

Determination of the University Students' Perception of Emotional Abuse

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Abstract

In this study, the determination of the university students' detection of emotional abuse is tried. Data of the research is collected using survey form prepared with "Perceived Emotional Abuse Scale" on 2013-2014 term students of Karabuk University School of Physical Education and Sports and collecting the answered forms (N:211). It is a definitive study. Items in which emotional abuse perception is low are; "My friends underestimate me" ($\bar{x}=4,32$), "My family always talks to me like they are reprimanding" ($\bar{x}=4,31$), "Usually my freedom is restricted" ($\bar{x}=4,30$), respectively while items in which emotional abuse perception is high are "Success more than I can achieve is expected" ($\bar{x}=2,96$), "People usually abuse my good will" ($\bar{x}=3,26$), "I encounter expectations above my skill level" ($\bar{x}=3,42$) respectively. Students showed a significant difference in views of perceived emotional abuse depending on the emotional abuse of students ($p<0,01$).

Keywords: University student, emotional abuse, emotional abuse scale

1. Introduction

Abuse is a public health problem affecting families, society, social establishments, education system and fields of work (Walker et. al. 1997; Polat, 2001; Horton and Cruise, 2001; Krug et. al. 2003; Taner and Gökler, 2004; Topbaş, 2004; Öztürk, 2007). Emotional abuse is (Ersanlı et. al., 2013) a perceived emotional situation where other adults have expectations and demands which are above the individual's skill level, other adults are acting hostile, constantly criticizing, insulting, not meeting the emotional needs of attention and love, are rejecting, intimidating, humiliating, taunting, and not appreciating.

Emotional abuse is the fundamental form of child abuse and is an umbrella collecting all maltreatments under it. In situations where there is no physical or sexual abuse, it can occur unaccompanied, it can also occur along with physical and sexual abuse (Polat, 2001; Taner and Gökler, 2004; Ünal, 2008). After the substantial damages of physical and sexual abuse are removed, emotional abuse can still continue. It is detected that in 90% of the cases of physical abuse and negligence, there is emotional negligence and abuse. In the studies of child abuse in our country, it is stated that emotional abuse is in the first place (78%) (Bahar et. al., 2009; Zeren et. al., 2012), followed by physical abuse and sexual abuse (incest included) (Zoroğlu et. al., 2001).

Behaviors qualified as emotional abuse are rejection, withholding love and stimuli, leaving alone, neglecting, constant criticism, intimidation, humiliation, forcing criminal activities, overprotection, excessive tolerance and fondness, pressure, threatening, blaming, having expectations outside the age and skills of the children, forcing the child to choose sides in family arguments, discrimination and comparison, exploitation, isolating the children, witnessing domestic abuse, rejecting emotional response and behaviors like these and emotional abuse is an emotional situation perceived by the individual (Bayraktar, 1990; Kars, 1996; Erkman, 1999; Yavuzer, 1999; Polat, 2001; Horton and Cruise, 2001; Runyan et. al., 2002; Topbaş, 2004; Turhan et. al., 2006; Ünal, 2008; Ersanlı et al., 2013).

Negative effects of emotional abuse on children/teens causes different problems in different age groups. These problems can be sorted as retarded development in infancy, social and emotional problems in preschool age, weak social and emotional connection, behavior problems and difficulty in learning in school age (Skuse, 1989), behavior problems in puberty (Şimşek and Cenkseven Önder, 2011), social phobia (Gibb et. al., 2007), depression (Hegarty et. al., 2004; Yıldız (Arabacı), 2007; Rohner et. al., 2008; Liu et. al., 2009), obsessive-compulsive behavior and anxiety (Mathews et. al., 2008), eating disorders and suicide (Doyle, 1997; Garnefski and Diekstra, 1997) personal, social and general disagreement (Yalçın, 2006; Tosuntaş (Karakuş), 2006), academic failure (Kars, 1996; Doyle, 1997; Flisher et. al., 1997; Azizoğlu, 2009), low ego perception (Siyez, 2003; Karakuş, 2012), decrease in self-acceptance level (Aydın and İşmen, 1996).

