The Effect Of Traumatic Disorders On Character Development In Early Childhood

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1. ABSTRACT

Traumas experienced during childhood are linked to child abuse and neglect, and it is concluded that the psychological damage to mental health and physical health integrity is high. The problem of trauma has a separate prevention as it also affects the person's future life. Child abuse and neglect is considered as a set of events that leave negative effects on both childhood and adulthood periods of the person and prevent their development. It is the most natural right of every child to lead a healthy life away from violence. Based on this, this study aims to examine the impact of traumatic disorders experienced in early childhood on the child's character development.

Keywords: Trauma, Abuse, Childhood, Health

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement and progress in a society is achieved within, through the healthy social, physical and spiritual development of children. Parents or caregivers exposing children to situations that do not align with social rules, affect the physical, emotional, sexual and mental development, harm the physical and mental health, intentional harm rather than accidents are all considered to block the development in children. The events that stun childhood development are called childhood neglect and abuse. These events have a negative impact on children in terms of a healthy development. Every child have the right to live a healthy life, free from violence. However, when we look, each year millions of children around the globe are subjected to sexual, emotional or physical abuse. The easy way of solution to one's identity crisis is explained by the concept of identity that forms around an event emerging based on previous experiences. It is a known fact that emotional regulation abilities are effective in this diagnosis.

Self-esteem is explained as being content with oneself while claiming being neither superior nor inferior, after a conclusion of self-evaluation. Growth in self-esteem with the social support from family and friends is a taught phenomenon. It is acknowled that childhood is the beginning phase of self-esteem, which is stated to be a lifelong process. Children who suffers from neglect and domestic abuse during formative years are adversely affected in terms of self-esteem. Undergoing negative experiences at an early age re-shapes the pre-existing genetics that causes stress and susceptibility to disease. Sexual abuse appears in adulthood with symptoms such as mild depression, major depression, addiction, and post-traumatic stress disorders. Physical neglect shows itself in specific circumstances. For example, it is observed that the hair and the skin of a physically neglected child are not taken care of. The skin is pale and it gives the impression of malnourishment. A clear example of physical neglect is when during unexpected and unwanted pregnancies, the mother starves herself and it results with the termination of pregnancy, or when children born outside of marriage being left to die from starvation. Personality development begins at infancy. Through, this continues as a lifelong phase but the speed differs in each stages of life. Among these, the adolescence and childhood stages are considered the most important periods in terms of personality development in general. (Yıldırım, 2010: 50-57; Gökler, 2006: 47-76). The effects of traumatic disorders that is experienced in early childhood on personality development was researched in this study.

1.1 1.1. Method

In this study, the compilation method was used to examine the effects of traumatic disorders experienced during early childhood on character development. The compilation method is a method that allows the integration of findings, results and evaluations by analyzing two or more studies published on specific subject. It typically includes publications of information collected by individuals in the relevant field of study, using a variety of approaches and sources, without resorting to a specific methodology (Burns and Grove, 2009; Gerrish and Lacey, 2010).

2. 2. GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 2.1. Childhood Trauma

An individual encountering events one cannot cope with it in a short time is called trauma. It is known that the trauma negatively affects organization, perceptive abilities and emotional stability. It is explained as the response given outside the cause that initiated the event, or as the internal or mental result of the said events. Experiencing a traumatic event is difficult at all ages. But the childhood is the hardest to cope with. Because it is stated there is almost no strength to cope with trauma in this age period. The vulnerabilities experienced during this period affect the image of self and object. Behaviors or reactions to future events are defined during this period. (Yıldırım, 2010: 50-57)

A type of trauma that occurs in childhood is abuse and neglect experienced during this time period. However, it is known that millions of children around the world are sexually, emotionally or physically abused every year. There is no single, clear definition coming from the experts among the field of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, there are slight differences between the definitions made regarding child abuse and neglect. While just making a definition about this term creates problems from the beginning, research on this subject also shows that the causes of neglect and abuse vary across many cultures and over time. For example, some acts known for being a common practice of maintaining discipline among mothers and fathers can be considered neglect or abuse today. Which behavior will be considered child abuse and neglect depends on the beliefs and values of society or the understanding of discipline and punishment in any culture. Moreover, value put on children varies in each culture. (Zeytinoğlu, 1991: 147-161).

