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The Relationship Between Parents' Awareness of Domestic Violence And **Childhood Trauma Experiences**

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This study was conducted to examine the relationship between parents' awareness of domestic violence and their childhood traumatic experiences. The sample of this study in relational screening model consists of 139 parents. Data were collected using the Personal Information Form, the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale, and the Childhood Trauma Scale. The mean of awareness of domestic violence scale was 24.76±4.4, and the mean of childhood traumatic experiences scale was 51.77±9.68. As a result, it was observed that there was a statistically significant, positive, very weak correlation between the domestic violence awareness scale and the total scores of the childhood traumatic experiences scale.

Key Words: Domestic violence, awareness of violence, traumatic experience

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), child maltreatment constitutes child maltreatment under the age of 18, including emotional, sexual, physical neglect and abuse and commercial exploitation that actually harm the development, health, dignity and life of children. In international studies on this subject, it is stated that 1 out of every 4 adults is exposed to physical abuse during childhood, 1 out of 13 men and 1 out of every 5 women are sexually abused and emotional abuse accompanies these situations (WHO, 2016). Such negative situations in childhood are stated as childhood traumatic experiences and their effects remain in the long term (Kaya, 2014). Since each society's family bond, perception of value towards children and the way of knowledge about the development of children vary, the acceptance of bad behavior towards children as neglect or abuse may also vary. For this reason, it is very difficult to define child neglect and abuse in a universal sense (Türker, 2017).

Childhood traumatic events are often different types of actions that occur at the same time. Experiencing trauma in childhood increases the risk of being abused by others in the rest of life. Studies show that traumatic experiences in childhood cause internal and external behavioral problems in the individual and these problems continue in adulthood (Çelik and Hocaoğlu, 2018; Ezen and Açıkgöz, 2017; Hodges et al., 2013; Kutlu, 2018; Moser et al., 2019; Racine et al., 2018; Sarı et al., 2016; Türkoğlu et al., 2017).

One of the most common traumatic experiences in childhood is violence, which is a type of physical abuse. Violence, which negatively affects the lives of individuals at any age and especially when it occurs within the family, affects the psychology of the individuals in the family and reduces their quality of life, can be physical, psychological and emotional (Aslan and Celik, 2020; Kaya, 2019). Violent behavior perpetrated by family members against another family member is called domestic violence. There are many reasons for domestic violence such as cultural, socio-economic, psychological and biological. One of these reasons is the legitimization of violence as a solution seeking due to exposure to violence in childhood (Callaghan et al., 2017). Children who have been exposed to domestic violence or become spectators in childhood try to implement it in adulthood, because childhood is a period when the building blocks of personality are formed. Violent behaviors, especially towards children, cause the child to be psychologically and physically harmed, and cause the child to adopt violence and display violent behaviors in adulthood (Ruck et al., 2016). In the study, in which the sample group consisted of adults, it was concluded that there was a relationship between childhood traumatic experiences, self-harming behavior and violent behaviors (Brown et al., 2018).

Regardless of the reason, domestic violence is a situation that negatively affects the life of every individual in the family, so it is not likely to be accepted in the social dimension. In order to eradicate violence in society, it is necessary to raise generations who are sensitive to violence and have a high awareness of violence. For this, every individual in the society should have a high perception and awareness of violence. This awareness must be present in the family, which is the smallest unit of the society, because the family is the first place where the child receives education. For this reason, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between parents' awareness of domestic violence and their childhood traumatic experiences.

2. METHOD

2.1. Model of the Research

Relational screening model was used in this study.

