

Original Article

The Relationship Between Parenting Self-Efficacy Levels of Mothers and their Awareness of Child Abuse: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to reveal the relationship between mothers' parenting self-efficacy levels and their awareness of child abuse.

Methods: This descriptive and relational study was conducted with 283 women between October 1, 2021 and December 15, 2021 via Google Form. The data were collected using the "Information Form", "Parental Self-Efficacy Scale Among Mothers", and "Abuse Awareness Scale Parent Form". The compliance of the data to normal distribution was evaluated with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics (number, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum), One-Way ANOVA, Chi-square test, and the correlation analysis. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results: The mean age of the mothers in the study was 35.95 ± 6.17 , and the average number of children was 2 ± 1 . A relationship was revealed between the education level, place of residence, number of children and parenting self-efficacy of the mothers ($p < 0.05$). A statistically significant relationship was found between the knowledge of the mothers in the study about child abuse and their level of education, place of residence, and feelings of self-efficacy about raising children ($p < 0.05$). A weak negative relationship was revealed between the age of the mothers and the Abuse Awareness Scale Parents Form score ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: The mothers in the study were found to have a moderate level of parenting self-efficacy and awareness of abuse. The mothers with a high education level, fewer children, and living in the city center were found to have higher parenting self-efficacy, while younger mothers were found to have higher awareness of abuse.

Keywords: Abuse, awareness, child, self-efficacy, mother

Introduction

Children may experience various challenges during the period of development. Parents are believed to have a major role in coping with these challenges, and positive results emerge as a result of the support of competent parents.

Parental self-efficacy contributes to positive family functioning and thus positive childhood behaviors (Angley et al., 2015; Everri et al., 2015). In this process, it is seen that mothers who are in close contact with the child come to the fore in their parent role.

Some studies show that mothers are more active than fathers in early childhood (Grady & Karraker, 2016; Scott et al., 2018).

Parenting is evaluated based on three basic dimensions (1-to ensure the safety of the child and others and to protect them from harm, 2-parenting that supports developmental, emotional and physical health, 3-to develop the child's potential), and the presence of these three dimensions helps to ensure child-parent interaction and thus an effective parenting (Vance & Brandon, 2017). Parenting behaviors are associated with behavioral and developmental outcomes in childhood. For this reason, parents' sensitivity may prevent children from being exposed to abuse in various ways (Barth, 2009; Baggett et al. 2017).

Child abuse is a situation that results in widespread problems that develop simultaneously with or after the physical, sexual and emotional neglect of children. This is a complex process involving children and their families (Van Duin et al., 2019; Zeanah & Humphreys, 2018). It is stated that most of the child abuse cases are not reported, and the parents of the children who face this challenge are exposed to various risks. Effective communication and awareness on this issue provide families with a good parenting opportunity (Rosenthal & Thompson, 2020). Since child abuse is a complex public health problem, the awareness of certain segments of society, especially parents, on child abuse is important. Abuse affects not only the child and his family, but also the society, and it is observed that there are various studies on the subject in the literature (Alanazi et al., 2021; Preethy & Somasundaram, 2020; Solak et al., 2021). Parents have a critical role in preventing child abuse. For this reason, parents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors bring about child abuse awareness (Jin et al., 2019).

The past experiences of parents, especially mothers, their readiness for parenthood, and the neglect and abuse they have experienced affect their parenting behaviors. Therefore, the awareness of these parents about the abuse of their children varies depending on various factors (Hughes & Cossar, 2016). In order to raise strong and healthy children, the way parents approach events and their awareness

and use of effective parenting strategies are of great importance (Sege et al., 2018). There are various studies conducted with parents on child abuse and awareness in the literature (Batzler et al., 2018; Guo et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2019). This study aims to reveal the relationship between mothers' parenting self-efficacy levels and their awareness of child abuse.

Research Questions

1. What is the parenting self-efficacy levels of mothers?
2. What is the awareness level of mothers about child abuse?
3. Is there a relationship between mothers' parenting self-efficacy levels and their awareness of child abuse?

Methods

Design: This descriptive and correlational study was carried out between October 1, 2021 and December 15, 2021.

Participants and Setting: The target population of the study was the mothers with children between the ages of 5-12. The sample of the study was calculated as 243 participants using One Way Analysis of Variance and G*power at 5% significance level, 95% test power, and D:0.255 effect size. The study was completed with 283 participants (n=283).

Measures: The data were collected through the Google Forms application using the "Information Form", "Parenting Self-Efficacy Among Mothers Scale", and "Abuse Awareness Scale Parent Form".

