

THE ROLE OF CHILD ABUSE AND GENDER ON LONELINESS AMONG  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Science

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## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE OF CHILD ABUSE AND GENDER ON LONELINESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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The main aim of the present study was to examine how well child abuse and gender could predict the loneliness of university students. There were 549 university students (189 male and 360 female) from Atatürk University who voluntarily participated in the research. The participants were selected through convenience sampling method. UCLA Loneliness Scale and The Scale of Child Abuse in the Family and demographic information form were utilized in paper-pencil format to the participants. A multiple linear regression was applied to test the research question. The results suggested that there was a significant relationship between loneliness, child abuse, and gender. Besides, a statistically significant difference among male and female participants was found for loneliness after an independent samples t-test analysis. In addition, male students ( $M = 38.74$ ), comparing to the female students ( $M = 35.38$ ), were found to be exposed to loneliness more ( $t_{547} = -3.54, p < .001$ ). Also, results indicated a

statistically significant difference between males ( $M = 63.80$ ) and females ( $M = 56.39$ ) for child abuse ( $t_{547} = -5.59, p < .001$ ). Moreover, regression analysis pointed out the predictive relationship between loneliness, child abuse, and gender. A statistically significant regression equation was found that explained 28 % of the variance  $F_{(2,546)} = 109.464, p < .001$  with an  $R^2$  of .286. The results suggested that early exposure to abuse predicted loneliness. The prediction was stronger for abused male students.

**Keywords:** Loneliness, Child Abuse, Child Maltreatment, Child Protection, University Students

## ÖZ

### ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNDE ÇOCUK İSTİSMARI VE CİNSİYETİN YALNIZLIK ÜZERİNDEKİ ROLÜ

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Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, üniversite öğrencileri arasında çocuk istismarının ve cinsiyetin yalnızlığı ne kadar iyi ön gördüğünü incelemektir. Araştırmaya Atatürk Üniversitesinden 549 üniversite öğrencisi (189 erkek ve 360 kadın) gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Katılımcılar kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiştir. Katılımcılara UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği ve Aile İçi Çocuk İstismarı Ölçeği ve demografik bilgi formu uygulanmıştır. İkili korelasyon analizinin sonuçları çocuk istismarı ve yalnızlık arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, bağımsız örneklem t-testi analizi sonuçları yalnızlık değişkeni için kadın ve erkek katılımcılar arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark olduğunu işaret etmiştir. Dahası, erkek ( $M = 38.74$ ) öğrencilerin kadın ( $M = 35.38$ ) öğrencilere göre daha yalnız oldukları tespit edilmiştir ( $t_{547} = -3.54, p < .001$ ). Ayrıca erkek ( $M = 63.80$ ) öğrencilerin kadın ( $M = 56.39$ ) öğrencilere kıyasla daha fazla istismara maruz kaldığı ortaya çıkan bir diğer sonuçtur ( $t_{547} = -5.59, p < .001$ ). Araştırma sorusunu test etmek için çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi yapılmıştır. Çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi sonucu

çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetin yalnızlığı istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir şekilde yordadığını tespit etmiştir. Bulunan istatistiksel olarak anlamlı regresyon denklemi varyansın % 28'ni açıklamıştır  $F_{(2,546)} = 109.464$ ,  $p < .001$  ve  $R^2 = .286$ . Erken yaşta istismara maruz kalmanın yalnızlığı yordadığı bulunmuştur. Yordayıcı ilişki istismara maruz kalmış erkek öğrenciler arasında daha güçlü olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yalnızlık, Çocuk İhmali, Çocuk İstismarı, Çocuğa Yönelik Kötü Muamele, Çocuk Koruma, Üniversite Öğrencisi

To My Family,

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## CHAPTER 1

### INRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Loneliness

Human beings are social organisms who born into and live their lives as communities. In the communities, people tend to relate themselves to the others (Qualter et al., 2015). One reason for the tendency of connecting with other people could be the strong need for intimacy, warmth, a sense of worth, and identity approval that could be observed in almost every human (Rokach, 1989). Nevertheless, loneliness has been a feeling for almost all human beings throughout the history.

Even though when loneliness has taken the researchers' attention and considered as a serious psychological phenomenon in the 1980s, the number of studies were limited, yet there was a growing interest among scientists who were conducting their studies on loneliness. Before the 2000s, there were plenty of loneliness studies and with a wide variety of interests (Nurmi, Toivonen, Salmela-Aro, & Eronen, 1997). Nowadays, the growing interest has reached a significant degree and loneliness has been investigated in terms of various aspects, variables, predictions, causalities, effects, and treatment methods.

Loneliness has been described by some researchers as:

an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others and/or lacks appropriate social partners for desired activities, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy (Rook, 1984, p. 1391).

Other researchers defined loneliness as ‘‘the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively’’ (Perlman & Peplau, 1981, p. 31). In addition to the definitions, the common state in explanation of loneliness is that the person is in a negative, distressing, and unpleasant feeling considering the social situations.

This unpleasant state of mood affects people in their daily lives. Furthermore, the consequences of loneliness are considerable and significantly effecting human beings from almost every age. One important developmental period where loneliness could be the feeling for many people is adolescence. It is the period where physically and emotionally significant developmental changes in the body appear (Qualter et al., 2015) which puts the adolescents in a vulnerable position for experiencing loneliness (Danneel, Maes, Vanhalst, Bijttebier, & Goossens, 2018). In their research, Weeks and Asher (2012) pointed out that going to school and spending a considerable amount of time with other students make school-aged students ideal for studying loneliness. They also explained that one reason for that could be the loneliness level of students who are affected by their peer relationships.

Another developmental period where loneliness might be present is the young adulthood period (Qualter et al., 2015). Moreover, experiencing loneliness in young adulthood might bring about several serious consequences such as low self-esteem (Badr, Naser, Al-Zaabi, Al-Saedi, Al-Munefi, Al-Houli, & Al-Rashidi, 2018) or committing a suicide (Chang et al., 2015). The aspects of loneliness are explained in terms of several age periods, but provided in a more detailed way for young adulthood.

Understanding loneliness among married couples is also important in identifying possible risk factors for child abuse. In a research, loneliness is studied in married couples and the results indicated that the more the marital adjustment, the less loneliness among the couples (Demir & Fıfılođlu, 1999). In their

research, Gaudin, Polansky, Kilpatrick, and Shilton (1993) studied loneliness, depression, stress, and social support in neglectful families. Their results have revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between loneliness and stress whereas a significant negative relationship occurs between loneliness and social support in neglectful families.

## **1.2 Child Abuse**

Every child has the right to be protected from any kind of maltreatment. These rights have been granted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1989). Both developed and developing countries have agreed on the UN convention on the rights of the child. It has been defined in the policy that every person below 18 years old is considered as a child (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1989). Even though the protection of the children, before and after birth, is a legal and moral obligation, the children are still in danger. Many children have exposure to some kind of child maltreatment. Despite the gender, age, religious beliefs, and socio-economic status of the children, many of them have been abused and many are at risk to be abused.

World Health Organization defines child abuse as:

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. (World Health Organization, 2016).

Based on the statistics revealed by World Health Organization (2017) 23 % of the children were physically abused, 36 % of the children were emotionally abused, 26 % of the children (18 % girls – 8 % boys) were sexually abused, and 16 % of the children were physically neglected worldwide. 1 in 4 adults has reported

that they were physically abused when they were children. In addition, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 13 men reported sexual abuse when they were children (Becker, 2016).

Child abuse is a serious concern that can be seen worldwide. Turkey is one of the countries where child abuse exists. In Turkey, every year, 1.6 million children are been the victim of physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and neglect and it is assumed by the researchers that this maltreatment caused the death of more than 1000 children (Yüksel & Saner, n.d.). In another research, child abuse and neglect in a year in Turkey has been studied and results revealed that emotional abuse (51 %) is the most frequently exposed type of child maltreatment in Turkey whereas physical abuse (43 %) is the second, neglect (25 %) is the third, and sexual abuse (3 %) is the fourth (Korkmazlar, Engin, & Büyükyazıcı, 2010).

The same study results explain that the children are not only at risk to be a victim of child abuse and neglect, but also being an eye witness to child maltreatment. The most frequently witnessed type of child maltreatment is physical abuse (56 %) while emotional abuse is the second and witnessed by 49 % of the children, and sexual abuse is third witnessed by 10 % of the children in a year in Turkey.

These percentages are only representatives of cases that have been reported. It is assumed that there are more abuse and neglect incidents that remain unknown as they were not reported or documented properly. Any maltreatment against children presents a serious concern. The consequences of child maltreatment may be shown throughout a lifetime. When the victims of child abuse become adults, there is a significant risk of having at least one of the presented issues; depression, obesity, violence tendency or being a victim of violence, risky sexual life, and unwanted pregnancy, and tobacco, drug, and alcohol abuse (World Health Organization, 2017). In addition, there is a significant relationship between experiencing traumatic events in childhood and adult obesity regardless of the type of abuse and neglect (Amianto et al., 2018). Experiencing these

above consequences of child abuse and neglect could be defined as the signs for potentially traumatic events in the children's lives (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

Another serious consequence of child maltreatment, which puts the children in great danger, is a homicide. WHO has revealed that the number of homicide victims among children below 15 is approximately 41 thousand (World Health Organization, 2017). There were approximately 199000 children homicide incidents occurred worldwide in 2000 (Waters, Hyder, Rajkotia, Basu, and Butchart, 2005). Even though these numbers vary throughout the world, the damage that was given to the children remains the same.

The consequences of the damage affect the children's life traumatically or sometimes it results in child homicide. In order to protect children from abuse and neglect, researchers may study the types of child abuse and identify possible factors that have a significant relationship with child maltreatment. It may provide the child protection specialists the necessary information for better understanding the related concepts as well as appropriate interventions.

Overall, the above findings of the empirical studies suggest that any kind of child abuse and neglect need to be terminated. Even though child protection programs are successfully carried out in many parts of the world, some children still exposed to maltreatment. Especially in Turkey, there is a strong need for studying child abuse (Korkmazlar, Engin, & Büyükyazıcı, 2010). Therefore, it is believed that identification of the possible predictor relationship of loneliness with child abuse and loneliness of individuals studying university may help practitioners to extend their knowledge, identify individuals who were abused and lonely, and apply appropriate intervention methods and contribute with significant positive changes in the individuals' lives.

### **1.2.1 Types of Child Abuse**

There are four types of child abuse. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect are the main types of child abuse (Tracy, 2008).

In order to provide the definitions of child abuse, Tracy (2008) pointed out that physical abuse is any kind of actual or potential physical harm to the children. Sexual abuse is using children for sexual satisfaction. Emotional abuse is unable to promote a supportive environment for children or inadequate/inappropriate responses to children's emotional development. Child neglect can be defined as putting the children under some circumstances in which their basic needs such as; feeding, sheltering, having proper clothes, being safe, being loved, having the necessary care for health, education, and socialization could not be met by their caregivers and it creates a possibility or a potential harm on children's physical, psychological, and emotional health and well-being (Smith & Fong, 2004).

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the predictive relationship between loneliness, child abuse, and gender among university students in Turkey. The identification of the background information was important for this study as it was assumed that it might be possible to describe the predictive relationship between loneliness, child abuse, and gender. Loneliness has negatively affected individuals' lives over the years. The consequences of loneliness damaged people's psychological and physical health. In order to prevent people from the negative consequences of loneliness, it is important to get more knowledgeable

about loneliness. One of the aims of this study is to investigate the loneliness level of university students.

Every child has the right to be protected from any kind of actual or possible harm. In order to strengthen the child protection programs by preventing harm, identifying risky children, and intervening, it is believed to be important to identify predictors, causes, and factors that have a relationship with child maltreatment. In this research, as another aim, child abuse is going to be investigated in terms of predictive relationship in relation with to gender on the loneliness of university students.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

How well loneliness of university students can be predicted from their childhood abuse and gender?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Individuals tend to interact and feel belonged to each other. However, the feeling of loneliness can be considered as the opposite of the belongingness (Gierveld, Tilburg, & Dykstra, 2006). Turner, Thomas, and Brown (2016) explained that early exposure to child abuse might bring about deficiencies of development and maintenance of social relationships. In addition, after experiencing an abuse incident, a child may struggle to establish social relationships and carry them out. On the other hand, people need to cope with their struggles in social relationships for more secure and healthier development (Erikson, 1969).

Bowlby (1977) also pointed out that people need positive relationships for their development in terms of social, cognitive, and emotional aspects.

People may experience loneliness in every developmental stage (Qualter et al., 2015). Furthermore, the empirical study revealed that young adulthood might be a developmental period in which individuals are more prone to experience loneliness (Badr et al., 2018). Individuals in young adulthood experience conflict between intimacy versus isolation (Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011). In order to successfully pass through this stage to the next one, people need to have intimate feelings toward their partners. Failure to find an intimate partner might result in isolation and loneliness as isolation and loneliness were found to have a relationship with each other (Beller & Wagner, 2018).

The findings of this study will extend the literature and contribute to the researchers' general understanding of the predictive relationship between child abuse and gender on loneliness among university students. The number of researches conducted on the predictive relationship between loneliness, child abuse, and gender is significantly low. However, the consequences of loneliness are believed to exist among university students and affect their daily lives in a destructive way. If this research is to yield significant results indicating that the loneliness of these individuals might be predicted from their childhood abuse and gender, it is believed that the researchers can make use of the results for carrying out their future research and practitioners can make use of the results while planning their treatment plans.

