

## Analysis of the Attitudes of the Preschool Teachers towards Sexually Abused Children in Terms of Different Variables

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### ABSTRACT

*This research was conducted to examine the attitudes of the pre-school teachers towards children who are sexually abused. The population of this study is composed of officially independent nurseries in Ankara Etimesgut and pre-school teachers working at such institutions. In the study, in order to determine demographic characteristics of the pre-school teachers, a "Personal Information Form" developed by the researcher was used for teachers; and in order to measure attitudes of the parents and pre-school teacher towards sexually abused children; the "Attitude Scales against Sexually Abused Children" was used. The data obtained in the study was analyzed with t test and One-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) in accordance with the number of categories in independent variables in SPSS 20 software package. As the sample size of teachers was small, Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis H test were applied as they were parametric equivalence of such tests. With the aim of analyzing significant differences found, Bonferroni test was applied. Through statistics, significance level was chosen as 0, 05. In conclusion, it was found that attitudes of pre-school teachers towards sexually abused children did not show statistically significant difference depending on their experience with sexually abused children, their age, seniority, their earlier training on child abuse and neglect and their earlier training in sexually abused children ( $p > 0.05$ ).*

**Keywords:** sexually abused, child abuse and neglect, attitudes

### INTRODUCTION

Childhood sexual abuse is a severe public health problem causing injuries, disabilities and even death and alarming serious concern for medical, legal and social fields which can be collected under four headings such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect (Turhan et al., 2006, p. 153). Sexual abuse is defined as a situation where an adult, who is at least six years older than a child, uses a child for his sexual satisfaction or seeks to let the others use the child for such purposes by threat, force or by convincing the child (Yıldırım Dođru, 2012, p. 74).

Although child sexual abuse has been the issue known for ages, there has been an increase in child abuse cases for the last years. It is reported that 1.6 per thousand children and adolescent are exposed to sexual abuse in the United States of America. Similar prevalence rates have been observed in epidemiological studies conducted in other countries (Ovayolu et al. 2007, p. 14). Researches done on child abuse incidents in Turkey revealed that the ratio is as high as 78%, ranking the first. It is identified that physical abuse is 24% and sexual abuse is 9% (Turhan et al. 2006, p. 154).

Sexual abuse of children is regarded as a very common and serious problem and it may affect everybody regardless of age, sex, socio economic class and geographical region. Average age group of children is reported between 8 and 11 years. Researchers have concluded that

children aged 4-9 constitute a higher risk group for sexual abuse. It is a fact that reported incidents make up only some part of all known incident (İnan, 2010).

It is observed that the effects of sexual abuse on children may vary depending on the relations between the child and the perpetrator, manner of sexual activity, use of violence, existence of bodily harm, collaboration of the child, age, development stage and psychological development prior to trauma. Reactions of the parents to the incident also play a dramatic role on the issue. The reactions of the child may reveal as fear, depression, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, secondary enuresis and encopresis, behavioral problems, school problems and sexual problems. Also, anger reactions, weak impulse control, challenge and resistance disorders may be observed in children exposing to incest. In addition, behaviors such as thumb sucking and nail biting can be seen frequently. Phobias, sleeping disorders, girls' feeling insecure near boys, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, stomachache and headache are other indicators that may be observed (Ovayolu et al, 2007, p. 16).

It was observed that children exposed to sexual abuse fear that they might be recognized in the society depending on the attitudes of the family members and the public as well. Hence, this study was conducted in order to determine the attitude of preschool teachers towards sexually abused children.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The population of this study is composed of 18 pre-school teachers working at governmental primary education schools and officially independent nurseries in Ankara Etimesgut. In the study a stratified sampling method was used. While selecting the sample from the population, 5% susceptibility and 95% confidence interval were taken into consideration. To calculate sample size, Ryan's formula (1995) was used. A "Personal Information Form" developed by the researcher was used to define demographic characteristics of the teachers and pre-school teacher towards sexually abused children; the "Attitude Scale against Sexually Abused Children" was used to define the attitude of the teachers towards sexually abused children. Attitude Scale against Sexually Abused Children was developed by Gültekin Akduman and Cantürk (2010) to measure the attitude towards sexually abused children. The scale consists of 19 items (13 positive and 6 negative) and a kind of Likert scale with five degrees (Gültekin Akduman and Cantürk, 2010, p. 25).