The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect has conducted a study about child abuse and neglect including 58 countries. Definitions of child abuse in these countries have been researched by experts, and some common points have been determined as to which behaviors were accepted as sexual abuse. The "World Health Organization Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention" was held in 1999. The definition made at this meeting is as follows: Child abuse and child maltreatment are forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation that result in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity (in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power).

Although there are different definitions of child neglect and abuse, the results have a common ground regarding to problems one suffers. Situations like this cause emotional, physical, social and sexual harm to a child. Childhood abuse is one of the most important issues today, as it extends not only in childhood but also into adulthood, and also causes symptomatological disorders. (Gökler, 2006: 47-76).

2.2 2.2. Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a psychosocially inadequate, underage child is being used as an object for sexual gratification by an adult. Furthermore, childhood sexual abuse is defined as all sexual acts directed against a minor by the acquaintances (relatives) but also by an adult, at least six years older than the child, in order to satisfy sexual desires. (Kara et al., 2004: 140-151).

Sex crime against children can be explained as the exploitation of a minor at the age of 15 or younger, being taken advantage of by a person at least five years older and exposure to sexual acts performed by force or even while having the consent of the minor. All types of sexual offense against children such as exhibitionism, molestation, using a minor as pornographic tool and rape are considered cases of sexual assault. It is also a common occurrence for the crime of sexual abuse be committed within the family and being forced into sexual activity by relatives. Research made by experts shows that sexual abuse against children between the ages of 3 and 5 are more frequent. (Aral ve Gürsoy, 2001: 140-151).

One of the events that should be taken into consideration is that there is a difference between sexual games and sexual abuse. It is considered normal for children whose developmental levels are almost the same, to touch or

look at each other's genital areas as they discover themselves for the first time, as long as there is no relationship between them. When we look at the results of a research conducted based on families and school administrators, the behaviors that the participants define as sexual abuse include turning a blind eye to the sexual use of the child, using the child sexually, and harming the sexual development of the child (Erginer, 2007: 35-59).

The situation where the abuser is related to the teenager or the child by blood, or even responsible for taking care of them is called "incest". When latest conducted researches are investigated, it is concluded that the person responsible for taking care of the child, other than the nuclear family members, still falls within this scope regardless of biological ties. (Alparslan, 2014: 194-201).

Research done on emotional and social consequences of child sexual abuse indicates that occurrences such as suicide, pregnancy, substance use, running away, joining a gang, behavioral problems, increased likelihood of risky sexual behavior, and post-traumatic stress disorder happen.

2.3 2.3. Physical Abuse

When we look at the types of abuse, physical abuse is considered to be the most observed and the simplest one to understand among other types. This type of abuse is interpreted as all violent behavior that physically harms the child. These behaviors include harmful behaviors such as shaking, slapping, punching, burning, poisoning, biting, kicking and strangling. Maltreatment by the parents or someone else responsible for the child's care in the form of beating and causes injury to the child, is defined as physical abuse. When we look at the most qualified definition of physical abuse, it is expressed as non-accidental injury to the child. Intentional injuries usually occur as a way for parents to punish the child, or when they cannot maintain control. For this reason, when age is not appropriate or the probability of spontaneous occurrence is low, accidents that occur frequent in childhood are judged with the suspicion of abuse. If it is claimed that the damage was caused by another child, this is proven true. The situation that causes cuts, burns and fractures on the child, which is often expressed as beating in society, should be explained as a form of physical abuse. (Pelendecioğlu ve Bulut, 2009: 50-62).

