

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Violence tendencies of high school students: an examination in terms of exposure to violence, participation in sports and socio-demographic attributes

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The purpose of this study was to determine the violence tendencies of young people studying in high school in terms of their participation in sports, status of exposure to violence and socio-demographic variables. It was also aimed to evaluate whether the identified violence tendency differed significantly by gender, grade, school success, features of the living place, parental education, economic level, doing sports or not, the ones doing sports regularly working being licensed or not, the number of years spent doing sports being licensed, the status of exposure to violence and the type of the violence exposure. To this end, 459 students in total, studying in 8 high schools randomly chosen within the boundaries of the district of Izmit of the province of Kocaeli in the academic year 2013 to 2014 and participating in the research voluntarily, were included in the scope of the study. As well as a survey determining the socio-demographic attributes, the Violence Tendency Scale developed by Haskan and Yıldırım (2012) was administered to high school students. Consequently, it was found out that violence tendencies of young people differed significantly by gender, working in a sports branch being licensed, the number of years spent doing sports being licensed, the status of exposure to violence and the type of the violence exposure.

**Key words:** High school student, doing sports, tendency to violence, violence exposure, type of violence.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, violence tendencies of adolescents and violence experienced in schools is an issue frequently brought to the agenda of the media. Violence is briefly defined as "the emergence of the sense of hostility and anger towards people and objects in an intense and destructive way" (Budak, 2003). Violence tendency is reported to be composed of violence related feelings, thoughts and

behaviors of individuals. It is stated that violence tendency is not limited to violence behaviors, but as well as resorting to violence in any situation, thinking that using violence is justifiable also means violence tendency. Considering the literature, violence is defined as harmful actions directed at people in many areas such as psychological, emotional, sexual, economic, physical and

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social areas being in the first place; whereas, it is stated that violence tendency can be defined as the level of positive thinking attributed to violence (Haskan and Yıldırım, 2012). In terms of the person it is directed at; three types of violence including self-directed, collective and interpersonal violence are mentioned. It is reported that of these types of violence, interpersonal violence is generally experienced among the individuals or groups knowing each other and is also frequently observed in schools as well as at home and in the streets (Kocacı, 2001, Özgür et al., 2011). It is also reported that with the increase in violence in schools recently, educational environments have become unsafe; therefore, secondary education students need to be primarily examined in terms of tendency to violence (Debarbieux, 2003, Kılıç, 2007, Leone et al., 2000, Özgür et al., 2011).

When examining the studies related to violence, adolescence is thought to be the most important of the periods posing a risk of the emergence of violence behaviors (Donat-Bacı and Özben, 2011, Selçuk and Güner, 2004). It is reported that 75% of young people are exposed to or witnessed violence in school, media and home environments in this period. It is stated that witnessing or being exposed to violence in this way also induces violence tendency and violence is learnt as a way of solving problems (Ayan, 2007; Çuhadaroğlu, 2006; Groves, 2003; Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2005; Krug et al., 2002; Korkut-Owen, 2008; Miller and Pedro, 2006). It is reported that being aware of the risk factors preliminary and leading to violence tendency is important for the solution of the problem. It is mentioned that any event, biological or environmental conditions creating emotional or behavioral problems can also emerge as a risk factor (Debarbieux, 2009). It is stated that as adolescents consider themselves unimportant, their tendency to violence increases; in Turkey, students studying in secondary schools commit violence mostly in the street (39%), followed by in school and their environment (34%); 14.4 of adolescents have been exposed to violence, 25% of them have used violence and the violence being exposed has reached the highest level between the ages of 15 and 16 in the last one month, violence is observed in 32.64% of secondary schools, 64% of the students have been exposed to violence in the last one year, boys socialize in order to be masculine through violence and aggression (Lu and Wong, 2013) and girls are exposed to more violence in home environments, whereas boys are exposed to more violence in school (Öğülmüş, 2007, Özcebe et al., 2006, Donat-Bacı and Özben, 2011, Özgür et al., 2011, Sabuncuoğlu et al., 2006).

It is stated that early knowledge of young people's risky behaviors and tendencies to violence; is important in terms of both realization of a healthy education and prevention of potential acts of violence and the extensional increase in violence due to young people in school learning violence through social learning (Haskan and Yıldırım, 2014, Donat-Bacı and Özben, 2011).

