

## Awareness levels of teachers regarding the physical abuse in children

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### Abstract

The aim of our research is to determine the awareness of primary school teachers on physical abuse in children according to their gender and professional experience. Material and Methods, Teachers in primary schools of four central distinct Directorate of National Education within Mersin province constituted the research population of the study. Teachers who agreed to participate in research based on a voluntary basis according to simple random sampling method (n:137) formed the research sample of the study. Data were collected using a survey having 21 questions which were rephrased by researchers. Research ethical committee and National Education Directorate approvals relating the study were taken prior to data collection. Results, In this study, teachers are determined to be female in 51%, to have a mean age of  $37.58 \pm 7.64$  to be married in 86.9%. "Bruises and wounds on child's face" which is a physical abuse indication is regarded by teachers as a physical abuse indication in 88.3% while 11.7% of them do not regarded the marks as a physical abuse. Human bites are realized largely for the purpose of punishment and they show abuse. Child's hand and arm are the areas where an adult hold the child tightly. "Bruises and bite marks on child's hand and arm" which is a physical abuse indication is regarded by teachers as a physical abuse indication in 93.4% while 6.6% of them do not regarded the marks as a physical abuse. 70.8% of the teachers have encountered "parental disregard to their children" finding within last two years. Conclusion, It is recommended that training about child abuse and child neglect which is qualified to meet the requirements of students and their families should be given to graduate teachers and student teachers studying in early childhood education.

Keywords: child, abuse, physical, psychology

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## 1. Introduction

Mental and physical care of the children which will constitute the backbone and future of the community has a critical importance in terms of their healthy development. Child abuse and neglect (CAN) is a global and well known public health problem for centuries. Even though, the prevalence and types of child abuse may vary, it is a major public health problem all over the world.

In the widest sense, child abuse and neglect can be defined as act on the part of the parents, teachers, family members, legal guardians, caregivers, or foreigners, which results in physical or mental injury, or delay in their physical, emotional, sexual or mental development (Canbaz, Turla, Aker & Peksen, 2005; Turhan, Sangun & İnandı, 2006; Unal, 2008). WHO defines child maltreatment as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting 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 (Canbaz, Turla, Aker & Peksen, 2005; Topbas, 2004; Jakupcevic, & Ajdukovic, 2011). The most important criterion making abuse different from neglect is that abuse is active while neglect being passive (Topbas, 2004; Gokler, 2006).

The prevalence of child abuse in a country is closely related to its level of development. Various factors may lead to different types and extent of child abuse. The most important factor is whether the act to be known as abuse or not (Topbas, 2004). Factors causing abuse or neglect of the child can be grouped as internal and external stress factors. External stress factors such as some economical, social or cultural characteristics distressing the family may lead to abuse or neglect of the child. Internal stress factors can be defined as parents' personality traits, lack of parents, characteristics of the child and excessive expectations from the child due to social environment. Single-parent families due to death, divorce or working in different cities constitute an important risk group in terms of child abuse (Gokler, 2006; Arıkan, Yaman & Celebioglu, 2000). Abuse or neglect has a negative impact on child's self-concept, thus preventing the children to grow up as healthy individuals in terms of physical, sexual, mental and psychosocial development (Unal, 2008; Topbas, 2004). Additionally, several psychiatric disorders such as major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide attempt, anxiety and, acute stress disorder may appear (McGregor, Julich, Glover & Gautam, 2010).

Besides children having the rights of living healthy, growing up, getting education, they also have legitimate right of being protected against abuse or neglect. In order to protect these rights, while parents bear tremendous responsibility at home, teachers do it at school (Unal, 2008; Gokler, 2006). Recognition and reporting the signs of physical abuse in children is a good starting point to prevent continuation of it. Preventive action aiming to increase awareness of the teachers' and all members of the community against physical abuse should be carried out with the participation of the children and families (Kenny, 2004).

Prevention of child abuse is very difficult, while having a great importance at the same time. A great task falls to physicians, child psychiatrists, legists working at the juvenile court, forensic medicine specialists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses, child development experts, social workers and school teachers in order to prevent child abuse (Unal, 2008; Gokler, 2006). Increasing teachers' awareness of child abuse and neglect has a particular importance. The aim of this study is to investigate primary school teachers' knowledge of physical abuse in children, to raise their awareness and sensitivity, and to design required training programs.