2.2. Universe and Sample

While the parents living in the province of Muş constitute the universe of the research, 139 people, 117 mothers and 22 fathers, who were chosen by random sampling method from the universe and volunteered to participate in the study, constitute the sample group of the research. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals participating in the research (N= 139)

Socio-demographic Characteristics		N	%	
Candan	Female	117	84,2	
Gender	Male	22	15,8	
Washing Chatas	Working	66	47,5	
Working Status	Not working	73	52,5	
	Nuclear family	115	82,7	
Family type	Extended family	22	15,8	
	Single-parent family	2	1,4	
	1	45	32,4	
Number of Children	2	49	35,3	
	3	16	11,5	
	4 and more	29	20,9	

It was observed that 84.2% of the individuals participating in the study were female and 15.8% were male. It was observed that 47.5% of the individuals were working and 52.5% were not working. It was observed that 82.7% of the individuals were in the nuclear family, 15.8% in the extended family and 1.4% in the single-parent family type. It was observed that 32.4% of the individuals had 1 child, 35.3% had 2 children, 11.5% had 3 children and 20.9% had 4 children or more.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

<u>Demographic Information Form:</u> In the form prepared by the researchers, there are questions about the participants' gender, age, education level, employment status, how many years they have been married, family type and number of children.

<u>Domestic Violence Awareness Scale:</u> The scale was developed by Özyürek and Kurnaz (2019) to determine individuals' awareness of domestic violence. The scale, which consists of 20 items, has 5 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions consist of definition of domestic violence, consequences of domestic violence, acceptance of domestic violence, normalization of domestic violence and awareness of children's rights. As a result of the analyzes made, it was determined that the reliability of the scale varied between 0.71 and 0.92, that is, the scale was reliable and valid.

<u>Childhood Trauma Scale:</u> The scale developed by Bernstein et al. (1994) in order to determine the traumatic experiences before the age of 18 was adapted into Turkish by Aslan and Alparslan (1999). The scale, prepared in a 5-point Likert type, consists of 40 items and three sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are physical, sexual, emotional abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.96, and the subscales were found to be between 0.94 and 0.96. The lowest score to be taken from the scale is

40 and the highest score is 200. The higher the score obtained from the scale, the higher the frequency of childhood traumatic experiences.

2.4. Analysis of Data

Research data were collected electronically due to the covid-19 pandemic. The data obtained in the research were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 25.0 program. Frequency (n) and percentage (%) were used as descriptive statistics parameters for personal information. While evaluating the data, descriptive statistical methods (number, percentage, min-max values, mean, standard deviation) were used. In order to compare the quantitative variables, it was first investigated whether the parametric test conditions were met. The normal distribution of the data used depends on the skewness and kurtosis values being between ±3 (Shao, 2002). Correlation analysis was applied to test the relationship of the scales, and Pearson coefficient was examined among the normally distributed quantitative variables, and the Spearman coefficient among the non-normally distributed quantitative variables. The significance level was accepted as 0.05. The reliability analyzes of the collected data were made by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient in SPSS. In this study, the reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.603 for the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale and 0.761 for the Childhood Trauma Scale.

3. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of the research conducted to examine the relationship between parents' awareness of domestic violence and their childhood traumatic experiences are presented.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the scales and sub-dimensions used

Scales and Sub-dimensions	Min	Max	Median	$ar{X}$	SS
Domestic violence awareness scale	20,00	40,00	24,00	24,76	4,40
Definition of domestic violence	5,00	15,00	5,00	6,14	2,14
Consequences of domestic violence	5,00	10,00	5,00	5,56	1,14
Acceptance of domestic violence	5,00	14,00	7,00	7,18	2,14
Normalization of domestic violence	5,00	12,00	5,00	5,87	1,44
Childhood traumatic experiences scale	38,00	80,00	49,00	51,77	9,68
Physical abuse	5,00	20,00	5,00	6,58	2,75
Sexual abuse	5,00	21,00	5,00	6,45	3,00
Emotional abuse	5,00	25,00	8,00	8,50	3,85
Physical neglect	5,00	20,00	8,00	8,46	3,26
Emotional neglect	6,00	19,00	11,00	11,31	2,80

As can be seen in Table 2, the average of the scale of awareness of domestic violence was 24.76 ± 4.40 , the mean definition of domestic violence dimension was 6.14 ± 2.14 , the mean of consequences of domestic violence dimension was 5.56 ± 1.14 , the mean of acceptance of domestic violence dimension was 7.18 ± 2.14 , the mean of normalization of domestic violence dimension was 5.87 ± 1.44 .

