

SEXUAL ABUSERS IN THE EYES OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This research examined the opinions of preschool teacher's regarding the characteristics of sexual abusers. In this study, case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In the survey using the semi-structured interview technique, the opinions of the preschool teachers about the age group of the sexual exploiter during the exploitation period, the proximity degrees to the victims, the actions they performed to cheat the victim/to gain the victim's trust, their personality traits, their physical appearances, their levels of education levels and their professions. The study group of the research is the preschool teachers working in the city centre of Sivas. From the purposeful sampling methods criterion sampling and maximum diversity sampling methods were used in this study. In the scope of the research, interviews were made with 25 preschool teachers. In transferring interview records to the research text, nicknames are set for the individuals in the study group so that confidentiality is maintained and data are not confused with each other.

Keywords: *Sexual Abuse, Preschool Teacher, Sexual Abuser, Characteristics, Opinion.*

Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Gözünden Cinsel İstismarcılar: Bir Nitel Çalışma

Öz

Bu araştırmada okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin cinsel istismarcıların karakteristik özelliklerine ilişkin görüşleri incelenmiştir. Çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan durum çalışma deseni kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği kullanılarak, okul öncesi öğretmenlerin, cinsel istismarcıların istismarı uyguladıkları

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dönemdeki yaş grupları, kurbanlara yakınlık dereceleri, kurbanlarını kandırmak ve onların güvenlerini kazanmak için kullandıkları yöntemler, karakteristik özellikleri, fiziksel görünüşleri, eğitim düzeyleri ve meslekleri hakkındaki görüşleri alınmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Sivas ili merkezinde çalışan okul öncesi öğretmenleri oluşturmuştur. Çalışmada, amaçlı örnekleme türlerinden ölçüt örnekleme ve maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme türü kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında, 25 okul öncesi öğretmeni ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşme kayıtlarını araştırma metinlerine dönüştürmede, gizlilik ilkesi gereği çalışma grubundaki bireylere takma isimler verilerek verilerin birbirleri ile karışmasının önüne geçilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsel İstismar, Okul Öncesi Öğretmeni, Cinsel İstismarcı, Kişisel Özellikler, Görüş.

Introduction

Nowadays, the concept of abuse is regarded as an important problem and abuse cases are often seen in mass media. Child abuse is the most common type of violence in childhood and sexual abuse generally is the more difficult one to be detected among the types of abuse. Types of abuse are negligence, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. The most easily noticeable type of abuse physical abuse because the physical reflections of the violence applied to the child can be easily discerned. The emotional abuse is often more difficult to notice as unsatisfactory interest and love to the child can be variable in the behaviour of the child. Sexual abuse, another type of abuse, is the type of abuse that affects the child in the deepest and permanent way (Efe, 2016, Kanak, 2011; Özgül, 2015). However, in the current literature it is reported that sexual exploitation is more prevalent is thought and the effects of such abuse are generally more negative (Barnes, 2014).

Neglect and abuse have different meanings. Neglect is that adults responsible for the care of the child are unable to meet their child's self-care and protection responsibilities. But abuse is the abuse of adult consciously misusing the rights and responsibilities of the child, including discipline and control by the adults responsible for the care of the child (Efe, 2016; İrevül, 2016). Child neglect and abuse involve all forms of setbacks in the child's development (Bilgin, 2015).

Sexual abuse involves a number of actions involving the use of a child for sexual satisfaction by an adult. These actions include a wide range of behaviours such as touching the genital area, exhibitionism, pornography, rape and all these actions are evaluated within the scope of sexual abuse (Barnes, 2014; Owayolu et al., 2007). According to another view, sexual abuse is defined as any sexual activity committed to a child under 12 years of age by a person 10 years or more older or to a child older than 12 years of age by a person 5 years older (Finkelhor, 1979; Kır, 2013). According to Article 103 of the Turkish Criminal Code no 5237, sexual abuse of a child is any sexual behavior against children who have not completed the age of fifteen, or who have completed the act, but whose

ability to perceive the legal meaning and consequences of the act has not developed, or on the basis of another cause affecting will in addition to forcing, threatening and deceiving (ctd. in İrevül, 2016). According to DSM V, sexual abuse (2013) includes any sexual activity that the parent or caregiver wishes to enjoy sexual pleasure for the child. Sexual abuse includes acts such as contact to sexual organs, penetration, incest, rape, force to sexual act.

When studies of sexual abuse are examined, it is often seen that the types of sexual abuse are treated under two titles: contact sexual abuse and non-contact sexual abuse. Types of sexual abuse include sexual contact, oral-genital-anal intercourse, prostitution, and the commercial use of the child for sexual purposes (Barnes, 2014; Efe, 2016; Garratt, 2011; İrevül, 2016; Özer, 2014; Topdemir, 2016; Yahaya, 2014). Non-contact sexual abuse includes verbal abuse, exhibitionism, voyeurism, pornography exposure and sexual exploitation.

