

Parental relationships and delinquent behaviors of adolescents that were abused in childhood

Çocukluk çağında örselenen ergenlerin ebeveyn ilişkileri ve kuraldışı davranışları

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Abstract

Aim:

The study investigates the correlation of childhood traumatic experiences on parent-adolescent relations and delinquent behaviors, in adolescents that admitted to our Hospital, which serves to a low socioeconomic region, in Ankara.

Material and methods:

Adolescents (n:1007, range: 14-18 years old) were asked to fill a booklet including three sections: "Childhood trauma questionnaire" (CTQ), "Parent-adolescent relationship inventory" (PARI) and "Illegal behavior scale" (IBS).

Results:

Median age was 16 years (62.3% girls), all the adolescents had low income. A history of physical abuse was reported in 25%, sexual abuse was reported in 3.5%. A positive correlation between CTQ and PARI ($p=0.001$, $r=0.444$); CTQ and DBS ($p=0.001$, $r=0.400$); PARI and IBS ($p=0.001$, $r=0.831$) were determined.

Conclusions:

In correlation to childhood traumatic experiences, adolescents who were abused had defective parental relationships and have increased tendency to delinquent behaviors. While adolescents who are describing their own family environment, indicating that there is no peace and love, there is a greater risk of traumatic experiences, negative relationships with parents and delinquent behavior.

Keywords: Abuse, Adolescent, Child, Delinquent behavior, Neglect, Parent

Özet

Amaç: Bu çalışmada, Ankara ilinde, düşük sosyoekonomik bir bölgede bulunan hastanemize başvuran ergenlerin, çocukluk çağındaki örselenme yaşantıları ile ebeveyn ilişkileri ve kuraldışı davranışları arasındaki bağıntıyı araştırmak amaçlandı.

Greç ve yöntem: Çalışmaya alınan ergenlerden (n: 1007, yaş aralığı: 14-18 yaş) üç ayrı bölümden oluşan bir kitapçığı doldurmaları istendi: "Çocukluk örselenme yaşantıları ölçeği" (ÇÖYÖ), "Ana-baba-ergen ilişki envanteri" (ABEİE), ve "Kuraldışı davranış ölçeği" (KDÖ).

Sonuçlar: Ortanca yaş 16 yıl olup (% 62,3 kız), tüm ergenler düşük gelire sahipti. Fiziksel istismar öyküsü %25, cinsel istismar öyküsü %3,5 sıklıkta bildirildi. ÇÖYÖ ve ABEİE arasında ($p=0,001$, $r=0,444$); ÇÖYÖ ve KDÖ ($p=0,001$, $r=0,400$) arasında; ABEİE ve KDÖ arasında ($p=0,001$, $r=0,831$) pozitif korelasyon tespit edildi.

Sonuç: Çocukluk çağında örselenme yaşantıları ile bağıntılı olarak ana-baba-ergen ilişkilerinde bozulma ve ergenlerin kuraldışı davranış eğilimlerinde artma olmaktadır. Kendi aile ortamını tariflerken, huzur ve sevgi olmadığını belirten ergenlerde, örselenme yaşantısı, ebeveynlerle olumsuz ilişki ve yasadışı davranışlara eğilim riski daha fazladır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuk, Ebeveyn, Ergen, İstismar, İhmal, Kuraldışı davranış

Introduction

Physical, emotional and sexual abuse in the childhood negatively effects the emotional and physical development, socialization, education, and all the normal development processes (1, 2). Compared to non-abused children, children who were abused have much higher rates of the multiple psychopathologic and physical problems (3, 4). The abuse experienced during the childhood damages the self-esteem. Such people shows anxiety, depression, suicide, antisocial disorders, eating problems, sexual disorders, use of substance, low impulse control and self-destructive behavior patterns (1, 5-8). At present, no fully satisfactory theory exists to account for the association between a history of childhood abuse and psychiatric outcomes, but the scientific literature suggests several potential mechanisms as likely candidates (9).

Unhealthy attachment with the family, presence of abuse in the family, inadequate and unhealthy perception of family relations by adolescents were found to be the factors related to adolescents' inclination to crime (7, 10-15).

The objective of this study is to examine the effects of childhood traumatic experiences on the parent-adolescent communications and illegal behaviors in the adolescents living in a low socioeconomic level, by using "Childhood Trauma Questionnaire" (CTQ), "Parent-Adolescent Relationship Inventory" (PARI) and "Illegal Behavior Scale" (IBS).

Materials and Methods:

A cross-sectional study including 1007 healthy adolescents (14-18 years-old ages) was conducted at pediatrics outpatient clinics between April 2013-July 2014.

