Summary
The Association Between Emotional Socialization Behaviors and Emotional Abuse Potential of Parents with Preschool Children

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In early childhood, social-emotional development can be influenced by a variety of individual and environmental factors. In addition to parents providing positive behavioral models for children during their early years, it is also important for children to see appropriate responses to their emotional experiences (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997). In this context, emotional socialization is defined as the parents' responses to their children when they experience negative emotions (Eisenberg et al., 1994). Denham et al., (2007) suggest that the emotional socialization process is transmitted to children through three basic mechanisms: modeling, contingency, and emotion coaching. These three mechanisms mean that parents provide emotional cues to their children by modeling their own emotions, responding to children's emotions with situational reactions, and engaging in discussions to guide children's emotions, respectively. Thus, the emotional socialization approach is highlighted as an emotion focused interaction rather than parents' general disciplinary styles (Kılıç, 2014). Encouraging expressions of an emotion, emotion-focused responses, and problem-focused responses are termed supportive emotional socialization responses, while responses that minimizing the importance of a child's emotional reaction, punitive responses that meet a child's expression with verbal or physical punishments, and parental stress reactions that meet a child's negative emotions with distress are termed non-supportive emotional socialization responses (Eisenberg et al., 1999; McElwain et al., 2007).

The lack of emotional support provided by parents, along with negative reactions to a child's emotions, can further cause the child's experience of negative emotions, resulting in emotional distress compounded by such neglect. In this context, non-supportive emotional socialization responses from parents can be associated with emotional abuse in children (Glaser, 2002). Research indicates that certain parenting practices significantly shape children's emotional regulation and adjustment, contributing to the development of emotional and behavioral issues, such as vulnerability to negative emotions and destructive behaviors, which may in turn lead to authoritarian or insensitive parenting styles (Combs-Ronto et al., 2009; Eisenberg et al., 2015). Studies have shown that parents who acquire supportive emotional socialization skills tend to respond more sensitively and appropriately to their children's emotions, resulting in a reduction of behavioral problems and the enhancement of their children's social-emotional competencies (Havighurst et al., 2022). Responses characterized by threats of punishment, minimization of emotions, and disregard for feelings represent non supportive emotional socialization strategies employed by parents (Denham et al., 2010). In such circumstances, children may exhibit problematic behaviors due to their inability to cope with intense emotions (Rogers et al., 2016). While children can derive positive gains from their emotional experiences, parental negative reactions can hinder their ability to benefit from these experiences (Shewark & Blandon, 2015). These reciprocal interactions suggest that non-supportive emotional socialization by parents, in conjunction with children's difficulties in emotional regulation, complicates the prevention of behavioral issues (Garner et al., 2007) and may exacerbate emotional abusive behaviors in parents.

Emotional abuse is defined as exposure to any attitudes, words, or actions that may have a negative impact on the child, including inappropriate behaviors that are physical, emotional, and/or sexual (Runyan et al., 2002). Emotional abuse behaviors, carried out by persons in authority or power over the child, or different adults or peers, based on age, knowledge, and power differences, may endanger the child's cognitive, emotional, or physical potential or directly harm them (Polat,

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2007). In emotional abuse, the perpetrator is often the child's attachment figure, such as the parent or caregiver, making it difficult to clearly distinguish appropriate and inappropriate attitudes towards the child over the course of this ongoing relationship (Glaser, 2002); culture specific child-rearing attitudes may also contribute to underreporting of emotional abuse (Maiter et al., 2004). Emotional abuse includes ridicule, humiliation, yelling, threatening, frightening, insulting, rejecting, isolating, comparing, ignoring the needs, aggressive behaviors or unrealistic expectations from other adults that exceed the child's capabilities (Glaser, 2002; Runyan et al., 2002; Siyez, 2003; Zoroğlu et al., 2001).

Parents may not be aware of the emotional abuse they practice due to the attitudes they adopt for various reasons (Keser et al., 2010; UNICEF, 2010) or they may not know that these behaviors are evaluated under the umbrella of emotional abuse (Pekdoğan & Gözün-Kahraman, 2020; Uslu et al., 2010). A caregiver's failure to provide a supportive and appropriate environment for the child can often be the beginning of emotional abuse (World Health Organization-WHO, 1999). However, starting from infancy, parental sensitivity towards their child can affect children's emotional development, behaviors during school years, and interpersonal relationships in later years (Bradley & Corwyn, 2008; Pluess & Belsky, 2010).