The results of this study are not only going to contribute to the literature and practitioners by extending the general knowledge about the loneliness of university students, but also their early exposure to abuse, effects of gender, and the predictor relationship of child abuse and gender with loneliness. Millions of children have been experiencing abuse in all around the world (Stoltenborgh, Van Ijzendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011).

There is a significant need for carrying out studies in relation to child abuse and neglect in Turkey. It was already suggested by United Nations in Turkey's report on child abuse and domestic violence that there is a significant need for conducting more studies on child abuse, child neglect, and domestic violence in Turkey (Korkmazlar, Engin, & Büyükyazıcı, 2010). Thus, this study is going to be significant in terms of not only examining the predictor relationship between loneliness, child abuse, and gender, but also help the existing literature to close the gap in the literature and serve Turkey's interest and expectations by providing empirical results to promote already existing child protection policies and encourage to develop more child protection-related policies.

## **1.6 Definition of the Terms**

**Loneliness:** The definition of loneliness in this research is based on the definition of Perlman and Peplau (1981). They defined loneliness as "the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively" (p. 31).

**Child Maltreatment:** Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect is considered as forms of child maltreatment (Zimmerman & Mercy, 2010).

**Child Abuse:** "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." (World Health Organization, 2016).

**Child Neglect:** Child neglect can be defined as the parents', legal guardians', or other caregivers' insufficient or unable to their child's basic needs (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, general information about loneliness, the importance of the childhood period, and child abuse were explained by reviewing the existing literature. There are going to be four main parts in order to explain loneliness, loneliness in university students, the importance of childhood period, and child abuse. The first part explained the general understanding of loneliness and the definition of loneliness. The second part provided how university students experience loneliness. The third part focused on the importance of the childhood period. The fourth part explained the studies conducted on child abuse and covered its importance.

#### **2.1 Loneliness**

Human beings are social organisms who born into and live their lives as communities. There is a great possibility that almost every human being is going to experience the feeling of loneliness, but it might occur in various ways with a various degree (McWhirter, 1990). There is a strong need for intimacy, warmth, a sense of worth, and identity approval for almost every human (Rokach, 1989). Nevertheless, loneliness has been a feeling for almost all human beings throughout history.

Loneliness has taken the researchers' attention starting from the 1980s (McWhirter, 1990). Despite the fact, in the past, depression, a related psychological phenomenon (Joiner, 1997), was the most commonly investigated

one and there were only a few researches on loneliness. Even though depression has been studied more than loneliness, evidence showing that there is a significant relationship between loneliness and depression (Brage, Meredith, & Woodward, 1993). In the previous decades, as a consequence, loneliness has been described by researchers as the least known psychological concept (Eisenman, 1983) with a lack of systematic research (Jones, Freemon, & Goswick, 1981). Yet, comparing to even older times, some researchers indicated that there was a growing interest in studying loneliness among the researchers (Hojat, 1982). Despite the growing interest in loneliness researches, there is a need for identifying loneliness over the lifespan (Qualter et al., 2013).

The feeling of loneliness may not only damage to human psychology but also physical health as well. In another research, the effects of loneliness on cardiovascular problems were examined (Harvard Heart Letter, 2018). The study points out several issues. First of all, people who are lonely or isolated have the risk of having a stroke. Second, there is a dramatic risk that lonely or isolated people may have experienced hearth attach. The risk might because of stress which plays an important role in increasing some hormones such as cortisol, which may eventually end up with damage to hearth and blood vessels. Lastly, the research suggested that inviting neighbors for drinking coffee or tea, starting up for a dance, exercise, or related classes, joining up for a club, or being volunteer might help reducing loneliness and eventually having the risk of experiencing cardiovascular disease.

The feeling of belonging is an essential concept for human beings. Gierveld, Tilburg, and Dykstra (2006) have suggested that loneliness could be considered as the opposite of belongingness and embeddedness. According to Erikson's (1969) psychosocial development theory, the central and fundamental concept for human development is social relationships. Biological embedding hypothesis proposed that early exposure to child maltreatment may create difficulties in developing and maintaining social relationships (Turner, Thomas, & Brown,

2016). Based on Erikson's psychosocial development theory, people should deal with their social relationship conflict. In order to establish more secure and healthier development, trust and feeling of security, as well as the capacity to create a relationship, is essential.

Abraham Maslow explained human needs under the Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid (Poston, 2009). In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there are five fundamental needs for humans. Individuals try to meet their needs in order to be self-actualized (Winston, 2016). If one of the needs in the hierarchy increases, it is going to be more difficult to meet the other needs (Aanstoos, 2018). The basic needs such as; water, food, shelter, and clothing formed the first level of the pyramid (Goebel & Brown, 1981). The second need in the pyramid was security, the third need was social needs, the fourth need was esteem needs, and finally, the last need was self-actualizing needs. In the Hierarchy of Needs, the third level is for the social needs which involve belongingness, attention, and love. Bowlby's (1977) attachment theory also proposes that there is a need for a positive relationship for people's social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Loneliness and social isolation and their interaction with each other were studied in relation to whether they affect human health (Beller & Wagner, 2018). It was concluded in this study as if loneliness increases, the effects of social isolation on human health increase (Beller & Wagner, 2018). Moreover, as social isolation increases, the effects of loneliness on human health increases. An increase in social isolation might result in social anxiety which was found to be positively correlated with loneliness and may create several problems (Maes, Nelemans, Danneel, Fernández-Castilla, Van den Noortgate, Goossens, & Vanhalst, 2019). Therefore, the conclusion that loneliness is a serious state which has the possibility of damage to human health can be assumed based on the results.

The researchers are not gathered under the same roof in terms of whether a significant relationship exists between loneliness and gender. Some researchers pointed out that loneliness and gender have a significant relationship (Rotenberg

& Morrison, 1993; Wiseman, Guttfreund, & Lurie, 1995; Chen & Chung, 2007; Muyan-Yılık, Sancak-Aydın & Demir, 2018) whereas several other researchers have identified that no significant relationship has occurred between these two concepts (Kamath & Kanekar, 1993; Green & Wildermuth, 1993; Jackson & Cochran, 1991). Several factors and characteristics of such study participants might be important to be identified as they may change the results. For instance, Gündoğdu (2010) explained that ideas and thoughts, school, family, sexual relationship, personality, pleasure, and interests may be different in genders and these differences could affect such study results.

### **2.1.1 Definition of Loneliness**

Loneliness has been described by some researchers as:

an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others and/or lacks appropriate social partners for desired activities, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy (Rook, 1984, p. 1391).

Other researchers defined loneliness as “the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively” (Perlman & Peplau, 1981, p. 31). In addition to the definitions, the common state in explanation of loneliness is that the person is in a negative, distressing, and unpleasant feeling considering the social situations. The discrepancy between one’s desired social relationships and actual social relationships might bring about the feeling of loneliness (Schmitt & Kurdek, 1985).

### **2.1.2 Loneliness in University Students**

For every individual from different age groups, despite loneliness has been a serious psychological state, young adulthood might be perceived as one of the most critical developmental age periods, in which there is a possibility for repeated exposure to loneliness and isolation (Qualter et al., 2015). Furthermore, young adults were found to experience child abuse and neglect at high rates which created some mental health issues such as low self-esteem (Badr et al., 2018). Therefore, in this study, the main focus is going to be on young adulthood. Young adulthood is a developmental period in which having an intimate partner has great importance on being successful at this stage (Gould, 2013). The failure to be successful at having a close relationship results in isolation. Having an intimate partner at this age period not only helps to prevent isolation but also decreases the stress level and loneliness (Lee & Goldstein, 2016).

There might be a significant relationship between loneliness and gender although both genders experience loneliness to some degree (Çeçen, 2008). In their research, Muyan-Yılık, Sancak-Aydın, and Demir (2018) found that there is a significant relationship between loneliness and gender among university students. They have identified that male students were found to be lonelier than female students. Similarly, to this study, Knox, Vail-Smith, and Zusman, (2007) found a significant relationship occurred between males and females in terms of loneliness. Their male participants reported higher loneliness comparing to the female participants.

In order to recognize the young adulthood loneliness, having a close look at the romantic relationships are significantly important. Lack of romantic relationships in a young adults' life may trigger the feeling of loneliness regardless of having a desire to find an intimate partner (Beckmeyer & Cromwell, 2019). However, the

desire to find an intimate relationship might lead these students to search for a partner.

Comparing to the male students, females feel less lonely and more secured in such situations where they are in a new environment regardless of their cultural background (Ditommaso, Brannen, & Burgess, 2005). Nevertheless, both genders are at risk of some psychological difficulties if they fail to set a romantic relationship. Being single as a college student might predict loneliness as well as some somatic symptoms, anxiety, and insomnia (Adamczyk, 2017). The loneliness of young adults, specifically in romantic relationships, might be predicted by the time spent as single and significant other's support (Adamczyk, 2016). The professionals might consider these predictors while conducting their helping sessions and their focus.

Social support could be a mediator on loneliness (Liu, Gou, & Zuo, 2016). In their research, Salimi and Bozorgpour (2012) investigated how perceived social support predicts the loneliness level of university students. They also examined the role of gender in the predictive relationship between these two variables. Their study results revealed that there was a significant relationship between perceived social support and loneliness levels of university students. In addition, girls found to be receiving more social support than boys in terms of family, friends, and significant others. Not only social support but also the social skills of college students play an important role. In addition, verbal communication skills hold an important role in the prevention of loneliness, depression, and anxiety among college students (Moeller & Seehuus, 2019).

Young adulthood, as a transition age stage from adolescence, still holds great importance on having close friendships in order to prevent loneliness and isolation (Lee & Goldstein, 2016). Even though there are some differences in the importance and meaning of friendship from culture to culture, each culture has its own unique predictors of loneliness in college students (Lykes & Kimmelmeier, 2014). Young adults could report loneliness higher in low or no

relationship between themselves and their family members in collectivist societies whereas in individualistic societies, individuals report themselves as lonely when they have low or no relationship with their friends (Lykes & Kemmelmeier, 2014).

Despite the culture of the individuals, many of the young adults leave their family, friends, intimate partner, and hometown in order to start college. In their new life at college, many freshmen try to have new friends. If they cannot find new friends for themselves, it is possible that they might experience the feeling of loneliness (McWhirter, 1997). Furthermore, the feeling of loneliness may result in dropping out of college especially at the beginning of the fall semester (Rotenberg & Morrison, 1993).

Loneliness may bring about serious consequences. Lonely people are at the risk to commit a suicide (Chang et al., 2015). In addition, the risk of suicidal ideation even becomes a greater risk if the person has been exposed to sexual assault. Lamis, Ballard, and Patel (2014) have also studied the association between loneliness and suicidal ideation among college students. Their results indicated that using drugs has an indirect effect on increasing the risk of committing a suicide among lonely college students. In their research, Dellinger-Ness and Handler (2007) identified that university students who feel lonely tend to engage in self-injuring behaviors. College students who report themselves as lonely also stated that they experience negative emotional experiences, inattentive and unresponsive social relationships, pessimistic and dissatisfying interpersonal relationships, shyness, and less assertiveness which create difficulties in initiating and maintaining the relationships with others (Ponzetti, 1990).

The construct of loneliness might be taken into consideration together with social isolation when it comes to predicting the health of individuals (Beller & Wagner, 2018). It has been suggested in their research that the experience of loneliness may increase as social isolation increases. At the same time, as social isolation increases, the effects of loneliness on an individual's mortality increase (Beller

& Wagner, 2018). Also, those freshmen who have attachment anxiety to a high degree are at risk of being lonely (Wei, Russel, & Zakalik, 2005). Their study results also concluded that not only high degree of attachment anxiety is found to be significantly related to loneliness, but also social self-efficacy and self-disclosure.

In their research, Jackson, Fritch, Nagasaka, and Gunderson (2002) demonstrated that high level of shyness predicts loneliness in college students even if they controlled the effects of self-presentation and social support. There are other study results supporting this relationship. Social media tools such as Facebook are frequently used by people who report themselves as lonely (Song, Zmyslinski-Seelig, Kim, Drent, Victor, Omori, & Allen, 2014). Song et al. (2014) also found out that shyness and low social support are predictors of loneliness and frequent use of social network sites in order to compensate their lacking in these areas.

The importance of social support in coping with loneliness is also proposed by other researchers that even though there are possible opportunities to connect with others, individuals still might experience social isolation as a consequence of lack of social skills (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Therefore, for more effective helping, it needs to be considered that loneliness interventions might cover behavioral and social aspects of loneliness. It has been enlightened by the empirical research findings that the feeling of loneliness in young adulthood might partly mediate the relationship between increased depressive symptoms and a decrease in positive affect in shy and unsupported individuals (Joiner, 1997).

Another important dimension of college students' loneliness is family support. It has already been pointed out by researchers that family support on college students is a strong predictor of suicide commitment and has significant positive psychological effects which may result in for students to cope better with their loneliness and suicidal ideation (Chang et al., 2017). Having adequate support

from the family members and significant others not only helps to cope with loneliness but also shortening the duration between remaining single and having a romantic relationship which may be helpful in managing with loneliness (Adamczyk, 2016).

However, the effects of family support on loneliness may be differ based on the type of communication. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the type of support that the parents provide for their kids. Research pointing out that talking on the phone with the parents is found to present more supportive, satisfying, and emotionally intimate relationship which may decrease loneliness and foster adjustment to college life whereas communicating with the parents by using social network sites demonstrated an increase in loneliness and anxious type of attachment, and arguing with the parents (Gentzler, Oberhauser, Westerman, & Nadorff, 2011). This finding was consistent with another research result demonstrating that while loneliness was not found to be a significant predictor of Facebook usage or desire to use Facebook as a way of communicating with their family members and friends, the amount of time spend on Facebook, on the other hand, was found to be positively impacting the college students' loneliness (Lou, Yan, Nickerson, & McMorris, 2012).

