

*Research Article*

# The School Counselors' Ideas on Features, Determinant and Intervention of Child Negligence and Abuse Cases

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## ABSTRACT

It is sad to know that many of the child negligence and child abuse cases, which are being frequently encountered in the society today, still remain unknown. This perhaps is due to lack of information on the part of the administrators, school counselors and other related bodies in the management of such cases. In this study, 50 school counselors shared their knowledge about features, determinants and intervention on child abuse and neglect. Counselors are key factors in the determination of child negligence and abuse cases. They usually have child psychology knowledge, and are regarded as specialist of such cases.

**Method:** In this study, a qualitative research was carried out and interviewed with 50 school counselors working in Sinop. 350 minutes interview recorded and 60 pages and 26100 words transcribed in the interview recorded.

**Analysis:** Data collected via semi constructed interviews have been subjected to descriptive and content analyses. Three questions asked to participant counselors.

**Findings:** In this study, the counselors have been able to differentiate features and determination of negligence and abuse cases. However, it has been determined that the counselors' information on intervention is limited.

**Conclusion:** Although counselors have enough information on features and determination of neglected and abused child they think that their knowledge is insufficient. It is apparent that counselors have lack of information on how they intervene to negligence and abuse cases. Counselors should participate in conferences, seminars, symposiums or any information sharing process on child negligence and abuse. Faculties that have counseling and guidance program should open courses as elective or obligatory about negligence and abuse.

**Keywords:** child negligence, child abuse, counselors' ideas

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## INTRODUCTION

Child abuse and neglect can be define as any physical and/or psychological harm, which parents or caregivers inflict on children who are in their care or custody or for whom they are responsible, as the result of physical, sexual or emotional actions, of omission or commission, which interfere or threaten the adequate development of the child and violate the community demands concerning the good treatment of children (Muela, et al., 2012: 7). Definitions of child abuse or maltreatment have two main components: harm, which may be a harmful action or a harmful consequence, and a person or persons responsible for the harm (Gough, 1996). As has been pointed out by Gough (1996), childhood itself is a social construct in which ages defining childhood have varied throughout history and across various socio-cultural groups of the human societies (Al-Shail and Hassan, 2012: 24). A child is considered abused if he or she is treated in a way that is unacceptable in a given culture at a given time (Meadow, 2007: 1).

Child abuse constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation (commercial or other types of exploitation), resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. The abuse takes place in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Some types of child abuse are naturally more common, such as cases of child neglect, than other types, such as sexual abuse. Further, certain types of abuse are often difficult to document or characterize, compared to other types that are readily evident in a number of ways (Al-Shail and Hassan, 2012: 26).

Worldwide, more than 200,000,000 children under the age of 18 years old were victims of child sexual abuse in 2002 alone (Lampinen and Sexton-Radek, 2010: 7). Child abuse and neglect affect approximately 12 of every 1,000 American children (Forum, 2008). Many women in families also face the threat of violence and are

nearly nine times as likely as men to experience intimate-partner violence. In addition, 7.7% of women are raped by an intimate partner each year (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Battering also exists within same-sex relationships, although rarely are the needs of those women and men met by social services or public policy (Renzetti, 2007). These data suggest that social workers must pay attention to many different aspects of family life, particularly as they relate to issues of gender inequality and age-specific problems (Mezey and Sanford, 2009: 67).

Theoretical examination and statistical research have helped understand serious problems in crimes against children who cannot protect themselves because of physical differences between when children perceive imminent danger. Such research has led to understanding that it is necessary for a third party to intervene for the sake of children. In the process of conducting research on including a third party, findings suggest that effective prevention can be realized when three factors exist (e.g., a child, society (the government or a private company), and a protector) and cooperate with one another. To facilitate such cooperation, a device enabling interaction is required to act as a link among the three factors. Among commercial products that are equipped with such functions, smart phones have been deemed appropriate; however, children are expected to have difficulties using existing smart phones as they are. In this regard, guidelines have been suggested through the application of available technologies and functions based on collected information (Jung and Im, 2012: 182).

