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*Full Length Research Paper*

# Experience of Violence Victimization and Perpetration in Youth's. Factors Associated With Violence Perpetration

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The study assessed exposure to violence, the perpetration of violence, and factors affecting the perpetration of violence. The study was designed a descriptive and cross-sectional self-report survey. A total of 442 university students (female=346, male= 96) have participated in the study. In this study, 26.9% (n =119) of the youth were exposed to some type of violence, 22% (n=101) of youth had used violence, and 16.5% (n =73) of the youth believe that there might be a reasonable excuse for use of violence. It was determined that strong predictors of the perpetration of violence include a "Belief in reasonable excuses for use of violence", "Exposure to violence", "Alcohol usage", "Watching sports programs on TV", "Primary school graduates or less educated mother", and etc. According to results, the most important risk factors associated with violence perpetration included "Belief in reasonable excuses for use of violence" and "Exposure to violence".

**Keywords:** violence, youth, factors according with violence perpetration,

## INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either resulting in or has a likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation". One point six million people die from violence, and more suffer from violence every day across the world (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, and Lozano, 2002). As violence affects all age groups, youths between the ages of twelve and

twenty-four are more likely to be victims of violent crimes compared to persons of other ages and are especially vulnerable to the consequences because adolescence is the life period when socialization mostly occurs (Krug et al., 2002). Exposure to violence or use of violence by a person under 25 is defined as youth violence by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (CDC, 2000).

How young people learn violent behaviors can be explained by social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). According to the theory, youths learn violent behaviors through observation or media. In this way, violent behaviors are transmitted to the next generation. Studies have shown that exposure to violence increases the use of violence and that people who were exposed to or

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witnessed family violence in childhood are more likely to use violence toward their spouses and children (McKinney, Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, and Nelson, 2009; Riggs, Caulfield, and Street, 2000; Shaffer and Ruback 2002). A study in Turkey reported that women who were exposed to violence were also exposed to violence during their childhood and that these women used violence toward their children (Yildirim, 1998).

In Turkey, violence has been accepted as a public health issue by the Health Ministry, and projects are being applied to reduce violence. However, few studies related to youth violence in Turkey have been conducted. The studies in the literature mostly investigated exposure to violence and factors affecting exposure to violence. However, perpetration of violence, and factors leading to the perpetration of violence have not been addressed. Understanding youth's the factor associated with perpetration violence will guide policies aimed at preventing violence. The study assessed exposure to violence, the perpetration of violence, and factors affecting the perpetration of violence.

This study focused on two questions. The first question was "Have youths experienced different types of violence?" and second question was "What is the factors associated with perpetration violence?".

## **METHOD**

### **Study Design**

The study was applied in a descriptive and cross-sectional self-report survey.

### **Participants**

The study was conducted at a state university (Istanbul, Turkey). The study population included all youths residing on the university's campus. Six hundred thirty-one randomly selected youths were invited to join the study, and 442 who volunteered to participate were included. The participation rate was 70%. One hundred and eighty-nine youths did not participate for various reasons such as lack of time, shyness, or neglect.

Among the 442 youths who participated in the study, 78.3% (n=346) were female, 21.7% (n=96) were male, and the mean age was  $20.4 \pm 1.9$  (n=442). Fifty percent (n=221) were majoring in medicine, 26.2% (n=116) were majoring in law, 37.3% (n=165) were in their third year of university, and 24.7% (n=109) were in their first year.

In addition, 49.1% (n=217) of the students' mothers and 28.3% (n=125) of their fathers graduated from primary school students (a total of five years of education) or less

educated. The ratio of having a university education was 16.1% (n=71) for mothers and 33% (n=146) for fathers, and 89.1% (n=349) of the students' parents lived together. The alcohol use rate was 7.9% (n=36). The most frequently watched TV programs were news (66.1%, n=294), Turkish series (61.8%, n=27), and international series (52.6%, n=232), and 21.3% (n=94) watched sport programs.