## 2. Methodology

The present study has a descriptive design aiming to investigate primary school teachers' awareness of physical abuse in children.

## 2.1. Participants

Participants of this study include 137 primary school teachers. They were recruited from randomly selected primary school teachers working at primary schools under the Ministry of Education in Mersin region, between March and May of 2012. All participants were recruited voluntarily.

## 2.2. Research Instrument

The data were collected using a survey instrument developed by Erol (2007) and used in her master's thesis. The Questionnaire consists of 21 questions and modified by the researchers. Additionally, the participants were asked to fill another form in order to get their socio-demographic data and professional background. The Questionnaire was developed to investigate the pre-school teachers' awareness about physical signs of child abuse and neglect in children, and was applied to preschool teachers working at public schools in Eskisehir. It has been reported that reliability of the questionnaire was high with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.95 (Erol, 2007). Participants were informed of purpose and procedure of the study by the author, their involvement was voluntary and would take approximately 10-15 minutes of their time. The required ethical approval and official permit were obtained before the study.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using MedCalc Statistical Software.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Demographic Data

Of the participants, 46.7% were within age group 30-39, with a mean age of 37.58±7.64. Females constitute 59.1% of the participants; 14.6% graduated collage, 86.9% was married, 79.6% had children, and 82.5% had been teaching for six or more years.

Table 1. The Teachers' Levels of Awareness of Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Signs of Physical Abuse	Sign of Physical Abuse		Not a Sign of Physical Abuse	
	n	%	n	%
Facial Bruises or Contusions	121	88,3	16	11,7
Bruises, Lesions, or Bites on Arms or Hands	128	93,4	9	6,6
Burns and Scalds on Hands or Feet	105	76,6	32	23,4
Bruises on Legs or Back	126	92,0	11	8,0
Fingerprints on Neck or Abdomen	130	94,9	7	5,1
Rope or Cord Marks on Wrist or Neck	131	95,6	6	4,4
Cigarette Burns Anywhere on Body	130	94,9	7	5,1
Bruises on Body at Several Stages	127	92,7	10	7,3
Rounded Bruises on Body	127	92,7	10	7,3
Several Bone Fractures Occurred in Different Incidents	112	81,8	25	18,2
Children's Exaggerated Responses to Painful Stimuli or Traumas	119	86,9	18	13,1
Children's Avoid to Interact with Adults	106	77,4	31	22,6
Children's Unwillingness to Go to Home	120	87,6	17	12,4
Children's Resort to Force When Fall into Conflict with Friends	111	81,0	26	19,0
Parent's Underestimate and Blame Their Children	92	67,2	45	32,8
Parent's Negative Perceptions About the Children Compared to Their Siblings or Peers	101	73,7	36	26,3
Parent's Describe Their Children as an Evil, Devil or Monster	113	82,5	24	17,5

Parent's Disregard of Their Children	99	72,3	38	27,7
Parent's Rejection to Discuss About Children's School Problems	96	70,1	41	29,9

Table 1 shows responses of the participants to the items regarding the signs of physical abuse. 11.7% of the teachers reported that they didn't consider the facial bruises and contusions as signs of physical abuse. Children who are exposed to physical abuse frequently exhibit bruises on face, especially by the mouth and cheeks, on ears and brow (Golge, Hamzaoglu & Turk, 2012). Presence of bruises by the mouth and eyes are signs that give rise thought of physical abuse. Human bite lesions commonly originate from punitive behaviors and are signs of physical abuse. 6.6% of the teachers reported that they didn't consider bruises, lesions, or bites on arms and hands of the children as signs of physical abuse. 23.4% of the teachers don't consider burns and scalds on hands or feet of the children as signs of physical abuse. 18.2% of the teachers don't consider several bone fractures which occurred in different incidents as signs of physical abuse. However, fractures occurring in different incidents are important signs of physical abuse. 22.6% of the teachers reported that they didn't consider the children avoid to interact with adults as a sign of physical abuse. 32.8% of the participants reported that they didn't consider mocking and depreciatory behaviors of parents towards their children as signs of emotional abuse. 27.7% of the teachers don't consider parents' disregard of their children as a sign of emotional abuse. 70.1% of the teachers consider parents' rejection to discuss about children's school problems as a sign of abuse whereas 29.9% of the teachers don't consider it in that way.

