

## Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Personality Typology

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between childhood trauma and personality typology. Research data were collected from the 730 undergraduates at İstanbul Gelişim University in the 2016-2017 academic year. In the research "International Personality Inventory Short Form" and "Childhood Trauma Scale" were used. The results are as follows: The physical and emotional neglect scores of the students who are introverted are higher than those of the students who are extraverted; the sexual abuse scores of the extraverted students are higher than those of the introverted students; the total score of childhood trauma and emotional abuse, physical and emotional neglect scores of the students who have hostile tendency are higher than those of the adaptable students; the total childhood trauma scores and emotional, physical abuse and physical, emotional neglect scores of the students who are untidy are higher than those of the students who are responsible; the total childhood trauma scores and physical, emotional neglect scores of the students who have a tendency of rejecting innovation are higher than those of the students who are open to innovation. The results show that there is a statistically notable relationship between childhood trauma and personality typology.

**Key words:** Childhood Trauma, Personality Typology, Abuse, Neglect

**Jel Codes:** I10, I19

### 1. Introduction

Childhood traumas, which have been experienced throughout the history at mankind but have recently been examined scientifically (Sicher, Lewis, Sargent, 2009, pp.39) and attracts all attentions on account of their causes and effects because they are serious problems in terms of medicine, law and psychosocial (Kairys, Alexander, Block, 2002, pp:644-645) are identified as social rules by parents or adults such as caretaker and as action or inaction preventing the child from being developed. As a result of action or inaction it is more than a probable that the child is harmed physically, emotionally, sexually and socially (Acehan, et al, 2013, pp: 591-614).

Personality, which is one of the main subjects to study in psychology and is not able to be defined clearly despite different attitudes examining and explaining scientifically (İnanç, Yerlikaya, 2011) is able to be identified as the dynamic process lasting from birth to death in which are included several psychological dynamics (Yakut, 2006) such as wisdom, emotion, ability (Köknel, 2005), culture, education, tradition, joy, sadness, talkativeness, irritability, way of talking which all make them different from others, and as the reflection of the individual's mental, physical and emotional traits on his/ her behaviours and way of life (Wortman, 1988).

It is known that childhood abuse and neglect may lead to unwanted results in the individual's development (Richards, O'Keeffe, 2004, pp:338-352). It is reported that childhood abuse and neglect is important for the individual's psychopathological development (Etain, et al, 2010, pp:376-383) may result in psychiatric disorders which contain anxiety, depression, substance addiction, suicidal behaviour, personality disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder (Alpaslan, 2014, pp:194-201; Cutajar, et al, 2010, pp:813-822) as well as being associated with assorted personality disorders, especially borderline personality disorder (Johnson, Cohen, Brown, Smailes, Bernstein, 1999, pp:600-6).

In the literature even though there exist a lot of studies related to the effect of childhood physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect on personality disorders (Erel, Gölge, 2015, pp:189-197; Eskin, Kaynak, Demir, 2005, pp:185-195; Polat, 2007) it has not yet been observed that there is a study on relationship between trauma and personality. This study is important enough to help produce adequate information and notice the role of childhood traumas on personality which distinguish the individual from other people.

## 2. Method and Material

### 2.1. Research Model

This research is a descriptive one in relational screening model which aims to determine relationships between childhood trauma and personality traits and to examine to what extent childhood trauma and subtypes of trauma predict the development of certain personality traits.

### 2.2. Population and Sample of the Research

Population of the research is composed of the students at Faculty of Economics Administrative and Social Sciences at İstanbul Gelişim University in the 2016- 2017 academic year. Sample of the research consists of 730 volunteers among those students. 403 ( % 57.2) of the participants are female and 327 ( % 42.8) of them are male and the average age is 20.5+2.5( 17-48).

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

**Personal information form:** It is a form prepared by the researcher, which includes the participants' gender, age and information of the department where they study as well as the information about the aim of the research and the voluntary basis and about the fact that they can quit being in the research and they need to give sincere answers in terms of the reliability of the research.

