mathbb{P} = \bigcup_{i \in I} \sigma_i$  and  $\sigma_i \cap \sigma_j = \emptyset$  for all  $i \neq j$ . Following [8], we say that a group  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -primary if  $G$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup for some  $i \in I$ .

A subgroup  $H$  in a group  $G$  is called  $\sigma$ -subnormal if there exists a chain of subgroups

$$H = H_0 \subseteq H_1 \subseteq \cdots \subseteq H_n = G$$

such that for each  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$  either the subgroup  $H_{i-1}$  is normal in  $H_i$  or the subgroup  $H_i/\text{Core}_{H_i}(H_{i-1})$  is  $\sigma$ -primary. Clearly, a subgroup  $H$  is subnormal in  $G$  if and only if it is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$  for the *minimal* partition  $\sigma = \{\{2\}, \{3\}, \{5\}, \dots\}$ .

Problem 2 below is more general as compared with Problem 1. This is connected with existence of the subgroups having several classes of conjugate Hall subgroups.

Following [8], we say that a system  $\Sigma = \{S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k\}$  of  $\sigma$ -primary Hall subgroups in a group  $G$  is a *complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$*  of  $G$  provided that

- (1)  $(|S_i|, |S_j|) = 1$  for all  $i \neq j \in \{1, 2, \dots, k\}$ ;
- (2)  $\pi(G) = \pi(S_1) \cup \pi(S_2) \cup \cdots \cup \pi(S_k)$ .

If  $\Sigma = \{S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k\}$  is a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  of  $G$ ; then, obviously,  $\Sigma^g = \{S_1^g, S_2^g, \dots, S_k^g\}$  is also a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in  $G$  for every  $g \in G$ . A group  $G$  is called  $\sigma$ -complete if  $G$  possesses

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at least one Hall set of type  $\sigma$  (clearly, for some partitions  $\sigma$ , there exist groups for which the set of all complete Hall sets of type  $\sigma$  is empty).

We say that a complete Hall set  $\Sigma$  of type  $\sigma$  in a group  $G$  is *reduced* to a subgroup  $H$  of  $G$  if  $H \cap S_i$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $H$  for each  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$  (it is possible that  $H \cap S_i = 1$  for some  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ ).

**Problem 2.** Let  $\sigma$  be a partition of the set  $\mathbb{P}$  of all primes and let  $\Sigma = \{S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k\}$  be a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in a finite group  $G$ . Let  $H$  be a subgroup in  $G$  such that  $\Sigma^g$  is reduced to  $H$  for every  $g \in G$ . Is it true that  $H$  is a  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroup in  $G$ ?

While Problem 1 requires that each complete Hall set  $\Sigma$  of type  $\sigma$  in  $G$  be reduced to a subgroup  $H$  in  $G$ , Problem 2 deals only with complete Hall sets  $\Sigma^g$  ( $g \in G$ ) for some given complete Hall set  $\Sigma$  in  $G$ . Therefore, the affirmative solution of Problem 2 leads to the solution to Problem 1.

In this article, Problems 1 and 2 are solved for a partition  $\sigma = \{\{p\}, \{p\}'\}$ , where  $p$  is a prime. Our main goal is to prove the following theorem:

**Theorem 1.1.** Let  $p$  be a prime,  $\sigma = \{\{p\}, \{p\}'\}$ , and let  $\Sigma$  be a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in a finite group  $G$ . If  $H$  is a subgroup in  $G$  such that  $\Sigma^g$  is reduced to  $H$  for every  $g \in G$  then  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ .

The key to proving Theorem 1.1 is given by Lemma 2.4 establishing the structure of a minimal counterexample for every partition  $\sigma$ , together with Kazarin's Theorem (see [9]) which describes simple nonabelian groups containing a Hall  $p'$ -subgroup.

## 2. Definitions and Preliminary Results

The present work deals only with finite groups and uses the definitions and notations of [10]. As regards the terminology of the theory of  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroups, the reader is referred to [7, 8].

We use the following notations:

If  $\pi$  is a set of primes then  $\text{Hall}_\pi(G)$  is the set of all Hall  $\pi$ -subgroups in a group  $G$ .

If  $\Sigma = \{S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k\}$  is a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in  $G$  and  $N$  is a normal subgroup in  $G$  then  $\Sigma N/N = \{S_1 N/N, S_2 N/N, \dots, S_k N/N\}$ .

If  $n$  is a natural then  $\sigma(n) = \{\sigma_i \cap \pi(n) \mid i \in I, \sigma_i \cap \pi(n) \neq \emptyset\}$ .