There are various determinants of abusive behaviors towards children. Abuse potential can be broadly defined as risk factors that are thought to increase parents' abusive behaviors towards their children, along with characteristics and practices related to child abuse (McGoron et al., 2020; Milner, 1994). Research indicates that sociodemographic variables related to the child and parent, parents' childhood experiences of abuse, life problems, and various personality traits may be factors that increase the potential for parents to abuse their children (Can and Beyazıt, 2018; Keser et al., 2010; Milner, 1994; Oliver, 1993). Emotional abuse potential refers to individual, familial, and environmental variables that lay the groundwork for emotional abuse. It is noted that parents' past experiences and their attitudes and approaches to child-rearing are among the primary predictors of child abuse potential (Uysal Bayrak, 2020). In this sense, emotional abuse potentials include behaviors that may lead to emotional abuse by parents, while negative emotion socialization responses involve attitudes and approaches that ignore the child's emotional experiences. Although emotional abuse potentials and negative emotion socialization are different concepts, they can sometimes overlap. According to Rodriguez (2016), child abuse potential is a concept that predicts

the likelihood of a parent's behaviors progressing towards the final point of abuse. In this context, non-supportive emotion socialization approaches represent one end of the spectrum, while behaviors that emotionally abuse the child represent the other end.

To understand the relationship between these two concepts, the classification developed by Hamarman and Bernet (2000) to determine the severity of emotional abuse can be used. This classification includes four stages: no abuse, mild emotional abuse, moderate emotional abuse, and severe emotional abuse. For a behavior to be classified as moderate or severe emotional abuse, it must involve malevolent intent, a high likelihood of harm to the child, or actions taken with the intent to cause emotional pain to the child. These behaviors pose a significant threat to the child's mental health, regardless of the parent's intent (Hamarman & Bernet, 2000). Accordingly, while moderate and severe levels indicate concrete emotional abuse behaviors, the no abuse and mild abuse levels indicate a structure that reflects parents' emotion socialization approaches. In this sense, negative emotion socialization approaches are thought to be a variable that can predict parents' emotional abuse potentials.

The literature explains the long-term effects of emotional abuse on children both psychologically and physiologically (Lumley & Harkness, 2007; McCarthy & Lumley, 2012; Messman-Moore & Coates, 2007). For instance, studies have shown that as parents' awareness of emotional abuse increases, their supportive emotion socialization responses also increase (Öztürk, 2017). It has also been demonstrated that mothers who neglect their children have less supportive emotion socialization approaches and engage in less emotion coaching with their children (Edwards et al., 2005; Shipman et al., 2007). Furthermore, it is known that parents with a high potential for abuse are more likely to exhibit coercive parenting styles (Haskett et al., 1995; Margolin et al., 2003). However, there is no research has been found directly addressing the impact of emotional socialization behaviors on the potential for emotional abuse.

Considering the risks that negative experiences can create in the long term, examining the responses of families to their children's emotions and emotional needs seems important for the psychological, physiological, and emotional development of children. Given the significant and protective effects of emotional abuse and supportive emotional socialization approaches on a child's social-emotional development, investigating the potential relationships between these two variables becomes crucial. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the predictive role of emotional socialization behaviors

used by parents on the potential for emotional abuse of children. The aim of this study is determined as "examining emotional socialization behaviors as a predictor of emotional abuse potential in parents with preschool children". Accordingly, the following questions were addressed:

1. Is there a significant relationship between parents' potential for emotional abuse and emotional socialization behaviors?
2. Do parents' emotional socialization behaviors predict the potential for emotional abuse?"

Method

The sample of the study consists of 206 parents selected through convenience sampling. Demographic information indicated that 189 (91.7%) of the participants were mothers. Fifty percent of the parents have daughters, with the average age of the children being 53.7 months (SD=14,05). The data for the study were collected using the Demographic Information Form to gather information about the participants, the "Children's Coping with Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES)" adapted into Turkish by Altan, Yağmurlu, and Yavuz (2013) to measure parents' emotional socialization behaviors, and the "Parents' Emotional Abuse Potentials Having 3-6-Year-Old Children Scale" developed by Pekdoğan and Kanak (2019) to measure parents' emotional abuse potentials. The CCNES includes 12 vignettes involving negative emotions experienced by children such as anger, fear, sadness, shame, and disappointment. The scale consists of six subscales: "Problem-focused reactions (PFR)", "Emotion-focused reactions (EFR)" "Expressive Encouragement (EE)" subscale, which supports the child's emotional expression, are also added to determine the "Supportive Emotional Socialization" levels. The other subscales are "Minimization reactions (MR)", "Punitive reactions (PR)" "Distress reactions (DR). The total scores from these three subscales constitute the "Non-supportive Emotional Socialization" levels. Parents' Emotional Abuse Potentials Having 3-6-Year-Old Children Scale aims to measure the emotional abuse potentials of parents with children aged 3-6 years, consisting of 50 items and two subscales. The causal subscale comprises items measuring behaviors of parents that lead to emotional abuse of their children. The preventive subscale includes items regarding behaviors of parents that prevent emotional abuse of their children. Ethics approvals were obtained from the ethics committee of a state university, and data were collected online for the study, followed by conducting simple correlations and regression analysis on the organized data.