While having a supportive family is an important factor on young adulthood loneliness, the physical health of the family members also demonstrates a significant relationship with loneliness (Segrin, Burke, & Dunivan, 2012). While the physical health of the family members could have a relationship with loneliness of young adults, the attachment styles and family boundaries might also explain the variance in loneliness (Demirli & Demir, 2014). The study demonstrated that if the male students insecurely and low-coherently attached with their families they point out themselves with higher levels of loneliness whereas female young adults with secure attachment type and high-coherent point out themselves as less lonely (Demirli & Demir, 2014).

The significant threats of loneliness on individuals' physical, emotional, and psychological health incontrovertibly higher and dangerous. It might be seen in almost every developmental age period. As indicated above, young adulthood period is one of these developmental age periods where loneliness causes significant harm on people. Therefore, in order to cope with loneliness, identification of the predictors could be helpful for especially the practitioners.

## **2.2 The Importance of Childhood Period**

Childhood is a critical developmental period in which many of the children have been exposed to abuse and/or neglect (World Health Organization, 2017) that have high probability of causing significant severe physical, psychological, (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017; & Fortson, Klevens, Merrick, Gilbert, & Alexander, 2016), and social (Miano, Weber, Roepke, & Dziobek, 2018) effects in their later life. Social awareness of the importance of healthy childhood development needs to be increased (Johnson & James, 2016).

Indisputably, all children have inborn rights to be protected from any kind of maltreatment. Children who could not be helped or prevented from the maltreatment may experience some malfunctions in adulthood or become perpetrators of maltreatment to their own children when they become adults (Caykoylu, Ibiloglu, Taner, Potas, & Taner, 2011). For example, in their research, Bifulco, Kwon, Jacobs, Moran, Bunn, & Beer (2006) concluded that children who have been exposed to abuse may experience adult insecure attachment in their relationships. This research finding is consistent with other research results indicating that neglect may provide motivation deficiency in crisis situations with the intimate partner in adulthood (Miano et al., 2018).

Childhood emotional and physical neglect and earlier depression episodes are found to be the predictors of depression (Paterniti, Sterner, Caldwell, & Bisserbe, 2017). Their study also pointed out that childhood physical neglect, being unmarried, and experiencing chronic depressive episodes may comorbid with a type of anxiety disorder which might predict a delay in recovery from depression (Paterniti et al., 2017). Being physically neglected as a child is found to be a significant predictor of adolescences' violent behavior in males (McGuigan, Luchette, & Atterholt, 2018). Howell and Miller-Graff (2014) explained that having high resilience plays an important role in order for decreasing the negative effects of depression and anxiety in young adulthood who have been exposed to violent behaviors when they were children.

In another research, Jaye Capretto (2017) investigated how could the relationship between the timing and type of child maltreatment, and post-traumatic stress and depression affect children when they become adults. The study identified that depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms could be predicted in adulthood stronger if the child was exposed to severe maltreatment. Being exposed to abuse and neglect also brings about an increase in the risk of crime and violence (Widom, 2017). In order to prevent the severe consequences of child maltreatment, early detection of abuse and neglect holds significant importance (Widom, 2017).

The quality of parenting is significantly important for the child's development. Parents help their children to learn some behaviors and eliminate others. The research provided information that some of the behaviors of the children such as comforting, helping, sharing, and defending received reinforcement more likely than others (Bower & Casas, 2016). Furthermore, parental warmth and responsiveness of the parents to their infants were found to be critically important in the child's development (Knauer, Ozer, Dow, & Fernald, 2019). If the parenting style includes leniency, it might bring about an increase in loneliness level whereas an increase in the acceptance attitude of parents results

in an increase in the creativity of their children (Lim & Smith, 2008). Thus, it might be more beneficial for parents to adjust their parenting style where there is going to be no signs of abuse and neglect. If the parents experience stress and fail to provide the necessary care, the children may face emotional abuse which may further damage them in their later life depends on the resilience of the child (Johnson & James, 2016).

Childhood period is an important developmental life period in which children may suffer from loneliness and as a result faced with several psychological and developmental challenges (Yan, Feng, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2018). Their study also revealed that family could be an important contributory factor for children's loneliness level by manipulating the children's adjustment to school. The family environment where a child grows plays an important role in the healthy development of the child. Studies show that raising a child in a risky family environment may result in health problems and increase loneliness in the university (Counts & John-Henderson, 2019). At the same time, child social behaviors in school settings might contribute to loneliness (Qualter & Munn, 2002). Such problematic situations may foster loneliness of children in correlation with peer rejection, low self-worth as well as low trust beliefs in peer relationships (Qualter et al., 2013).

Perceived child loneliness and longitudinal relationships between the parent and child were investigated during the middle childhood period (Yan, Feng, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2018). The researchers asked children from grades 1, 3, and 5 to reflect on their loneliness. One of the results that the study pointed out that there was a decrease in loneliness from grade 1 to grade 5. Another finding of the study was girls felt less lonely if they felt closer to their father. The results also show us how important the parents are in children's lives not only in a materialist way but also in a spiritual way.

The earlier parent-child relationship might be an indicator of individuals' psychological state in their later life. A study conducted on the relationship

between the roles of the parent-child relationship in the middle childhood period demonstrated that the closeness between fathers and their girls might predict future loneliness (Yan, Feng, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2018). Moreover, more the distance between the fathers and their girls might bring about girls' feeling lonely quickly.

There are several protective factors that may prevent children from the negative effects of child maltreatment. Schultz, Tharp-Taylor, Haviland, and Jaycox (2009) explained some of these protective factors like an increase in social competence, development of adaptive functioning skills, and having a positive relationship with the peers might be significant contributors of child psychological health for a maltreated child.

Another critical age period in childhood is adolescence. There are plenty of studies conducted related to loneliness during adolescence. Adolescence is the period in which individuals start to establish their identity (Gould, 2013). While establishing the identity, there is a great possibility to experience conflicts with friends, intimate partners, and families. Çiftçi, Demir, and Bikos (2008) stated that the conflict management skills of adolescents may differ depend on whom they are walking. It might be possible that the difference may be a consequence of avoiding conflicts and further loneliness. In order to avoid loneliness during adolescence, researchers explain that having a satisfying relationship and relatedness with peers are important (Gallardo, Martin, & Barrasa, 2018). Adolescents can experience plenty of physical and mental changes during this period. Especially, the physical changes that happen may be perceived as negative and different and result in perceived social isolation and experiencing loneliness (Laursen & Hartl, 2013).

Drug and alcohol abuse might be seen among teenagers (Duprey, Oshri, & Caughy, 2017). Early exposure to neglect, specifically emotional and physical neglect, increases the risk factors of showing depressive symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder, illegal substance use, and using tobacco during early

adulthood (Cohen, Menon, Shorey, Le, & Temple, 2017). The association between severe childhood neglect, alcohol, and drug abuse in adolescence might be mediated by internalizing the problems (Duprey et al., 2017).

Alcohol and drug abuse are also likely in young adults and make them more vulnerable to these substance's abuse if there is a history of child maltreatment (Huang et al., 2011; Young-Wolff, Kendler, & Presscot, 2012). Furthermore, if the child has not received supervision from the family, it fosters the vulnerability to drink alcohol in adulthood (Snyder & Merritt, 2016).

### **2.3 Child Abuse**

Millions of children have been exposing to some type of child abuse and many of them have the potential risk to be abused in all around the world (Stoltenborgh, et al., 2011). The effects of child abuse bring about significant physical, psychological, and emotional damage to the children's life. Some of the damages that are given to the children are life-threatening, creates trauma, and may last throughout a lifetime (Johnson & James, 2016). Therefore, children need to be safeguarded including legal safeguarding as they do not have developed physical and mental maturity (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1989).

In November 1989, the rights of the children have been granted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1989). The importance of protecting the children from any kind of maltreatment before and after their birth was granted by the state parties of the convention. As a part of the convention, Turkey also has responsibilities toward keeping children safe from abuse and neglect.

All around the world, there are so many countries that pay significant attention to the protection of the children. Nevertheless, the children are still in great danger to be a victim of any type of child abuse. As child abuse is being said as a worldwide issue, Turkey is one of the countries where child abuse presents a serious concern for the children's life. The Turkish law, law number 5395, represents the child protection legal obligations of Turkey in order to ensure and provide the necessary precautions, support, and actions that need to be taken (Kanunu, 2005).

Children who exposed to abuse and neglect suffered from neurocognitive functioning difficulties in later life (Gould, Clarke, Heim, Harvey, Majer, & Nemeroff, 2012). Consequences of child abuse, specifically sexual abuse, were found to be associated with several mental health disorders more among males than females (Turner, Taillieu, Cheung, & Afifi, 2017). Their study also demonstrated that sexual abused led males to attempt suicide. Furthermore, the history of child abuse affected the emotion processing of individuals in the long term (Young & Widom, 2014).

There are four types of child abuse; physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (World Health Organization, 2017). All four types of child maltreatment present a serious physical and psychological concern on children's physical and mental health and well-being.

So many children have been experiencing physical abuse in all around the world. The most frequently exposed type of child maltreatment in the family is the physical type of abuse (Black, Heyman, & Slep, 2001). Children who were experienced physical abuse may suffer from the severe consequences such as all life alcohol consumption, future problems with being involved in fights, health issues, legal troubles, work issues, and family problems (Lown, Nayak, Korcha, & Greenfield, 2011).

Child sexual abuse is another type of child abuse which children have been experiencing in all around the world. As the age of the children grew older, the potential risk factors and even the risk of being exposed to sexual abuse increased (Davies & Jones, 2013). Children who exposed to sexual assault suffer the consequences both short-term and long-term (Hornor, 2010). Hornor (2010) referred to other empirical researches and stated that several of the consequences of child sexual abuse were problems in sexual behavior, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse, obesity, and committing a suicide. Moreover exposure to sexual abuse in childhood was found to be associated with loneliness and negative network orientation in later life (Gibson & Hartshorne, 1996).

Another type of child abuse that is frequently experienced by children, but not given adequate attention by the researchers, is emotional abuse (Johnson & James, 2016). Comparing to the other types of child abuse, it might be hard to distinguish and identify child emotional abuse (Black, Slep, & Heyman, 2001). However, emotional abuse, like other types of abuse, may result in trauma (Johnson & James, 2016). Furthermore, childhood history of emotional abuse may result in eating disorders such as bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, or purging behavior in later life (Kimber, McTavish, Couturier, Boven, Gill, Dimitropoulos, & MacMillian, 2017). Moreover child emotional abuse was found to be a damaging factor for several parts of human development such as social relationships, emotional, cognitive, and biological processes of the individuals (Yates, 2007). Empirical study results pointed out that the consequences of emotional abuse, in long term, might present the most significant damage on an individual's psychological health and was found to be associated with several mental health disorders than emotional neglect (Taillieu, Brownridge, Sareen, & Afifi, 2016).

Child neglect is a worldwide problem that might have fatal consequences and requires effective protection systems and policies. Although child neglect is a

serious concern for almost every country, the rate of child neglect is significantly high in all around the world (Klevens & Ports, 2017). Welch and Bonner (2013) suggested that child abuse prevention and protection programs are not only needed for children, but also for adults who have responsibilities toward taking care of the children. Children who have been neglected also reported experiences of several other types of child maltreatment (Mennen, Kim, Sang, & Trickett, 2010). Children who have been exposed to child neglect may experience psychological difficulties in their later lives (Tendolkar, Mårtensson, Kühn, Klumpers, & Fernández, 2018). Moreover emotional neglect was found to be associated with fear and avoidance in social relationships (Müller, Bertsch, Bülau, Herpertz, & Buchheim, 2019). Despite the severe fatal consequences, child neglect is a usually neglected topic among researchers (Honor, 2014).

Childhood abuse may present severe physical and mental health problems in short term (Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, DaCosta, & Akman, 1991) and long term (Springer, Sheridan, Kuo, & Carnes, 2003). One of the long term effects of child abuse was explained to be difficulties in social relationships (Springer et al., 2003). If a child exposed to abuse, in later developmental periods of life, difficulties in developing and maintaining social relationships with other people may be present (Turner, Thomas, & Brown, 2016; Sheikh, 2018).

Individuals may demonstrate functional social behaviors in accordance with their capacities, abilities, and motivation towards attempting social relationships (Kim & Cicchetti, 2010). However, a child who exposed to abuse may find it difficult to understand and interpret the feelings and thoughts of other individuals which create deficiencies in social skills and effect social relationships (Barnes, Howell, & Miller-Graff, 2016). Even though the abused children may establish social relationships in their later life, because of the association between childhood abuse and adulthood psychocological distress, the quantity and the quality of the relationships may be lower (Sheikh, 2018). Children who exposed to abuse and as a result experienced the disturbance in the social relationships

might bring about social isolation (Sheikh, 2018) and loneliness (Howe & Parke, 2001).