**International Personality Inventory Short Version (IPISTV):** IPISTV, developed by Goldberg on the basis of the 5 factor model of personality has got 5 subdimensions which are " extraversion-intraversion", " conscientiousness-undirectedness", " emotional stability-nevroticism", "openness to experience- closed to experience", " agreeableness-hostility". The questions of the scale consisting of 40 questions was evaluated by use of 5- point likert scale. The Turkish Version of IPISTV along with reliability and validity analysis of the Turkish version was made by Yöyen in 2016 and cronbach's alpha of the whole scale was determined as .82. Reliability analysis is as follows on the basis of the subdimensions of the scale: Cronbach's alpha is .74 for extraversion, .75 for emotional

stability, .70 for conscientiousness, .68 for openness to experience and, .55 for agreeableness 16.

**Childhood Trauma Questionnaire:** The reliability and validity studies of the Turkish version of the Questionnaire developed by Bernstein and his colleagues was made by Şar and his colleagues in 2012. The Questionnaire composed of 28 items includes 5 subdimensions which are sexual, physical, emotional abuse and emotional, physical neglect in connection with childhood abuse. All the items are evaluated on the basis of 5 point likert type. Cronbach's alpha of the Questionnaire is .93.17

### 2.4. Data Analysis

In the research the T- test was used in order to analyse the relationship between personality typology and childhood trauma as well as subtypes of trauma and logistic regression analysis was made in order to see the effect of childhood trauma and subtypes of trauma on personality typology. SPSS 22.0 was put into practice for statistical analysis. The results were assessed at a %95 confidence interval and at a significance level at  $p < 0,05$ .

## 3. Results

In total 730 people, 403 (%57,2) of whom were female and 327 (%42,8) of whom were male, took part in the research and the average age was 20.5 + 2.5 ( 17-48).

The relationship between the participant's childhood trauma and personality typology of traumatic subtypes was analyzed by use of t- test. According to the results of the analysis there was a statistically significant difference in introversion-extraversion, the first subdimension of personality as well as in physical neglect score ( $t=3,497$ ;  $p=0,002 < 0,05$ ), emotional neglect score ( $t=3,500$ ;  $p=0,001 < 0,05$ ), and sexual abuse score ( $t=-2,170$ ;  $p=0,014 < 0,05$ ). The physical neglect score of the introverted students (7,320) and their emotional neglect score (9,370) were higher than those of the extraverted ones. The sexual abuse of the extroverted students (6,600) was higher than those of the introverted ones.

Table 1. Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Introversion - Extraversion Personality Trait

	Introversion(n=261)		Extraversion (n=469)		t	p
	Av.	Sd	Av.	Sd		
Childhood Trauma Score	35,780	8,644	34,460	9,447	1,519	0,129
Emotional Abuse	6,710	2,415	6,520	2,460	0,851	0,395
Physical Abuse	5,490	1,546	5,390	1,437	0,743	0,458
Physical Neglect	7,320	2,657	6,570	2,074	3,497	0,002
Emotional Neglect	9,370	4,239	8,130	3,516	3,500	0,001
Sexual Abuse	5,860	2,781	6,600	3,887	-2,170	0,014

Table 2. Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Hostility- Agreeableness Personality Trait

	Hostility (n=118)		Agreeableness (n=612)		t	p
	Av.	Sd	Av.	Sd		
Childhood Trauma Score	45,110	16,460	34,500	8,672	4,903	0,014
Emotional Abuse	8,670	3,395	6,500	2,376	3,733	0,016
Physical Abuse	6,500	2,662	5,380	1,399	3,202	0,093
Physical Neglect	9,780	4,466	6,700	2,108	5,779	0,010
Emotional Neglect	12,170	5,680	8,380	3,648	4,231	0,012
Sexual Abuse	7,110	5,368	6,350	3,527	0,882	0,378

Table 3. Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Undirectedness-Conscientiousness Personality Trait