Table 2. Teacher's Level of Awareness About Signs of Physical Abuse According to Their Academic Degrees (Physical Signs)

Physical Signs	Academic Degree	Yes		No		Total		Chi-Square Test
		n	%	n	%	n	%	
1. Facial Bruises and Contusions	License/Bachelor's Degree	103	88,0	14	12,0	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =,064 p=1,000
	Postgraduate/Master's	18	90,0	2	10,0	20	14,6	
2. Bruises, Lesions, or Bites on Arms or Hands	License/Bachelor's Degree	111	94,9	6	5,1	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =2,712 p=0,126
	Postgraduate/Master's	17	85,0	3	15,0	20	14,6	
3. Burns and Scalds on Hands or Feet	License/Bachelor's Degree	90	76,9	27	23,1	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =,035 p=0,783
	Postgraduate/Master's	15	75,0	5	25,0	20	14,6	
4. Bruises on Legs or Back	License/Bachelor's Degree	108	92,3	9	7,7	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =,123 p=0,663
	Postgraduate/Master's	18	90,0	2	10,0	20	14,6	
5. Fingerprints on Neck or Abdomen	License/Bachelor's Degree	111	94,9	6	5,1	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =,001 p=1,000
	Postgraduate/Master's	19	95,0	1	5,0	20	14,6	
6. Rope or Cord Marks on Wrist or Neck	License/Bachelor's Degree	111	94,9	6	5,1	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =1,073 p=,592
	Postgraduate/Master's	20	100,0	0	0,0	20	14,6	
7. Cigarette Burns Anywhere on Body	License/Bachelor's Degree	112	95,7	5	4,3	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =1,155 p=,271
	Postgraduate/Master's	18	90,0	2	10,0	20	14,6	
8. Bruises on Body at Several Stages	License/Bachelor's Degree	109	93,2	8	6,8	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =,252 p=,640
	Postgraduate/Master's	18	90,0	2	10,0	20	14,6	
9. Rounded Bruises on Body	License/Bachelor's Degree	109	93,2	8	6,8	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =,252 p=,640
	Postgraduate/Master's	18	90,0	2	10,0	20	14,6	
10. Several Bone Fractures Occurred in Different Incidents	License/Bachelor's Degree	98	83,8	19	16,2	117	85,4	X <sup>2</sup> =2,168 p=,205
	Postgraduate/Master's	14	70,0	6	30,0	20	14,6	

Table 2 shows the findings concerning teachers' awareness about signs of physical abuse according to their educational status. According to Table 2, 88.0 % of the teachers having a license degree consider facial bruises and contusions as signs of physical abuse compared to the teachers having a postgraduate degree / master's degree or higher with the ratio of 90.0%. The difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = .064, p > .05$ ).

The ratio of participants who consider bruises and lesions on hands and arms as signs of physical abuse is 94.9% among teachers having a license degree, whereas it is 85.0% among teachers having a master's degree or higher. Although the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having a license degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = 2.712, p > .05$ ). 94.9% of teachers having a license degree reported that they considered rope or cord marks on wrist or neck as signs of physical abuse, whereas 100% of the teachers having a master's degree or higher considered them in this way. Although the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having a master's degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = 1.073, p > .05$ ).

The ratio of participants who consider several bone fractures which occurred in different incidents as signs of physical abuse is 83.3% among teachers having a license degree, whereas it is 70% among teachers having a master's degree or higher. Although the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having a license degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = 2.168, p > .05$ ).

Table 3. Teachers' Level of Awareness of Children's Behavioral Characteristics According to Their Years of Tenure (Children's Behavioral Characteristics)

