



**A Retrospective Study: According to Online News, the Victims, Perpetrators and Characteristics of Sexual Abuse at Schools\***

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** This study aims to investigate the characteristics of the children exposed to sexual abuse (SA) in the school environment.

**Research Methods:** In this study, the online news which was between 01.01.2014 and 31.03.2018 was screened retrospectively through archive research method. Then, the news was analyzed using content analysis. In this context, qualitative research model was used.

**Findings:** The number of victims varied between 1 and 100 in each incident, 39.3% of the incidents include only one victim; the perpetrators committed abuse once in 13.5% of the SA incidents while they did it more than once. The findings showed that 95.5% of the SA incidents included physical contact,

27.6% included verbal abuse, 6.4% included exposure to pornographic content and 5.8% included exhibitionism. In addition, at least 14.7% of the incidents included cyber SA, 9.2% included video recording, 12.6% included threat and 3.7% included physical violence. 60.7% of perpetrators were teachers, 14.7% were principals or vice-principals, 12.3% were peers or higher grade students, 9.2% were school staff other than teachers and administrators and 3.1% were outsiders, such as school bus drivers. The tactics of the perpetrators were examined according to whether they were teachers and peer, it was found out that perpetrators were exhibited different tactics. The students respectively disclosed SA to family members, counselors, school management or a friend.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** Based on the findings, training aimed to prevent SA may be organized at school for students, teachers, other school staff and parents on a regular basis.

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## Introduction

School environment is considered to be one of the safest places for students, but it can be an unsafe environment due to child sexual abuse (SA) and cause students to have various psychosocial problems (Celik et al., 2012). Although it is pointed out in the literature that SA is less in social venues other than home (Shattuck, Finkelhor, Turner, & Hamby, 2016), the number of studies conducted on SA in the school environment is limited (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Astor, 2002; Gebeyehu, 2012; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995). The available studies have revealed very different rates regarding SA in the school environment. The review study conducted by Shakeshaft (2004), which is the most comprehensive study conducted on this subject, revealed that the SA by school staff in America varied between 3.7% and 50.3%. It was determined in a study conducted in Africa on female students at the age of 13-17 that the SA frequency was 49.6% and the victims were exposed to at least one kind of SA (Gebeyehu, 2012). Longobardi et al. (2017) showed in a study they conducted in Italy on 6th and 13th graders that emotional abuse, physical abuse and SA were experienced at schools by 77%, 52% and 24%, respectively. Similarly, in another study conducted on 13052 children at the age of 0-17, verbal abuse was the most common kind of abuse (63.2%) at institutions, such as kindergartens that offered services to children, while SA was 6.4% (Shattuck et al., 2016). Although this SA rate is the lowest rate in the literature, it is estimated to correspond to 36,000 victimized children when compared to the population (Shattuck et al., 2016).

Perpetrators can be peers of children (Gebeyehu, 2012; Longobardi et al., 2017), as well as teachers or other school staff (Benbenishty et al., 2002; Longobardi et al., 2017; Surface, Stader, & Armenta, 2014; Timmerman, 2003; Walter, 2018) in SA incidents taking place at schools. However, a review of the former studies reveals that the number of studies examining both teachers and peers is limited and the peer-teacher ratio differs in existing studies. For example, a quantitative study that involved 2,808 randomly selected adolescents at 22 secondary schools in the Netherlands determined that 9% of the students were SA victims and 27% of the perpetrators in the school environment were school staff, whereas 87% were peers (Timmerman, 2003). Another study conducted by AAUW Educational Foundation (2001) on 2,064 children in the 8th to 11th grades on a face to face and online basis found out that eight out of ten children were exposed to SA, while six out of ten children were victims of SA, including physical contact. SA rate of teachers and other school staff was determined as 38%, the SA rate of peers was determined as 85%, and the rate of children committing SA on others at school was determined as 59%. Shakeshaft (2004) examined the SA rate of school personnel and determined the SA rate of teachers on students in the 8th to 11th grades as 9.6%.

As stated above, different rates were determined in former studies on SA and perpetrators in the school environment. The different SA definitions, methods and sample characteristics in the studies are considered to be the possible causes for this fact (Stranger, 2015). For instance, AAUW Educational Foundation (2001) included sexual jokes in SA while Timmerman (2003) did not take them into the scope of SA.

On the other hand, the SA rate of peers may be higher due to the imbalance between the number of teachers and peers (Timmerman, 2003). In short, it is reported in the literature that it is difficult to determine the actual SA rate at schools due to the methodological differences in studies, the low reporting rate of children or failure of school managements to inform the judicial authorities about the reporting children (Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995). However, because the media makes more news about teachers committing abuse and/or SA taking place at schools in recent years (Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995; Stranger, 2015) indicates that this issue must not be underestimated at schools.

