



Understanding Emotional Neglect and Emotional Abuse: A Holistic View from Conceptualization to Intervention

Duygusal İhmal ve Duygusal İstismarı Anlamak: Kavramdan Müdahaleye Bütüncül Bir Bakış

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the definitions of emotional neglect and emotional abuse experienced during early childhood, their impact on mental health, and the preventive and intervention efforts related to these phenomena. Initially, the overlapping and distinct aspects of emotional neglect and emotional abuse are examined, and conceptual explanations regarding these issues are provided. In this context, the historical development and visibility of these concepts are explored, along with an analysis of how different periods and societies have approached these phenomena. Emotional neglect and emotional abuse are discussed within the frameworks of psychodynamic theory, attachment theory, social learning theory, psychosocial development theory, and ecological theory, with an emphasis on their short- and long-term effects on individuals. Risk factors are thoroughly analyzed, particularly focusing on the mechanisms through which emotional neglect and abuse during the 0-6 age period influence mental health problems in adulthood. Furthermore, intervention programs developed in this area are reviewed, and recommendations are offered to professionals for preventing, identifying, and addressing emotional neglect and abuse effectively. Individual and group therapies aiming to increase parents' self-awareness and psychoeducation programs designed to improve parenting skills are thought to play an important role in intervening in emotional neglect and abuse by helping parents develop emotional regulation, stress management and parenting skills.

Keywords: Emotional neglect, emotional abuse, mental health

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, erken çocukluk döneminde yaşanan duygusal ihmal ve duygusal istismar olgusuna ilişkin tanımlamalar, bu durumların ruh sağlığı üzerindeki etkileri ve önleme ile müdahale çalışmalarına odaklanılmıştır. Öncelikle, duygusal ihmal ve duygusal istismar kavramları arasındaki kesişim noktaları ve ayrımlar ele alınarak bu konulara dair kavramsal açıklamalar incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, söz konusu kavramların tarihsel süreçteki görünürlüğü değerlendirilmiş ve farklı dönemler ile toplumların bu olgulara yaklaşımı incelenmiştir. Duygusal ihmal ve istismar, psikodinamik kuram, bağlanma kuramı, sosyal öğrenme kuramı, psikososyal gelişim kuramı ve ekolojik kuram perspektiflerinden ele alınmış; bu durumların birey üzerindeki kısa ve uzun vadeli etkileri tartışılmıştır. Risk faktörleri detaylı bir şekilde incelenerek, özellikle 0-6 yaş döneminde maruz kalınan duygusal ihmal ve istismarın yetişkinlikte ruh sağlığı sorunları üzerindeki etkileri ve bu etkilerin ortaya çıkma mekanizmaları tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca, bu bağlamda geliştirilen müdahale programları gözden geçirilmiş; duygusal ihmal ve istismarın önlenmesi, erken tanınması ve etkili müdahale yaklaşımlarına yönelik alan uzmanlarına öneriler sunulmuştur. Ebeveynlerin öz farkındalığını artırmayı amaçlayan bireysel ve grup terapilerinin ve ebeveynlik becerilerini geliştirmek için tasarlanmış psikoeğitim programlarının ebeveynlerin duygu düzenleme, stres yönetimi ve ebeveynlik becerilerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olarak duygusal ihmal ve istismara müdahalede önemli rol oynayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Duygusal ihmal, duygusal istismar, ruh sağlığı

Introduction

Many children suffer from emotional neglect, which is defined as a parent being psychologically unavailable and not meeting their emotional needs and desires (Erickson and Egeland 2002, Iwaniec 2003, Webb 2012). Emotional neglect, especially of young children, often goes unnoticed because it occurs out of the public eye and the child is too young to distinguish what actually constitutes care and attention and to express the unhappiness they experience (Iwaniec 2003). Therefore, although emotional neglect is visible in some severe cases, such as developmental delay, it is very difficult to prove due to the lack of clear physical symptoms. When neglect begins, the family is most likely not in a position to request or accept help. While it is difficult to intervene in the family; in early childhood, when neglect leaves the most serious effects, the child cannot be reached alone, and it is even understood later that neglect has occurred.

Historically, emotional abuse and neglect have been understudied compared to other forms of trauma and interpersonal victimization. Emotional neglect, if continued, can lead to long-term negative physical, cognitive and psychological consequences for a child (Zweig-Frank and Paris 1991, Iwaniec 2003, Wark et al. 2003, Baker and Maiorino 2010, Maheu et al. 2010, Young et al. 2011, White et al. 2012, Aust et al. 2013, Schimmenti et al. 2015, Cohen et al. 2017, Müller et al. 2019, Kealy et al. 2020, Chen et al. 2021). In their study comparing the longitudinal effects of physical abuse, neglect and psychological maltreatment, Erickson et al. (1989) found that maternal verbal abuse and emotional unresponsiveness had equal or greater negative effects on attachment, learning and mental health than physical abuse. Emotionally neglected children aged 2-6 years showed more intellectual and social deficits than those exposed to other forms of abuse. Another study found that parental verbal aggression predicted physical aggression, delinquency and interpersonal problems in adolescents more than physical abuse (Vissing et al. 1991). Despite these findings, emotional neglect and emotional abuse by parents or other caregivers is perceived as a vague concept due to familial and cultural differences in parenting practices. By remaining in the background as the unintended consequence of ineffective or "stressed" parenting, valid allegations of psychological maltreatment of children are often met with resistance, disregard or even outright denial. Therefore, the interventions required by the relevant authorities do not receive sufficient attention (Hodgdon 2019).

In 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics published a special report identifying psychological maltreatment as the most severe and pervasive form of child abuse and neglect (Hibbard et al. 2012). According to a study, 15.4% severe to extreme emotional abuse and 13.1% severe to extreme emotional neglect in community samples and 32.2% severe to extreme emotional abuse and 19.1% severe to extreme emotional neglect in clinical samples. These rates are quite high by any standard and indicate that more attention should be paid to psychological maltreatment (Baker and Maiorino 2010). Emotional and physical neglect in family settings is the most common combination of maltreatment experienced by children in the United States, and children aged 3 and under are disproportionately at risk of being neglected. The second most common combination of maltreatment is neglect and psychological maltreatment at 1.7% (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2017). According to the 2022 report of the Children's Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services, 6.8% of victims were psychologically maltreated. According to the World Health Organization (WHO 2020), 29.1% of the 204 million children under the age of 18 in the WHO European Region are estimated to have experienced emotional abuse, when underreporting of abuse is taken into account. The statistics in Turkey were last reported by UNICEF in 2010, and it was shared that the probability of emotional abuse was 51% and the frequency corresponding to emotional neglect under the neglect dimension was 9% (Korkmazlar Oral et al. 2010).

Given the rising prevalence of emotional neglect in the general population (Güler et al. 2002, Baker and Maiorino 2010, Taillieu et al. 2016, Karasu and Bilgen 2017, Kumari 2020), the lasting negative effects on mental health and social functioning are alarming and underline the need for early intervention programs. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the striking consequences of emotional neglect and abuse and effective prevention and intervention programs based on the theoretical framework. Thus, in addition to effective methods and techniques that will help experts working with parents, the aim of this study is to explain the necessity of considering the issue in a macro framework and to shed light on the

preparation of community-based programs. In the study, emotional neglect and emotional abuse are defined and explained through different theoretical perspectives. In this context, its causes and consequences and different approaches to its measurement are examined and its difficulties are discussed. Finally, the necessity of being holistic for prevention and intervention programs to be effective is explained in view of theoretical explanations and empirical findings.

