



Relation between childhood abuse and self esteem in adolescence

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Abstract([Genişletilmiş Türkçe özet bu dosyanın sonundadır.](#))

The aim of this study is to examine the connection between childhood abuse and self esteem in adults and reveal the potential of childhood abuse determining self esteem. Sampling of this study comprised 915 secondary school students from Konya city's central district who were randomly selected. 583 of the sample students (%58.3) were females while 382 were males (%41.7). As a result of this study, it has been determined that there is a significant negative correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem. As a result of the regression analyses conducted separately, childhood abuse predicted significantly self-esteem, and it has been revealed that just even emotional abuse is major determinant of self-esteem. Result achieved on this issue indicates that students' self esteem levels decrease as childhood abuse increase.

Keywords: Abuse, Self-esteem, Childhood Abuse, Adolescence

Introduction

As living conditions are getting increasingly complicated nowadays, it is extremely important for children and adolescents who are the future of a society, to be brought up in a healthy manner in all possible aspects.

Family environment in which children are brought up, parent-child relationships and methods of bringing up children are among the major factors of effecting children's mental health and personality development (Ünal, 2008).

Although family environment is supposed to be the safest circumstance for a child, it is known that for disciplinary purposes, many parents intentionally or unintentionally harm, abuse and exploit their children, negatively affect their physical, mental and social development and thus bring up unhealthy individuals (Akduman, Ruban, Akduman, & Korkusuz, 2005).

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The concept of child neglect is generally the failure of fulfilment of individuals' obligation of taking care of a child and physically or mentally disregarding the child (Atay, 2003). According to Polat (2001), it (neglect) is; mothers', fathers' or care givers' disregard of basic needs such as care, protection, nutrition, clothing, medical care and education, which are essential for healthy upbringing of a child. The basic point separating neglect from abuse is that abuse is active while neglect is a passive circumstance (Turhan, Sangün, & İnandı, 2008).

Child abuse, on the other hand, is a total of actions or inactions which prevent or degrade child's development and regarded as inappropriate or damaging according to social laws or professionals, directed at the child by an adult such as mother, father or care giver, and which are. As a consequence of these actions or inactions, a child may be physically, mentally, sexually or socially harmed and is vulnerable in terms of health and security (Taner & Gökler 2004; Tıraşçı & Gönen, 2007; Tyler, Allison & Winsler, 2006). Although there are a variety of categorisations of the abuse concept, the most common used are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect (Polat, 2001; Tyler et al., 2006; Bernstein & Fink, 1998; Kara, Biçer, & Gökalp, 2004).

While physical abuse is regarded as a child being harmed in the hands of the people responsible for child's well being, in other words, physical integrity of the child being harmed, it is described in a broad sense as "*child's non-accidental injury*" (Polat 2001; Taner & Gökler 2004; Kara et al., 2004). Emotional abuse means harming children physiologically by depriving them from attention and love they need (Turhan et al., 2006). Emotional abuse include rejection, humiliation, profanity, isolation, separation, intimidation, threatening, disregarding of emotional needs, expectance of over-responsibility, discrimination among siblings, ignoring, not paying attention, ridiculing, nicknaming, exercising excess pressure and domination, enforcing dependency and over-protectiveness (Topbaş, 2004; Tell, Pavkov, Hecker, & Fontaine, 2006; Kara et al., 2004). Sexual abuse is exploitation of a physico-socially immature and under aged child by an adult (at least 4-6 years senior) for the purpose of sexual satisfaction (Kara et al., 2004). Sexual abuse covers all behaviours in a wide range, from touching genital areas with hands, exhibitionism, voyeurism, using in pornography to rape (Akduman et al., 2005; Tell et al., 2006; Hodson & SkeenSource, 1987). A child's mistreatment (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc.) is an important risk factor for children who were subject to such mistreatment, in terms of short and long term psychological problems which is developed during the course of childhood and adolescence period (Cohen, Mannarino, Murray, & Igelman, 2006). It is accepted (Kiser, Heston, Millsap, & Pruitt, 1991; Wolfe, Gentile, Michienzi, Sas, & Wolfe, 1991; Williams & Corrigan, 1992; Brown & Anderson, 1991; Akt. Williams, 1994; Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, DaCosta, & Akman, 1991; 1992) that childhood abuse is correlated with a variety of future mental problems such as obstructive

behaviour, personality disorder, depression, substance abuse, anti social behaviour disorder (Brown & Anderson, 1991) low self esteem (McCarthy & Taylor, 1999).