$\sigma(G) = \sigma(|G|)$ .

The basic properties of  $\sigma$ -subgroups are given as some lemmas whose proofs are straightforward.

**Lemma 2.1.** Let  $H$  and  $N$  be subgroups in  $G$ , where  $N$  is normal in  $G$ . Then

- (1) if  $H$   $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$  then the subgroup  $HN/N$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G/N$ ;
- (2) if  $N \subseteq H$  then  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$  if and only if  $H/N$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G/N$ .

**Lemma 2.2.** Let  $H$  and  $K$  be subgroups in  $G$ , where  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ . Then

- (1) if  $K \subseteq H$  and  $K$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $H$  then  $K$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ ;
- (2)  $K \cap H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $K$ ;
- (3) if  $H \subseteq K$  then  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $K$ .

Following [8], we say that a group  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -nilpotent (or  $\sigma$ -decomposable) if  $G$  is the direct product of some  $\sigma$ -primary groups; i.e.,  $G$  is representable as a direct product of its Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroups for some  $i \in I$ .

A straightforward check shows that the class  $\mathfrak{N}_\sigma$  of all  $\sigma$ -nilpotent groups is a hereditary Fitting formation. This implies in particular that every group  $G$  contains some least normal subgroup the quotient group by which is  $\sigma$ -nilpotent. This subgroup is denoted by  $G^{\mathfrak{N}_\sigma}$  and called the  $\sigma$ -nilpotent residual (or the  $\mathfrak{N}_\sigma$ -residual) of  $G$ .

**Lemma 2.3.** A subgroup  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$  if one of the following is fulfilled:

- (1)  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -nilpotent;
- (2)  $G^{\mathfrak{N}_\sigma} \subseteq H$ ;
- (3)  $|\sigma(G)| = 1$ .

Suppose that  $H$  is a subgroup in a  $\sigma$ -complete group  $G$ , while  $\sigma(G) = \{\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \dots, \sigma_k\}$ , and  $\Sigma = \{S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k\}$  is a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in  $G$ . We say that a pair  $(G, H)$  is a *counterexample to Problem 2* if for every  $g \in G$  the complete Hall set  $\Sigma^g$  is reduced to  $H$  but the subgroup  $H$  is not  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ . If, moreover, the pair  $(G, H)$  is such that the sum  $|G| + |H|$  is minimal; then we refer to the counterexample  $(G, H)$  as a *minimal counterexample to Problem 2*.

**Lemma 2.4.** *Let  $\sigma = \{\sigma_i \mid i \in I\}$  be a partition of the set  $\mathbb{P}$  of all primes. If  $(G, H)$  is a minimal counterexample to Problem 2 then  $G$  and  $H$  are simple nonabelian groups.*

PROOF. Let  $N$  be a minimal normal subgroup in  $G$  and let  $\Sigma = \{S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k\}$  be a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in  $G$ . By Lemma 2.3,  $k = |\sigma(G)| \geq 2$ . By hypothesis,  $H \cap S_i^g$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $H$  for all  $g \in G$  and  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ . Since  $N \trianglelefteq G$ , we infer that  $N \cap S_i^g \trianglelefteq S_i^g$  and  $N \cap S_i^g$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $N$ . It is easy to conclude from this that  $S_i^g \cap HN$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $HN$ . Now, since  $S_i^g N / N \cap HN / N = (S_i^g \cap HN) N / N$ ; therefore,  $S_i^g N / N \cap HN / N$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $HN / N$ . Thus, the complete Hall set  $\Sigma^g N / N$  of type  $\sigma$  in  $G / N$  is reduced to  $HN / N$  for every  $g \in G$ . Hence, by the minimality of the counterexample,  $HN / N$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G / N$ . But then  $HN$  is a  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroup in  $G$  by Lemma 2.1. Therefore,  $N$  is not in  $H$ ; in particular,  $\text{Core}_G(H) = 1$ . Clearly,  $H \cap S_i^x$  is a Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup in  $H$  for all  $x \in HN$ , and  $\{HN \cap S_1^x, HN \cap S_2^x, \dots, HN \cap S_k^x\}$  is a complete Hall set of type  $\sigma$  in  $HN$  which is reduced to  $H$ . If  $|HN| < |G|$ ; then the subgroup  $H$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $HN$  by the minimality of the counterexample. Then  $H$  is a  $\sigma$ -subnormal subgroup in  $G$  by Lemma 2.2, which contradicts the assumption.