## **2.4 Summary of the Literature Review**

To sum up, as loneliness increases the health of the individuals might be affected negatively and brings about social isolation (Beller & Wagner, 2018). As social isolation increases, individuals may suffer from social anxiety which was found to be positively correlated with loneliness and may create several problems (Maes et al., 2019). Lonely individuals are at the risk of establishing inattentive and unresponsive social relationships, pessimistic and dissatisfying interpersonal relationships, shyness, and lack of assertiveness which create difficulties in initiating and maintaining the relationships with others (Ponzetti, 1990), committing a suicide (Chang et al., 2015), and tend to engage in self-injuring behaviors (Dellinger-Ness & Handler 2007).

Childhood is a significant developmental period whose effects might be seen in the long term (Caykoylu et al., 2011). Abuse and loneliness are only two concepts that are observed in childhood and their severe consequences in childhood and later developmental periods of the life (World Health Organization, 2017; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017; Fortson et al., 2016; Miano et al., 2018; Qualter et al., 2015). Jaye Capretto (2017) concluded the relationship between the timing and type of child maltreatment, and post-traumatic stress, and depression disturb individuals' life when they become adults. Depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms could be predicted in adulthood stronger if the child was exposed to abuse and neglect. Exposure to abuse and neglect may also result in an increase in the risk of crime and violence (Widom, 2017). Yet, loneliness and child abuse present a significant concern that might affect individuals' lives in a disruptive way in both the present times and

in the future. Understanding the effects of loneliness (Paterniti et al., 2017) and abuse (Johnson & James, 2016) may contribute to the prevention of the damage and provide a healthier development for the individuals.

It has been hypothesized in this research that as children were abused, they would feel lonelier in their later life especially when they become young adults. In addition, the feeling of loneliness in young adulthood might be as a consequence of possible abuse during childhood. Gender of the children might also play an important role. The gender differences may occur in terms of experiencing loneliness and child abuse. Therefore, this study is going to be carried out in order to identify the predictive relationship between child abuse and gender on loneliness among university students.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD**

In this part, the overall design of this research was presented. In order to explain the overall design, the method part was divided into several sections; the overall design of the study, participants of the study, data collection procedure, the instruments, data analysis procedure, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

#### **3.1 Overall Design of the Study**

The research was designed as a correlational prediction design in order to identify the predictive relationship of child abuse and gender variables on loneliness. University students from Atatürk University participated in the study. A convenience sampling method was used for sampling. In this study, the loneliness of university students was the criterion variable whereas child abuse and gender were the predictor variables. For the criterion and predictor variables, one score, two in total was collected from the scales and one categorical score from the demographic information form for gender. In addition, the demographic information form was used to collect information to describe the sample.

Assumption checks were conducted in order to proceed with the multiple regression analysis. The researcher eliminated the outliers which manipulated the results. In a regression analysis, as the sample gets bigger, outliers create a bigger problem than the normality assumption (Field, 2013). After rejecting the null hypothesis, satisfying the assumptions, and eliminated the outliers, a

multiple linear regression analysis was utilized together with independent samples t-test, and bivariate correlation analysis. The results of the descriptive analysis are also provided. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used to analyze the collected data. The results of all analyses were explained in detailed.

### **3.2 Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study were university students from Atatürk University. A convenience sampling method was used for sampling. There were 360 (65.6 %) female students and 189 (34.4 %) male students, in total 549 university students participated to the study. The sample size for this research might be satisfying in terms of external validity. External validity can be explained as the level that the sample of a study represents the intended population and the results may be generalized to the population (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). The participants in this study were studying in different faculties of Atatürk University. The participants were undergraduate students. There were 54 students as freshman (9.8 %), 136 as sophomore (24.8 %), 122 as junior (22.2 %), and 237 as senior (43.2 %).

Among the participants, 55 of them reported that their family income was low (10 %), while 464 of the participants indicated their family income as moderate (84.5 %), and 30 of the participants stated their family income as high (5.5 %). There were 500 university students who pointed out that their parents were together (91.1 %) whereas 49 of them reported their parents as divorced (8.9 %).

In terms of mother educational level, there were 112 students who reported that their mothers did not go to school (20.4 %), 246 of them reported that their mothers were primary school graduates (44.8 %), 72 participants stated their

mothers as middle school graduates (13.1 %), 76 of them pointed out their mothers as high school graduates (13.8 %), 40 participants indicated their mothers to be university graduates (7.3 %), and 3 of them reported that their mothers were masters or doctoral program graduates (.5 %).

In terms of father educational level, among the participants, 22 of them stated that their fathers did not go to school (4 %), 164 of them pointed out that their fathers were primary school graduates (29.9 %), 117 participants reported their fathers as middle school graduates (21.3 %), 136 of them stated that their fathers were high school graduates (24.8 %), 98 participants indicated that their fathers graduated from university (17.9 %), and 12 of them reported that their fathers were masters or doctoral program graduates (2.2 %).

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedure**

In this research, before collecting the data, the researcher applied to Middle East Technical University (METU) Human Research Ethics Committee (See Appendix A). After obtaining the necessary approval from the board, the researcher presented the approval form to an instructor at Atatürk University and obtained permission to collect data during the class time. A convenience sample method was used in this study. The data was only gathered once and instrumented in the 2018-2019 academic year fall term. The administration of the instruments was carried out by the researcher. The instructors of Ataturk University only observed the data collection procedure during their lecture hours.

After having the approval from the instructors, in order to collect data, the researcher used university classrooms during the lecture hours. The collection of the data was carried out face to face by the researcher where the researcher has always been available for the necessary explanation and questions of the

participants. Before distributing the hard copy of the instruments, the researcher made a few explanations. First of all, the researcher introduced himself to the students and shared the reason why he was there. Secondly, as the expected age period of the participants in this study was young adulthood, a brief definition of young adulthood was explained. According to Erikson (1969), individuals were called young adults between ages 19 to 40. Students who were not young adults were not involved in the study. Third, the general aim of the research was pointed out. Fourth, the introduction of the UCLA Loneliness Scale, The Scale of Child Abuse in the Family (AİÇİÖ) and the demographic information form was made. Moreover, an announcement about keeping all the responses confidentially and using the responses only for scientific purposes was made to the participants. Fifth, the students were asked for their volunteer participation in the study. Lastly, an inform consent, demographic information form, and the instruments were distributed to volunteer young adults.

### **3.4 The Instruments**

#### **3.4.1 UCLA Loneliness Scale**

In this research, Turkish adaptation of UCLA Loneliness Scale was used to gather data about loneliness of university students participated in the study. UCLA Loneliness Scale was developed by Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson (1978) in order to provide a valid and a reliable measure for the researchers so that the concept of loneliness could be investigated more effectively. Later, Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) revised the scale and added positive items. Turkish adaptation of UCLA loneliness Scale was conducted by Demir (1989). In the revised and adapted version of the scale, there were 10 normal items (1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, and 20) and 10 revised items (2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 18) in total 20 questions were presented. The measurement of the scores obtained

in the scale was made through four points Likert Scale (4 = never, 3 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 1 = often). From Turkish adaptation of UCLA Loneliness Scale, the minimum score that could validly be obtained was 20 while the maximum score could be 80. The higher the loneliness level of the participants the lonelier the individual. In the Turkish adaptation, for this study, internal reliability was found as .90.

#### **3.4.2 The Scale of Child Abuse in the Family (Aile İçi Çocuk İstismarı Ölçeği)**

Another scale that was used in the research to collect data from the participants is, Aile İçi Çocuk İstismarı Ölçeği (The Scale of Child Abuse in the Family). The scale was developed by Sarıbeyoğlu (2007) in order to identify the general tendencies and different types of domestic abuse. In the scale, there were 27 normal items and 8 revised items (4, 7, 12, 16, 20, 24, 26, and 35) in total 35 questions were presented. The measurement of the scores obtained in the scale was made through five points Likert Scale (5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = rarely, 2 = once, 1 = never). Minimum 35, a maximum of 175 points could be obtained from the scale. Higher scores from the scale indicate more exposure to abuse. For this study, the internal reliability score of the scale of child abuse in the family was found to be. 89.

#### **3.4.3 Demographic Information Form**

Demographic information form was presented to the participants in order to identify the general characteristics of the participants. In the form, a detailed

explanation of the purpose of using a demographic information form was provided in the first place. There were several variables asked in a categorical way. They included gender, university grade level, family income, whether the parents were together or separated, whether the mother was alive or not and biological or stepmother, whether the father was alive or not and biological or stepfather, mother's educational level, and father's educational level.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedure**

A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to analyze the data. A multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to identify the predictive relationship of more than one independent variable on the dependent variable at the same time (Yan & Su, 2009). Before conducting a multiple regression analysis to the data, a simple data cleaning procedure was done and the cases who did not respond to all items of UCLA Loneliness Scale and The Scale of Child Abuse in the Family were eliminated. After that, outliers were detected and the ones with scores lower than -1.55 and higher than 3.84 removed from the database. After that, there were several assumptions that needed to be met in order for valid outcomes. Field (2013) stated that there were seven main assumptions in multiple regression analyses; multivariate outliers, normally distributed error, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, Linearity, no perfect multicollinearity, and multivariate normality.

After satisfying all the assumptions, a descriptive analysis was used to explain the characteristics of the data. Then, in order to explain the mean differences, independent samples t-test was utilized. In order to identify the bivariate correlation among the variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient test was conducted. Lastly, for the predictive relationship of child abuse and gender on loneliness, a multiple linear regression analysis was utilized to the data.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Even though the age group of this study was considered as adults who have every legal responsibility about their lives and choices, the researcher considered child abuse as a sensitive topic that requires some ethical precautions. Therefore, the researcher developed an inform consent and explained its reason to all volunteer participants. Another aim of the inform consent was to find the participant who contacted with the researcher so that their responses would be removed from the data was also explained to the participants. After providing this information, the researcher explained that it was not an obligation to fill out the inform consent if the participants believe they were not going to ask for their responses to be removed from the data.

The inform consent provided information about the researcher's name and surname, university major, thesis advisor, and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the researcher pointed out one of the most sensitive ethical concepts in the field of psychological counseling and guidance, confidentiality, and explained that all the responses would be kept confidentially and only to be used in scientific purposes.

Then, the researcher's phone number and e-mail address were provided so that if the participants felt like they needed more information about the research, they could easily contact. In the last part of the inform consent, the participants were asked to put their names and surnames, the date they filled out the survey, and their signature in order to approve that they were voluntarily participating to the study. They were informed that they had the right to leave out the survey without completing it, and they accepted that their responses were only going to be used for scientific purposes. One copy of the inform consent was left with the volunteer participants.

### **3.7 Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations to this study. Firstly, the data collected only from one university students who were enrolled in one of the state universities in Turkey. Even though there were so many students enrolled at Atatürk University, the results might not be generalized to the other university students in Turkey. The second limitation in this study was applying a convenience sampling method which may not be considered as representative of a population and would have been avoided if it would be possible. The third limitation was that the proportion of females was higher than males.

The fourth limitation was that the researcher did not select and control the moderator and mediator variables. A mediator variable may affect or modifies the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable whereas a moderator variable is used in research to explain this relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

In this chapter, the results gathered from the statistical analysis provided in terms of the research question. Firstly, the assumptions were checked that were missing data analysis, multivariate outliers, normally distributed errors, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, linearity, no perfect multicollinearity and multivariate normality. Then, the descriptive analysis was provided. A descriptive analysis of each scale was presented. Later, multiple regression analysis was conducted and the results were provided. Finally, the chapter was concluded with a summary of the results.

#### **4.1 Missing Data Analysis**

Before running the main analysis, missing data were screened. Data that exceeded 10 % were eliminated from the results because missing data is not perceived as a critical concern unless it exceeds 10 % (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). At first, there were 640 participants in the study. Instead of using imputation methods as the sample size was relatively high, all of the data including unanswered items were eliminated from the sample by applying the listwise deletion method for each questionnaire and total 91 data were removed from the original sample.

## 4.2 Descriptive Statistics Results of the Loneliness Scale

Table 4.1 explains the means and standard deviations of loneliness with regard to demographic variables.

Table 1

Loneliness Scores in Regard to Demographic Variables

| Group            |                | n   | M     | SD    |
|------------------|----------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Gender           | Male           | 189 | 38.74 | 12.19 |
|                  | Female         | 360 | 35.38 | 9.55  |
| University Grade | Freshman       | 54  | 38.27 | 12.55 |
|                  | Sophomore      | 136 | 36.05 | 10.03 |
|                  | Junior         | 122 | 36.28 | 10.94 |
|                  | Senior         | 237 | 36.56 | 10.39 |
| Family Income    | Low            | 55  | 45.34 | 14.31 |
|                  | Moderate       | 464 | 35.64 | 9.58  |
|                  | High           | 30  | 34.30 | 11.32 |
| Parental Status  | Together       | 500 | 36.30 | 10.45 |
|                  | Separated      | 49  | 38.95 | 12.34 |
| Mother Education | No school      | 112 | 40.95 | 11.81 |
|                  | Primary School | 246 | 35.71 | 9.81  |
|                  | Middle School  | 72  | 35.95 | 7.66  |
|                  | High School    | 76  | 35.13 | 11.92 |
|                  | University     | 40  | 33.72 | 11.27 |

Table 1 (cont'd)

Loneliness Scores in Regard to Demographic Variables

|                  |                 |     |       |       |
|------------------|-----------------|-----|-------|-------|
|                  | Graduate Degree | 3   | 27.00 | 7.00  |
|                  | No School       | 22  | 42.18 | 14.36 |
|                  | Primary School  | 164 | 37.48 | 10.58 |
| Father Education | Middle School   | 117 | 36.04 | 9.32  |
|                  | High School     | 136 | 37.23 | 11.35 |
|                  | University      | 98  | 34.26 | 9.75  |
|                  | Graduate Degree | 12  | 29.00 | 7.75  |

Based on the descriptive statistics, male students reported higher mean of loneliness ( $M = 38.74$ ,  $SD = 12.19$ ) than female students ( $M = 35.38$ ,  $SD = 9.55$ ). Rather than that freshman pointed out higher mean score ( $M = 38.27$ ,  $SD = 12.55$ ), than sophomore ( $M = 36.05$ ,  $SD = 10.03$ ), junior ( $M = 36.28$ ,  $SD = 10.94$ ), and senior ( $M = 36.56$ ,  $SD = 10.39$ ).