The frequency of child negligence and abuse phenomenon, with its aspects that are and that are not reflected to the press, is defined as “non-accidental injuries of children as consequences of actions performed or cannot be performed by the parents or the persons responsible for the child” (Kempe, 1989). Child negligence and abuse that takes many forms such as physical, emotional, sexual, economic abuse, negligence and incest, is a quite common phenomenon. The researches show that abuse, which is observed at a rate of 1-10% in the world, is observed at the rate of 10-53% in our country (Yilmaz, Isiten, Ertan and Oner, 2003). In the research of the a research group (2001) where children applying to or brought to five hospitals in west part of Turkey over a period of eighteen months have been scanned, 32% of the children have been diagnosed with child abuse. (Ahioglu, 2004). The prevalence of child sexual abuse of girls has been estimated to be approximately 27%, while the prevalence in boys has been estimated at approximately 16% (Finkelhor et al., 1990). As Meadow (2007) states that types of abuse as follows:

**Physical abuse (non-accidental injury):** The prototype of physical abuse—“the battered baby”—was described by Kempe (1962) et al. Of Denver, Colorado, in 1962 and has been well publicized ever since. Physical abuse entails soft tissue injury to the skin, eyes, ears, and internal organs as well as to ligaments and bones. Burns and scalds are included. Most of this abuse is short term and violent, though it may be repetitive. There are subgroups with more long term persistent injury, including poisoning, suffocation, and fabricated or induced illness.

**Neglect:** This is failing to provide the love, care, food, or physical circumstances that will allow a child to grow and develop normally. It is also intentionally exposing a child to any kind of danger.

**Sexual abuse:** This occurs when dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents participate in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, and that violate the social taboos of family roles. Such abuse ranges from inappropriate fondling and masturbation to intercourse and buggery. Children may also be forced to participate in producing pornographic photographs and videos, or be victims of abuse through the extended family network and sex rings.

**Emotional abuse:** This has no generally agreed definition. Some regard a child as abused if he or she has a behavioral disturbance to which the parents fail to respond appropriately in terms of modifying their behavior or seeking professional help. Most would consider a child to be emotionally abused, however, if the child’s behavior and emotional development were severely affected by the parents’ persistent neglect, rejection, or terrorization.

Commonly, different types of abuse overlap with each other so a child may be abused in several different ways either at the same time or sequentially. Most abuse occurs within the family. The adult may harm the child both actively and passively and by acts of both commission and omission. One parent may be active in beating the child, another just as harmful in failing to protect a child from the sexual advances of a cohabitant. A parent who fails to provide food or love for a child may also commit physical assault. At least half of the abuse that occurs, sometimes over lengthy periods of the child’s life, goes undisclosed at the time, even though it is known or suspected by a person or people not directly involved (Meadow, 2007: 1-2).

Many forms of child abuse may lead to the death of the child. Physical abuse is the commonest reason. Head injuries are an important cause of death as a result of a young child being shaken, hit, or hurled. Visceral injuries, though uncommon, have a disproportionately high mortality. For all these injuries, a misleading history and delay in presentation to doctors interfere with optimal treatment. Death also occurs from severe burning, drowning, poisoning, starvation, and neglect. Research suggests that the number of deaths from abuse has decreased in the past 20 years, mainly because of the work of child protection agencies and better medical care (Meadow, 2007: 38). Child abuse occurs across socioeconomic, religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. The

causes of child abuse or maltreatment are numerous, multiple, and complex. There is no single profile that describes all families within which child abuse occurs. On the other hand, supportive, emotionally gratifying relationships with a healthy network of relatives or friends may help minimize the risk of parents abusing their children, especially during stressful life events. Based on this understanding, research has recognized a number of risk factors commonly associated with child maltreatment. However, the presence of these factors does not necessarily always result in child abuse and neglect. In other words, the factors that may contribute to child maltreatment in one family, such as poverty, may not result in child abuse in another family (Al-Shail and Hassan, 2012: 25).

