

Investigation of Teachers' Violence Sensitivity Levels Towards Children According to Different Variables

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Abstract

The study aims to reveal relationship between the secondary school teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children according to different variables. The study sample consists of 563 teachers working in Erzurum, Turkey in the academic year of 2017-2018. In this study, "Violence Sensitivity towards Children" scale, which was developed by Arzu Özyürek (2017), was used. SPSS 21 package program was used to analyze the data. In the analysis of the data, frequency distribution was used to determine the demographic characteristics, the Independent Samples T test was used to examine the differentiation status between two independent variables and the violence sensitivity level towards children, and the One Way Anova analysis tests were conducted to examine the differentiation status between more than two variables and the violence sensitivity level towards children. All these tests were analyzed in SPSS 21 package program and the significance was evaluated at $p < 0.05$ level.

Findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference between the teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children and gender, age, status of having a child, place of childhood, administrative duty status and tenure of office. However, no significant difference was found between variables of family structure and employment status.

Measures should be taken to prevent children's exposure to violence by identifying violence sensitivity levels of teachers towards children, who play an active role in the teaching and the development of the children, and by examining the variables that differ in their sensitivity levels. In addition, the study suggests further researches on different groups and more comprehensive studies for better understanding of and awareness about the subject of violence and children.

Keywords: child and violence, violence and sensitivity, teacher

1. Introduction

Violence in the history of humanity, which seriously affected the lives of people and societies, was not perceived as a problem for centuries (Polat et al. 2016). Especially nowadays, news about violence, which is watched and listened in visual, audio and press media, reveals how important this phenomenon exists as a sociological and psychological problem. Violence is a sociological and psychological problem in Turkey as in other parts of the world. It manifests itself in different intensities and types in all segments and institutions of the society, as it has been perceived and explained as a problem-solving method which is still considered same way (Evgin and Bayat, 2015; Pelendecioğlu and Bulut, 2009).

World Health Organization (2002) defines violence as "the actual use or threatening to use of physical force or power intentionally against to self, others, or a group or a community that will cause damage or increase possibility to end with physical damage, psychological damage, death, developmental problems or deprivation." It is stated that violence is more common in family environment where person lives. It is also stated that at least one of family members harms another member or members of family with physical, emotional, economic, sexual force (Tel, 2002).

Women and children, who are more vulnerable at the point of defense, are the ones generally affected by violence in the family which forms the basis of the society (Ayan and Kocacık, 2009; Şenol and Mazman, 2014). Studies have also identified that children are the ones mostly affected by domestic violence which is also accepted as a public health problem (Çakmak et al. 2017; Karadağ, 2015). It is stated that violence against children causes negative effects to cognitive, behavioral, social and emotional development of the children as well as causes physical and psychological damages to the children. And the domestic violence affects individual's life more than the sum of all genetic diseases (Nicolson and Wilson, 2004; Cited in: Ayan, 2007).

Violence that children are exposed can be physical, emotional, sexual, and economic. Physical violence is any kind of action that causes child to be physically injured, harmed or killed unrelated to an accident or a health problem. The child, whose parents desire to punish, is usually exposed to physical violence. Slapping, hitting, kicking, stabbing, etc. are examples of this kind of violence. Emotional violence is the situation in which children and young people suffer from psychological damage according to social and scientific standards by being exposed to attitudes and behaviors that affect them negatively or by being deprived of their interest, love and care. Emotional violence also refers to not talk to children or young people, to cut off communication, to prevent them from talking to family or friends or expressing themselves. Sexual violence is the use of a child or adolescent by an adult as a means of sexual satisfaction. Behaviors such as rape and talk about sex can be given as examples of sexual violence. Economic violence is forcing of children to work, beg or steal in their early ages, which are announced as illegal acts, in order to contribute family budget and pay educational expenses and needs (Şenol and Mazman, 2014; İnci ve Duman, 2014).

The protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights conventions (UNICEF, 2014: 6). A significant progress has been made in Turkey in terms of legislation and implementation especially after the 2000s with increase in the number of work about the protecting children from neglect and abuse, (Çocuğa Yönelik Şiddetin Önlenmesi Teknik Destek Projesi, 2015). In recent years, children have been exposed to physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect in a variety of settings depending on the existence of negative socio-cultural, economic, communicative and psychological conditions particularly in the domestic environment and school, which are supposed to be the safest places. (Çetinkaya-Yıldız and Hatipoğlu-Sümer, 2010; Duran and Ünsal, 2014; Özyürek, 2017).

Increasing number of violent cases in schools disturbs these institutions from being places where children can safely be educated (MEB, 2015). However, in most of the countries, schools are the places where children spend the most of time outside the homes and gain positive behaviors. Therefore, educational institutions are expected to play a very important role in keeping children away from violence. In addition, the schools aim to ensure that the physical and spiritual development of children is carried out in a healthy environment (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). Teachers and staff at these educational institutions should be sensitive to violence in order to prevent violent cases from causing more severe damages to children that affect their physical and psychosocial health.

Although violence against children is the subject of numerous studies in the literature, it has been observed that in general there is limited number of recent studies conducted on sensitivity to violence (Aptarahsvili et al., 2016; Brell, 2007; Corey, 2008; Collyer, Gallo, Corey, Waters & Boney-McCoy, 2007; Collyer, & Melisi 2008; Collyer, Johnson, Bueno de Mesquita, Palazzo& Jordan, 2010; Collyer, Brell, Moster and Furey, 2011; Egan, 2010; Egan & Collyer, 2012; Egan, 2014; Garcia-Ramirez, 2016; Marcotte, 2015; Scharrer, 2008) and sensitivity to violence towards child (Kurtuluş, 2018; Özyürek, 2017; Özyürek, Sezgin, & Kürtüncü, 2017; Çavuş, Topçu-Bilir and Özyürek, 2017). In this respect, it is thought that the examination of teachers' violence sensitivity towards children can be helpful to recognize and prevent violent incidents that can be experienced by children in domestic and school environment.

2. Method

2.1 Research Model

This research is a descriptive study of screening model. The model is often used to determine the interaction and quantity between two or more variables. Relational screening model, which does not give a real cause-effect relation, allows estimation of the situation in other variable or variables in accordance with the information of a particular variable (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2014).

2.2 Participants

The universe of the study consists of teachers working in public schools in Erzurum, Turkey during the academic year of 2017 -2018. The sample of the study consists of 563 teachers, 253 female and 310 male. The appropriate sampling method was used as the sampling method. The research process was started in accordance with the permission received from the Provincial Directorate of National Education and the data were collected by the researcher. After the teachers were informed about the research, data collection tools were applied.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

In this study, the "Violence Sensitivity towards Children Scale" (SVACS), which was developed by Özyürek (2017), was used. The Cronbach Alpha value of the internal consistency coefficient, which was developed by Özyürek in determination of the reliability of the scale, was determined to be 0,82 for the single-factor structure. The scale consists of a total of 19 questions and 3 points likert (3 I agree, 2 I partially agree, 1 I disagree). The scale evaluates the questions of 3, 6, 12, 14 and 18 in reverse. The high total score obtained from the scale indicates that the violence sensitivity towards children is high (Özyürek, 2017). In addition, the personal information form prepared by the researcher was used.

2.4 Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data, frequency distribution was used to determine the demographic characteristics, the Independent Samples T test was used to examine the differentiation status between two independent variables and the violence sensitivity level towards children, and the One Way Anova analysis tests were conducted to examine the differentiation status between more than two variables and the violence sensitivity level towards children. All these tests were analyzed in SPSS 21 package program and the significance was evaluated at $p < 0,05$ level.