Results

The relationships between variables were examined using Pearson Correlation Coefficients. According to this, non-supportive responses were found to be positively correlated with parents' causal potential for emotional abuse while supportive emotion socialization responses were negatively correlated. Moreover, parents' supportive emotion socialization responses were found to be positively correlated with parents' behaviors aimed at preventing emotional abuse. According to the six sub-dimensions of emotional socialization, as expected, there was an inverse relationship between the Causal Emotional Abuse Potentials and Expressive Encouragement (EE), Emotion-Focused Reactions (EFR), and Problem-Focused Reactions (PFR). Conversely, Preventive Emotional Abuse Potentials were positively related to EE, EFR and PFR. Additionally, while there was no significant relationship between Preventive Emotional Abuse Potentials and Distress Reactions (DR) and Minimization Reactions (MR). However, DR and MR were positively correlated with Causal Emotional Abuse Potentials. Punitive Reactions (PR) were positively correlated with Causal Emotional Abuse Potentials and negatively correlated with Preventive Emotional Abuse Potentials.

Regression analysis was conducted to reveal how parents' emotional socialization responses predicted their potential for emotional abuse. According to the results, it was observed that supportive and non-supportive emotional socialization responses had a moderate significant relationship with causal behaviors related to the potential for emotional abuse (R = 0.434). Emotional socialization responses were significant predictors of causal behaviors related to the potential for emotional abuse ($F_{(2,203)}$= 23.559, p<.01), and approximately 19% of the variance in parents' potential for emotional abuse can be explained by supportive and non-supportive emotional socialization responses (R^2= 0.188). Finally, a significant model was established indicating that emotional socialization responses were significant predictors of preventive behaviors related to the potential for emotional abuse ($F_{(2,203)}$= 16,028, p<.01); a moderate significant relationship was found (R= .369). However, while supportive emotional socialization responses had a predictive effect on preventive behaviors related to the potential for emotional abuse [β=-.345, t(206)= 5.28, SE=.35, p<.01], non-supportive emotional socialization responses did not have a significant effect. Additionally, approximately 14% of the variance in preventing parents' potential for emotional abuse can be explained by supportive and nonsupportive emotional socialization responses (R^2 = 0.136). Parents' emotion socialization responses had a

moderate significant relationship (R=0.456) with the causal emotional abuse potentials (F (6,199)= 8.731, p<.01). The results show that only MR predict parents' behaviors that lead to emotional abuse [β= .271, t(206)= 3.045, SE=1.67, p<.01]. Lastly, a significant model was established indicating that emotional socialization sub-dimensions were significant predictors of preventive behaviors related to the potential for emotional abuse (F(6,199)= 6.041, p<.01); however, none of the emotional socialization sub-dimensions were significantly related to preventive behaviors regarding the potential for emotional abuse (R = 0.393).

Discussion

As a result of this study; supportive and nonsupportive emotion socialization reactions together predicted parents' causal behaviors regarding emotional abuse potential; supportive emotion socialization reactions also predicted preventive behaviors regarding emotional abuse potential. In addition, it was observed that minimization reactions (MR) predicted parents' causal behaviors regarding emotional abuse potentials, but none of the sub-dimensions of emotion socialization showed a significant relationship with behaviors preventing emotional abuse potential.

These results seem consistent with the literature in many ways. For instance, Edwards and colleagues (2005) reported that mothers who neglected their children were generally less supportive of their children's emotional expressions, discussed emotions less with their children, and experienced more negative emotions. This seems consistent with the findings in the present study that dismissive emotion socialization responses predicted the potential for emotional abuse. Moreover, a study by Shipman and colleagues (2005) found that neglected children received lower levels of support from their mothers for their negative emotions. These children also had higher conflict expectations and tended to suppress their challenging emotions. When the studies on the emotional abuse potential of parents are examined, similar to this study; a negative relationship was found between the causal emotional abuse potentials of mothers and democratic parenting attitudes, and a positive relationship with authoritarian parenting attitudes; a positive relationship was found between the preventive abuse potentials and democratic and authoritarian parenting attitudes, and a negative relationship with protective attitudes (Pekdoğan & Gözün Kahraman, 2020).

