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MOTHERHOOD IN THE SHADOW OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT: A PARENTING PATH

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the determinants of child rearing attitudes and behaviors of primary school students' mothers in terms of abuse and neglect comparatively. In the research, study group was selected via Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory followed by in-depth interviews with 17 mothers (9 abusive and 8 non-abusive) whose children between the ages of 6-11, socio-economic income level and education level are low. The data were analyzed by Giorgi's *descriptive phenomenological method*. The data collection process of the study was conducted with semi-structured interview forms. In line with the analyses, six main themes were obtained being *"maternal heritage, characteristics of the mother, maternity identity, parenting relationship, family dynamics, working life and financial opportunities*". Sub-themes differ according to the abusive and non-abusive groups. In line with the findings, sources of mothers' attitudes and behaviors in child rearing were determined, and the contents of the main theme and sub-themes are presented in detail.

Keywords: Motherhood; child abuse, neglect; child rearing attitude

Introduction

Although children's growing in a healthy way in psychological, social and physical terms is the goal and expectation of all societies, children may face negative situations that may prevent them from growing healthily (Kırca, 2006). Children may encounter various adverse situations, which prevent their healthy development. Some of them are deprived from love, care and maintenance they need, some of them are exposed to violence by their parents or caregivers, some of them are seen as labour and some are sexually exploited (Juettner, 2009). These situations, which are defined as "child abuse and neglect", include attitudes and behaviors that negatively affect the physical, developmental and psychological well-being of the child (Kırca, 2006; UNICEF, 2010). Nevertheless, while the family environment in which the foundations of trust are laid, is the place where the child should be supported emotionally, an atmosphere of love should be created and the basic needs must be met, insufficient or harmful approaches are quite hurtful for the child (Corby, 2006). In a study, where all the studies conducted on child abuse and neglect are compiled, family (7.81%) emerges as the least studied group (Bakır & Kapucu, 2016). However, the false/missing information or negative child rearing attitudes of parents are the leading among the risk factors in the experiencing or repetition of child abuse and neglect (Yalçın, Koçak & Duman, 2014). Also, significantly increased sharing, lack of communication and interaction, and stress appearing due to lack of social support are among the factors that trigger the growth of children in unhealthy family environments (Karakaş, Konuk & Çağan, 2007; Özdoğan, 2006). However, in order for individuals to be physically and mentally healthy, the relationship they establish with those who care for them during childhood is very important (Bekçi, 2006).

Parenting attitudes of parents and determinants of these attitudes differ from each other. Researches reveal that the most intense interactions of children starting from birth are with their mothers. According to data obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute (TIK), it is seen that mothers assume more responsibility in rearing children aged 0-5 with a ratio of 89.6 % compared to fathers (TIK, 2015). In this context, permanent traces of the mother's interaction with her child in the development of the child cannot be ignored (Tümkaya, 2012). On the other hand, when the risk factors that may lead to child abuse and neglect are examined, it is seen that the focus is on the mothers and mothers' characteristics (Holden, Willis & Corcoran, 1992). Although some studies have identified the rates of parents' abuse of children with close values (Polat, 2001), it has been determined by researches that mothers have higher child exposure rates (Ceylan, Gözün-Kahraman & Ülker, 2016; Kara-Doruk, 2012). On the other hand, Güler, Uzun, Boztaş and Aydoğan (2002) revealed that mothers' abusive behaviors were related to the high number of children in the family, low education level, spouse substance use, and paired violence. Among the main factors, the fact that the mother is obliged to take care of the child is the main factor in taking the first place in the ranking of the parents who apply the abuse. However, mother's health, support from her environment and family environment are important determinants of child abuse (Bahar, Savaş & Bahar, 2009).

The most important prediction in terms of making progress in preventing child abuse and neglect is increasing the number of studies, aimed at evaluating mothers with their various characteristics, problem areas, past and present life and examining their relationship with their children (Bulut, 1996; Karakaş, Konuk & Çağan, 2007). When the related literature is examined, it is seen that the existing studies are predominantly descriptive and their content is structured regardless of the needs of families and children. In addition, there is a shortage of qualitative studies that thoroughly investigate the process with mothers who abuse their children (Bakır & Kapucu, 2017).

Mothers' upbringing attitudes may differ between cultures and subcultures at the macro level, and between families and individuals at the micro level. The society lived in, socio-economic situations, cultural characteristics and the biography of the mother can be listed among these differences (Öztürk, 2017). While these factors are diversified in this way, it will be important to examine the factors that are considered to be determinants of child rearing attitudes with cultural contexts. Therefore, this study is important in terms of forming mothers' abusive and negligent child rearing attitudes and behaviors based on the need for determining resources specific to our culture. In line with this purpose, qualitative interviews were made individually with two different mother groups, with and without abusive and negligent child-rearing attitudes. Sub-problem created in line with the general purpose of the study is: "How do motherhood attitudes and behaviors, which are or are not abusive and neglect emerge?" Accordingly, in semi-structured interviews, participants were asked questions about their childhood experiences, parenthood, parenting relationship with their spouses, family characteristics and economic situations.