The phenomenon of sexual abuse can occur as paedophilia and incest according to factors such as the closeness between the exploited child and the sexual exploiter, and the age of the sexual exploiter. According to World Health Organization, paedophilia is the emergence of sexual fantasies, drives and behaviours in a recurrent fashion for children who are 13 years of age or younger (Kır, 2013; ctd. in İrevül, 2016).

Paedophilia is classified as a sexual choice disorder according to DSM 5. Victims of paedophilia are usually children aged 13 and below (Corona, Jannini and Maggi, 2014). Paedophilia often appears at an early age. The abusers who have sexual fantasies about children have threefold child victims than the abusers who do not have sexual fantasies (Özbay, 2010).

Incest refers to intra-family sexual situations of the family members who cannot be legally married. This is usually a suppressed phenomenon due to the characteristics of the victim and the exploiter, and therefore the diagnosis is also very difficult (Gölge, 2005, Kır, 2013). Incest cases arise with difficulty because a child cannot accept abuse by his / her relatives, the people around them do not believe it when the child discloses the abuse, the child is worried about the dissolution of the family, and the abuser threatens the child (Doğan, 2009).

For the individual exposed to sexual abuse, this practice has quite destructive effects. As Ovayolu et al. (2007) have noted, the devastating effects of sexual abuse might be the effect on the child's sexual life, the emotional impact, the effect of anxiety disorder, the behavioural effect, and the influence on personality development. The effect of sexual abuse on the child victim was discussed under 4 headings in some researches (Akgiray, 2007; Bilgin, 2015; Finkelhor, 1985; Garratt, 2011), traumatic sexualisation, stigmatization, feeling of betrayal and feeling of weakness. In the aspect of traumatic sexualisation, an individual may show obsessive, aggressive, coincidental sexual behaviours, or abstain from sexual intimacy. In the case of stigmatization, the individual may feel guilty, the self-esteem of the individual may decrease and may be isolated from the society, may

show behaviours such as drug and alcohol use, involving in a crime or attempting a suicide. In the aspect of feeling of betrayal individual may develop the feeling of distrust, may enter a depression process, may exhibit over-dependent behaviours and as a result of these situations (s)he may experience marital problems, (s)he may allow his/her child to be victim and (s)he may be isolated from the society, and may be disturbed by close relationships. Whereas in the aspect of feeling of weakness, the individual can lose the feeling of self-sufficiency, may enter into a state of constant fear and anxiety, and may perceive himself/herself as a victim.

There are various risk factors for the child in case of being sexually abused and for the abuser in case of executing sexual abuse. The risk factors for the child can be listed as follows: showing behavioural disorders such as hyperactivity and stuttering, being an individual with special needs, his/her academic failure, having an asocial group of friends, being a female child, having sleeping disorders, not being in the gender anticipated or desired, having a sexual abuse story in past and sharing the same room with adults (Bekçi, 2006; Efe, 2016; Kır, 2013; Özer, 2014; Topdemir, 2016).

Risk factors for abusers can be listed as follows: low socioeconomic level, communication disorders in the family, low self-esteem in the parents, depression in the parents, anxiety or alcohol-drug use, parents at young ages, parents being exposed to abuse in past (parental exploitation story), the presence of a step father, the lack of emotional attachment between the mother and the child, the low educational level of the mother and the hostile attitude of the parents to the child (Bekçi, 2006; Efe, 2016; Özer, 2014; Topdemir, 2016).

According to DSM-V (2013), in order to label someone as a sexual abuser, the person must have fantasies stimulating strong sexual desire, sexual drives or behaviours including sexual activity towards the child repeated for at least 6 months.

Abusers are usually men. According to various research findings, even there are cases where abusers are women, the rate is for woman is found between 5% and 10% (Efe, 2016). According to Langström et al. (2013), in all cases of sexual abuse, males account for more than 70% of abusers. According to a survey conducted by Terzi and Özbay (2013), abuser in 32 of 36 sexual abuse cases was male, in 2 cases were both sexes, and in 2 cases gender of abusers was undisclosed. At the same cases, 19 of the context are the acquaintances, 10 are the family, and 7 are the school.