Furthermore, the literature includes the information that doing sports contributes to the individual's social development, prevents nervousness and tendency to violence creating a positive effect on the nervous system and also is supportive in coping with the situations such as exposure to violence and the trauma occurred due to the positive effect it creates (Kalyon, 1994, Krechtle, 2004, Koç, 2007). Considering the effect of doing sports on eliminating the feeling of anger and relaxing (De Vries, 1981; Kalyon, 1994), sports participation of high school students in adolescence period was wondered. In this respect, it was intended to examine whether their participation in sports was in professional level - that is whether they were licensed if they participated in sports - the number of years spent doing sports being licensed; considering in terms of social learning, whether the student was exposed to violence; if so, what kind of violence he was exposed to; whether these situations increased their tendency to violence; and also the relationship of violence tendency with the other socio-demographic variables. Considering the information that the efforts to prevent violence were carrying out studies to reduce risk factors and increase preventive factors (Ögel et al., 2006), knowledge of young people's tendency to violence was thought to be important in terms of the prevention of school violence. In this respect, it was investigated what the level of violence tendency was in schools and whether it had a relationship with being exposed to violence, violence type, doing sports and some socio-demographic variables.

### **The purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the violence tendencies of high school students and to evaluate whether the identified tendency differed significantly by gender, grade being attended, school success, features of the living place, parental education, economic level, doing sports or not, working being licensed or not, the number of years spent doing sports being licensed, the status of exposure to violence and the type of the violence exposure.

### **Research Questions**

Do high school students have tendency to violence? Does this tendency differ by the variables such as gender, grade, school success, features of the living place, parental education and economic level?

Does the tendency to violence differ by doing sports or not, doing sports being licensed (that is, being a competition athlete or not), the number of years spent working being licensed?

Does the tendency to violence differ by high school students' exposure to violence and the type of violence exposure?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Subjects

This research is a descriptive study. Eight high schools were randomly chosen among the 16 high schools in the center of the district of İzmit of the province of Kocaeli in the academic year 2013-2014 to represent the population. After visiting the selected high schools and obtaining permission from the school managements, the students studying in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades were informed about the research. Scales were distributed to the students who wanted to participate in the study voluntarily by the researcher. When the 530 scales filled were examined, 459 scales in total deemed valid, 100 of which were from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 101 of which were from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 258 of which were from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, were taken into consideration. As the university entrance exam was near in the period, the study was conducted and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students were preparing for it, they did not want to participate in the study. As the study was based on voluntariness, the 12<sup>th</sup> grades were not included in the study.

### Data collection

#### Data collection questionnaire

**Information survey:** It is a 13-question survey prepared in the light of literature information in order to determine the high school students' personal traits, sports participation, whether they were exposed to violence and the type of the violence exposure. This information survey was applied in the way that the students answered the questions. The students' school success was determined based on their choosing the appropriate grade point average from the grading scale (85,00 to 100 VERY GOOD; 70,00 to 84,99 GOOD; 60,00 to 69,99 AVERAGE; 50,00 to 59,99 PASS; 0 to 49,99 FAIL) used in the Turkish National Education System considering their last school report.

**Violence tendency scale:** The violence tendency scale, a 20-item three-rating scale (3=always, 2=sometimes, 3=never), one of which is inverted, which was developed by Haskan and Yıldırım (2012) and measures the secondary school students' violence tendency, was used. The inverted item is graded inversely. The scores of the scale range between 20 and 60. High scores indicate that tendency to violence is high. The period for answering the scale, which can be applied both individually and in groups, is approximately 15 min (Haskan, 2009, Haskan and Yıldırım, 2012).

### Development of the scale

Violence related feelings, thoughts and behaviors of secondary school students were determined and an item pool was created through literature review. The opinions of three experts from the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance on 44 items from the pool considered appropriate were taken. The 44-item pilot form improved as a result of the expert opinions was applied to 120 secondary school students and the unclear, wrong answered items were removed from the scale or the expressions were corrected. After the pilot application, the 44-item scale was applied to 218 students in three secondary schools in different socioeconomic statuses. A factor analysis was conducted on 218 data. The 20-item scale obtained as a result of the factor analysis was applied to 140 secondary school students again for test-retest reliability. The reliability of the scale was tested in two ways, in the first of which the Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .87 and in the second of which, the test-retest reliability coefficient was calculated as  $r_{xx}=.83$  when the violence tendency scale was applied twice to 140 students with an interval of three weeks. Thus, it was

indicated that the scale can be used securely to measure the violence tendencies of the students (Haskan, 2009, Haskan and Yıldırım, 2012).