Method

The phenomenological approach as a qualitative research pattern was employed in this research. Accordingly, the research method developed by Giorgi (2009) named "the descriptive phenomenological research pattern", which is based on Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, was used as the research pattern. All procedures performed in the study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee.

Participants

In the study, individual interviews were conducted with a total of 17 mothers (9 abusive and 8 non-abusive). Also, the maximum diversity sampling method, which is one of the most used methods in descriptive phenomenology, which enables to carry out in-depth research, is used (Patton, 2002). In determining the sample, the following criteria were used: "being women, having a low socio-economic income and education level, having children aged between 6-11, being in the low and high abuse risk group in line with the scores obtained from the scale." The participant group was accessed by applying the *Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory* (Yaman & Yüksel, 2019) applied by the researchers to 243 primary school students' mothers. Participants were chosen from among the volunteers who filled out the questionnaire. In line with the scores obtained from the inventory, individual interviews were conducted with mothers with low and high levels of abusive child-rearing attitudes and behaviors. This inventory, which measures attitudes and practices regarding abusive and negligent child-rearing, consists of five sub-dimensions, being "a) expectations from children, b) *empathy regarding children's needs*, c) *use of physical punishment as a disciplinary tool*, d) *parent-child role responsibilities*, e) *children's power and independence*". Scoring of the scale is performed by grading it from 1 to 5. While the scores between 1-4 indicate abusive attitudes and behaviors, those between 4-7 indicate the parenting practices of the general population and the ones between 7-10 represent caring and empathetic approaches (Bavolek & Keene, 2005). The scores were calculated for the averages in accordance with the original of the scale. In this case, it is seen that while the participants coded P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P10, P13, P15, P16 and P17 have abusive and negligent attitudes and practices, participants coded P4, P6, P8, P9, P11, P12 and P14 are not.

Participants' ages range between 27-48 and the number of children varies between 1-4. The highest level of education completed by the participants is high school. Two of the participants are separated from their spouses and the others are married. None of the participants are currently going through a psychological support process. In the research, the names of the participants were stated as "P1, P2, P3,...P17" in order to maintain privacy.

Data Collection

The interviews held within the scope of the research were conducted face to face by the researcher. Interviews were made by making appointments with the participants and voice recordings were taken with their permission. The interviews lasted, on average, 35 to 45 minutes. The data was collected using the semi-structured interview form. Below are some examples of questions used in qualitative interviews: "Which of the behaviours you observe in your own parents do you observe in yourself?", "When you think about your relationship with your child; How do you maintain discipline?", "There is something you want your child to do but he is not doing it. How would you react in that moment?"

Data Analysis

In this study, a phenomenology pattern that examines the phenomena that all participants experienced in common by aiming to describe a concept or an event was used (Creswell, 2013). Also Giorgi's "*descriptive phenomenological pattern*" was used for analyses, the data collection process was provided through semi-structured interview forms, and direct quotations were included to reveal the essence of the participants' feelings, thoughts and experiences. The following steps of descriptive phenomenological analysis were followed in the study (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008): (i) The reading of transcripts/texts obtained from interviews from a phenomenological perspective and reaching an impression regarding the whole phenomenon (ii) differentiating meaning units that reveal different aspects of the whole, (iii) revealing the psychological aspects of the existing situation as much as the content of the narratives allow, (iv) revealing the general structure of the experienced phenomenon. In the study, the texts obtained by putting individual interviews with the group of participants on paper were analyzed with the "MAXQDA" computer program.

Validity and Reliability of Data

In this study, it was tried to provide internal validity via long-term interaction, in-depth data collection, expert's examination and participant's confirmation while external validity was provided through the detailed descriptive and purposeful sampling method. Besides, consistency examination was performed for internal validity and confirmation examination for external validity (Koşar, 2018).

Researcher's Role

Researchers facilitated ensuring objectivity by keeping their feelings and opinions in the background in a controlled way throughout the study. On the other hand, subjective experiences of the researchers constituted a supportive basis in the stages of data analysis and interpretation whereas attention was paid to enabling objectivity by making use of the opinions of different researchers (relevant field experts).

<div align="center">Results</div>

In this study, the narratives of the participants were examined by phenomenological reduction and a general structural description was created. The main themes that appear as a result of the descriptive phenomenological analysis were determined as "*maternal heritage, characteristics of the mother, maternity identity, parenting relationship, family dynamics, working life and financial opportunities*".

