

Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Reporting Child Sexual Abuse (CSA): A Sample of Turkey

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Abstract

Although it is defined as a form of assault, child sexual abuse bears a number of features that make it exceptionally hard to diagnose by the children suffering and the adults in their social settings. The school environment is advantageous to recognize and react to circumstances that risk the prosperity of children. Therefore, schools must establish a healthy setting for children and must be able to pursue their growth with the aim of informing authorities about any diagnosed case of vulnerability. Proofs propose that the asperity of child sexual abuse is likely to increase over time. Thus, prompt diagnosis or intervention is pivotal in prohibiting sufferers from sexual abuse. Regarding the mentioned issue, this study inquires the conceptions of pre-service EFL teachers on reporting child sexual abuse. This study is based on a phenomenographic research method which is a qualitative research methodology within the interpretive research paradigm. The data of the study were gathered through semi-structured interview questions. The participants of the study were fourth class pre-service EFL teachers (N= 20) studying at a state university in Turkey. The results of the study suggest that pre-service EFL teachers are aware of the seriousness of the issue and they tend to report abuse. The results of the study may supply great help for the researchers in the fields of teacher education, foreign language teacher education, teacher empowerment, and in-service teacher training, as well as language teaching departments and the related authorities.

Keywords: *abuse, child sexual abuse, EFL, EFL teachers, pre-service EFL teachers*

Hizmet Öncesi İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Çocuk Cinsel İstismarını Bildirmeye Yönelik Tutumları: Türkiye Örneği

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Öz

Çocuk cinsel istismarının bir tip saldırı olarak tanımlanmasına rağmen, çocuklar ve çevredeki yetişkinler tarafından fark edilmesi zor olabilir. Çocukların refahını tehlikeye atabilecek riskleri ortaya koymada okullar avantajlı yerlerdir. Bu yüzden okullar çocuklar için sağlıklı ortamlar yaratmalı ve herhangi bir risk tespit ettiklerinde yetkililere bildirmek için çocukların gelişimini yakından gözlemlemelidirler. Kanıtlar çocuk cinsel istismarı vakalarının arttığını göstermektedir. Bu nedenle, mağdurların zarar görmemesi için erken teşhis ve müdahale hayati önem arz eder. Bu çalışma hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmenlerinin çocuk cinsel istismarı bildirmeye yönelik tutumlarını irdelemektedir. Çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik araştırma yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın verisi yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat sorularıyla toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören dördüncü sınıf İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarından oluşmaktadır. Çalışmada aday İngilizce öğretmenlerinin çocuk cinsel istismarı farkındalıklarının olduğu ve bu gibi vakaları rapor etme eğiliminde oldukları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları öğretmen eğitimi, yabancı dil öğretmen eğitimi, öğretmen gelişimi ve hizmet içi öğretmen eğitimi gibi alanlarda araştırma yapanlar, dil eğitimi bölümleri ve ilgili otoriteler için yararlı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: istismar, çocuk cinsel istismarı, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce, İngilizce öğretmenleri, hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmenleri

Introduction

The number of sexual abuse cases has been recently growing and CSA incidents mostly appear among such cases both in Turkey and all over the world. Children, who cannot fulfill their sexual growth, as well as not having the required related knowledge, are prone to more serious damage, if they are exposed to any sexual abuse. CSA results in negative side effects for children. These effects may involve hatred, improper sexual attitudes, anxiety, stress, despair, and any other mood disorder. Thus, children should be educated to report such events without any hesitation and they should attain the necessary professional support in case of any abuse (Ovayolu, Uçan, and Serindağ, 2007). It is vital to conceive and report CSA since, otherwise, destructive consequences may appear. Besides families, teachers also have a significant role in noticing and stopping the abuse since they have a close relation with children (Aksel and Irmak, 2015). CSA is any sexual activity that is not recognized by immature children. Children cannot knowingly approve such abusive behaviors that violate social norms. Recently, CSA has been frequently encountered in Turkey. Thus, in order to prevent the CSA problem, necessary precautions should be taken by the government and the society should be educated accordingly (Yaşar and Şenol, 2015). In 1996, UNICEF reported the state of the world's children. It put forward that there were around two billions of children under 16 in the world in 1994. Among them, more than 150 millions lived in West countries, more than 100 millions lived in the previously Soviet lands, and more than 1500 millions of children lived in the third world countries. However, the income rates of these nations were just contrary to the number of children. In the prosperous countries where only 9% of the world children live, more than 80% of the world income is wasted. Therefore, while almost all the children in wealthy countries live in comfort, majority of the children in poor countries experience poverty, famine, bloodshed, and a lack of sanitary opportunities. The reality that wealthy countries have not done much to overcome child poverty in the world should be more expressed for the public opinion (Finkelhor, 1984). CSA forms nearly 10% of formally confirmed child maltreatment events, being nearly 88,000 in 2000. The risk determinants involve age, gender, disabilities, and family maltreatment. A number of syndromes and complications have been related to CSA; however sexualized manners