The fearful attitude, due to the lack of necessary self-confidence and undeveloped social skills in abusive people has revealed that one is in negative thoughts about himself/herself and others, and (s)he probably blames himself/herself for the problems in his/her life. These people have negative thoughts about other people and do not seek help or support from others. It is likely that these people would say that they do not care what others think about him/her, and there are rarely strong emotional ties in their relationships (Terry and Tallon, 2004). Abusers are individuals who have limited relationships with family members and social environment, introvert, psychosexual and socially inadequate

persons. Conducted researches show that people who did sexual abuse have generally an abuse story in their pasts. Abusers mostly consist of individuals with low educational level and low socioeconomic status (Efe, 2016).

Low self-esteem is an important risk factor for abuser in child abuse. Individuals with low self-esteem are reported to perceive their children more negatively and be less able to cope with domestic stress. According to Howe (2005), there is a relationship between being sexually hurt and low-quality love connection. People who sexually exploit children have undeveloped necessary self-confidence and social skills to shape influential close relationships, mostly with their peers. This failure leads to frustration in those who continue to search for close relationships with minor partners.

Abusers are the people to a great extent from the known and familiar environment to the child rather than unfamiliar and unknown places. Sexual abuse can be accomplished by parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours, teachers, or any other person (Özgül, 2015). The abuser in the immediate vicinity of the victim tries to win the child's trust with some deceptive techniques. In the course of the process, they learn by observing what the child likes or dislikes and use this information in the process of getting close to the child (Gönültaş, 2016).

As it is considered that child sexual exploitation happens mostly in a close environment known to the child and sexual exploiter is someone close and known to the child, one of the most important milieu for exploitation is the school environment, because children spend a significant part of their time in school. According to some findings obtained in the research, a significant part of the cases of abuse (24,1%) are revealed as a result of the notifications of educational institutions. Guidance and Psychological Counselling stands out as the branch in which students can express themselves more easily and can establish more close relationships with ethical principles such as confidentiality, unconditional acceptance, which establish close relations with the students by interviewing and consulting students and groups in the school environment. However, the adequacy of school psychological counsellors plays an important role in the points of negligence and abuse when it is thought that due to their professional duties preschool teachers should do various preventive work for students, teachers and parents in the case of negligence and abuse due to their professional duties with support school psychological counsellors (Bilgin, 2015; Efe, 2016; Gönültaş, 2016, Özgül, 2015). The purpose of this study is to reveal the views of preschool teachers in relation to the characteristics of sexual abusers. For this purpose, the following questions were asked:

- What are the opinions of preschool teachers in relation to the age group of sexual abusers in the process of abuse?
- What are the opinions of preschool teachers in relation to the degree of sexual abuse's proximity to the victim?
- What are the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the actions that sexual abusers have cheated the victim and gained their trust?

- What are the opinions of preschool teachers on the personality traits of sexual abusers?
- What are the views of preschool teachers on the physical appearance of sexual abusers?
- What are the views of preschool teachers on the level of education of sexual abusers?
- What are the opinions of preschool teachers in relation to the profession of sexual exploiters?

Method

In this part of the study, information about the research method, the design of the research, the study group, the data collection tool, the data collection process, the analysis of the data and the validity and reliability are included.

Research Design

In this study, case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Qualitative research is a type of research where qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are implemented, and perceptions and events are put forward in natural environment in realistic and holistic manner (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). Qualitative research is the research approach in which data is produced without any form of statistical processing or any other numeric means (Altunışık, Coşkun and Yıldırım, 2005). In the direction of this research, the focus is on the preschool teachers' opinions on the characteristics of sexual abusers.

The case study is a type of empirical research that provides an in-depth coverage of the researcher's quest for answers to questions that begin with how or why questions specific to a current situation being examined (Saban and Ersoy, 2016). In the study, holistic case-study pattern, one of the case-study designs, was used. The holistic case-study pattern can be used to investigate extreme, contradictory, or peculiar situations in order to confirm or refute a well-formed theory, or in situations where no one has previously attained or has not worked. (Seggie and Bayyurt, 2015). Since the research was conducted only with the preschool teachers and the characteristics of the sexual exploiters in the research were examined in depth, the holistic case study pattern was used.

The Study Group

From the purposeful sampling methods criterion sampling and maximum diversity sampling methods were used in this study. The criterion sampling method is used when all situations that meet a predetermined set of criteria are studied. Criterion or criteria can be created by the researcher or a previously prepared criteria list can be used (Karadeniz and Demir, 2010; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). This sampling method is a method that the researcher refers to when (s)he wants to determine specific case event types for in-depth

investigation (Karadağ, 2011). As Izci, Göktaş and Şad (2014) stated, the researchers' observation units can consist of persons, events, objects or situations with qualifications. Since the focus of this research was only preschool teachers' opinions, the criterion sampling method was used as a sampling method. Pre-school teachers were chosen as the study group of this research since they work at the first step of formal education and teaching process and their competence in recognizing and noticing child abuse are important for and contribute well to child-abuse prevention. To determine the sample of this study, the criteria were "Pre-school teachers working in the province of Sivas" and "Pre-school teachers who has completed their probation year successfully".