The information about individual characteristics of adult perpetrators and victims in SA experienced in the school environment is limited. Teachers committing abuse can be of both sexes (Mototsune, 2015; Moulden, Firestone, Kingston, & Wexler, 2010; Ratliff & Watson, 2014; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995; Timmerman, 2003) and the majority consists of male perpetrators (Mototsune, 2015; Timmerman, 2003). Their ages vary between 19 and 69, with an average of 37.28 in a study in Canada (Moulden et al. 2010). Characteristics, such as religious and ethnic origin, are not known (Moulden et al., 2010). They inflict SA both on male and female students (Mototsune, 2015; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995), but they usually choose girls and students in the pre-puberty and puberty period (Moulden et al., 2010; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995). In addition, a study examining the reasons for license revocations of teachers in the USA revealed that SA towards students was the main reason for license revocation (61%), and it was found out thanks to the data gathered about incidents that teachers from any branch could commit SA, but the branches with the highest number of license revocation were determined as sports (23%), music (12%) and English (11%; Walter, 2018). Shakeshaft (2004) found out that SA was committed most by classroom teachers, and they were followed by sports teachers, school bus drivers and administrators. A study conducted on the news about five female teachers who committed SA revealed that female teachers chose students in pre-puberty, they were successful in their professions, manipulated the victims, and had mental health problems and former abuse stories (Stranger, 2015). When we look at the characteristics of victimized students, we can see that upper-grade students are exposed to SA by peers (Gebeyehu, 2012) or teachers (Mototsune, 2015) more than lower grade students, their age average is 11.8 (Moulden et al., 2010), most of them are older than 12, and they live with both of their parents (Moulden et al., 2010).

Teachers may exhibit SA behaviors that are either mild, such as fondling, or severe, such as penetration or rape. The rate of penetration is less than abuse, and SA is committed most through fondling, kissing and masturbative behaviors (Moulden et al., 2010), and most incidents take place at schools (Mototsune, 2015; Moulden et al., 2010). These types of SA can take place face to face or on cyber platforms, such as the Internet and mobile phones (Mototsune, 2015; Walter, 2018). Therefore, SA is defined as establishing inappropriate teacher-student communication, such as correspondence and texting, through all kinds of technological devices (social media and mobile phone ) or having emotional relationships with students with or without their consent (Walter, 2018). For instance, Mototsune (2015) found out that 47.1% of abusive teachers

established communication using electronic devices, and exposure to cyber SA was higher in female students (40.2%) compared to male students (23.1%).

It is easier for teachers to inflict SA on children as they are figures of authority and in a position where they can establish close relationships with students (Celik et al., 2012; Moulden et al., 2010; Shakeshaft, 2003). Furthermore, abusive teachers use some tactics instead of physical force/violence in SA incidents towards students (Moulden et al., 2010; Shakeshaft, 2018). Although the rate of threat and violence is low, SA behaviors of teachers may cause psychological problems in both male and female students, such as delayed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and alcohol addiction (Burgess, Welner and Willis, 2010) just like in incest incidents (Finkelhor & Hashimma, 2001; as cited in Mototsune, 2015). As for the tactics they employ, some of these tactics include targeting children that are disadvantaged due to familial and psycho-social reasons, obtaining private knowledge about the victims, showing special attention to the victims they are targeting, supporting and rewarding them etc. (Knoll, 2010; Mototsune, 2015; Shakeshaft, 2013; Shakeshaft, 2018). For example, Moulden et al. (2010) determined the rate of teachers using their authorities as 84%, those forming friendly relations as 40%, those offering help to victims as 16% and those offering gifts, such as money, as 14%. It is pointed out in studies that abusive teachers aim to gain the trust of parents so that they can spend more time with underachieving students (e.g., Knoll, 2010; Shakeshaft, 2003). Furthermore, teachers abusing primary school students try to gain the trust of families and their colleagues while those abusing high school students can establish more emotional relationships with students (Kaufman et al., 2016). Shakeshaft (2018) states that adults sexually abusing children in the school environment possess different characteristics; some perpetrators who are sexually aroused by children choose to work at schools to be closer to children and act in a methodical manner while identifying and monitoring children. She states that this kind of perpetrators target students that are looking for adult interaction and attention, have a dysfunctional family, exhibit lagging, angry or self-destructive behaviors; in other words, students who will probably not be believed by the school management if they report. She says that there is another group that targets older students, acts carefully and approaches the victim slowly, forms trust relationships, test before SA whether the victim can keep secrets and establish friendship and emotional relationships with students.

Ruffin (2017) states that the existence of abusive teachers has been resisted for years, and this problem has escaped the attention. Attitudes of school management are considered to be one of the reasons (Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995). Teachers are suspended following an allegation or they are just fired without performing any judicial transactions to prevent the school from falling into disrepute (Irvine & Tanner, 2007; Sullivan & Beech, 2002). Moreover, it is reported that these perpetrators have letters of recommendation from the school management so that they can find a new job at another school (Shakeshaft, 2004). Walter (2018) states that this attitude towards abusive teachers is has been known for years but not put down on paper in America. Similarly, there are no written sources about the attitudes of school management in Turkey other than the news published in the media.

As pointed out above, studies on SA committed in the school environment are limited in number and only few studies could be reached in Turkey. Three of these studies are case reports revealing exposure of male students to SA by peers (Keser, Yuksel & Calik, 2014; Odabas, Keser & Yuksel, 2012) and teachers (Celik et al., 2012). Another study examined the characteristics of 125 students that attended Ankara Child Advocacy Center from 2010 to 2015 and were determined to have been exposed to SA (Kocturk & Yuksel, 2018). The results of this study indicate that 36% of SA incidents in the school environment are committed by peers or higher grade students and 64% are committed by adults, most of the adult perpetrators are teachers (62.5%) and people coming to school from outside (10%) may abuse students.