After the schools were identified to collect data, the permit required to conduct the study was obtained from Provincial Directorate of National Education. The data collected for the study was analyzed using SPSS computer software and as the sample size of teachers was relatively small, Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis H test were applied in order to find whether the scores of the teachers from the attitude scale against the sexually abused children differentiate depending on various demographic characteristics. With the aim of analyzing the differences found, Bonferroni test was applied. Through statistics, significance level was chosen as 0,05.

## **FINDINGS**

18 teachers constituted the population of the study and the findings were described in the tables. All of the teachers participating to the study were females (N:18). 22% of the teachers participating to the study (N:4) was between 26-30 years of age; 61,1% (N. 11) was between 31-35 years;16,7% (N: 3) between 41-50 years of age. 5,6% (N:1) of the participating teachers has 4-10 years of experience; 22,2% (N: 4) has 4-10 years; 50,0% (N: 9) has 10-15 years; 22,2% (N: 4) has 15-20 years of experience. While 44,4% of the teachers participating to the study (N:8) did not receive any training on Child Rights; 22,2% of whom gathered

knowledge on their own; 33,3% (N:6) was trained on the issue. While 50,0 % of the teachers participating to the study (N:9) was not received training on child neglect and child abuse; 16,7% (N:3) obtained knowledge on their own; 33,3 (N:6) received training on the issue. While % 82,4 (N: 15) of the teachers participating to the study never encountered incidence of sexually abused children; only 17,6%(N:3) of whom came across such incidence. Whereas 50% (N: 9) of the teachers participating to the study did not know where to apply, 5,5 % (N:1) of whom expressed they would never apply to anywhere, 27,7% (N:5) said they would apply school administration and counseling service at their schools; 16,6% (N:3) said they would apply to the Office of public prosecutor and child welfare department and Child Abuse Center.

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Results of Mann Whitney U Test concerning the scores of the Teachers in Attitude Scale against the Sexually Abused Children depending on their experience in Sexually Abused Children incidents**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Scores Ortalaması</i>
No	15	89,790	7,910	8,790
Yes	3	93,670	2,310	10,000
<i>Results of Mann Whitney U Test</i>		<i>U</i>		<i>P</i>
		24,000		0,768

In Table 1, it is seen that encountering sexually abused children did not cause any significant difference in terms of attitude towards sexually abused children ( $U=24,000$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ). The attitudes of the teachers who encountered or did not encounter sexually abused children were very close to each other. When mean scores are examined, the teachers encountered children exposed to sexual abuse got higher scores than those who did not encounter any sexually abused children cases.

**Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations and Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis concerning the scores of the Teachers in Attitude Scale against the Sexually Abused Children depending on the ages of the teachers**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Scores Ortalaması</i>
20-30	4	93,250	3,500	1
31-35	11	90,450	7,310	3
36 and over	3	88,330	11,550	2
<i>Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test</i>	<i>Sd</i>		<i>H</i>	<i>P</i>
	2		0,347	0,841

In Table 2, it is seen that age did not make any significant difference in terms of attitudes towards sexually abuse children ( $H=0,347$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ). The attitudes of the teachers of 20-30, 31-35 and over 36 years of age were very close to each other. When mean scores are examined, the scores of teachers between 20 and 30 years are higher than those in 31-35 age group and the scores of those in 31-35 are higher than those who are over 36 years.

**Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations and Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis concerning the scores of the Teachers in Attitude Scale against the Sexually Abused Children depending on professional seniority of the teachers**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Scores Ortalaması</i>
1-10	5	90,600	4,720	2
11-15	9	91,110	7,820	1
16-20	4	90,000	10,000	3
<i>Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>H</i>		<i>P</i>
	2	0,807		0,668

In Table 3, it is seen that professional seniority of the teachers did not make any significant difference in terms of attitude towards sexually abuse children ( $H=0,807$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ). The attitude of the teachers who has recently started this profession and those who has been working for years appeared to be close. When mean scores are examined, teachers between 11-10 years of experience got higher scores than those having 1-10 and 16-20 years of experience.

**Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations and Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis concerning the scores of the Teachers in Attitude Scale against the Sexually Abused Children depending on whether teachers previously received training on Child Rights**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Scores Ortalaması</i>
I have not received any training.	8	89,250	8,290	3
I obtained information on my own.	4	95,000	0,000	1
I was trained on the subject.	6	89,830	7,810	2
<i>Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>H</i>		<i>P</i>
	2	2,358		0,308

In Table 4, it is seen that previous training on Child Rights did not make any significant difference in terms of attitude towards sexually abuse children ( $H=2,358$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ). The attitude of the teachers who received or not received training on Child Rights; or obtained information on their own was very close. When mean scores are examined, it is remarkable that the teachers not received any training on the issue are those with highly negative attitudes. ( $X: 89,250$ ).

**Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations and Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis concerning the scores of the Teachers in Attitude Scale against the Sexually Abused Children depending on whether teachers previously received training on Child Neglect and Child Abuse**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean scores Ortalaması</i>
I have not received any training.	9	90,130	8,030	2
I obtained information on my own.	3	93,250	3,500	1
I was trained on the subject.	6	89,830	8,500	3
<i>Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>H</i>		<i>P</i>
	2	0,327		0,849

In Table 5, it is seen that teachers previously received on neglect of children and child abuse did not make any significant difference in terms of attitudes towards sexually abuse children ( $H=0,327$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ). The attitudes of the teachers who received or not received training on the issue were very close to each other. When mean scores are examined, it is found that the teachers who obtained information on their own got the highest scores ( $X: 93,250$ ).

**Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations and Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis concerning the scores of the Teachers in Attitude Scale against the Sexually Abused Children depending on whether teachers previously received training on Sexually Abused Children**

	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Scores</i>
I have not received any training.	9	90,670	7,680	3
I obtained information on my own.	3	92,670	4,040	1
I was trained on the subject.	6	89,830	8,500	2
<i>Results of Kruskal Wallis H Test Analysis</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>P</i>	
	2	0,056	0,972	

In Table 6, it is seen that whether teachers previously received training on Sexually Abused Children did not make any significant difference in terms of attitude towards sexually abused children ( $H=0,056$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ). The attitude of the teachers who received or not received training on sexual abuse was very close to each other. When mean scores are examined, it is found that the teachers who obtained information on child abuse got the lowest scores ( $X: 89,830$ ).

**Table 7. Analysis of the responses of the teachers about where they would apply in the event of encountering a child who exposed to sexual abuse**

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I do not know where to apply.	9	33,3
I will apply to School Counseling Service, School Administration and Principal.	5	27,7
I will apply to the Unit in charge of Child Rights, Child Abuse Center, Child Welfare Office and Office of Public Prosecutor.	3	16,6
I will not apply to anywhere.	1	5,5
Total	18	100,0

50% of the pre-school teachers ( $N:9$ ) stated that they did not know where to apply when they encounter a child who exposed to sexual abuse, 5,5% ( $N:1$ ) of whom stated they would not apply to anywhere, 27,7% would apply to the school administration and counseling service, 16,6% ( $N:3$ ) would apply to the institutions such as the office of public prosecutor, child welfare department and Child Abuse Center.

## DISCUSSION

It is thought that teachers who encountered or did not encounter any incident of sexual abuse developed attitudes close to one another as a consequence of training the pre-school teachers

received during their teacher training period on developmental and psychological effects of the sexual abuse on children and reintroducing the children into society. Although the teachers, who learned the effects of maltreatment to the children during their teacher training period, did not come across a child who exposed to sexual abuse, they approached to the issue mindfully as they knew the undesirable outcomes of abuse. In addition, it may also be thought that teachers encountering a child who exposed to sexual abuse might share the problems of such children experience with their colleagues.