Abuse and neglect experienced by individuals during development period may significantly effect self and environmental perception. How one perceives him/her selves is explained by the concept of self esteem. Self esteem can be explained as continued self-evaluation (Rosenberg, 1965) and self belief that one is strong, worthy, important and successful (Coopersmith, 1981). Coopersmith (1967) described self esteem as one's evaluation regarding his/her own esteem and explained it as a manifestation of his/her beliefs of self competence, importance, success and values and an attitude of approving or not approving his/her self. Under normal circumstances self esteem displays stability but in different fields of life it may show variations according to gender, age and other defining conditions (Coopersmith, 1967). While high self esteem is an indication of one's perception of self-respect and self-worth, low self esteem means self-rejection and being unsatisfied with one's self. While high self esteem is generally associated with positive characteristic, low self esteem may be related with risk behaviours and negative developmental results (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2009).

In children who were subject to abuse, there are many physical, psychological and social problems related with childhood era experienced abuses. In adult lives of individuals who were subject to abuse as a child, cases of depression (Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconica, 1996), substance dependency (Toker, Tiryaki, Özçürümez, & İskender, 2011; Atay, 2003), problems in interpersonal relations (Atay, 2003) and solitude may be experienced. Additionally, abuse (emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect) experienced during childhood causes lowered self esteem (Drach, Wientzen, & Ricci, 2001; Johnson & Booth, 1998; Matto, 1998; Swanston et al., 2002, Akt. Tell et al., 2006).

From the literature review and theoretical explanations above it is considered that childhood era experienced abuse is effective in determining the current self esteem of an individual. The aim of this study is to analyse the correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem in adults and to reveal the strength of childhood abuse determining self esteem.

Method

Participants

Sampling of this study comprised 915 secondary school 11th and 12th students from Konya city's central district who were randomly selected from studying students. 583 of the sample students (%58.3) were females while 382 were males (%41.7).

Measures

In the collection of data needed for the study, sample students of 11th and 12th class were subjected to Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and Childhood Trauma Scale. Validity and reliability of these tools are presented below.

Childhood Trauma Scale

Prepared by Bernstein and his friends (1994), validity and reliability of the scale was carried out with a substance dependent group and it has been determined that this scale comprises 4 subscales of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and physical neglect. In this study, Cronbach alpha coefficient was found between 0.79 and 0.94 and therefore high validity and reliability was attributed (Aslan & Alparslan, 1999). Turkish adaptability of the scale was realized by Aslan & Alparslan (1999). Test reliability of the scale in validity and reliability trials was 0.96. Turkish adaptability of the scale consists of three subscales (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse). Valuation of the scale is realized with 1-5 item likert scale type evaluation, corresponding to the answers “never”, “seldom”, “sometimes”, “often” and “very often”

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

It was developed by Rosenberg (1965). It contains 12 subscales and 63 items. In this study, 10 items of Self Esteem subclass is used. The scale, Turkish adaptability of which was realized by Çuhadaroğlu (1986) is 4 item likert type scale. Values achievable from the scale vary between 10 and 40. High values achieved from the scale indicate the high self esteem level of the individual. In Turkish adaptability of the scale, test – retest method was used. In test – retest method used in a period of 4 weeks, it has been found that there is a $r = .71$ relation between both measurements.

Analyses of Data

Analyses of the results obtained from the scales were carried out by SPSS 15.00 package software. Therefore, within the frame of study modelling, “childhood abuse” is independent variable while “self esteem” is dependent variable. In this context, there is a significant negative correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem and childhood abuse determine self esteem. In revealing the positive or negative correlation between adults’ childhood abuse and self esteem, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Technique is used. Whether childhood abuse significantly determine self esteem is tested with regression analyses.

Results

In this empirical study where correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem is analysed, initially correlation between childhood relation and self esteem and subsequently, regression analyses regarding childhood abuse determining self esteem is studied.