All explanations with many different definitions we come across about physical abuse, are aimed at behaviors that harm children's health and cause scars or injuries on their bodies. Ill-intented behaviors such as wounding, strangling, hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, kicking are within the definition if we were to give an example of physical abuse. The reasons for physical violence against children at home are stated as establishing authority, punishing the kid or venting out pent-up anger. It is known that the brain of babies who were rapidly shaken by the angry parents moves back and forth in the skull. As a result, brain hemorrhages may occur in babies.(Kara vd., 2004: 140-152).

2.4 2.4. Emotional Abuse

Considering the types of abuse, emotional abuse seems to be the most difficult to define. Emotional abuse includes verbal threats, expressions that hurt pride, verbal threats, humiliation, and many behaviors that affect the emotional and mental health of the child. In addition, constant negative emotions, ridicule, communication with double messages, giving unexpected answers, parents not showing feelings such as compassion, love, trust and acceptance are also included in this scope (Saçarçelik, 2009: 55-58).

Emotional abuse is one of the most common types of abuse we encounter in daily life. It is also explained as the expectations and requests of other adults or parents according to the child's abilities and aggressive behaviors. Emotional abuse is the most difficult type of abuse to identify. It is stated that this abuse differs from other types of abuse because it has permanent or long-term consequences (Topbaş, 2004).

Emotional abuse includes continuous ordering or verbal abuse that will cause interruptions in terms of the child's psychological development. Emotional abuse is not experienced alone and can also occur after sexual and physical abuse. Emotional abuse, which is interpreted as violence, consists of attitudes and behaviors in which the child is given a feeling of love when he/she is inadequate and unworthy, unloved or only fulfills his/her wishes. Behaviors such as mocking, damaging the things that the child values and humiliating the child emotionally reject the child (Sayar & Bağlan, 2010).

2.5 2.5. Physical Neglect

Physical neglect is defined as harming a minor or young child due to inadequate hygiene, inadequate nutrition and inadequate care. Many events such as not providing the child with the necessary health care, excluding the child, leaving the child alone, ignoring the child's clothing and hygienic needs, not taking the necessary precautions to protect the child from toxic substances, not taking the child who runs away from home are accepted as physical neglect (Kaplan vd., 1999: 1214-1222).

A physically neglected child has unkempt hair and skin. His/her skin is pale and he/she looks malnourished to people. It reflects that physical neglect can have very serious consequences in terms of the mother starving herself in unexpected or unwanted pregnancies and as a result of this situation, the pregnancy is terminated or children born out of marriage are left to die by starving. Physical neglect can also cause long-term damage to a child's cognitive, social, behavioral and emotional development. Neglected children are more likely to suffer from academic and cognitive disorders, more limited peer relationships, intensely bottling up their emotions, and social inadequacy than children exposed to physical abuse (Lynch, 1999: 1-8).

2.6 2.6. Emotional Neglect

Emotional neglect is defined as failing to meet the psychological needs of the child, care for the child emotionally, withholding the necessary compassion and love from the child, failure to teach social rules, failure to provide adequate support for social development. When we look at the field of psychiatry, it is known that the intensity of childhood abuse and neglect of patients is being investigated. In a study, the rate of emotional neglect being 81.6% is an indication of emotional neglect (Sadock et al., 2004: 370-376).

It is known that the prevalence of emotional neglect in childhood is higher than the rate of physical and sexual abuse. The emotional and physical development of children exposed to neglect is severely disrupted. Children who are chronically exposed to behavioral neglect may feel and show too much affection even to strangers without discriminating any person, or may be found inadequate in terms of socialization even in familiar environments (Wright et al., 2009: 59-67).

2.7 2.7. Factors Causing Childhood Traumatic Experiences

The risk factors related to the families of abused and neglected children are listed as follows (Garbarino and Ganzel, 2000: 76-93):

- Parents have insufficient self-management skills.
- They lack self-confidence.
- They are prone to anxiety and depression.
- They are exposed to abuse during childhood.
- There are fights and problems between parents. There is substance addiction.
- Family structure remains weak.
- Discrimination is practiced.
- There are socio-cultural incompatibilities.
- Social support remains weak.
- They are excluded from society.