3. Results

This section presents the statistical distributions of demographic characteristics and frequency distributions of sports activity status of the teachers and the relationship between these variables and the violence sensitivity towards children.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Teachers

	Variable	N	%
Gender	Female	253	44,9
	Male	310	55,1
	Total	563	100,0
Age	26 years old or younger	63	11,2
	Between 27-35 years old	203	36,1
	Between 36-45 years old	209	37,1
	46 years old or older	88	15,6
Family Structure	Nuclear	519	92,2
	Extended	44	7,8
Do you have a child?	Yes	416	73,9
	No	147	26,1
Where did you spend your childhood?	Countryside	119	21,1
	Town	96	17,1
	City/Metropolitan	348	61,8

The research was conducted on 563 teachers, 253 female and 310 male. It was observed that teachers were mainly over 27 years of old and had a nuclear family structure. It was observed that 416 teachers had a child while 147 teachers had no child. While 348 teachers spent their childhood in city/metropolitan area, 119 teachers spent their childhood in countryside and 96 of the teachers spent in a town.

Table 2. Distribution of Professional Status of Teachers

	Variable	N	%
Tenure of office	Less than 5 years	134	23,8
	Between 6-10 years	156	27,7
	Between 11-15 years	102	18,1
	16 or more years	171	30,4
	Total	563	100,0
Administrative duty	Principal	11	2,0
	Deputy principal	43	7,6
	I have no administrative duty	509	90,4
Employment Status	Permanent	501	89,0
	Contractual	30	5,3
	Paid	32	5,7

In terms of the professional characteristics of the teachers who participated in the research, it was observed that the majority of the participants was in a permanent job status and did not have an administrative duty.

Table 3. Results of the t test analysis of Gender and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Violence sensitivity level towards children	Gender	N	X	SS	t	P
	Female	253	48,6561	3,54846		
	Male	310	45,9742	4,37993	7,859	,000

According to the t-test conducted to compare the violence sensitivity levels of the male and the female teachers towards children, a significant difference was found_(,000) at the significance level of $p < ,050$. Accordingly, the violence sensitivity of the female teachers towards children_($x=48,6561$) is higher than that of male teachers_($x=45,9742$).

Table 4. Results of the Anova test analysis of Age of the Teachers and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Age	N	X	SS	F	P	Difference
26 years old or younger 1	63	48,0159	3,67859			
Between 27-35 years old 2	203	48,5862	3,99086		,002	1>3
Between 36-45 years old 3	209	46,1914	4,58905	17,056	,001	1>4
46 years old or older 4	88	45,6818	3,06836		,000	2>3,4
Total	563	47,1794	4,23989			

In the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the violence sensitivity level towards children in different age groups, a significant difference was found_(,002-,001-,000) at the significance level of $p < ,050$.

In this regard, teachers younger than 26 years old_($x=48,0159$) and between 27-35 years old_($x=48,5862$) have higher violence sensitivity levels towards children than teachers between 36-45 years old_($x=46,1914$) and more than 46 years old_($x=45,6818$).

Table 5. Results of the t test analysis of Family Structure and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Violence sensitivity level towards children	Family Structure	N	X	Ss	t	P
	Nuclear	519	47,2042	3,99236		
	Extended	44	46,8864	6,54578	,317	,753

According to the t-test conducted to compare the violence sensitivity levels in terms of living in nuclear and extended family structures, no significant difference was found_(,753) at the significance level of $p < ,050$.

Table 6. Results of the t test analysis of Status of Having a Child and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Violence sensitivity level towards children	Do you have a child?	N	X	Ss	t	P
	Yes	416	46,7476	4,17927		
	No	147	48,4014	4,18520	-4,123	,000

The t-test was used to compare the violence sensitivity levels of teachers towards children depending on having a child or not and a significant difference was found_(,000) at the significance level of $p < ,050$. According to this finding, teachers who did not have a child have higher violence sensitivity level towards children_($x=48,4014$) than teachers who have a child_($x=46,7476$).

