



*International Journal of Eurasia Social Sciences*  
Vol: 10, Issue: 35, pp. (354-366).

Research Article

Received: 16.07.2018 Accepted: 14.02.2019

## VALIDITY and RELIABILITY STUDY OF THE SCALE FOR EMOTIONAL ABUSE POTENTIAL OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGED 3 TO 6

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a measurement tool for measuring the emotional abuse potentials of parents having children at the age of 3-6 and to investigate parents' emotional abuse potentials based on some variables. The study group consists of 357 parents having children at the age of 3-6 for developing the measurement tool. The parents included in the study group were selected through homogenous sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method. First, an item tool was created for the measurement tool. Then the items were examined by domain experts. The content validity index (CVI) of the items contained in the measurement tool was found to be over .80, thereby ensuring content validity. Prior to the factor analysis, Bartlett's test result was found to be ( $p=.000$ ) and KMO value was found to be .97 for data fitness. These results indicated the sampling size to be excellent and the data to be fit for factor analysis. At the end of the exploratory factor analysis, the measurement tool was determined to consist of 50 items and two factors. The first sub-dimension (causal) consists of 29 items and accounts for 31.8% of the total variance. The second sub-dimension (preventive) consists of 21 items and accounts for 28% of the total variance. The fit indices obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis were also detected to be highly acceptable. The internal consistency coefficient is .96 for the "causal" and "preventive" sub-dimensions. The internal consistency coefficient obtained for the entire scale is .97. The obtained findings demonstrated that the measurement tool is a valid and reliable measuring the emotional abuse potentials of parents having children at the age of 3-6.

**Keywords:** Emotional abuse, child, preschool, parent, scale.

## INTRODUCTION

There are five forms of abuse towards children. These are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation (WHO, qtd. in Özgentürk, 2014). Considering emotional abuse in detail, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was enacted in 1974 in the USA. In this act, emotional abuse is under the category of mental harm (Kocaer, 2006). To Karakurt and Silver (2013), researchers have difficulty in measuring emotional abuse due to the complexity underlying emotional abuse. There are certain hardships in defining and distinguishing emotional abuse (Buser and Buser, 2013).

To call a situation emotional abuse, this situation needs to be considered based on preestablished emotional abuse indicators. Hence, it is important to reveal the sources of these indicators. Revealing the sources of indicators requires interviews with childreteachers, and parents. There are steps to be taken after understanding the source of the problem. These steps need to be followed (Yolcu, 2009). Emotional abuse may refer to shouting at, humiliating, and swearing a child as well as leaving him/her alone, expecting more responsibilities than s/he can bear, and discrimination among siblings (Demir, 2012). What emotional abuse stands for changes depending on the culture as well. There is a need to make an evaluation of the behaviors manifested by parents that are considered as emotional maltreatment based on cultural norms. The most frequent forms of emotional abuse are as follows: insult, ridicule, nicknaming, threatening, shouting, not recognizing, putting on pressure, humiliation, accusing, and comparing to others (Özgentürk, 2014). Teachers' shouting at students, ridiculing and nicknaming them, threatening by violence, not recognizing them, putting certain students at the back rows all the time (...) can be examples of emotional abuse (Yolcu, 2009).

Emotional abuse or psychological trauma may occur on its own or be accompanied by sexual abuse (Yağmur, 2008). To Çağlarımak (2006), sexual and physical abuse leads to emotional abuse. While such actions are taking place, the subjects can be exposed to emotional abuse as well. Sakar, Akça and Bozkurt (2017) argue that emotional abuse is at the center of all forms of abuse. Therefore, the period of influence of emotional abuse is much longer other forms of abuse. This influences one's personality and academic success negatively (Sarıbeyoğlu, 2007).

To Gibb, Chelminski and Zimmerman (2007), emotional abuse in childhood leads to more depressive cognitions in the abused person compared to sexual and physical abuse. As put by Crow, Cross, Powers and Bradley (2014), knowing that emotional abuse is associated with both emotional dysregulation and depression is the first step to understand the development of depression. Sakar et al., (2017) found out that as pre-service teachers' perceived abuse levels increase, their psychological well-being levels decrease. To Crow et. al. (2014), types of maltreatment towards children including emotional abuse leads to disengagement from healthy emotion regulation skills within the context of caretaker sensitivity. There is an association between high-level emotional abuse as a childhood trauma and bipolar disorder (Etain et al., 2012).