**Table I Abuse Possible Adverse Outcomes**

<b>Types of abuse</b>	<b>Possible adverse outcome</b>
Emotional abuse or neglect: impact is most profound if it is experienced in the first two years of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to thrive</li> <li>• Attachment disorders</li> <li>• Concentration and learning</li> <li>• Poor interpersonal relationships</li> <li>• Aggression</li> </ul>
Physical abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of abused children grow up to be abusive parents</li> <li>• Attachment disorders</li> <li>• Post-traumatic stress disorders</li> <li>• Externalizing behavior problems (aggression, delinquency)</li> <li>• Poor peer relationships</li> <li>• Academic underachievement</li> </ul>
Sexual abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexualized behaviors</li> <li>• Self harming behaviors</li> <li>• Post-traumatic stress disorder</li> <li>• Chronic low mood</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Drug and alcohol misuse</li> <li>• Bulimia nervosa</li> </ul>
Witnessing domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety and fears</li> <li>• Sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Poor interpersonal relationships</li> </ul>

In addition, there is high incidence of child abuse and neglect in families in which domestic violence is commonplace. Forbes, 2007: 71

Accessing children, who have been abused, is one of the most difficult fields for medical and legal institutions. It is very difficult to differ between abusive and non-abusive conditions by distinct lines; it is only possible for individuals with the necessary knowledge. Even in cases where abuse is clearly evident and easily identified, the difficulty of exposing the children and the families cannot be negated. According to the researches, very few of the children who have been neglected and abused reach treating institutions. In general, cases are kept secret in the family (Kocaer, 2006). Especially in sexual abuse cases, it is stated that merely 5-10% applies to legal authorities (Ergonen, Kirilmaz, Sonmez and Ozdemir, 2007).

The sexual exploitation of children is the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend and are unable to give informed consent to and that violate the social taboos of family roles (Hobbs, 2007: 42).

Neglect is family related issue. Parents have rights regarding their children. They also have duties to those children (Table II). Child neglect is the failure to perform these duties. The concept of parental duty appears in the law and is based on the combination of a biological truth and a social imperative. The biological truth is that the rate at which human offspring develop the skills for independence is slow compared with that of most other mammals. Children take years before they are able to gather food, protect themselves from the elements or predators, recognize and handle danger, or are capably socialized. During these years, they rely on adults of the species for survival, protection, and teaching (Rosenberg and Cantwell, 2007: 60).

**Table II Purpose of parental duties**

<b>Duty</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Food	Growth and development
Clothing	Protect the child adequately
Shelter	Protect the child from extreme weather, keep them safe, and allow a place for sleep
Safekeeping	Prevent reasonably foreseeable and avoidable injury or illness
Nurturance	Promote attachment on which development of empathy and other characteristics largely depend
Teaching	Move the child towards being independent in a way that is safe for the child and not dangerous to others

Child neglect and abuse is a deep problem that should be handled in an inter-disciplinary manner. However, the problem, which is mainly handled from legal and medical aspects, should also be approached from the educational perspective. Increasing the contributions of the educators who are in direct contact with the children is critically important for the resolution of the problem. This is because, in short (Maher, 1991):(1) The behaviors of the child who has been abused changes. Since they are informed on the normal development features of the children, the teachers may observe and identify the changes in the child and abnormal behaviors more easily. (2) An abused child seeks someone who to share his secret with. He wants to share the issue with a natural and trustworthy person. Teachers are frequently approached for help related to this issue. (3) The increase in the reported cases of child abuse is significant and the identification of such cases is easier by teachers in compulsory education. (4) For studies in which children are the focus, the suitable place is the school for different professionals who work in the school environment. Teachers play an important role in child focused studies. (5) Child abuse cases do not have any social, economic class difference, place, locality borders. These are cases that may be encountered at all social levels. All teachers are aware of this legal problem.

