

WCES-2010

Examination of the correlation between depression and hopelessness levels in mothers of children who attend rehabilitation centers

Cengiz Şahin^a *

^a*Faculty of Education, Ahi Evran University, Kirsehir, 40100, Turkey*

Received November 10, 2009; revised December 11, 2009; accepted January 21, 2010

Abstract

This research was conducted to examine correlation between depression and hopelessness levels in mothers of disabled children between ages 7 and 11. 138 mothers of children with disabilities were included in the study. The data of the study were collected with the “Beck Depression Scale”, “Beck Hopelessness Scale” and “General Information Form”. Data have been analyzed by using Pearson correlation technique. The findings of the research suggested a significant correlation between the depression and hopelessness levels of mothers of disabled children ($p < .01$).

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Keywords: Children with disabilities; depression; hopelessness; mothers of disabled children; rehabilitation centers.

1. Introduction

Family is an universal social corporation in which children are growing up healthily and never lost its importance. Therefore every child whether normal or disabled needs a family in which they grow up. Child's being handicapped may deteriorate the health of their family members and may cause them to experience psychological problems. The birth of a child with a disability is known to significantly influence the lives, emotions and behaviors of family members. While family is expecting a normal developing child, the birth of disabled child causes fundamental change on family. Roles and duties of parents thus change (Klauß & Wertz-Schönhagen 1993). These may increase depression, stress and hopelessness levels of family members. All of their expectations, hopes and plans, including work and financial arrangements are predicated on the expectation of the child having normal characteristics. In a number of studies, the stress, and depression levels of families with disabled children were found to be very high (Beckman, 1983; Wilton & Renaut, 1986; Bebko, Konstantareas & Springer, 1987; Sipahi, 2002).

Some studies reported that mothers of children with an intellectual disability experienced more family problems and showed more depressive symptoms (Bremer-Hüber, 1990; Magana, Seltzer & Krauss, 2004). In a study by Ceylan & Aral (2007) it has been found that there is a correlation between hopelessness and depression levels of mothers with disabled children. In their study, Saloviita, Italinna & Leinonen (2003) observed that mothers of children with disabilities were concerned about the child's behavioral problems. In a study done by Smith, Innocenti, Boyce and Smith (1993), it was determined that parents of a child with a disability experienced more

* Cengiz Şahin. Tel.: +0 505-319 29 30

E-mail address: csahin40@gmail.com.

emotional difficulties and showed more symptoms of depression when compared to parents without a disabled child. In other studies, emotional disorders such as unhappiness, negative prospects towards the future, hopelessness and pessimism were also claimed to be influential in depression (Seber, Dilbaz, Kaptanoğlu & Tekin, 1993; Şahin, Ceylan, 2008).

Abramson, Alloy & Metalsky (1978) put forward the theory of hopelessness depression. According to this theory, when a person faced with negative consequences that can not be controlled, s/he feels individual helplessness when s/he believes that she can't control events alone. According to this model, tendency to causal attribution that everybody has shows significant individual differences and each person has the existing causal and each individual has a unique form of attribution. These kinds of attributions lead the development of expectations that negative consequences can not be controlled in future and deterioration in the perception of control. As a result of deterioration in the perception of control, when a person faces with the results that can be controlled he shows signs of desperation rather than necessary effort. When a person attributes the personal property about inability to control distortion on self-perception occurs. Model regards this deterioration on self-perception as the most important symptom of depression (Tegin, 1980; Hovardaoğlu, 1986).

Beck (1963) considers the concept of hopelessness within the framework of cognitive theory and regards it as person's negative expectations for the future. He emphasized the hopelessness concept, which is important for pessimism and one of the depression symptoms, while developing his theory and made various studies about the measurement of despair. As a result of study research has done with 80 depressed and psychotherapy patients who have attempted suicide asserts that there is a link between suicide attempts and these patients' beliefs about they don't have the solution of the problem and never find the solution. According to Beck, patients attribute wrong meanings to their experiences though they don't have objective and realistic reasons and expect negative results despite they don't make efforts to reach their aims. Beck calls this condition as "hopelessness" (Durak, 1994). It is also thought that mothers with disabled children may experience hopelessness about their children's future and, difficulties in finding solutions to these problems can cause depression. With in the light of this idea, in this study it is aimed to determine the relationship between depression and hopelessness levels of mothers, and intended to offer suggestions to parents.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This research was conducted with mothers of children who are between 7 and 11 ages, attend to rehabilitation center. 138 volunteer mothers of children with a disability were included in the study.

2.2. Measures

In this study, "The General Information Form" consisting of questions developed by the researcher was used to collect information related to the mothers' age, education level, employment status, as well as the sex and disability type of children. The "Beck Depression Scale" (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock & Erbaugh, 1961) translated into Turkish by Tegin (1980) was used to measure mothers' depression. In addition the researcher employed the "Beck Hopelessness Scale" (Beck, Lester & Trexler, 1974) developed by Beck et al. and translated into Turkish by Kutlu (1998).