As a result, SA incidents taking place in school and committed by teachers must be addressed from an educational point of view considering that children spend most of their times at schools after their families, SA may cause many psychological and social problems related to school (e.g., school phobia, school leaving) (Blakemore, Herbert, Arney, & Parkinson, 2017; Burgess et al., 2010; Celik et al., 2012; Kocturk & Bilge, 2018) and school counseling services are important for detecting and preventing SA. As there is a limited number of studies in the literature, characteristics of SA taking place in the school environment, as well as victims and abusive teachers are not known for sure, it is not possible to reach out to victims for study for ethical and other reasons, SA incidents at schools can be learned from the news (Celik et al., 2012) and the Turkish society uses the Internet and television most as a source of learning the news (Olkun, 2017), this study aims to examine news about SA taking place in the school environment published at news websites and to determine the nature of SA incidents, as well as individual characteristics of perpetrators and victims. The study tries to answer the following questions for this purpose:

1. What are the characteristics of SA incidents taking place in the school environment (e.g., number of victims, gender, grades, number of abuse, type of abuse, cyber SA, the part of the school where the incident takes place, videotaping, threat and battering)?
2. What are the characteristics of perpetrators (victim-perpetrator relationship, sex, marital status, criminal history, the branch of the perpetrator if s/he is a teacher, tactics and methods and amount of punishment) in SA taking place in the school environment?
3. Who do the victims report the incidents first, and what happens after reporting (the attitude of the school management and legal notification status)?

## Method

### *Research Design*

In this study, the online news has been screened retrospectively through the archive research method. Then, the news was analyzed through content analysis. In this context, a qualitative research model was used in this study.

### Research Sample

One hundred sixty-three news reports examined during this study were about SA incidents in 48 cities and most of the news are from: İstanbul (10.4%), Antalya (8.6%), Kayseri (6.1%), Ankara (4.3%), İzmir (4.3%), Aydın (4.3%) and Diyarbakır (4.3%). 55.2% ( $n = 90$ ) of the incidents reported in the news took place in city centers, while 44.8% ( $n = 73$ ) took place in the country.

The number of victims was given in 147 out of the 163 news reports included in this study while 17 news reports did not mention the names of the victims clearly and there was more than one victim. Accordingly, we understand that there was a minimum of 732 victims in the 163 news about SA in the school environment. 89% ( $n = 145$ ) of the news mentioned the victims as only female students, 6.7% ( $n = 11$ ) mentioned only males and 4.3% ( $n = 7$ ) mentioned both male and female students. The ages of the victims vary between 6 and 17 and the age average is 12.89 ( $SD = 2.99$ ). Moreover, it is reported in 4.3% of the news that the victims had a physical disability.

The 163 SA incidents took place at primary schools, secondary schools and high schools respectively by 30.7% ( $n = 50$ ), 26.4% ( $n = 43$ ) and 42.9% ( $n = 70$ ). As for the school type, it was found out that one incident (0.7%) was experienced by a student getting home education from the state, seven (4.6%) incidents took place at private schools while 140 (92.1%) incidents took place at state schools. Five incidents (3.1%) happened at boarding schools, and the high schools were determined to be of different kinds, such as Anatolian Vocational High School, Imam-Hatip High School and Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School.

### Research Instruments and Procedures

SA news at the websites of newspapers, such as Hurriyet, Milliyet, Haberturk, Yenisiasir, and news agencies, such the Anatolian Agency, CNN Turk and Ihlas News Agency between 01.01.2014 to 31.03.2018 were examined using the Google search engine, as it is the most commonly used search engine (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). The time interval was kept short to prevent data loss. Various possible news topics, such as "abuse at school", "sexual ... at primary school", "sexual ... at secondary school", "sexual ... at high school", "sexual abuse/harassment at primary school", "sexual abuse/harassment at secondary school", "sexual abuse/harassment at high school" and "abusive teacher", were separately searched in these news sources and more than 1000 news reports were achieved. News containing the date and the name of the news reporter were included in this study as the same news were published at different websites and the aim was to include highly reliable news in the study. Therefore, the SA news were listed by place (the cities where the incidents took place), time (date of the news) and case details (e.g., number of victims, initials of the perpetrator), repeating news were eliminated, and a total of 163 different news reports were determined.

### Data Analysis

The contents of these 163 news reports were analyzed in parallel with the research questions and the information about the characteristics of the SA incidents, and the information obtained from the news about the perpetrators and reports was grouped using Microsoft Word. Then the data were entered into the SPSS program to obtain descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage, and analyses were performed using SPSS.