Information Form: It is a form that includes questions on age, education level, income status, place of residence, number of children, primary caregiver of the child, feeling competent in raising children, having knowledge about child neglect and abuse, and the information source of those who have knowledge (Demir, 2015; Emre et al., 2019; Kaytez & Deles, 2020).

Parenting Self-Efficacy Among Mothers

Scale: The scale developed by Coleman and Karraker (2000) was adapted to Turkish by Demir (2015). The scale consists of 32 items and 5 factors, which are (1) provision of structure and discipline (Discipline), (2) Facilitating child's achievement in school (Achievement), (3) Supporting child's need for recreation including socializing with peers (Recreation), (4) Provision of emotional nurturance (Nurturance), and (5) Maintenance of child's physical health (Health). The items are rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (Totally

Disagree) to 6 (Totally Agree). The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 192, and the lowest score is 32. The Cronbach's Alpha of the scale is 0.79, while the test-retest reliability result is 0.84 (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Demir, 2015). The Cronbach's alpha in this study was found to be 0.84.

Abuse Awareness Scale Parent Form: The scale developed by Pekdogan (2017) determines parents' awareness of abuse. The scale consists of 18 items and has a single factor structure. The items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree). Items 12, 15 and 17 are reverse-coded. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 90, and the lowest score is 18. In scoring, the 18-42 score range indicates low abuse, the 42-66 score range represents moderate abuse, and the 66-90 score range represents high abuse. A high score from the scale indicates that parents have a high potential for abuse. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.98. The test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be 0.94 (Pekdogan, 2017). The Cronbach's alpha in this study is 0.72.

The Data Collection Procedures: In this study, data were collected through an online form. The time given to the participants for each form is approximately 15 minutes. Within the scope of the data protection law, anonymity has been ensured, personal data were kept confidential and not shared with second parties.

Analysis Procedures: The data were analyzed using the SPSS 20.0. The compliance of the data to normal distribution was evaluated with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (number, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum), One-Way ANOVA, the Chi-square test, and the correlation analysis. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Issues: Approval for the study was obtained from the ethics committee of the Ondokuz Mayıs University (date: 24.09.2021; number: 2021-737). The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and written approvals were obtained from the parents.

Results

The mean age of the mothers in the study was 35.95 ± 6.17 , and the average number of children was 2 ± 1 . 66.1% of the mothers have a university or higher education degree, 64% have an average economic status, and 49.8% live in the city center. 78.8% of the primary care of the children of the mothers in the study is provided by the mother or father. 68.6% of the mothers feel competent in raising children. 67.5% of the mothers stated that they have information about child abuse and 35.6% of them stated that they received this information from the Internet (Table 2).

Our study revealed a significant difference between the parenting self-efficacy scale scores of the mothers and their educational status ($p < 0.001$). Parenting self-efficacy scores of the mothers with a university degree or a higher degree were found to be higher than those with lower degrees. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was observed between the place of residence and the parenting self-efficacy scores of mothers ($p < 0.001$). Parenting self-efficacy scores of the mothers living in the city center were found to be higher than those of the mothers living in other places (Table 3).

A weak negative correlation was revealed between the age of the mothers in the study and the Abuse Awareness Scale Parent Form score ($p < 0.05$). It was found that as the age of the mothers decreased, the score they obtained from the Abuse Awareness Scale increased. In addition, a weak negative relationship was found between the number of children and the parenting self-efficacy scale score of mothers ($p < 0.05$). As the number of children decreased, the scores obtained from the Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale increased (Table 4). Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was revealed between the knowledge of the mothers in the study about child abuse and their level of education, place of residence, and feeling competent in raising children ($p < 0.05$, Table 5).

Table 1. Abuse awareness scale parents form and parental self efficacy scale among mothers mean scores

	X \pm SD	Min-Max
Abuse Awareness Scale Parents Form	52.99 \pm 4.57	40-66
Parental Self Efficacy Scale Among Mothers	110.22 \pm 25.10	32-160

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and information about abuse (n=283)