Maternal heritage

The abuse narratives from the childhood of participants who abuse and neglect their children have shown that their relations with their parents are characterized by six main areas of challenges: "*oppressive, ungoverned, violent, indifferent, controlling, shouting, angry*". Regarding these negative experiences one of the participants (P1) described her relationship with her parents in her childhood as follows: "*In our environment, there was violence against the child*". Another participant (P7) said: "*My father was very oppressive and controlling. We were afraid of him. My mother was calmer compared to him. She was always the compromiser. When you made a mistake, he would yell and get very angry.*"

It was observed that the participants maintained the negative relationship patterns that they experienced with their parents in their childhood, in their relationships with their own children and had difficulties in controlling themselves. These experiences were characterized with the concept of identification in their own parenthood. A participant (P16), who recalls her relationships with her own parents with negative experiences and applies similar ones to her own child, provided a clear example of this: "*When I did something wrong, my father would foam with rage and get angry at that moment, but he would be quickly placated. But I don't forget my mom's. I remember her screaming and yelling. A yell with a long endless scream*". The same participant expressed one of her approaches towards her own child as: "*There are times when I lose my control. Sometimes I shake him up a few times. I also get angry with myself afterwards but I can't hold myself back either.*"

Regarding the participants who did not expose their children to abuse and neglect, the concept of maternal heritage was reflected in parenthood in two ways: (i) *identification* and (ii) *compensation*. While in the story of non-abusive participants, the identification sub-theme points to the mothers who define their childhood experiences with positive memories, lovingly and try to maintain the same in their own children, the compensation sub-theme reflects mothers who had traumatic experiences in their childhoods, but did not transfer these to their relation with their own child and tried to develop healthy relationship patterns.

The responses of the participants in the non-abusive group, whose stories are characterized by the sub-theme of *identification*, about their childhood experiences are clustered around positive experiences, where there are the concepts "*so beautiful, good, docile, correct, not hitting, strong family ties, patient*". The statement of one of the participants (P8) who stated that her positive childhood experiences were reflected as identification in her own parenthood is as follows: "*They raised us to be very docile, they never beat us. I'm a bit like them when I raise my kids. Because we grew up like that, we are happy with our lives.*"

Non-abusive participants, symbolizing the compensation sub-theme, indicated the existence of (i) *pressure*, (ii) *conservatism*, (iii) *the approaches of getting angry and yelling accompanying getting irritated* and (iv) *neglect* in their relations with their parents. The participants mentioned the parts of these approaches that challenge them and maintained that they try to avoid these in their relationship with their own children (P9): "*When something*

happened, they would yell and slap you. I have never been like that with my children. I saw and I know what it is like, so I won't do it to my children."

Characteristics of the Mother

One of the determinants of abusive attitudes and practices emerged as the characteristics of the mother. Mothers' tendency to abuse was explained as (i) *dysfunctional emotion regulation,* (ii) *insufficient awareness of self-needs,* (iii) *insufficient self-awareness and* (v) *parenting age* in this participant group. On the other hand, in the non-abusive group, these determinants were symbolized with the characteristics (i) *emotion regulation dynamics*, (ii) *openness to development*, (iii) *awareness of self-needs* and (iv) *parenting age characteristics*.

In the stories of the abusive participants, the hardness they experience in *emotion regulation* when they encounter negative situations are accompanied by the reactions of resorting to *violence, anger, intolerance* and *tension*. For example, a participant's (P10) story reveals a clear example of discordant emotion regulation: "*I can not tolerate irritability and injustice, or rather, I cannot bear injustice. I am aware of this, but I cannot fix it. I am aware of it, that is, when they make a mistake, I just sock one.*"

As for the non-abusive participant group, mothers were found to be more successful in organizing their emotions. The perception of a participant (P6), who clearly demonstrates this sub-theme, which is symbolized by the ability to initiate the emotion regulation process, being aware of the emotion experienced, is as follows: "*When I think to myself after getting angry, I can say "why did I do it?" I can question myself. Actually, it is all in our minds. There were times I said it, especially in rearing my first child. But now when I look at it, there is nothing to make a big deal about. If Allah the Almighty granted motherhood to us motherhood, if you have taken this chance, it means this is your responsibility. Now I can realize this, I can stop myself.*"

One of the sub-themes that reflect the personal characteristics of the mother is *awareness of self needs*. This sub-theme functions differently in two groups of participants. It was observed that mothers who abused their children had difficulty in realizing their needs and taking action to meet them. One of the participants (P1) exemplified this as follows: "*You know, I just want my home to be clean, my children to be in a good mood, their outfits to be clean, their food to be complete, there is nothing else I think about*".