in children are the forthcoming consequences. So far, the cognitive-behavioral therapy of children and non-offending parents is the most adequate cure. Impediment practices have concentrated on the education of children to enhance awareness and diminish risk factors (Putnam, 2003). Children suffering from sexual abuse experience the next shock in the discovery phase. Their endeavors to adjust their personal experiences with the factual world around are impaired by the distrust, condemnation and denial they encounter. The usual handling action of the child negates the firm beliefs and expectancies customarily owned by adults, labeling the child with manipulating or lying. Rather than protecting and helping the recovery, reckless adults push the child much deeper into self-condemnation, self-hatred, re-victimization and alienation. However, the support of a compassionate psychiatrist can supply the child with crucial trustworthiness and approval (Summit, 1983). A scheme has been presented for a more precise understanding of the impacts of CSA. Four traumatic motions— powerlessness, betrayal, traumatic sexualization, and stigmatization— are named as the basis of the mental harms created by abuse. These may be employed to assess suffering children and to foresee problems these children may subsequently encounter (Finkelhor and Browne, 1985). The current literature on the long-term consequences of CSA suggests that more specific effects of CSA and parental psychopathology should be deeply clarified. Adult women formerly experiencing CSA display denser symptoms of sexual turmoil or impairment, homosexual involvement in adolescence or adulthood, dolor, and are more inclined to such practices compared to non-abused women. High tension, panic, and lethal opinions and actions have also been related to a history of CSA. However, there is inadequate proof to affirm an association between a history of CSA and a post-sexual abuse syndrome. Male sufferers of CSA display disordered adult sexual activity. Further, the association between the age when abuse happens and the consequence is still uncertain. On the other hand, more serious long-term damage arises from events containing a father or stepfather. Additionally, longer duration of CSA, utilizing force, threatening to use force may cause greater damage (Beitchman, et al. 1992). In order to impede the mentioned traumas beforehand, prompt diagnosis or intervention is pivotal. Thus, this study inquires the conceptions of pre-service EFL teachers on reporting child sexual abuse. With all these in mind, the following research question was put forward:

- What are the views of pre-service EFL teachers on reporting child sexual abuse?

Methodology

This phenomenographic study (Svensson, 1997) aims to discover the conceptions of pre-service EFL teachers on reporting child sexual abuse. Phenomenology is an approach to clearly interpret the third-persons through their consciousness or experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). It requires using scientific principles with an anthropological bend (Kafle, 2011). With this aim, it relates the third-persons' own reports with any possible proof. The aim of this approach is to perceive how the subject conceives or interprets the environment (Lavery, 2003). Thus, the present qualitative study has examined the conceptual underpinnings of the pre-service EFL teachers who studies in the 4th class at a state university in Turkey. The data of the inquiry were gathered through semi-structured interview questions developed by the researcher. For the coding reliability of the interview, Kappa Coefficient for Inter-coder Reliability was calculated and it was found that the coding process was highly reliable ($K = .885$, $p < .001$). Pre-service EFL ($N = 20$) voluntarily took part in the study. In order to easily reach the most possible number of informants, convenience sampling method was utilized (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam, 2013).

Findings

The findings section is comprised of the awareness of CSA and reporting CSA. The following part gives detailed information about the awareness of CSA.

Findings in relation to the awareness of CSA

Based on the findings, it was clear that all informants ($N = 20$) were aware of what CSA is. Further, this part involves five sub-divisions as CSA Behaviors, CSA in Turkey, CSA training, CSA speeches in society, and Laws on CSA.