Concepts Related to Emotional Neglect and Emotional Abuse

Due to the difficulties in separating the definitions of emotional neglect and emotional abuse with a common understanding in the literature, it is necessary to examine them under the same title in the study. Emotional abuse began to be defined separately from child abuse and examined in a broader framework in the 1980s. The problem of defining psychological maltreatment, which is used by many researchers instead of emotional abuse and emotional neglect, was emphasized in 1991 when the editors of the journal "Development and Psychopathology" devoted an entire issue to assessing progress in defining this type of maltreatment (Cicchetti 1991). To date, there is no consensus on a single classification. According to Doyle (1997), emotional abuse includes acts of omission and commission that are considered psychologically damaging by societal standards and professionals. These actions, which harm the child's behavioral, cognitive, emotional, social and psychological functioning as soon as they occur or in the future, are committed by parental figures in different positions of power where the child is vulnerable. Iwaniec (1995) evaluated emotional abuse in terms of its outcomes in the child and defined it as hostile or unconventional parental behaviors that seriously and permanently damage the child's self-esteem, reduce the perception of success, reduce the sense of belonging, prevent healthy development and trigger various emotional and behavioral problems. Verbal hostility, unrealistic expectations, rejection, instilling fear and anxiety, withholding attention and care cause emotional damage to the child.

The definitions of neglect and abuse may vary across countries, and determination of maltreatment often depends on contextual factors and intent. In contexts where poverty and parental neglect are difficult to distinguish, the challenge of defining the boundaries between inadequate parenting and neglect has led to a discrepancy in research findings on understanding the effects of neglect and appropriate approaches for its prevention and intervention (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council [IOM and NRC] 2014). As long as emotional neglect is not operationally defined clearly enough, it will remain difficult to identify the most effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

Emotional abuse and emotional neglect also exist independently of other forms of abuse and neglect. For example, while physical neglect is often accompanied by psychological neglect, physical neglect may not always be present in cases of psychological neglect (Erickson and Egeland 1987). While physical abuse is often accompanied by emotional abuse and emotional neglect, in the opposite case, emotional abuse is accompanied by physical abuse at a very low rate (Claussen and Crittenden 1991). There are many similarities between emotional abuse and emotional neglect and physical neglect. Physical neglect involves the failure to provide supervision that addresses basic (survival) needs (Maslow 1948; Barnett et al. 1993). In the UK, Working Together (HM Government 2010) government guidance refers to emotional abuse and neglect under two separate headings; emotional neglect is classified under the general heading of neglect, whereas in the US, psychological maltreatment includes both neglect and abuse. Glaser (2002) defines emotional abuse and neglect as the relationship between parent and child characterized by worrisome interactions. These interactions have characteristics that can harm the psychological and emotional health of the child and do not require physical contact. Furthermore, it encompasses not only cases of neglect but also active acts of abuse, and is usually not incident-based, but continuous or recurrent.

Psychological maltreatment is defined by APSAC (2019) as "repetitive pattern and excessive caregiver behavior that prevents the child's basic psychological needs (safety, respect, emotional and social support, socialization, cognitive stimulation, etc.) and makes the child feel that they are worthless, damaged, defective, unloved, unwanted, endangered, and primarily needed to meet the needs of others", while "emotional unresponsiveness (ignoring)" corresponds to emotional neglect. It is seen to include caregiver

behaviors that ignore the child's attempts to interact and needs (not expressing love and affection to the child) and showing little or no emotion in interactions with the child. Under this heading (APSAC 2019), (1) being disengaged and disinterested; (2) interacting only when necessary; (3) failing to show warmth, affection, care and love to the child; (4) being emotionally distant and indifferent to the child's needs to be secure and safe, such as failing to recognize when the child is victimized by others or failing to meet the child's basic needs; (5) any other form of physical abuse, physical neglect or sexual abuse, including emotional unresponsiveness.

In their study on emotional neglect as psychological neglect, Erickson and Egeland (1995) used the term "psychologically unavailable" to describe parents who ignore young children's cues and signals, especially their desires for warmth and trust. Hodgdon (2019) categorized emotional neglect as a lack of warmth, support, and care, and classified its types as follows: the caregiver is physically unavailable; the caregiver is emotionally unavailable due to dissociation, severe depression, chronic mental illness, or developmental delays; extreme family stress due to poverty, lack of social support, or a dangerous environment interferes with the caregiver's emotional availability; the caregiver ignores the child's requests for attention or stays away from the child; the caregiver leaves the child for a period of time with no indication of when s/he will return. Emotional abuse types (Hodgdon 2019): the caregiver humiliates, belittles, ridicules the child; blames the child for the family's problems; consistently displays a negative attitude or pattern of hostility towards the child; makes excessive and/or inappropriate demands on the child that are inappropriate for the child's developmental stage; uses fear, intimidation, humiliation, threats or bullying to discipline the child; and uses pressure; violating a boundary, excessive monitoring or excessive controlling behaviors that are not appropriate for the child's developmental stage; expecting the child to assume an inappropriate level of responsibility; interfering with the child's important relationships and socialization; exposing the child to relationship conflict between caregivers.

Although emotional neglect and emotional abuse have theoretically different definitions, the distinction between these two concepts remains unclear in practice. The fact that the effects of neglectful and damaging behaviors in parent-child interactions are close to each other causes neglect and abuse to be intertwined, especially in the emotional context (Glaser 2002). While research shows that this situation is related to the inability to operationally categorize parental behaviors into a single category, it also reveals that different types of neglect or abuse can coexist (Iwaniec 1995). Therefore, given the difficulty in distinguishing between emotional neglect and abuse in practice, it is necessary to address both concepts together in intervention and prevention studies.

Theoretical Foundation

The change in the perspective on emotional neglect and emotional abuse in the historical process is closely related to the development process of evidence-based studies that enable this issue to be addressed in a scientific framework. Examining this process of change will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Historical Development

Although emotional neglect and emotional abuse as a dimension of neglect and abuse has become more visible with the increasing importance given to children's rights and the striking results of studies in the field of mental health, it has been handled in various ways in different cultures and societies throughout history. The traces of a child who has been subjected to emotional neglect and emotional abuse appear in different products of art and literature such as poetry, novels, biographies and paintings before the scientific studies in the field (Iwaniec 2006). Especially in the early 20th century, with the introduction of legal regulations and comprehensive studies on children's rights and child protection laws in Western countries, violations that cause irreversible consequences began to come to the agenda more seriously (Veerman 1992, Parkes 2013). As a result of this, different dimensions of neglect and abuse have started to be addressed and studied in different fields, and emotional neglect and emotional abuse have also found a place in the psychology literature.