### **Data collection**

Data were collected with a questionnaires developed by the researchers. The questionnaire included three sections. The first section consisted of eight questions regarding the respondents' demographic and habits. The second section consisted of seven questions regarding the respondents' exposure to violence. The third section consisted of four questions regarding the respondents' use of violence.

Data were collected using the self-report technique in which a single questionnaire form was completed once by the respondent and was returned to the researcher. Completing the questionnaire took 15 minutes on average.

### **Data analyses**

Data analyses were carried out using the Statistical Software Package for the Social Science (SPSS), version 14.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, means and standard deviations were used to describe the sample and main variables. Young's exposure and perpetration of violence were classified as physical, verbal, and emotional violence according to their responses. Logistic regression analysis was performed for factors that affect the perpetration of violence.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Written permission was provided by the university to conduct the study. Additionally, the youths were informed about the aim of the study, issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, and consent were explained, and written consent was given by the volunteers.

## **RESULTS**

In this study, 16.5% (n = 73 / 442) of youths believe that there might be a reasonable excuse to use of violence. Table 1 presents reasonable excuses for use of violence

**Table 1.** Youth's Reasonable Excuses for Use of Violence

	n	%
Unable to control their anger due to extreme provocation / Self-defense.	34	46.6
Disciplining children and women	32	43.8
Asking for justice in conditions where laws become insufficient.	7	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2.** Characteristics of Reported Violence of Youth's (n=119)

Variables	n	%
<b>Exposure to any kind of violence<sup>a</sup></b>		
Physical violence	109	91.6
Verbal violence	16	13.4
Emotional violence	14	11.8
<b>Frequency of being exposed to violence</b>	108	90.8
Seldom	11	9.2
Often		
<b>The period of exposure to violence</b>		
Primary school	59	49.6
High school	37	31.1
University	7	5.8
Unanswered	6	5.5
<b>People who used violence<sup>a</sup></b>		
Mother	46	38.6
Father	45	37.8
Teacher	38	31.9
Friend	42	35.3

<sup>a</sup>More than one response has been provided.

according to the youth's opinions.

### Youth's exposure to violence

Of the study participants, 26.9% (n=119 / 442) had been exposed some type of violence. The exposure to some type of violence ratio was 24.3% (n=84 / 346) for women and 36.5% (n=35 / 96) for men. The age range of first-time exposure to violence was between 3 and 21. The mean age for first-time exposure to violence was  $9.7 \pm 4.1$  (n=119) years. Table 2 presents, exposure to any kind of violence, frequency of being exposed to violence, the period of exposure to violence, people who used violence.

Among youths who were exposed to violence, 37% (n=44) reported that "They felt angry, stressed, did not deserve it, unwillingness to go home and school, hatred of life and wanting to die," 29.4% (n=35) reported that

"They felt guilt, shame, unhappiness, tearfulness, pain, and regret," 28.6% (n=34) reported that "They felt humiliated and worthless (low self-esteem, defenselessness and incapability, weakness, withdrawal, feeling alone)," 10.1% (n=12) reported that "They felt fear and pressure," and 28.5% (n=34) reported "They wanted to get revenge."

### Youth's perpetration of violence and effective factors of perpetration of violence

The ratio of perpetration of violence among youth was 22.9% (n=101 / 442). When considering the types of violence, the respondents mostly use physical (93.1%, n=94) and verbal (12.9%, n=13) violence. Of the respondents 67.31% (n=68) "I used violence because I got angry with the person," and 21.8% (n=22) "I used violence to defend myself" explained. The ratio of using

**Table 3.** Logistic Regression Analysis For Risk Factors Associated With Violence Perpetration (n=442)

Variables	OR <sup>a</sup>	95 % CI	p - value
Belief in reasonable excuses for use of violence	5.1	2.5 - 10.3	<b>p = .000</b>
Exposure to Violence	4.1	1.9 - 9.2	<b>p = .000</b>
Exposure to father's violence	2.3	.94 - 5.6	p = .06
Alcohol usage	2	.71 - 6	p = .18
Exposure to teacher's violence	1.8	.68 - 4.8	p = .23
Exposure to mother's violence	1.7	.70 - 4.2	p = .23
Watching Sport Programs on TV	1.5	.79 - 3.16	p = .22
Primary school graduates or less educated mother	1.4	.73 - 2.68	p = .31

<sup>a</sup> An odds ratio greater than 1.0 indicates the variable is higher among youth perpetrating violence.