Walker et al. (1997) argue that there is more emphasis on sexual and physical abuse, yet there is no comprehensive perspective regarding the issue. Adults experience negative influences of emotional abuse as well. While some adults are exposed to emotional abuse in the family environment, others are exposed to it in the working environment. Moreover, both genders are exposed to emotional abuse. To Karakurt, Kristin and Silver (2013), emotional abuse is more common among young people. As the age gets older, the rate of being exposed to emotional abuse decreases. Maneta, Cohen, Schulz and Waldinger (2014) argue that individuals' being exposed to emotional abuse in childhood influences their marriages and partner satisfaction in the later periods. The communication a child has within the family affects his/her all areas of development and plays an important role in his/her compliance with the society. Children growing up in an environment where emotional needs such as love and trust are met turn out to be healthy and happy individuals. On the other hand, children who are abused and neglected, deprived of love and interest display certain behavioral problems. In this process, parents employ different methods and techniques to discipline the child. Some parents, whether consciously or not, perform physical punishment on their children; some deprive the child from something they like; some perform verbal violence; and others believe that they can discipline the child by neglecting them. Some of these attitudes and behaviors displayed by parents are classified as abuse. The influence of emotional abuse, referring to parents' or other close adults' expectations and requests from the child at a level above his/her capabilities and displaying aggressive behaviors, may manifest itself throughout one's life. Children who are constantly criticized and humiliated by their parents and whose need for love and interest are not met grow up to have passive characteristics without self-confidence and display anti-social behaviors. Moreover, emotional abuse may have negative influence on children's physical and mental developments. As a result, it affects children's personality and success negatively.

Social and traumatic dimensions of the child abuse and neglect, plays an important role benefits of the new generation on the society. These negative behaviors towards children should be prevented, risk groups should be determined and necessary precautions should be taken. When investigate the literature, it is possible to come across a lot measurement tools about the abuse have been developed. The Domestic Conflict Index (DCI) (Margolin et al. 1989), Psychological Maltreatment Inventory (PMI) (Kasian and Painter, 1992), Composite Abuse Scale (Hegarty, Sheehan and Schonfeld, 1999), Child Abuse and Trauma Scale (Kent and Waller, 1998), Child Sex Abuse Attitude Scale ( Ferrara, 1999), The Abuse Disability Questionnaire (McNamara and Fields, 2001), Childhood Experience of care and Abuse Questionnaire (Smith, et al., 2002), Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale ( Peters, 2008) some of them (qtd; Ersanlı, Yılmaz and Özcan, 2013).

It has been many developed and adapted measuring tools about abuse in Turkey. Emotional Maltreatment Scale in Adult-Young Relationships (Alantar and Erkman, 1989). (Öner and Sucuoğlu, 1994), Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (Aslan and Alparlan, 1999), Child Abuse and Neglect Information Form (Judge, Tutkun and Shar, 1994), Problem Solving Scale in Relationships (Kalkan, 2008), Mobbing Exposure Level Questionnaire (Koç and Bulut, 2009), Emotional Abuse Awareness Scale (Uslu et al., 2010), Perceived Emotional Abuse Scale (Ersanlı, Yılmaz and Özcan 2013). It is seen that the developed measurement tools contain physical, sexual and

emotional abuse dimensions and they are usually addressed the older age groups or the 0-18 age group. What is remarkable is the lack of an emotional exploitation scale for parents of preschool children.

One of the most important difficulties in investigating the subject of abuse is the lack of adequate assessment tools. The difficulty of getting the right information about the subject is the most important reason for this. Abuse and neglect of children are mostly carried out by their families. Only 57.9 % are reported by professionals such as teachers, police, lawyers or social workers in contact with the child (Taner and Gökler, 2004). The fact that parents have difficulties in obtaining information makes it difficult to evaluate the studies related to abuse. For this reason, the awareness level of the parents' behavior towards children is the first step of the measures to be taken. Because parents may not be aware of how much their behavior hurts to children, and they can characterize these behaviors as traditional. In this study, it is aimed to develop a measurement tool to provide early intervention in cases of emotional abuse applied to children aged 3-6 and to contribute to the rearing of more healthy generations.

Depending on these influences of emotional abuse, it is possible to say that it is very common but there are many problems to detect and report it. Not knowing emotional abuse increases the risk of performing this form of abuse. Previous studies show that the rate of emotional abuse in Turkey ranges from 10% to 53% (Gümüş, 2009). Moreover, it is seen that there is no scale aimed at revealing the potential of emotional abuse among parents having children in preschool period. Taking into account the negative effects of emotional abuse on children, parents need to be aware of emotional abuse, and there is a need for a scale to measure parents' potential of emotional abuse to help guidance services to be received.