2.3. Data collection method

Related to research, a meeting was conducted under the chairmanship of lieutenant governor with managers of rehabilitation centers and at the meeting the purpose of the research was explained to managers of rehabilitation centers. Family of disabled 7-11 age children attending rehabilitation centers was determined. Interviews were made by mothers and specialists (psychologists, social workers, and counselors). During interviews firstly questions were read in the form of general information and mothers were asked to answer. Then sentences in beck depression scale were read to mothers and asked to choose the sentence that best describes themselves. In a similar way by reading

sentences to mothers in Beck Depression Scale they were asked to state the sentences that are appropriate for them as “true” and inappropriate as “false”. Interviews with mothers lasted about 30 minutes.

The mothers of children with disabilities were identified by making contact with school administrators. As a first step, administrators were briefed about the purpose of the research. They were thus invited to supply the names and telephone numbers of families that matched the study criteria. Researchers then made contact with mothers and the aim of the research was explained to them. Mothers who chose to participate were invited to choose an appropriate day and hour for an interview. The interviews were held in a quiet room at the schools of the children. Those mothers who were not able to go to the schools were interviewed at home by the researchers. All interviews were carried out by the researchers of this study. At the start of the interviews, the questions in the General Information Form were read aloud by the researchers and the mothers were asked to answer them. Thereafter, the sentences in the Beck Depression Scale were read to the mothers and they were asked to choose the sentences which described them best. In the same way, the sentences in the Beck Hopelessness Scale were read to the mothers and they were requested to respond as “true” to the expressions they thought to be relevant and “false” to the ones they found irrelevant. The duration of the interview was approximately thirty minutes for each mother.

2.4. Data analysis

Personal information relating to the mothers participating in the research was described as frequencies and percentages. Analysis of the data showed a constant correlation between the mothers’ depression and hopelessness levels. They were analyzed by using Pearson correlation coefficients.

3. Results (Findings) and Discussion

It was found that 72% of the mothers were 35 years old or below; 86% did not work; 61 % were literate or primary school graduates; 32% were secondary school graduates; and 7% were university graduates. It was determined that the majority of the children with disabilities were boys 49 %. 28% of disabilities were related to hearing and 23% to mental retardation.

For statistical analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were applied to establish if there was a correlation between depression and hopelessness levels. The results showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between depression and hopelessness ($r=0.67$, $p<.001$). This suggests that when the depression levels of mothers increase, so do their hopelessness levels, and that greater hopelessness levels means higher levels of depression.

Green (1989), in his study, conducted interviews with 40 psychiatric patients, 20 outpatients and a total of 60 depression diagnostic patients and found a significant relation between hopelessness and depression and clinically described as depressed. As known, there is a close relation between hopelessness and depression. Therefore hopelessness is generally considered to be the reason for depression. A depressed person feels insufficient and worthless, and may experience hopelessness in his feelings and thoughts about the future and thus perceives life as full of obstacles and difficult problems. In a study by Ceylan & Aral (2007) it has been found that there is a correlation between hopelessness and depression levels of mothers with 5-7 aged disabled children. Research by Dereli & Okur (2008) named determination of depression level of the families having a handicapped child it is found that the depression level of the families is quite serious and the depression level of the mothers is higher than the fathers. At the results of the research by Coşkun & Akkaş (2009) it was seen that there was a reverse relation between the high continual anxiety level of mothers who have disabled children and continual anxiety level. In a similar research by Dođru & Arslan (2006) the situation of permanent anxiety has been found most of the mothers with disabled children. At the other research by Bahar, Bahar, Savaş & Parlar (2009) it was found that Beck Anxiety Inventory scores of the mothers who had handicapped children were higher and the presence of the social supports has decreased their depression levels.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The results showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between depression and hopelessness. Similar to other studies which concluded that people who had a tendency for depression expressed higher levels of hopelessness, this study also found that the hopelessness level was higher in those families which had a tendency for

depression. Consequently, it may be proposed that families of children with a disability should be supported to alleviate the hardships and attendant levels of hopelessness they may face. Society should be given information about disabilities, their reasons, and the requirements of children with a disability. This undertaking may decrease the levels of guilt and loneliness currently experienced by mothers of disabled children, and help to influence families to look to the future in confidence that the society accepts their children. Since it is thought that psychological consultation applications are effective in alleviating mothers' depression and anxiety levels, psychological support should also be available to these families.

In the lights of the results, it is believed that mothers having handicapped children need psycho-social support and they need to be provided with effective planned services to help them to share their feelings and look after the handicapped child. Families are in need of professional support as much as handicapped children. Necessary spiritual support should be provided for mothers with handicapped children. In addition, it is considered that providing counseling back-up services toward the situations families are in, would be helpful in reducing hopelessness and depression levels of the mothers with handicapped children and in their social orientation and in their coping with stress.