Thus, we assume in what follows that  $G = HN$ .

Suppose first that  $N$  is an elementary abelian  $p$ -subgroup for some  $p \in \pi(G)$ . Then the index  $|G : H|$  is a power of  $p$ . This and  $k \geq 2$  imply that there exists  $\sigma_i \in \sigma$  for which  $\sigma_i \cap \pi(G) \in \sigma(G)$  and  $p \notin \sigma_i$ . Then  $H$  includes each Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup  $S_i^g$  for every  $g \in G$  and also  $S_i^g \neq 1$ . Hence,  $\langle S_i^g \mid g \in G \rangle \subseteq H$ . Since  $1 \neq \langle S_i^g \mid g \in G \rangle \trianglelefteq G$ ; therefore,  $\text{Core}_G(H) \neq 1$ . This is impossible.

Consequently,  $N$  is a direct product of isomorphic simple nonabelian groups. Put  $K = H \cap N$ . Obviously,  $K \trianglelefteq H$ . Therefore, the complete Hall set  $\Sigma^g$  of type  $\sigma$  in  $G$  is reduced to  $K$  for every  $g \in G$ . Thus,  $(G, K)$  satisfies the hypothesis of the lemma. If  $K = H$  then  $G = N$  is a simple nonabelian group. Hence,  $K \neq H$ . By the minimality of the counterexample,  $K$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ . But then, by Lemma 2.2,  $K$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $N$ . Hence, there exists a chain of subgroups

$$K = K_0 \subseteq K_1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq K_{n-1} \subseteq K_n = N$$

such that, for each  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ , either  $K_{i-1}$  is normal in  $K_i$  or  $K_i / \text{Core}_{K_i}(K_{i-1})$  is  $\sigma$ -primary.

Suppose that  $K \neq 1$  and consider the three possible cases:

CASE 1. Let  $N$  be a simple nonabelian group. Then  $K_{n-1}$  is not normal in  $N$ . Thus,  $N / \text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) = N / 1 = N$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group for some  $i \in \{1, \dots, k\}$ . Since  $G = HN$  and  $k \geq 2$ ; it follows that  $H$  contains all Hall  $\sigma_j$ -subgroups  $S_j^g$  ( $j \neq i$ ) for all  $g \in G$ . Consequently  $\text{Core}_G(H) \neq 1$ , which is impossible.

CASE 2. Let  $N = N_1 \times N_2$ , where  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  are isomorphic simple groups. If  $K_{n-1}$  is not normal in  $N$  then  $N / \text{Core}_N(K_{n-1})$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group for some  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ . Clearly, either  $\text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) = 1$  or  $\text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) \in \{N_1, N_2\}$ . If  $\text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) = 1$  then  $N / \text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) = N$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group. If  $\text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) \in \{N_1, N_2\}$ ; then, due to the isomorphism  $N / \text{Core}_N(K_{n-1}) \simeq N_1$ , the subgroup  $N_1$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group, which implies that  $N$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group too. Next, as in the case when  $N$  is a simple nonabelian group, we get a contradiction to  $\text{Core}_G(H) \neq 1$ .

If  $K_{n-1}$  is normal in  $N$  then  $K_{n-1} \in \{N_1, N_2\}$ , i.e.,  $K_{n-1}$  is a simple nonabelian group. If  $K \subset K_{n-1}$ ; then, as in Case 1, we get a contradiction. Consequently,  $K_{n-1} = K$ . Then  $K = H \cap N \trianglelefteq N$  and  $K = H \cap N \trianglelefteq H$ . Therefore,  $K \trianglelefteq \langle N, H \rangle = HN = G$ . Since  $K \subseteq H$ , this yields  $\text{Core}_G(H) \neq 1$ . We get a contradiction once again.

CASE 3. Suppose that  $N = N_1 \times N_2 \times \dots \times N_t$ , where  $t \geq 3$  and  $N_1, N_2, \dots, N_t$  are isomorphic simple groups. Inducting on  $t$ , as in Cases 1 and 2, we conclude that either  $N$  is a  $\sigma$ -primary group or  $\text{Core}_G(H) \neq 1$ . This contradicts the above.