In the research carried out by Walsh, et. al. (2008), they have evaluated 32 hypothetical physical abuse and negligence scenarios among 254 teachers, based on the probability of 5 point likert scale type abuse and negligence. The variance of the teachers' determination and points reporting could only be modestly accounted for school membership. In the full model, it has been determined that the most important effect in determination and reporting was the circumstance feature of type, frequency and intensity, especially in child physical abuse and negligence. At teacher level, it has been determined that the strongest determinant in reporting was the attentiveness for legal reporting liabilities. The both findings and reporting were not as strong as the effect of the teacher's education, characteristic effects at school level, which arose as a counter-intuitive finding. However, the researches demonstrate that the teachers' resource is not adequately utilized in this issue. This is not a condition unique to our country. In the research on the determination and reporting of child abuse by teachers, by O'Toole, Webster, O'Toole and Lucal (1999), it has been determined that the teachers are able to identify the symptoms from the behavior of the victims within the range of 50.30-50.99%, and that they report these within the range of 51.08-55.6%. These rates may be interpreted as that every one of two cases can be identified by teachers and that every one of the two identified cases are reported. In the same research, it has been determined that the teachers are faced with numerous problems in reporting the cases they have identified, that they are "scared" in identifying the symptoms and deciding to report especially due to "masked" student behaviors.

In their study titled Singaporean early childhood teachers' responses to myths (legends) about child abuse, Briggs and Potter (2004) have researched the opinions and levels of knowledge of teachers on child abuse. While, all types of abuse towards disabled children are recognized internationally, early childhood teachers are more informed than special education (early childhood) teachers. Based on the conclusion of these studies, the government will prepare an action plan and provide education for the related teachers (Briggs and Potter, 2004: 339).

According to the results of the research, teachers have consulted professional support more in abuse cases aimed at disabled children. Whereas, numerous researches on the role of educators in the determination of child neglect and abuse cases around the world demonstrate that teachers may have a significant role in perceiving and reporting of child abuse and negligence cases (Stern,1991).

Karakaya, Uneri and Coskun (2005), in their study titled "Childhood Sexual Abuse: Diagnosis Difficulties due to a Phenomenon" have stated that sexual abuse aimed at children is a substantial life event and leads to serious mental trauma. According to the researchers, it brings different physician groups face to face with sexual abuse phenomena. While abused children may arrive with physical and mental symptoms for diagnosis, they may also arrive with non-specific complaints. It has been suggested that the training of physicians working with children on drawing information and protection, would allow abuse to be identified at an early stage and reduce unfavorable remnants.

In the recent years, the interest and awareness on child abuse in Turkey is increasing, although it is still inadequate. Child abuse is investigated in 4 major groups as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and negligence (Tirasci and Goren, 2007: 70). Considering that all children at compulsory education age are with

teachers in schools and the teachers' ability to differentiate between normal and abnormal behavior, due to their pedagogic formation, one of the best solution is to make teachers effective in determination and referral of the cases. Pre-service and in-service trainings play a critical role in the achievement of this. The training requirements of teachers on child neglect and abuse is not particular to this profession only. The study by Kocaer (2006) has also demonstrated the need for training on this issue for health personnel. In order for the training to be efficient, the contents of the information to be provided have to be composed according to the requirements of the participating group.

The experience of physical abuse or neglect is a complex event that may trigger social, emotional, and physical consequences. It can also be invested with cognitive meaning about the self, others, and one's place in the world. These transactional problems typically occur within a dysfunctional family setting and tend to be nested in larger societal problems (e.g., poverty), both of which may contribute to girls' reactions. Unlike the literature in other areas of family violence (domestic violence or sexual abuse), work on physical abuse and neglect has remained relatively silent on the topic of gender (Azar, 321). There are also five phases to the accommodation syndrome: secrecy; helplessness; accommodation and entrapment; delayed, conflicted, or unconvincing disclosure; and retraction and recantation (Summit, 1983).

Neurological and biological changes, observable with neuro-imaging techniques, occur as a result of abuse or exposure to abuse (McCullum 2006). These changes contribute to medical, social, behavioral, and emotional problems during childhood and later in life (Pernicano, 2010: 7).