The results of the descriptive statistics also pointed out that students with low family income have higher mean score of loneliness ( $M = 45.34$ ,  $SD = 14.31$ ) when compared to students with moderate family income ( $M = 35.64$ ,  $SD = 9.58$ ) and high family income ( $M = 34.30$ ,  $SD = 11.32$ ).

Participants who reported as their parents were separated also reported higher mean of loneliness ( $M = 38.95$ ,  $SD = 12.34$ ) than others whose parents were together ( $M = 36.30$ ,  $SD = 10.45$ ). In terms of mother education, mean score of loneliness was highest in students whose mothers did not go to school ( $M = 40.95$ ,  $SD = 11.81$ ) comparing to primary school graduates ( $M = 35.71$ ,  $SD = 9.81$ ), elementary school graduates ( $M = 35.95$ ,  $SD = 7.66$ ), high school graduates ( $M = 35.13$ ,  $SD = 11.92$ ), university graduates ( $M = 33.72$ ,

SD = 11.27), and higher school graduates (M = 27.00, SD = 7.00). Similarly to the mother education, students reported their mean score of loneliness as highest whose fathers did not go to school (M = 42.18, SD = 14.36) than primary school graduates (M = 37.48, SD = 10.58), elementary school graduates (M = 36.04, SD = 9.32), high school graduates (M = 37.23, SD = 11.35), university graduates (M = 34.26, SD = 9.75), and higher school graduates (M = 29.00, SD = 7.75).

### **4.3 Assumptions of Multiple Regression Analysis**

#### **4.3.1 Multivariate outliers**

In order to identify multivariate outliers on the dependent variable and independent variables, the data were examined via Cook's Distance, Centered Leverage Value, Mahalanobis Distance, and Standardized DFBETA Intercepts. Highest cook's Distance and Standardized DFBETA intercept values were found to be smaller than 1 and only values  $> 1$  (Field, 2009) may be cause for concern but for this sample values satisfy the assumption. Moreover, critical Centered Leverage value which was calculated through the formula of  $3(k+1)/n$  (where  $k$  = number of predictors and  $n$  = number of participants) (Stevens, 2002) and there was not Leverage value more than .016 and there were no outliers in terms of this test, too. The accepted criterion for multivariate outliers is the Mahalanobis Distance value at  $p < .001$ . The Mahalanobis Distance value calculated for each observation is decided by comparing with the critical chi-square value (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Mahalanobis Distance value was found to be .52 which indicated that no multivariate outliers were found.

### 4.3.2 Normally Distributed Error

It was assumed that the residuals in the model were random, normally distributed and in order to examine the normally distributed errors, histogram or normal P-P plot of residuals might be the indicators.

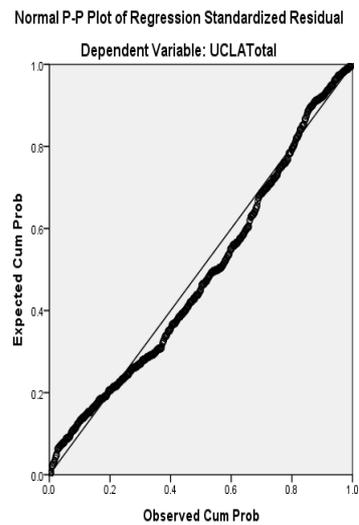
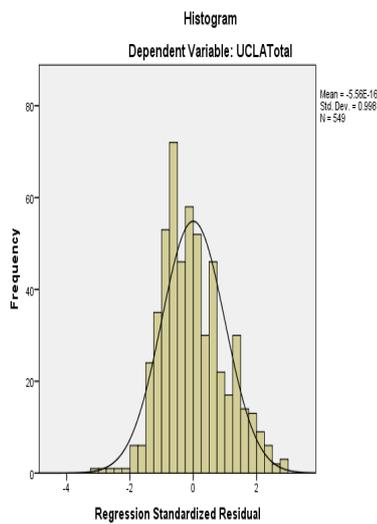


Figure 1. Histogram showing distribution of standardized residuals

Figure 2. Normal P-P plot showing normality of residuals

As Figure 1 demonstrated, it could be said that a slight positively skewed distribution occurred and there was some deviation from the normal distribution. Not exactly normal but closer to normal distribution. In Figure 2, there were some deviations from the line but both lines appear to be parallel and deviations close to the normal line.

### 4.3.3 Homoscedasticity

At each level of the predictor variable, the variance of the residual terms should be constant in order to conclude the homoscedasticity of residuals. In order to conclude that there was no model violation, participants should not demonstrate a systematic pattern or shape and clustering. A scatter plot of predicted value and residual was checked to identify if the homoscedasticity assumption is violated.

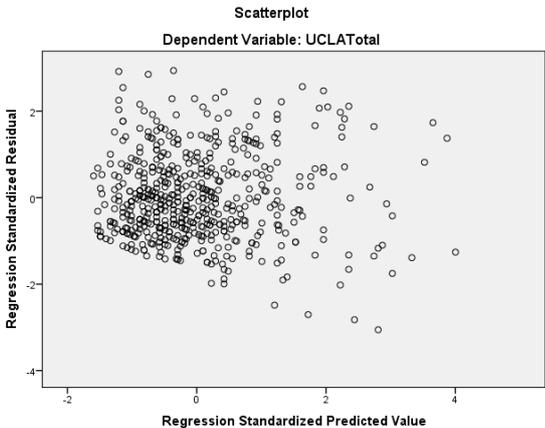


Figure 3. Distribution of the homoscedasticity of residuals

In Figure 3, no systematic pattern or great difference in the spread of scatter plot appeared but some residuals were clustered in a part. This showed some heterogeneous residuals. The vertical spread of the residuals was narrower on the left side of the chart and was wider on the right side of the chart. Berry and Feldman (1985) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) explained that slight heteroscedasticity has little effect on the significance of the tests.

#### 4.3.4 Independence of Errors

Durbin-Watson statistic value was the criteria in order to decide that satisfaction of this assumption met. As a general rule, the residuals are not correlated if the Durbin-Watson statistic is approximately 2, and the acceptable range is 1.50 - 2.50 (Field, 2013). The Durbin-Watson statistic for this research found to be is 1.75, which falls in the acceptable range from 1.50 to 2.50. The result of this analysis showed that the assumption of independence of errors was satisfied.

#### 4.3.5 Linearity

In order to examine the linearity of residuals, partial regression scatter plots were checked. The visual inspection of plots showed a close to linear relationship between the variables of the study.

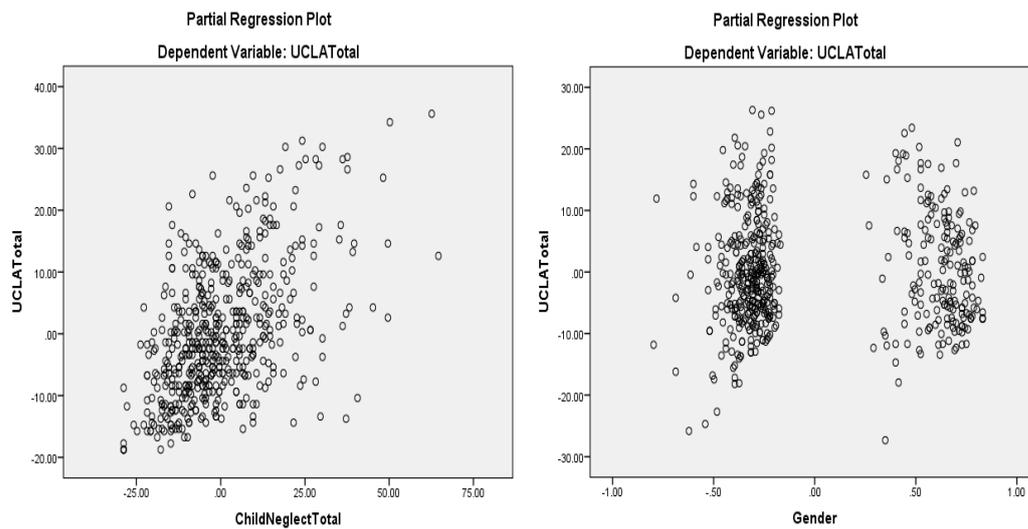


Figure 4. Scatter plots of residuals

#### **4.3.6 No Perfect Multicollinearity**

When there is a strong correlation between two or more predictor variables in a regression model multicollinearity exists. In order to check multicollinearity, VIF (variance inflation factor) should be less than 4 whereas Tolerance should be more than .20 (Menard, 2000). After screening, VIF value is found to be 1.05 whereas Tolerance value is found to be .94 and results demonstrated that they had all acceptable values. Thus, it could be concluded that this assumption was satisfied and there was no perfect multicollinearity. Furthermore, bivariate correlation results pointed out that the correlation between variables did not exceed the critical value of .90 (Field, 2009). This result also satisfied that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated.

#### **4.3.7 Multivariate Normality**

For the multivariate normality assumption of multiple linear regression analysis, all variables in the data set and their linear combinations should be normally distributed. Univariate normality tests were carried out in order to identify the normality as histograms, Q-Q plots, skewness and kurtosis values, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests.

After examining histograms visually, loneliness, and child abuse showed positively skewed distributions. But these variables, might not be expected to be normally distributed as the population may not show high loneliness or child abuse score. Also, normal Q-Q plots did not demonstrate many deviations from the normal distribution. Skewness and Kurtosis values range mostly between -1 and 1.

Lastly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk results were applied, but the normality assumption was found to be violated because although the p-values for

normality tests for all variables should be greater than .05 for each variable p value was found to be smaller than .05 ( $p < .05$ ). However, since the sample size was relatively high ( $N = 549$ ), it could be effective in dealing with non-normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2010).

#### **4.4 Results of Multiple Regression Analysis**

After satisfying all the necessary assumptions, multiple regression analysis was utilized. An independent sample t-test was conducted to identify whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between male and female students in terms of loneliness and child abuse. The results pointed out that there was a statistically significant mean difference between males ( $M = 38.74$ ) and females ( $M = 35.38$ ) in terms of loneliness ( $t_{547} = -3.54, p < .001$ ). Also, results indicated a statistically significant difference between males ( $M = 63.80$ ) and females ( $M = 56.39$ ) for child abuse ( $t_{547} = -5.59, p < .001$ ). After identifying a significant mean difference, gender was dummy coded and included in multiple regression analyses as a residual. Then, bivariate correlation test was run to identify the relationship between loneliness and child abuse. Computing correlations between loneliness and child abuse showed significant results for each variable. There was a positive and significant correlation between loneliness and child abuse ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ). Lastly, multiple regression analysis was carried out in order to test how well child abuse and gender significantly predicted loneliness together.

Table 2

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Loneliness  
(N = 549)

| Variables   | B     | SE B | $\beta$ | R <sup>2</sup> | $\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------|-------|------|---------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|             |       |      |         | .28            | .28                     | .28                     |
| Loneliness  | 13.87 | 1.72 |         |                |                         |                         |
| Child Abuse | .37   | .02  | .52     |                |                         |                         |
| Gender      | .60   | .83  | .02     |                |                         |                         |

\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed)

A multiple linear regression analysis was utilized to predict the loneliness of university students based on their childhood abuse and gender. A statistically significant regression equation was found that explained 28 % of the variance  $F_{(2,546)} = 109.464$ ,  $p < .001$  with an R<sup>2</sup> of .286. The results yielded that child abuse ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and gender ( $\beta = .02$ ,  $p < .05$ ) significantly and positively predicted loneliness. Child abuse was found to be the strongest predictor of loneliness.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the discussion of the analysis of the results was pointed out. The discussion was made through the researcher's explanations of the results, interpretations, other research findings, conclusion, and implication of the results.

#### **5.1 Discussion of the Results**

The study was carried out in order to identify the predictive relationship of child abuse and gender on loneliness among university students. This study was the first scientific research that examined the predictive relationship of child abuse and gender in determining university students' loneliness in Turkey. Individuals in young adulthood were observed to report abuse in high rates which brought about some mental health problems such as a decrease in self-esteem (Badr et al., 2018). Being exposed to abuse was found to have a relationship with perceived social isolation in later life (Sheikh, 2018). Also, gender was found to have a significant relationship with loneliness (Rotenberg & Morrison, 1993; Wiseman, Gutfreund, & Lurie, 1995; Chen & Chung, 2007; Muyan-Yılık, Sancak-Aydın & Demir, 2018). It was hypothesized in this research that child abuse and gender of university students might be a predictor of loneliness.

The results of the current research pointed out that there was a significant and positive predictive relationship between child abuse and gender on the loneliness of university students in Turkey. The results were consistent with the previous

research indicating that children who were exposed to abuse also experienced loneliness and social isolation in their lives (Polansky, Ammons, & Gaudin, 1985; Lapierre, Maloney, Cornetto, & Pears, 2006). Early exposure to abuse may prevent children from developing adequate and efficient social skills which might decrease social competence and cope with loneliness and even may foster compliance with adult authority so that the children would not feel isolated (Benedan, Powell, Zajac, Lum, & Snow, 2018).