Behaviors such as neglecting the child, using humiliating words, and ignoring them are considered acts of emotional abuse (Krug et al., 2002). In this regard,

minimizing reactions are behaviors that negatively affect children's emotional development and can potentially lead to emotional abuse. The literature emphasizes the significant impact of negative parenting attitudes on children's psychological health (Garbarino et al., 1997). From this perspective, it was an expected finding that minimizing responses would predict parents' behaviors that lead to emotional abuse. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that in this study, parents' emotional abuse potentials were not found to be related to other sub-dimensions of emotion socialization responses. Especially considering the items in the CCNES which was used within the scope of the research, it can be said that the items evaluating parents' punitive emotion socialization responses include behaviors aimed at inhibiting the child's behaviors and the items evaluating parents' distress responses are related to parents' own emotion regulation processes and their concerns about their children (Pala et al., 2023). In addition, the items evaluating minimizing responses on the scale seem to reflect a tendency to directly minimize the importance of the child's sadness, fear, or anger (Çakmak, 2022). Therefore, the sub-dimensions involving punitive and distress responses may not have been directly related to behaviors causing or preventing emotional abuse potentials.

Supportive emotion socialization includes parenting behaviors that help children develop emotional skills (Altan Altun et al., 2013; Fabes, 2002; Suchodoletz et al., 2011; Tao et al., 2010). However, the effects of these responses can change when interacting with parents' overall attitudes and other environmental factors (Güven and Erden, 2017). For example, some parents may exhibit both supportive emotion socialization behaviors and non-supportive responses simultaneously, which can influence their potential for emotional abuse. Some researchers have found that fathers' supportive responses agaerss mothers' non-supportive emotion socialization responses are protective for the child (Kaya, 2016); some other researchers have stated that when one parent exhibits supportive emotion socialization while the other shows non-supportive responses it can be an appropriate approach for the child's social and emotional development (McElwain et al., 2007). Çakmak (2022) concluded in her study examining the emotion socialization responses of grandmothers and mothers with the child outcomes that there is a transgenerational transmission of supportive and nonsupportive emotion socialization responses, emphasizing that exposure to non-supportive behaviors in childhood has more significant effects than exposure to supportive behaviors. In this context, knowing which emotion socialization practices are particularly functional and which are dysfunctional in terms

of social-emotional well-being is also emphasized as important in terms of overall parenting styles (Altan Aytun et al., 2013).

In the study, the lack of a significant relationship between any sub-dimension of emotion socialization and preventive behaviors related to emotional abuse potentials suggests that these sub-dimensions alone may not be sufficient and that preventive tendencies against abuse may need to be considered in a broader context. According to researchers, some emotion socialization behaviors are more inclined to strengthen children's emotional and social competencies compared to others (Çakmak, 2022). However, the degree to which an emotion socialization behavior supports the desired outcome depends on what behavior is functional in that context, namely contextual conditions. Indeed, Güven and Erden (2017) explain this situation with the potential of changes in units affecting the family as a whole, as suggested by systemic approaches. According to the findings of the current research, it can be said that if parents use emotion-focused, problem-focused, and expressive-encouragement responses together, they can be preventive against emotional abuse potentials. Therefore, it can be said that emotion-focused, problem-focused, and expressive-encouragement responses, which include positive actions such as expressing children's emotions and talking about their feelings and experiences, can be preventive in terms of emotional abuse potential when used together; however, their effects are limited/low when considered individually. The multifaceted nature of the emotional abuse concept and its different dynamics may also be an important factor revealing this difference (Jannah and Safrina, 2019).

Similarly to the results of the study by Kanak and Pekdoğan (2020), it was determined that mothers' potential for emotional abuse created a significant difference in the causal sub-dimension of the scale. This situation may be due to feelings of inadequacy stemming from mothers' workload, the situation of experiencing difficulties in both home and work together, the reluctance of fathers to support mothers in their daily lives, and mothers' exposure to emotional abuse during childhood. Even mothers' low parenting skills, unreadiness for parenting, lack of sufficient parenting knowledge, dealing with depression, and other problems may lead to emotional abuse (Shumba, 2002). Sattler (2022) revealed that mothers' perceived instrumental social support, part-time work, and full-time work situations are associated with less physical abuse, and that neglect and abuse longitudinally decrease as social support provided to mothers increases. Considering the importance of secure attachment, environmental factors such as school, and the presence of supportive relationships in early childho-

od, it is crucial to create protective factors for parents in the community, school, and peer groups to mitigate the effects of emotional abuse (Li et al., 2020).

