

Examination of Pre-School Teacher Candidates: Knowledge and Awareness Levels for Emotional Neglect/Abuse

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ABSTRACT The aim of the study is to provide information and awareness about the emotional neglect and exploitation of preschool teacher candidates using quantitative research method. The study's population was 360 students and the sample size was 212 teacher candidates in pre-school teaching determined by objective sampling method. "The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale" was used to determine the level of knowledge and awareness of teacher candidates about emotional neglect and abuse. Socio-demographic Information Form was used to see the socio-demographic characteristics of the teacher candidates. The data were analyzed by SPSS 21.0. When the level of knowledge and awareness of emotional neglect and exploitation of pre-school teaching candidates in North Cyprus is examined, it is concluded that 22-25 year olds tend to ignore emotional neglect/abuse more. As the educational level increases, the tendency of people to refuse/ignore emotional neglect/abstinence and to isolation and threaten is increased.

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse and negligence are defined as "all of the attitudes and behaviours that hinder the children's physical, emotional, mental or social development that are harmful to their health by the family, relatives, teachers and other individuals in the community in which they are responsible, during the infancy, childhood and adolescence" (Ersanli et al. 2013).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines child abuse as, "behaviours made intentionally or unintentionally by an adult, society or country that affect the child's health, physical and social development in the negative way" (World Health Organisation 2016).

Children learn social and emotional skills from infancy (Conner- Burrow 2017). Child abuse and negligence are defined as a very complex (Taner and Gökler 2004) and dangerous social problem (Budak 2000; Demirbas and Gulacti 2017). Child abuse and negligence can be classified into four groups as; physical, sexual, emotional abuse and negligence and it is difficult to separate them from each other (Yilmaz et al. 2015). Child abuse

and negligence is a fact that may have been experienced in every society and every level of development without being bound to racism and religion (Simsek 2010; Cirik and Efe 2017).

In a study conducted by UNICEF and the Social Services and Child Protection Agency in Turkey (2010), it is observed that twenty-five percent of the children between the ages 7-18, were exposed to negligence, fifty-one percent were emotionally abused, forty-three percent were physically abused and three percent were sexually abused in the past year (UNICEF 2010).

Emotional abuse is the most common form of abuse in everyday life among the various types of abuse (Azizoglu 2009). The examination of emotional abuse, which is more difficult to see and measure in terms of the actions and consequences amongst the types of abuse, (Göynüklü 2012) has become more recent and has been specifically addressed since the 1990s (Gökler 2006).

A study with 1851 students in Vietnam showed that half of the students reported at least 1 event of child maltreatment in the past year and furthermore emotional maltreatment

was placed in the first place with 31.8 percent (Tran et al. 2017). Emotional abuse includes all behaviours that prevent the child from developing emotionally, socially, physically and a type of maltreatment that results in a deterioration of the child's physical and psychological development (Garbarino and Garbarino 1994). Emotional abuse is a fact that collects all forms of abuse under one umbrella. It can exist alone or can also be seen together with physical and sexual abuse. The concrete damage of physical and sexual abuse continues to exist as emotional abuse after the traces of emotional abuse disappear (Erol 2007).

Emotional abuse is when the caregiver (parent, caregiver, teacher, close relatives taking care of the child) causes psychological damage to the child by repetitively reprimanding and using violence. Closing or tying a baby, a child or a teenager in a room, rejecting, leaving alone, intimidating, threatening or acting like the child is not around, ignoring, parents shouting at the kids in a humiliating way, threatening and making mimics or excessive protective attitudes are considered emotional negligence or abuse (Güler et al. 2002; Polat 2001; Masarogullari and Uzunboylu 2017). The emergence of emotional abuse depends on two main factors: the first is the child is deprived of interest, love and care and the second one is facing negative behaviours by caregivers (Türk 2013).

Amongst the applicants to the Ege University Child Protection Unit between the years of 2009-2010, a total of 89 children diagnosed with child abuse (46 girls and 43 boys) with ages ranging from 1 to 17 were evaluated and it was found that among the children, forty-nine percent suffered from sexual abuse, twenty-five percent physical abuse, eleven percent emotional abuse and fourteen percent negligence (Koç et al. 2012). Theoklitou et al. (2012), in their study of child abuse in school settings found that "52.9 percent of primary school students were exposed to negligence, 33.1 percent were emotionally abused, and 9.6 percent were exposed to physical abuse."