### Results

Research findings indicated that the number of victims varied between one and 100 in each incident, 39.3% ( $n = 64$ ) of the incidents included only one victim while 60.7% ( $n = 99$ ) include multiple victims; the perpetrators committed abuse once in 13.5% ( $n = 22$ ) of the SA incidents, while they did it more than once (multiple), in other words, the victims were abused more than once by the same perpetrator in 63.8% ( $n = 104$ ) of the incidents. It was observed that 79.1% ( $n = 129$ ) of the incidents included harassment, 16.6% ( $n = 27$ ) included rape and there was no clear information about the type of SA. Thus, the incidents were just defined as "sexual abuse" in 4.3% ( $n = 7$ ). In 156 news reports where the types of abuse were stated, it was determined that 95.5% ( $n = 149$ ) of the SA incidents included physical contact, 27.6% ( $n = 43$ ) included verbal abuse, 6.4% ( $n = 10$ ) included exposure to pornographic content and 5.8% ( $n = 9$ ) included exhibitionism (see Table 1). In addition, it was determined that at least 14.7% ( $n = 24$ ) of the incidents included cyber SA (through the Internet or mobile phone), 9.2% ( $n = 15$ ) included video recording, 12.6% ( $n = 20$ ) included threat and 3.7% ( $n = 6$ ) included physical violence (see Table 1). As for the SA environment, it was determined that at least 31.9% ( $n = 52$ ) took place in classroom environment, 33.1% ( $n = 54$ ) took place in an isolated/private environment outside the classroom (e.g., private room, gymnasium, boiler room) and 20.2% ( $n = 33$ ) took place outside the school (e.g., inside a vehicle, perpetrator's house).

The examination of perpetrator characteristics within the scope of the second research question revealed that the total number of perpetrators in 163 news reports was 208, approximately 1% ( $n = 2$ ) of the perpetrators were female and 99% ( $n = 206$ ) were male. 92% ( $n = 150$ ) of the SA incidents were committed by one person, while 8% were committed by more than one person. It was determined that 18 people sexually abused the victim in one incident.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics for the Sexual Abuse Cases*

Variable	Victim	
	N	%
Incident		
Once	22	13.5
Multiple	104	63.8
Not known	37	22.7
Type of SA		
Penetration	27	16.6
Harassment	129	79.1
Physical contact	149	95.5
Verbal abuse	43	27.6
Pornographic content	10	6.4
Exhibitionism	9	5.8
Cyber SA	24	14.7
Video recording	15	9.2
Threat	20	12.6
Physical violence	6	3.7
Perpetrator		
Teacher	99	60.7
Administrator	24	14.7
Peer or higher grade student	20	12.3
Other school staff (e.g., janitor, officer, canteen worker)	15	9.2
Outsider	5	3.1
Perpetrator under 18 years old	21	12.9

In this study, 60.7% of perpetrators were teachers, 14.7% were principals or vice-principals, 12.3% were peers or higher grade students, 9.2% were school staff other than teachers and administrators (e.g., janitor, officer, canteen worker) and 3.1% were outsiders, such as school bus drivers. Information was gathered about the marital status of seventy perpetrators, and 57.1% ( $n = 40$ ) of them were married, 38.6% ( $n = 27$ ) were single and 4.3% ( $n = 3$ ) were divorced, and 60.3% ( $n = 38$ ) of 63 perpetrators had



children. Furthermore, it was found out that some perpetrators ( $n = 10$ ) had criminal histories and the crimes of and allegations about 80% ( $n = 8$ ) of those with a criminal history were about SA. News reports indicated that eight perpetrators with a criminal history related to SA were teachers and decisions of non-prosecution were made for two of them, one of them was acquitted, trials were in progress for two, the investigator appointed by the Ministry of Education did not believe the allegation about one of them, two teachers were appointed to different schools and committed crimes at those schools as well. One of the remaining perpetrators was a teacher and had received punishment for being a member of a terrorist organization, while the other teacher was a janitor performing free community service within the scope of probation and committed SA on children on the first workday. Moreover, it was determined that SA was committed by another teacher for the second time at two schools (1.2%) where the students had suffered SA in the past.

As for the branches of abusive teachers, it was determined that abusive teachers could be from various branches, and the branches with the highest number of incidents were classroom teacher (29.3%) and physical education (13%) branches (see Table 2). The tactics of the perpetrators were examined according to whether they were teachers and administrators and it was found out that perpetrators that were administrators exhibited extremely friendly behaviors or behaviors not expected from authority figures ( $n = 13$ ), deceptive behaviors, such as attending social activities and giving or receiving a massage ( $n = 10$ ), offered bribes or reinforcers, such as money, a private lesson and not being expelled, to the victims ( $n = 11$ ), used different tactics, such as games, so that the other students in the class would not figure out what was going on ( $n = 6$ ), committed SA through emotional attachment/flirt saying they were in love with the students ( $n = 6$ ), locked the doors of their rooms ( $n = 6$ ), took the students home with excuses, such as cleaning, wanted them to keep the incident as a secret ( $n = 3$ ), frightened the victims threatening that nobody would believe the students if they reported the incident. They would sue the students ( $n = 3$ ), exhibited violent behaviors, such as battering if refused by the student ( $n = 2$ ), took the students from the class during lessons and exposed them to SA ( $n = 2$ ). On the other hand, if the perpetrator was a peer or higher grade student, the perpetrators threatened and blackmailed the victims mostly through video recording and photographs ( $n = 7$ ), deceived the victims ( $n = 4$ ) and sexually abused them by flirting ( $n = 4$ ). The examination of the judicial processes of perpetrators revealed that 52.1% ( $n = 85$ ) were arrested, 26.4% ( $n = 43$ ) were convicted, 13.5% ( $n = 22$ ) were released pending trial and 1.8% ( $n = 3$ ) were acquitted. It was found out that the highest amounts of punishment inflicted on the perpetrators were 10-20 years (7.4%), over 80 years (5.5%) and 0-5 years (3.7%).

