

# The Anger Expression Patterns and Early Abuse Experiences in Turkish Male Sex Offenders

## Türkiye'deki Cinsel Suç Faillerinin Öfke İfade Biçimleri ve Erken Dönem İstismar Deneyimleri

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**ABSTRACT Objective:** Childhood trauma and neglect have adverse effects not only in the childhood period, but also in the adulthood of individuals. Trauma can cause various psychiatric disorders and may also influence the child towards expressing his/her increasing anger in aggressive behaviors which may also lead to some criminal behaviors. That is why the relationship between traumatic experiences and anger expression styles was considered to be critical, especially in understanding criminal behavior. **Material and Methods:** The sample of the study consisted of 74 convicted male sex offenders from Istanbul Ümraniye prison. Data was collected with a demographic information form, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and Trait Anger-Anger Expression Scales. **Results:** The results showed that, in sexual offenders, a positive and significant relationship between their childhood traumatic experiences and their trait anger, externalized and internalized anger. Additionally, their anger control was found to be negatively and significantly correlated with physical and emotional abuse experience during childhood. **Conclusion:** Offenders with high childhood trauma experiences tend to direct their anger to others and act aggressively. The effect of physical abuse comes forward when the relationships are analyzed deeply. The results of this study, parallel with the literature, thought to give some good insights for the intervention and prevention of the sexual offences and it is considered to be a starting point for the future studies what will be conducted in that context.

**Key Words:** Child abuse; sex offenses; anger; stress disorders, traumatic

**ÖZET Amaç:** Yaşamın erken döneminde yaşanan istismar ve ihmalin, sadece çocukluk dönemine değil, bireyin yetişkinliğine de olumsuz etkileri bulunmaktadır. Travma, birçok psikiyatrik soruna yol açabileceği gibi, çocuğun öfkesini agresif davranışlar olarak ifade etmesine de sebep olabilir. Bu da, suç davranışına yol açabilir. Bu sebeple, travmatik deneyimler ve öfke ifade biçimleri arasındaki ilişki, özellikle suç davranışını anlamak açısından, çok önemsenmektedir. **Gereç ve Yöntemler:** Çalışmanın örneklemini İstanbul Ümraniye Cezaevinde kalan, cinsel suç işlemiş, 74 erkek hükümlüden oluşmaktadır. Bu kişilere, demografik bilgi formuna ek olarak, Çocukluk Çağı Ruhsal Travma Ölçeği ve Sürekli Öfke ve Öfke İfade Ölçeği anketleri uygulanmıştır. **Bulgular:** Sonuç olarak, cinsel suç işlemiş kişilerin çocukluk çağı ruhsal travma deneyimleri ile sürekli öfkeleri, dışsallaştırılan öfkeleri ve içselleştirilen öfkeleri arasında pozitif ve anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu bulunmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, bu kişilerin öfke kontrollerinin, travma deneyimleri ile negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişkisi olduğu da saptanmıştır. **Sonuç:** Cinsel suç işlemiş kişilerde, çocukluk çağı istismarı arttıkça, öfkeyi, agresif davranışlar şeklinde, dışarıya yönlendirdikleri ortaya konmuştur. Bu ilişkiler yakından incelendiğinde, fiziksel istismar deneyimlerinin etkisinin ön plana çıkıyor olduğu görülmüştür. Bu çalışmanın, ilgili yazın ile paralel bir şekilde, cinsel suç alanı ile ilgili, özellikle müdahale ve önleme açısından önemli getirileri olduğu ve gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalar için iyi bir başlama noktası oluşturduğu düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çocuk istismarı; cinsel suçlar; öfke; stres bozuklukları, travmatik

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One of the serious childhood trauma that affect children is the experience of the abuse and neglect. Child abuse is a problem that has been observed through the history and has found to have serious negative impacts on the development of the children.<sup>1</sup> Child abuse is defined as “the attitudes and behaviors of adults who are responsible for childcare; which have a negative influence on the child’s physical, devel-

opmental and psychosocial wellbeing".<sup>2</sup> It may be occurred as physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect, or with the combination of these types.<sup>3</sup>