Although attitudes of the teachers who encountered or did not encounter any incident of child sexual abuse were very close to each other, when mean scores were analyzed, it is revealed that the scores of the teachers with experience were relatively higher than those without such experience. It is thought that this results from the fact that teachers were able to observe and interpret the situation of the child and the effects of severe problems and difficulties over personality, social and academic development of the children individually.

The data obtained revealed that it is not because the teachers were experienced but because the teachers obtained information related to the developmental and psychological effects of sexual abuse over the child and reintegrating the child into the society during their teacher training period. In addition, it is thought that the profession of teaching might effect their attitudes towards the children's problems all their lives since the first day of their professional life, the teachers feel themselves responsible regarding development and safety of children.

It is also believed that the knowledge of the teachers about the definition of child sexual abuse and the results thereof might affect their attitudes towards the children exposed to sexual abuse. It is beyond doubt that the teachers who identify sexual abuse, have an insight of its results and know the effects of the attitudes over the children can develop positive attitudes towards these children. Although we could not find any study related to the attitudes towards the sexually abused children, the studies concerning teachers' and candidate teachers' awareness of child sexual abuse revealed that the ages of the teachers did not make a significant difference (Pala (2011) reported in his study where he examined the knowledge and awareness of future teachers about child sexual abuse and neglect that there was not a significant relation between the recognition of child sexual abuse and their ages.

It is thought that pre-school teachers with 1-10 years, 11-15 years and 16-20 years of experience respectively developed similar attitudes as they obtained information related to the developmental and psychological effects of sexual abuse over the child and reintegrating the child into the society during their teacher training period. It is thought that as teachers feel themselves responsible for the development and safety of the children starting from the very first day of their professional life and the roles and obligations assigned to the teachers by the society; their attitudes concerning the problems of the children may affect all their professional lives.

It is reported in the studies that professional seniority level of the teachers affect their implementation potentials as well as their defining physical and emotional abuse in different ways. It is considered that the attitudes of teachers differentiate in terms of describing and implementing physical and emotional abuse depending on seniority levels towards child sexual abuse may be affected. Although it is not possible to expect for the teachers who impose abuse to develop positive attitude, it is likely that they may tend to ignore such abuse. In literature reviewed, we could not find any study concerning the attitudes towards the children exposed to sexual abuse, the results obtained from this study made us think that seniority level of the teachers did not make any significant difference regarding attitudes towards sexually abused children, sex issues were still regarded as taboo in the society and humiliating criticism to perpetrators could affect the attitudes of the teachers. In a study

where the reactions of the class teachers against the undesirable behaviors in the classroom were analyzed, Çoban and İşcen (2006) noted that destructive reactions were usually displayed by the teachers who were about to retire and those entitled to retirement (quoted from Çoban and İşcen by Türk, 2010). Alkan (2007) concluded in his study that when seniority level of the teachers and undesirable behaviors were compared, teachers with 11-20 years of experience displayed positive behaviors, while least positive behaviors to cope with undesirable behaviors were displayed by the teachers with 1-5 years of experience. Teachers with 1-5 years of experience are those displaying more inconsistent behaviors whereas those with 11-20 years of experience showed the most consistent behaviors (quoted from Alkan by Pala, 2011). In his study, Tugay (2008) reported that the teachers with 21-30 years of professional teaching experience feel more confident in describing sexual and emotional abuse and therefore teacher working for 21-30 years have much knowledge thanks to their experience and they were able to use such information effectively (Quoted from Tugay by Sarıbaşı, 2013). In his study conducted regarding the recognition of indicators of physical abuse by the pre-school teachers, Erol (2007), teachers with 5 years or less experience seem to be more sensitive to determine physical abuse than those with teachers with different service period (Quoted from Erol by Sarıbaşı, 2013). Sarıbaşı (2013) reported in the study conducted regarding the recognition of indicators of child abuse by the pre-school teachers, he found that there is no significant difference among the teachers with different service periods in terms of defining emotional child abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse

Kenny (2004) reported in his study in which the attitudes of the teachers towards neglect and abuse of the children were measured that experience did not have any effect in terms of recognizing the types of child neglect and abuse as well as behavioral indicators (Quoted from Kenny by Sarıbaşı, 2013). Dönmez (2009) noted that majority of the teachers participated to the questionnaire on solution recommendations to prevent child abuse and neglect and variable of seniority did not affect the rate of participation to the items in the questionnaire. In the study where the candidate teachers and primary school teachers were analyzed in terms of child abuse, Türk (2010) found that statistically there was no significant difference between seniority level and measurement of abuse.

Education is a process aiming to provide desired behavior in teachers. Either through their own facilities or through planned education period, if teachers receive education about child rights, this can affect their attitudes towards the child exposed to abuse in a positive way. Besides, it is thought that social roles and responsibilities the society laid on teachers, frequent coverage of the issue in mass media, establishment of internet platforms where teachers in different regions may share their experiences affect attitudes of the teachers positively.

As recent studies in Turkey illustrate, the majority of candidate teachers attending pre-school teaching departments do not receive any training on child rights and therefore cannot classify the information on child rights. Teachers are trained with a lack of knowledge on this critical issue. Although the attitudes of the teachers seemed to very close to each other, when mean scores were examined at the end of the study, it was found that teachers who obtained knowledge on their own got higher scores and this reveals that they try to learn about missing points about the issue through in-service training sessions, internet, which is the easiest way to reach information nowadays. Teachers who obtained information on child rights recognize any type of abuse and neglect including sexual abuse is against child rights. Teachers who obtained information on the issue associate child rights with child abuse and develop attitudes towards sexually abused children with the responsibility of being a teacher.

Akduman and Türkoğlu reported that only 22 in 80 universities admitting students to undergraduate programs during 2013 and 2013 academic year included “Child Rights” course in the curriculum, which was listed as elective courses. Since “Child Rights” was an elective course, the number of students accessing the program was limited and thus majority of the students could not develop awareness concerning child rights during teacher training period. The studies conducted with both candidate teachers and regular teachers show that there is serious lack of knowledge in this issue.

The result obtained suggests that there might be problems in the quality of the training the teachers underwent as teachers develop more negative attitudes. As the teachers, who received training on the issue develop negative attitudes, it is thought that their training should be more qualified. It may be important if professional training sessions are held by the Ministry of National Education and inclusion of this issue in undergraduate and graduate programs in order to solve the problem.

As surveys conducted both in Turkey and the world indicated, candidate teachers could not gather sufficient knowledge training about child abuse and neglect during their training period and thus teachers experience problems due to their lack of knowledge. However, it is important that such trainings be given by professionals. When teachers do not have accurate knowledge on child abuse and neglect, they may develop misleading ideas and thus may normalize child abuse. And this, in turn, adversely affects their attitude towards the children exposed to sexual abuse. Considering each type of neglect and abuse is interrelated, it is thought that having accurate knowledge about child abuse and neglect can make teachers more sufficient and hence teachers may develop positive attitudes towards children exposed to any types of abuse including sexual abuse. Walsh et al. (2005) reported that 92.2% of the respondent teachers in Australia did not receive any education on the issue (quoted from Walsh by Pala, 2011). Kenny (2004) noted that only 34% of respondents stated they received training about child abuse during their practicum period. Yet, 23% of such 34% respondents stated the issue was dealt with in detail, 43% stated that not much information was given and 35% said it was insufficient. 37% said professional level of training was sufficient, 49% stated it was not complete, 14% said it was not sufficient. Generally, teachers think they do not aware of the indicators and symptoms of child neglect, physical and sexual abuse. In his study, Pala (2011) found that teachers were more unqualified in defining sexual abuse. Erol (2007) concluded that respondent teachers failed to determine physical abuse (quoted from Erol by Sarıbaş, 2013). Tugay (2008) noted that teachers were not certain about themselves in defining child neglect and abuse (quoted from Tugay by Türk, 2010). Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu (2005) reported that two in three male trainee teachers and approximately one in three female trainee teachers participated to survey stated that they were in favor of physical violence towards students when necessary (quoted from Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu by Türk, 2010). Gözütok et al. (2006) indicated that when 1992 and 2006 were compared, teachers believed that beating students was more necessary than it was 14 years ago and opinions as to students’ deserving violence increased, and beating started to be seen as the last resort just for the student’s benefit (quoted from Gözütok by Türk, 2010). According to the findings of Toker Arıkan’s study (2006), the teachers generally were of the opinion that physical punishment was necessary (quoted from Toker Arıkan by Türk, 2010).