	X±SD	min-max
Age	35.95±6.17	21-56
Number of children	2±1	1-6
	n	%
Education status		
Primary school	16	5.7
Secondary school	29	10.2
High School	51	18.0
University and above	187	66.1
Economic status		
Good	95	33.5
medium	181	64.0
Bad	7	2.5
Place of residence		
City center	141	49.8
District	105	37.1
Village	37	13.1
Person providing primary care for the child		
Mother/ Father	223	78.8
Sitter	14	4.9
Grandmother	31	11.0
Kindergarten	15	5.3
The state of feeling competent in raising children		
Yes	194	68.6
No	7	2.4
Partly	82	29.0
Having knowledge about child abuse		
Yes	191	67.5
No	36	12.7
Partly	56	19.8
Information resource on child abuse (n=247)		
Book	37	15.0
Internet	88	35.6
TV	38	15.4
Education life	84	34.0

Table 3. Difference between "Abuse Awareness Scale Parent Form" and " Parental Self Efficacy Scale Among Mothers " with some variables

	Abuse Awareness Scale Parents Form	Parental Self Efficacy Scale Among Mothers
	X±SD	X±SD
Education status		
Primary school	55.00±4.73	89.75±31.89
Secondary school	53.48±5.75	95.93±22.88
High School	52.47±4.39	113.37±25.65*
University and above	52.88±4.39	113.33±23.17*
Statistic	F:1.403	F:8.542
	p:0.242	p<0.001
Place of residence		
City center	52.65±4.15	116.15±22.68

District	53.21±4.65	107.90±25.03
Village	53.68±5.75	94.24±26.63
Statistic	F:0.937 p:0.393	F:12.883 p<0.001
Having knowledge about child abuse		
Yes	52.88±4.55	111.75±25.40
No	52.72±4.10	105.81±26.88
Partly	53.54±4.95	107.86±22.66
Statistic	F:0.515 p:0.315	F:0.598 p:0.315

Table 4. The relationship between age, number of children and the average score of "Abuse Awareness Scale Parents Form" and "Parental Self Efficacy Scale Among Mothers"

	Abuse Awareness Scale Parents Form	Parental Self Efficacy Scale Among Mothers
Age	r:-0.124 p:0.037	r:-0.031 p:0.607
Child number	r:0.074 p:0.216	r:-.0.180 p:0.002
Abuse Awareness Scale Parents Form	r:- p:-	r:-.0.034 p:0.570

Table 5. Comparison of mothers' knowledge of child abuse and some variables

Having knowledge about child abuse						
	Yes		No		Partly	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Education status						
Primary school	9	4.7	3	8.3	4	7.1
Secondary school	15	7.9	7	19.4	7	12.5
High School	25	13.1	12	33.3	14	25.0
University and above	142	74.3	14	38.9	31	55.4
Economic status						
Good	73	38.2	8	22.2	14	25.0
medium	113	59.2	27	75.0	41	73.2
Bad	5	2.6	1	2.8	1	1.8
Place of residence						
City center	101	71.6	20	55.6	20	35.7
District	72	68.6	7	19.4	26	46.4
Village	18	48.6	9	25.0	10	17.9
Person providing primary care for the child						
Mother/ Father	156	81.7	30	83.3	37	66.1
Sitter	10	5.2	2	5.6	2	3.6
Grandmother	15	7.9	4	11.1	12	21.4
Sitter	10	5.2	0	0	5	8.9
The state of feeling competent in raising children						
Yes	149	78.0	19	52.8	26	46.4
No	2	1.0	5	13.9	0	0
Partly	40	20.9	12	33.3	30	53.6

Discussion

This study, which aimed to reveal the relationship between mothers' parenting self-efficacy levels and their awareness of child abuse, showed that mothers' parenting self-efficacy levels and child abuse potential were at a moderate level. Emre et al., (2019) reported that the parenting self-efficacy levels of the Syrian mothers living in Turkey are moderate, while the study conducted by Demir (2015) with mothers and fathers revealed that the parenting self-efficacy levels of mothers were moderate. Capik et al., (2020) found that mothers had a moderate abuse potential, and the study conducted by Soyunmez et al. (2021) with parents with epilepsy also revealed that mothers had a moderate abuse potential. Kaytez and Deles (2020) showed that mothers' awareness of abuse is moderate. The parenting self-efficacy and child abuse awareness levels of the mothers in our study were similar to the levels reported in the literature. It is believed that a high level of parenting self-efficacy motivates parents to raise a child, and thus parents become more sensitive about the early recognition of the negativities that may occur in the child. Low levels of parenting self-efficacy may lead to the development of ineffective child-rearing behaviors. Moderate levels of parenting self-efficacy of mothers may have affected their awareness of child abuse and caused it to be at a moderate level.