Table 1: Correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem in adolescence

		Phys. Abuse	Emot. Abuse	Sex. Abuse
Self	Pearson Correlation	-.299(**)	-.350(**)	-.206(**)
Esteem	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000

** $p < 0.01$

In table 1 it is revealed that between self esteem and physical ($r = -.299$, $p < .001$), emotional ($r = -.350$, $p < .001$), and sexual abuse ($r = -.206$, $p < .001$) there is a significant negative correlation.

Table 2: Potential of childhood abuse determining self esteem in adolescence

R	R ²	Adjusted R	F		β	Standardized Beta	t
				Constant	37.481		
.360	.129	.126	45.121*	Physical	-.034	-.059	-1.179
				Emotional	-.121	-.283	-6.248*
				Sexual	-.118	-.061	-1.637

* $p < .001$

According to data available on table, there is a significant correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem and childhood abuse explains for the %12.9 of the variance in self esteem ($R = .360$, $R^2 = .129$, $F = 45.121$, $p < .001$). It is revealed that emotional abuse among childhood abuses is an important determinant of self esteem ($\beta = .283$, $p < .001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

As a result of this study, it is determined that there is a significant negative correlation between childhood abuse and self esteem. As a result of the regression analyses conducted, it is revealed that childhood abuse significantly determines self esteem and just emotional abuse is an important determinant of self esteem. This result achieved on this issue, reveals that self esteem levels decrease as childhood abuse levels of adolescence increase.

Whatever the child upbringing methods may be, it is known that sometimes children are subject to physical punishment and consequently also harmed emotionally and sometimes even sexually. During the upbringing of the child, families deliberately or not, exhibit violence or neglect behaviours which negatively effect child's development (Bahar, Savaş, & Bahar, 2009). It is evident

that unhealthy parent-child relation including child's neglect by his/her parent, effects child's self esteem in a negative way and that neglected children have lower self esteem levels than children who were not neglected (Tyler et al., 2006). Compared with other types of abuse, emotional abuse is considered not a short term crisis and to be potent of creating more serious results (Iwaniec, Larkin, & Higgins, 2006) and developmental, psychological, social and behavioural problems (Iwaniec et al., 2006), playing a critical role in the emotional development of a child (Paavilainen, Åstedt-Kurki, & Pautonen, 2000; Meadow, Mok, & Rosenberg, 2007). When these results are assessed, it is evident that children's expectancies from their parents are not merely the satisfaction of their physical needs but sensibility and affection are far more important. It is accepted that affection, acceptance and sensibility received from who are important in one's life are important contributing factors for the development of self esteem (Coopersmith, 1967). In a study conducted by Robertson & Simons (1989) on this, it is found that family acceptance is effective on adolescents' self esteem and that perceived family rejection has a negative correlation with adults' self esteem. In another study focusing on childhood mistreatment's long term psychological results, it is revealed that psychological abuse lowers self esteem levels and creates tendency towards developing depression (Gross & Keller, 1992; Higgins & McCabe, 2001a; 2003). In a study conducted by Briere & Runtz (1990) where a multiple types of abuse are examined, it is asserted that psychological abuse may cause low self esteem, physical abuse may cause aggressiveness and sexual abuse may be related with abnormal sexual behaviours.

If literature is reviewed, it is evident that physical and sexual abuse also has negative impact on self esteem. In studies conducted on adolescents, it is found that having been subjected to physical abuse during childhood results in low self esteem (Ritter, Stewart, Bernet, Coe, & Brown, 2002; Bolger, Patterson, & Kupersmidt, 1998; Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1988; Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Morrow & Sorell, 1989). Additionally, it is revealed that subjected physical abuse during childhood is significant variable in determining adulthood life adaptation. (Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1988; Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Morrow & Sorell, 1989). In parallel with these results, another study conducted on children reveals that children subjected to violence have tendency of developing hostile attitudes, fear, anxiety, withdrawal, depression, weak social relations, low self esteem, unsuccessful education life, low problem solving skills and sexually discriminating behaviours (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009).