It is known that social-emotional development in early childhood is highly influenced by individual and environmental factors, and it is important for parents to respond appropriately to children's emotional experiences (Denham, 1993; Havighurst et al., 2010; Yağmurlu & Altan, 2010). It is emphasized that emotion socialization enhances children's skills in expressing their emotions and supportive responses contribute positively to children's emotional development (Yağmurlu & Altan, 2010); however, it is stated that the disregard of emotions in children and the resulting emotional abuse include attitudes that endanger the child's emotional and social development (Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). Furthermore, attention is drawn to the relationship between emotion socialization responses and emotional abuse, and it is stated that non-supportive emotion socialization responses can suppress a child's emotions and lead to emotional distress (Shields & Cicchetti, 1997; Yağmurlu & Altan, 2010). Supportive emotion socialization responses, on the other hand, are emphasized to have positive effects on children's emotional development (Denham et al., 2007; Güven & Erden, 2013; Havighurst et al., 2010). There are no studies directly examining those relationships in the literature. However, in Öztürk›s (2017) study; it was found that parents with high emotional abuse awareness used positive emotion socialization approaches more frequently and negative emotion socialization approaches less frequently compared to those with low awareness. The same study also showed that emotional abuse awareness directly predicted the frequency of punitive emotion socialization responses. In this regard, the findings of this study are parallel to the current study.

Implications for Intervention

The literature highlights the effective outcomes of interventions focused on emotional abuse and emotion socialization. Katz and Rigterink (2012) suggest that emotion-coaching-oriented parenting, which is a type of supportive emotion socialization, protects children from domestic violence. Research conducted to date has shown that emotion socialization behaviors are associated with positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes in children. Although studies on families with a history of neglect and abuse are limited, there are still results suggesting their protective effects on children at risk. For example, Havighurst, Murphy, and Keheo (2021) found that following the implementation of the Tuning in to Kids (TIK) Program aimed at supporting emotion socialization with families of children experiencing complex trauma, parents' emotion socialization levels increased,

and parent-child interaction, parental mental health, and children's emotional and behavioral competence improved. Similarly, Rolock et al. (2021) highlighted the positive outcomes of the TIK Program in reducing parental difficulties and increasing family interactions in parents with adoption experience and caregivers of foster children; they also recommended long-term follow-up studies due to the possibility of placement changes and abuse experiences in foster or adopted children. Valentino et al. (2022) found in their intervention study using Reminiscing and Emotion Training (RET) that improvements in parental behaviors mediated reductions in maladaptive behaviors of maltreated children one year later; they also found that the effect of maltreatment was more intense among families that did not receive RET intervention. This study demonstrates that RET is effective in improving mothers' emotional socialization behaviors and facilitating emotional and behavioral adjustment in maltreated children. These findings are important in demonstrating the benefits of short, focused, relational interventions for children and their caregivers who are at risk of maltreatment.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study is important in demonstrating the relationship between parents' potential for emotional abuse and their emotion socialization approaches. However, it has some limitations. It was conducted with a sample in which participants were homogeneous in terms of children's gender and family income level. Furthermore, looking at the study group of the research, it can be seen that the majority of participants were mothers, and fathers' participation was less. In this regard, future research could involve broader samples including fathers from different socioeconomic levels and consider the relationships among variables based on the demographic data of children and parents. In this study, it is also considered as a limitation that parents may have provided socially desirable responses in self-report data collection tools, and that multiple data sources were not used. Future research could benefit from controlling for the level of social desirability bias in responses.

As emphasized in the literature, emotion coaching-based programs aiming to improve parents' emotion socialization skills, such as TIK or RET, are known to be effective in directing parents' attention to their children's emotions, reducing behaviors that ignore, minimize, or punish emotions (Güven & Erden, 2017; Havighurst et al., 2010; Ülker Erdem, 2019; Valentino et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2012). In this context, researchers can design intervention programs aimed at increasing families' awareness of emotional abuse and providing them with positive emotion socialization skills, collaborative efforts can be made to disseminate existing programs, and thus functional parent-child interactions can be improved. This study is important not only in increasing parents' and researchers' awareness of implicit emotional abuse behaviors but also in contributing to the literature on preventing negative behaviors towards children, identifying at-risk and disadvantaged groups, enhancing children's emotional competence, and developing effective and sufficiently good parenting interventions.