A personal information form was used to collect the sociodemographic data (gender, age, whether abused physically and/or sexually). "Childhood Trauma Questionnaire" was used for the data on the childhood abuse variable (emotional, physical, and sexual), PARI was used for the data about the parent-adolescent communication variables, and IBS was used to determine the illegal behaviors.

Childhood Trauma Questionnaire was developed to detect the childhood abuse before the age of 18 (16, 17). Higher results in the questionnaire indicate specific abuse during childhood and adolescence. Parent- Adolescent Relationship Inventory tests the parent-child relationships and the supervision of the parents over the kids using the answers of adolescents (18). The higher results of the inventory show an inadequate quality of parent-adolescent relationship and supervision. Illegal Behavior Scale is a self-reported form for 15-18 age year old adolescents (19) which aims to determine the misbehavior that was not reported to the government agencies, but which requires a punishment by law, if detected. Higher scores of the scale indicate the tendency to illegal behavior.

The data from the Turkey Labor Union Confederation was used to determine the income status (20).

This research was performed under permission by Local Education and Coordination Committee (Number: 4216). An informed consent was obtained from the adolescents and parents.

Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) 15.0 was used for the statistical analysis of the data. Results were accepted significant for $p < 0.05$. Whether the distribution of the continuous and discrete numeric variables was close to normal was investigated by Kolmogorov Smirnov test. Adolescent's ages and distribution of the scales' results were different from normal, so descriptive statistics were given as median (lowest-highest). Descriptive statistics were shown in the median form for continuous and discrete variables, and in percentage form for categorical variables. Importance of the significance of differences in terms of median values between groups was searched by Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests. Spearman correlation test was performed to evaluate the correlation between median values. Categorical variables were evaluated by using Pearson's chi-square or Fisher's exact chi-square test.

Results

Median age of 1007 adolescents that completed the study were 16 (14-18) years, 62.3% (n=628) were females, and all had low income levels.

Of the adolescents describing the family environment, 71% stated that there was no love and peace. In addition, adolescents stated that alcohol was consumed (30%) and drug addicted (7%) in the family, 19% had imprisoned and 13% had physically disabled family members. History of physical abuse in childhood was reported by 25% (n=251) and sexual abuse by 3.5% (n=35) of the adolescents.

The median score of CTQ was 96 (40-176). Median score was 93 in adolescents who stated peace and love in the family and 110 in those who did not (p=0.001). Overall, 549 (54.5%) of the adolescents had a higher CTQ score (>96).

The median score of PARI was 101 (71-219). The median score was found 102 in those whose mothers were housewives, 98 in those whose mothers were employed (p=0.030), 103 in those with extended families and 98 in those with nuclear families (p=0.003).

Adolescents who had drug addicting and inprison family members, who were subjected to domestic violence, sexual harassment, and that there was no atmosphere of peace and love had a high median PARI score (p<0.05). The median PARI score was high in 506 (50.2%) cases (>101).

The median score of IBS was 51 (38-118), and the median score was higher in adolescents who had drug addicting, physically disabled, in prison family members, who were sexually abused, had violence in the family, and lack of peace and love (p<0.05). In 510 (50.6%) of the cases, the median score of IBS was higher (>51).

A positive correlation was found between CTQ and PARI (p=0.001, r=0.444) (**Figure 1A**) (**Table 1**), between CTQ and IBS (p=0.001, r=0.400) (**Figure 1B**) (**Table 1**) and between PARI and IBS (p=0.001, r=0.831) (**Figure 2**) (**Table 2**).

Discussion:

The child abuse and neglect is an important public health problem in all over the world. It causes harm on cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional functions beside the physical injury on the child, and its effects continue throughout lifetime (4, 21). The pediatricians must diagnose the abuse situation at the first stage, before the child's physical and mental health gets damaged, and the necessary measures be taken properly (22).

In this study, childhood traumatic experiences, adolescent-parent relationship and the illegal behaviors of adolescents were evaluated in a low socioeconomic region in Ankara. The childhood and adolescent's abuse and neglect, deficiency in family relationships, and family conflicts are seen as one of the main reasons of illegal behaviors in adolescence (23, 24). Established relationship and the quality of connection to parents are important for the healthy development of an adolescent, and it also effects friendship relations of adolescent. Adolescents who have a trustful attachment to their parents and have a loving environment, have higher self-respect, life satisfaction, school success, less psychological disorders and are less prone to crime (5,17, 25, 26).