Low levels of education, low levels of income, a broken bond between children and the family, and parents' dependence on alcohol or drugs make children vulnerable to neglect and abuse. In addition to these, social problems and interruptions in communication processes within the family are among the risk factors that may lead to neglect or abuse. In a study conducted in the field of neglect and abuse in Turkey, behaviors such as adults being indifferent to the child's lessons, misbehaving, being insistent, disobeying, not doing the tasks requested by their parents, and hiding things from their family are defined as behaviors that cause exposure to abuse (Oral et al., 2010: 282).

According to a 2010 study conducted by Yolcuoğlu and colleagues, 21.4% of the people examined after sexual, physical, emotional abuse and incestuous relationship exhibit the attitude of physically harming themselves. This rate is very close to each other in boys and girls. The most common behavior in girls and boys is self-harm, hitting the body hard and punching oneself violently. It is also stated that 10.1% of the people in the study attempted suicide at least once (Yolcuoğlu 2010: 73-78).

2.8 2.8. Childhood Trauma and its Relationship with Psychiatric Diseases

Anxiety-related disorders such as anxiety and depression symptoms, suicide attempts, post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety disorders are more common in people who have experienced trauma in childhood. Apart from familial and hereditary factors, the early death of one or both parents increases the risk of developing bipolar and anxiety disorders, and prenatal stress is associated with major depression in adulthood (Heim & Nemeroff, 2001: 1024).

Having negative experiences in the early period leads to the shaping of genetics that cause susceptibility to stress and disease. Sexual abuse is manifested in adulthood with symptoms such as mild depression, major depression, addiction to substances and post-traumatic stress disorders. The risk of major depression increases by 40% in

women who were sexually abused in childhood and who reach adulthood. Symptoms such as weight gain, increased appetite and increased sleep duration are also important factors in the emergence of these disorders. Childhood trauma is more common in bipolar patients. In 2005, Garno et al. examined the history of childhood abuse in 100 bipolar adult patients. The frequency of trauma was 51%. Emotional abuse was reported by 37% of the patients, sexual abuse by 21%, physical abuse by 24%, emotional neglect by 24% and physical neglect by 12%. Childhood trauma predisposes to bipolar disorder. In addition, the clinical presentation and process of the disease are also affected by this situation (Putnam, 2003: 166).

2.9 2.9. Character

The word character is known as an old concept of French origin. It is defined by TDK as a person's unique structure, a symptom that distinguishes a person from other people, a characteristic that determines behavior, a person's attitude and behavior. From the point of view of Erich From, character is explained as the acquired characteristic of a person. In 2010, İnanç et al. do not define character as a mechanism that is not instinctive as a result of the relationship of the person with his/her environment. In 2005, Köknel defined character as the value shown by the environment to a person's emotional, mental and physical activity. When we look at this definition, it is seen that character emerges at birth and is not transmitted from individual to individual by inheritance. For example, no child is born lazy. If a child is lazy, it is argued that he/she is lazy because he/she looks at laziness as an important tool that will make life easier and as it should be in order not to lose dignity. Personality does not change in the following years and in this context it is considered separate from character. However, character includes traits that are acquired through later learning. In this context, education and family upbringing in childhood are effective in the formation of a child's character (Adler, 2019: 45-78).

When we look at the literature, it is seen that a person's character is considered as all of the virtues or character strengths that guide the way that person behaves in the world. For most people, the emotions, actions, and thoughts related to virtue can occur at a slow, uneven pace throughout a large part of development. For this reason, at each stage of development, a person is endowed with different characters that are more stable, mature and functional than others (Aristotle, 1999: 86-113).