This study is limited to the examination of the relation between depression and hopelessness levels of the mothers of 7 and 11 year-old children with a disability. For this reason, further studies with larger populations may bring healthier generalizations.

References

- Bahar, A., Bahar, G, Savaş, H.A. & Parlar, S. (2009). Engelli çocukların annelerinin depresyon ve anksiyete düzeyleri ile Stresle başa çıkma tarzlarının belirlenmesi. *Fırat sağlık hizmetleri dergisi*, (4) 11: 97-109.
- Bebko, Y.M., Konsantareas, M.M.& Springer, J. (1987). Parent and professional evaluations of family stress associated with characteristics of autism. *Journal of Autism Developmental Disorders*, 17, 565-576.
- Beck, A.T., Ward, C.H, Mendelson, M., Mock, J.O.& Erbaugh J. (1961). An inventory for measuring depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 4, 561-571.
- Beck, A.T. (1963). Thinking and depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 9, 324-333.
- Beck, A.T., Lesker. D.&Trexler, L. (1974). The hopelessness scale. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 861-874.
- Beckman, P.J. (1983). Influence of selected child characteristics on stress in families of handicapped infants. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 88, 150-156.
- Bremer-Hübler, U. (1990). Streß und Streßverarbeitung im täglichen Zusammenleben mit geistig behinderten Kindern: eine empirische Studie zur Situation der Mütter. Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 11, Pädagogik Bd.444, Frankfurt/Main
- Ceylan, R., & Aral, N. (2007). An examination of the correlation between depression and hopelessness levels in mothers of disabled children. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 35 (7): 903-908.
- Coşkun Y. & Akkaş, G. (2009). Engelli çocuğu olan ailelerin sürekli kaygı düzeyleri ile sosyal destek algıları arasındaki ilişki. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, (10), 1, 213-227.
- Derehi, F. & Okur, S. (2008). Engelli çocuğa sahip olan ailelerin depresyon durumlarının belirlenmesi. *Yeni Tıp Dergisi*, 25, 164-172.
- Doğru, S. S. Y. & Arslan, E. (2006). Engelli çocuğu olan annelerin sürekli kaygı düzeyi ile durumluk kaygı düzeylerinin karşılaştırılması. *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2008, (19):543-553
- Durak, A. (1994). Beck umutsuzluk ölçeğinin geçerlik ve güvenirlik çalışması; *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi*, 9,1-11.
- Green, S.E. (1989). The relationship between depression and hopelessness. *British Journal of Psychiatry*,154, 650-659.
- Hovardaoğlu, S. (1986). Öğrenilmiş çaresizlik modeli, *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi*, 5, 1-3.
- Köroğlu, E. (2004). *Depresyon: Nedir, Nasıl Baş Edilir*. Ankara: Hekimler Yayın Birliği Yayını.
- Klauß, T. & Wertz-Schönhagen, P. (1993). Behinderte menschen in familie und heim –Grundlagen der verständigung und möglichkeiten der kooperation zwischen eltern und betreuern. Weinheim.
- Kutlu, M. (1998) *Özürlü çocuğu olan ana-babaların umutsuzluk düzeyleri*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ondokuz Mayıs Üniver., Samsun.
- Maganna, S., Seltzer, M.M.& Krauss, M. W. (2004). Cultural context of caregiving: Differences in depression between Puerto Rican and Non-Latina White mothers of adults with mental retardation. *Mental Retardation*, 42, 1-11.
- Saloviita, T., Halinna, M.&Leinoen, E. (2003). Explaining the parental stress of fathers and mothers caring for a child with intellectual disability: a double ABC model. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 47, 300-312.
- Seber, G., Dilban, N., Kaptanoğlu, C.,& Tekin, D. (1993) Umutsuzluk ölçeği geçerlilik ve güvenirliği. *Kriz Dergisi*, 1, 139.
- Sipahi, Ö. (2002), *Down sendromlu çocuğu olan annelerde depresyon sıklığı ve ilişkili faktörlerin araştırılması*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, İstanbul Üniver., İstanbul.
- Smith, T.B., Innocenti, M.S., Boyce, G.C., & Smith, C.S. (1993) Depressive symptomatology and interaction behaviour of mothers having child with disabilities. *Psychological Reports*, 73, 1184-1186.
- Şahin, C. & Ceylan, R. (2008). Sınıf öğretmeliği anabilimdalında öğrenim gören öğrencilerin umutsuzluk düzeylerinin incelenmesi, 7.Ulusal Sınıf Öğretmenliği Eğitimi Sempozyumu, Çanakkale.
- Tegin, B. (1980) *Depresyonda bilişsel şemalar*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Hacettepe Üniversitesi., Ankara.
- Wilton, K., & Renaut, J. (1986) Stress levels in families with intellectually handicapped preschool children and families with non handicapped preschool children. *Journal of Mentally Deficiency Research*, 30, 163-169.