It is important to determine the risk groups for the illegal behaviors in adolescence. The risky behaviors constitute the most important dangers for the health and security in the period of adolescence and youth. In USA, the causes of deaths at the ages 10-24 are; 23% motor vehicle accidents, 18% accidental injuries, 15% murder, and 15% suicide (27). The violence has an increased tendency among the children and teenagers, and become a social problem according to a research conducted among the students in Turkey (28).

There is a very strong relationship between the child abuse potential and the family conflicts, family ties, marital satisfaction, parents' personal problems, and positive interaction patterns

(29-31). Kaya et al. (2) stated that physical, emotional abuse-neglect can be estimated at a good level by looking at the family functions. In our study, a significant relationship was detected between CTQ and PARI. According to these results, childhood traumatic experiences can be reduced through improvements to the family functions. Therefore, we want to emphasize the importance of identifying the children and adolescents at risk, and taking the required preventive/remedial steps.

A significant relationship was found between CTQ and IBS in our study. Erel and Gölge (3) reported that increased exposure to sexual, physical and emotional abuse increases the rates of risky behaviors. People exposed to trauma in childhood, uses more stabs, conducts violence, and experience sexual intercourse at an early age (5, 6, 32).

Adolescent violence behaviors are associated with the lack of child-parent relationship, antisocial behaviors of parents, alcohol and drug use, wrong discipline and auditing practices and inadequate family functions (5, 9). However, the level or adequacy of social support received from family and friends can prevent the illegal behaviors (5, 33). Totan and Yöndem (34) found that the probability of violence and being a bully or victim decreases with the increase of the parent-adolescent relationship.

The abuse and neglect of adolescents' experience in childhood is effective on their inclination to illegal behaviors in later stages of life. Therefore, child abuse and neglect prevention is extremely important for the protection of child and adolescent health. In this study, we intend to show the importance of the early recognition of the abuse and neglect behaviors, and the devastating effects in future periods, and raise awareness among pediatricians. This is a preliminary study, and there is a need for further research.

A national registration system and a repository that is specially designed for child abuse-neglect cases must be established in Turkey. Epidemiological studies for the determination of the characteristics of abusers and victims, and of the risk factors for child abuse-neglect are necessary. National policies should be developed to avoid the disastrous consequences of the child abuse-neglect, and to protect children at high risk.

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Table 1. The relationship between the groups with high and low scores in CTQ and PARI and IBS [n (%)] *

Comparison of the relationship between scales		Childhood trauma questionnaire		
		Lower scores (n=458)	Higher scores (n=549)	p
Parent- Adolescent Relationship Inventory	Lower scores (n=501)	268 (53.5%)	233 (46.5%)	0.001
	Higher scores (n=506)	190 (37.5%)	316 (62.5%)	
Illegal Behavior Scale	Lower scores (n=497)	274 (59.8%)	223 (40.6%)	0.001
	Higher scores (n=510)	184 (40.2%)	326 (59.4%)	

*Column percentage

Table 2. Relationship between high and low scores between PARI and IBS [n (%)] *

Comparison of the relationship between scales		Parent- Adolescent Relationship Inventory		
		Lower scores (n=501)	Higher scores (n=506)	p
Illegal Behavior Scale	Lower scores (n=497)	427 (%85,2)	70 (%13,8)	0,001
	Higher scores (n=510)	74 (%14,8)	436 (%86,2)	