In ancient times, children were perceived as beings who needed to be shaped to fulfill the needs of the family rather than as individuals worthy of value on their own. There are sources indicating that the number of child deaths was high, and that, unlike adult deaths, they were not given due attention and were influenced by gender (Golden 2015). Although the number of detailed information on the view of childhood in antiquity is not sufficient (Aries 1962), based on details the unwelcoming response to their crying (Golden 2015), it is apparent that their emotional needs were overlooked, but rather the need to ensure the continuation of the family in line with their physical strength was emphasized. In the medieval period, childhood was viewed as a temporary phase before adulthood, this concept did not have a separate place in society (Aries 1962) and the emotional needs of the child were not on the agenda. With the Renaissance period, especially with the reforms in the field of education, the responsibilities of the family towards the child and consequently the importance given to the child's education began to come to the agenda (Pollock 1983), but it was also seen that they continued to advocate harsh discipline methods (DeMause 1974). In the 18th century, with the works of philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau, the perception of childhood has changed, with childhood being recognized as a distinct developmental period. During this period, the idea that children need special attention and care regarding their education has been a topic of discussion (Mandal 2019). As of the 19th century, with the steps taken in the field of children's rights, which came to the agenda after children were employed under harsh conditions (Veerman 1992; Parkes 2013), the notion that the child should be regarded as an individual with emotional needs, rather than a resource that should meet economic needs began to be accepted. However, especially in rural areas or in parts of societies that have difficulty in making an economic presence in the city as a result of migration from rural to urban areas, the child is still considered as an economic resource and not as an individual with emotional needs. The different value judgments of different cultures continue to shape individuals' approach to the emotional needs of the child. In the early 20th century, Freud's (1905) work is considered to be the beginning of scientific evidence-based studies in the field, revealing the complexity of the child's emotional world and the importance of this complexity on personality development.

Theoretical Approaches

Psychodynamic Theory

Psychodynamic theory explains how childhood experiences affect personality development and mental health by shaping the unconscious processes of the individual (Freud 1923, Sandler and Fonagy 1997). In order to overcome the internal conflicts experienced in childhood, children need the support and attention of their parents (Winnicott 1971, Schonkoff and Phillips 2000). "Emotional neglect", characterized by the denial of the attention and support necessary for developmental processes, and "emotional abuse", characterized by the misuse of these needs, are traumatic experiences that cause the child to experience feelings of worthlessness, loneliness, inadequacy and guilt (Iwaniec 2006). These traumatic experiences that cannot be dealt with during childhood may become repressed into the unconscious and negatively affect the personality development and mental health of the individual. Intense negative emotions pushed into the unconscious by developing various defense mechanisms such as repression and denial by the child trying to cope with conflicts cause the child to experience internal problems such as low self-esteem, depression and anxiety and interpersonal problems such as insecurity in social and romantic relationships (Freud 1936, Blatt and Levy 2003). Psychodynamic theory emphasizes that emotional neglect and abuse have deep effects on the inner world of the individual and the role of these experiences on personality development, defense mechanisms and interpersonal relationships. In this framework, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the origins of the mental problems that individuals exposed to emotional neglect and abuse in childhood face in adulthood and guides effective intervention approaches.

Accordingly, the "Good Enough Parenting Program", developed as an early intervention parenting program to help parents meet the basic emotional needs of their children and prevent the development of psychopathology from the very beginning, is based on schema therapy. The program focuses equally on reducing the child's problems and strengthening parenting practices. The program aims to help parents better understand their own early negative experiences and coping styles to reduce negative interactions with their children that involve anger. Parents reported that they behaved more consciously and patiently

in this process, thus reducing their reactive and negative responses to triggering situations with their children, and the program appears to be effective in reducing emotionally abusive behaviors (Louis et al. 2021).

Attachment Theory

According to the Attachment Theory developed by John Bowlby (1969), a bond is established between children and their caregivers from birth and this bond contributes to their healthy development process at the primary level. Negativities in this process, which is called the attachment process, or failure to develop the process at all, cause significant damage to children's social and emotional development (Bowlby 1988, van Ijzendoorn et al. 1991, Kerns and Brumariu 2014, Fuentes-Balderrama 2023). Bowlby suggested that children should receive not only physical but also emotional care needs, which include components such as love, attention and trust, in line with their developmental levels (Bowlby 1969, 1988). In cases of emotional neglect and emotional abuse, the caregiver does not regularly respond to the emotional needs of the child, remains insensitive or reacts inappropriately (Crittenden 1992, Tronick and Weinberg 1997, Howe 2005). The child's inability to repeatedly access the caregiver's attention when he/she needs it or receiving an abusive response causes emotional stress and interrupts the secure attachment process.

The emotional bonds established between a child and his/her caregiver enable the child to enter the process of exploring the environment as a result of feeling safe. A child who is emotionally neglected and emotionally abused is deprived of a secure base from which he/she is nurtured and needs to explore the environment and develop a healthy self. This causes the child to experience social and emotional problems, and problems in the development of sense of self and in relationships with others in adulthood (Bowlby 1988, Schore 2001, Colman and Thompson 2002, Perry 2002, Groh et al. 2014). In families where emotional neglect and abuse occur, when the child cannot get answers to his/her emotional needs for a long time, he/she develops avoidant attachment by suppressing these needs in order to protect himself/herself or he/she may have an anxious attachment style by experiencing anxiety and uncertainty due to being exposed to inconsistent attitudes of his/her parents (Ainsworth et al. 1978, Egeland and Sroufe 1981, Howe 2005). Both situations cause the child to experience problems in developing healthy relationships within himself/herself and with others both in the present and in adulthood (Main et al. 1985). In cases where secure attachment is not achieved, the child has difficulty coping with emotional stress and may experience anxiety disorders, depression, low self-esteem and relationship problems in the future (Sroufe 2005, Jinyao 2012, Brown et al. 2019, Fuentes-Balderrama 2023). Internal working models shaped in this direction determine the child's basic beliefs about himself/herself and others. The development of basic beliefs such as "I am worthless" or "others are unreliable" can be shown among the long-term consequences of emotional neglect and emotional abuse (van Ijzendoorn 2007). Attachment theory also underlines the importance of meeting emotional needs in the early period and shows emotional neglect and emotional abuse as a major risk factor in child development.

There are evidence-based studies showing that attachment-focused parenting programs are effective in preventing and intervening in parents' behaviors that fall within the scope of emotional neglect and abuse. One of these, the mentalization-based "Lighthouse Parenting Program" was developed to indirectly prevent emotional neglect and abuse by focusing on strengthening attachment (Byrne et al. 2018). In each session, activities aimed at enhancing attachment are conducted, while an exploration process is also offered regarding the parent's own attachment style and the attachment style of their child. It was observed that the behaviors within the scope of emotional neglect and abuse of the parents who participated in the program decreased (Gervinskaitė-Paulaitienė et al. 2023). The "Circle of Security Program" aims to facilitate parents to better understand the emotional needs of their children and to respond appropriately and sensitively to these needs by providing attachment-oriented content (Mercer 2015). While developing secure attachment, it also strengthens parent-child interaction in the following ways increasing the parent's observation capacity to read cues from the child, improving reflective functioning skills, and facilitating the transition from defensive behavior to empathy (Marvin et al. 2002). In the process of developing secure attachment, it is aimed for the parent to be sensitive to the emotional needs of the child, and behaviors that fall within the scope of emotional neglect and emotional abuse become the target of intervention.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory argues that individuals acquire behaviors through modeling and reinforcement by observing their environment. Bandura, through his studies suggesting that children can imitate the behaviors they witness, provided evidence that violence can also be learned by witnessing it (Bandura 1977, 1986). Studies proving the intergenerational transmission of parental behaviors, neglect and abuse show that children are likely to exhibit the parenting practices they were exposed to when they become parents (Chen and Kaplan 2001, Bartlett et al. 2017, Huesmann 2018, Neppl et al. 2020, Morgan et al. 2022). Children who are themselves exposed to emotional neglect and abuse may also adopt these behaviors or take their parents as role models. When they become adults and start their own families, they may play these roles and exhibit the behaviors they have acquired. This perspective explains the behavioral aspect of the intergenerational transmission of neglect and abuse.