	Undirectedness (n=141)		Conscientiousness (n=589)		t	p
	Av.	Sd.	Av.	Sd.		
Childhood Trauma Score	39,800	12,793	34,440	8,750	3,617	0,012
Emotional Abuse	8,120	3,226	6,450	2,326	4,279	0,002
Physical Abuse	6,200	2,619	5,350	1,313	3,559	0,048
Physical Neglect	7,590	2,889	6,740	2,224	2,290	0,022
Emotional Neglect	10,290	5,259	8,360	3,607	3,163	0,026
Sexual Abuse	6,730	4,062	6,350	3,562	0,659	0,510

There was a statistically significance in the hostility- agreeableness variable of personality as well as in childhood trauma total score ( $t=4,903$ ;  $p=0,014<0,05$ ), emotional abuse score ( $t=3,733$ ;  $p=0,016<0,05$ ), physical neglect score ( $t=5,779$ ;  $p=0,010<0,05$ ) and emotional neglect score ( $t=4,231$ ;  $p=0,012<0,05$ ). Childhood trauma total score of the students with hostility (45,110) and their emotional abuse score (8.670), physical neglect score (9,780) and emotional neglect score (12,170) were higher than those of the ones with agreeableness.

It was found out that the undirectedness-conscientiousness variable of personality as well as the average of childhood trauma total score ( $t=3,617$ ;  $p=0,012<0,05$ ), emotional abuse score

( $t=4,279$ ;  $p=0,002<0,05$ ), physical abuse score ( $t=3,559$ ;  $p=0,048<0,05$ ), physical neglect score ( $t=2,290$ ;  $p=0,022<0,05$ ) and emotional neglect score ( $t=3,163$ ;  $p=0,026<0,05$ ) was statistically significant. Childhood trauma total score of the students with undirectedness (39,800), their emotional abuse score (8,120), physical abuse score (6200), physical neglect score (7900) and emotional neglect score (10290) were higher than those of the ones with conscientiousness.

When table 5 was analyzed no statistically significant relationship was found between childhood trauma, trauma subtypes, and nevtoticism and emotional stability variable of personality.

Table 5. Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Neuroticism-Emotional Stability Personality Trait

	Neurosis (n=317)		Emotional Stability (n=413)		t	p
	Ort	Ss	Ort	Ss		
Childhood Trauma Score	35,530	10,006	34,390	8,624	1,401	0,162
Emotional Abuse	6,730	2,567	6,470	2,356	1,182	0,238
Physical Abuse	5,470	1,667	5,380	1,318	0,727	0,467
Physical Neglect	6,910	2,390	6,730	2,219	0,887	0,376
Emotional Neglect	8,900	4,162	8,240	3,490	1,974	0,057
Sexual Abuse	6,400	3,775	6,360	3,481	0,135	0,892

Table 6. Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Closed to Experience-Openness to Experience Personality Trait

	Closed to Experience (n=154)		Openness to Experience (n=576)		t	p
	Av.	Sd.	Av.	Sd.		
Childhood Trauma Score	38,330	12,237	34,460	8,746	2,944	0,027
Emotional Abuse	7,280	3,542	6,500	2,280	2,229	0,119
Physical Abuse	5,700	2,462	5,390	1,311	1,504	0,355
Physical Neglect	7,670	2,997	6,700	2,178	2,949	0,025
Emotional Neglect	9,870	4,539	8,360	3,669	2,802	0,021
Sexual Abuse	6,930	3,999	6,310	3,552	1,186	0,236

Table 7. Logistic Regression Analysis on the Impact of Childhood Traumas on Personality