Interventions for children: Treatment for the child should take account of several factors, including the child's symptoms, developmental stage, strengths, the type and context of the abuse, the degree of parental support, and current social circumstances (Forbes, 2007: 72). Key Goals as follows:

#### **For the child**

- Safe, nurturing environment
- Trusting relationship with a supportive adult
- Enhancement of resilience
- Reduction in symptoms

#### **For the non-abusing parent**

- Protectiveness
- Belief of and support for child
- Coping strategies
- Child behavior management skills
- Treatment of mental health problems

#### **For the abusing parent**

- Other agencies aim to:  
Stop the abuse  
Invoke legal interventions
- Some abusing parents will have no or limited further contact with the child
- Some abusing parents will be referred to adult mental health services for:  
Treatment of mental health problems  
Treatment of substance misuse  
Treatment of poor impulse control (Forbes, 2007: 72)

#### **Child sexual abuse: Possible presentation (Note, a third of children have no symptoms)**

- Change in behavior
- Social withdrawal
- Deterioration in schoolwork
- Sexualized behavior
- Sleep disturbance
- Secondary enuresis or encopresis
- Fearfulness
- Panic attacks

**In older children/adolescents: As above plus**

- Depression
  - Self harming behaviors
  - Running away
  - Promiscuity
  - Alcohol and drug abuse
- Treatment (after child protection investigation)

**Non-abusing parent(s)**

- Education about sexual abuse and the grooming process
  - Assessment of functioning of parent(s) and child before and after disclosure
  - Reinforcement of competent parenting
  - Advice on management of current or potential difficulties in the child
- Child
- Not all children will require treatment from the CAMH team. However, indications are:
    - Moderate to severe symptoms
    - Risk of self harm
    - Poor parental support
  - Treatment depends on the age of the child and the severity of symptoms
  - Most children can be treated as outpatients

**For children with moderate verbal ability and reasoning**

- Abuse focused cognitive behavior therapy
- Components include:
  - Education about sexual abuse
  - Education about protective strategies
  - Shifting the locus of blame for abuse from self to others
  - Identify caution of support
  - Coping strategies
  - Relaxation techniques
  - Treatment of depression
  - Treatment of symptoms of post-traumatic stress
  - Support for appearing in court (Forbes, 2007: 72)

Programs aimed at preventing child abuse vary along multiple dimensions. At the outset, those seeking to implement a prevention strategy must identify their overarching goal and, consequently, the scope of the program they will need to employ. Indicated (or tertiary) prevention programs are the most narrow in scope in that they target families with a history of maltreatment and seek to prevent the re-occurrence of abuse (Abrams and Portwood, 2010: 37).

The social worker's role in civil or criminal proceedings may be that of an expert, custody evaluator, mediator, substance-abuse evaluator, domestic violence counselor, probation officer, child protective services worker, court worker who assesses a defendant for diversionary programs, or corrections-facility counselor (Heer, 2009: 48).

Social workers often encounter catastrophic circumstances of the human condition. Interpersonal violence, child abuse, sexual molestation, abuse and maltreatment of the elderly, suicide and attempted suicide, homicide, and addictive disorders might all be part of the daily experiences of the social work client (Kelly, et al., 2009: 51).

For example, the systems dealing with child welfare and substance abuse differ in terms of primary interventions and have been known to have difficulty with collaboration in their interdisciplinary work (Kelly, et al., 2009: 52).

Social workers may work in a variety of family-related settings in which they must help family members negotiate unhealthy family relationships. In the case of suspected child abuse, neglect, and/or endangerment, social workers are mandated reporters. They may also have encounters with children through adoption or foster placement work, divorce proceedings involving children, and in interventions with survivors of domestic violence (Saltzman & Furman, 1999).

Counselors can help victims begin to process their experiences of abuse and help them understand that they are not to blame for their partner's actions. A victim impact statement can be a powerful tool for victims to express how their partner's abuse has affected them personally. It also allows the victim to express her opinion on how the defendant should be punished and/or how the case should be resolved. In some cases, a victim

advocate may also serve as an expert witness to provide testimony on the dynamics and implications of intimate partner violence (Mele, 2009: 98).