The study group of the research is the preschool teachers working in the city centre of Sivas. In the scope of the research, interviews were made with 25 preschool teachers. In transferring interview records to the research text, nicknames are set for the individuals in the study group so that confidentiality is maintained and data are not confused with each other. The information regarding the nickname, gender, age and year of service of the preschool teachers constituting the study group is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Demographic Data on Participants

| Nickname | Gender | Age | Year of Service |
|-----------------|---------------|------------|------------------------|
| T1 | Female | 25 | 2 |
| T2 | Female | 30 | 9 |
| T3 | Male | 28 | 5 |
| T4 | Female | 38 | 16 |
| T5 | Female | 25 | 3 |
| T6 | Female | 25 | 3 |
| T7 | Female | 24 | 2 |
| T8 | Female | 29 | 5 |
| T9 | Male | 24 | 1 |
| T10 | Female | 29 | 5 |
| T11 | Male | 25 | 3 |
| T12 | Male | 27 | 5 |
| T13 | Female | 44 | 22 |
| T14 | Male | 25 | 3 |
| T15 | Male | 32 | 10 |
| T16 | Female | 33 | 8 |
| T17 | Female | 32 | 8 |
| T18 | Female | 29 | 6 |
| T19 | Male | 26 | 4 |
| T20 | Male | 33 | 7 |
| T21 | Male | 28 | 5 |
| T22 | Female | 41 | 19 |
| T23 | Female | 38 | 15 |
| T24 | Male | 31 | 8 |
| T25 | Male | 25 | 4 |

Data Collection Tool

In this study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used. Semi-structured interview forms include both explicit and open-ended questions (Şekerler, 2015). The semi-structured interview form has an advantageous structure because it provides an opportunity to ask in-depth questions on a specific issue or to expand questions when the desired response is not available (Tekbıyık and Akdeniz, 2008). The purpose of using the semi-structured interview form is to provide more detailed information on the participants in the process because they have a flexible structure and allow the participants to express their answers in detail with additional questions.

An interview form was developed for the preschool teachers for the data collection process. In the developed form, following questions are asked: "What is your opinion on the sexual exploiters' proximity to the victim?", "What do you think about the personality traits of sexual abusers?", "What are your thoughts on the level of education of sexual abusers?", and "What are the actions that sexual abusers have taken to cheat the victim / to gain the victim's trust?"

Data Collection Process

The data of this study were collected using the semi-structured interview form technique with the preschool teachers working in the province of Sivas.

In the process of creating the interview form, the relevant literature was searched for the purpose of the research and a draft interview form was formed as a result of the survey. The created form is presented to the expert opinion. According to Çelik and Eksi (2015), the use of expert opinion contributes to clarifying and correcting aspects of the form that are missed or not fully understood. The necessary adjustments were made in the direction of the feedbacks received through the expert opinion. Most of the feedbacks taken from the experts stated that the form is suitable for the aim of the study. However, two of the experts suggested some revisions in the items in the form and these revisions were implemented accordingly and thus the final version of the form was obtained. After these revisions, the preliminary application phase was realized. As a result of the preliminary applications made, it was concluded that the questions in the semi-structured interview form are appropriate for the research process. The preschool teachers who make up the study group are very important. In terms of the validity and reliability of the interviews, it is very important that the preschool teachers did the interviews voluntarily (Şen, 2010). For this reason, prior to the interviews, the importance and the aim of the research the participants were explained to the participants, and it was stated that their names would remain undisclosed.

Validity – Reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) (ctd. Çelik and Ekşi, 2015; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016) have developed four criteria that are described in detail in qualitative research evaluation.

Credibility, as the first one of these four criteria, is the structure presenting if the collected data accurately reflect the multiple realities of the studied case. In this study, for the credibility factor, the stage of acquiring in-depth information through semi-structured interview form was realized. In addition, while the semi-structured interview form was being formulated, the expert opinion was consulted and the feedback forms were continuously updated until the final form. At the end of the interviews with the participants, the answers they gave to the interview form were shared with the participants and asked whether they wanted to add or remove any part. In this way, both the interview process is summarized and the interviews made with the participants have become more accurate.

The second criterion, transferability, refers to the degree to which the findings obtained in the research can be adapted to different topics and contexts. In order to increase the transferability of the study, a literature search was done and quotations from the related works were made. Besides the data obtained during the interviews and samples from the records, nicknames were given to the participants by taking into account the privacy principle and were shared within the research text. In order to increase transferability, the type of sample is specified as the criterion sampling in accordance with the purpose of the study. The study included, the demographic data of the participants that constituted the study group.