It is accepted that to have been subjected to sexual abuse during childhood results in low self esteem and further widening of the self/ideal self gap and accordingly with these variables, creates problems in interpersonal relations (Freshwater, Leach, & Aldridge, 2001; Hazen, Connelly, Soriano, & Landsverk, 2008; Owens, 1984; Bolger, Patterson, & Kupersmidt, 1998) and causes

emotional and sexual problems (Sappington, Pharr, Tunstall, & Rickert, 1997). In people with sexual abuse history, cases of anxiety, depression, substance dependency, suicidal behaviour and post traumatic stress disorder can be experienced. On the other hand developing interpersonal relations, sustaining social relations and self esteem are negatively effected by sexual abuse (Aktepe, 2009). Being subject to rape in an incest relationship, in comparison to other sexual assaults, results in a lower self esteem (Darves-Bornoz, Berger, Degiovanni, Gaillard, & Lepine, 1999). The most common long term result of incest relationship is the feeling of intense guilt (self-blame of being involved in incest), anger (against abuser and parents who did not provide protection against the abuser) (Morrow & Sorell, 1989) and distortion of self perception (Scott & Stone, 1986) caused by long term depression (Silverman, Reinherz, & Giaconica, 1996). In a study focusing on the effects of being subject to different sexual violence on 14-19 years of age adolescent girl's psychological well-being situation, it has been revealed that self esteem and depression level of girls subjected to rape is more critical than self esteem and depression level of those who did not experience sexual violence or rape attempt/sexual coercion (Cecil & Matson, 2005). Should above results be taken into consideration, it is evident that childhood abuses reduce self esteem. It is known that childhood abuse negatively influence personality characteristic of individuals in their childhood, adolescent and adult lives and cause lower self esteem (Toker et al.; Karadeniz, 2008; Beitchman et al., 1991; 1992; Tortamış, 2009; Freshwater et al., 2001). In consideration of the above given explanations, it is evident that abuse and neglect should be recognised, prevented and responded.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Araştırmanın Önem ve Amacı: Aile ortamının çocuk için en güvenli ortam olduğu düşünülmele birlikte, pek çok anne babanın çocuklarını terbiye etme gerekçesiyle bilinçli ya da bilinçsiz olarak onlara eziyet ettikleri, zarar verdikleri ve fiziksel, ruhsal, zihinsel ve toplumsal gelişimlerini olumsuz yönde etkileyerek sağlıksız bireyler yetiştirdikleri, onları ihmal ve istismar ettikleri görülmektedir. Çocukta ihmal kavramı genel olarak, çocuğa bakmakla yükümlü olan kişilerin bu yükümlülüğünü yerine getirmemesi çocuğu fiziksel ya da duygusal olarak ihmal etmesidir. Polat'a göre anne, babaların veya bakıcıların çocuğun iyi yetişmesi, iyi durumda olabilmesi için gerekli temel gereksinimlerini, bakım, koruma, beslenme, giyim, tıbbi bakım ve eğitimin ihmal edilmesi şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. İhmal ve istismarı birbirinden ayıran en temel nokta, istismarın aktif, ihmalin ise pasif bir olgu olmasıdır. Çocuk istismarı ise, ana baba ya da bakıcı gibi bir erişkin tarafından çocuğa yöneltilen, toplumsal kurallar ve profesyonel kişilerce uygunsuz ya da hasar verici olarak nitelendirilen, çocuğun gelişimini engelleyen ya da kısıtlayan eylem ve eylemsizliklerin tümüdür. Bu eylem ya da eylemsizliklerin sonucu olarak çocuğun fiziksel, ruhsal, cinsel ya da sosyal açıdan zarar görmesi, sağlık ve güvenliğinin tehlikeye girmesi söz konusudur. İstismar olgusu çeşitli şekillerde sınıflandırılmakla birlikte en çok fiziksel istismar, cinsel istismar, duygusal istismar ve ihmal olarak yapılan sınıflandırmalara rastlanmaktadır. İstismara maruz kalan çocuklarda, çocukluk döneminde yaşanan istismara bağlı olarak birçok fiziksel, psikolojik ve sosyal problem görülmektedir. Çocuklukta istismar edilen bireylerin yetişkin hayatlarında depresyon, madde bağımlılığı, kişiler arası ilişkilerde problem, iletişim problemleri, yalnızlık gibi problemlere rastlanabilmektedir. Ayrıca, çocuklukta yaşanan istismar (duygusal, fiziksel cinsel istismar ve ihmâl) benlik saygısının azalmasına neden olmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın amacı ergenlerin çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantıları ile benlik saygıları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek ve çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantılarının benlik saygısını yordama gücünü ortaya koymaktır.