This study is planned and executed in order to determine the university students' perception of emotional abuse.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

The universe of this research, purpose of which is the determination university students' perceived emotional abuse situations consists of students studying in 2013-2014 academic year of Karabuk University School of Physical Education and Sports. In the research, sampling method is used and every student who accepted to fill the survey form (N=211) is included in the research

2.2. Data Gathering Tool

When literature is examined, it is seen that there are a number of measuring tools which measure emotional abuse (Tolman, 1989; Kasian and Painter, 1992; Aslan and Alparslan, 1999; Hegarty et. al., 1999; Ferrara, 1999; Ersanlı et. al., 2013; Arslan and Kabasakal, 2014).

In the research, a survey form consisting of two parts is used as data gathering method. In the first part, there are questions aimed to determine the personal properties of students, in the second part, there is "Perceived Emotional Abuse Scale" (PEAS), consisting of 61 items developed by Erşanlı et all. (2013) in order to determine the perceived emotional abuse of students. In the validity study of the scale, extent and structure validity are used. Each items in the scale is subjected to quintet Likert type rating and 58 items in the scale are of negative content, agreement levels of the students are scored as "none=5", "slight=4", "normal=3", "very much =2", "completely=1". 3 positive items in the scale are scored as "none=1", "slight=2", "normal=3", "very much=4", "completely=5"

2.3. Data Gathering and Analysis

In the research where data are analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 18.0 program, for the distribution of students based on their personal properties, frequency and percentage values are calculated. On the other hand, participation of the students are presented as percentages in order to determine the perceived emotional abuse situations and defined with arithmetic mean values and standard deviations. Besides, in the comparison of perceived emotional abuse with personal properties in the variables consisting of two groups, independent samples t test, in the variables consisting of more than two groups, one way ANOVA is applied.

In the study, for the reliability analysis of the perceived emotional abuse scale's internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is calculated and this value is found as 0,963. On the other hand, it is detected in the factor analysis that, the 61 items of scale are combined under a single factor which explains the 52,3% of total variance. In the factor analysis of "Perceived Emotional Abuse Scale" by Erşanlı et all. (2013), it is calculated that the scale is combined under a single factor which explains the 40,56% of total variance and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is calculated as 0,95

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings Regarding the Personal Properties of Participants

Distribution of the students based on personal properties is presented in Table 1. Accordingly, 58,3% of the participating students are male, 41,7% of the participating students are female. 63,5% of the students are between 21 and 23 years old, 53,1% of the students are in 1st and 2nd grade, 46,9% of the students are in 3rd and 4th grade.

According to Table 1, 62,1% of the students state that they have monthly income of 500 TL or less while 86,8% of them state that they spent most of their lives in counties or cities.

Almost half of the students (48,3%) stated that they live in a house with their friends, 33,6% stated that they stay in dorm. 75,4% of the participating students stated that they were not subjected to any emotional abuse while 24,6% (52 people) stated that they were emotionally abused at least once. Of students who stated they were subjected to emotional abuse, 42,3% stated that they were abused by their friends, 32,6% stated that they were abused by their family and 25,1% stated that they were abused by other factors (teachers, relatives etc.)

Emotional abuse is stated as harming of an individual by people who are responsible for the individual's care and education by behaving in a harmful way or not behaving. These types of behaviors can cause behavioral, cognitive, emotional or physical damages in children and teens (Hibbard et. al., 1988). Behaviors of adults towards emotional abuse can cause symptoms in teens such as unrest, concern, aggressive reactions, introversion, insignificance and developing a dependent personality (Kulaksızoğlu, 2005). As a matter of fact, it is determined in a study by Güler et. al. (2002) that 93,0% of the participants were emotionally abused by their mothers.

3.2. Findings and Discussion Regarding the Determination of Students' Perceived Emotional Abuse Situation

In the research, descriptive statistics regarding the determination of students' perceived emotional abuse situation are given in Table 2. When the general average of the values in Table 2 are taken into consideration, students' perceived emotional abuse situations are found as 3,94 in a quintet Likert scoring, therefore this value can be considered positive and well above average. In other words, it is determined that students have a perception that they are not subjected to many emotional abuse situations.