Dependability as being the third criterion gives information about whether the findings of the research will be the same if the findings are repeated in the same way or with the same or similar participants over time. In order to increase the consistency of the work, sample interviews were conducted through the semi-structured interview form and the participants' responses were examined.

Confirmability, the fourth and final criterion, implies that findings are dependent of separate individuals and contexts, being as independent from the researcher. Subjective judgements have been avoided in order to increase the validity of the work and an objective attitude has been demonstrated in the data collection and analysis process. In addition, experts were consulted during the data collection and analysis process. Forms and encodings collected during the work are kept for review when necessary. The interviews were held in the appropriate classrooms or school administrators' offices in their own schools for an average of 40-45 minutes. After that, the voice-recordings of the interviews were transcribed. In order to ensure the reliability of the study, the research was conducted with more than one researcher, and consensus was reached on the stages of gathering and sorting the data. To ensure the acceptability of the study, calculations were made using the data analysis steps ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{opinion consensus}}{\text{opinion consensus} + \text{opinion dissensus}} \times 100$) of Miles and Huberman (1994). As a result of the calculations, 90% match was observed. The reliability level of 70% and over is considered to show intended reliability level (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). The internal and external reliability of the study were realized through this process.

Findings

In this part, findings on the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the characteristics of sexual abusers are included.

Describing the Opinions of Preschool Teachers

At the beginning of the analysis phase of the study, the answers given by the preschool teachers to the semi-structured interview form questions were divided into categories according to the subordinate problems. The codes obtained from the participant's views were collected under seven themes in the sub-problems area as age, proximity grade, exploiters' actions, personality traits, physical appearance, education level and profession.

Table 2. The Categories Obtained From The Opinions of The Participants Regarding Age Theme

| 1. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | f |
|---|-----------|
| No Age Limit | 13 |
| Young Adult | 8 |
| Middle Age and Over | 4 |
| Total | 25 |

Participants stated that the age group in which sexual exploiter applies abuse is expressed as 'No Age Limit' (f = 13) and 'Young Adult' (f = 8). Regarding "No Age Limit" category, while T15 nicknamed participant says "*Anyone who is aware of his/her sexual drives may come from any age group. The events we witnessed caused me to think that way.*" T2 nicknamed participant says; "*...may be in every age group because in many cases we are reading, experiencing, witnessing, we see abusers of all ages*". About the 'young adult category', T5 nickname participant says *I think abusers are 20-40 years old. I think that most of the cases of abuse that we are seeing on TV are in this age range, whereas T9 nicknamed participant says usually between the ages of 18 and 25, which is the young adult group. I think people who are unable to complete their identity and sexual development in a healthy way and do not fulfil their adequate social roles are usually within this age range*".

Table 3. The Categories Obtained From The Opinions of The Participants Regarding Proximity Degree Theme

| 2. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | F |
|---|------------|
| Acquaintance | 12 |
| Relative | 11 |
| Intra-Family | 8 |
| Stranger | 1 |
| No Proximity Distinction | 1 |
| Total | 33* |

* *The participants gave responses containing multiple categories to the question of the degree of proximity of the exploiters. For this reason, category frequencies seem higher than the number of participants.*

The participants expressed the most 'Acquaintance' (f = 12) and 'Relative' (f = 11) in terms of the level of proximity between the sexual exploiter and the victim. Regarding 'Acquaintance' category, T13 nicknamed participant says "I think it is more often from intra-family, relative and acquaintances. Although it is known generally by the strangers, children are often more likely to be sexually abused by whom they trust and know." whereas T18 nicknamed participant tells "I think it's more from the immediate vicinity of the victim. An exploiter can be one of the people around because (s)he needs a certain amount of time to gain some confidence". Regarding 'Relatives' category, T11 nicknamed participant tells "Relative-abusers are too many. Strangers and Intra-family are rare cases than the others.", whereas T14 nicknamed participant says "I believe that relatives or acquaintances and people trusted by the families are witnesses are involved in these events."