All kinds of abuse and neglect seriously influence the child's current life and his/her future.<sup>4,5</sup> Reactions to abuse may vary from child to child, yet, when the abuser is a family member, and when the abuse continues for a long period of time, it intensifies the impact of it and complicates the treatment.<sup>3</sup> In addition to that, some researchers argue that, besides leading to some psychopathological problems, childhood abuse and neglect may have some indirect influences on the trait personality which in turn may contribute to the pathological personality characteristics of the individual.<sup>6</sup>

Abuse experiences may lead to various psychiatric disorders in the child and also may lead the child to behave in an aggressive way which may be considered a way of reflecting his/her increased anger.<sup>3,5,7</sup> Anger is "a negatively toned emotion, subjectively experienced as an arousal state of antagonism toward someone or something perceived to be the source of an aversive event".<sup>8</sup> It is a normal feeling however the way it is expressed may sometimes cause problems.<sup>9</sup> Anger expression styles were studied and 3 patterns appeared. When anger is directed inside, the feeling is repressed; it is not expressed at all. On the other hand, when it is directed outside, the feeling is expressed with aggressive behaviors, physically damaging objects or people. The third one is controlled anger, in which the person is able to control his/her feeling in a proper way and he/she has the ability to stay calm in anger provoking situations.<sup>10</sup> If anger continues for a long time or its severity is high, then the person may have some problems with people around them. He/she may have conflicts in his/her relationships and these conflicts may even sometimes become physical.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, because the child does not have the control over the abuse that he/she is experiencing, he/she may feel losing control over his/her entire life and this frustration may lead to anger which in turn may trigger aggressive behaviors as a way of anger expression.<sup>3</sup> That is, anger may also increase the risk of a child abusing others when he/she becomes adolescent and adult.<sup>12,13</sup>

Various findings in the literature suggest a relationship between abuse experiences and anger levels.<sup>4,14-17</sup> Children who were exposed to domestic violence and abuse are thought to have a high risk of evolving into adults who act violently.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, children with abuse experiences were found to demonstrate reactions of anger and aggression frequently.<sup>4,13</sup> This may be caused by the feelings of frustration, helplessness and loss of control when he/she is abused.<sup>5</sup> Besides, some of them may be showing their feelings of frustration, helplessness and desperation with anger and aggression.<sup>4</sup>

In a research conducted with high school students with serious emotional problems were studied in Massachusetts; a meaningful relationship between history of abuse and reactive aggressive behaviors was found when factors like age, gender, ethnicity and mental problems were taken into account.<sup>19</sup> The findings of another study carried out with students in Switzerland showed that children with a history of domestic physical abuse had a higher risk of abusing other children.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, another study with college students showed a significant relationship between childhood trauma experiences and physical aggressiveness.<sup>21</sup> Women who witnessed domestic violence and women with high levels of childhood physical abuse experiences were found to have a higher risk of using the same behavior patterns in their relationships with their partners. In males, a relationship between emotional abuse experiences and anger towards the partner was found.<sup>21</sup>

The main goal of the current study is to reveal the relationship between variables like childhood trauma experiences, anger levels and anger expression styles that are thought to be linked to sexually aggressive behavior.<sup>22-27</sup> Individuals who have committed sexual assault were selected as participants because the relationship between the above mentioned variables and sexual assault was notable.<sup>22-28</sup>

Besides the psychopathological symptoms, some other influences of the childhood adverse experiences on personality were explored. When the personality characteristics of the sex offenders were studied, high neuroticism was found to be distinctive in that group of people compared to the other offenders and non-offenders.<sup>6,29,30</sup> This may be con-

sidered as an important indicator of experiencing higher levels of negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, guilt and anger in that specific group of people because high levels of neuroticism is associated with high levels of such negative emotions.<sup>31</sup> People who are highly neurotic were found to have dysfunctional coping mechanisms especially in their interpersonal relationships which in turn contribute to their negative reactivity when frustrated, so that they become more prone to anger and aggression.<sup>31,32</sup> Understanding and describing clearly the characteristics of the sex offenders and the problems they have with their personality is very important to develop appropriate prevention and intervention programs for this group.