## **METHOD**

In this study, a measurement tool will be developed to determine the parents' emotional abuse potential. The scale development process is structured according to the stages of Devellis. In this context Devellis's (2014) scale development principles and process steps can be summarized as follows:

- To determine the structure to be measured by literature review
- Determination of the type of measurement (scale type) and creation of the item pool
- Evaluation of the item pool by experts
- Implementation of the Draft Scale at the sampling
- Data analysis and finalization of the scale

### **Study Group**

The literature was reviewed to determine the size of the study group with which "The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6" would be tested for validity and reliability. According to the literature on the items and respondents ratio, there should be 3 to 6 people for each item according to Cattell (1978), at least 5 people for each item according to Gorsuch (1983), and at least 10 people for each item

according to Everitt (1975). Jinchul (2004) argues that there should be more than 5 people for each item. There are 65 items in the scale in total. Based on the information provided, 357 parents were included in the validity and reliability study. 257 of the parents (68%) are mothers while 100 (32%) are fathers.

The mothers and fathers included in the study were selected through homogenous sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method. Homogenous sampling involves only people with certain pre-defined characteristics in the study (Ekiz, 2013). The present study consists only of parents with children aged 3 to 6 and attending a preschool education institution.

### **Development of the Scale**

Initially, a literature review was conducted to prepare "The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6", and the scales and questionnaires developed and adapted in previous studies were analyzed. Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) (Tolman, 1999), The Domestic Conflict Index (DCI) (Margolin, Burman and John., 1989), Emotional Abuse Scale in Adult-Adolescent Relationships (Alantar and Erkman, 1989), Psychological Maltreatment Inventory (PMI) (Kasian and Painter, 1992), Composite Abuse Scale (Hegarty, Sheehan and Schonfeld, 1999), Child Abuse and Trauma Scale (Kent and Waller, 1998), Child Sex Abuse Attitude Scale (Ferrara, 1999), Child Abuse Potential Scale (Öner and Sucuoğlu, 1994), Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (Aslan and Alparslan, 1999), Information Form for Child Abuse and Neglect (Yargıç; Tutkun and Şar, 1994), The Abuse Disability Questionnaire (McNamara and Fields, 2001), Childhood Experience of Care and Abuse Questionnaire (Smith, et al., 2002), Domestic Violence Myth Acceptance Scale (Peters, 2008), The Problem-Solving in Romantic Relationships Scale (Kalkan, 2008), Mobbing Experience Level Scale (Koç and Bulut, 2009), Abuse Awareness Scale (Uslu et al., 2010), and Emotional Abuse Perceived Scale (Ersanlı, Yılmaz and Özcan 2013) were reviewed. These scales were helpful in writing items while developing the scale in relation to emotional abuse potential.

After the literature review, parents having children aged from 3 to 6 (n=50) to represent the target group were interviewed about their behaviors towards their children to develop the scale items that would detect parents' potentials of emotional abuse towards their children aged 3 to 6. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed through content analysis. The expressions relevant to emotional abuse were added to the item pool. The items have 5-point Likert-type rating as follows: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Usually (4), Always (5). While writing the items, we paid attention to having items written in a plain and clear form. We also paid attention to having equal number of positive and negative expressions. Lastly, we tried to ensure that the items do not cover more than one view/emotion and idea.

### **Content Validity**

Content validity shows whether or not the items included in a measurement tool are qualitatively and quantitatively adequate to measure the characteristic intended to be measured (Büyüköztürk, 2010). One of the

ways of testing content validity is asking expert opinion. Davis' technique was used for evaluating the expert opinions. According to this technique, expert opinions rate the items on the following four-point basis: (a) relevant, (b) requiring minor revision, (c) requiring major revision, and (d) not relevant. Index of Content Validity (CVI) is obtained by dividing the number of the experts ranking (a) relevant and (b) requiring minor revision by the total number of the experts. A CVI of .80 is acceptable (Davis, 1992; qtd. in Taşkın and Akat, 2010). In this regard, 70 items prepared for the measurement tool were submitted for the opinions of one Turkish language expert, one assessment and evaluation expert, and three preschool education experts. Based on the expert opinions, five items were removed from the measurement tool. 65 items remained in the measurement tool. The items in the measurement tool were seen to have a CVI over .80. The obtained findings indicate that the measurement tool has content validity.

### **Construct Validity**

Construct validity is about how correctly the prepared scale items measure the determined characteristics (Tavşancıl, 2009; Büyüköztürk, 2010). One way to ensure construct validity is factor analysis. The measurement tool prepared in the scale development process is administered to an unbiased sample selected from the population. Factor analysis is made through scoring of the responses to the items. Based on the analysis results, the items are removed from or added to the measurement tool, and the analysis is repeated. By this means, the measurement tool is finalized (Karakoç and Dönmez, 2014).