That the teachers who stated that they were informed about the issue have the most negative attitudes reminds of the questions regarding the quality of the training they received. It is highly important when and by whom such training was given. It will be therefore of great importance for the issue to be solved that the training should be given by the professionals both during their undergraduate education and during their working life such as in-service training.



Recently, there have been reactions and criticism against sexual abuse of the children both on televisions and internet as well as campaigns organized. It may be thought that teachers complete their lack of knowledge about sexual abuse through these ways and improve their awareness about the issue. The attitudes of the teachers who completed their lack of knowledge regarding definition of sexual abuse, indicators and prevention through such ways were positively affected. In parallel with this situation, Pala (2011) noted in his study where he analyzed the knowledge an awareness of future teachers about child abuse and neglect that there was not any significant relevance between identifying sexual abuse and previous training of the teachers.

Since 50% (N:9) of the teachers participated to the survey reported that they did not know where to apply when they encountered children exposed to sexual abuse, it is thought that the knowledge of the teachers as the most closest persons to the child other than the parents concerning child rights, child abuse and neglect. It is therefore anticipated that teachers encountering situations where the rights of the children are violated or abused and neglected but not having enough information what they should do may tend to ignore the situation of the children or miscommunicate with the parents of such children .

It is alarming that 5,5%(N:1) of the teachers participating to the survey reported that they would not apply to anywhere when they encountered to a sexually abused child, and 50% of whom reported they did not know where to apply. Teachers may abstain from taking any action as it is likely that there could be some adverse reactions of the parents since some of them notified they would not apply to anywhere to report the situation, they did not have enough knowledge regarding identifying sexual abuse and recognizing indicators and its negative effects on children, and sexual issues are still regarded as taboo in Turkish society. Teachers play a very crucial role in recognizing child sexual abuse and stopping the child's dreadful life. When a teacher encounter such an incident but fails to take any action, this may damage mental and physical development of the child and it may also cause the child to become involved in crimes, use drugs or become an abusive individual. It is therefore very important for the teachers to be informed about the issue.

Pala (2011) reported in his study where he analyzed the knowledge an awareness of future teachers about child abuse and neglect that when the teachers participating to the study were asked "Do you have to notify child abuse and neglect pursuant to the policies of the National Education?", 73,7% of whom said "Yes"; 4,7% said "No, 21,6 % said "I'm not sure". In the same study, the participants responded the question about where to apply in case of a doubtful child abuse and neglect" they reported that school administration was the first authority they would apply (42,1%) while the "Directorate of Social Services (24,0%) ranked the second one. In a study conducted by Saribaş (2013) on awareness level of the pre-school teachers towards child abuse and neglect, the main institution was "Parent-Teacher Association and Directorate of Health, Directorate of Social Services, the Police, Directorate of National Education and the School Administration respectively. Tugay (2008) reported that the teachers who have great role in identifying child neglect and abuse, failed to notify incidents of child neglect and abuse. According to the teachers, existing system on notification in education programs and national education policies was not at sufficient level (Quoted from Tugay by Türk, 2010). Akduman and Türkoğlu noted that when asked " Where do you apply in case of violation of Child Rights?"; 13,04% of the candidate teachers stated that they did not know where to apply, whereas 43,48% stated they would apply to Children Police; 8,70% (N:2) to RAM-Counseling and Research Center, 30,43% to the principal and 4,35% to an attorney-at-law respectively. In the study on "Knowledge, Attitude and Beliefs of Teachers on Child Abuse and Prevention", knowledge, attitude and beliefs of teachers regarding child abuse and its prevention were analyzed. As a result, great majority of teachers