One of the important issues related to sexual offenders is the recidivism rate, which is also critical for crime prevention. An early review study introduced that recidivism rates are relatively low among sex offenders, less than 12% in 42 reviewed studies.<sup>33</sup> National police statistics of Australia in 2001 also showed that, 14% of alleged offenders had previously been apprehended for sexual offences.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that there are some methodological and conceptual constraints in recidivism studies. The methodological constraints are mainly related to measurement differences, varying follow-up times, and the underreporting of sex offenses.<sup>35</sup> For instance, Lievore stated that many of the studies measure reconviction rates from other sexual offenses within a given period of time but the reconviction rates may not reflect the true nature and amount of recidivism.<sup>36</sup> Besides, rapes and sexual assaults are one of the most underreported types of crimes.<sup>37</sup> Conceptual constraints about recidivism study is about how to define recidivism. That is to say, recidivism rates are effected by how and when reoffending is measured. The definition of recidivism may be limited to sexual reoffending, violent non-sexual reoffending or may be broadened to any type of reoffending. Some of the previous studies supported the idea that, sexual offenders are more likely to commit any type of crime instead of only sexual crimes.<sup>36</sup> For instance, Langan and Levin stated that 46% of rapists who were released from prison were re-arrested within 3 years of their release for another crime, mostly

from other violent offenses or public-order offenses.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Lievore included 17 recidivism studies and concluded that, estimates of sexual reoffending rates are varying from 2% to 35% depending on the criminogenic characteristics of the offender, while the estimates of reoffending from any type of offense may react to 72%.<sup>34</sup>

Another important issue related to criminological characteristics of sexual offenses is the relationship between offender and the victim. Feldhaus, Houry and Kaminsky stated that the large proportion of sexual assaults is committed by someone that the victim knows.<sup>39</sup> According to 2005 National Crime Victimization Study statistics in U.S., 73% of sexual assaults were perpetrated by a non-stranger. Among those, 38% of rapists are a friend or acquaintance, 28% are an intimate, 7% are a relative.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Kelly, Lovett and Regan mentioned that over 70% of the victims of rape previously known to their assailant.<sup>41</sup> Besides, offender-victim relationship is thought to have an impact on the behavior of the offender during the offense as well as the psychological characteristics of the offender.<sup>42</sup> Some of the previous studies reported that there are greater degree of physical coercion, force and verbal aggression directed to the victim when the victim was a stranger.<sup>43,44</sup> Similarly, Woods and Porter stated that stranger offender is more likely to act in a dominant and hostile style during attack, known offenders are less likely to be violent.<sup>38</sup>

Criminal profiling studies are an important part of crime prevention and intervention programs. These studies are considered to be important not only in decreasing the number of suspects in criminal investigations but also in prevention of the crime.<sup>45,46</sup> For this reason, various studies were conducted to find out the personality characteristics, basic motivations, socio-demographic characteristics, family structures, anger and aggression levels, self-respect levels, psychiatric properties, childhood abuse experiences and empathy levels of sexual offenders.<sup>6,23-26,29,30,47</sup> By using data from various studies, profiles have been created that reveal the basic characteristics of sexual offenders.<sup>30,48-51</sup> Not just their psychopathological characteristics, but also understanding these people's personality characteristics

and the difficulties they have because of these peculiarities gain importance especially to communicate better with them and to prepare some interventions.<sup>6</sup> One of the aims of this study is to have information about the above mentioned characteristics of the Turkish sexual criminals. It was considered to be meaningful and important in planning the prevention and intervention strategies. Besides, research on rapist profile may help the law enforcement to narrow down the number of the suspects.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, as it was known that the early childhood traumatic experiences increase the anger level of the individuals, understanding the relationship between these variables would help us to describe better the escalation of the anger created by the childhood abuse and neglect to the point of sexual offences and give some ideas about how to catch some risk groups beforehand, how to intervene to the problem and how to offer some solutions.<sup>26</sup>

The main hypothesis of this study is that a high frequency of childhood trauma experiences will be observed in sexual offenders. Besides, high level of trait anger and increased levels of internalized and externalized anger is estimated in line with the literature. Lastly, a decreased anger control would be expected in our sample.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study consist of 74 male sexual offenders from one of the prisons in İstanbul, who accepted to participate. The selection of the sample was carried out by purposive sampling method. They were all convicted of a sexual assault. Sexual assault was defined in this study as rape and attempted rape. The minor sexual offences were not included in the study. The sex offenders in Umraniye Prison were all convicted rapists.

The selection of the sample was based on two criteria: (a) being literate, (b) willingness to participate.