Children's Behavioral Characteristics	Years of Tenure	Yes		No		Total		Chi Square Test
		n	%	n	%	n	%	
1. Children's Exaggerated Responses to Painful Stimuli or Traumas	5 or less years	20	83,3	4	16,7	24	17,5	$X^2 = ,317$ $p = ,521$
	6 or more years	99	87,6	14	12,4	113	82,5	
2. Children's Avoid to Interact with Adults	5 or less years	21	87,5	3	12,5	24	17,5	$X^2 = 1,705$ $p = ,192$
	6 or more years	85	75,2	28	24,8	113	82,5	
3. Children's Unwillingness to Go to Home	5 or less years	23	95,8	1	4,2	24	17,5	$X^2 = ,1819$ $p = ,306$
	6 or more years	97	85,8	16	14,2	113	82,5	
4. Children's Resort to Force When Fall into Conflict with Friends	5 or less years	20	83,3	4	16,7	24	17,5	$X^2 = ,101$ $p = 1,000$
	6 or more years	91	80,5	22	19,5	113	82,5	

Table 3 shows the findings concerning teachers' awareness about signs of physical abuse according to their terms of office. According to Table 3, 83.3% of teachers having 5 or less years of tenure, whereas 87.6% of teachers having 6 or more years of tenure considered the children's exaggerated responses to painful stimuli or traumas as signs of physical abuse. Although the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having 6 or more years of tenure, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = .317, p > .05$ ).

The ratio of participants who consider the children avoid to interact with adults as a sign of physical abuse is 87.5% among teachers having 5 or less years of tenure, whereas 75.2% among

teachers having 6 or more years of tenure. Although, the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having 5 or less years of tenure, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = 1.705, p > .05$ ).

Table 4. Teachers' Level of Awareness of Parents' Behavioral Characteristics According to Their Years of Tenure (Parents' Behavioral Characteristics)

Parents' Behavioral Characteristics	Academic Degree	Yes		No		Total		Chi Square Test
		n	%	n	%	n	%	
1. Parent's Underestimate and Blame Their Children	License/Bachelor's Degree	81	69,2	36	30,8	117	85,4	$X^2 = 1,568$ $p = ,210$
	Postgraduate/Master's	11	55,0	9	45,0	20	14,6	
2. Parent's Negative Perceptions About the Children Compared to Their Siblings or Peers	License/Bachelor's Degree	89	76,1	28	23,9	117	85,4	$X^2 = 2,276$ $p = ,131$
	Postgraduate/Master's	12	60,0	8	40,0	20	14,6	
3. Parent's Describe Their Children as an Evil, Devil or Monster	License/Bachelor's Degree	96	82,1	21	17,9	117	85,4	$X^2 = ,103$ $p = 1,000$
	Postgraduate/Master's	17	85,0	3	15,0	20	14,6	
4. Parent's Disregard of Their Children	License/Bachelor's Degree	85	72,6	32	27,4	117	85,4	$X^2 = ,060$ $p = ,807$
	Postgraduate/Master's	14	70,0	6	30,0	20	14,6	
5. Parent's Rejection to Discuss About Children's School Problems	License/Bachelor's Degree	83	70,9	34	29,1	117	85,4	$X^2 = ,287$ $p = ,592$
	Postgraduate/Master's	13	65,0	7	35,0	20	14,6	

Table 4 shows the findings concerning teachers' awareness about signs of physical abuse according to their academic degrees. According to Table 4, 69.2% of teachers having a license degree whereas 55.0% of teachers having a master's degree or higher considered parents' underestimate and blame their children as signs of emotional abuse. Although, the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of emotional abuse is highest among teachers having a license degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = 1.568, p > .05$ ).

The ratio of participants who consider the parents' negative perceptions about the child compared to his/her siblings or peers as signs of emotional abuse is 76.1% among teachers having a license degree, whereas 60.0% among teachers having a master's degree or higher. Although, the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of emotional abuse is highest among teachers having a license degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = 2.276, p > .05$ ).

The ratio of participants who consider the parent's describe their children as an evil, devil or monsters as signs of physical abuse is 82.1% among teachers having a license degree whereas

85.0% among teachers having a master's degree or higher. Although, the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having a master's degree or higher, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = .103, p > .05$ ).

Among participants, 72.6% of teachers having a license degree versus 70.0% of teachers having a master's degree reported that they considered the parents' indifference about their children as a sign of emotional abuse. Although, the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of emotional abuse is highest among teachers having a license degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = .060, p > .05$ ).