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics for the Branches of Abusive Teachers*

Branch	N	%
Classroom teacher	36	29.3
Physical education teacher	16	13
Assistant principal	15	12.2
Mathematics teacher	10	8.1
Principal	9	7.3
Turkish language and literature teacher	4	3.3
Turkish teacher	4	3.3
Social studies teacher	4	3.3
Science teacher	4	3.3
Religious culture and moral knowledge teacher	3	2.4
English teacher	3	2.4
Counselor	2	1.6
Arabic language teacher	2	1.6
Music teacher	1	.8
History teacher	1	.8
Painting teacher	1	.8
Geography teacher	1	.8
Biological teacher	1	.8
Teacher unknown his branch	6	4.8

Note. N = 123

The people students reported the incidents first, and what they went through after reporting were examined within the scope of another research question. It was found out that 63.8% ( $n = 104$ ) of the students told family members, the school counselor, school management or a friend about the incident, 11.7% ( $n = 19$ ) reported the incident upon being suspected to be the victim of SA, 6.1% of the incidents were discovered after another teacher, parent or student witnessed the SA, and the reporting stories of 18.4% ( $n = 30$ ) were not included in the news. In 41 news reports (25.2%), the school management or the Ministry of National Education officials exhibited negative attitudes after reporting. The most common negative attitudes were reported as failing to make legal notification and take administrative action ( $n = 18$ ), refusal of the school management to believe the SA reporting and defending the perpetrator ( $n = 8$ ). On the

other hand, the examination of people who informed the judicial authorities revealed that parents of students reported in 44.2% of the incidents, the school staff reported in 31.9%, the Ministry of National Education reported in 2.5%, hospitals reported in 1.8%, the Prime Ministry Communication Center (BIMER) reported in 0.6 and women's organizations reported in 0.6%.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examined news about SA taking place in the school environment and a total of 163 different new reports about SA were assessed. The findings indicate that most of the students in SA incidents taking place in the school environment were female students, but male students were also exposed to individual and multiple SA in the school environment; the most common kind of SA was harassment, most SA incidents took place at high schools and primary schools, SA could happen at every type of school, there was more than one victim in most cases, perpetrators committed SA more than once on the same victim and SA incidents took place mostly in an intramural environment. SA inside schools took place mostly in classrooms, private rooms, gymnasiums, non-class environments, such as boiler rooms, while it could happen in out-of-school environments, such as vehicles, perpetrator houses and public areas. In addition, SA experienced by students mostly included physical contact and students were exposed to exhibitionism, rape, verbal and/or cyber SA. When we compare these findings with the literature, we can see that information about findings, such as SA venue, is limited, but it is stated in the literature that female students are exposed to SA more than male students in the school environments (Mototsune, 2015; Ratliff & Watson, 2014; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995), SA takes place in and out of school environment (Knoll, 2010; Mototsune, 2015; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995), SA takes place at state, religious and private schools and it takes place most at state schools (Mototsune, 2015). According to the research findings of Mototsune (2015), male teachers mostly chose school environments in parallel with this study while female teachers commit SA on students mostly in out-of-school environments. However, given that the number of female teachers in this study is limited ( $n = 2$ ) and one of them committed SA in the classroom while the other one committed it on the Internet prevents us from having a clear opinion.

Findings of perpetrator characteristics indicate that teachers, school management, peers as well as people offering services to students, such as janitors, officers, canteen workers and school bus drivers, committed SA in the school environment and teachers committed the highest amount of SA at schools. Although the literature states that both peers and adults can commit SA in the school environment (Shakeshaft, 2004; Timmerman, 2003), Timmerman (2003) and AAUW Educational Foundation (2001) found out that peers committed more SA. This is considered to arise from the differences in the definition of SA or research methods. These studies were not conducted on face to face basis with students as in this study and behaviors, such as sexual jokes, were not considered SA due to the research method. As the source of data in this study is based on the news published in the media, it is thought that students

did not report such mild behaviors exhibited by peers and even if they did, the journalists might not have found them important enough to be published in the media. The study of AAUW Educational Foundation (2001) determined that most of the students did not report such mild SA behaviors to an adult, which supports this view. On the other hand, because peers have a higher rate of SA is expected as the number of peers at schools is higher than the number of teachers (Timmerman, 2003). Therefore, it is thought that assessing the rate of perpetrators according to the number of teachers and students at schools may provide healthier results. Furthermore, limited information could be reached about individual characteristics of abusive teachers in this study and it was determined that most of them were married, at least 7% of them had former SA allegations about them and no judicial (e.g., the decision of non-prosecution) or administrative (e.g., informing judicial bodies or appointing to another school) precautions were taken against those teachers with a history of abuse. It is pointed out in previous studies that the number of studies on SA in the school environment is limited and there is limited information about characteristics of perpetrators as most studies are based on past events (Mototsune, 2015; Moulden et al., 2010; Shakeshaft, 2018; Walter, 2018). Given that the majority of the perpetrators were determined to be married and have children suggests that people with pedophilic tendencies may try to camouflage themselves with such socially accepted roles to hide themselves or the majority of abusive teachers may be a part of the pedophilic group that is affected by both children and adults (Hall & Hall, 2007). In addition, the literature indicates in parallel with this study that school management act in a way that is protective of perpetrators and refrain from taking judicial action (Mawdsley, 2010; Shakeshaft & Cohan, 1995; Shakeshaft, 2004). The findings of this study show that this problem exists in Turkey just like in the previous work conducted in United States of America (Walter, 2018), but it has not been written down, suggesting that the majority of people informing the judicial bodies consists of parents of victims whereas it must be the schools.