A significant difference was found between the parenting self-efficacy scale scores of the mothers in the study and their educational status. Parenting self-efficacy scores of the mothers with a university or higher degree were found to be higher than the mothers with other education levels. The study conducted by Emre et al., (2019) with Syrian mothers revealed no significant difference between maternal education level and parenting self-efficacy level. Demir (2015) reported that as the level of education increases, the level of parenting self-efficacy increases as well. Mothers with a high level of education are likely to exhibit behaviors such as critical thinking, searching for information, and criticizing the information they have acquired. For this reason, it can be said that increasing level of education ensures that mothers acquire competence in many subjects such as child rearing and awareness of abuse.

Thus, this result of the study is thought to be an expected result.

A statistically significant difference was found between the place of residence and the mothers' parenting self-efficacy scale scores. The parenting self-efficacy scores of the mothers living in the city center were found to be higher than those living in other settlements. The meta-analysis study of Wittkowski et al., (2016), which included group-based educational interventions applied to parents with preschool children, revealed that the interventions increased parenting self-efficacy levels of the mothers. Given that the living conditions in the city center are better in terms of accessing opportunities than other settlements, mothers can participate in various trainings or activities starting from their pregnancy and have the opportunity to come together with people whose experiences will be useful for them. This may enable mothers to develop themselves in issues such as finding the opportunity to improve their childcare skills, ensuring the safety of the child, and contributing to his/her development. Therefore, living in the city center can increase the parenting self-efficacy levels of mothers with the opportunities it presents to mothers.

Our study revealed that as the age of the mothers increased, the parenting self-efficacy scores also increased. The study conducted by Byrne et al., (2019) with mothers with newborn babies reported that age did not affect the level of parenting self-efficacy. Similarly, Emre et al., (2019) showed that there is no relationship between age and parenting self-efficacy levels. It is thought that the difference revealed in our study may due to the large difference between the lowest and highest values of maternal ages. It is believed that as the age of the mother increases, life experience increases, the mother has the opportunity to spend more time with her own child and the children in her social environment, and she can spend more time with her social environment and peers. They may have been better in terms of parenting self-efficacy as they had the opportunity to develop themselves by observing the strengths and weaknesses of mothers.

It was found that the potential for abuse increased as the age of the mothers decreased. Similarly, Pekdogan (2017) stated that the potential for abuse increases as the age of mothers decreases, while Miragoli et al., (2018) revealed that the age of the mother does not significantly affect the abuse potential. Similar to this study, Kaytez and Deles (2020) reported that the potential for abuse increases as the age of the mothers decreases. Given that younger mothers may be inexperienced in raising children, they may need support. Therefore, it can be said that the finding obtained in this study is an expected finding.

Our study further showed that parenting self-efficacy of mothers with a small number of children is higher. Demir (2019) reported that as the number of children increased, parenting self-efficacy of mothers increased. Coskun et al., (2019) found that the number of children did not affect the level of parenting self-efficacy of mothers with gifted and talented children. In our study, the reason for the high parenting self-efficacy levels of mothers with a small number of children may be that they have the opportunity to spend more time with fewer children. Mothers with few children can be more advantageous in finding the opportunity to research and access new and updated information in order to respond to all kinds of needs of the child at the highest level, apart from the time they devote to the care, development and protection of the child. It is thought that this may have affected their feelings of self-efficacy.

A statistically significant relationship was found between the knowledge of the mothers in the study about child abuse and their educational status. Kocak and Buyukgonenec, (2011) reported that parents with a low level of education abuse and neglect their children more. Alzoubi et al., (2017) stated in their study that mothers with higher levels of education have higher awareness of child abuse. Guo et al., (2019) revealed a relationship between the education level of parents and their awareness, knowledge, and attitudes of child abuse. Thapa et al., (2018) stated in their study that awareness of child abuse increases as the level of education increases. As the education level increases, the rate of mothers doing research and reading books may increase, and as a result, there may

be an increase in their knowledge about child abuse. It may be stated that the result of our study coincides with those in the literature.

Conclusion: It was determined that the mothers in our study had a moderate level of parenting self-efficacy and awareness of abuse. A significant relationship was found between mothers' educational status, place of residence, and number of children, and parenting self-efficacy. It has been revealed that younger mothers have higher awareness of abuse. In addition, a relationship was found between the knowledge of the mothers in the study about child abuse and their level of education, place of residence, and feeling competent in raising children. Since the level of parenting self-efficacy of mothers with higher education levels is higher, it is recommended to develop child-rearing training programs for mothers. These trainings should be given by public health nurses as it is an issue affecting the whole society, and interdisciplinary collaboration should be ensured.

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