On the other hand, it was observed that the non-abusive participants tried to realize their needs and take them into consideration. A participant who stated that she used to keep her own needs in the background before, but this was not good for her and affected her interaction with her children negatively, described the change in her as follows: (P6): "*I can set aside time for myself now, now I even consider attending art and career training courses, I think of attending them, I kind of started going beyond myself. Conflicts may occur when you do not set aside time for yourself.*"

The sub-theme that only occurs in participants in the group with abusive attitudes and practices, and that reflects one of the mother's personal characteristics, has been *insufficient self-awareness*. Before starting an individual interview with a participant, her dialogue with her child was witnessed. An expression of a mother (P3), who says "*Can't you see what you turned me into, how unhappy I am, don't do this to me any more*" to her child because he peed in a pet bottle because the teacher wouldn't let him go to the toilet. Also this participant had these discourses in the interview: "*Self-confident and strong-willed people will always choose to support their children anyway, they won't blame them for the shortcomings and mistakes they see in them and they will lead them*". The discourses here reveal the difference between the interaction of the person with her child and the way of raising the child in her perception.

It was observed that the participants who did not have an abusive attitude had efforts to improve themselves in the child rearing process. These mothers are defines as *openness to development.* They described their efforts to carry out the child rearing process in a healthy way, to improve themselves and to be a better mother as "*reading books, participating in training, trying to come together with educated people*". The story of a participant (P4) who exemplified this effort is as follows: "*I read many books, I try to improve myself, I know more or less how to act.*"

One of the common themes that appears in the abusive participants is the *age of parenting*. The stories of the participants who exposed their children to abuse, relate marrying and becoming a mother at an early age to inexperience, clumsiness, impatience and refer to the age of parenting for abusive practices. For example, a participant (P2) who applied physical violence to her child exemplified her experience as follows: "*I accept that I make mistakes in most things. Unfortunately, this happens when you got married in an early age. I don't know*

whether I should say that these mistakes stem from ignorance".

Maternity Identity

Maternity identity theme, which explains how a person experiences motherhood with cultural codes is characterized by (i) *the meaning attributed to motherhood*, (ii) *the meaning attributed to the child*, (iii) *the behavioral adaptation of the child*.

The Meaning Attributed to Motherhood

The meanings that the participants attributed to motherhood indicate two concepts, being (i) *sublimation* and (ii) *intensive motherhood*.

It was seen that the participants in both groups regarded motherhood as a supreme concept. One of the participants (P5) expressed the example of this as follows: "*Motherhood, child, I think it is superior to everything, even yourself. It is even superior than you; you do everything for him/her. So, for example, you do any kind of sacrifice for him/her. So whether it is marriage or something else, you do it for your child.*"

In the stories of the participants, it was seen that the mother played a central role in the parenting processes. A quotation (P1) that exemplifies that mothers restrict father's participation in parenting with this approach is as follows: "*My dream was to be a very good mother, because we didn't see it in our mother. I am happy when those around me, my relatives for instance say what a good mother I am. Once my neighbor asked me how I could keep up with everything. It takes care of everything whether it's home, food or cleaning and everything about children. You are motivated and do it more then*".

The Meaning Attributed to the Child

The meaning attributed to the child was symbolized with mothers' expectations from their children. The responses of mothers with abusive and negligent attitudes and practices regarding their expectations from their children are clustered around the concepts of (1) *submissiveness*, (2) *applicability of moral identity* and (3) *assertiveness not aimed the mother*.

Submissiveness reflects the expectation of mothers with abusive attitudes and practices from their children to comply with their own rules or the actions they have determined, under the name of responsibility. One participant (P3) states her experience as follows: "*It is like this since his childhood, I sleep and he looks after his brother; for example, he feeds his brother. There are two and a half years between them*".

Whereas *applicability of moral identity* indicates mothers' concerns regarding their children in one aspect in the group with an abusive attitude, on the other hand, it reflects their dreams about their children. Mothers' expectations regarding their children's moral development are found to be categorized by the concepts of (i) *honesty* and (ii) *self-control*. In the stories of non-abusive mothers, regarding the applicability of moral identity, mothers were found to expect their children to be (i) *dutiful*, (ii) *respectful*, (iii) *honest* and (iv) *self-controlled*.

A participant expressed her expectation of *honesty* (P7) with the discourse "*He should be honest, should not lie or hide something*" Another participant (K10) described self-control expectation as "*I want him to be a conscientious person. I would not like him to tread on anyone's toes. I would like him to be in his right mind. To be well-behaved*".