One of the significant findings of this study is that abusive teachers in Turkey can be from almost every branch and the branches where they can be encountered most are a classroom teacher and physical education branches. This finding is supported by many studies (Shakeshaft, 2004; Walter, 2018) and this may arise from that teachers with pedophilic tendencies especially choose these professions, there are more classroom teachers than others, students taking classes from teachers especially in these branches spend more time with their teachers, or they are more vulnerable as the classes include physical contact.

Another important finding of the study is that the tactics used by abusive teachers and administrators on victims were determined. In line with the literature, it is observed in this study that perpetrators who are peers or higher grade students threaten and blackmail using footage more compared to teachers, while abusive teachers and administrators prefer friendly attitudes and behaviors not expected from authority figures instead of physical violence and threats, they offer rewards to victims, such as money, private lessons, not expelling from school, attend social activities together with adolescent students, and exhibit flirting behaviors (Knoll, 2010;

Mototsune, 2015; Moulden et al., 2010; Shakeshaft, 2018). Moreover, because abusive teachers use tactics, such as giving or receiving a massage from older students, playing games, such as night and day, not raising heads from books, having the victim sit in the back. Thus, the other students would not understand what is going on in SA incidents exposed by primary school students is an important finding of this study that can be used for education against SA.

The judicial processes about perpetrators in the school environment indicate that most of the perpetrators received a prison sentence for more than 10 years, which suggests that incidents, including judicial action, may have been reflected in the media more or the judicial processes may have been attached more importance as they were reflected in the media, thus forming public opinion about the incidents. Furthermore, the punishment increases when a person teaching the child commits abuse according to Turkish Penal Code No 5237 (TCK 103, 2004). This may be the main reason why the perpetrators committing abuse received more severe punishments although there were more harassment incidents in the study.

Another striking finding of the study is that not every victim told someone about the SA in the school environment, some victims reported after someone (another teacher, parent or student) witnessed the incident or someone (e.g., parents or teacher) suspected SA; family members, school counselors, school management and people defined as friends are the ones to whom they reported the incidents most. Although the number of studies on this subject is limited, it is pointed out in one study in the USA that friends (61%), family (24%) and teachers (11%) are the people to whom the incidents are reported first and the rate of students reporting abuse by teachers maybe 71% (AAUW Educational Foundation). This is considered to be caused by differences in the research methods or cultural features of populations.

Despite the important contributions of the present study noted above, this study has a few limitations. One of them is that the source of information for the study is based on the news on the Internet. Therefore, only the incidents reflected in the media were found out and the nature of SA incidents that were not reported or published in the media is not known. Moreover, as this study is based on online news, it was not possible to obtain the same amount of information about the incident story, perpetrator and victim in each SA news. Finally, some news might have been removed from the press by the publishing newspapers or agencies as the news published on the Internet for more than four years were retrospectively scanned. Thus, future studies on this subject can be planned in a prospective manner.

In conclusion, a lot of information was obtained about characteristics of the SA taking place in the school environment, the victims and perpetrators through this study examining the news published in the media. Based on the findings, the training aimed to prevent SA may be organized at school for students, teachers, other school staff and parents on a regular basis. Information about perpetrator and victim profiles, behaviors that constitute abuse, behaviors (e.g., the school administrator closes the door of his/her private room when there is a student inside) that must create a suspicion of SA and the importance of reporting (e.g., mentioning school management

and teachers that received punishment because of failure to inform judicial authorities) can be explained at these training. On the other hand, an open policy regarding SA allegations at schools can be established within the Ministry of National Education considering that school administrators may also be perpetrators or protect abusive teachers or other school staff. Furthermore, as it was observed in this study that teachers with previous SA allegations committed SA at other schools to which they were appointed, even if there is only an allegation, preventing abusive teachers and other school staff from establishing direct communication with children until they are found innocent must be considered. On the other hand, safety measures (e.g., camera) can be taken in isolated areas inside schools that are determined in this study and where SA may take place, and these measures may be used to deter perpetrators.

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### **Retrospektif Bir Çalışma: Çevrimiçi Haberlere Göre Okulda Yaşanan Cinsel İstismar Olaylarında Mağdurlar, Failler ve Olayın Özellikleri**

#### **Atf:**

Koçturk, N. (2020). A retrospective study: According to online news, the victims, perpetrators and characteristics of sexual abuse at schools. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 115-134, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2020.86.6