Among participants, 70.9% of teachers having a license degree versus 65.0% of teachers having a master's degree reported that they considered parents' rejection to discuss about children's school problems as a sign of physical abuse. Although, the ratio of participants who consider these findings as signs of physical abuse is highest among teachers having a license degree, the difference between groups is not statistically significant ( $X^2 = .287, p > .05$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

Although differences between types of child maltreatment may exist, they occur in all communities, and differences exist at the level of awareness against them. Since children will constitute the backbone and future of the community, increasing the teachers' awareness against child maltreatment has a critical importance in mental and physical care of the children in terms of their healthy development. But, there are few studies searching teachers' level of awareness about child maltreatment (Yasar, Kiziltepe & Kandira, 2014; Kurklu, 2011; Akacan 2012). Thus, one of the limitations of this study is difficulty in discussing the findings compared to other studies.

In this study, 11.7% of teachers reported that they didn't consider facial bruises and contusions as signs of physical abuse. In Erol's (2007) study, this ratio was found as 53.4%. The reason behind lower ratio in our study may be due to becoming a current issue in the media, and shows an increase in the level of teachers' awareness about this topic (Lonne & Nigél, 2014). Nevertheless, this ratio is preferred to be 0% for the teachers since they should be very sensitive to child maltreatment. 6.6% of the teachers reported that they didn't consider bruises, lesions, or bites on arms and hands of the children as signs of physical abuse. In Erol's (2007) study, 13.9% of preschool teachers reported that they didn't consider these findings as signs of physical abuse. In a study conducted by Basbakkal and Baysan in order to investigate the knowledge levels about child abuse and neglect, 55.9% of 152 police officers couldn't identify physical abuse (Basbakkal & Baysan, 2004). In their study conducted by Bozkurt et al, it has been reported that the teachers were able describe physical abuse (Bozkurt & Cam, 2004). Findings of our study is in line with existing literature. Not solely the teachers, but every field of community need training in child abuse and neglect to increase awareness and sensitivity against it.

In our study, 23.4% of the teachers reported that they didn't consider burns and scalds on hands or feet of the children as signs of physical abuse. In Erol's (2007) study, this ratio was reported as 27.6% for the preschool teachers. Findings of our study is in line with existing literature. The health professionals and doctors being of the same opinion with the teachers shows us that we have lots of things to do in this field.

This study revealed that 18.2% of the teachers didn't consider several bone fractures which occurred in different incidents as signs of physical abuse. In Erol's (2007) study, this ratio was reported as 27.9% for the preschool teachers. Arıkan et al. reported that 16.2% of nurses could recognize signs of physical abuse while 10.3% of them could recognize signs of physical neglect. Findings of our study is in line with existing literature (Arıkan, Yaman & Celebioglu, 2000). According to some cultures and communities, several types of physical abuse is not considered as abuse Even, some cultures consider these kind of abusive behaviors as a requirement of their disciplinary training Several widely used proverbs such as "beating originated in heaven=thrashing is the key to educating", "a rose grows up at the point where mothers or

teachers smack you” indicates that these kind of abusive behaviors have been accepted by the Turkish community. The health professionals and doctors being of the same opinion with the teachers shows us that we have lots of things to do in this field. In this study, 22.6% of the teachers reported that they didn’t consider the children avoid to interact with adults as a sign of physical abuse. In Erol’s (2007) study, this ratio was reported as 22.9% (Erol, 2007).

In this study, 32.8% of the teachers reported that they didn’t consider mocking and depreciatory behaviors of parents towards their children as signs of emotional abuse. In Erol’s (2007) study, 20% of preschool teachers reported that they didn’t consider mocking and depreciatory behaviors of parents towards their children as signs of emotional abuse. In their study, Keser et al. reported that behaviors such as the children consistently to be criticized and denigrated by their parents (10%), not to show love towards them (11%), thoughts such as some kids to deserve being beaten (15%) and to deserve being beaten by their teachers (13%) are important indicators of negative attitudes towards the children (Keser, Odabas & Elibuyuk, 2004). The health professionals and doctors being of the same opinion with the teachers shows us that we have lots of things to do in this field.

In this study, 32.8% of the teachers reported that they didn’t consider mocking and depreciatory behaviors of parents towards their children as signs of emotional abuse. 27.7% of the teachers reported that they didn’t consider parents’ disregard of their children as a sign of emotional abuse. It has been reported that, 70.1% of the teachers considered parents’ rejection to discuss about children’s school problems as a sign of abuse whereas 29.9% of the teachers didn’t consider it in that way. In Erol’s study, these rates are 22.1% and 27.1% respectively and are consistent with our findings.