Parents are usually the most important adults in their child's life, and parents need to take into account their perception of child behaviour. However, teacher is the most important adult in the lives of children after parents (Edelbrock and Achenbach 1984; Ozcan and Ugurel 2017). Preschool education institutions are very impor-

tant centres for children as well as families (Dereobali et al. 2013; Uzunboylu et al. 2017).

Weyns et al. (2017) say that teacher's behaviors both positive and negative have unique effects on the development of relational aggression. In a study conducted by Pekdogan (2017) on teacher candidates, it was found that teacher candidates had low levels of physical and sexual abuse during childhood and high levels of exposure to emotional abuse.

While Erol (2007) studied the level of awareness of physical abuse by the teachers working in the preschool education institutions and noted that the teachers were not able to determine the signs of physical abuse, in the study of Tugay (2008), he found out that 98.3 percent of the teachers stated that they did not receive a training related with the topic and emphasized the necessity of in-service training on negligence and abuse. For this reason, the teachers should be informed about the child abuse by the in-service trainings after the undergraduate period and should be given the skills to recognize the abused children (Sahin and Beyazova 2001; Uzunboylu et al. 2017b).

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the knowledge and awareness levels of the preschool teacher candidates towards emotional abuse. It is believed that the findings will contribute to previous studies and literature in the country and will provide information on what can be done in this regard.

METHODOLOGY

This section consists of the study method, sample group characteristics, data collection procedure and the data analysis process.

This research has been done using quantitative research method. In quantitative research, the goal is to describe the event or situation in a frame bounded by the materials used in the investigation, to reveal the relationship or differences, or to make prospective procedures (Basol 2008). After aim of the research, correlational study is chosen which aims to determine emotional neglect/abuse levels of teacher candidates and examine effects of some socio-demographic characteristics on this level. The study's pop-

ulation consists of 360 students who have undergraduate education in pre-school teaching education at a private university in Nicosia. The sample of the research is composed of 212 teacher candidates consisting of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades who are educated in preschool teaching department determined by objective sampling method. Knowledge and awareness levels of preschool teacher candidates were determined as the dependent variable and socio-demographic variables were determined as the independent variable in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS)

The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (DIBFA-Duygusal İhmal/Istismara Yönelik Bilgi ve Farkındalık Ölçme Aracı) was developed by Kanak (2015) in order to identify the knowledge and awareness levels of pre-school teacher candidates about emotional neglect and abuse and it includes 38 items. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .83. The scale is a 7-point Likert type scale (strongly not appropriate, not appropriate, partially not appropriate, moderately appropriate, partially appropriate, appropriate, strongly appropriate) and it is aimed to obtain an estimate about knowledge and awareness levels of teacher candidates based on the scores obtained from the scales.

The scale includes four sub-dimensions which are rejection/ignorance with 9 items, humiliation and exposing the child to violence with 9 items, isolation and threatening with 10 items and discrimination with 10 items. In Likert-type scales, questions are not asked explicitly, a statement is constituted and the participant is asked if this statement reflects his opinion or not. Minimum score that can be obtained from the scale is 1 and maximum score is 7. If a statement of the scale is positive, then "strongly agree" refers to 7 and "strongly disagree" in negative statement refers to 1. Every answer is evaluated and a total score is obtained through adding these scores. Accordingly, it is known that when total score increases, awareness level of an individual related with emotional neglect and abuse decreases.

Demographic Information Form

Demographic information form is developed in order to obtain information about participants. The form includes question related with age, gender, educational level, educational levels of their parents and income level of the participants.

Procedure

Teacher candidates were informed about the aim of the study and asked to complete the scale. ENKAS and Demographic Information Form were administered to groups consisting of 40 individuals. The duration of the applications was 30-40 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with SPSS 21.0 statistical package program and results are provided based on descriptive statistics, number and percentage distributions. The relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and ENKAS mean scores were tested through independent samples t-test and One-Way Variance Analysis. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was regarded in order to calculate the reliability of the scale.

RESULTS

Data related with the study group were obtained through "Demographic Information Form". The data are provided with frequency (f) and percentage (%) values (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that 82.5 percent of the participants were female (n=175) and 17.5 percent of them were male (n=37). 49.1 percent of the participants were between the age of 18-21 (n=104), 31.6 percent of them were between the age of 22-24 (n=67) and 19.3 percent of them were at the age of 25 and above (n=41). Results also indicated that 18.4 percent of the participants were first year students (n=39), 19.3 percent of them were second year students (n=41), 39.6 percent of them were third year students (n=84) and 21.6 percent of them were fourth year students (n=48).