In their research, Gould, et al. (2012) identified that early exposure to abuse may damage neurocognitive functioning. It might bring about serious cognitive deficiencies and eventually end up with low social skills which may lead to loneliness. Another research concluded that if a child experienced abuse, he or she may suffer from deficiencies in emotion processing in the afterlife (Young & Widom, 2014). The negative effects of early exposure to child abuse, as indicated in the above empirical studies, might decrease the probability and quality of the social relationships which may eventually result in loneliness.

The degree of the predictive relationship between child abuse and gender on loneliness was found to be lower. This was unexpected, but a possible result. One possible reason for that might be that the researcher did not select and control the mediator and moderator variables. A moderator variable may affect the degree of the relationship whereas a mediator variable explains the degree of the relationship (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). Another explanation to the degree of the relationship, there were several characteristics of the participants which may affect the findings and their degree of relationship as they could be considered as possible threats to internal validity (Andrade, 2018). The characteristics of the participants such as ethnicity and religious beliefs might affect their responses and the findings as a result.

The results also yielded that there was a statistically significant mean difference on loneliness terms of gender. Male young adults were found to be lonelier comparing to the female young adults. This result supported previous research

results explaining that even though women experienced loneliness in some degree, men experienced loneliness more (Theeke, Carpenter, Mallow, & Theeke, 2019; Ditommaso, Brannen, & Burgess, 2005; Muyan-Yılık, Sancak-Aydın and Demir, 2018). One reason for this result might be explained by the social support that women receive more than men (Adamczyk, 2016). In general, women tend to demonstrate social skills, such as empathy, more than men (Pohl, Bender, & Lachmann, 2005). Therefore, it might be possible that having more social skills increases the social support that an individual receives and eventually that individual may end up with feeling less lonely.

A gender difference on experiencing abuse was another result of the study. Unexpectedly, as comparing to women, men identified as being more abused when they were children comparing to the woman. The studies showed that gender differences in experiencing childhood maltreatment may be related to the parents' exposure to abuse when they were children (Oshio & Umeda, 2016). Their research suggested that mothers' and fathers' childhood exposure to abuse may result with neglecting their own sons and daughters. In addition, if a parent was abused, there was an association that abused mothers abuse their daughters more whereas abused fathers abuse their sons more. Therefore, as male participants in this study were found to be abused more, it might be possible that it was because of their fathers were abused when they were children.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The current study results have suggested that there was a significant predictive relationship of child abuse and gender on loneliness among university students. Moreover, a statistically significant mean difference for gender was found for loneliness and child abuse. In addition, male young adults were significantly found to be lonelier comparing to female young adults. Furthermore, male

participants not only reported higher loneliness but also early exposure to child abuse.

The findings contributed to the existing literature by pointing out the relationship between child abuse and gender on loneliness. Researchers concluded that child abuse and loneliness were frequently observed among young adults (Badr et al., 2018; Qualter et al., 2015). Although the number of research on loneliness had been increasing, only a few studies carried out on abuse. The importance of these two concepts was pointed out in this research frequently. Therefore, there was a great need for further investigation of the relationship between loneliness and child abuse in terms of age groups older than adolescence.

### **5.3 Implication of the Results**

There were several important points that this research revealed for mental health professionals. Firstly, if an individual suffered from loneliness, there was a possibility that the individual was exposed to childhood abuse. Thus, the practitioners may examine whether there was a previous abuse exposure during childhood to strengthen their helping process. In order to increase their quality of helping, mental health professionals can make use of strategies that foster the social skills of abused individuals (Sperry & Widom, 2013).

Secondly, the results showed that males might be suffering more from loneliness. Thus, considering the severe negative consequences of loneliness, for instance, committing a suicide (Chang et al., 2015), it might be beneficial to identify the social relationships of the individual to understand whether loneliness was present or not so that such damage could be prevented from the lives of people.

Lastly, even though both males and females were at great risk of being exposed to abuse, this study pointed out that males experience abuse more than girls. Prevention of possible risk factors and protecting the children from any kind of maltreatment is vital (Kanunu, 2005). It was strongly suggested in this research that mental health professionals should not ignore or underestimate the risk that males have for being abused and exposed to loneliness. Identification of loneliness and/or any type of abuse might lead the practitioners to efficiently establish the treatment plan so that it would be more effective in helping and supporting their clients.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Research**

There were only a few studies conducted on the predictive relationship between child abuse and gender on loneliness. The previous research focused on child abuse during childhood and adolescence period. Thus, it was important to note that even though there were similar results yielded in this study and other studies, their age population might be different. Therefore, future research might carry out their studies on understanding these concepts by focusing on their effects on university students.

Although there was not much research conducted on the relationship between child abuse and gender on loneliness, only a few studies carried out with populations older than adolescence. On the other hand, there is a significant gap in the literature of child abuse specifically in Turkey as indicated in the UNICEF report (Korkmazlar, Engin, & Büyükyazıcı, 2010).

Even though the number of researches on child abuse and loneliness is increasing, there is a significant need for investigating them not only in relation to each other, but also with other variables such as social support, self-esteem, attachment styles, and trust relationship in order to extend the body of

knowledge about these topics. Therefore, future researches may focus on understanding loneliness and child abuse with a population older than adolescents as well as in relation to the above variables.

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## APPENDICES

### A: APPROVAL LETTER FROM MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
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Sayı: 28620816 / 337

06 Haziran 2018

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (IAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. Ayhan DEMİR

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız yüksek lisans öğrencisi Emre BAŞOĞLU'nun "İhmalin Yordayıcısı olarak Yalnızlık" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay 2018-EGT-087 protokol numarası ile 01.10.2018 - 30.12.2018 tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL  
Üye

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN  
Başkan V

Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR  
Üye

Doç. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI  
Üye

Doç. Dr. Zana ÇITAK  
Üye

Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK  
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Pınar KAYGAN  
Üye

## **B: INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Gönüllü Katılım Formu**

Bu çalışma, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Ana Bilim Dalı yüksek lisans öğrencisi Emre Başoğlu tarafından Prof. Dr. Ayhan Demir danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir. Araştırmanın amacı Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencileri arasında yalnızlık, çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyet arasındaki yordayıcı ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Bu çalışma için vereceğiniz her türlü cevaplarınız tamamen gizli tutulacak ve toplu bir şekilde istatistiksel analizlerle değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bulgular yalnızca bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılacaktır. Çalışma hakkında daha detaylı bilgi almak için 0530 911 15 98 numaralı telefondan veya emre.basoglu@metu.edu.tr mail adresinden benimle iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

**Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.**

İsim Soyisim:

.....

Tarih: ...../...../.....

İmza:

## C: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

### Demografik Bilgi Formu

Değerli katılımcı,

Demografik bilgi formunu doldururken isim - soyisim yazmanıza gerek yoktur. Bu bilgiler sizlerden genel bir değerlendirme yapmak amacı ile toplanmaktadır. Verdiğiniz yanıtlar gizli tutulacak ve yalnızca bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılacaktır. Dolayısı ile sizlerden aşağıda yer alan tüm soruları eksiksiz bir şekilde doldurmanızı rica ediyoruz. Formun doldurulması esnasında anlamadığınızı düşündüğünüz yerlerde araştırmacıya soru sorabilirsiniz.

Teşekkürler.

#### Cinsiyet:

Kız  Erkek

#### Üniversite Sınıf Düzeyi:

1. Sınıf  2. Sınıf  3. Sınıf  4. Sınıf

#### Hangi seçenek ailenizin gelir düzeyini daha iyi yansıtır:

Yüksek  Ortalama  Düşük

#### Anne-baba birlikte mi:

Evet  Hayır

**Annenizin eğitim durumu:**

Okula gitmedi.....

İlkokul mezunu.....

Ortaokul mezunu.....

Lise mezunu.....

Üniversite/Yüksekokul mezunu.....

Yüksek lisans / doktora mezunu.....

**Babanızın eğitim durumu:**

Okula gitmedi.....

İlkokul mezunu.....

Ortaokul mezunu.....

Lise mezunu.....

Üniversite/Yüksekokul mezunu.....

Yüksek lisans / doktora mezunu.....

## D: UCLA LONELINESS SCALE (Sample Items)

### UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği

Aşağıda çeşitli duygu ve düşünceleri içeren ifadeler verilmektedir. Sizden istenilen her ifade de tanımlanan duygu ve düşüncüyü ne sıklıkta hissettiğinizi ve düşündüğünüzü her biri için tek bir rakkamı daire içine alarak belirtmenizdir.

|  | Ben bu durumu<br><b>Hiç</b><br>yaşamam | Ben bu durumu<br><b>NADİREN</b><br>yaşarım | Ben bu durumu<br><b>BAZEN</b><br>yaşarım | Ben bu durumu<br><b>SIK SIK</b><br>yaşarım |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Kendimi çevremdeki insanlarla uyum içinde hissediyorum.       | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 2. Arkadaşım yok.  | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 3. Başvurabileceğim hiç kimsem yok.                              | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 4. Kendimi tek başınaymışım gibi hissetmiyorum.                  | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 5. Kendimi bir arkadaş grubunun bir parçası olarak hissediyorum. | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 6. Çevremdeki insanlarla birçok ortak yönüm var.                 | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 7. Artık hiç kimseyle samimi değilim.                            | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 8. İlgilerim ve fikirlerim çevremdekilerce paylaşılmıyor.        | 1                                      | 2  | 3  | 4  |

## E: THE SCALE OF CHILD ABUSE IN THE FAMILY (Sample Items)

### Aile İçi Çocuk İstismarı Ölçeği

Sevgili Arkadaşlar,

Anne babaların gençlere yönelik bazı davranışlarını incelemeyi amaçlayan bu çalışmada sizden Kişisel Bilgi Formu'nu ve 2 adet ölçeği yanıtlamanız istenmektedir. Soruları içtenlikle yanıtlamanız ve hiçbir soruyu boş bırakmamanız çalışmanın amacına ulaşması açısından önemlidir. Verdiğiniz cevaplar sadece araştırma amaçlı olarak kullanılacak, yanıtlar gizli tutulacaktır, bunun için lütfen formlara kimliğinizi belirtecek bilgiler yazmayın.

Katılımınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Emre Başoğlu

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi

Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Yüksek Lisans Programı

Ankette yer alan her maddeyi okuduktan sonra maddede belirtilen durumu yaşıyor ya yaşamadığınızı, yaşadınızsa hangi sıklıkta olduğunu aşağıda bir örneği verilen değerlendirme ölçeğindeki şıklardan birini işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

| <b>Hiçbir zaman yaşamadım</b> | <b>Bir kez yaşadım</b> | <b>Nadiren yaşadım</b> | <b>Sık sık yaşadım</b> | <b>Her zaman yaşıyorum</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
|                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |

Yaşantılarınızı bizimle paylaştığınız için çok teşekkür ederiz.

| <b>Anne ve/veya baba tarafından;</b>  | <b>Hiçbir zaman yaşamadım</b> | <b>Bir kez yaşadım</b> | <b>Nadiren yaşadım</b> | <b>Sık sık yaşadım</b> | <b>Her zaman yaşıyorum</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1- Gence bazen çok sert bazen çok yumuşak davranmak   |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |
| 2- Gençlere, kendi cinslerine ait olmayan rolleri benimsemelerini sağlayacak şekilde davranılması |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |
| 3- Aile bireylerinin ya da diğer kişilerin gençle alay etmelerine göz yumulması                   |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |
| 4- Gencin gelişimini destekleyen fırsat ve ortamlar yaratmak                                      |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |
| 5- Gencin kulağını çekmek   |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |
| 6- Genci, döveceğini söyleyerek tehdit etmek  |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |
| 7- Gencin yaşına ve gelişim düzeyine uygun spor aktivitelerine yönlendirilmesi                    |                               |                        |                        |                        |                            |

## F: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

### ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNDE ÇOCUK İSTİSMARI VE CİNSİYETİN YALNIZLIK ÜZERİNDEKİ ROLÜ

#### GİRİŞ

##### Yalnızlık

İnsanlar, hayatlarını topluluklar halinde sürdüren sosyal varlıklardır. Bu topluluklarda insanlar diğer bireylerle ilişki kurma eğilimindedir (Qualter ve ark., 2015). Bireyler ile ilişki kurma eğiliminin bir nedeni, hemen hemen her insanda gözlemlenebilen; yakınlık, sıcaklık, değer duygusu ve kimlik onayı için güçlü bir ihtiyaçtır denebilir (Rokach, 1989). Buna rağmen, yalnızlık tarih boyunca neredeyse bütün insanların yaşadığı bir duygu olmuştur.

Yalnızlığın birçok tanımı olmakla birlikte genel anlamda sosyal ilişkileri de göz önüne aldığımızda kişinin olumsuz, sıkıntılı ve hoş olmayan bir duygu içinde olması olarak tanımlayabiliriz (Rook, 1984; Perlman ve Peplau, 1981). Bu ruh hali, insanların günlük yaşamlarını olumsuz etkiler ve yalnızlığın sonuçları hemen hemen her yaşta insana önemli ölçüde etki eder. Ergenlik, yalnızlığın birçok birey tarafından ortak ve yoğun olarak hissedildiği kimlik oluşumunda önemli bir rolü olan gelişimsel bir dönemdir. Ergenlik vücutta fiziksel ve duygusal bağlamda gelişimsel değişikliklerin ortaya çıkabileceği (Qualter ve ark., 2015) ve ergenleri yalnızlık hissini yaşamak için savunmasız konuma sokabileceği bir evredir (Danneel ve ark., 2018). Weeks ve Asher (2012) araştırmalarında, okula gitmenin ve diğer öğrencilerle birlikte çok fazla zaman geçirmenin diğer bir deyişle okul çağındaki öğrencilerin yalnızlık üzerine çalışmak için ideal olduğuna dikkat çekmiştir. Bunun bir sebebi yalnızlık düzeyinin akran ilişkilerinden etkileniyor olması olabilir.