### Statistical analysis

In the study, descriptive frequencies and percentage distributions for socio-demographic attributes were taken. Mean and standard deviation values of violence tendency scale were used. As the data showed a normal distribution, the independent t-test was used for the comparison of two groups and one-way analysis of variance (One way-Anova) was used for the comparison of three or more groups.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, violence tendency scores of male students were found to be significantly higher than of female students ( $p=.001$ ). Contrary to these findings; studies reporting that there is no relationship between gender and level of violence tendency (Arpacı, 2011), and aggression scores of girls are higher than of boys have also been encountered (Ellickson and McGuiga, 2000, Kırmoğlu et al., 2008). Studies finding violence tendencies of boys higher than of girls similar to our study are also available (Haskan, 2009). The information that these are the results of the effect of cultural leanings; while girls learn that being compatible was a good personality trait, boys learn that aggression is a part of the sense of "masculinity" and they socialize in order to be masculine through violence and aggression, while boys carry out open attacks particularly in schools, girls show unnoticeable verbal aggression (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995; Ellickson and McGuiga, 2000; Giles and Heyman, 2005; Lopez and Emmer, 2002; Lu and Wong, 2013; Thomas and Smith, 2004) is supported by our findings. When interpreted with the information that violence tendency scores of boys being higher than girls stems from boys believing that resorting to physical violence, particularly externalized and observed from the outside, is a positive experience (Astin et al., 2003), it is also seen in our study that with the effect of the gender roles of "femininity" and "masculinity" while children are learning social gender roles, shows of physical violence in particular are considered as a kind of indicator of power by the boys in adolescence period and from this point of view, violence is externalized with a kind of effort to prove their power, whereas girls learn to be quiet as a matter of their social gender role and behave in line with their gender role as they gain social acceptance and are supported particularly for the suppression of their violence related feelings.

In this study, no significant relationship was found between the violence tendency and the grade being attended ( $p=.775$ ) and the features of the living place being lived in for the last ten years ( $p=.064$ ). Although no significant relationship was observed between the violence tendency scores according to the education

level of both mother ( $p=.169$ ) and father ( $p=.055$ ), there are studies finding violence tendency significant according to the education level of mother and insignificant according to the education level of father (Arpacı, 2011, Ayan, 2006; 2007, Şahan, 2010). In addition, no significant relationship was observed between the violence tendency scores and the income level ( $p=.649$ ). The studies carried out also showed that, violence was more common in families with low socio-economic status and income inequality was a risk factor for violence tendency in young people (Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2005, Özcebe et al., 2006).

The reason why the violence tendency scores did not differ significantly by income status in this study unlike literature studies is thought to result from young people not having enough knowledge about the income status of the family to induce violence tendency as they are only given the responsibility of studying and getting into university and this age group is not given the responsibility for the family budget as a result of the sense of child raising in Turkish society.

The violence tendency scores of high school students showed no significant difference according to the status of doing sports ( $p=.077$ ), whereas it was observed that the violence tendency scores were significantly high in favor of those doing sports being licensed ( $p=.016$ ) and the violence tendency scores increased significantly as the number of the years spent working being licensed increased ( $p=.031$ ). Similar results were reported in the other studies carried out as well (Haskan and Yıldırım, 2014). In the study, when those engaged in sports and those not engaged in sports were compared, no significant difference was observed in the violence tendency scores. When interpreted with the facts that the results were found significant when those having a license, in other words, athlete students participating in competitions and those not having a license but doing sports regularly were compared, a significant increase was also observed in the violence tendency scores as the number of years being licensed increased, the information in the literature that sports involves violence and aggression by nature (İkizler, 1994), it was thought that the violence tendency scores of competition athletes were found high because of their combative, aggressive and ambitious nature and it was important to carry out detailed studies on the issue. Although no significant difference was observed in the violence tendency scores in terms of the students' school success, assessed according to the grade point averages the students received from the exams at school ( $p=.321$ ), it was stated that adverse conditions such as student success being low, lack of interest in school and lessons, lack of social, cultural and physical opportunities played an active role in the emergence of violence (Fager and Boss, 1998). Furthermore, it was observed that the violence tendency scores of those exposed to violence were significantly high ( $p=.000$ ), considering the type of violence being exposed; those exposed to both physical

and psychological violence had the highest violence tendency scores followed by those exposed to physical and psychological violence respectively and the difference found between these scores was also significant ( $p=.016$ ). As seen from the results, although doing sports does not increase violence tendency, competitive sports do. As violence exposure increases violence tendency and violence tendency induces violence, supporting children and young people with activities in the form of games which are not competitive is thought to be important in reducing violence tendency. Therefore, it was concluded that activities which are non-competitive and based on games should be applied in the studies carried out for children and young people in schools.