In the *assertiveness not aimed the mother* is one of the expectations of the participants from their children appears as obedience to mother and assertiveness against the outside. The discourse of a participant (P1) who aspires her child to know/defend her rights but yells or resorts to physical violence when she shows this attitude to the mother reflects an example of this: "*My biggest expectation is that she does not interfere with anyone, but she is also insolent so that she can defend herself. I would not like her to be wimpy. She should be able to stand her own feet. I would not like her to gammon. For example, she comes and tells me something and she tells the same thing the second and the third time. If I let her, she may tell it fifty times. I get angry and sock her one.*"

The applicability of moral identity and self-reliance are other concepts that symbolize the meaning attributed to the child in the non-abusive group. Applicability of moral identity was defined with the expectation

of (i) *dutiful child*, (ii) *respect*, (iii) *honesty* and (iv) *self-control* in the group that does not exhibit an abusive attitude. The statement of a participant (P6), which reflects one of the discourses about her children being dutiful, is as follows: "*First of all, that s/he is a dutiful child.*" In addition, the expectation from their children to be respectful, is one of the common perceptions that appear.

An excerpt that reveals this is as follows (P6): "*I would like him to show respect to his parents and the elderly; I think these are the only expectations that parents may have*". The expectation from their children to be honest, is one of the perceptions seen in participant stories (P8): "*I would like her to behave honestly, just as her parents did. I would like /her to steer away from lies*". The statement of a participant (P11), who explains self-control as a child's controlling herself in line with some rules is as follows: "*I think the child should have some rules, know herself, control herself. Not to have any difficulties in the future*". A quote from one of the non-abusive participants (P11) who has an anticipation of self-confidence regarding her children is as follows: "*There is no such thing as everyone in this world will be a teacher or a doctor. I would like her to stand on her own feet even if she has a low status and be self-confident*".

The Behavioral Adaptation of the Child

In the narratives of the participants, it is an important determinant whether the mother's approach to the child matches the expectation in perception. The statement of a participant (P1) who showed physical and verbal violence to her child, indicating that s/he quit the act of abuse and affirmed her relationship with her child when her child acted in accordance with her expectations came to the fore in this regard: "*For example, when they sleep in the evening, they take off their clothes; my son has a very good temper in that sense. He folds up everything including his socks and puts them in their place. For example, when I say her while washing the dishes, he comes immediately and prepares teacups and plates. It became his duty. But they stay at home on Sundays and if she prepares breakfast on Saturday, he prepares it on Sunday. How can there be a problem when things are like this?*" One of the discourses showing how a child who does not act inline with the expectation of her mother, who has abusive approaches can be the source of abuse is as follows (P1): "*I can attack immediately; when she makes me repeat it twice, do it, do it. But nowadays, I turned to the punishment of not going out in any circumstance, not violence. It seems to be a bit better. When they beat each other, I warn them three or four times, and in the fourth one, I sock them both one, by sitting them down*".

In non-abusive participants, it is seen that regarding the behaviors of children that do not comply with expectation, the attitude of acceptance is adopted, and expectations from their children are observed to be associated with temperament features. A quote exemplifying the mother's accepting approach is as follows (P8): "*They will misbehave because they are children; their reactions may also be different because of others, that may also be the case.*" The statement of a participant (P12) who stated that her child has her own temperament characteristics and that she considers this is as follows: "*Every child is different. Because there is a style in which she is raised. If I raised the child myself, this is the way it is now. Anyway, I do not force her to eat, she can do as she likes.*"

Parenting Relationship

This theme reveals the parenting relationship of parents in the child rearing process and how they manage the process. The stories of the participants showed that the parenting relationship is characterized by two main areas: (i) *physical and psychological presence of the father* and (ii) *parental consistency*.

Physical and psychological presence of the father

In participants with abusive attitudes and practices, this sub-theme indicates that the father was not involved in the parenting process or that the process was not shared. The statements of a participant (P1) who defined the father's absence in the parenting process as a situation that kept him from being calm are as follows: "*The most difficult aspects stem from my being alone all the time, my husband's not supporting me in anything. On weekends, my husband usually has breakfast in the morning, and than goes to the outside.*"

The participants, who did not have abusive attitudes and practices, provided examples of statements that showed that fathers took responsibility regarding parenting and that this relieved them (P4): "*Their father shows more concern and I take care of my own business. There were many times when I left my son with his father and he took care of him*"

Parental consistency

The effects of mothers' having different approaches than the father in parenting relationship have been one of the remarkable situations regarding the source of mothers' abusive attitudes. One of the quotations that exemplify this experience is as follows (P10): "*I am one-sided, my husband is someone who says yes to everything. When the father comes, my order, plan is disturbed. This time I yell and do something to the child.*"

In non-abusive participant stories, it was observed that the decision-making processes of parents about their children were more easily shaped. The participant coded (P8) is the clear example of being consistent in the decision-making process on issues regarding children: "*We listen up to the last stage, we decide and act together. When the father arrives in the evening, we make a consultation and we decide together.*"

Family Dynamics

The stories of the participants indicate that (i) *functional appearance of the family structure* and (ii) *age difference of children* are decisive in their relations with their children.