Table 4. The Categories Obtained From the Opinions of the Participants Regarding Exploiters' Actions Theme

| 3. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | f |
|---|------------|
| To Build Trust | 14 |
| To Give A Gift | 9 |
| To Make Observation | 3 |
| To Threaten | 3 |
| Purposeful Behaviour | 2 |
| To Take Advantage From Weakness and Wish | 2 |
| To Say Action is Secret or Game | 1 |
| Total | 34* |

* *Participants gave responses containing multiple categories to the question of the degree of proximity of the exploiters. For this reason, category frequencies seem to be high in number of participants.*

The participants stated that the actions taken by the sexual exploiter in order to cheat the victim / to gain the victim's trust are mostly 'To Build Trust' (f = 14) and To Give Gift' (f = 9). Regarding 'To Build Trust' category T15 nicknamed participant says *"to behave nice to the victim and his/her vicinity and sincere actions to build trust"* whereas T10 nicknamed participant says *"... takes advantage from the weaknesses and wishes of the person. Through observations (s)he provides the victim the thing which (s)he wants but not achieves. (S)He does some reassuring, consistent behaviour for a certain period of time"*. Regarding 'To Give Gift' category, T13 nicknamed participant says *"standing close to the victim, showing him or herself as if (s)he is interested in the victim, or giving gifts according to local and cultural values etc."* whereas T6 nicknamed participant says *"Abusive individuals can often say children to keep this secret. They can call it a game or try to fool them with gifts"*.

Table 5. The Categories Obtained From The Opinions of The Participants Regarding Personality Traits Theme

| 4. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | F |
|---|------------|
| Socially Inadequate | 13 |
| Having Developmental, Behavioural, and Psychological Problems | 13 |
| Having An Abuse Story in the Past | 5 |
| Selfish | 2 |
| Trusted | 2 |
| Total | 35* |

* Participants gave responses containing multiple categories to the question of the degree of proximity of the exploiters. For this reason, category frequencies seem to be high in number of participants.

The participants expressed the personality traits of sexual exploiter mostly as 'Having Developmental, Behavioural and Psychological Problems' (f = 13) and 'Socially Inadequate' (f = 13). Moreover four participants stated that exploiters may have an abuse story in the past. Regarding 'Having Developmental, Behavioural and Psychological Problems' category, T15 nicknamed participant says *"(Abusers) are the persons whose characters are not fully formed, have psychological disturbances, cannot control their drives, have not developed internal control."* whereas T2 nicknamed participant says *"aggressive, liar, and most likely to have been abused."* Regarding the 'Socially Inadequate' category, T14 nicknamed participant says *"I think that they are types that are repressed and introvert, experiencing problems in their social relations."* whereas T13 nicknamed participant says *"They are the individuals with the lack of respect and self-confidence, seeing themselves inadequate, not having good communication at some points."*

Table 6. The Categories Obtained From the Opinions of the Participants Regarding Physical Appearance Theme

| 5. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | f |
|---|-----------|
| No Appearance Distinction | 15 |
| Not Slummy | 7 |
| Male-typing | 3 |
| Total | 25 |

The participants expressed their thoughts about the physical appearance of sexual exploiter mostly as 'No Appearance Distinction' (f = 15) and 'Not Slummy' (f = 7). Regarding 'No Appearance Distinction' category, T7 nicknamed participant says “(His/Her) Physical appearance looks like an ordinary human.” whereas T5 nicknamed participant says “Of course this differs. (S)he may be in bad look, his/her hair may be cluttered, or his/her clothes and (s)he can also be neat”. Regarding 'Not Slummy' category, T2 nicknamed participant says “well-groomed, normal-looking, not with torn-out clothes as you might imagine, not a moody look! Like everyone.” whereas T13 nicknamed participant says “Person from slum or loser types are generally considered. On the contrary, I am convinced that those who are educated, career-savvy, in senior rank may be in these actions.”

Table 7. The Categories Obtained From the Opinions of The Participants Regarding Level of Education Theme

| 6. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | f |
|---|-----------|
| Low Level of Education | 14 |
| No Education Distinction | 11 |
| Total | 25 |

Participants stated sexual abuser's level of education as 'Low Level of Education' (f = 14) and 'No Education Distinction' (f = 11). Regarding the 'Low Level of Education' category, T7 nicknamed participant says “I think sexual abuse is usually practiced by uneducated individuals.” whereas T9 nicknamed participant says “I think that sexual abusers generally have low levels of education and but these people may also have higher levels of education.” Regarding the 'No Education Distinction' category, T18 nicknamed participant says “I think that sexual abusive individuals cannot be evaluated in terms of academic career. I am convinced that academic career will not have an impact on sexual abuse. So even a professor in any area can be a sexual exploiter. whereas T22 nicknamed participant says “I think the level of education does not effect.”