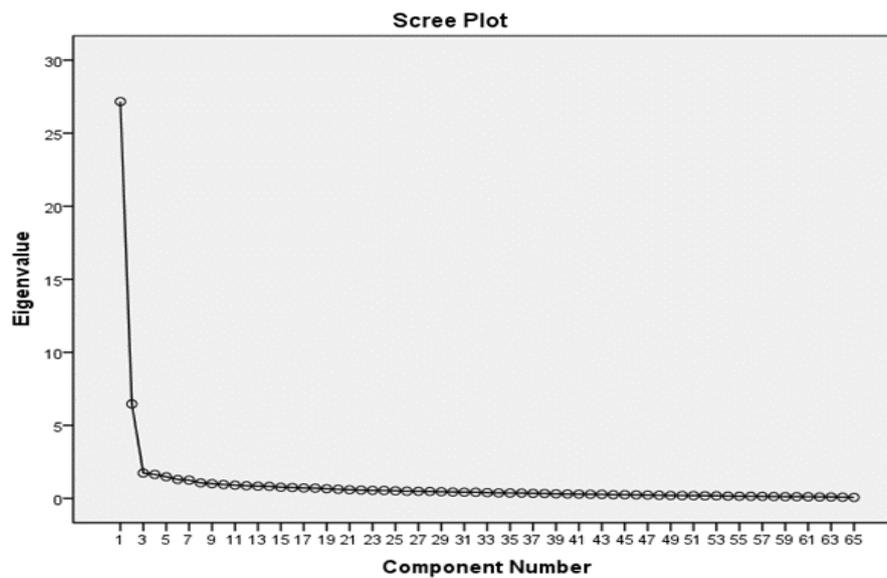
Exploratory factor analysis was made to determine the factor constructs of "The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6" in order to ensure its validity. Then confirmatory factor analysis was carried out to test the correctness of the constructs obtained through the exploratory factor analysis.

## **FINDINGS (RESULTS)**

### **Findings About Validity**

Before starting factor analysis for "The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6", Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's sphericity tests were conducted to determine the fitness of the data. The KMO value was found to be .97, and the Bartlett's test result was found to be ( $p=.000$ ). While a KMO value over .80 indicates a perfect sample size,  $p=.000$  as Barlett's sphericity test result shows the fitness of the data for factor analysis (George and Mallery, 2003).

The exploratory factor analysis showed the scale to have two factors with an eigenvalue over 1. These two factors explain 51% of the variance. Scree plot concerning these factors is given in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Scree Plot Graphic

15 items with a factor item loading less than .50 were removed from the analysis. Accordingly, the number of the items in the measurement tool decreased from 65 to 50. With the number of factors limited to two, exploratory factor analysis was repeated. The exploratory factor analysis results for the measurement tool are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Factor Structure and Factor Loadings of the Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6

Item	Factor 1		Factor 2		t*** Value
	EFA**	CFA*	EFA	CFA	
I4	.580	.60			12.38
I8	.634	.69			14.63
I11	.680	.70			14.96
I14	.644	.63			13.19
I15	.756	.80			18.06
I16	.545	.55			11.24
I18	.776	.76			16.77
I21	.554	.56			11.28
I22	.750	.71			15.28
I23	.778	.79			17.81
I24	.552	.48			9.56
I25	.771	.76			16.90
I27	.719	.74			16.23
I28	.754	.79			17.66
I35	.709	.74			16.08
I37	.557	.50			18.10

I38	.794	.80	18.10
I44	.710	.70	17.48
I45	.707	.78	14.45
I49	.773	.78	15.27
I52	.722	.60	12.39
I53	.729	.82	18.68
I54	.565	.64	12.39
I55	.602	.60	16.80
I57	.787	.84	17.23
I60	.651	.76	16.84
I62	.833	.76	19.73
I63	.818	.77	16.84
I64	.777	.77	19.57
The variance explained 31.8%			
I6	.728	.69	14.63
I7	.773	.71	15.45
I9	.805	.70	14.96
I10	.724	.80	18.25
I12	.697	.55	13.19
I13	.619	.63	11.24
I17	.571	.76	16.77
I29	.808	.74	16.08
I30	.846	.85	19.74
I31	.828	.50	9.93
I32	.844	.80	18.10
I36	.582	.65	11.27
I39	.821	.82	17.48
I40	.838	.78	17.48
I47	.683	.52	10.15
I50	.700	.60	18.68
I51	.822	.82	18.68
I56	.714	.84	19.57
I58	.818	.77	10.52
I61	.582	.76	16.84
I65	.761	.76	16.84
The variance explained 28%			