Yöntem: Bu araştırmanın örneklemini, Konya ili merkez ilçelerinde ortaöğretime devam eden 915 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, öğrenim görmekte olan öğrenciler arasından tesadüfi olarak seçilmiştir. Araştırma örneklemini oluşturan öğrencilerin 583'ü kız (%58.3) ve 382 erkek (%41.7) öğrencidir. Araştırmada gereksinim duyulan verilerin toplanmasında, örnekleme belirtilen ortaöğretim 11. ve 12. sınıf öğrencilerine Rosenberg Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği ve Çocukluk Örselenme Yaşantıları Ölçeği uygulanmıştır. Araştırmada uygulanan ölçeklerden elde edilen verilerin değerlendirilmesi SPSS 15.00 paket programı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Dolayısıyla araştırma deseni kapsamında bu çalışmada 'çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantılar' bağımsız değişken; 'benlik saygısı' bağımlı değişken olarak kurgulanmıştır. Bu bağlamda çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantıları ile benlik saygısı arasında negatif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki vardır ve örselenmiş yaşantılar benlik saygısının yordayıcısıdır. Ergenlerin çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantılar ve benlik saygısı arasındaki pozitif veya negatif ilişkinin ortaya konulmasında Pearson momentler çarpımı korelasyon tekniği kullanılmıştır. Çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantılarının benlik saygısını anlamlı düzeyde açıklayıp açıklamadığı ise regresyon analizi ile test edilmiştir.

Tartışma ve Sonuç: Bu araştırma sonucunda çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantıları ile benlik saygısı arasında negatif yönde anlamlı bir ilişkinin olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca yapılan regresyon analizi sonucunda çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantılarının benlik saygısını, anlamlı düzeyde açıkladığı, sadece duygusal istismarın benlik saygısının önemli bir yordayıcısı olduğu sonucu ortaya çıkmıştır. Konuyla ilgili elde edilen bu sonuç, ergenlerin çocukluk dönemi istismar yaşantıları arttıkça benlik saygısı düzeyleri azaldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çocuk yetiştirme yöntemi ne olursa olsun zaman zaman çocukların fiziksel cezalara uğradıkları ve bununla beraber duygusal hasarların da ortaya çıktığı, bazen de cinsel yönden zedelendikleri bilinmektedir. Aileler çocuk yetiştirme sürecinde bilerek ya da farkında olmadan çocuklarının gelişimini olumsuz yönde etkileyecek, kimi zaman şiddet, kimi zaman da ihmal şeklinde davranışlar gösterebilmektedirler. Çocukların ebeveynleri tarafından ihmal edilmesini de kapsayan sağlıksız ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkisinin, çocukların benlik

saygısını olumsuz etkilediği ve ihmal edilmiş çocukların ihmal edilmeyen çocuklara göre daha düşük benlik saygısına sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Diğer istismar türleri ile karşılaştırıldığında duygusal istismarın daha tehlikeli sonuçlar doğurabileceği, kısa süreli bir kriz durumu olmadığı gelişimsel, davranışsal, psikolojik, sosyal ve davranışsal sorunlara yol açabileceği, çocukların duygusal gelişiminde olumsuz rol oynayabileceği belirtilmektedir. Bu sonuçlara baktığımız zaman, çocukların ailelerinden beklentilerinin sadece fiziksel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması olmadığı, çocuğa gösterilen duyarlılık ve duygusal yakınlığın çok daha önemli olduğu görülmektedir. Bireyin yaşamında önemli yere sahip bireylerden aldığı ilgi, sevgi ve kabul, benlik saygısının gelişimine olumlu katkı sağladığı kabul edilmektedir. Buna dayanarak, ergenler üzerinde yapılan bir araştırma da, aile kabulünün ergenlerin benlik saygısı üzerinde etkili olduğunu, algılanan aile reddinin ergenlerdeki kendine saygı ile negatif yönde ilişkili olduğunu bulmuştur. Çocukluk çağında kötüye kullanılmanın uzun vadeli psikolojik sonuçlarının ele alındığı başka bir çalışmada, psikolojik istismarın benlik saygısı düzeylerini düşürdüğü ve depresyona karşı yatkınlık yarattığı bulunmuştur.