In this context, studies that enable parents to gain awareness about the effects of their own neglect and abuse histories on their parenting practices and to acquire new behaviors by improving their parenting skills are effective in intervening in emotional neglect and emotional abuse. The "Triple P-Positive Parenting Program" provides cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes in the parent and prevents developmental, emotional and behavioral problems in the child by providing the skills of observing oneself and the child, applying positive discipline techniques, reviewing unrealistic expectations, stress management, coping, problem solving and maintaining a happy relationship (Sanders 2012, Nogueira 2022). However, social learning-based parenting interventions are among the first interventions to include neurobiological measurements (Fisher and Skowron 2017). It has been shown that the negative effects of early adversity, especially on the basic neuroendocrine system that regulates the stress response, can be reduced by family-based interventions (Patterson et al. 2010). It is seen that the results of interventions based on social learning principles offer similar effects with attachment-based interventions (Dozier et al. 2008) and this effect may be related to reducing caregiver stress and providing a consistent and sensitive care environment. The "ACT (Raising Safe Kids) Program", which increases parents' positive parenting behaviors and reduces their psychological aggression, provides parents with positive discipline, anger management and problem solving skills with a content developed based on social learning principles (Knox et al. 2013).

Psychosocial Development Theory

In his theory of psychosocial development, Eric Erikson (1959) argued that human beings go through certain stages throughout their development, the duration of which may vary, but the sequence is the same for all individuals, and that these stages have their own conflicts. The successful resolution of each conflict provides the necessary foundation for the resolution of the next conflict and ensures the continuation of development. The first of these stages is the trust versus mistrust stage experienced during infancy from birth to approximately 2 years of age. The child's passing through this stage by gaining trust is related to the relationship with his/her primary caregivers (Erickson 1963). If the child does not receive the necessary care and attention from his/her parents at this stage or is exposed to emotional neglect and abuse, he/she will develop insecurity towards himself/herself, people and the environment, and his/her successful passage through the other stages will be affected (Hart et al. 2011). Between the ages of 2 and 4, the child, who will experience the conflict of doubt and shame against autonomy, first needs trust in order to gain autonomy successfully at this stage. If the family does not trust and support the child to be able to perform tasks appropriate to the child's developmental period at this stage, or if they cause the child to experience shame instead of encouraging him/her, the shame and guilt acquired by the child at this stage will affect his/her future life. Between the ages of 4 and 6, the child will need family support to successfully overcome the conflict of initiative versus guilt, along with the trust and autonomy acquired in the previous stages. If this foundation is not established consistently, it will have a significant impact on the child's ability to confront conflicts that will determine the rest of his/her life (Erikson 1963). In cases of emotional neglect and abuse, parents do not consistently provide unconditional acceptance, trust and emotional support, which are the basic needs of the child during these periods. This situation damages the child's ability to overcome these early social conflicts.

Research shows the effectiveness of studies that aim to inform parents about the requirements of these periods and teach necessary parenting practices so that parents can respond to their children's developmental period-specific needs. "Nurturing Parenting" aims to teach age-specific skill development by drawing attention to the parents' lack of knowledge and skills related to the stages of development. Parents' lack of knowledge about the needs of their children going through various stages of growth and development, appropriate expectations for each stage, and their attempts to suppress the child's need for autonomy are among the critical behaviors identified in cases of abuse (Bavolek, 2015). The effectiveness of the program was proven with the finding that parents who attended the program sessions were less likely to show neglect and abuse in these areas (Maher et al. 2011).

Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Belsky (1980, 1993), the pioneers of ecological theory, provided a perspective that has had a significant impact on understanding the factors that influence child abuse. They explained the child's development in terms of the functioning of the systems in which the child exists. The 'individual level', which corresponds to the individual characteristics of the child and the parent; the 'microsystem', which refers to the physical environment of the child, such as school and home, which directly affects the child; and the 'mesosystem', which corresponds to the structure formed by these relationships, based on the fact that the relationship between different microsystems affecting the child also affects the child. They presented all the systems that influence the child in a broad perspective as "exosystems," which, although not directly related to the child, exert an indirect impact by affecting the systems that influence the child, and "macrosystems", which are formed by the cultural and ideological structure that affects them all.

The ecological model considers child abuse as a multi-layered process that occurs under the influence of the individual, family, society and culture. This model suggests that each factor mutually modifies each other. For example, the risk factors of parents may change with the influence of the environment and society (Sidebotham 2001). In child abuse, the individual development process is examined to understand the reasons behind the parent's abusive or neglectful behavior. In this context, the parent's own experiences in childhood and young adulthood and their perceptions and reactions to these experiences are important. This level can help to understand the reasons for intergenerational transitions in child abuse because each parent's individual developmental process also has a place in the ecological model.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the interaction between a developing individual and the environment in which that individual lives, as well as the relationships with broader social contexts. This interaction is a continuous process of adaptation between the individual and his/her environment. The ecology of child abuse should not be considered as a static model, but as a framework integrated into the dynamic process of child development. In their study examining child abuse from an ecological perspective, Ling and Kwok (2017) concluded that parents' history of childhood abuse increases the likelihood of marital conflicts and insecure parent-child attachment, which in turn increases neglect and abusive behaviors, including emotional abuse, exhibited by the parents themselves. In addition, it has been observed that parents who adhere to cultural parenting practices without question exhibit aggression in their marital conflicts as modeled by their own families, and these conflicts indirectly affect the child (Ling and Kwok 2017). It was concluded that the "Chicago Child-Parent Center Preschool Program" developed based on the ecological model was effective in parents' abusive and neglectful behaviors, including emotional abuse, and that the variables mediating these effects were related to individual, intra-family and extra-family dynamics (Mersky et al. 2011).

Risk Factors for Emotional Neglect and Emotional Abuse

Emotional neglect and emotional abuse can be caused by various risk factors originating from the child, family and environment. In order to prevent emotional neglect and emotional abuse, it is essential to accurately analyze the underlying causes and risk factors and appropriate elements should be evaluated within the scope of intervention and prevention.

There is not expected to be a profile of children who are more vulnerable to emotional abuse in terms of gender, age, position in the family, health and disability, and in relation to family contexts, there do not appear to be considerable differences in terms of religion, ethnic group, culture and class, or a member with a disability (Doyle 1997). However, children from certain groups are known to experience more emotional neglect and abuse. Children from disadvantaged segments of society, such as child laborers or children displaced by war and other crises, may be exposed to both extrafamilial and familial abuse and neglect due to the time they spend away from their families (Kumari 2020). When considering child abuse and neglect in general and psychological maltreatment in particular, the responsibility for whether the relationship between parent and child is abusive or neglectful lies with the parent. Children can be temperamentally difficult and provocative or, in some cases, have psychological or physical conditions that cause severe stress for their parents and challenge their ability to cope. However, if parents are unable to cope, the right thing to do is to seek help. If parents are unable to get help for any reason, the responsibility to intervene on behalf of both the child and the parent lies with other relatives (Glaser 2002).

Within the perspective of developmental psychopathology, the ecological transactional approach provides the opportunity to examine the risk and protective factors in each ecological system that affect the consequences of child abuse and neglect (Cicchetti and Toth 2016). This approach considers the child within the family and considers temporary or permanent risk and protective factors in individual, familial, social and broader macrosystems as factors affecting the child's adaptation and maladaptation in the maltreatment experience. Emotion regulation is very important for initiating and adjusting behaviors that increase adaptation and prevents negative emotions from escalating to anxiety levels (Cicchetti and Toth 2016). Neglected infants show less emotional expression and have negative affect for longer periods of time than non-neglected infants, and this initiates negativity that will continue throughout development. Supporting these conclusions, Löve (2019) concluded that emotional neglect is clearly related to parental psychological problems, but not significantly related to parental socioeconomic status. When the risk factors of the groups exposed to emotional abuse and those not exposed to emotional abuse are compared, it is seen that factors such as extended family structure, conflicts between parents and within marriage, change of primary caregiver, loss of a child in the family, difficulties in meeting basic needs due to economic difficulties, mental health problems (Doyle, 1997) and the obligation to provide care to individuals with special needs come to the fore.