reported that there were children exposed to sexual abuse among their students and also added they did not know how to deal with the issue (Abrahams, Casey and Daro, 1992). Abrahams et al (1992) reported in the study “Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs of the Teachers on Child Abuse and its prevention”, that most of the respondent teachers did not receive sufficient training on child abuse (quoted from Abrahams et al. By Sarıbaşı, 2013). Kenny (2004) noted that 85% of the teachers did not know the obligation of notification in case of a child sexual abuse incident whereas only 13% stated that they know school policies about such notification (quoted from Kenny by Sarıbaşı, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It has been known that the condemning and humiliating attitudes of the members of family and the society towards the sexually abused children affect children and cause the children to lose self-esteem and self-confidence in adults since sex issues are still regarded as taboo in Turkey. Attitudes towards children exposed to sexual abuse are of great importance in terms of reducing the effects of abuse on children, enabling them to participate to the social life and develop a healthy personality in the future. It is thought that misleading opinions in the society regarding sexual abuse adversely affect the attitudes developed towards sexually abused children.

Parents should be educated about the nature of the problem before they become mothers and fathers and therefore their awareness of the issues should be raised. By this way, it is anticipated that parents will be able to protect their own children from sexual abuse and neglect; and make contribution to the children by helping them become involved with the society. It is necessary to increase the consultancy and support systems aimed at parents and children and have parents utilize such training to the greatest extent possible. Parents should be trained about every aspect of developmental stages in order to follow the developments of their children closely and recognize any changes in such developments. Furthermore, parents should be taught about the communication skills to make healthy contact with their children and develop self-confidence of their children.

When the curriculum of pre-school teaching department is considered, it is reported that the great majority of the candidate teachers did not have any training regarding the child rights, child abuse and neglect or the courses on these topics were taken as elective ones. It is therefore necessary that the content of the child safety courses including child rights, child abuse and neglect should be prepared by the specialist and the subject should be taken by pre-school candidate teachers as a compulsory course. In fact, entire curriculum of the pre-school teaching department should include child safety courses including child rights, child abuse and neglect prepared in details by the specialist as a compulsory subject. It should be noted that child safety courses should be included in the curriculum of the other departments of the universities as child abuse remains an unsolved problem in the society and we share every aspect of our lives with the children. By his way awareness and sensitivity of all segments of the society could be raised.

Nowadays, when the number of people that the mass media can reach, its effect on the society and accessibility to mass media are taken into consideration, it can be said that there should be proper programs to teach parents and the children issues on child rights, child abuse and neglect as well as sexual abuse of children and researches and articles. TV programs may also be made with the specialists and cartoons may be prepared for young children.

The relevant institutions should do some research regularly and the children in need of protection with higher abuse risk should be watched closely and protected. If necessary, the

number of such institutions may be increased. The support programs given to the children exposed to sexual abuse and their parents should be improved, development of the child should be followed up and most importantly their safety should be provided. The laws on perpetrators must be reregulated and some deterrent obligations are to be set. In such law, the roles and duties of every member of the society are supposed to be defined clearly in order to protect sexually abused children and enable them to become involved with the society. Furthermore, government policies are to set regulations concerning the points of contact and application process in case of a child abuse incident and if any person fails to notify when they witness a child abuse incident, the sanctions to be imposed should also be set forth.

In literature reviews, it is observed that there is not much research related to sexual abuse in Turkey. It is therefore thought that future studies on the issue may contribute to the issue. Researchers may conduct a study about parents' knowledge and awareness of child sexual abuse. Also, it may be helpful to survey which variables differentiate parents' knowledge and awareness of the child sexual abuse and make a study about the teachers' knowledge and awareness of sexual abuse and what the effects of the attitudes of the parents towards the child exposed to sexual abuse on children would be. They may also investigate the effects of teachers' attitude towards sexually abused children over children.

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