### MATERIAL

In the battery, Socio-Demographic Information Form, The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and Trait Anger and Anger Expression Scales were included.

**Socio-Demographic Information Form.** Socio-demographic information form was created by the researcher with the aim of obtaining detailed information about the participants. It included questions about socio-demographic variables like age, education, occupation, marital status.

**State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory.** The scale was created by Spielberger in 1988 and measures the anger and anger expression styles. The Cronbach alpha value of the scale was found to be between .73 and .84. Its Turkish adaptation was done by Özer in 1994 and this version's Cronbach alpha value was .70.<sup>53</sup>

The scale consisted of 34 items. There were two subscales: trait anger and anger expression. The trait anger subscale included questions about how the person generally felt and the degree of anger. The anger expression subscale also had 3 dimensions: Externalized anger (expressed anger); internalized anger (repressed anger) and anger control level.<sup>53</sup>

**The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was created by Bernstein et al. in 1994, with the aim of scanning the traumatic experiences before the age of 18 years. It was adapted to Turkey by Aslan and Alparslan.<sup>52</sup> The Cronbach alpha values were found to be between .79 and .94. Its reliability and validity was very high. Its Turkish adaptation was done by Aslan and Alparslan in 1999 and this version's Cronbach alpha value was found to be .96.<sup>54</sup>

The original questionnaire had four subscales: physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect and physical neglect. The Turkish version consisted of 3 subscales: emotional abuse and neglect, physical abuse and neglect and sexual abuse. In the current study the Turkish version of the scale was used.<sup>54</sup>

### PROCEDURE

Data was gathered from Umraniye prison where all of the sexual offenders stayed, after the necessary permissions were granted by the Turkish Ministry of Justice. One hundred and four convicts were interviewed. Participants were taken into a classroom determined by the institution in groups of 10 (one group being 4). They were informed about the aim

of the study and the confidentiality issues. Then, a consent form was given. The participants who are willing to participate were asked to sign. Participants read and answered the questionnaires by themselves. It took an average of 90-100 minutes for each group to complete the battery. Seventy nine convicts agreed to participate. However, at the end of data gathering, data from 5 participants' questionnaires were omitted because they were incomplete. The data was analyzed by using SPSS 20 (Statistical Package Social Sciences) and primary conducted analyses were Independent Sample t-Test, Pearson Correlation and Linear Regression Analysis.

## RESULTS

The results of the study is presented in three parts; socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, criminal characteristics of the participants and lastly, the relationship between childhood trauma experiences and anger expression styles.

The age of the participants varied between 22 and 66, with a mean of 33.31 years and a standard deviation of 9.73. Most of the participants were between the ages 26-40 years (63.5%). The majority were primary school graduates (37,8%), single (55,4%) and used to have a regular job before being imprisoned (81,1%). Income levels were mostly 1000 TL and under (55.4%). The percentage of participants who had no previous psychiatric problems was 91.9%. Most of the participants (58.1%) stated that they used to live with their family before being imprisoned. Detailed information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants was provided in Table 1.

It was found that 75.7% of the participants reported to have no previous criminal records (N=56). Only, 24.3% of them reported to have at least one more criminal record apart from sexual offense they have been detained for. When the type of previous offense examined, it is found that 8 (10.8%) of them was attempted murder, 6 (8.2%) of them was property offenses, 1 (1.4) of them was gang-related offenses and only 1 (1.4) of them was sexual offense. The majority of the offenders were between the ages of 19-29 years (50.0%) at the time of sexual offense.

Some of the characteristics of the victims are also examined such as age of the victim, gender of the victim and the relationship between offender and the victim. When the gender distribution of victims is analyzed, it is found that 93.2% of them are females (N=69). The analysis regarding the age of the victim showed that 52.6% of the victims are children while the remaining are adults. In 75.3% of the sexual offenses, the offender and the victim are acquaintance. The criminal characteristics of the offenders are shown in Table 2.

It may be interpreted that the total scores of physical and emotional abuse are varied among participants while the scores of sexual abuse are low among the participants with a restricted variation. The descriptive statistics of childhood traumatic experiences, trait anger and anger expression styles are presented in Table 3.