When results on the educational levels of the participants' mothers are examined, it is seen that 6.6 percent of their mothers were illiterate (n=14), 7.1 percent of them were literate (n=15), 32.1 percent of them were primary school gradu-

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants (N=212)

	<i>f</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	175	82.5
Male	37	17.5
<i>Age Group</i>		
18-21	104	49.1
22-25	67	31.6
26 and above	41	19.3
<i>Educational Level</i>		
1 st year	39	18.4
2 nd year	41	19.3
3 rd year	84	39.6
4 th year	48	21.6
<i>Educational Level of the Mother</i>		
Illiterate	14	6.6
Literate	15	7.1
Primary school	68	32.1
Secondary school	25	11.8
High school	65	30.7
University	22	10.4
Master Degree	3	1.4
<i>Educational Level of the Father</i>		
Illiterate	3	1.4
Literate	9	4.2
Primary school	41	19.3
Secondary school	31	14.6
High school	76	35.8
University	49	23.1
Master Degree	3	1.4
<i>Income Level</i>		
1000 and below	27	12.7
1001-3000₺	107	50.5
3001-5000₺	52	24.5
5001₺ and above	26	12.3

ates (n=68), 11.8 percent of the were secondary school graduates (n=25), 30.7 percent of them were high school graduates (n=65), 10.4 percent of them were university graduates (n=22) and 1.4 percent of them had master degree (n=3). Considering the educational levels of the participants' fathers, it is seen that 1.4 percent of their fathers were illiterate (n=3), 4.2 percent of them were literate (n=9), 19.3 percent of them were primary school graduates (n=41), 14.6 percent

of the were secondary school graduates (n=31), 35.8 percent of them were high school graduates (n=76), 23.1 percent of them were university graduates (n=49) and 1.4 percent of them had master degree (n=3). When the distribution of the income levels of the participants is examined, it is observed that 12.7 percent of the participants have an income level of 1000₺ and below (n=27), fifty percent of them have an income level of 1001-3000₺ (n=107), 24.5 percent of them have an income level of 3001-5000₺ (n=52) and 12.3 percent of them have an income level of 5001₺ and above (n=26).

Parametric tests were used to determine whether The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) scores differ based on the variables of the research. Independent samples t-test method was used to test whether ENKAS scores differ based on gender. Results of this comparison of ENKAS scores are provided (Table 2). Independent samples t-test was applied in order to determine if mean scores of the participants differ based on their gender. According to the results, statistically significant difference was observed among the means of the groups ($t(210)=-3.11$; $p<.01$). This result shows that knowledge and awareness levels of male participants related with emotional neglect/abuse were lower than females.

The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) mean scores of the participants were compared with their ages, educational levels, their parents' educational levels and income levels through One-Way Variance Analysis method. Results revealed no statistically significant difference. Then, relationship between sub-dimensions and socio-demographic characteristics were tested.

One way variance analysis method was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between participants' ages and Rejection/Ignorance mean scores (Table 3).

Table 2: Results on the comparison of participants' The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) scores based on gender

<i>Score</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>ss</i>	<i>Sh_x</i>	<i>t-test</i>		
						<i>t</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>p</i>
	Female	175	2.23	0.91	1.67	-3.11	210	0.002**
	Male	37	2.74	0.99	1.77			

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

Table 3: F values of participants' ages and The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) rejection/ignorance sub-dimension mean scores

<i>f, \bar{X} and sd values</i>					<i>ANOVA result</i>					
<i>Score</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>sd</i>	<i>Var K</i>	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Rejection/ Ignorance</i>	18-21	104	1.82	1.02	Intergroup	8.646	2	4.323	3.513	0.032*
	22-25	67	2.28	1.23	Intragroup	257.168	209	1.23		
	26 and above	41	1.98	1.09	Total	265.814	211			

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

Results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between participants' ages and rejection/ignorance sub-dimensions ($F(2,209)=3.513, p=0.032 < 0.05$). Then, Post Hoc test (Scheffe) was applied in order to figure out in which age groups there is a statistically significant difference. Difference was observed in 18-21 and 22-25 age groups. According to this, it is seen that individuals at the ages of between 22-25 tend to ignore emotional neglect/abuse when compared to other age groups. The results on one-way variance analysis which was applied to determine whether there is a significant difference between educational levels of the participants and Rejection/Ignorance mean scores was calculated (Table 4). Results indicated that there is a significant difference between educa-

tional levels of participants and their Rejection/Ignorance mean scores ($F(3,208)= 4.032, p=0.008 < 0.01$). Then, Post Hoc test (Scheffe) was applied in order to figure out in which educational level there is a statistically significant difference among the groups. Statistically significant difference was obtained between first year and fourth year university students for Rejection/Ignorance sub-dimension. According to this, it can be said that when educational level increases, tendency for ignoring emotional neglect/abuse also increases. One way variance analysis was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between educational levels of the participants and Isolation/Threatening sub-dimension (Table 5). Significant difference was observed between educational levels