Yalnızlığın ortaya çıkabileceği diğer bir gelişimsel dönem ise genç yetişkinlik dönemidir (Qualter ve ark., 2015). Genç yetişkinlik döneminde yaşanan yalnızlık düşük öz saygı (Badr ve ark., 2018), intihar etme (Chang ve ark., 2015) gibi bazı ciddi sorunları beraberinde getirebilmektedir. Bu çalışmada yalnızlığın yaşandığı bazı gelişimsel dönemlere değinilse de çalışmanın odak noktası içerisinde üniversite öğrencilerinin de bulunduğu genç yetişkinlik dönemidir.

## **İstismar**

Bütün çocukların her türlü kötü muameleden korunma hakkı vardır. Bu haklar Birleşmiş Milletler Çocuk Hakları Sözleşmesinde açıkça belirtilmiştir (Birleşmiş Milletler Uluslararası Çocuk Acil Yardım Fonu 1989). Hem gelişmiş hem de gelişmekte olan ülkeler, çocuk haklarına ilişkin BM sözleşmesine uyma hususunda ortak karar almışlardır. Sözleşmeye göre 18 yaşın altındaki her birey çocuk olarak kabul edilmektedir (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1989). Çocukların korunması, doğumdan önce ve sonra, yasal ve ahlaki bir zorunluluk olsa da çocuklar hala daha tehlike içindedir. Birçok çocuk, istismarın herhangi bir çeşidine maruz kalmaktadır. Çocukların cinsiyetini, yaşını, dini inancını ve sosyo-ekonomik fark gözetmeksizin, onların haklarını belirten BM sözleşmesine rağmen birçok çocuk istismara maruz bırakılmakta, birçoğu da bu risk altında yaşamaktadır.

Dünya Sağlık Örgütüne göre çocuk istismarı:

Çocuk istismarı veya kötü muamele, her türlü fiziksel ve/veya duygusal kötü muamele, cinsel istismar, ihmal veya ihmalkar muamele veya ticari veya diğer istismar biçimlerini içinde barındırır ve fiili veya potansiyel olarak sorumluluk, güven veya güç ilişkisi çerçevesinde çocuğa zarar vererek çocuğun sağlığı, hayatta kalması, gelişimi veya saygınlığına zarar vermesi (Dünya Sağlık Örgütü, 2016).

Çocuk istismarı 4 yaygın şekilde görülmektedir. Bunlar fiziksel istismar, cinsel istismar, duygusal istismar ve ihmaldir (Dünya Sağlık Örgütü, 2017). Dünya Sağlık Örgütü (2017) tarafından elde edilen istatistikler gösteriyor ki çocukların % 23'ü fiziksel istismara, % 36'sı duygusal istismara, % 26'sı (% 18 kız ve % 8 erkek) cinsel istismara uğramış ve % 16'sı fiziksel ihmale maruz kalmıştır. Ayrıca her 4 yetişkinden 1'i çocukken fiziksel olarak istismara uğradığını bildirmiştir. Ek olarak, 5 kadından 1'i ve 13 erkekten 1'i çocukken cinsel istismara uğradığını bildirmiştir (Becker, 2016).

Çocuk istismarı dünya çapında görülen ciddi bir sorundur. Türkiye'de, çocuk istismarı vakaları ile karşılaşılan ülkelerden bir tanesidir. Türkiye'de her yıl 1,6 milyon çocuk fiziksel, cinsel, duygusal istismara ve ihmale maruz kalmanın yanı sıra araştırmacılar tarafından elde edilen bulgulara göre bu kötü muamelenin 1000'den fazla çocuğun ölümüne neden olduğu varsayılmaktadır (Yüksel ve Saner, t.y.). Başka bir araştırmada, Türkiye'de bir yıl içinde çocuk istismarı ve ihmali incelenmiş; sonuçlar duygusal istismarın (% 51) en sık maruz kalınan çocuk kötü muamelesi türü olduğunu göstermiştir. Ardından, fiziksel istismarın (% 43) ikinci, ihmalin (% 5) üçüncü, cinsel istismarın ise (% 3) dördüncü sırada geldiği ortaya konmuştur (Korkmazlar, Engin ve Büyükyazıcı, 2010).

Bu yüzdeler yalnızca rapor edilmiş vakalardan yola çıkılarak elde edilmiştir. Doğru şekilde bildirilmediği veya belgelenmediği için kayıt altında olmayan çok daha fazla istismar olayının olduğu varsayılmaktadır. Çocuklara yönelik herhangi bir kötü muamele ciddi endişeler meydana getirmektedir. Çocuklara kötü muamelenin sonuçları yaşam boyu gözlemlenebilmektedir. Çocuk istismarı mağdurları yetişkin olduğunda, depresyon, obezite, şiddet eğilimi veya şiddet mağduru olmak, riskli cinsel yaşam ve istenmeyen hamilelik ile tütün, uyuşturucu ve alkol bağımlılığı gibi sonuçlardan en az birine sahip olma riski büyüktür (Dünya Sağlık Örgütü, 2017). Buna ek olarak çocukluk çağında travmatik olayların yaşanması ile yetişkin obezitesinde istismar türüne bakılmaksızın önemli bir ilişki vardır (Amianto ve ark., 2018). Çocuk

istismarının yukarıda bahsedilen sonuçları, bu muameleye maruz kalan çocukların yaşamlarındaki potansiyel travmatik olayların işaretleri olarak görülmektedir (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

Genel olarak, yukarıdaki bilimsel çalışmaların bulguları, her türlü çocuk istismarının sonlandırılması gerektiğini göstermektedir. Çocuk koruma programları dünyanın birçok yerinde başarılı bir şekilde gerçekleştirilse de bazı çocuklar hala daha kötü muameleye maruz kalmaktadır. Özellikle Türkiye'de çocuk istismarının derinlemesine araştırılması için önemli çalışmalar yapılması gerekmektedir (Korkmazlar, Engin ve Büyükyazıcı, 2010).

### **Araştırmanın Amacı**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencileri arasında çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetin yalnızlığı ne derecede ön gördüğünü incelemektir. Çocuk istismarı, cinsiyet ve yalnızlık arasındaki yordayıcı ilişkinin tanımlanmasının son derece önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Yalnızlık, bireyin yaşamını yıllar boyu olumsuz etkileyebilecek olan bir duygudur. Yalnızlığa maruz kalan bireylerin psikolojik ve fiziksel sağlığında kayda değer bir zarar görülebiliyor. Bu zararın engellenmesi için yalnızlığın daha iyi tanınması gerekmektedir. Dolayısı ile bu çalışmanın amaçlarından biri genç yetişkinlerin yalnızlık düzeylerini araştırmaktır.

Bütün çocukların başlarına gelebilecek her türlü olmuş veya olası zararlardan korunma hakkı vardır. Çocuk koruma programlarını, zararı önleyerek, riskli çocukları belirleyerek ve müdahale ederek güçlendirmek için, çocuğun maruz kaldığı istismar ile ilişkisi olan yordayıcı, nedenleri ve faktörleri tanımlamanın önemli olduğuna inanılmaktadır.

## **Araştırma Sorusu**

Çocukluk döneminde maruz kalınan istismar ve cinsiyet üniversite öğrencilerinin yalnızlığını ne kadar açıklamaktadır?

## **Araştırmanın Önemi**

Bireyler birbirleri ile etkileşime girme ve birbirlerine ait olma eğilimindedirler. Ancak yalnızlık hissi, aidiyetin zıttı olarak düşünülebilir (Gierveld, Tilburg ve Dykstra, 2006). Turner, Thomas ve Brown (2016), çocuk istismarına maruz kalmanın, sosyal ilişkilerin gelişmesi ve sürdürülmesinde eksikliklere yol açabileceğini açıkladı. Ayrıca, bir istismar olayı yaşadıktan sonra, çocuk sosyal ilişkiler kurmak ve bunları yürütmek için mücadele edebilmektedir. Öte yandan, daha güvenli ve sağlıklı bir gelişim için insanların sosyal ilişkilerdeki mücadeleleriyle başa çıkmaları gerekir (Erikson, 1969). Bowlby (1977) ayrıca insanların gelişimleri için sosyal, bilişsel ve duygusal yönleriyle olumlu ilişkilere ihtiyaç duyduklarına dikkat çekti.

İnsanlar bütün gelişim aşamalarında yalnızlık yaşayabilir (Qualter ve ark., 2015). Dahası, ampirik çalışma, genç erişkinliğin, bireylerin yalnızlığı deneyimlemeye daha yatkın oldukları gelişimsel bir dönem olabileceğini ortaya koydu (Badr ve ark. 2018). Genç erişkinlik çağında bireyler, yakınlığa karşı uzaklık arasında çatışma yaşarlar (Pittman, ve ark., 2011). Bu aşamadan başarılı bir şekilde geçmek için, insanların eşlerine karşı samimi hisleri olması gerekir. Samimi bir eş bulamama, izolasyon ve yalnızlığın birbirleriyle ilişki içinde olduğu tespit edildiğinden (Beller ve Wagner, 2018) izolasyon ve yalnızlık ile sonuçlanabilir.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları mevcut alanyazını genişletecek ve araştırmacıların üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetlerinin yalnızlığı

ne derece ön gördüğü hakkında genel bir anlayışa sahip olmalarına katkıda bulunacaktır. Yalnızlık ile çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyet arasındaki ilişki üzerine yapılan araştırma sayısı oldukça düşüktür. Ancak yalnızlığın sonuçlarının üniversite öğrencileri arasında var olduğuna ve günlük yaşamlarını olumsuz yönde etkilediğini gösteren çok sayıda araştırma bulunmaktadır.

Bu araştırmanın, üniversite öğrencilerinin yalnızlıklarının, cinsiyet ve çocuk yaşta maruz kaldıkları istismar ile olan ilişkisini belirten önemli sonuçlar vermesi beklenmektedir. Bu durumda araştırmacıların ve uygulayıcıların bu sonucu kendi alanlarında kullanabilecekleri düşünülmektedir. Sonuçlar, bir uzmanın danışan veya hasta gördüklerinde yalnızlık ve istismar konularına daha fazla dikkat etmelerini sağlayabileceği gibi bilimsel araştırmalar yapanların da hangi alanlara odaklanabileceğini göstermesi açısından önemlidir.

## YÖNTEM

Araştırma, çocuk istismarı ile cinsiyet değişkenleri arasındaki yalnızlık üzerindeki yordayıcı ilişkiyi tanımlamak için yordayıcı korelasyonel araştırma olarak tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmaya Atatürk Üniversitesi'nde okumakta olan üniversite öğrencileri katılmıştır. Örneklem için uygun örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada üniversite öğrencilerinin yalnızlığı kriteriyen değişken iken, çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyet yordayıcı değişkenlerdir. Kriteriyen ve yordayıcı değişkenler için ölçeklerden toplamda iki puan, cinsiyet için de demografik bilgi formundan bir kategorik puan alınmıştır.

## **Örnekleme**

Bu araştırmanın katılımcıları, Atatürk Üniversitesi'nden genç yetişkinlik döneminde olan üniversite öğrencileridir. Çalışmaya 360 (% 65.6) kadın öğrenci ve 189 (% 34.4) erkek öğrenci, toplam 549 genç yetişkin katılmıştır.

## **Veri Toplama Yöntemi**

Bu çalışmada veri toplanmadan önce, araştırmacı Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ) İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'na başvurmuş (Bkz. Ek A). Kuruldan gerekli onayı aldıktan sonra araştırmacı onay formunu Atatürk Üniversitesi'ne sunmuş ve ders saatleri içerisinde veri toplama izni alınmıştır. Bu çalışmada uygun örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veriler yalnızca bir kez toplanmış ve 2018-2019 akademik yılı güz döneminde elde edilmiştir. Ölçeklerin uygulanması bireysel olarak araştırmacı tarafından yapılmıştır. Atatürk Üniversitesi öğretim görevlileri sınıftaki uygulama boyunca beklemişlerdir.

## **Ölçekler**

### **UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği**

Bu çalışmada Russell, Peplau ve Ferguson (1978) tarafından geliştirilen UCLA yalnızlık ölçeğinin Demir (1989) tarafından Türkçe'ye uyarlanmış hali kullanılmıştır. Ölçekte 10 olumlu 10 olumsuz olmak üzere 20 madde bulunmaktadır. Katılımcılar ölçeğe cevap verirken 4'lü Likert tip (1 = ben bu durumu sık sık yaşıyorum, 4 = ben bu durumu hiç yaşamam) sorular kullanılmıştır. Ölçekten en az 20 en fazla 80 puan elde edilebilmektedir. Elde edilen

puanlardaki yükseklik yalnızlığın daha fazla olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada ölçeğin iç güvenilirlik katsayısı .90 olarak bulunmuştur.