Since early caregiver relationships affect the quality of current and future relationships, children receiving pathological care have negative expectations about the existence and reliability of relationships and perceive themselves as inadequate and worthless (Toth and Manly 2019). It has been revealed that mothers who experienced emotional neglect in childhood have more attachment problems with their infants after birth. "Neglected mothers" tend to consciously or unconsciously transfer their own experiences to their infants, and this may lead to an intergenerational cycle of neglect (Talmon et al. 2019). This intergenerational cycle remains a risk factor for emotional neglect unless intervened. A study examining mothers' behavioral, perceptual and autonomic responses to their infants' emotional cues supports the cycle of neglect with the conclusion that mothers who experienced neglect in childhood were less likely to regulate their emotions and behaviors, which may cause difficulties in dealing with their children's emotional expressions (Buisman et al. 2018). In addition, neglectful parents are thought to have various disorders in their personality structure, and it has been suggested that these parents often exhibit infantile and immature personality traits that are stuck in childhood anxieties. This concept means that the individual fails to fulfill the emotional needs specific to childhood and continues these deficiencies into adulthood. The need of parents to obtain the expected love and attention that was not given to them in their own families or the need to grieve may also explain their inability to give this love and attention to their own children (Polansky et al. 1983, Taylor and Daniel 2005, Stevenson 2008). Studies show that caregiver and family-related risk factors are prominent in child emotional neglect and abuse.

Nevertheless, different cultures differ in terms of desirable behaviors in child care and behaviors that are seen as abusive. In Western cultures, rewarding a child's success and showing emotion through close physical contact is considered normal, while over-criticizing and threatening to punish a child is perceived as emotional abuse. In some eastern cultures, rewarding is considered inappropriate because it is thought

to encourage arrogance, while punishment and criticism are thought to be used to prevent or change unwanted behaviors. What is perceived as normal varies from culture to culture (Iwaniec 2003). Environments where punishment and verbal aggression are considered normal for the purpose of disciplining the child and sharing emotional expressions is not considered appropriate pose a risk for emotional neglect and abuse in childhood, even if there is no intention of neglect and abuse.

Parenting in Turkey is evolving from a traditional authoritarian approach to a more modern structure as a result of cultural factors, changing economic dynamics and the reflection of modernization on family life and parent-child relationships. Studies show that as generations progress, parents adopt more loving, non-controlling and autonomy-supportive attitudes instead of discipline-oriented approaches (Sunar 2009), but emphasize that a certain degree of control is exercised over children in order to maintain family closeness (Sunar 2002). These findings partially support Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) prediction of a developing urban family model by questioning the role of control despite the increasing intergenerational support for love and autonomy. Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005) reveal that while the economic value attributed to children is decreasing, their psychological value is increasing. However, there is still a lack of awareness about emotional neglect and abuse and inconsistencies in parenting practices.

In the cultural context, indifference and emotional distance in the collectivist Turkish society are seen at a lower rate compared to Western examples (Sümer et al. 2016). In addition, Güler et al. (2002) stated that in terms of emotional abuse/neglect behaviors practiced by mothers, common behaviors include not showing affection to their children, yelling, and shouting.

Another study conducted in Turkey shows that individuals who were abused in childhood are more likely to become abusive parents in adulthood and that parents' economic difficulties are associated with abusive behaviors. In particular, parents struggling with low income were found to be more likely to maltreat their children than those with high income. While no significant relationship was found between mothers' level of education and abusive behaviors, it was reported that fathers' level of education was significantly associated with behaviors related to emotional abuse (Sofuoğlu et al. 2016). In the demographic analyses, the fact that mothers constituted the majority of the parent sample (approximately 72%) also points to the critical role of the mother in child development.

Research also reveals that rural mothers expect their children to conform to traditional moral rules at an earlier age and are more likely to use unquestioning obedience and punishment. In contrast, highly educated mothers in metropolitan areas demand that their children acquire developmental characteristics earlier, but adopt a more flexible and less obedience-oriented parenting approach. In the context of emotional abuse, this suggests that the rigid parenting approach in rural areas may potentially pave the way for emotional abuse (Nacak et al. 2011). In another study, it was observed that parents did not have sufficient or comprehensive knowledge about child abuse, neglect and emotional abuse, but still acted by prioritizing the well-being of their children. However, although these parents were sensitive, they were found to exhibit behaviors such as insulting, angering, scolding, yelling, not listening, removing their children, threatening or ignoring them, and giving room punishment when under stress (Üstündağ 2022).

Overall, the findings suggest that Turkish parenting practices are shaped under the influence of cultural, socioeconomic and demographic factors and the interaction of these variables may be a risk factor for children's emotional health. Therefore, it is of great importance to consider the cultural and economic environments in which parenting approaches are practiced when developing interventions to prevent emotional abuse and neglect.

Relationship of Emotional Neglect and Emotional Abuse with Psychopathology

The effects of emotional neglect and abuse on children are profound and long-lasting. As Hart et al. (2011) point out, such experiences lead to the development of emotional problems such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, as well as behavioral symptoms such as aggression, antisocial behavior and eating disorders. It can create interpersonal difficulties, such as lack of trust in relationships and social isolation,

and prevent children from healthy attachment. In addition, it can have serious negative effects on academic performance and physical health. Glaser (2011) emphasizes that such neglect cannot be based solely on external signs of harm, as the effects of emotional maltreatment can often be attributed to other causes. The psychological effects of emotional neglect at the individual level are examined under specific categories.

Emotion Recognition, Emotion Expression, Emotion Regulation

Prolonged emotional deprivation and lack of mirroring during infancy causes great distress that permeates the mind and body, setting the stage for psychopathology. When a child experiences emotional neglect, they are likely to use dissociation defenses to protect themselves from internal conflicts that are no longer bearable (Stein et al. 1991, Schimmenti and Caretti 2016). According to Jessar et al. (2017), emotionally neglected children run the risk of not being able to reliably and validly interpret their own internal experiences due to their primary caregivers ignoring their feelings. This neglectful attitude leads children to perceive their own emotions as insignificant and worthless, which may negatively affect their future emotional and social functioning.

In a poor emotional environment, children have no chance to learn to understand their emotions. Neglectful parents are unlikely to teach their children the emotion regulation skills necessary to identify and differentiate emotions, regulate them, or gain perspective (Kim and Cicchetti 2010, Sciarrino et al. 2018). In a study with neglected children, it was found that these children had more difficulty recognizing emotional expressions in a skit and were less able to distinguish between emotions compared to the control group and the physically abused group (Pollak et al. 2000). Since an emotionally rejected child does not know a loving and affectionate parent whose behavior he/she can model, he/she grows up without knowing how to give love. Although he/she longs for attention and affection, he/she has difficulty receiving it when it is offered, tends to isolate his/her feelings to protect himself/herself from being hurt emotionally, and eventually gives up trying to receive love from people (Iwaniec 2003). The results of a study examining the relationship between alexithymia and early life stress in psychologically and somatically healthy individuals showed that there was a significant correlation between emotional neglect in early childhood and alexithymia, with emotional neglect explaining 13% of the variance. While alexithymia was positively correlated with emotional neglect, it was not significantly associated with other childhood traumas such as physical or sexual abuse (Aust et al. 2013). Psychologically abused children behave emotionally under pressure and control when they are with their caregivers and hesitate to express their negative emotions. Howe (2005) states that these children avoid asking for help and do not feel safe thinking that their needs will be rejected. Since they experience that showing their needs may be perceived as weakness, they try to develop a strong and independent identity. As a result, they tend to avoid all attachment-related experiences.