2.10 2.10. Character Education

The aim of character education, is to raise members of society who are caring, productive, compassionate, well behaved children with high moral values and to make them use their potential with the best intent and understand the purpose of life and live according to it in their adolescence years.The behaviors that are intended to be acquired in the character education program are as follows:

Responsibility

Responsibility is defined as taking responsibility for events that occurs within one's own authority or the consequences of behavior. It is necessary to instill the sense of responsibility in child from an early age. Families need to be an example in order to become a role model for the child. The type of responsibility is as important as the acquirement of responsibility in a person. While instilling a sense of responsibility, it is observed that a correct personality can not be formed when one encounters with wrong basic or distorted values. The behaviors determined to measure responsibility behavior in children are as follows (Altınköprü, 1999: 65-77):

- Using own belongings regularly,
- Taking care of the living beings in environment,
- Gathering the toys and putting them back to their places after play time is over,
- Commitment towards the responsibilities given by others,
- Not making excuses.

Confidence

When the national literature is examined, confidence is defined as a feeling of well-being within oneself. Confidence forms when there is acknowledgement in oneself and being in peace with. It is observed that only those who can self-improve and have sense of self awareness can form their own character. (Eldeleklioğlu, 2004: 111-121).

One can only find the strength to compensate for shortcomings with

being confident in self. Traits related to confidence has to be improved from the early stages of childhood. The approach of parents, locals from environment, teachers and relatives are important during childhood and adolescence for this reason.

There are some behaviors to measure confident behavior in children. These behaviors are as follows

(Eldeleklioğlu, 2004: 111-121):

- Establishing whether they could do it or not when offered a job,
- Responding each criticism with an open-mind.
- Explanining the decisions regarding oneself when necessary. Accepting and facing with the consequences of one's own actions.

Leadership

Defined as "leadership", this concept is also means as the task of directing and controlling the behavior of others. Leadership is seen as one of the characteristics that occur at an early age. Especially observed between the ages of three and six. During the game, the leader is the one who starts the game and the other players are led by their leader. The child who is a leader is confident in self.

Behaviors determined to measure leadership behavior in children are as follows (Çağdaş and Seçer, 2002: 27-29):

- Being able to lead an organization or game when necessary,
- Making simple decisions regarding one's own environment.
- Must be in a leadership position in a study or activity,
- Being fair to everyone while in the position of leadership

Generosity

This concept is expressed as using one's power for the benefit of others, volunteering to help people in need, and being in solidarity with society.

Generosity ehavior in children is evaluated according to the following criteria (Aktepe, 2010: 23-34):

- To share the resources with those in need when necessary,
- Being able to empathize with others,
- Offering assistance to others in tasks that one is good at.
- Volunteering to listen people who have problems.

Respect

Respect is defined as treating someone with care and attention due to one's superiority, significance or age status. Respectful people take others into consideration. "It is important for adults to treat children with respect in order to develop respectful behavior in children and reflecting this to environment. In order for the concept of respect to develop in children, their opinions, wishes and communication must be given importance." (Balat ve Dağal, 2006: 46-67).

Behaviors used to measure respectful behavior in children are as follows:

- Using someone else's belongings with permission,
- Giving importance to personal care and cleanliness,
- Making eye contact while communicating with each other,
- To have environmental awareness

Kindness

Kindness means being polite, gentle and respectful towards others. Kindness is based on the notion of doing someone a favor. Children practice simple rules and acts of kindess through school. Children in preschool are expected to display simple behaviors such as saying ylu are welcome or thank you. (Deniz, 1990: 15-27).

The behaviors expected from children within the extent of politeness are as follows:

- Making a habit of saying words such as thank you, sorry, good morning, good evening in daily life,
- Always approaching people with politeness,
- Having proper table manners
- Being tolerant towardsthe manners of others

Patience

Defined as waiting for an event to be over when encountered distressing situations without making a fuss. It is

said that patience is one of the most important personality trait that a person can have. A child who gets to have everything in instant may have difficulties in future, or may not know the worth. (Tuzcuoğlu, 2003: 67-76).

The behaviors expected from children in order to measure patient behavior are as follows:

- Waiting for the speaker to finish talking in order to take turn in communication,
- Finishing what he started,
- Waiting in their line to start a job,
- Being patient in the face of situations and tasks that cannot be done.