#### **Özet**

*Problem Durumu:* Öğrenciler için en güvenli yerlerden biri olması gereken okul ortamı yaşanan çocukluk dönemi cinsel istismarı (Cİ) ile güvensiz bir ortam olabilmekte ve öğrencilerde çeşitli psiko-sosyal sorunlara yol açabilmektedir (Çelik vd., 2012). Her ne kadar ev dışı sosyal alanlarda Cİ mağduriyetlerinin daha az olabildiği (Shattuck, Finkelhor, Turner ve Hamby, 2016) alanyazında vurgulansa da okul ortamında yaşanan Cİ'ye yönelik çalışmalar kısıtlı sayıdadır (Gebeyehu, 2012; Shakeshaft ve Cohan, 1995). Var olan çalışmalarda da okul ortamında yaşanan Cİ'ye yönelik çok farklı oranların saptandığı görülmektedir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Alanyazında kısıtlı sayıda araştırmanın olması ve okul ortamında gerçekleşen Cİ'nin, mağdurların ve istismarcı öğretmenlerin özelliklerinin tam olarak bilinmemesi, araştırma yapmak için bu mağdurlara ulaşamaması, okul Cİ olaylarının haberlerden öğrenilebilmesi (Çelik vd., 2012) ve Türkiye'de toplumun haber alma kaynağı olarak en çok interneti ve televizyonu kullanmaları (Olkun, 2017) sebebiyle, bu çalışmanın amacı internetteki haber sitelerinde yer alan okul ortamında yaşanan Cİ'lere yönelik haberlerin incelenerek Cİ olaylarının niteliğinin, istismarcılara ve mağdurlara dair bireysel özelliklerin belirlenmesidir.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu çalışmada arşiv araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak çevrim-içi basında yer alan Cİ haberleri geriye dönük olarak taranmıştır. Bu bağlamda çalışma, nitel araştırma modelindedir.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Okul ortamında veya okul ortamından bir kişi tarafından Cİ'ye maruz kalmış olan öğrencilerin çevrimiçi basında yer alan haberlerinin incelendiği bu çalışmada konuyla ilgili 163 habere ulaşılmıştır. Belirlenen 163 Cİ olayının %30.7'si ( $n = 50$ ) ilkokulda, %26.4'ü ( $n = 43$ ) ortaokulda, %42.9'u ( $n = 70$ ) lisede geçmekte olup mağdurların sınıf düzeyi 1. sınıf ile 12. sınıf arasında değişmektedir.

Çalışmanın bulgularına göre mağdur sayısının her bir olayda 1-100 arasında değiştiği, olayların %60.7'sinde ( $n = 99$ ) birden fazla mağdurun olduğu; %63.8'inde ( $n = 104$ ) istismarcının birden fazla kez (çoklu) istismarda bulunduğu öğrenilmiştir. Olayların %79.1'inin ( $n = 129$ ) taciz, %16.6'sının ( $n = 27$ ) tecavüz vakası olduğu, %4.3'ünde ( $n = 7$ ) Cİ türünün ne olduğuna dair net bir bilginin olmadığı saptanmıştır. Cİ olaylarının yaşandığı ortam incelendiğinde de en az %31.9'unun ( $n = 52$ ) sınıf ortamında, %33.1'inin ( $n = 54$ ) okulda sınıf dışı ıssız/özel bir ortamda, %20.2'sinin ( $n = 33$ ) okul dışında gerçekleştiği saptanmıştır.

Çalışmanın ikinci sorusuna yönelik istismarcıların özelliği incelendiğinde ise 163 istismar haberinde istismarcı sayısı toplam 208 olup istismarcıların yaklaşık %1'i ( $n = 2$ ) kadın %99'u ( $n = 206$ ) erkektir. İstismarcıların %60.7'si öğretmen, %14.7'si müdür veya müdür yardımcısı, %12.3'ü akran veya üst sınıftan bir öğrenci, %9.2'sinde öğretmen ve idareci dışındaki okul personeli (örn., temizlik görevlisi, memur, kantinci) ve %3.1'inde servis şoförü gibi okul dışından bir kişidir.

İstismarda bulunan öğretmenlerin branşları incelendiğinde ise öğretmenlerin her branştan olabildiği, en çok sınıf öğretmenliği (%29.3) ve beden eğitimi öğretmenliği (%13) branşlarından oldukları belirlenmiştir. İstismarcıların öğretmen ve idareci olup olmamalarına göre taktikleri incelendiğinde ise öğretmen ve idareci olanların öğrencilere aşırı derecede arkadaşça tutum veya otorite figürü harici davranışlar sergiledikleri ( $n = 13$ ), sosyal faaliyetlere gitme ve masaj yapma/yaptırma gibi kandırma davranışlarında buldukları ( $n = 10$ ), mağdurlara para, özel ders, okuldan atılmama gibi rüşvet veya pekiştirici teklif ettikleri ( $n = 11$ ), sınıf içinde diğer öğrencilerin olayı anlamaması için oyun vb. farklı taktikler kullandıkları ( $n = 6$ ), öğrenciye âşık olduklarını belirtip duygusal yakınlık/flört ilişkisi aracılığıyla Cİ'de buldukları ( $n = 6$ ), kendi odalarının kapısını kilitledikleri ( $n = 6$ ), öğrencileri çeşitli bahanelerle eve götürdükleri ( $n = 4$ ), olayın aralarında sır olarak kalmasını istedikleri ( $n = 3$ ), olayı anlatırsa inanılmayacağına ve dava açacağına dair tehdit ile mağdurları korkutabildikleri ( $n = 3$ ), öğrenci kabul etmediğinde darp etme gibi şiddet davranışları sergiledikleri ( $n = 2$ ) ve ders saatinde öğrenciyi sınıftan alarak odalarında Cİ'de buldukları ( $n = 2$ ) belirlenmiştir. Buna karşın, istismarcının akran veya üst sınıftan bir öğrenci olması durumunda istismarcıların daha çok video, fotoğraf gibi görüntü çekimi ile mağdurlara tehditte ve şantajda buldukları ( $n = 7$ ), kandırma davranışları sergiledikleri ( $n = 4$ ) ve flört ilişkisinden yararlanarak Cİ'de buldukları ( $n = 2$ ) saptanmıştır.