Self-worth and Externalizing Problems

Emotionally abusive parents often display a consistently negative attitude towards their children, deprive them of entertainment and socialization, believe that the child is deliberately irritating them, and establish physical and emotional distance from the child by using derogatory language. This situation prevents the child from developing healthy attachment with the parent, leads to social isolation and loneliness, and negatively affects the development of self-esteem and self-confidence (Iwaniec 1995, 2003). Emotionally neglected children are characterized by behavioral problems, difficulties in social relationships and low competence, and these children stand out with low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, unhappiness, low academic achievement and insecure attachment to their parents. They may exhibit passive and disobedient behavior, be prone to outbursts of anger, and show signs of learned helplessness. While young children may be more vulnerable to emotional neglect, young people who are abandoned or neglected in adolescence are also at risk (Iwaniec 2003). Children who are emotionally maltreated by their parents or even siblings feel inadequate, isolated, unwanted and unloved. They have low self-esteem and see themselves as worthless (Brassard and Hardy 1997, O'Hagan 1998, Hart et al. 2002, Iwaniec 2006, Skogrand et al. 2007, Wright 2008, Barlow and MacMillan 2010). Children respond to such situations in one of two

ways: They resist, become hostile, aggressive and exhibit behavioral problems, or they turn their anger inward and self-harm, become depressed, withdraw or suicidal (Crosson-Tower 2014).

It has been suggested that neglected children perceive that they are not worthy of their parents' time, love and attention compared to physically abused children (Dean et al. 1986). This rationalization of parental maltreatment seen in physically abused children acts as a buffer when considering later psychological problems such as somatization, paranoia, anxiety, depression, and hostility. As a result, researchers have suggested that neglect may be a stronger indicator of future mental health outcomes and interpersonal stressors (Gauthier et al. 1996). Researchers conducting the Minnesota Mother/Child Interaction Project followed children born to high-risk mothers from birth to adulthood. They concluded that children who are exposed to hostile and verbal abuse are exposed to a number of negative consequences such as poor attachment, acting out in anger, showing poor impulse control, being easily distracted and learning problems. These negative effects were as strong as those seen in physically abused children. The same study also found that children with parents who refused to respond emotionally were more likely to have lower self-esteem, exhibit self-abusive behaviors, and develop serious psychopathology compared to their non-abusive peers (Erickson et al. 1989).

Anxiety and Depression

Neuroscientific research demonstrates the specific and detrimental effects of childhood emotional abuse and neglect on brain development (Teicher and Sampson 2016). Teicher et al. (2006) found that parental verbal abuse is a particularly powerful form of maltreatment and is associated with negative effects on dissociation, depression, limbic arousal, anger, and hostility similar to or stronger than other forms of domestic abuse (Teicher et al. 2006). Emotional neglect has a significant positive relationship with psychiatric symptoms and negative affect. It was observed that experiences of emotional neglect in childhood predicted the severity of current psychiatric symptoms and negative affect levels mediated this relationship. In addition, women who experienced emotional neglect developed more psychiatric symptoms (Schimmenti et al. 2015). A study reports that university students with a history of emotional abuse or emotional neglect tend to develop negative self-beliefs (Wright et al. 2009). These young adults internalized negative messages from their parents and felt shame, and as a result, saw themselves as defective. They reported higher levels of depression and anxiety than their peers who were not maltreated.

Compared to others, youth with a history of caregiver absence and emotional neglect showed significantly higher left amygdala and left anterior hippocampus activation according to fMRI results during the processing of threatening information (Maheu et al. 2010). In another study, childhood emotional neglect was found to mediate increased amygdala activity in the presence of genetic disorders. Increased amygdala activity may also translate into constant vigilance and may predispose to the development of stress-related psychopathologies such as mood and anxiety disorders (Bogdan et al. 2012). Findings from a study examining whether FKBP5 genotypes, previously associated with impaired negative feedback of the HPA axis and stress-related psychopathology, interact with childhood emotional neglect to increase threat-related dorsal amygdala reactivity suggest that the FKBP5 genotype, in interaction with environmental stressors, leads to a marked increase in amygdala reactivity. This upward trend in the context of emotional neglect suggests that individuals carrying FKBP5 alleles are at increased risk for stress-related psychopathology (White 2012).

Dependency

The impact of emotional abuse on addiction is closely related to emotion dysregulation. Research shows that adverse childhood experiences, especially emotional neglect and abuse, significantly increase the risk of developing substance use disorders in adulthood (Felitti et al. 1998). One study found that emotional abuse predicts alcohol dependence and is more effective than other types of neglect and abuse (Potthast et al. 2014).

The chronic stress response that occurs in early life periods affected by emotional abuse may lead to changes in brain regions that manage impulse control in the future, making individuals more prone to

addiction (Sinha 2008). In particular, dopamine system dysregulation has been observed in individuals exposed to emotional abuse, and this has been reported to increase compulsive behaviors towards reward seeking (Anda et al. 2006). In a study by Rosenkranz et al. (2012), only emotional abuse and neglect were found to be strong predictors of substance use problems when childhood abuse types were evaluated together. This finding is consistent with the "self-medication" hypothesis, which suggests that individuals may use addiction as a coping mechanism to balance emotion regulation difficulties and alleviate psychological pain (Khantzian 1997).

The long-term effects of emotional abuse on emotion regulation and cognitive control mechanisms are striking. The overlap of brain regions associated with emotion regulation in maltreated individuals with regions identified as potential predictors of substance use disorders underlines the role of abuse in addiction development (Puetz and McCrory 2015). The results of previous studies also show that emotional neglect is significantly associated with substance abuse (Cohen et al. 2017, Salokangas et al. 2019).

Without a sense of connectedness at home, young people may seek emotional connection through strategies that provide instant relief, such as excessive cell phone use. These devices enable users to play games and stay connected with friends online anytime and anywhere. However, resorting to cell phones to satisfy the need for relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2000) may increase the risk of problematic cell phone use. The results of the study reveal a significant positive relationship between adolescents' childhood emotional neglect and their current problematic mobile phone use (Chen et al. 2021). In conclusion, emotional maltreatment is an important risk factor for addiction development and psychological, neurobiological and behavioral mechanisms underlie this relationship.

Personality Disorders

Emotional neglect is associated with psychiatric disorders and symptoms for many children and adults. Emotional neglect at age 11 significantly predicts psychopathology at age 15 (Young et al. 2011). A study revealing a positive association between childhood emotional neglect, narcissistic vulnerability and symptoms of depression and anxiety found that narcissistic vulnerability serves as an important mediating role in the link between childhood emotional neglect and the severity of both forms of psychological distress. When shame was added to the model, results indicated that narcissistic vulnerability contributed to psychological distress stemming from negative experiences in childhood, while shame played an important mediating role in this process. These findings suggest that pervasive insecurities and self-regulation difficulties reflected in narcissistic vulnerability, often originate from a relative lack of parental warmth and empathy, and fostering shame-related feelings and ultimately leading to acute psychological distress (Kealy et al. 2020). Based on the theory of Mahler et al. (1975), Masterson and Riley (1975) suggested that selective maternal presence during the dissociation-individuation period predisposes the individual to borderline psychopathology in the later period. Accordingly, When examining the childhood of an individual with borderline personality traits, a combination of overprotective and emotionally neglectful elements becomes apparent (Zweig-Frank and Paris 1991). The results of the study also contribute to the theory by showing that both male and female participants found their parents to be less involved but more controlling in their childhood than the non-borderline group (Zweig-Frank and Paris 1991).