Functional appearance of the family structure

In participants who have abusive attitudes and practices towards their children, the structures of (i) *extended family* and (ii) *extended family with the appearance of nuclear family* were described as features that symbolize the functionality of the family structure.

A participant in the abusive group (P10), who stated that they lived with her mother-in-law, exemplifies how this affects her approach to her child: " *When my children are in conflict, she tries to intervene before me and she says "he is small, he does not understand anything." She says this when the child is also there. And I get tougher against my child to show myself*".

The theme of extended family with the appearance of nuclear family, which was revealed in the story of the abusive group, reflects the decisiveness of the family elders (grandparents) in the family's decision-making processes, even if one does not live in the same house with them. This situation increases the oppressive attitudes of the participants in their maternity. The participant coded (P5) explained that the grandmother who was living in the same neighborhood looked after her child because she worked and explained the aspects of this, which harmed her relationship with her child in the words: "*Her grandmother looks after my child in her own home. She has a set of rules and she expects us to do similar things at home. Sometimes I look and see that she teaches things that I don't want my child to know. I am afraid to tell this to my mother-in-law. This time I put pressure on my child, I assault her*".

Age Difference of Children

In the stories of the participants, the effect of the age difference between the children was pronounced rather than the number of children in the abusive practices. One participant (P3) expressed the difficulty of having children with ages close to each other as follows: "*When the number of children with ages so close to each other increased, I started to get insufficient. I started not being able to control myself, my nerves. If there was time in between, I would also have become experienced.*"

While the mothers in the non-abusive group emphasized that they were novice in the first child, they stated that their approach styles differed positively with their children born after 5-6 years (P17): "*The second child was even more different; now, my current opinion is even not like it was with the second child. As a person grows, s/he can really understand this much better.*"

Work Life and Financial Opportunities

In the stories of the participants in the abusive group, that there are intense working hours and a low standard of living together with economic difficulties have negatively affected the approach to children. The perception of one of the participants (P2), where the times of economic distress are shown to be among the reasons for the harming of family relations, are as follows: "*A little economic well-being is really important. If*

you have taken all the load upon yourself, and even beyond that you are economically collapsing, it is very hard. It's always an environment of tension." A participant with long working hours (P15) exemplifies the effects of this situation on parenthood as follows: "*I work very hard. I am tired when I go home, I cannot stand a sound. Then I take it out on the ones around me*."

It is among the common perceptions that material opportunities are not decisive in the approach to the child in the stories of non-abusive participants. The statement of one of the participants (P11) is a clear example of this: "*My husband is a factory worker, I am not working. We don't have a lot of income, but thank goodness we're getting along. We don't get so stressed*".

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, individual interviews were conducted with the mothers in order to reveal the determinants of abused and non-abused motherhood. The findings that emerged within the scope of the research were discussed under a common roof, and syntheses for similarities and differences were introduced. As a result of the analysis, it was confirmed that the results obtained from the inventory and the qualitative interviews of the mothers were consistent. In other words, these experiences of mothers with and without abusing attitudes and behaviors have also shown themselves in the interviews and sounding has been deepened with questions.

Considering the prevalence of child abuse and neglect and its negative effects on children, it is necessary to identify risky situations and their sources first. Many studies emphasize that children who have been abused by their biological parents are mostly abused by their mothers (Ceylan, Gözün-Kahraman & Ülker, 2016; Sedlak et al., 2010; Yılmaz-Irmak, 2012). In the related literature, low socio-economic income level is one of the important risk factors in abusive parenting approaches (Horton & Cruise, 2001; Stith, Liu, Davies, Boykin, Alder & Harris, 2009). The participants of this study were also selected from mothers with low socio-economic income. Considering that the income level is one of the determining factors in abuse, it was examined how the experiences of those who had the same income level and with and without an abusive attitude differed. The mothers' narratives point to some determinants in the origin of maternity attitudes and behaviors. As indicated in findings section, main themes are defined as *maternity heritage, characteristics of the mother, maternity identity, parenting relationship, family dynamics, working life* and *financial opportunities*.