When the statistics in Table 2 are taken into consideration, most positive items regarding emotional abuse (where emotional abuse perception is low) are; "My friends underestimate me" ($\bar{x}=4,32$), "My family always talks to me like they are reprimanding" ($\bar{x}=4,31$), "Usually my freedom is restricted" ($\bar{x}=4,30$), "My relatives threaten me to do what they want" ($\bar{x}=4,29$), "Usually my friends exclude me" ($\bar{x}=4,28$), "They mock my physiological conditions (stammer, squint, glasses etc.)" ($\bar{x}=4,27$), "Usually my friends look at me sarcastically" ($\bar{x}=4,27$), "They make fun of what I wear" ($\bar{x}=4,27$) respectively. To the item "My friends underestimate me", 5,2% of participants showed a negative approach with "strongly agree" and "agree" choices whereas, 83,9% of participants showed a positive approach with "strongly disagree" and "disagree"

According to Table 2, most negative items regarding emotional abuse (where emotional abuse perception is high) are; "Success more than I can achieve is expected" ($\bar{x}=2,96$), "People usually abuse my good will" ($\bar{x}=3,26$), "I encounter expectations above my skill level" ($\bar{x}=3,42$), "My wrongdoings are usually held against me" ($\bar{x}=3,61$), "People do not accept that I too can make mistakes" ($\bar{x}=3,64$), "They always compare me with someone else" ($\bar{x}=3,66$), "My talents are usually ignored" ($\bar{x}=3,69$) respectively.

To the item "Success more than I can achieve is expected", 44,1% of the participants showed a negative perception with choices of "strongly agree" and "agree" whereas 38,4 of the participants showed a positive perception with choices of "strongly disagree" and "disagree".

In a study including five countries showed that, yelling at children/teens is found at 75-80% and it is determined to be the most frequently seen emotional abuse (Runyan et. al., 2002).

In the study, students' views of perceived emotional abuse situations are compared to their personal properties (Table 3) and it is seen that students' views show no significant difference based on groups of gender, age, grade, monthly income, the place the student lived the longest and accommodation ($p>0,05$). However, the views of the students' perceived emotional abuse situations show a significant difference on students subjected to emotional abuse situations ($p<0,01$) (Table 3).

According to Table 3, it is found that, female students, students in the 20 and under age group, students who have 301-500 TL monthly income, students who lived the longest in town/county and students who live home with their family has a higher situation of emotional abuse than others. In the study by Zoroğlu et. al. (2001) and Garcia et. al. (2002) emotional abuse is found to be higher in female students than male students.

Similar results to this study were detected by the research of Aydın and İşmen (2003) and it is determined that individuals who are in the 20 and under age group are subjected to emotional abuse more than individuals who are in 21 and over age group.

When averages in Table 3 are analyzed, it is seen that the students who were subjected to emotional abuse ($\bar{x}=3,69$) have a more negative view on emotional abuse than the views of the students who were not subjected to emotional abuse ($\bar{x}=4,01$). As a matter of fact, in the study by Zeren et. al. (2012), similar results were reached and no statistically significant differences were found between the students' childhood age emotional abuse total scores and their age group, gender and monthly income.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

In this study conducted in a definitive manner, 58,3% of the participating students are male while 41,7% of the participating students are female. 63,5% of the students are between the ages of 21 and 23, 53,1% are in 1st and 2nd grade, 46,9% are in 3rd and 4th grade. Items where emotional abuse perception is low are; "My friends underestimate me" ($\bar{x}=4,32$), "My family talks to me like they are reprimanding" ($\bar{x}=4,31$), "Usually my freedom is restricted" ($\bar{x}=4,30$) respectively while items where emotional abuse perception is high are; "Success more than I can achieve is expected" ($\bar{x}=2,96$), "People usually abuse my good will" ($\bar{x}=3,26$), "I encounter expectations above my skill level" ($\bar{x}=3,42$) respectively. It is determined that the views of the students on emotional abuse situations show a significant difference depending on being subjected to emotional abuse ($p<0,01$).

Convention on the Rights of the Children, which is accepted by almost every country in the world, was signed by Republic of Turkey in 1990 and it became valid in 1995 by a decree of the cabinet. This convention, which has a total of 58 items, the 19th item is about the right of the children to be protected from violence. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Children, for a generation that is healthy in every aspect, in the topics of abuse and negligence should be approached in a social scale, response strategies to social stress factors should be determined (Bahar et. al. 2009).