Somatic Disorders

Children exposed to emotional abuse often experience problems such as anxiety, fear, sleep problems, psychosomatic symptoms, eating disorders and distractibility. Problems such as destructive and aggressive behaviors, bedwetting and fecal incontinence can also be observed (Iwaniec 1995, 2003). In a study examining research in the field of emotional abuse and neglect, it was found that rates of emotional abuse and neglect were higher in a sample that included many clinical conditions such as eating disorders, substance abuse, axis 1 disorders, self-harm, and individuals with unspecified problems receiving outpatient psychotherapy than in a general population sample (Baker and Maiorino 2010). Strikingly, experiences of emotional abuse or emotional neglect have been found to carry more "weight" or "toxicity" than other forms of childhood abuse. Specifically, children and adolescents with a history of psychological

maltreatment alone typically exhibit equal or worse clinical outcome profiles than youth with combined physical and sexual abuse (Spinazzola et al. 2014, Hodgdon, 2019). Some of these children also develop somatic complaints such as headaches, asthma, colitis or sleep disorders (Crosson-Tower, 2014).

Deterioration at the Family and Social Level

Being exposed to emotional neglect in childhood has an impact on women's body perception during and after pregnancy, bonding with their infants, and their maternal self-efficacy. Childhood emotional neglect is significantly positively associated with postpartum mother-infant attachment problems. Growing up in a neglectful family, marked by a sense of invisibility and a disrupted sense of self, may manifest itself in a fragile and deficient self-concept and leading to low sense of maternal self-efficacy. The findings of the study reveal a vicious cycle in which "neglected mothers" can give their babies the same life experience as themselves (Talmon et al. 2019). In another study, participants who experienced emotional neglect by a female caregiver during childhood reported higher levels of current psychological distress, as well as less adaptability and resilience within the family system (Wark et al. 2003).

Children who experience emotional neglect by their parents for a long time are unable to meet their emotional needs due to the unsafe environment and emotional deprivation. Therefore, it becomes difficult for these children to develop a healthy personality and social functioning and increases the risk of externalizing problems in social activities. It is also seen in the study results that parental emotional neglect predicts deviant peer relationships (Yang et al. 2021). In the study examining the mediating role of oxytocin and attachment system in the relationship between emotional neglect and social fear and avoidance, emotional neglect was significantly associated with lower plasma oxytocin concentrations. The results emphasize the role of oxytocin and attachment systems in the interaction between emotional neglect and social (impaired) functioning (Müller et al. 2019).

Prevention and Intervention Activities

Due to the increasing prevalence of emotional neglect in the general population, the lasting negative effects on social functioning and mental health are alarming and underscore the need for early intervention and prevention programs. Due to the nature of emotional neglect and abuse, prevention and intervention programs need to have a holistic structure to be effective, and comprehensive strategies are also needed at the societal level to ensure the sustainability of programs for the target population. Although there are a limited number of studies directly targeting emotional neglect and emotional abuse, early intervention programs that include practices aimed at strengthening parent-child relationships for families at risk are effective.

Casey Family Programs are aimed at at-risk families and aim to prevent child abuse and neglect, advocating for the importance of the role a safe and stable family plays in children's lives (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2019). The Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) offers a multi-level parenting and family support strategy that aims to prevent serious behavioral, emotional and developmental problems in children by increasing parents' knowledge, skills and confidence (Sanders et al. 2004). Developed in the 1980s, SafeCare, a preventive early intervention program for families with children aged 0-5 years and at high risk for child neglect and physical abuse, continues to be implemented in many countries and consists of 3 modules: parent-child interaction, health services and home safety. The results of the program show that neglect is reduced or prevented in high-risk families. Improvements were also seen in terms of parental personal well-being, reduced parental stress related to childcare, and parental perception of the child (Arruabarrena Madariaga 2019).

Minding the Baby, a multidisciplinary, relationship-based home program, was initiated to help young and at-risk new mothers "mentalize" their babies (and themselves) in a variety of ways, and the results have demonstrated the effectiveness of the program (Slade et al. 2005). It is known that many families in which one or both parents abuse substances have high rates of child abuse and neglect. Accordingly, the Parents Under Pressure (PUP) program (Dawe et al. 2003), a home-based intervention, utilized the ecological model of child development to target multiple domains of family functioning. The 3 and 6-month follow-ups of

the program showed significant reductions in problems in multiple domains of family functioning, including the potential for child abuse, rigid parenting attitudes, and child behavior problems (Dawe and Harnett 2007).

One of the programs that has had a widespread impact on parenting education in Turkey is the Mother Child Education Program, developed by the Mother Child Education Foundation and implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education. One of the program's components, the Mother Support Program, aims to support economically disadvantaged mothers of children aged 3-6 in their parenting roles. By providing mothers with information about their children's development, the program aims to support healthy development and strengthen the bond between them through effective communication. Through group discussions, the program focuses on the expression and acceptance of the child's emotions (Bekman 1998). The intervention is conducted by volunteer trainers who have completed the MOCEF Mother Support Program Trainer Training. In addition, additional sessions are organized with the participation of fathers in order to support mothers' harmonization with their spouses in their attitudes and behaviors towards their children. It was concluded that mothers who participated in the program showed less negative disciplinary practices, behaved consistently, developed effective communication skills, remained calm and patient in crisis situations, recognized the child's developmental needs and desires, and felt that they had a closer relationship with their child (Bekman and Atmaca Koçak 2011). As a result of the need for a special program for fathers during the implementation of the program, the Father Support Program (FSP) was developed with the aim of providing fathers with information about the care of their children, developing effective communication skills and democratic attitudes, and preventing abuse. As a result of the program implementations, fathers stated that they showed more love and spent more time with their children and experienced positive changes in their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. Quantitative findings also support the changes in attitudes and improved communication patterns (Atmaca Koçak 2004).

The Family Education Program (FEP), developed by the Ministry of Family and Social Services, aims to improve the quality of life of the family, strengthen family interactions and teach the family how to use its existing resources. The program consists of twenty-six comprehensive modules, and the results of a study examining the effectiveness of the modules targeting family education and communication show that parents who participated in the program had more realistic expectations from their children, established more positive relationships, and had lower rates of negative discipline and verbal punishment than those who did not participate (Karadağ and Tuncay 2022). These results show that although the studies do not directly target emotional neglect and abuse, the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors changed indirectly intervene in behaviors involving emotional neglect and abuse.

Looking at the programs developed to prevent emotional neglect and abuse, the results of the study in which the Web-based distance education program designed for parents was implemented showed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of inappropriate expectations, insensitivity, intimidation, rejection/repression and positive attitudes at the end of the application. The program significantly increased parental awareness in the experimental group (Gülirmak and Orak 2020). In another study conducted in Turkey, a 6-session emotional abuse prevention and intervention program was conducted with 7th and 8th grade students and their mothers, and according to the results; the children of the mothers who received training perceived their mothers as less oppressive and less controlling after the training, while the post-test scores of the mothers who received training in the dimensions of emotional abuse, stress, problems with others and family were lower than the control group (Gürsel 2019).