\*The factor loadings for the exploratory factor analysis

\*\*The factor loadings for the confirmatory factor analysis

\*\*\*T values giving the significance of the factor loadings estimated through CFA

According to the EFA results, the first sub-scale consists of 29 items and explains 31.8% of total variance. The factor loadings of the items in the first sub-scale vary from .83 to .54. The second sub-scale consists of 21 items and explains 28% of total variance. The factor loadings vary from .83 to .57. "The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6" has a two-factor structure. While the first factor is named as behaviors supporting emotional abuse potential, the second factor is named as behaviors preventing emotional abuse potential.

CFA was made to test the correctness of the structure obtained through EFA. The findings concerning CFA indicate that the factor loadings of the items in the first factor vary from .84 to .48 while the factor loadings of the items in the second factor vary from .50 to .85. T values obtained through CFA demonstrate that t values in the first factor vary from 9.56 to 19.73, and t values in the second factor vary from 9.93 to 19.57. That the calculated t values are greater than 1.96 shows significance at .05 level, and that the calculated t values are greater than 2.58 shows significance at .01 level (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2000; Kline, 2011). In light of this information, the items in the measurement tool are significant at .01 level and compatible with the model.

To reveal the adequacy of the model tested in CFA, chi-square goodness, non-normed fit index (NNFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were examined. The fit indices obtained through the analyses are indicated in Table 2. The table demonstrates that the fit indices obtained from CFA are highly acceptable.

**Table 2.** CFA Fit Indeks

The Fitness Indices Examined	Excellent Fitness	Acceptable Fitness	The fitness indices obtained from CFA
$\chi^2/sd$	$0 \leq \chi^2/sd \leq 2$	$2 \leq \chi^2/sd \leq 3$	2.18
CFI	$.95 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$.90 \leq CFI \leq .95$	.99
NFI	$.95 \leq NFI \leq 1.00$	$.90 \leq NFI \leq .95$	.97
NNFI	$.97 \leq NNFI \leq 1.00$	$.95 \leq NNFI \leq .97$	.99
RMSEA	$.00 \leq RMSEA \leq .05$	$.05 \leq RMSEA \leq .08$	.05

### Findings about Validity

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to obtain findings concerning the reliability of the 50-item "The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6". The internal consistency coefficient is .96 for the "Causal" and "Preventive" sub-dimensions. The internal consistency coefficient obtained for the entire scale is .97. The obtained findings indicate that the measurement tool is a reliable one to measure the emotional abuse potentials of parents with children aged 3 to 6.

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In the present study, a 50-item measurement tool composed of two sub-dimensions (“causal” and “preventive”) was developed to determine the emotional abuse potentials of parents with children aged 3 to 6. The measurement tool was found to be valid and reliable.

“The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6” is a measurement tool with two sub-dimensions developed to measure the emotional abuse potentials of parents with children aged 3 to 6. The “causal” sub-dimension measures parents’ behaviors causing emotional abuse towards their children. This sub-dimension consists of 29 items. The lowest score to be obtained from this dimension is 29, while the highest score is 145. There is no reversely scored item in the “causal” sub-dimension. Higher scores show parents’ high potential to display emotional abuse towards their children. The “preventive” sub-dimension of the measurement tool consists of items about parents’ preventing emotional abuse towards their children. The “preventive” sub-dimension contains 21 items. All the items are reversely scored. The lowest score to be obtained from this dimension is 21, while the highest score is 105. Higher scores show parents’ high potential to prevent emotional abuse towards their children.

As to the reliability coefficients of the scale, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients of the “causal” and “preventive” sub-dimensions were calculated to be .96, and the entire scale was found to have a reliability coefficient of .97. The EFA and CFA results also indicate that the measurement tool is valid. Based on all these findings, it can be said that “The Scale for Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Children Aged 3 to 6” is a valid and reliable measurement tool. We think that evaluating the emotional abuse potentials of parents with children aged 3 to 6 is important to light the way for research on emotional abuse.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on these findings, studies can be conducted to measure the levels of emotional abuse of pre-school children. In line with the findings, trainings can be given to families on how can they behave. In this respect, the effectiveness of the measurement tool can be tested by making studies on different models.

## Acknowledgement

A part of this study was presented as oral presentation at 10th International Education Research Congress.

This study was made from the project no. SYO019001.17.001 supported by Hitit University Scientific Research Projects Unit.

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