Table 1. CSA Behaviors

Code	f	%
Body contact	18	40.10
Sexual speeches	12	27.27
Forcing to sex	10	22.73
Online CSA	4	9.90
Total	44	100.00

It is simply understood from Table 1 that the informants mostly referred to CSA behaviors by hinting on *Body contact* (f= 18). Further, a number of respondents uttered *Sexual speeches* (f= 12), while the theme *Forcing to sex* occurred 10 times. Lastly, few respondents expressed *Online CSA* (f= 4). The following sentences exemplify the ideas of the informants:

- CSA emerges once an adult maliciously touches a kid.
- Using sexual expressions while talking to a vulnerable kid means CSA.
- Forcing children to sex or threatening them to use force accordingly means CSA.
- CSA happens in daily life as well as online. Not only CSA occurs by touching a child, it also happens online.

Table 2. CSA in Turkey

Code	f	%
Common	20	62.50
Neglected	12	37.50
Total	32	100.00

Table 2 plainly illustrates that the respondents mostly reported CSA as *Common* (f= 20). Moreover, 12 respondents complained about the fact that CSA is *neglected* (f= 12) in Turkey. Remarks of students on the related issue are as follow:

- Although it is an issue that is tried to be concealed, CSA is very common in Turkey.
- CSA is a neglected disorder and it does not take the value it deserves.

Table 3. CSA training

Code	f	%
Never	20	55.56
Required	16	44.44
Total	36	100.00

As can be clearly understood from Table 3, all the participants have *never* (f= 20) took CSA training. Further, majority of the respondents declare that such trainings are *required* (f= 16). Samples from the responses of the informants are as follow:

- Unfortunately, we have never taken CSA or such trainings in our education life.
- Although it is required, there is no CSA training in our curriculum.

Table 4. CSA speeches in Society

Code	f	%
Normal	12	46.15
Social setting	8	30.77
Abnormal	4	15.38
More open	2	7.69
Total	26	100.00

Majority of the informants expressed that CSA speeches in Turkey are *normal* (f= 12). Further, a number of informants declared that such speeches vary according to the *social setting* (f= 8). Besides, while some respondents mentioned CSA speeches are abnormal (f= 4) in the society, few informants expressed that the point of view of society on talking about such issues is *more open* (f= 2) compared to past. Quotes from the remarks of studentst are as follow:

- It is so normal to talk about CSA in Turkey. We live in the 21st century and people are more open-minded.
- Discussing such issues in society vary according to the social environment where people live.
- It is not normal to talk such issues in the Turkish society, since we are a bit conservative.
- Before, people used to be embarrassed even when hearing such events as CSA, but now they are more open to such discussions.

Table 5. Laws on CSA

Code	f	%
Aware	16	80.00
Partly aware	3	15.00
Unaware	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00

One can simply comprehend from Table 5 that majority of the informants are aware of (f= 16) CSA laws. On the other hand, while few respondents are partly aware of CSA related laws (f= 3), only one respondent is unaware of them. The following sentences are from the remarks of students:

- I know that there are laws protecting children against CSA but they are really insufficient.
- I do not exactly know such rules a lot since I am not a lawyer. However, I am partly familiar with a phone line for complaints.
- To be honest, I do not know anything about such laws.

Findings in relation to reaction to CSA

Majority of the informants (N= 14) have declared that if they encounter or even feel CSA, they would directly report it to the official authorities. Further, 6 respondents put forward that they try to inquire the issue before getting professional counseling or reporting. Besides, it was discovered that the informants (N= 20) emphasized educating children to prevent any form of abuse.

Table 6. Reporting CSA

Code	f	%
Reporting to school manager	20	43.48
Reporting to family	18	39.13
Reporting to law-enforcement officers	4	8.70
Reporting to higher authorities	3	6.52
Reporting to Presidency Complaint Line	1	2.17
Total	46	100.00

With regard to reporting CSA, majority of the informants declared *Reporting it to school manager* (f= 20). Furthermore, *Reporting CSA to family* was observed to emerge 18 times. On the other hand, while some informants

stated *Reporting it to law-enforcement officers* (f= 4), a few of them mentioned *Reporting it to higher authorities* (f= 3). Lastly, only one respondent mentioned *Reporting it to Presidency Phone Line*. The pursuing remark clarifies the views of an informant:

- If I encountered a CSA event, I would firstly report it to the school manager. Then, I would inform the family about the issue. Afterwards, if there is no solution, I would report it to law-enforcement officers or even higher authorities. As the last step, if there is still no solution, I would inform the Presidency.