Additionally, series of t-test analysis are conducted to examine the effect of two criminal characteristics; whether the victim was a child or an adult and the relationship between offender and

**TABLE 1:** Participants' sociodemographic characteristics.

N=74	n	%
Age Range (year)	22-66	
Mean	33.31	
Standard Deviation	9.735	
Age Distribution (year)		
22-25	13	17.6%
26-40	47	63.5%
41-66	14	18.9%
Education Level		
Just reading/writing skills	2	2.7%
Primary school graduate	34	45.9%
Secondary school graduate	20	27.1%
High school graduate	15	20.3%
College graduate	3	4.1%
Marital Status		
Single	41	55.4%
Legally Married	17	23.0%
Divorced	15	20.3%
Reliously Married	1	1.4%
Profession		
Worker	23	31.1%
Craftsman	22	29.7%
Tradesman	29	39.2%

the victim, on each of the childhood traumatic experiences, trait anger and anger expression styles. It was found that, scores of the childhood traumatic experiences, trait anger and anger expression styles were not statistically significant between offenders of child sexual abuse and offenders of adult sexual assaults. For the relationship between offender and the victim, it was found that the scores of external anger are higher ( $t(71)=2.156$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and the scores of anger control are lower ( $t(71)=2.148$ ),  $p<.05$  for offenders when the victim was a stranger.

There was a positive and statistically significant correlation between the total scores of childhood trauma questionnaire and trait anger scores ( $r=.65$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and externalized anger scores ( $r=.52$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Also, a negative and statistically significant relationship existed between the total scores of childhood trauma questionnaire and anger control scores ( $r= -.58$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Accordingly, when the frequency of childhood traumas increased, trait anger and externalized anger also increased while levels of anger control decreased.

Scores of physical abuse were found to be significantly and positively correlated to scores of emotional trauma ( $r=.81$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and sexual trauma ( $r=.42$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Another positive and statistically significant correlation was found between scores of emotional trauma and sexual trauma ( $r=.37$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

The trait anger scores of sexual offenders were found to have a significant positive relationship between physical trauma scores ( $r=.63$ ;  $p<.01$ ), emotional trauma scores ( $r=.60$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and sexual trauma scores ( $r=.23$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Thus, when the frequency of physical, emotional and sexual trauma increased, trait anger levels also increased.

The relationship between externalized anger scores and anger control scores was significant and negative ( $r=.57$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Also, externalized anger scores were found to be positively and significantly correlated to scores of physical trauma ( $r=.54$ ;  $p<.01$ ), emotional trauma ( $r=.42$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and sexual trauma ( $r=.24$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

Significant negative correlations between anger control scores and scores of physical abuse ( $r= -.56$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and emotional abuse ( $r= -.54$ ;  $p<.01$ ) were found.

**TABLE 2:** Criminal characteristics of the offenders.

N=74	n	%
Previous criminal records		
No	56	75.7%
Yes	18	24.3%
Type of previous offenses		
First offense	56	75.8%
Attempted murder	8	10.8%
Property offenses	6	8.2%
Gang-related offenses	1	1.4%
Sexual offenses	1	1.4%
Unknown	2	2.8%
Age of the offender at the time of sexual offense (year)		
Below 18	3	4.0%
19-29	37	50.0%
30-40	23	31.1%
41-51	7	9.5%
52-63	4	5.4%
Gender of the victim		
Female	69	93.2%
Male	4	5.4%
Unknown	1	1.4%
Age of the victim (year)		
Below 18	39	52.6%
19-25	15	20.2%
26-30	7	9.5%
31-35	4	5.4%
36-40	1	1.4%
41-45	1	1.4%
Unknown	7	9.5%
The relationship between offender and the victim		
Acquaintance	56	75.3%
Stranger	18	24.7%

**TABLE 3:** The descriptive statistics of childhood traumatic experiences, trait anger and anger expression styles.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Childhood Traumatic Experiences	91.35	34.03
Physical Abuse	36.55	16.07
Emotional Abuse	48.28	17.78
Sexual Abuse	6.88	3.33
Trait Anger	24.65	7.60
Internalized Anger	17.72	4.60
Externalized Anger	19.57	7.89
Anger Control	20.19	6.67

A positive significant correlation between trait anger scores and internalized anger scores ( $r=.35$ ;  $p<.01$ ) was found. The correlation between scores of anger control and externalized anger were significant and negative ( $r= -.74$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Also, while externalized anger scores negatively correlated with anger control scores ( $r=-.57$ ,  $p<.01$ ); positively correlated with internalized anger scores ( $r=.25$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The relationship between childhood traumatic experiences, trait anger and anger expression styles are shown in Table 4.