Children are to have a name and nationality at birth, adequate nutrition, housing, recreation, medical services, protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, and exploitation; children with physical, mental, or social handicaps have the right to special treatment, education, and care. This declaration also stresses that unless to the result of exceptional circumstances a child in her or his tender years shall not be separated from her or his mother. This declaration demands that children receive protection provided by the public authorities (Smith, 2009: 153).

The initial screening and interview of children who have been abused requires building safety and rapport (Smith, 2009: 159).

One of the challenges we face is the constant education of attorneys, judges, and juries in child-abuse issues. Much work can go into pretrial preparation and the filing of motions to make the child's courtroom experience less threatening and more beneficial to the tryer of fact. It is essential to have an interest in the legal system and a willingness to participate in both the investigation and prosecution of child abuse (Smith, 2009: 162).

Traumatization can occur each time a child relates an abuse incident he or she has experienced, or in false-allegation cases when a child is coached (Lau and Treacy, 2009: 167). Because the social work profession often lacks education and training in investigative interviewing and legal prosecution in child-abuse cases, additional training is required for forensic interviewers in these areas (Lau and Treacy, 2009: 168)

Recent studies have examined instruction in forensic interviewing, such as structured interview protocols and the extended forensic evaluation model (Carnes, Nelson-Gardell, Wilson, & Orgassa, 2001; Conte, Sorenson, Fogarty, & Rosa, 1991; Poole & Lamb, 1998). In addition, the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) model has been established as a strategy to prevent repeated child interviewing, as well as an effort to ensure that legitimate cases move forward for prosecution, whereas legitimate cases do not. CACs provide a safe, child-friendly atmosphere for children and families to receive services (Cronch et al., 2005).

In its guidelines for investigative interviewing in cases of alleged child sexual abuse, the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC, 1997) stated that "Investigative interviewing in cases of alleged abuse requires specialized knowledge. This knowledge can be acquired in a variety of ways (e.g., formal course work, individual reading, workshops and conferences, professional experience and supervision), and should include familiarity with basic concepts of child development, communication abilities of children, dynamics of abuse and offenders, categories of information necessary for a thorough investigation, legally acceptable child interviewing techniques, and the use of interview aids (such as drawings or anatomical dolls). Specialized knowledge is especially important when young children are interviewed" (APSAC, 1997, p. 2).

"The forensic interview" is an essential component of the fact-finding process in cases of physical and sexual abuse. The goal of the interview should be to obtain a statement from a child in a developmentally sensitive, unbiased, and truth-seeking manner that will support accurate and fair decision-making in the criminal justice and child welfare systems (Lau and Treacy, 2009: 168). The forensic interview is a critical component of a child-abuse investigation. Forensic interviewers should have knowledge and training about child development, cultural considerations, the legal requirements of child protective services and law enforcement prosecutions, sexual-abuse dynamics, as well as being able to rule in/out other rival explanations for the child's statements and behaviors other than abuse (Lau and Treacy, 2009: 178).

The child welfare system's focus is on children's safety, well-being, and permanency, as well as supporting families. Although punishment of child abusers is not the primary goal, many people do view the conviction of offenders as a positive community outcome. Therefore, although it is reasonable to ask whether forensic interviewing results in more prosecutions and convictions of child abusers, there is not yet a sufficient amount of research to provide a clear answer to this inquiry (Cross, Jones, Walsh, Simone, & Kolko, 2007).

When abuse or neglect is substantiated on someone in the home, the goal for treatment may be family reunification, termination of parental rights, or out-of-home placement. For family reunification, family relationships ultimately need to change, not just the individuals within the family. Even when the abuse is by someone outside the family, the parent-child relationships must be addressed in terms of safety and protection. Programs for family violence rarely treat the family as a unit, and few programs address the cross-generational trauma that is often present in CPS-involved families. When community programs focus exclusively on education and skills development, individuals learn to say what professionals "want to hear" and to do what is expected of them in order to get through the court system; the process becomes one more of compliance than of change (Pernicano, 2010: 4).