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Table 1: Distribution of Participants Based on Personal Properties

Variable	Group	Numb	Percenta
Gender	Female	88	41,7
	Male	123	58,3
Age	20 and under	34	16,1
	21-23	134	63,5
	24 and over	43	20,4
Grade	1	76	36,0
	2	36	17,1
	3	87	43,2
	4 and +	12	3,7
Monthly Income	300 TL and under	68	32,2
	301-500 TL	63	29,9
	501-700 TL	44	20,9
	701 TL and over	36	17,0
The place the individual lived the longest	Village	27	12,8
	Town	1	0,5
	County	66	31,2
	City	117	55,5
Accommodation Status	Home with my family	29	13,7
	Home with my friends	102	48,3
	Dorm	71	33,7
	Other	9	4,3
Emotional abuse status	Yes	52	24,6
	No	159	75,4
Total		211	100,0

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Regarding the Determination of Students' Perceived Emotional Abuse Situation

Items	Agreement Level					\bar{X}	s.d.
	Completely	Very much	Normal	Slight	None		
	%	%	%	%	%		
They mock me when I am unsuccessful	2,8	9,0	14,2	45,5	28,4	3,88	1,02
They always tease me about my physical appearance (being overweight, short height)	2,8	10,4	11,8	42,7	32,2	3,91	1,05
My wrongdoings are usually held against me	3,3	16,6	19,4	37,0	23,7	3,61	1,12
They mock my physiological conditions (stammer, squint, glasses etc.)	1,4	6,6	8,1	31,8	52,1	4,27	0,96
I am yelled at near others	1,9	6,6	11,8	34,1	45,5	4,15	1,00
They always tell me not to intervene	1,4	5,2	10,9	33,6	48,8	4,23	0,94
My friends underestimate me	2,8	2,4	10,9	28,0	55,9	4,32	0,96
I am treated fairly (<i>positive item</i>)	10,9	37,0	21,8	19,4	10,9	3,18	1,19
Success more than I can achieve is expected	14,7	29,4	17,5	21,8	16,6	2,96	1,33
I am always interrupted while speaking	3,3	8,1	17,5	42,7	28,4	3,85	1,03
I am usually criticized negatively	1,9	5,7	16,6	46,4	29,4	3,96	0,93
They always compare me with someone else	5,2	12,3	19,0	37,9	25,6	3,66	1,14
People judge me based on my appearance	3,3	6,2	14,2	41,7	34,6	3,98	1,02
They laugh at me when I do or say something wrong	3,3	10,9	16,6	38,4	30,8	3,82	1,09
My friends ignore me when I try to tell something	2,8	6,2	13,7	40,8	36,5	4,02	1,00
My every act is criticized by someone	1,4	5,2	23,2	39,8	30,3	3,92	0,93
Most people do not appreciate me	1,9	4,3	13,3	35,5	45,0	4,18	0,95
Sometimes very hurtful jokes are made about me	1,4	10,9	16,6	37,4	33,6	3,91	1,03
People around me usually pressure me	1,9	8,1	17,5	38,9	33,6	3,94	1,00
Sometimes I encounter sexism	4,7	12,3	15,6	30,3	37,0	3,82	1,19
I am not warned continuously around other people (<i>positive item</i>)	8,5	25,1	20,4	26,1	19,9	3,24	1,27
They usually say I cannot do on the things I can do	3,3	6,2	14,2	32,2	44,1	4,08	1,06
I am subjected to jokes with bad language	2,4	10,0	18,5	34,1	35,1	3,90	1,07
My friends call me with a nickname	2,8	9,0	18,0	36,0	34,1	3,90	1,06
Usually my friends look at me sarcastically	0,0	4,3	10,4	38,9	46,4	4,27	0,82
I sometimes am obstructed about the things I can do	2,4	14,2	18,5	35,5	29,4	3,75	1,10
I am criticized about my education	0,9	10,4	12,3	38,4	37,9	4,02	1,00
People do not accept that I too can make mistakes	4,3	13,3	20,4	37,9	24,2	3,64	1,11
My talents are usually ignored	3,8	13,3	18,5	39,3	25,1	3,69	1,10
Nobody apologizes to me about their wrongdoings	1,4	8,1	12,8	39,3	38,4	4,05	0,98