Table 8. The Categories Obtained From the Opinions of the Participants Regarding Profession Theme

| 7. The Categories Related to Sub-problem | F |
|---|-----------|
| No Profession Distinction | 18 |
| Social Professions | 4 |
| Self-employment | 3 |
| Total | 25 |

The participants expressed which profession the sexual exploiter has the most as 'No Profession Distinction' (f = 18) and 'Social Professions' (f = 4). Regarding 'No Profession Distinction' category, T2 nicknamed participant says "*I do not think they do a specific job. (S)he could be a grocer or a teacher. His/Her profession may vary from being a plumber to being a doctor.*" whereas T6 nicknamed participant says "*(S)he might be unemployed or may have any sort of job or occupation.*" Regarding 'Social Profession' category, T9 nicknamed participant says "*The members of the profession where they have to work with the opposite gender may be in a more risky group in terms of sexual abuse.*" whereas T24 nicknamed participant says "*As it is covered in the mass media, we see more in the social professions rather than differing into this or profession.*"

Conclusion and Suggestions

This part contains the conclusions and suggestions on the findings obtained the research process.

Result

This research examined the opinions of preschool teachers regarding the characteristics of sexual abusers. In the survey using the semi-structured interview technique, the opinions of the preschool teachers about the age group of the sexual exploiter during the exploitation period, the proximity degrees to the victims, the actions they performed to cheat the victim/to gain the victim's trust, their personality traits, their physical appearances, their levels of education levels and their professions.

Findings from guidance preschool teachers' views on age groups in the process of sexual exploitation by abusers show that there is no specific age group and that individuals who engage in sexual abuse can be in any age group. Besides four participants stated that abusers may be in the young adulthood. According to Kara, Bicer and Gökalp (2004), the majority of abusers are between 20-40 years old. A study by Sullivan and Beech (2004) found that 92.5% of abusers were aware of sexual arousal for children up to 21 years of age and 67.5% of abusers had sexual abuse until age 21, according to information obtained from sexually abusive individuals. Dissimilarly, in an analysis by van Outsem (2009), has reached the result that the cases of sexual exploitation where the perpetrators

aged between 12 and 18 years are in increase. This is related to individuals growing up in an abusive family environment, attachment problems and antisocial behaviour patterns. When the findings and researches are examined, it can be said that the occurrence of the abuse is quite variable in terms of age group, and there are abusers of all ages in the researches and cases. In this respect, the views of participant preschool teachers are similar to those of the literature.

Findings from the preschool teachers' views on the degree of sexual abuse's proximity to the victim revealed that exploiter was the victim's 'nearest acquaintance', 'relative', and 'family member', respectively. Similarly, Finkelhor (1994) found that between 70% and 90% of the sexual exploiter was a child's acquaintance and that they were located in the immediate vicinity of the child. Again according to Finkelhor (1997), sexual exploiters are usually individuals in the immediate vicinity of the victim, such as family members, relatives and child care workers, teachers, religious service personnel, sports coaches. According to Keskin and Çam (2005), the majority of abusers, regardless of the gender of the exploiter and the victim, are individuals whom the child knows in his/her immediate vicinity. According to Aktepe (2009), abusers are individuals whom the victim recognises from 40.7% to 66.7%. According to Kara, Bicer and Gökalp (2004), sexual exploiters mainly consist of acquaintances, relatives and family members. In a study conducted by Vural et al. (2013) about the proximity level of abuser to the victims, it was founded that 39.4% of the sexual abusers were acquaintance, 31.1% were stranger, 15.6% were intra-family, and 13.9% were relatives. Differently, according to a study by Dönmez and his colleagues (2014), 42.3% of sexual exploiters are strangers whom the victim does not recognise, 41.4% is an acquaintance outside the family, 16.2% is in the intra-family and relatives. According to Garratt (2011), child sexual abuse can be accomplished by a family member, relative or religious officer or teacher whom are trusted. The case of abuse by strangers is less prevalent than the cases of abuse by acquaintances. When the findings and researches are examined, the views of the participant preschool teachers are similar to those of the literature on the fact that the abuser is usually an individual in the immediate vicinity of the victim.

The findings from the views of preschool teachers on the actions taken by sexual exploiters to cheat the victims / to gain the victim's trust have revealed that exploiters mostly engage in 'to build trust in victim' and 'to give gift to victim' actions. According to Elliott (1995), sexual abusers perform acts of bribery, giving gifts to increase compliance with the victim and to systematically desensitise the victim. When the findings and researches are examined, the opinions of the participant preschool teachers and the data in the researches in the literature are similar in the points that the exploiters perform acts of building trust and giving various gifts by using the interests and wishes of the child in order to be able to reach the victim and carry out abusing.