According to the result of independent t-test; the variables of gender (Table 1), doing sports being licensed or not, violence exposure and according to the one-way analysis of variance; the variables of the number of years working licensed and the type of violence exposure were found significant (Table 2). When these variables were evaluated with the multiple regression analysis, they were found to effect the level of violence tendency in a ratio of 58%. The relationship between the respective variables were found to be significant in the level of  $p<0.05$  in the multiple regression analysis performed ( $F(5.435)=5.346$   $p<.005$ ).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in the study we carried out, violence tendency scores were found significantly higher in males than females in terms of gender, the reason of which was thought to be the effect of harshness and aggressive attitudes seen as the symbol of "masculinity" being encouraged by the society. It shows that studies of social gender roles being conducted starting from early ages is important in prevention of violence tendency. Violence tendency scores is higher in those doing sports being licensed than in those doing sports without being licensed. An increase in violence tendency scores as the number of the license year increases indicate that sports including competitions increase violence tendency, which was thought to result from the effect of considering being ambitious in competitions, following the opponent closely and making a show of power to the opponent important in performance sports. It was also thought that it would be more appropriate to conduct game-oriented studies rather than competition sports in terms of prevention of violence tendency. Violence tendency scores were found to be significantly higher in those exposed to violence than in those not exposed to violence. As the violence tendency scores were found significantly high in those exposed to both physical and psychological violence and those exposed to physical violence and psychological violence respectively and it was seen that doing sports

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage distribution and mean scores of violence tendency of high school students in terms of socio-demographic variables.

Variables		Frequency	Percent(%)	Mean±Sd	P value
Gender	female	204	44.4	44.37±10.53	.001
	male	255	55.6	47.63±10.54	
Grade	11	258	56.2	46.28±10.73	.775
	10	101	22.0	46.57±9.12	
	9	100	21.8	45.55±11.86	
Feature of the living place	Province	311	67.8	45.63±11.09	.064
	District	123	26.8	46.68±9.31	
	Village	25	5.4	50.64±10.39	
Mother's education level	University	66	14.4	45.78±12.73	.169
	High School	132	28.8	45.56±10.63	
	Secondary School	117	25.5	45.60±9.63	
	Primary School	130	28.3	46.75±10.43	
	Literate	6	1.3	52.83±5.70	
	Illiterate	8	1.7	53.87±10.09	
Father's education level	University	110	24.0	44.47±11.51	.055
	High School	178	38.8	46.43±11.03	
	Secondary School	85	18.5	46.23±9.62	
	Primary School	79	17.2	47.35±9.17	
	Literate	4	.9	46.00±7.39	
	Illiterate	3	.7	62.33±10.01	
	Below 500TRY	5	11	52.60±13.44	
Income status	501-1000	51	11.1	45.64±11.77	.649
	1001-1500	113	24.6	45.94±9.79	
	1501-2000	127	27.7	46.75±9.77	
	2001 and above	163	35.5	45.88±11.44	

**Table 2.** Frequency and percentage distribution and mean scores of violence tendency of high school students in terms of the status of doing sports and violence exposure.

Variable		Frequency	Percent(%)	Mean±Sd	P value
Status of doing sports regularly	Doing sports	294	64.1	46.65±10.36	.206
	Not doing sports	165	35.9	45.34±11.11	
Are those doing sports regularly licensed	Yes	192	41.8	47.58±10.41	.016
	No	267	59	45.17±10.72	
The number of years doing sports being licensed	1-3	95	20.7	45.74±10.53	.031
	4-6	67	14.6	45.71±10.54	
	7-9	34	7.4	49.35±9.49	
	10-12	13	2.8	54.61±9.05	
	13-15	1	.2	44±-	
	15 and over	1	.2	63±-	
	School success	Fail	25	5.4	
Pass		84	18.3	45.90±10.94	
Average		183	39.9	45.42±10.17	
Good		124	27.0	46.67±11.30	
Very Good		43	9.4	49.11±9.98	

Table 2. Cont'd

Status of exposure to violence	Yes	166	36.2	49.00±11.43	<b>.000</b>
	No	293	63.8	44.59±9.84	
Type of violence exposure	Physical	62	37.3 (13.5)	50.64±12.21	<b>.016</b>
	Psychological	96	57.8 (20.9)	47.22±10.36	
	Both physical and psychological	8	4.8 (1.7)	57.62±13.08	

being licensed led to an increase in violence tendency scores, it was thought that performance of non-competitive social and sports activities in schools was important in prevention of violence tendency.

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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