		B	S.E.	p	OR	95% C.I. for OR	
						Lower	Upper
Introversion - Extraversion	Emotional Abuse	-0,13	0,27	0,627	1,14	0,67	1,93
	Physical Abuse	-0,03	0,32	0,937	1,03	0,55	1,91
	Physical Neglect	-0,43	0,22	<b>0,046</b>	1,53	1,01	2,34
	Emotional Neglect	-0,46	0,28	0,106	1,58	0,91	2,75
	Sexual Abuse	0,53	0,29	0,064	1,70	0,97	3,00
Hostility- Agreeableness	Emotional Abuse	-1,15	0,63	0,068	3,15	0,92	10,83
	Physical Abuse	-0,30	0,63	0,629	1,35	0,40	4,61
	Physical Neglect	-0,50	0,55	0,366	1,65	0,56	4,87
	Emotional Neglect	-0,83	0,58	0,154	2,29	0,73	7,18
	Sexual Abuse	0,53	0,63	0,403	1,70	0,49	5,84
Undirectedness- Conscientiousness	Emotional Abuse	-1,05	0,42	<b>0,012</b>	2,86	1,26	6,48
	Physical Abuse	-0,13	0,46	0,786	1,13	0,46	2,82
	Physical Neglect	-0,20	0,38	0,592	1,22	0,59	2,55
	Emotional Neglect	-0,67	0,42	0,108	1,95	0,86	4,43
	Sexual Abuse	0,60	0,46	0,189	1,82	0,75	4,44
Neurosis- Emotional Stability	Emotional Abuse	-0,23	0,25	0,358	1,26	0,77	2,06
	Physical Abuse	0,44	0,31	0,153	1,55	0,85	2,85
	Physical Neglect	-0,07	0,21	0,727	1,07	0,72	1,61
	Emotional Neglect	-0,41	0,27	0,132	1,51	0,88	2,57
	Sexual Abuse	0,39	0,26	0,134	1,48	0,89	2,47
Closed to Experience- Openness to Experience	Emotional Abuse	-0,01	0,40	0,982	1,01	0,46	2,19
	Physical Abuse	0,36	0,48	0,459	1,43	0,55	3,70
	Physical Neglect	-0,63	0,31	<b>0,043</b>	1,88	1,02	3,47
	Emotional Neglect	-0,33	0,40	0,402	1,39	0,64	3,02
	Sexual Abuse	-0,54	0,37	0,147	1,72	0,83	3,57

It was determined that the openness to experience- closed to experience variable of personality as well as childhood trauma total score ( $t=2,944$ ;  $p=0,027<0,05$ ), physical neglect ( $t=2,949$ ;  $p=0,025<0,05$ ) and emotional neglect score ( $t=2,802$ ;  $p=0,021<0,05$ ) was statistically significant. For that reason it can be stated that childhood trauma total score of the students with closed to experience (38.330) and their physical neglect score (7,670), emotional neglect score (9,870) were higher than those of the ones with openness to experience.

A multivariety logistic regression analysis was carried out to evaluate the risk that childhood traumas pose for personality typology and it was witnessed that introversion was 1,53 times higher in those with physical neglect ( $p=0,046<0,05$ ), undirectedness was 2,86 times higher in those with emotional abuse ( $p=0,012<0,05$ ) and resistance to new experience was 1,88 times higher in those with physical neglect ( $p=0,043<0,05$ ).

#### **4. Discussion**

In this study, it was ascertained that childhood abuse and neglect is associated with introversion, hostility, undirectedness and closed to experience and that sexual abuse is associated with extroversion. It was also found out that it is highly possible for those with physical neglect to develop introversion and resistance to new experience and for those with emotional abuse to develop undirectedness.

The literature defining ways of behaviour in which personality is formed supports the findings which we attained. Introverted individuals are defined as shy, timid, quiet, serious, introverted rather than extroverted, distant from others (Şentepe, Güven, 2015, p:31; Tatlıoğlu, 2014, p:947) self-protective, less dependent on socialization (Bitlisli, Dinç, Çetinceli, Kaygısız, 2013; p:463), lonely and cautious (Bono, Boles, Judge, Lauer, 2002, pp: 1311-1344; Hammond, 2001, pp: 153-165). The fact that all these definitions are characteristics of children with emotional and physical neglect in accord with the literature stating that abused children with emotional neglect think over their unhealthy relationship with the people maltreating them and that they try to reduce their dependence on them as well as the fact that children facing danger due to the people maltreating them developed disregard,

obedience, emotional inhibition and aggression in order to cope with these negative and hostile behaviours. Therefore it can be considered as a way of protection (Özgentürk, 2014, pp: 265-276).