The mean of childhood traumatic experiences scale was 51.77 ± 9.68 , the mean physical abuse dimension was 6.58 ± 2.75 , the mean sexual abuse dimension was 6.45 ± 3.00 , the mean emotional abuse dimension was 8.50 ± 3.85 , the mean physical neglect dimension was 8.46 ± 3.26 and the mean emotional neglect dimension was 11.31 ± 2.80 .

Table 3. The relationship between the domestic violence awareness scale and the childhood traumatic experiences scale

Correlation	_	mestic Violence vareness Scale	Definition of domestic violence	Consequences of domestic violence	Acceptance of domestic violence	Normalization of domestic violence
Childhood	r	0,194*	0,130	0,070	0,270*	0,196*
Trauma Scale	p	0,022	0,126	0,411	0,001	0,021
Physical Abuse	r	0,153	-0,003	-0,005	0,215*	0,165
	p	0,072	0,971	0,953	0,011	0,052
Sexual Abuse	r	0,112	-0,110	0,113	0,159	0,076
	p	0,189	0,197	0,183	0,062	0,371
Emotional Abuse	r	0,290*	0,132	0,092	0,291*	0,193*
	p	0,001	0,121	0,279	0,001	0,023
Physical Neglect	r	0,308*	0,267*	0,138	0,277*	0,288*
	p	0,000	0,002	0,105	0,001	0,001
Emotional	r	0,061	0,091	0,007	0,047	0,164
Neglect	0,4	78	0,289	0,938	0,580	0,054

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Table 3 shows the results of the correlation analysis. According to Pearson Correlation analysis, it is seen that there is a statistically significant, positive (same) relationship at a very weak level between the domestic violence awareness scale and the childhood traumatic experiences scale (r<0.2; p<0.05).

According to the Spearman correlation analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the domestic violence awareness scale and the emotional abuse sub-dimension of the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0.2 < r < 0.3; p < 0.05).

According to Pearson's analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the domestic violence awareness scale and the physical neglect sub-dimension of the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0.2<r<0.3; p<0.05).

According to the Spearman correlation analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the definition of domestic violence sub-dimension of the domestic violence awareness scale and the physical neglect sub-dimension of the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0,2<r<0,3; p<0,05).

According to Pearson's analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the acceptance of domestic violence sub-dimension of the domestic violence awareness scale and the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0,2<r<0,3; p<0,05).

According to Spearman's analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the acceptance of domestic violence sub-dimension of the domestic violence awareness scale and the physical abuse and emotional abuse sub-dimensions of the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0,2<r<0,3; p<0,05).

According to Pearson's analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the acceptance of domestic violence sub-dimension of the domestic violence awareness scale and the physical neglect sub-dimension of the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0.2 < r < 0.3; p < 0.05).

According to Spearman's analysis, it is seen that there is a statistically significant, positive and very weak relationship between the normalization of domestic violence sub-dimension of the domestic violence awareness scale, the childhood traumatic experiences scale and the emotional abuse sub-dimension (r<0,2; p<0,05).

According to Spearman's analysis, there is a statistically significant, positive and weak relationship between the normalization of domestic violence sub-dimension of the domestic violence awareness scale and the physical neglect sub-dimension of the childhood traumatic experiences scale (0,2<r<0,3; p<0,05).