### **Aile İçi Çocuk İstismarı Ölçeği**

Bu çalışmada kullanılan diğer bir ölçek ise Sarıbeyoğlu (2007) tarafından geliştirilen Aile İçi Çocuk İstismarı Ölçeğidir. Ölçekte 27 olumlu 8 olumsuz olmak üzere toplamda 35 soru bulunmaktadır. Ölçekte 5'li Likert tip (1 = Hiçbir zaman, 5 = Her zaman) kullanılmıştır. Ölçekten az 35 en fazla 175 puan alınabilmektedir. Yüksek puan istismarın daha fazla olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma için ölçeğin iç güvenilirlik katsayısı .89 olarak saptanmıştır.

### **Demografik Bilgi Formu**

Demografik bilgiler formunda katılımcıların cinsiyeti, üniversite sınıfları, aile gelir düzeyleri, ebeveynlerin birlikte mi ayrı mı oldukları, ebeveynlerin hayatta olup olmadıkları ve öz mü üvey mi oldukları ve ebeveynlerin eğitim düzeylerine yönelik sorular sorulmuştur.

### **Veri Analizi**

Verilerin analizine başlamadan önce ölçekte bulunan uç değerler tespit edilip çıkarılmıştır. Ardından, çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi yapabilmek için gerekli olan varsayımlar test edilmiştir. Tüm varsayımları yerine getirdikten sonra

verilerin özelliklerini açıklamak için tanımlayıcı analiz kullanılmıştır. Daha sonra ortalama farkları açıklamak için, bağımsız örneklem t testi kullanılmıştır. Son olarak, çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetin yalnızlığın üzerindeki yordayıcı ilişkisi için, verilere çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi uygulanmıştır.

### **Çalışmanın Sınırlılıkları**

Bu araştırmada çeşitli sınırlılıklar bulunmaktadır. Öncelikle veri Türkiye’de bulunan yalnızca bir üniversiteden ve bünyesindeki genç yetişkinlerden toplanmıştır. Diğer bir sınırlılık ise bu araştırmada elverişli örneklem yönteminin kullanılmasıdır. Bir başka sınırlılık ise örneklemdaki erkek ve kadın dağılımının eşit olmamasıdır. Ek olarak bu çalışmada düzenleyici ve aracı değişkenler kontrol edilmemiştir.

## **BULGULAR**

### **Yalnızlık Ölçeği İçin Betimleyici İstatistik**

Tanımlayıcı istatistik sonucuna göre, erkek öğrencilerin ortalama puanı ( $M = 38.74$ ,  $SD = 12.19$ ) kız öğrencilere ( $M = 35.38$ ,  $SD = 9.55$ ) göre yalnızlık değişkeni bakımından daha yüksek bulunmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin ortalama puanının ( $M = 38.27$ ,  $SD = 12.55$ ), 2. sınıf ( $M = 36.05$ ,  $SD = 10.03$ ), 3. sınıf ( $M = 36.28$ ) ve 4. Sınıf ( $M = 36.56$ ,  $SD = 10.39$ ) öğrencilerine kıyasla yalnızlık değişkeni bakımından daha yüksek olduğu tespit edildi.

Tanımlayıcı istatistik sonuçları aynı zamanda aile geliri düşük olan öğrencilerin ortalama puanı ( $M = 45.34$ ,  $SD = 14.31$ ) orta dereceli aile geliri olan öğrenciler ( $M = 35.64$ ,  $SD = 9.58$ ) ve yüksek aile geliri ( $M = 34.30$ ,  $SD = 11.32$ ) ile karşılaştırıldığında daha yüksek yalnızlık puanlarına sahip olduğunu gösterdi. Ebeveynlerinin boşanmış olduğunu bildiren katılımcıların ortalama puanı ( $M = 38.95$ ,  $SD = 12.34$ ) ebeveynleri bir arada olan öğrencilere kıyasla ( $M = 36.30$ ,  $SD = 10.45$ ) daha yüksek yalnızlık puanı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Anne eğitimi açısından, anneleri okula gitmemiş olan katılımcıların ortalama puanı ( $M = 40.95$ ,  $SD = 11.81$ ) anneleri ilkokul mezunu ( $M = 35.71$ ,  $SD = 9.81$ ), ortaokul mezunu ( $M = 35.95$ ,  $SD = 7.66$ ), lise mezunu ( $M = 35.13$ ,  $SD = 11.92$ ), üniversite mezunu ( $M = 33.72$ ,  $SD = 11.27$ ) ve yüksek lisans/doktora mezunu ( $M = 27.00$ ,  $SD = 7.00$ ) olanlara göre daha yüksek yalnızlık puanı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir.

Anne eğitimine benzer şekilde baba eğitimi düzeyinde de babası okula gitmemiş olan katılımcıların ortalama puanı ( $M = 42.18$ ,  $SD = 14.36$ ) babaları ilkokul ( $M = 37.48$ ,  $SD = 10.58$ ), ortaokul ( $M = 36.04$ ,  $SD = 9.32$ ), lise ( $M = 37.23$ ,  $SD = 11.35$ ), üniversite ( $M = 34.26$ ,  $SD = 9.75$ ) ve yüksek lisans/doktora mezunu ( $M = 29.00$ ,  $SD = 7.75$ ) olanlara göre daha yüksek yalnızlık puanı olduğunu raporlamışlardır.

### **Çoklu Doğrusal Regresyon Analizi Sonuçları**

Bütün varsayımlar sağlandıktan sonra çoklu regresyon analizi uygulanmıştır. Çocuk istismarı ve yalnızlık değişkenleri için cinsiyetin istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark oluşturup oluşturmadığını ölçmek için bağımsız değişken t-testi yapılmıştır. Analiz sonuçları yalnızlık ve cinsiyet arasında anlamlı bir fark

olduğunu vurgulamıştır ( $t_{547} = -3.54, p < .001$ ). Ayrıca, çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyet arasında da istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark ortaya çıkmıştır ( $t_{547} = -5.59, p < .001$ ). Anlamlı bir fark bulunmasının ardından cinsiyet çoklu regresyon analizinin için bağımsız değişken olarak girmiştir.

Ardından, yalnızlık ve istismar arasındaki ilişkiyi saptamak için ikili korelasyon analizi yapılmıştır. Analiz sonuçları, yalnızlık ve çocuk istismarı değişkenleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Yalnızlık ve çocuk istismarı arasında kayda değer ve pozitif bir ilişki ortaya çıkmıştır ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ).

Son olarak, çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetin üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları yalnızlığı ne kadar iyi ve kayda değer derecede yordadığını test etmek için çoklu regresyon analizi yapılmıştır. Çoklu regresyon analizi sonuçları çocuk istismar ve cinsiyetin yalnızlık üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişkisi olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu ilişki elde edilen  $R^2 = .286$  ile % 28 oranında ilişkiyi açıklamaktadır  $F_{(2,546)} = 109.464, p < .001$ . Analiz sonuçları istismar ( $\beta = .52, p < .001$ ) ve cinsiyetin ( $\beta = .52, p < .001$ ) kayda değer ve pozitif bir şekilde yalnızlığı ön gördüğünü ortaya çıkarmıştır. İstismar en güçlü yordayıcı olarak bulunmuştur.

## TARTIŞMA

Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerinde çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetin yalnızlığı ne derecede ön gördüğünü saptamak amacı ile yapılmıştır. Bu araştırma, Türkiye’de okuyan üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyetlerinin yalnızlık üzerindeki yordayıcı etkisini inceleyen ilk çalışmadır. Genç erişkinlik çağındaki bireylerde raporlanan istismar olaylarının fazla olduğu ve bunun da özgüvende azalma gibi bazı sorunlara yol açabileceği bilimsel çalışmalarca

saptanmıştır (Badr ve ark. 2018). İstismara maruz kalmanın ilerleyen zamanlarda algılanan sosyal yalıtımla ilişkisi olduğu bulunmuştur (Şeyh, 2018). Ayrıca cinsiyet ve yalnızlık arasında da anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu bulunmuştur (Rotenberg ve Morrison, 1993; Wiseman, Gutfreund, & Lurie, 1995; Chen ve Chung, 2007; Muyan-Yılık, Sancak-Aydın ve Demir, 2018). Bu çalışmada maruz kalınan istismar ve cinsiyetin üniversite öğrencilerinin yalnızlığını ön göreceği hipotezi kurulmuştur.

Mevcut araştırmanın sonuçları, Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencilerinin yalnızlığı, çocuk istismarı ve cinsiyet arasında anlamlı ve pozitif bir yordayıcı ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Sonuçlar, istismara maruz kalan çocukların genç erişkinlik döneminde yalnızlık ve sosyal yalıtım yaşadıklarını gösteren önceki araştırmalarla tutarlıdır (Polansky, Ammons ve Gaudin, 1985; Lapierre ve ark., 2006). İhmale erken maruz kalmak, çocukların sosyal becerilerinin gelişmesinde olumsuz bir rol oynayarak onların sosyal ilişkilerini güçlendirmesinde yardımcı olacak yeterli ve etkili sosyal becerilerin gelişmesini engelleyebilir ve hatta izole olmamak için yetişkinlerin otoritesine uyabilirler (Benedan, ve ark., 2018).

Araştırmalarında Gould ve ark. (2012) erken yaşta maruz kalınan istismarın nörobilişsel işleyişe zarar verebileceğini ortaya çıkarmışlardır. Ciddi bilişsel eksikliklere yol açabilecek olan istismara maruz kalmanın sonucunda da yalnızlığa sebep olabilecek yeterli sosyal becerilerin kazanılmasını engelleme ile de sonuçlanabilir. Bir başka araştırma, çocukların istismara karşı karşıya kalması durumunda, ileriki yaşamlarında duygu işlemede eksikliklerin yaşanabileceği sonucuna varmaktadır (Young ve Widom, 2014). Yukarıdaki araştırmalarda belirtildiği gibi erken yaşta istismara maruz kalmanın olumsuz etkileri, yalnızlık ile sonuçlanabilecek yeterli sosyal ilişkilerin oluşturulamaması olasılığını arttırabilir ve mevcut ilişkilerin de kalitesini düşürebilir.

Yalnızlığın çocuk istismarındaki yordayıcı ilişkisinin derecesi düşük olarak saptanmıştır. Bu beklenmeyen, ancak olası bir sonuçtur. Bunun olası bir nedeni araştırmacının düzenleyici ve aracı değişkenleri kontrol etmemiş olması olabilir.

Düzenleyici deęişkenler ilişkinin derecesini etkileyebilirken, aracı deęişkenler ise ilişkinin derecesini açıklarlar (Fraenkel, Wallen ve Hyun, 2011). Katılımcıların cinsiyet, etnik köken ve dini inanç gibi özellikleri ölçeęin uygulanması esnasında vermiş oldukları yanıtları ve bunun sonucunda elde edilen bulguları etkileyebilir.

Sonuçlar ayrıca yalnızlık ve cinsiyet arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark farkının olduğunu göstermiştir. Erkek üniversite öğrencileri, kadın üniversite öğrencileri ile karşılaştırıldığında daha yalnız oldukları tespit edilmiştir. Bu sonuç, kadınların bir dereceye kadar yalnızlığı tecrübe etmesine rağmen, erkeklerin yalnızlığı daha fazla yaşadığını açıklayan bazı araştırmaların sonucu ile örtüşmektedir (Theeke ve ark., 2019; Ditommaso, Brannen ve Burgess, 2005; Muyan-Yılık, Sancak-Aydın ve Demir, 2018).

Ek olarak, çocukluk döneminde istismara maruz kalma ve cinsiyet deęişkeni arasında da istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark ortaya çıkması bu çalışmanın bir dięer sonucudur. Beklenmedik bir şekilde, kadınlara kıyasla erkeklerin çocukken daha fazla istismar edildikleri tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmalar, çocukken istismarı yaşamadaki cinsiyet farklılıklarının, ebeveynlerin çocukken istismar edilmeye maruz kalmalarıyla ilgili olabileceğini göstermektedir (Oshio ve Umeda, 2016). Bir başka deyişle eęer bir anne çocukluk döneminde istismara maruz kalmışsa kendi kızını istismar etme olasılığı artarken eęer bir baba aynı şekilde istismara maruz kalmışsa oęlunu daha çok istismar ettięi bulunmuştur.

Özetle, bu çalışmanın sonuçları, üniversite öğrencileri arasında çocuk istismarına maruz kalmanın ve cinsiyetin yalnızlığın anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ek olarak, cinsiyet ve yalnızlık ve cinsiyet ve istismar için elde edilen sonuçlarda istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark vardır. Ayrıca, erkek üniversite öğrencilerinin, kadın üniversite öğrencilerine göre daha yalnız oldukları görülmüştür. Ayrıca, erkek katılımcılar sadece daha fazla yalnız deęil, aynı zamanda çocuk istismarına daha çok maruz kaldıklarını da bildirmişlerdir.

Bulgular çocuk istismarı, cinsiyet ve yalnızlık arasındaki ilişkiyi göstererek mevcutalanyazına katkıda bulunmuştur. Araştırmacılar, üniversite öğrencilerinde çocuk istismarı ve yalnızlığının sıklıkla gözlendiği sonucuna varmaktadır (Badr ve ark., 2018; Qualter ve ark., 2015). Yalnızlık konusundaki araştırmaların sayısında göreceli olarak bir artış olmasına rağmen, istismarla ilgili yapılan araştırmaların sayısı oldukça azdır. Bu iki kavramın önemi katılımcıların cinsiyetleri ile birlikte bu araştırmada sıkça vurgulanmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu nedenle yalnızlık, çocuğun istismar edilmesi ve cinsiyet hakkında ileride daha fazla araştırma yapılması gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

**G: THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU**

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