The theme of maternity heritage consists of the theme "*identification*" in the abusive group identification and the themes *identification* and *compensation* in the non-abusive group. Mothers who have abusive and negligent attitudes and practices have described their relationship with their parents with negative experiences, being *pressure, violence, indifference, controlling, yelling* and *getting angry*. It has been observed that they pursue the negative relationship patterns that they experienced in their childhood with their children. The results of many studies have revealed that the exposure of a parent to abuse in his/her childhood or his/her witnessing it has increased the rate of his/her exposure of his/her own child to abuse (Başbakkal & Baysal, 2004; Berhman & Kliegman, 2002; Reyome, 2010). In the non-abusive group, it was observed that those who defined their childhood experiences with positive characteristics maintained a similar attitude regarding their own children. It is observed that those who have negative relationship patterns in their childhood tend to compensate them and establish healthy relations with their children.

Emotion regulation in the stories of the participants in the abusive group was characterized by difficulties in regulating the negative emotions felt in the face of any situation/event in daily life depending on the current situation. Here, the difficulties experienced by mothers in controlling themselves when faced with negative situations, bring along the reactions of resorting to violence, irritability, intolerance and tension. One of the common perceptions in the life of the participants in the abusive group is that they cannot control their anger while engaging in violent acts to their children. The stories of non-abusive participants indicate that they can regulate their own feelings, develop strategies to cope or struggle for these in the face of negative situations in their lives. The dysfunctional emotion regulation ability is also among the risk factors in abuse in other studies (Reyome, 2010; Soykan, 2003; Tuna, 2010). Without a mother as an effective regulator, emotions are difficult to manage effectively.

In the narratives of mothers in the non-abusive group, unlike the other group, it was seen that they were oriented towards attending trainings and reading books for the sake of improving themselves. Each of these supportive steps paves the way for parents who are informed about abuse to be able to protect their children more safely (Xie, Qiao & Wang, 2015). Because abusive parenting is associated with insufficient knowledge of child

rearing or its dysfunctional use (Mammen, Kolko & Pilkonis, 2003).

One of the concepts that symbolize the personal characteristics of the mother in the story of the participants is awareness of self needs. Participants in the group who did not expose their children to abuse talked about the positive effects of noticing their needs and doing something to meet them both on themselves and their interactions with their children. In the abusive group, there is inefficacy in recognizing self-needs. On the one hand, they argue that housework and basic care of children are above all else, and on the other hand they talk about their fatigue, stress and anger bursts. While the disruption of balance between the two is a risk factor in abuse, achieving balance is the determinant of a healthy mother-child interaction (Barth, 2009). At this point, there is the need to develop skills of providing effective self-support, facing emotions, and changing emotion intensity. Both participant groups emphasized the negative effects of getting married at an early age on their own parenthood by associating it with inexperience, clumsiness and impatience.

In the studies that examine the relationship between the age of the abuser and exposure to abuse, it is seen that the probability of exposure to abuse by young parents is higher, especially in mothers. Here, the inadequacy of the mothers' ability to recognize the needs of the children and to respond according to their needs is encountered (Black, Heyman & Smith-Slep, 2001; Mersky, Berger, Reynolds & Gromoske, 2009). In addition, mothers with social support areas were found to have low levels of exposure to abuse (Mersky, Berger, Reynolds & Gromoske, 2009).

The participants in both groups define motherhood as a supreme concept and state that they love their children. However, despite their intense love, they can expose their child to abuse. On the other hand, in the stories of the participants, it was seen that the mother preferred to play a central role in parenting processes and liked it. And this shows that the father's participation in parenting is determined by the mother by encouragement or restriction. However, that the mother is the one responsible for taking care of the child and inadequate support are among the main risk factors in mothers' taking the first place in the ranking of parents who apply abuse (Bahar, Savaş & Bahar, 2009).

The inadequacy of empathy, which is a prerequisite for an effective parenting, is encountered in abusive attitudes and parents with weak empathy skills are found to expose their children to abuse more (Müderrisoğlu, Dedeoğlu, Akço & Akbulut, 2014). In the findings of the study, that the expectations of abusive mothers regarding their children were not met by their children was found to trigger abuse. In this context, if the child's actions are in line with the expectations of the mother, the mother likes the child and the child is described by positive characteristics.

When the child's actions diverge from the expectation of the mother, this situation can constitute the source of abuse. On the other hand, it is like an extension of the compensation mechanism that parents could not fulfill by themselves that the children "can stand on their own feet, defend their right and not be wimp," which the participants list among their expectations from their children. However, these inappropriate expectations trigger the pressure on the child. Factors such as the child's incompatibility with expectations and disappointments can be the determinant of parents' abusive and negligent attitudes (World Health Organization, 2010).