4. DISCUSSION

In this study, which examined the relationship between parents' awareness of domestic violence and their childhood traumatic experiences, it was revealed that there was a statistically significant, positive, very weak relationship between the total scores of the two scales. The results of the study are discussed with the results of some studies in the literature. In their research, Fuller Thomson, Sawyer & Agbeyaka (2021) stated that a universal screening for childhood physical abuse should be done in case of domestic violence, especially in families with parents with addiction or mental illness. Liu, Xue & Zhao (2021), in their study to determine the consequences of domestic violence on mental health, found a relationship between exposure to domestic violence and mental health of individuals and child abuse. In another study (Nevin et. al., 2010), childhood trauma, self-esteem, and marriage type were examined in relation to domestic violence among women in Turkey. It has been concluded that physical abuse experienced in childhood leads to an increase in domestic violence. Dave (2000) revealed in the research that exposure to childhood trauma is caused by domestic violence. In a similar vein, Dye's study (2018), in which he examined the long-term effects of childhood trauma, stated that exposure to childhood trauma may cause lifelong physical, mental and emotional disabilities.

A significant relationship (p<0.05) was found between awareness of acceptance of domestic violence and physical abuse, emotional abuse and physical neglect. In the study of Butler, Quigg & Bells (2020) in England and Wales, the sample group consisted of adults who were exposed to childhood traumas such as neglect, abuse or violence before the age of 16, it was concluded that the use of violence by adults who experienced traumatic situations such as physical, sexual, emotional neglect/abuse and witnessing violence during childhood increased, causing emotional and behavioral problems. It is seen that the results obtained from the studies are similar to the obtained results. Liel et. al (2020) found a relationship between exposure to parental violence and child abuse in his study.

A significant relationship (p<0.05) was found between awareness of the normalization of domestic violence and physical neglect and emotional abuse. Skinner et. al (2021), using the term toxic triad, in their study to define the risk of child neglect and abuse, which may result from domestic violence, which is one of these triads, determined

that a single factor may cause worse outcomes in children. Fuller-Thomson & Agbeyaka (2020) found that there is a relationship between exposure to parental domestic violence and childhood sexual abuse in their research examining three risk factors for child sexual abuse. Levenson & Socia (2016) found that individuals who were exposed to emotional neglect, sexual abuse and domestic violence during childhood increased their use of violence in adulthood. Craig et al (2019), on the other hand, concluded in their study that individuals who encountered traumatic situations during their childhood were observed to have mental health problems, violent behaviors and substance use in the following years. Craig & Zettler (2020) stated that negative experiences in childhood increase violence and repetitions of violence. The effect of exposure to negative childhood experiences (such as neglect and abuse) on students' academic achievement was investigated in the study conducted with 525 university students studying at a large university in the Southeast and it has been determined that students who are exposed to negative experiences in childhood experience more health problems and depressive symptoms are more common than students who do not have such negative experiences (Hinojosa et. al., ark., 2019).

A significant relationship (p<0.05) was found between awareness of the definition of domestic violence and physical neglect. Mantovani & Smith (2021), in their study on individuals receiving psychiatry services, stated that individuals with a history of childhood abuse (sexual and physical abuse, psychological-emotional abuse) have harmful social and behavioral consequences and engage in violence-related behaviors.

5. CONCLUSION

The mean of awareness of domestic violence scale was 24.76±4.4, and the mean of childhood traumatic experiences scale was 51.77±9.68. As a result, it was observed that there was a statistically significant, positive, very weak correlation between the domestic violence awareness scale and the total scores of the childhood traumatic experiences scale. A significant relationship (p<0.05) was found between awareness of acceptance of domestic violence and physical abuse, emotional abuse and physical neglect.

A significant relationship (p<0.05) was found between awareness of the normalization of domestic violence and physical neglect and emotional abuse.

A significant relationship (p<0.05) was found between awareness of the definition of domestic violence and physical neglect.

According to the results of the research, it is recommended that children exposed to trauma during childhood should be identified and intervened in the early stages. Country-based projects can be developed to prevent domestic violence.

Ethical Approval

Ethical principles and rules were followed during the planning of the research, data collection, data analysis and reporting.

Conflict Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in this study.

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