Our study revealed that 88.0% of the teachers having a license degree considered facial bruises and contusions as signs of physical abuse compared to the teachers having a master’s degree or higher with the ratio of 90.0% 94.9% of teachers having a license degree reported that they considered rope or cord marks on wrist or neck as signs of physical abuse, whereas 100% of the teachers having a master's degree or higher considered them in this way. These findings suggest that teachers having a master's degree or higher are more sensitive at identifying signs of physical abuse Arikan et al. (2000) reported that, nurses having a master's degree know signs of physical abuse better than nurses having a license degree or less (Arikan, Yaman & Celebioglu, 2000). Based on these findings, it can be suggested the higher the level of education, the higher awareness of the signs of physical abuse.

In a study conducted by Golge et al., it has been reported that there was an increase at the awareness of physical signs of child abuse. The increase at the awareness of of physical signs have been attributed to the education as well as in service training (Golge, Hamzaoglu & Turk, 2012).

Our study revealed that 83.3% of teachers having 5 or less years of tenure, whereas 87.6% of teachers having 6 or more years of tenure considered the children’s exaggerated responses to painful stimuli or traumas as signs of physical abuse. The ratio of teachers who consider the children avoid to interact with adults as a sign of physical abuse is 87.5% among teachers having 5 or less years of tenure, whereas 75.2% among teachers having 6 or more years of tenure. Erol (2007) reported that teachers having 5 or less years of tenure were more sensitive at identifying these two findings, but couldn’t find a relationship between ability to identify findings and years of tenure. The higher sensitivity rate of identifying abuse findings among teachers having 5 or less years of tenure has been attributed to the training programs of universities on child abuse and neglect and increased awareness of the population on this topic. In this study, it is suggested that the higher sensitivity rate of identifying abuse findings among teachers having 6 or more years of tenure might be due to the training programs of universities on child abuse and neglect, increased awareness of the population on this topic, as well as several projects conducted by The Ministry of Family and Social Policies and increase in the budgets of these projects. In another study conducted to determine the level of awareness of signs of child abuse and neglect, nurses and midwives having 1-5 years of tenure obtained higher scores than groups having 6-10 years of tenure, and more than 11 years of tenure (Catik & Cam, 2006).



In our study, 69.2% of teachers having a license degree whereas 55.0% of teachers having a master's degree or higher considered parents' underestimate and blame their children as signs of emotional abuse. Guler et al. reported that mothers didn't exhibit affection for their children to prevent deterioration of children's discipline and not to become spoilt. Thus, mothers don't exhibit affection for their children, and think that it is necessary to shout, scold, underestimate, or blame the children for their education (Guler, Uzun, Boztas & Aydogan, 2002). Based on this study, it can be suggested that the teachers' behaviors are influenced by the community whichever degree of education they had.

In this study, the ratio of participants who consider the parents' negative perceptions about the child compared to his/her siblings or peers as signs of emotional abuse is 76.1% among teachers having a license degree, whereas 60.0% among teachers having a master's degree or higher. In this study, 70.9% of teachers having a license degree versus 65.0% of teachers having a master's degree reported that they considered parents' rejection to discuss about children's school problems as a sign of physical abuse. This study revealed that teachers having a license degree are more sensitive than teachers having a master's degree at identifying those three signs. This result might be attributed to the absence of training programs during their master's education depending on their branches.

In this study, the ratio of participants who consider the parent's describe their children as an evil, devil or monsters as signs of physical abuse is 82.1% among teachers having a license degree whereas 85.0% among teachers having a master's degree or higher. In a study conducted on nurses and midwives by Uysal, no statistically significant relationship was found between level of awareness of signs of abuse and degree of education (Uysal, 1998). Our findings are consistent with their results.

In conclusion, child maltreatment should be treated as an avoidable problem, the health professionals including nurses, doctors and other disciplines should make greater effort to prevent the violence and build a community that is refined from violence. This goal could be achieved by educating families, teachers, every individual of the community to stop violence, counselling them, and providing support systems. Besides, undergraduate and postgraduate training programs should be conducted and maintained. In this wise, we may contribute to early detection and prevention of child maltreatment.

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