Table 4: F values of participants' educational levels and The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) rejection/ignorance sub-dimension mean scores

<i>f, \bar{X} and sd values</i>					<i>ANOVA result</i>					
<i>Score</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>sd</i>	<i>Var K</i>	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Rejection/ Ignorance</i>	1 st year	39	1.63	0.83	Intergroup	14.608	3	4.869	4.032	0.008**
	2 nd year	41	1.80	1.28	Intragroup	251.206	208	1.208		
	3 rd year	84	2.02	1.03	Total	265.814	211			
	4 th year	48	2.4	1.23						

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

Table 5: F values of participants' educational levels and The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) isolation/threatening sub-dimension mean scores

<i>f, \bar{X} and sd values</i>					<i>ANOVA result</i>					
<i>Score</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>sd</i>	<i>Var K</i>	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Isolation/ Threatening</i>	1 st year	39	2.67	1.18	Intergroup	11.897	3	3.966	3.173	0.025*
	2 nd year	41	2.19	1.13	Intragroup	260.000	208	1.25		
	3 rd year	84	2.58	1.12	Total	271.897	211			
	4 th year	48	2.92	1.03						

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

of the participants and Isolation/Threatening mean scores ($F(3,208)=3.173, p=0.025<0.05$). Then, Post Hoc test (Scheffe) was applied in order to figure out in which educational level there is a statistically significant difference among the groups. Statistically significant difference was obtained between second year and fourth year university students for Isolation/Threatening sub-dimension. According to this, it can be said that when educational level increases, tendency for isolation and threatening also increases. One way variance analysis was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between educational levels of the participants' mothers based on Isolation/Threatening sub-dimension (Table 6). Results revealed a significant difference between Isolation/Threatening mean scores and educational levels of the participants' mothers ($F(6,205)=2.862, p=0.011<0.05$). Post Hoc test (Bonferroni) was also used to figure out at which educational level there is a significant difference. Results showed a significant difference between literate mothers and mothers who were graduated from primary school. This result indicates that tendency of isolation and threatening among participants with literate mothers is higher.

Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of 9 items in Rejection and Ignorance sub-dimension was obtained as 0.808 and Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of 9 items in Humiliation and Exposing Children to Violence sub-dimension was obtained as 0.735 (Table 7). In addition, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of 10 items in Isolation and Threatening sub-dimension was calculated as 0.745 and Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of 10 items in Comparison and Discrimination was calculated as 0.709. It can be said that cronbach alpha value of the whole scale is high with a value of 0.911.

DISCUSSION

Child abuse and negligence is a common problem. Despite the large number of studies both in our country and in other countries, there is a notable increase in child abuse and negligence cases (Yilmaz 2009). Not being recognized, notified, diagnosed, denied and kept secret by the professionals working with the child further increase the significance of issue (Polat 2001).

Teachers are a key vital element in the schools where children spend most of their time after their houses, in observing behavioural changes in children, identifying child abuse and negligence and risk potential, prevention and reporting (Dilsiz and Magden 2015; Baglama and Demirok 2016). In educational settings, emotional abuse is a repetitive harmful interaction between teacher and student. The emotional abuse behaviours of teachers can be listed as; shouting at the children in a way that can make them cry, offend the student, giving the child labels such as idiot or stupid (Okoza et al. 2011). Therefore, the knowledge of teachers regarding the emotional abuse must be high.

Koran and Avci (2017) made a study about children's rights to participate in classroom activities in preschools for eight weeks. They observed that teachers choose children by labeling them as well-behaved, naughty, clean and dirty. In the survey conducted by the researchers, it was seen that as the age and educational level of the prospective teachers increased, the level of ignoring or isolating the children also increased.