More sexual abuse was witnessed in the extraverted ones. In the literature, the characteristics of extraversion are socialising, loving to be with people as well as to have fun, leading the way, having power, being eager and treating in a friendly way (Somer, Korkmaz, Tatar, 2002, pp:21-33). Extraverted people are defined as self-confident, active, adventurous (Kozako, Safin, Rahim, 2013, pp:181-187), positive, sociable, energetic, cheerful, optimistic and enthusiastic (Bono, Boles, Judge, Lauer, 2002, pp: 1311-1344). These traits of extraverts may have made it possible for the perpetrator to reach them, as a result of cultural perception.

It was found out that childhood trauma total score of the students with hostility and their emotional abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect scores are higher than those of the ones with agreeableness. Our finding is supported by the literature. The fact that the individuals with traumatic experiences have disassociative symptoms, tendencies to harm themselves physically as well as to suicide (Zoroğlu, Tüzün, Şar, Öztürk, Kora, Alyanak, 2001, pp:69-78) emotional and behavioral problems, fear, depression, anger, hostility (Ovayolu, Uçan, Serindağ, 2007, p:13) and antisocial personality disorders (Algül, et al., 2009, pp:278-285) can be interpreted as an expression of repressed hostility. The literature cites that the children with physical and emotional abuse have less intensity of emotions, find it hard to communicate and show their feelings behaving irritably (Traşçı, Gören, 2007, pp:70-74).

According to another finding, childhood trauma total score of the children with undirectedness and their emotional abuse, physical neglect, physical abuse and emotional neglect scores are higher than those of the ones with conscientiousness. Our finding is supported by the literature. Undirectedness is on the other side of conscientiousness and those with undirectedness are defined as careless, unreliable (Şentepe, Güven, 2015, p:31) planless and undisciplined (Basım, Çetin, Tabak, 2009, pp:20-34). The literature states that the individuals with childhood trauma react quickly and have a lack of attention, hyperactivity disorder, disassociative

disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, borderline personality disorder and a tendency to harm themselves as well as to suicide (Güleç, Topaloğlu, Ünsal, Altıntaş, 2012, pp:112-137). It is thought that these psychiatric situations may be connected to undirectedness.

According to our 4th finding, childhood trauma total score of the students with closed to experience and their physical neglect score as well as their physical neglect score are higher than those of the ones with openness to experience. People with closed to experience are considered to be traditional, conservative and resistant to change (Bono, Boles, Judge, Lauer, 2002, pp: 1311-1344; Şentepe, Güven, 2015, pp:31). People with openness to experience are known to be dreamer, adventurous, original, creative, curious, self- important and industrious (Basım, Çetin, Tabak, 2009, pp:20-34). It is rather meaningful that physical and emotional neglect scores of those with closed to experience are higher than those of the ones with openness to experience. Physical and emotional neglect can be defined as not responding timely and adequately to children's main physical, emotional, educational, social, cognitive and cultural needs (Özgentürk, 2014, pp:265-276). It is thought that as a consequence of not fulfilling the need to be fed, educated and know oneself as well as not meeting one's physical and emotional needs, closed to experience prevents one's mental and emotional development.

Clinical experiences make it clear that even though the reasons why individuals go to the clinic are different, childhood trauma has a strong impact on their development of personality. The findings of this study indicate that, considering the fact that trauma is the heaviest violence against the individual in the childhood trauma has psychological effect on the individual's entire life and plays a big and chronic role in the personality.

In this context, for the future of our country it is important and urgent to double multidisciplinary activities of juridical, psychological, social and educational disciplines in order to stop child abuse and neglect increasing each passing day in our country.

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