Discussion

A growing number of researches on child abuse are contemporarily encountered in Turkey. Yet, most of the research studies in the related field contain low evidence and it is highly required to carry out research with higher evidence (Bakır & Kapucu, 2017). Akgül (2015) inquired the rate of reporting CSA cases, discovered the constituents causing not reporting CSA, and the attitudes towards reporting CSA as well. Yalçın, Koçak, and Duman (2014) examined the case in Turkey and they discovered that the younger the child is, the more the probability of abuse is. In his study, Finkelhor (1994) reviewed the related literature and found out that interviews on CSA in large nonclinical adult populations have been carried out in a number of countries including the United States and Canada. Further, these studies have attained rates parallel to North American research in which it was discovered that females are abused much more than males. All these studies clearly confirm that sexual abuse is an international problem to be considered. Further, Browne and Finkelhor (1986) also reviewed the conducted studies and related reports on CSA. They found out that these studies and reports have all focused on confirming the impacts of CSA. They also added that empirical studies have indicated reactions with regard of the first impacts— in at least a part of the related sufferer population—of anxiety, fear, stress, depression, hostility and anger, hatred, and sexually improper actions. Additionally, the types of abuse that are apparently most harmful are those including genital contact and force. Putnam (2003) states that CSA is an important risk factor for psychopathology and adds that while the related prevention programs are promising, evaluations are still limited. Based

on the related studies, he also suggests that longitudinal follow-up and large-scale effectiveness studies are required. Moreover, Fergusson, Horwood, and Lynskey (1996) expressed that those reporting CSA had more anxiety, depression, disorder, and suicidal actions compared to those not reporting it. According to their study, there were continuing relation between the extent of CSA and risk of disorder. The results were persistent when the findings were accorded with the measured childhood family and other related determinants. Similar relationships between CSA and measured disorders were found. Moreover, a meta-analysis study on the impact of CSA was conducted by Paolucci, Genuis, and Violato (2001) and six results were consequently attained: posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, suicide, sexual promiscuity, victim-perpetrator cycle, and poor academic performance. In this meta-analysis study, thirty-seven research papers published between 1981 and 1995 including 25,367 people were utilized. The analyses supplied evidence affirming the relation between CSA and subsequent negative short- and long-term effects. Besides, the results of the meta-analysis aid a multidimensional model of traumatization rather than a particular CSA syndrome. Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, and Akman (1991) wrote a report evaluating empirical studies on the short- and long-term impacts of CSA. Apart from sexualized action, most of the short-term impacts stated in the related literature are symptoms characterizing child clinical samples in general. Among teens, generally reported consequence contains the increased possibility of re-victimization, homosexuality, and sexual dissatisfaction. Further, anxiety, depression, and committing a suicide may emerge among sufferers of CSA. In brief, the related studies give a wide scope of CSA outcomes, as well as the methodological weaknesses available in numerous reviewed studies. However, it is not easy to affirm the existence of a “post-sexual-abuse-syndrome” with a specific outcome, as Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, and Akman mentioned. The present study utilized all these mentioned studies and interviewed the informants accordingly. In other words, seeing the significance and vitality of the issue from the related literature, this paper inquired pre-service EFL teachers’ conceptions on reporting CSA.

Conclusion

This paper examines the conceptions of pre-service EFL teachers on reporting child sexual abuse. It was found out that pre-service EFL teachers are aware of the seriousness of CSA and they are inclined to report it. By looking at the fact that there is no CSA education in education faculties, particularly in ELT departments, one can easily understand that is still a neglected problem which is common in Turkey. However, people are now more open to talk about CSA in society compared to past. Further, being aware of the related laws on CSA, EFL pre-service teachers are more inclined to report it to authorities.

Recommendations

Precautions against CSA have to be taken both at macro and micro levels, since they both fulfill each other. In order to diminish and wipe out such incidents the government needs to take serious and urgent actions by full empowering children in legislation, besides putting children protection rules into practice. Policy makers should educate every individual against CSA as well. Activating a strong awareness of such issues within the society plays a significant role in stopping CSA. However, not every action should be expected from the government, since it is the duty of each individual of the society to struggle against sexual abuse. Further, education faculties have to initially educate student teachers to develop their CSA awareness. Then, teachers should raise awareness of CSA among the students and their parents.

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