Thus,  $K = H \cap N = 1$ , and so  $G = N \rtimes H$  is the semidirect product of  $N$  and  $H$ . If  $S_i \in \Sigma$  then  $S_i = \tilde{N} \rtimes \tilde{H}$ , where  $\tilde{N} \in \text{Hall}_{\sigma_i}(N)$  and  $\tilde{H} \in \text{Hall}_{\sigma_i}(H)$ . Consider the group  $N \rtimes \tilde{H}$  which includes  $S_i$ . By hypothesis,  $H \cap S_i^x$  are Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroups in  $H$  for all  $x \in N\tilde{H}$ . Hence,  $S_i^x \cap H \subseteq N\tilde{H} \cap H = (N \cap H)\tilde{H} = \tilde{H}$ . Consequently,  $S_i^x \cap H = \tilde{H}$ , whence we infer that  $\tilde{H} \subseteq S_i^x$  for all  $x \in N\tilde{H}$ . Hence,  $\tilde{H} \subseteq O_{\sigma_i}(N\tilde{H})$ . If  $O_{\sigma_i}(N) \neq 1$  then  $N$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group. As shown above, this is impossible. Thus,  $O_{\sigma_i}(N) = 1$ , and the Hall  $\sigma_i$ -subgroup  $\tilde{H}$  in  $H$  centralizes  $N$ . Since this holds for each  $i \in \{1, \dots, k\}$ ; therefore,  $G = N \times H$  and  $H \trianglelefteq G$ , which is impossible. Thus,  $G$  is a simple nonabelian group.

Show that  $H$  is simple. Suppose that  $H$  contains a proper normal subgroup  $L \neq 1$ . Obviously,  $(G, L)$  satisfies the hypothesis of the lemma. Since  $|G| + |L| < |G| + |H|$ , the subgroup  $L$  is  $\sigma$ -subnormal in  $G$ . This means that there exists some chain of subgroups

$$L = L_0 \subseteq L_1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq L_{n-1} \subseteq L_n = G$$

such that, for each  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ , either  $L_{i-1}$  is normal in  $L_i$  or  $L_i / \text{Core}_{L_i}(L_{i-1})$  is  $\sigma$ -primary. This and the simplicity of  $G$  imply that  $G$  is a  $\sigma_i$ -group for some  $i \in \{1, \dots, k\}$ . Since  $k \geq 2$ , this is impossible. Consequently,  $H$  is a simple nonabelian group. The lemma is proved.

REMARK. As follows from [3], the structure of a minimal counterexample to the Kegel–Wielandt conjecture is the same as in Lemma 2.4, i.e.,  $G$  and  $H$  are simple nonabelian groups.

The simplicity of  $G$  of the minimal counterexample to Problem 2 implies

**Lemma 2.5.** *Let  $(G, H)$  be a minimal counterexample to Problem 2 and let  $\sigma(G) = \{\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \dots, \sigma_k\}$ . Then  $\pi(H) \not\subseteq \sigma_i$  for each  $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, k\}$ .*

Additional information about the structure of a minimal counterexample to Problem 2 is given by the following proposition, which is of interest in its own right. Note only that if  $H$  is a subgroup of  $G$  and  $p$  is a prime; then, by [12], the notation  $H \leq_p G$  means that  $H$  is  $p$ -subnormal in  $G$ , i.e., for every Sylow  $p$ -subgroup  $P$  in  $G$ , the intersection  $P \cap H$  is a Sylow  $p$ -subgroup in  $H$ .

**Proposition 2.6.** *For every partition  $\sigma$ , any group  $G$  in a minimal counterexample  $(G, H)$  to Problem 2 cannot be an alternating group.*

PROOF. Suppose that  $G \simeq A_n$ ,  $n \geq 5$ . Since  $H$  is a simple nonabelian group,  $n \geq 6$ . By [11],  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -complete for a nonminimal partition  $\sigma$  if and only if either  $n = p$  is a prime or  $n = 8$ .

Let  $n = 8$ . Then  $G$  has a Hall  $\{2, 3\}$ -subgroup and is  $\sigma$ -complete only for those nonminimal partitions  $\sigma$  for which  $\sigma(G) = \{\{2, 3\}, \{5\}, \{7\}\}$ . Since  $H$  is a simple nonabelian group,  $\pi(H)$  contains at least one of the numbers 5 or 7. Let  $5 \in \pi(H)$ . Then  $H \leq_5 G$  and, by [12, Theorem 1.4],  $n = s \cdot 5^a > 5$ , where  $1 \leq s < 5$ . Since  $n = 8$ , this is impossible. It is demonstrated similarly that the case of  $7 \in \pi(H)$  is impossible either.