When the effect of emotional and sexual abuse controlled, physical abuse was found to be significantly and positively correlated with trait anger ( $r=.347$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and external anger ( $r=.345$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Physical abuse was also found to be significantly and negatively correlated with anger control ( $r=-.265$ ,  $p<.05$ ). There was no other statistically significant results in partial correlations. The results are presented in Table 5.

A series of stepwise linear regression analysis were conducted for each dependent variable, which are trait anger, internal anger, external anger and anger control, by entering the abuse types as predictors.

Physical abuse ( $\beta= .650$ ,  $p= .000$ ) was found to be significant predictor for Trait Anger. Total variance explained by physical abuse was 42%,  $F(1,67)= 49.093$ ,  $p= .000$ . Sexual and emotinal abuse did not enter into the model and was found to have no statistically significant predictive value for Trait Anger.

Physical abuse ( $\beta= .546$ ,  $p= .000$ ) was found to be significant predictor for External Anger. Total

variance explained by physical abuse was 30%,  $F(1,67)= 28.416$ ,  $p= .000$ . Sexual and emotinal abuse did not enter into the model and was found to have no statistically significant predictive value for External Anger.

Physical abuse ( $\beta= -.567$ ,  $p= .000$ ) was found to be significant predictor for Anger Control. Total variance explained by physical abuse was 32%,  $F(1,67)= 31.758$ ,  $p= .000$ . Sexual and emotinal abuse did not enter into the model and was found to have no statistically significant predictive value for Anger Control.

For Internal Anger, none of the predictors were found to be significant in regression model.

## DISCUSSION

Sexual offense is considered to be one of the most violent crimes having very serious negative impacts on the victims. The number of sexual offense incidences has been increasing and to prevent them, detailed knowledge about sexual offenders is needed.<sup>45</sup> Understanding especially the basic reasons that lead the offenders to this act might be an important step for the development of prevention strategies.<sup>55</sup>

It is important to obtain information about and understand the relationship between childhood trauma experiences, anger levels, and anger expression styles, which were stated to be related to sexual offense.<sup>22-28</sup> The main goal of this study is to investigate the relationship of these variables in the context of sexual offense.

The participants have an average age of 33.31, their ages when they committed sexual offense were

**TABLE 4:** Bivariate correlation results of childhood traumatic experiences, trait anger and anger expression styles.

Variables	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Abuse Total	.653**	.201	.518**	-.577**	.944**	.950**	.494**
(2) Trait Anger		.354**	.628**	-.740**	.626**	.600**	.233*
(3) Internal Anger			.249*	-.012	.133	.213	.179
(4) External Anger				-.569**	.543**	.424**	.236*
(5) Anger Control					-.564**	-.539**	-.211
(6) Physical Abuse						.809**	.416**
(7) Emotional Abuse							.369**
(8) Sexual Abuse							1.00

\* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ .

**TABLE 5:** Partial correlation results of childhood traumatic experience and anger expression styles and trait anger.

Variables	Trait Anger	Internal Anger	External Anger	Anger Control
Physical Abuse	.347**	-.040	.345**	-.265*
Emotional Abuse	.182	.122	.006	-.177
Sexual Abuse	-.057	.135	.011	.055

\*p&lt;.05, \*\*p&lt;.01.

Note: the Effect of Other Childhood Traumatic Experiences Controlled.

between 22 and 66. Seventy five percent of the participants were graduates of primary and secondary school; primary school graduates having the highest percentage (37%). This finding was similar to findings of other studies in the literature.<sup>27</sup> Studies with criminal individuals showed that not only sexual offenders but also people who committed robbery or homicide had a low level of education.<sup>26,52,56,57</sup> This may suggest the availability of a correlation between low level of education and criminality in general. An individual with a low level of education may have difficulties in developing healthy coping mechanisms and eventually may resort to violent behaviors. Thus, the individual may be driven to criminal behavior.<sup>52</sup> Studies also have found that when the level of education decreased, there was also a decrease in problem solving abilities.<sup>58</sup> The main problem solving skills, which are first learned in the family environment, are formed through educational activities and schooling. Individuals with low levels of education may act impetuously or ambivalently when they face a problem and may perceive themselves as inadequate problem solvers. These characteristics may orient the individual to violence and in turn, may lead to criminal behavior.<sup>59</sup>