*Column percentage

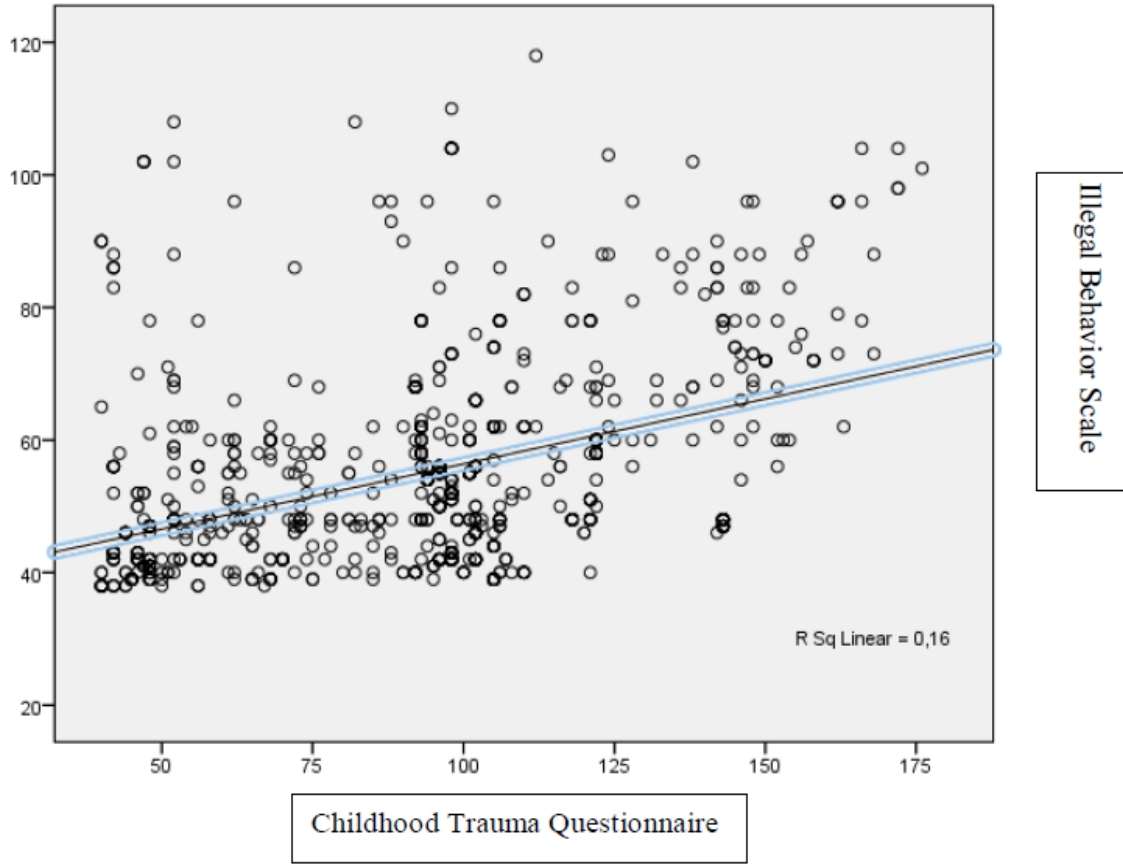


Figure 1 B: The relationship between ‘Childhood Trauma Questionnaire’ and “Illegal Behavior Scale” ($p=0.001$, $r=0.400$)

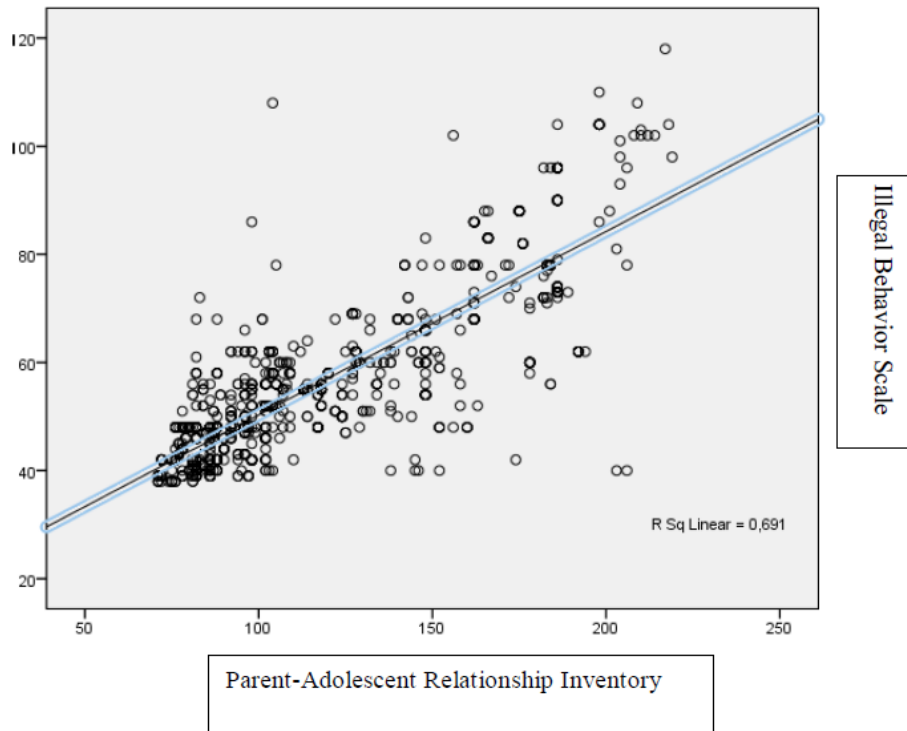


Figure 2: The relationship between ‘Parent-Adolescent Relationship Inventory’ and ‘Illegal Behavior Scale’ (p=0.001, r=0.831).