A study of child abuse by Theoklitou et al. (2012) at primary school context found that there was no significant gender difference in the abuse rates of teachers in the study. According to Güler et al. (2002), research findings support the fact that nearly ninety-five percent of the

Table 6: F values of educational levels of participants' mothers and The Emotional Neglect/Abuse Knowledge and Awareness Scale (ENKAS) isolation/threatening sub-dimension mean scores

<i>f, \bar{X} and <i>sd</i> values</i>			<i>ANOVA result</i>							
<i>Score</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>sd</i>	<i>Var K</i>	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Isolation/ Threatening</i>	Illiterate	14	2.71	1.4	Intergroup	21	.015	6	3.502	0.011*
	Literate	15	3.39	1.2	Intragroup	250	.882	205	1.224	
	Primary	68	2.31	0.98	Total	271	.897	211	2.862	
	Secondary	25	3.02	1.16						
	High	65	2.61	1.2						
	University	22	2.37	0.84						
	Postgrad	3	2.47	0.9						

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

violent people were males and more than ninety percent of the victims were women and children. But there was not any gender difference among teachers regarding awareness of child abuse. In the researchers study it was found that female participants' knowledge and consciousness about child abuse/negligence was higher than men. In one study, 480 teachers responded to vignettes and female teachers had a higher tendency to over-report a child abuse (Webster et al. 2005). According to Saribas (2013), the level of awareness of the teacher's emotional and physical abuse behavioural symptoms does not differ according to the variables of gender, educational status and duration of service.

Meinck et al. (2017) conducted a study about childhood victimisation on 1244 girls whose ages were between 13-24. According to the results, emotional abuse prevalence is 28.5 percent and teachers constitute 2.5 percent of the perpetrator group. As it can be seen, teachers are not the most frequent perpetrators but they have an important position in children's life.

When the researchers compared the scores of participants with the demographics, it was identified that the increase in the level of education of participants and the tendency of people to reject/ignore emotional negligence/abuse in parallel. In a research by Webster et al. (2005) it was stated that the reporting of problems by less trained teachers will be a problem for teachers and students.

For some children, emotional abuse experiences occur first in schools. Such abuses could be the result of practices that have been incorporated into the education system or the behaviour of teachers individually. Children in school were not protected from emotional abuse. Students of all classes were at high risk of experiencing all levels of emotional attacks by teachers in classroom contexts (Türk 2013).

As a result of the research conducted, it was found that there was a significant difference between the level of awareness of emotional abuse by the literacy levels among the mothers of participants. For participants with literate mothers, it was seen that there was more tendency to leave alone and threat. In a study by Güler et al. (2002) it is seen that mothers apply emotional abuse/negligence behaviour to their children regardless of their education status, age, family structure, economic situation.

King and Janson (2011) noted that the child's involvement in ignorance, rejection, intimidation, and provocation (that is, embarrassment, mockery) in emotional maltreatment included in schools through intimidation and fear. According to a study, the amount of reprimands used by teachers was on an average seven to eight times more reprimands than praise to students and it is significantly higher than the amount of praise (Weyns et al. 2017). As a result of this study, there was no significant difference in teacher candidates' scores on humiliation and exposure to violence subscale. The reason for this is that the candidates may prefer more passive methods instead of behaving in this way like ignoring.

In addition to examining the prevalence of psychological maltreatment of students, it is also important to examine the characteristics of maltreatment. Whitted and Dupper (2008) found that the most common forms of psychological abuse committed by school personnel lead to students crying, being forced into spontaneity, and ignoring them. James et al. (2008) included calling and ignoring the names of students among the most common types of negative behaviours conducted by teachers.

Child abuse is a problem that has existed for many years and is becoming more and more dangerous (Berkmen and Okray 2015). In addition to basic caregivers for children, one of the most important places after their families is the preschool education institutions since the after-school period is a period when the basis of the life of the individual is established (Oktay 2000).

CONCLUSION

In this study the researchers have provided important clues about the level of knowledge and awareness of preschool teacher candidates regarding emotional abuse, at least as important as other forms of abuse. The fact that this issue is very rarely mentioned in the Turkish literature and perceiving emotional abuse as a more "mild" abuse may lead to changes in the level of knowledge and awareness of people. It is believed that further research on this subject in depth and different dimensions is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Child abuse is a multifaceted problem that needs to be studied. There should be more prevention programs for children, families, teach-

ers and adults who take care of children. By these programs, people learn about child abuse, how to deal with it, how to protect children from risks factors and how to prevent it.

For the candidate teachers, the lessons about child abuse are optional in the universities. The inclusion and compulsion of lessons related to child abuse in the school curriculum and the arrangement of educational programs for working children are expected to raise the awareness level of all teachers working in this field. There is also a lack of strategy in government about child abuse. Government should develop child protection strategies and programs for all professionals who directly work with children.

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