When the main hypothesis of the current study is considered, a significant positive relationship between childhood trauma experiences, trait anger and externalized anger levels of sexual offenders was found. Additionally, childhood trauma experiences were found to be negatively correlated with anger control levels. Accordingly, when the frequency of childhood trauma increased, trait anger and externalized anger were observed to be increased; while anger control was found to be decreased. These results support the hypothesis of the study. Other studies with different samples are also consistent with this hypothesis: individuals who experienced

more trauma in their childhood may demonstrate anger and aggressive behavior.<sup>3,4,13,14,60,61</sup> In various studies, participants with history of physical, emotional and sexual abuse were found to have been increased levels of trait anger and externalized anger with lower anger control, compared to those without history of abuse.<sup>21</sup> Widom and Mazfield found a higher ratio of being arrested because of violent crimes in individuals with history of childhood abuse, compared to people without such a history.<sup>62</sup> The same study also showed that the highest ratio of arrests for violent crimes was in the individuals who were physically abused.<sup>62</sup> These findings suggest that individuals who were traumatized as a child have a higher probability of traumatizing others in the future.<sup>20,22,23,25-28,60</sup>

Sexual offense can be considered as a type of violence and a way of expressing anger.<sup>52</sup> Thus, individuals with a history of childhood trauma may be thought to have a higher risk of committing sexual offense. Salter et al. found that 27% of the individuals who were abused as children (physically, emotionally or sexually) were sentenced because of a sexual crime as adults; approximately 50% of them with an act involving penetration.<sup>28</sup> Connolly & Wollons found that individuals who sexually offended children and adults had a high rate of childhood abuse.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, it is speculated that sexual abuse in childhood may prevent the individuals from developing a healthy concept of sexuality.<sup>7,47</sup> However, when the results of the current study are considered together with the literature, the conclusion of a stronger relationship between childhood adverse experiences in general and the sexual crime is coming forward instead of the influence of the sexual abuse experience on sexual aggression in particular.<sup>25,28</sup> In their research, Salter and his colleagues found that not just sexual abuse



but other early life experiences may increase the probability of sexual offence in adulthood.<sup>28</sup> This result was unexpected because in the literature, there was a good amount of research concluding that sexual abuse experiences in childhood would increase the risk of becoming a sex offender in adulthood.<sup>63-65</sup> Additionally, Craissati and his colleagues, found that sex offenders experienced a great amount of emotional and physical abuse and neglect besides the sexual abuse they were exposed.<sup>66</sup> In the current study, the participants were all sexual offenders and when their childhood experiences were examined, physical and emotional abuse were found to be more frequent than the sexual ones. The frequency distribution may explain the finding that the adverse childhood experiences are affecting the risk of becoming a sex offender in adulthood as Salter and his colleagues found in their study.<sup>28</sup>

In accordance with the above mentioned ideas, in many of the studies conducted on sexual offences, the motivation of such offences is thought to be anger, need for power, control and domination.<sup>66,68</sup> This conclusion is thought to be parallel with what it was found in the current study. The childhood abuse and neglect experiences, increases the level of anger of the child and may cause feelings of rejection, worthlessness and low self-esteem.<sup>4,13,68</sup> Hickey, in his Trauma-Control Model, suggests that, in order to cope with such feelings, the child begins to develop fantasies in which he/she satisfies the need for control/dominate his/her life, then in puberty, the satisfying feelings of these fantasies are associated with violent sexuality and then in adulthood acted out as sexual offenses.<sup>68</sup> There are also other authors supporting the critical role played by the fantasies created by the adverse childhood experiences in sexual offenses in the literature.<sup>69</sup> In the current study, the fantasies were not explored, however, the positive relationship found between anger, child abuse experiences in Turkish sex offenders may seem in harmony with the opinions of these authors.

However, this conclusion is far from being a fact because as it is known the sexual abuse victims tend to hide their experiences for various reasons. Then, this frequently leads the studies to understate the number of sexual abuse cases. Using self-report

technique may be the reason of having less number of such experiences in this current study. In future studies, it will be better to include some additional information from other sources (criminal files, medical files, interview with some family members... etc.) in the research. Unfortunately, this was one of the weaknesses of this current research.