Öğrencilerin %63.8'inin ( $n = 104$ ) sırasıyla aile üyesi, rehber öğretmen, okul yönetimi ve arkadaş gibi bir kişiye olayı anlattığı saptanmıştır. Bildirim sonrası ise okul yönetiminin veya MEB yetkililerinin olumsuz tutum sergilediği 41 haberde (%25.2) belirtilmiş olup, en çok görülen olumsuz tutumun ise adli bildirimde ve idari

işlemlerde bulunmama ( $n = 18$ ) ile okul yönetiminin Cİ bildirimine inanmaması ve istismarcıyı savunması ( $n = 8$ ) olarak aktarılmaktadır.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri:* Bu çalışmada okul ortamında yaşanan Cİ olaylarında mağdurların çoğunluğunun kız öğrenciler olmakla birlikte erkek öğrencilerin de bireysel ve çoklu Cİ'ye maruz kaldıkları, en çok görülen Cİ türünün taciz olduğu, Cİ olaylarının en çok lisede ve ilkokulda yaşandığı, her tür lisede/okul türünde Cİ'nin görülebildiği, olayların çoğunluğunda mağdurların birden fazla olduğu, istismarcıların da aynı mağdura çoğunlukla birden fazla kez istismarda bulunduğu ve Cİ olaylarının en çok okul-İçi bir ortamda yaşandığı belirlenmiştir. Okul-İçi ortamda ise Cİ en çok, sınıfta, kişisel oda, spor salonu, kalorifer dairesi gibi sınıf dışı ıssız/özel bir ortamda meydana gelirken, araç İçi, istismarcının evi, açık alan gibi okul dışı alanlarda da yaşanabilmektedir. Bunlara ek olarak, öğrencilerin yaşadığı Cİ türünün çoğunlukla fiziksel temas içerdiği ve öğrencilerin teşhirciliğe, tecavüze, sözel ve/veya sanal Cİ'ye de maruz kaldıkları belirlenmiştir. Elde edilen bu bilgiler alanyazınla karşılaştırıldığında, Cİ'nin meydana geldiği yer gibi bulgulara dair bilgilerin kısıtlı olduğu; ancak alanyazında da kızların erkeklere göre okul ortamında daha fazla Cİ'ye maruz kaldıklarının (Mototsune, 2015; Ratliff ve Watson, 2014; Shakeshaft ve Cohan, 1995), Cİ'nin okul-İçi ve okul-dışı ortamda meydana geldiğinin (Knoll, 2010; Mototsune, 2015; Shakeshaft ve Cohan, 1995), Cİ'nin devlet, dini ve özel okullarda gerçekleştiğinin ve en çok devlet okullarında yaşandığının (Mototsune, 2015) belirlendiği görülmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, medyada yer alan haberlerinin incelendiği bu çalışma ile okul ortamında yaşanan Cİ'lerin, mağdurlarının ve istismarcılarının özelliğine dair birçok bilgi elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara dayanarak okullarda öğrencilere, öğretmenlere, diğer okul personeline ve ebeveynlere yönelik düzenli aralıklarla Cİ'yi önleme konusunda eğitimler gerçekleştirilebilir. Bu eğitimlerde istismarcı ve mağdur profiline dair bilgiler, hangi davranışların istismar olduğu, hangi davranışların gözlenmesi durumunda Cİ'den şüphelenilmesi gerektiği (örn., öğrenci içeride iken okul yöneticisinin kişisel odasının kapısını kilitlemesi) ve bildirim yapmanın önemi (örn., adli bildirimde bulunmadığı için hapis cezası alan olgular belirtilerek) anlatılabilir. Bununla birlikte, okul yönetiminde bulunan kişilerin de istismarcı olabileceği veya istismarcı öğretmeni veya diğer okul personelini koruyabileceği göz önüne alınarak, MEB bünyesinde okulda yaşanan Cİ iddialarına yönelik açık bir politika oluşturulması sağlanabilir. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada geçmişte Cİ iddiası olan öğretmenlerin yeni atandıkları okulda da Cİ davranışı sergiledikleri görüldüğünden, iddia dahi olsa adli yönden suçsuz bulunana kadar istismarcı öğretmenlerin ve diğer okul personelinin çocuklarla birebir iletişim halinde olmasının engellenmesi gerektiği düşünülmektedir. Bir diğer yönden, bu çalışmada belirlenen ve Cİ'nin gerçekleşebileceği okul içindeki ıssız alanlarda güvenlik önlemleri (örn., kamera) alınabilir ve bu önlemlerin istismarcılar için caydırıcılık oluşturması sağlanabilir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Okul, cinsel istismar, çocukluk dönemi cinsel istismarı, öğretmenin cinsel istismarı, akran cinsel istismarı, okul güvenliği.