Let  $n = 7$ . Then  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -complete only for those nonminimal partitions  $\sigma$  for which  $\sigma(G) = \{\{2, 3\}, \{5\}, \{7\}\}$  or  $\sigma(G) = \{\{2, 3, 5\}, \{7\}\}$ . The first case is excluded like for  $n = 8$ . In the second case, in view of Lemma 2.5, we have  $7 \in \pi(H)$  and  $H \leq_7 G$ . Then, by Theorem 1.4 from [12],  $7 = s \cdot 5^a > 7$ , where  $1 \leq s < 7$ , which is impossible.

If  $n = p \geq 11$  then  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -complete only for those nonminimal partitions  $\sigma$  for which  $\sigma(G) = \{\pi((p-1)!), \{p\}\}$ . Obviously,  $p \in \pi(H)$  and  $H \leq_p G$ . By [12, Theorem 1.4],  $p = s \cdot p^a > p$ , where  $1 \leq s < p$ , which is impossible. The proposition is proved.

We will also need the following number-theoretic result from [13] establishing that if  $a$  and  $b$  are naturals such that  $a \geq 2$ ,  $b \geq 3$ , and  $(a, b) \neq (2, 6)$  then there is a prime  $r$  that divides  $a^b - 1$  but does not divide  $a^l - 1$  for all  $l = 1, 2, \dots, b-1$ . Such  $r$  is called *primitive* with respect to the pair  $(a, b)$ .

### 3. Proof of Theorem 1.1

Let  $(G, H)$  be a minimal counterexample. Then, by Lemma 2.4,  $G$  and  $H$  are simple nonabelian groups. Since  $G$  is  $\sigma$ -complete,  $G$  has a Hall  $p'$ -subgroup  $M$ . By [9, Theorem 7], one of the following cases is possible:

- (a)  $G = A_p$  and  $M \simeq A_{p-1}$ ;
- (b)  $G = PSL_n(q)$ , where  $q = r^m$ ,  $m \geq 1$ ,  $r$  is a prime, and  $M$  is a parabolic subgroup in  $G$ ; moreover,  $|G : M| = (q^n - 1)/(q - 1) = p^k$  and  $n$  is a prime;
- (c)  $G = PSL_2(11)$ ,  $p = 11$ , and  $M \simeq A_5$ ;
- (d)  $G = M_{11}$ ,  $p = 11$ , and  $M \simeq M_{10}$ ;
- (e)  $G = M_{23}$ ,  $p = 23$ , and  $M \simeq M_{22}$ .

By Proposition 2.6, the alternating group  $A_p$  cannot be a counterexample to Problem 2.

Consider case (b). Suppose first that  $n \geq 3$ . If  $(q, n) \neq (2, 6)$  then there is a prime  $t$  primitive with respect to  $(q, n)$ . By Fermat's Theorem,  $t \geq n + 1$ , and so  $t \geq 5$ . Since  $M$  is a parabolic subgroup,  $(|M|, t) = 1$ . Lemma 2.5 implies that  $H \leq_t G$ . This case is excluded by [12, Theorem 1.4]. Thus,  $(q, n) = (2, 6)$  and  $G = SL_6(2)$ . Since 6 is not a prime, the group  $G = SL_6(2)$  does not satisfy condition (b).

Thus,  $G = PSL_2(q)$ , where  $q + 1 = p^k$ . By [13, Lemma 1.2], only the following cases are possible.

Suppose first that  $r = 2$ . Then  $2^m + 1 = p^k$ . The two cases are possible:

(1)  $k = 1$  and  $p$  is a Fermat prime, where  $m$  is a power of 2. Then  $G = PSL_2(2^2) \simeq A_5$  for  $m = 2$ . This case was considered above. For  $m = 2^2 = 4$ , we obtain  $p = 17$ . By Lemma 2.5,  $H \leq_t G$  where  $t \geq 17$ . This case is impossible since it is excluded by [12, Theorem 1.4].

(2)  $m = 3$ ,  $p = 3$ ,  $k = 2$ , and  $G = PSL_2(9)$ . Since  $9 + 1 = 10$  is not a prime power, this case is impossible too.

Thus,  $r$  is an odd prime and  $r^m + 1 = 2^k$ . In this case  $m = 1$  and  $r = 2^k - 1$  is a Mersenne prime. Since  $G = PSL_2(r)$ , we have  $H \simeq A_5$  (if such a subgroup exists). Since  $\sigma = \{\sigma_1, \sigma_2\}$ , where  $\sigma_2 = \{2\}$ , the group  $A_5$  contains a subgroup of order 15, which is impossible.

The analysis of cases (c), (d), and (e) shows that they are impossible in view of Lemma 2.5 and [12, Theorem 1.4]. The theorem is proved.

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