In this study, the relationship between the types of trauma experienced by sexual offenders and their anger expression styles were investigated. It was found that when the number of physical and emotional trauma increases the externalized anger increases. That is, people who are physically and emotionally abused more, tend to express their anger more physically, aggressively. In addition to that, increase in these two types of abuse was found to be related with less anger control ability. That is, these people found it difficult to control their anger and they prefer to express it. Increase in sexual trauma experiences was found to be related to trait anger and externalized anger. In other words, when the number of sexual abuse experiences increases, people tend to externalize their anger more. They act aggressively and this increases the risk of hurting others. Studies on that topic in the literature support these findings.<sup>20,21</sup>

Besides from the main hypothesis, the present study also investigated some of the criminal characteristics of the offenders. Recidivism rates are low among the participant group, especially for sexual reoffending. Only one of the participants out of 74 stated that they had previous criminal record from another sexual offense. When any type of offending is taken into account, it was found that the recidivism rates are 24%. The findings of the current study are consistent with previous studies in sense that in general, sexual offenders may be serial offenders rather than serial rapists.<sup>36</sup> Lievore stated that the sexual reoffending rates vary highly depending on the criminogenic characteristics of the offenders. While a large proportion of sex offenders have prior convictions for violent and general offences, there may be a small number of sexual recidivists who commit a disproportionate number of sex crimes.<sup>34</sup> The authors of this study recommend that each of the sexual offenders should be

analyzed depending on their unique characteristics and should participate to a related rehabilitation programs depending on their needs.

Previous studies also showed that, the large proportion of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim.<sup>39,40</sup> Those findings were consistent with the current study since the victim and the offender are acquaintance in 75% of the cases. Additionally, it was found that the level of external anger is higher and the level of anger control is lower for offenders when the victim was a stranger. It is consistent with some of the previous studies, which support the idea that there are greater degree of physical coercion, force and verbal aggression directed to the victim when the victim was a stranger.<sup>42-44</sup>

In the current research, when the data analyzed further and controlled for the effects of other abuse types, the influence of sexual and emotional abuse, but not physical abuse, on anger expression styles and anger control has disappeared. This result is thought to be the effect of the lowness of the number of sexually abused participants. This lowness may be because of the participants' reluctance of be honest about their experiences. In future, some additional methods should be used for overcoming such difficulties in collecting objective and correct data on sexual abuse.

Prevention of sexual crime is a more complicated issue because of the various factors that it involves. However, the relationships found between childhood abuse experiences and anger expression styles may show how critical is to educate people about effective parenthood and raise awareness about the consequences of child abuse. This research is thought to have a contribution to the development of such educational programs. Risk groups should be detected and they should be given some insights about their own behaviors towards their children. These people should thought to communicate with their children, to be aware of their own feelings (anger, sadness,... etc.) and they must be thought to use their own re-

sources (or develop new skills) in order to contain these aversive feelings and/or express them appropriately without projecting them on children.

## CONCLUSION

As a preliminary study, this research gave good insights for the intervention and prevention of the sexual offences. It showed that sex offenders with high childhood trauma experiences tend to express their anger directly and act aggressively. The effect of physical abuse on these individuals' anger and aggressive behavior is found to be noteworthy. This results, being parallel with the literature, is considered to be a starting point for the future studies what will be conducted in that area.

**Limitations of the study:** One of the main limitations in this research was the self-report technique used in collecting data. While asking personal questions about childhood traumatic experiences, the probability of not wanting to share such intimate information of the participants should be considered when results are evaluated.

Moreover, the questionnaires measure the constructs in the study as they operationally define them. These operational definitions may be considered to be limited especially in such topics "childhood traumatic experiences". These constructs are very difficult to measure because how an event effect an individual will depend on how that individual experience it, how he/she define trauma will change the way he/she answers the questions. Besides, participants may not be able to remember their childhood experiences clearly for various reasons. This may also be considered as a limitation of the study.

In future studies, using additional resources in data collection (such as criminal and medical records, interviewing family members,... etc.) may bring a more objective perspective in the data collected and this in turn may increase the generalizability of the results.

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