Therapists working with victims of abuse or neglect should carefully assess family boundaries, discipline practices, assigned responsibilities (such as chores), and parental expectations for things such as privileges (bedtime, dating, movies/TV). Parents in these families have little idea of what is developmentally age-appropriate. Parents may give too many or too few choices. Older children may be expected to care for younger children, and force and intimidation may be considered "discipline." (Pernicano, 2010: 40).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research group

The research group comprises fifty (50) school counselors, in other words guidance practitioners employed in 60 different schools in Sinop; the most part of Black Sea in Turkey. As it seen some counselors are working in more than one school. Counselor is a professional who carry out counseling process. Counseling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counselor and a client. This Relationship is usually person to person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people. It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self determined goals through meaningful, well informed choices and through resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature (Burks and Steffle, 1979: 14). In short counseling is a process of helping people with their troubles. Counselors are to regard other pupil personnel specialists primarily as referral sources to help those whose needs demand their specialized kinds of service. Counselors are knowledgeable as well about the referral agencies that exist outside the school (Shetzer and Stone, 1981: 70).

### Data collection tools

The three semi constructed interview questions asked to the participants which are fifty school counselors. These questions are (1) What do you know about features of neglected and abused children? (2) How do you determine neglected and abused children? and (3) How do you intervene on neglected and abused children?

### Collection of data

The semi constructed interview form and sample cases developed by literature research have been asked in writing to a group of 22 persons, comprised of the professionals employed at the schools, hospitals and child centers. The information collected in the preliminary implementation have been shared with the same group by a confirmation meeting and new contributions have been obtained. Afterwards, the re-structured questions have been asked to fifty participants by interview via by one by meeting in their schools. Care has been taken to assure that the same counselors are not present in both groups. The sample cases that comprise the acceptable common symptoms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse have been asked to both groups and the presence of any discrepancies between the theoretically provided information.

### Analysis of data

A qualitative research has been carried out, interviews with 50 school counselors working in Sinop. 350 minutes interviews recorded and 60 pages and 26100 words transcribed in those interviews records. In the research, descriptive and content analyses have been made on the data collected by interview. Additionally, the collected data have been compared with the contents of the responses given to the sample cases later on.

### Findings

The demographic characteristics of the research participants based on sex, fields, seniority and school of graduation, are provided in the following table (Table III).

**Table III Demographic Characteristics of the Teachers who have Participated in the Interview**

		n	%
<b>Sex</b>	Female	29	58
	Male	21	42
School type	Elementary	30	60
	Middle	20	40
Length of service	1-5 Years	18	36
	6-10 Years	22	44
	11- more Years	10	20
Degree (diploma)	Education (counselor)	32	64
	Arts and Sciences (psychologist)	6	12
	Others	12	24
TOTAL		50	100



The table above shows how the research findings can be identified descriptively. The counselors do not find their level of knowledge on the neglect and abuse issue adequate. They stated that, although they can face neglected and abused children they don't know how to handle these cases. The teachers are aware of the austerity of the child abuse and neglect problem and they are receptive to the problem. However, they are aware that their lack of knowledge complicates their intervention in the problem and cause them to act timidly, and that an ignorant intervention would further complicate the problem. The counselors have stated that they need information on the basic facts related to the subject matter, identification criteria, how they should act when they are intervening, how they should approach the student, how they can salvage the student and the needed information on the legal aspects of the problem. They also stated that courses on abuse and neglect should be included in the universities curriculum. The counselors are not informed on the legal dimensions of the issue. 92% of the group (46 counselors) is not aware of the features and determinants of the cases they have determined as negligence or abuse issue.

Content analyses of the research findings have also been made. As the method used in forming and coding the themes in the research, the words most frequently and commonly used by the teachers have been taken into consideration. The questions that have been raised to the counselors during interview and the frequency of the received responses are provided below. However, taking into consideration the contribution of the participants during the interview in precipitating each other's responses, the effort to reach a consensus has been observed in the discussion of each question. In the content analysis, this condition has caused the rate of sharing to be high for some elements, and in others, to changes in the priority classifications, although they agree with what each other have said.