In particular, community-based comprehensive studies have been found to be more effective and permanent, and the effectiveness of family-centered studies has also been proven. In order to break the cycle of emotional neglect and abuse, it is important that effective intervention strategies are sustainable. In this sense, individual and family-oriented support programs and protective policies at the community level will contribute to the healthy psychological development of children and pave the way for them to grow up as healthy individuals in the future.

Discussion

Emotional neglect and emotional abuse in childhood show their negative effects on the individual not only in childhood but also in adolescence and adulthood, unless intervention is provided. For this reason, those who work with children and families should first of all be well aware of the situations and actions that emotional neglect and emotional abuse conceptually cover, their causes arising from the family and the environment, and their physical and psychological effects.

One reason emotional neglect and emotional abuse are studied less than other types of abuse is that the traces of emotional neglect and emotional abuse are less visible and harder to substantiate compared to other types of neglect and abuse. Emotional neglect and abuse is difficult to diagnose because the child does not know what constitutes care and attention at the time of exposure or is not accessible enough to express himself/herself. The effects in adulthood require long-term studies, which are time-consuming and costly. Another reason is the lack of a definition that includes common criteria accepted by the majority in the scientific field. Many researchers have defined emotional neglect and abuse by focusing on different aspects of emotional neglect and abuse that may not always be clear, such as "the effects on the child" or "the actions of the caregiver". Since situations that constitute emotional neglect and emotional abuse may be considered normal in different cultures, the development of standardized measurement tools has become challenging. In different cultures and societies, the harm caused by emotional neglect and emotional abuse is ignored or underestimated. Due to such difficulties, researchers have difficulty in obtaining evidence-based and objective results and interest in the field remains limited.

However, studies conducted so far have shown that the effects of emotional neglect and emotional abuse are seen in different forms in childhood and adulthood, have emotional and physical effects such as anxious attachment, limited interaction, restricted emotional responses (Stein et al. 1991, Gauthier et al. 1996, Schimmenti and Caretti 2016), negative affect, alexithymia, emotion dysregulation disorders (Aust et al. 2013), and eating disorders, substance abuse disorders (Aust et al. 2013). 1996, Schimmenti and Caretti 2016), negative affect, alexithymia, emotion dysregulation (Aust et al. 2013), and are associated with eating disorders, substance abuse problems, axis 1 disorders, self-harm (Baker and Maiorino 2010), depression, anxiety disorders (Salokangas et al. 2019).

In order to improve prevention and intervention efforts, it is necessary to focus on the causes. When we look at the family-based causes, it is first seen that the emotional neglect and emotional abuse experienced by the parent affects the relationship they develop with their child (Talmon 2019). Parental stress, lack of knowledge about developmental needs, lack of caregiving skills, and the presence of culturally normal and culturally transmitted caregiving practices are among the causes of unintentional emotional neglect and abuse. Intervention programs can be planned at primary and secondary level, community-centered or family-centered. Programs in which the family and child are involved together are effective. The main purpose of interventions is to repair the damage, strengthen the parent-child relationship, improve the child's perception of trust and belonging at the family level (Iwaniec 2003) and to encourage children to be seen as individuals with basic human rights at the community level. Therefore, interventions should inevitably include selecting methods and approaches that address the child's needs, accelerating developmental gains, changing parental attitudes, training parents to better understand the child's developmental needs, and teaching childcare practices. In this context, various multidimensional and comprehensive studies have been found to be effective in preventing emotional neglect and abuse by strengthening the emotional bond between parents and their children through supporting parents and strengthening their skills. Bekman and Koçak (2011) reported that emotional bonds between children and their parents can be strengthened through training programs for parents. These programs train parents on how to understand their children's emotional needs and how to support their children's development through healthy communication. Similarly, Day et al. (2020) prepared a program is based on a multi-theoretical model. This model aims to improve parents' behaviors by utilizing attachment theory, social learning theory, and cognitive-emotional theories. The program teaches parents emotional regulation skills, healthy relationship-building strategies and methods to guide their children more effectively. In this way, it helps parents cope with emotional difficulties and provide a healthier environment for their children

and aims to create positive changes in children's psychological development. Sanders et al. (2004) found that structured training for parents provides positive effects on children's development and creates a strong protective factor against emotional abuse and neglect through changes in parents' attitudes. This program provides parents with practical tools to understand their children's behavior and guide them effectively. The content of the program helps parents to show more empathy for their children, meet their emotional needs and avoid negative discipline methods. Taken together, these studies suggest that interventions for parents can prevent emotional neglect and abuse by improving both parenting skills and the parent-child relationship.

Conclusion

Within the scope of this study, the difficulties of defining emotional neglect and emotional abuse conceptually are emphasized and the characteristics of emotional neglect situations and emotional abuse acts are examined by focusing on the content of various definitions. The developments between the historical development of the view of emotional neglect and abuse and the beginning of studies at the scientific level are presented. The effects of emotional neglect and abuse, which also appear as psychological maltreatment, are discussed within the theoretical framework.

Considering that emotional neglect and abuse leave the most serious effects in the 0-6 age range, there is a need to develop and implement programs for parents, who are the target audience, and individual or group programs to prevent and intervene in neglect and abuse. First of all, it is necessary to target the behaviors that constitute neglect and abuse and identify the underlying antecedents that can be included in the scope of intervention. In the presence of parental pathology, it is also important to increase the number of centers where parents can receive psychological support in order to direct them to relevant specialists through methods such as individual or group therapies and medical treatment for early intervention.

In cases of emotional neglect and abuse that are unintentional or caused by a lack of knowledge and skills, it is critical to increase parents' self-awareness. Such parenting difficulties often stem from parents' internal conflicts, emotion regulation problems and inadequacies in stress management. In this context, psychoeducation and individual/group therapies offer effective tools to help parents cope with these challenges.

Psychoeducation can help parents recognize their own emotional states, learn stress coping strategies and improve their emotion regulation skills. Individual and group therapies offer more in-depth interventions, enabling parents to deal more effectively with their personal and psychological difficulties. Individual therapy helps parents understand their inner conflicts, get to know themselves better and contribute to their psychological well-being. Thus, parents gain awareness of the influence of their own internal processes in their approach to their children. Group therapies, on the other hand, enable parents to share their experiences with other individuals facing similar challenges and learn from each other. By providing social support, the group environment will encourage parents to develop healthier coping strategies without feeling alone.

In therapeutic interventions, working on the dysfunctional beliefs that parents hold will allow them to change their negative attitudes towards their children and their own parenting. In addition, in such intervention programs, it is of great importance to use effective methods and methods to overcome knowledge and skill deficiencies. Having knowledge about the needs of developmental periods, developing reflective functioning skills, learning positive discipline methods and playful parenting skills will help parents develop more empathetic and effective approaches to their children. Programs developed in line with proven theoretical perspectives (cognitive-behavioral approach, attachment theory, social learning theory) will help parents to change their behaviors towards their children and bring the interactions within the family to a healthy ground. In conclusion, psychoeducation and individual/group therapies allow parents to cope with their personal challenges and improve their parenting skills. Such multidimensional interventions will help parents develop strategies to prevent emotional neglect and abuse.

In addition, it is thought that the organization of general public information programs through the cooperation of field experts, primary and secondary schools, municipalities, and other non-formal education centers and the inclusion of media campaigns will be beneficial in order to raise awareness throughout the society, change social perception and create public awareness. In this way, these studies will contribute to society and the scientific field as early intervention for the mental health problems that children who are subjected to emotional neglect and abuse may have to cope with both during the period they are exposed to emotional neglect and abuse and when they become adults and/or parents.

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