Table 7. Results of the Anova test analysis of the Place of Childhood and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

The place of childhood	N	X	Ss	F	P	Difference
Countryside 1	119	43,4622	3,74118	7,067	,001 ,021	3>1 3>2
Town 2	96	43,8750	2,79567			
City/Metropolitan 3	348	45,0029	4,69563			
Total	563	44,4849	4,28077			

In the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the violence sensitivity level towards children depending on the teachers' place of childhood, a meaningful difference was found ($_{,001-.021}$) at the significance level of $p<,050$.

According to this finding, the sensitivity levels of teachers who spent their childhood in a city/metropolitan ($x=45,0029$) are higher than teachers who spent their childhood in a countryside ($x=43,4622$) and town ($x=43,8750$).

Table 8. Results of the Anova test analysis of the Tenure of Office and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Tenure of Office	N	X	Ss	F	P	Difference
Less than 5 years 1	134	47,8433	3,58118	16,12 2	,000	4<1,2,3
Between 6-10 years 2	156	48,3974	4,29505			
Between 11-15 years 3	102	47,3431	3,97640			
16 or more years 4	171	45,4503	4,29523			
Total	563	47,1794	4,23989			

In the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the violence sensitivity level towards children depending on tenure of office, a meaningful difference was found ($_{,000}$) at the significance level of $p<,050$.

According to this result, the teachers with 16 years of teaching experience have higher violence sensitivity levels towards children ($x=45,4503$) than teachers with 5 years or less experience ($x=47,8433$), teachers with 6-10 year experience ($x=48,3974$) and teachers with 11-15 year experience ($x=47,3431$).

Table 9. Results of the Anova test analysis of Administrative Duty and of the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Administrative Duty	N	X	Ss	F	P	Difference
Principal 1	11	49,0909	3,08073	5,279	,009 ,004	2<1 2<3
Deputy principal 2	43	45,3721	4,07678			
I have no administrative duty 3	509	47,2908	4,23776			
Total	563	47,1794	4,23989			

In the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the violence sensitivity level towards children depending on the administrative duty status, a meaningful difference ($_{,000}$) was found at the significance level of $p<,050$.

According to this finding, the sensitivity levels of teachers with deputy principal duty ($x=45,3721$) are less than the teachers with principal duty ($x=49,0909$) and the teachers with had no administrative duty ($x=47,2908$).

Table 9. Results of the Anova test analysis of Employment Status and the Violence Sensitivity Level towards Children

Employment Status	N	X	Ss	F	P	Difference
Permanent	501	44,5828	4,34599	1,299	,274	-----
Contractual	30	43,4333	3,25559			
Paid	32	43,9375	4,01559			
Total	563	44,4849	4,28077			

In the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the violence sensitivity levels towards children in terms of employment status of the teachers, no significant difference was found ($_{,753}$) at the significance level of $p<,050$.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The research investigated secondary school teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children according to different variables. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the gender and the teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children. It was observed that the female teachers' sensitivity to violence was higher than male teachers. In the study conducted by Özyürek (2017) on undergraduate students, it was found that female students had a higher level of violence sensitivity towards children than male students. This result is in line with findings of the current research that showed that female teachers have a higher level of violence sensitivity towards children. In addition, Özyürek, Sezgin and Kürtüncü (2017) stated that women's basic empathy levels and their violence sensitivity levels towards children were significantly higher than men.

A significant difference was found between the teacher's age and the violence sensitivity levels towards children. It was found that the teachers under 26 years old have higher levels of violence sensitivity towards children. Followings can be reasons for this result; idealism at the early years of the profession, the fact that negative events and their consequences are experienced at the later years of profession, the increasing awareness and sensitivity of the teachers about these issues, being aware of their responsibilities, and realizing students' problems. In her study, Özyürek (2017) stated that participants' perceptions of violence towards children were not significantly affected by their age. Özyürek, Sezgin and Kürtüncü (2017) also stated that the participants' basic empathy levels and their violence sensitivity towards children were not significantly affected by the age variable. A similar result was reported by Çavuş et al. (2017).