They usually do not take my feelings into consideration	2,4	6,2	12,3	45,5	33,6	4,02	0,96
Always negative sides of the work I do well is seen	1,9	11,4	16,1	37,4	33,2	3,89	1,05
Usually other people decide on behalf of me	1,4	7,1	15,2	38,9	37,4	4,04	0,97
Usually people around me do not keep their promises	3,8	10,9	15,6	39,3	30,3	3,82	1,10
My friends usually ignore me	0,0	5,7	11,8	40,8	41,7	4,18	0,86
Usually my thoughts and behaviors are not met with respect	2,4	7,1	10,0	36,0	44,5	4,13	1,01
I am warned constantly about any topic around other people	1,4	2,8	15,2	36,0	44,5	4,19	0,90
My family always talks to me like they are reprimanding	0,9	4,3	12,3	27,5	55,0	4,31	0,91
Usually I am not treated fairly	1,9	8,1	16,6	38,9	34,6	3,96	1,00
Usually my friends exclude me	1,4	2,8	12,8	32,2	50,7	4,28	0,90
I am obstructed usually with "You cannot do it"	0,9	3,8	17,5	31,8	46,0	4,18	0,92
My relatives usually show no respect to my rights	2,8	4,3	14,7	35,1	43,1	4,11	1,00
People usually abuse my good will	13,3	18,0	19,9	27,0	21,8	3,26	1,34
My friends underestimate me	0,5	3,8	17,1	34,6	44,1	4,18	0,88
Nobody is trying to understand me	2,8	8,5	16,6	37,9	34,1	3,92	1,05
My family finds me incompetent	1,4	5,2	9,0	30,8	53,6	4,30	0,94
My freedom is usually restricted	0,9	8,1	14,7	35,5	40,8	4,07	0,98
I encounter expectations above my skill level	5,7	18,0	23,7	34,1	18,5	3,42	1,15
My relatives usually interfere with my behavior	2,8	9,5	17,1	38,4	32,2	3,88	1,06
My way of speaking (speech, accent etc.) is mocked	2,8	5,7	16,1	31,3	44,1	4,08	1,04
Even if I put into words, things I want are ignored	1,9	4,3	15,6	40,3	37,9	4,08	0,94
My relatives do not show that they love me	3,8	7,1	12,8	39,8	36,5	3,98	1,06
My relatives think I cannot do the things I can do	2,8	8,1	14,2	36,5	38,4	4,00	1,05
My relatives never reprimand me (<i>positive item</i>)	10,4	21,8	18,5	28,0	21,3	3,28	1,30
My relatives yell at me easily	2,8	5,7	18,0	38,9	34,6	3,97	1,01
My relatives threaten me to do what they want	1,9	1,9	12,8	31,8	51,7	4,29	0,90
Sometimes my friends act as though I do not exist	1,4	8,1	15,6	30,8	44,1	4,08	1,02
My family and my friends blame me for the behaviors they do not approve	2,4	5,2	15,6	39,3	37,4	4,04	0,98
I usually feel that I am not trusted	4,3	6,2	16,1	31,3	42,2	4,01	1,10
They associate me with adjectives about my behavior (shy, clumsy etc.)	2,8	3,8	15,2	32,7	45,5	4,14	1,00
They make fun of what I wear	2,4	3,3	10,4	32,7	51,2	4,27	0,95
GENERAL						3,94	0,85

Table 3: Comparison of Participants' Perceived Emotional Abuse Situations to Their Personal Properties

Variable	Group	\bar{X}	s.d.	t/F	P
Gender	Female	3,94	0,48	0,416	0,678
	Male	3,91	0,61		
Age	20 and under	4,11	0,37	2,917	0,065
	21-23	3,91	0,58		
	24 and over	3,80	0,58		
Grade	1	4,01	0,53	1,099	0,351
	2	3,92	0,67		
	3	3,86	0,54		
	4 and +	3,74	0,46		
Monthly income	300 TL and under	3,92	0,55	0,346	0,792
	301-500 TL	3,97	0,50		
	501-700 TL	3,90	0,56		
	701 TL and over	3,85	0,68		
The place the student lived the longest	Village	3,92	0,67	0,502	0,681
	Town – County	3,96	0,55		
	City	3,95	0,54		
Accommodation	Home with family	3,99	0,55	0,287	0,835
	Home with friends	3,92	0,58		
	Dorm	3,90	0,53		
	Other	3,81	0,62		
Subjected to Emotional abuse	Yes	3,69	0,63	3,447	0,001*
	No	4,01	0,51		

* $p < 0,01$