Uncertainties in the role distribution of the parents in the family or a parent's taking on more responsibility may lead to abuse with increased stress (Martinez, Figueiredo & Albiol, 2014). AÇEV's (2017) comprehensive report on Turkey about fatherhood and its determinants revealed that despite the reduction in gender hierarchy in recent years, the roles of women and men, therefore mothers and fathers have not exactly been balanced yet and mothers have more roles in child care than fathers. Although the research results of Müderrisoğlu, Dedeoğlu, Akço & Akbulut (2014) reveal that father's taking responsibility for domestic work does not make a significant difference in neglect and abuse, in this study, the mothers stated that the burden on them decreased with the support they received from their spouses and they were able to calm down by creating the opportunity to spare time for themselves.

In the approach to the child, the fact that the mother and father have different attitudes and are not consistent, that the mother's own authority is weakened, this causes her to feel that she is not approved and she tries to establish this authority with the pressure or violence she orientates towards her child. In the relevant article, although the importance of consistency of parents in the approach to the child is emphasized (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005), it is important to investigate which dynamics it feeds in the parenting relationship and to raise parents' awareness in this regard.

In decision-making processes the extended family structure or the nuclear-looking extended family

structure are elements that increase the tension of mothers in the abusive group and affect their approaches to their children negatively. This situation especially increases the oppressive attitudes of the participants in their motherhood. According to Tuna (2010), one of the important risk factors of child abuse is family and family characteristics (Tuna, 2010). It is observed that abuse rates are higher in large families (Horton & Cruise, 2001). On the other hand, the state of inability to control indicates dysfunctional coping methods (Tower, 2005) and inadequate problem solving skills (Tuna, 2010). In addition, it is known that there is a high level of conflict in home environments where the role structure in families is unstable and there is less communication within the family, and that the parent-child relationship increases parallel to the increasing communication in the family (Stith et al., 2009).

It is seen that in the tense relation forms established with the children of the abusive participants, work life and financial opportunities are emphasized. It has been demonstrated in many studies that the level of stress and social support in the work and family environment and low living standards pose a risk regarding child abuse (Demiriz & Öğretir, 2007; Peltonen, Ellonen, Pösö & Lucas, 2014). In the study of Erkan & Toran (2004), it is observed that mothers with low socio-economic level are mothers who are more protective, do not accept the role of motherhood, are difficult to get along in a family environment and follow strict discipline methods. However, although the socio-economic income level is low, it was seen that this was not something that would affect approach to the child in the story of mothers who were not in the abusive group. Since it is understood that every parent with a high level of stress does not abuse their child, it is necessary to reveal in detail what other factors pose risk to parents besides stress.

As a result of this study, we are faced with the need to prepare qualified educational programs considering the needs and the cultural properties of the families, with the aim of minimizing the effects of negative environmental conditions on children, contributing to the awareness of mothers in child development and education, increasing their self-awareness and supporting the families. One of the important contributions of the study to the field is that it points to a discrepancy between the perception of motherhood and maternity performance. This study is important in terms of revealing the need for redefining the themes of love and communication in mother-child relation in line with the needs and expectations of the child and structuring parenting rearing practices by considering the needs of the child.

Although researches have been conducted regarding parental attitudes and their possible effects on the child, it is seen that the studies are generally conducted by quantitative research method. Therefore, this study is important in that it reflects cultural codes and treats mothers' parenting attitudes and practices in depth. The findings of this study may also contribute to the evaluation of the mother-child and parenting relationships in collectivist culture. It is thought that conducting similar studies with different participant groups considering the mothers' age, the number of children in the family and the diversity of the family's structures will contribute to the field. On the other hand, findings from this study point to a number of needs related to possible prevention programs organized at schools for mothers to prevent abuse and negligent child-rearing attitudes. The areas that need to be emphasized in the content of the trainings to be presented are in the participants' story are "reflection of mothers' childhood attachment patterns and relationships with their parents to their own parenthood, identification or compensatory mechanisms, emotion regulation skills, awareness of self-needs, parenting relationship, physical and psychological availability of the father, family dynamics, working conditions and materiality".

Despite all these contributions, the research has several limitations. There is a linear relationship between mothers taking on responsibilities and spending more time with the child as the main person responsible for caring for the child and exposing their children to physical, emotional abuse and neglect. However, there are many factors that determine mothers' parenting attitudes and they need to be handled from a systemic point of view. In addition, it is thought that it is important to examine the risk factors related to fathers in detail in child abuse and neglect in more comprehensive studies. The working group of this research was selected among the mothers whose children go to primary school. However, despite all the diversity of data, it is possible to reach a theoretical reality regarding maternal attitudes and behaviors with a structure that encompasses all social and cultural differences. As a result of the findings, it is seen as a compulsory need to prepare qualified educational programs by school counselors that will be developed by taking into account the mothers' parenting needs and cultural characteristics. In programs to be organized for mothers, focusing on the goal of how to develop maternal potentials can be a preparatory for qualified planning.

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