How do you feature child negligence and abuse? In the responses to this question, a full definition pointing out to the physical, emotional and sexual aspects of the concept could not be attained. The teachers generally have approached abuse mainly as sexual abuse. 8% of the teachers have included the emotional aspect to their definitions.

**Table IV How do you feature child negligence and abuse?**

Feature	n	%
Neglect: Families' failure when supplying their duties	48	96
Emotional abuse: Divestiture of child from love, affiliation, affection	38	76
Sexual abuse: Forcing child in sexual activities	50	100
Physical abuse: Violence that child face	50	100

From the table it can draw that counselors have highly enough information about child negligence. Counselors' information about emotional abuse is a bit little less than others (%76 n=38). All counselors know about features of sexual and physical abuse.

Do you believe that you can identify those of your students who are neglected or abused? The table bellow illustrates how counselors determine child neglect and abuse cases.

**Table V According to you, which are the symptoms to be watched out for?**

Determinations	n	%
Lover academic achievement	46	92
Becomes introverted	50	100
Comes to school with wounds and bruises.	42	84
Behaves aggressively in class	40	80
Submissive	48	96
Crying	38	76
Total	50	100

All school counselors shared in the idea that all neglected and abused children become introverted. Counselors think that neglected and abused children have lover academic achievement (%92 n=46). Especially in physical abuse cases children come to school with wounds and bruises (%84 n=42). Aggressive manner in class (%80 n=40). If a child face abuse or negligence she or he becomes submissive (%96 n=48). Abuse and neglect causes child cry (%76 n=38). How do you handle or intervene in the children who are neglected and abused? This last

question's answer is generally passed by teachers. Mostly they said "I made individual counseling" (%92 n=46). None of the counselors have knowledge of legal procedures on negligence and abuse cases.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Worldwide, more than 200,000,000 children under the age of 18 years old were victims of child sexual abuse in 2002 alone (Lampinen and Sexton-Radek, 2010). A child is considered abused if he or she is treated in a way that is unacceptable in a given culture at a given time (Meadow, 2007). Meadow (2007) states that abuse can be neglect, physical, sexual or emotional. Many forms of child abuse may lead to the death of the child. Child abuse occurs across socioeconomic, religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups.

Taking into consideration that all children at compulsory education age are with counselors in schools and that the ability of the counselors or guidance practitioners, with their pedagogic knowledge, to differentiate between normal and abnormal behavior, one of the best solutions is making the teachers effective in the determination and referral of these cases. The educators, at the same time, are among the profession groups who have an obligation for legal notification as public employees. Despite this, the counselors are the constituents who are least educated specifically on the issue. As can be understood from the counselor course definitions, educators are not trained on the issue during pre-service training period, also are not trained as necessary on child neglect and abuse by the in-education training activities of the university. Generally, it is believed that the teacher has a higher level of knowledge related to the issue. This study shows that the teachers in the group of the research are receptive to the subject, but do not have the adequate level of knowledge required in the identification of the cases. Training practices based on training requirements and sample case studies will be more effective. Moreover, in relation to what will be experienced following the identification of the case, they are concerned that the child will not be adequately protected during that process. This situation leads them to be timid in intervention. Since there is no specific regulation, the educators are intervening in the event within the framework of their own knowledge and experiences and a standard approach does not exist.

Counselors can help victims of abuse and neglect to process their experiences of abuse and help them understand that they are not to blame for their partner's actions. (Mele, 2009). The forensic interview is an essential component of the fact-finding process in cases of physical and sexual abuse. The goal of the interview should be to obtain a statement from a child in a developmentally sensitive, unbiased, and truth-seeking manner that will support accurate and fair decision-making in the criminal justice and child welfare systems (Lau and Treacy, 2009).

Universities which are giving counseling degrees should open obligatory or elective courses on child abuse and neglect. Researches should be encouraged to prepare the thesis in master and doctoral degrees on child abuse and neglect. Counselors working in schools should attend conferences, seminars or symposiums on child abuse and neglect. Ministry of Education should supply in-service training about child abuse and neglect for school counselors.

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