Findings from the preschool teachers' views on the personality traits of sexual abusers revealed that the abusers were mostly the ones 'having developmental, behavioural and

psychological problems' and 'socially inadequate' individuals, respectively. In addition to this, preschool teachers have stated that abusers may have an abuse story in the past. Abusers are individuals who lack empathy skills, have low self-esteem, exhibit aggressive behaviours, emotionally inadequate, and have narcissism (Efe, 2016; Pithers, 1994) A research by Simons, Wurtele and Durham (2008) found that 62% of the abusers were anxiously bound to their the parents. According to Aktepe (2009), the main personality traits seen in abusers are introvertedness towards family and social contact with the vicinity, psychopathic personality that does not have warm family and spouse relationships, deprivation of empathy skills, low level of delaying gratification, aggressive behaviours, emotional inadequacy and narcissism. Similarly, according to Keskin and Çam (2005), abusive individuals lack the capacity of delaying gratification and empathy skill, show aggressive behaviours because of dissatisfaction, experiencing emotional inadequacy, have low level of self-esteem and narcissistic According to Aktepe (2009), sexual exploiters are exposed to sexual abuse in their childhood or domestic violence. According to Jespersen, Lalumiere and Seto (2008), there is a significant relationship between sexual abuse history and sexual guilt. For this reason, individuals who are sexually exploited are more likely to be sexually guilty in the future. Similarly, according to Dhawan and Marshall (1996), sexual abuse history plays an important role for abusers, and the vast majority of abusers have been subjected to domestic or out of family sexual abuse in the past. Seghorn, Prentky and Boucher (1987) found that sexual exploiters' exposure to past exploitation was significantly higher than sexual abuse. In a study by Lindsay et al. (2001), 35% of sexual exploiters were exposed to abuse in the past. According to Blackman and Dring (2016), an individual exploited by his or her mother or father develops a devastating anger towards his or her family. The individual who moves this anger to a girl or a boy actually acts with the feeling of revenge from his or her mother or father. When the research findings and the literature are examined, it can be said that the opinions of the participant preschool teachers and the information in the literature are similar.

The findings of the physical appearances of sexual abusers derived from the views of the preschool teachers have emerged in the sense that 'no appearance distinction' and 'not slummy types in contrast to what they are supposed to be' in terms that the abusers do not appear to be different from normal individuals. In support of the research findings, various studies in the literature indicate that sexual abusers are usually individuals, such as parents, siblings, relatives, teachers, or neighbours, who are located in the immediate vicinity of the victim, and that they appear to be ordinary individuals rather than physically typical criminals (Gönültaş, 2016; Özgül, 2015). In addition, some preschool teachers have described the physical structure of the exploiter as a typical male description. According to Jones and his colleagues (2016), sexual abuse can be carried out by both men and women, but in the vast majority of cases the sex of the exploiter is male. When the research findings and the literature are examined, it can be said that the opinions of the participant preschool teachers and the information in the literature are similar.

The findings from the preschool teachers' views on the level of education of sexual exploiters have emerged as 'no education distinction' as there is no difference from the normal individuals' levels and 'low level of education' as their level is lower than the other individuals. According to Keskin and Çam (2005), sexual exploitation individuals are generally at low educational level. According to a study conducted by Van Outsem (2009), only 6% of the abusers had a higher educational level and 94% of them had medium or lower education level. In a study by Cantürk and Koç (2010), it has been found that abusers are generally poorly educated individuals and are involved in a low socioeconomic level. When the literature is examined, much emphasis is placed on the low level of education of sexual abusers. Investigations that show that abusers may have any level of education are also included in the literature. When the research findings and literature are examined, it is similar to the researches in the literature that participant preschool teachers do not make difference of education and emphasise level of low education.

The findings from the preschool teachers' views on the profession of sexual abusers show 'no profession distinction' in the sense that there is no distinction between sexual abusers and normal individuals and sexual abusers may have 'social professions' different from other individuals. The sexual exploiters do not have a distinguishing difference in terms of factor of appearance etc. from the other individuals. Likewise, no research findings were found that classify sexual abusers professionally. It can be said that sexual abusers are not a distinctive group when it is considered that they are generally familiar persons to the victims in their vicinity. In this context, the ability of pre-school teachers to recognize sexual abuse and abusers is important both to raise children's awareness about protecting their bodies and to help parents increase their knowledge of the subject. A conscious pre-school teacher will play an important role in building a healthy society, while laying the foundation for the creation of child-friendly environments.

Suggestions

In the direction of the research findings, the following proposals have been given regarding implementation and researches:

- Children are at a fairly high risk when sexual abusers are considered to be individuals who are in a close vicinity to the children and have characteristics that are usually physically indistinguishable. For this reason, preventive actions should be carried out before the occurrence of sexual abuse.
- In order to be able to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of sexual abuse, various institutions and organizations can inform students, families and teachers.
- Considering the duties and responsibilities of the preschool teachers in the school, the issue of sexual abuse is one of the subjects they particularly should specialize in. In this regard, preschool teachers can become experts in this subject by taking various education and briefings about abuse including undergraduate studying.

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