Considering the sensitivity levels of the teachers and their families, no significant difference was found between the nuclear family and the extended family. Any works in the literature found to support this finding.

Considering the teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children and having a child status, it was observed that the teachers with no child have higher levels than the teachers with a child. A similar study has not been found to support this finding of the study. Among the participants, those who have no children were probably the teachers in younger age group, idealists and who were closely involved in their students. As mentioned above, the violence sensitivity levels of these groups towards children are high.

In terms of the teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children and the place where teachers spent their childhood, significant differences were found. It has been observed that teachers who spent their childhood in the city/metropolitan have higher violence sensitivity levels towards children than those who spent their childhood in countryside or towns. Any data was found in literature in Turkey on intensity of violence against children depending on rural/urban distinction. Karataş et al. (2008) found that women with background of rural areas experienced high domestic violence in their families and surrounding families. And the study showed that the women were often silent to the violence and, in some cases, gave rights to persons who showed violence. In the study conducted by the Turkish Ministry of Family Social Policies and Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (2015), no rural and urban difference was found in terms of violence against women.

Considering the teachers' violence sensitivity levels towards children and the tenure of office a significant difference was found. It has been observed that teachers who worked for more than 16 years have low violence sensitivity towards children. It was expected that the experienced teachers, who spent excessive time with the students and who had ability to recognize children's behaviors and appearance more easily, are knowledgeable about violence against children, to get higher scores on violence sensitivity level towards children. However, a different result was reached. Erol (2007), in her study conducted on preschool teachers, reported that teachers with maximum five years of experience were more sensitive to indications of physical assault than other teachers. Domestic, economic or other problems experienced by teachers in the past years can cause decrease in the sensitivities. Another study (Çavuş, Topçu-Bilir and Özyürek, 2017) showed that teachers with 15 years of experience or more have a higher level of violence sensitivity towards children. The finding differs with the result of the current study.

In Turkey, Education Ministry employs teachers at four different statutes. These are permanent teachers, contracted teachers, paid teachers and expert trainers who work in kindergarten classes and kindergarten schools. In the study, the permanent teachers were employed in the civil servants status, the contracted teachers were in the contract employment status and the paid teachers were employed as temporary staff (Öztaş, 2010). Although no significant difference was found between the employment status and violence sensitivity towards children, it was observed that the violence sensitivity levels of permanent teachers towards children were higher than contracted and paid teachers. Both personal rights and the salary differ in favor of permanent teachers among the employment groups. Therefore, it was expected that the employment status could affect the violence sensitivity towards children. However, contrary to expectations, no significant difference was found between the teachers' sensitivity and the employment status. On the other hand, it was observed that the violence sensitivity of permanent teachers towards children was higher than that of contracted and paid teachers. It could be because the permanent teachers feel more belonging to the school, they have the opportunity

to learn more about their students for a longer time and so their levels of violence sensitivity towards children were higher than the contracted and paid teachers.

The first and most effective way to save children from violence, neglect and abuse is to accept the fact of violence. It is especially important that teachers working in schools, which are one of the places where violence is experienced intensely, should be sensitive to violence and know how to react when they encounter violent events. With this aim, teacher candidates should get new and up-to-date information before the graduation. The teachers in office also should get same information through in-service trainings. The psychological counselors at the schools should give seminars to students, parents and teachers in order to increase awareness about violence against children.

In addition to the variables that were used in this study that may affect the violence sensitivity towards children, the role of exposure to physical violence during childhood, witnessing domestic violence and being trained about child abuse or neglect can be investigated. Moreover, researchers can examine relationship between teachers' violence sensitivity towards children and prevention of and intervention in violence. Further studies can compare violence sensitivity of parents and teachers towards children.

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