2.11 2.11. Character Development

The collective fundamental values that sustain the entire society for survival is called morals. From this perspective, the system must operate in a way that does not exceed the moral limits. In a world where people only think about own interests and the things they care, neither social, economic nor artistic life can be mentioned. Everyone, including moral tutors such as teachers, parents, clergy and politicians, needs to learn and teach people in all aspects. "Moral development is one of the most important elements of personality development and is related to the development of an awareness of good and bad within the socialization process of children. With the aid of moral development a person is expected to be able to control oneself within the rules and traditions of the society. If a person can have self control according to the social rules it is internally controlled; and if one makes decisions under the influence of the people around shows an externally controlled moral development." (Selçuk, 2005: 45-48).

When we look at the all aspects of character development, especially adolescence and childhood are the most critical periods of life. Most of character is developed during childhood. For this reason, adolescence years is explained as important periods in terms of the development of personality. (Şemin, 1979: 48-56).

Character development begins at infancy. It is considered as a lifelong process. However, the speed progress varies from time to time. Among these periods, adolescence and childhood are usually interpreted as the most important time periods of character development. During infancy, communication can be only made with the family. When an infant moves into childhood, the environment is also added to the list. This process continues in this procedure.

2.12 2.12. The Effect of Childhood Traumas on Character Development

Childhood traumas appear as events that affect development in physical, emotional, behavioral, social and cognitive areas. Neglect and abuse are considered childhood traumas; It is explained as the exposure of children to behaviors and attitudes that prevent their emotional, physical, social and mental development by their parents, other caregivers or strangers.

It can occur in two cases, emotional and physical. However, abuse also has a sexual dimension. Physical abuse is defined as a child getting injured with the intentional harm of an adult, and the sexual abuse is when the child is used for the sexual desires and needs of an adult. (Kılıç, 2027: 90-97).

The easy way of solution to one's identity crisis is explained by the concept of identity that forms around an event emerging based on previous experiences. From a developmental perspective, it is predicted that the ability of emotional regulation develops before the identity in childhood, and all emotions such as shame, guilt, insecurity and doubt will be perceived in more positive sight by people with high emotion regulation ability. (Erikson 1980: 213).

When the bond that the mother establishes with the child is shaped correctly and gives appropriate responses aligning with the child's needs, it is seen that this provides the child with the necessary experiences for self-awareness and emotional regulation in the future. So, the mother acts as a mirror for the child in this. This affects the emotional regulation and identity development skills of the child. (Çuhadaroğlu, 2001: 194-199).

3. 3. CONCLUSION

Love, care and protection are the basic needs during childhood years. Meeting the needs of individuals in childhood and growing up in a healthy family is very important for their psychological and social development. On the other hand, experiencing trauma during childhood leaves a person with negative and permanent effects for life.

The effects of neglect and abuse, which can be seen all over the world and every society, show themselves even after years have passed on. According to research, it is seen that even after years some victims can not overcome the traumatic situations they experienced. Childhood traumas, along with constant stress, cause a serious increase of symptoms of mental illness in adulthood. It is stated that people who are involved in crime have problematic

backgrounds and dysfunctional family relationships. The disruption of family relationships cause abuse and neglect in the childhood stages of criminals. This situation plays an active role in perpetuating guilt, neglect and abuse. In the light of this information, it is thought that childhood trauma may lead a person to criminal behavior such as violence. Children who have been exposed to chronic neglect behavior may feel very fond of even strangers, regardless of person.

It is stated that childhood traumas, which are considered the most serious type of crime against psyche, deeply affect the social and psychological development of a person. It is also possible to say in this regard that psychological, educational, social and legal measures are insufficient. Another reason is that the children who are exposed to abuse or the families feeling deeply ashamed about the issue.

In this study, the effects of traumatic childhood disorders on character development were examined. As a result, the relationship between childhood and self-esteem was clarified and events that negatively affected the character development of individuals due to childhood traumas were identified.

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