**OR:** Odds Ratio, **CI:** Confidence Interval

violence for jealousy and to get something by force was 8.9% (n=9). Most frequently, the students were violent toward siblings, cousins, and nephews (57.4%, n=58); 28.7% (n=29) were violent toward friends, and 7.9% (n=8) were violent toward their mothers.

In the result of this study it was found that risk factors associated with violence perpetration; belief in reasonable excuses for use of violence (OR: 5.1), exposure to violence (OR: 4.1), alcohol usage (OR: 2), exposure to father's violence (OR: 2.3), exposure to teacher's violence (OR: 1.8), exposure to mother's violence (OR: 1.7); watching sports programs on television (TV) (OR: 1.5), and primary school graduates or less educated mother (OR: 1.4) (Table 3).

## DISCUSSION

In this study, youth's exposure to violence, perpetration of violence, and the factors affecting perpetration of violence were investigated.

According to this study, some youths (16.5%, n=73) believed that there might be reasonable excuses to use violence as indicated in Quinn, Bell-Ellison, Loomis, and Tucci (2007) study. A significant number of students stated that violence results from psychological problems and distrust among individuals, and that individuals use violence because they are unable to control their anger. Herrman and Silverstain (2012) obtained similar findings. These findings indicate the need to teach individuals how to cope with anger in eliminating violence.

In Şahin, Dişsiz, Sömek, and Dinç (2008) study, "Use of violence toward a woman is acceptable" was reported with a higher rate than our findings. The difference is due to the study samples. The belief that there are reasonable excuses for use of violence is an important finding showing that violence is being internalized. In our findings, many youths believed that violence can be used to discipline children and women. Similar findings were

obtained in other studies (Hıdıroğlu, Topuzoğlu, Ay, and Karavuş, 2006; Şahin et al., 2008; Yiğitalp, Ertem, and Özkaynak, 2007). Similarly, in Muhammad and Uysal's (2008) research, youths stated that if a woman cheated and didn't obey her husband she should be beaten as this would make her a better woman. According to National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey (The Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Directorate General on the Status of Women, 2009), incidence of violence, including sexual and domestic abuse against women and girls, varies widely across the population in Turkey. In the same study, 24.7 % of women believe that burning the food, disagreeing with their husband, spending money irresponsibly, neglecting child care, or refusing sexual intercourse might create a legitimate reason for husbands to beat their wives. These results show that in Turkish culture youths and woman consider violence an enforcement tool and that violence is tolerated by society. In Turkey, these ideas should be considered when developing projects related to reducing violence.

According to this study, youths are exposed to violence at a significantly high rate. While this ratio was higher than what Okour and Hijazi (2009) reported (11.9%), it was similar to Ergönen et al. (2006) research finding (29%). The difference between the studies might result from social differences.

Similar to other studies (Hanson et al., 2008; McKinney et al., 2009; Sünter, Canbaz, Dündar, Dabak, and Peşken, 2010), in this study men were exposed to violence more than women. Higher exposure to violence for men than women might be related to the higher rate of societal violence for men or the use of physical violence as a male punishment method in families. The ratio of exposure to violence is lower for male and female youths compared to other study findings (McKinney et al., 2009). This difference might be because youths might avoid reporting their exposure to violence. Youths may not remember their exposure to violence.

Another important finding is that the mean age of first exposure to violence is nine, which is also the beginning of adolescence. Adolescence is the developmental period during which individuals experience important physical and psychological changes. Exposure to violence during this period might lead children to accept violence as a normal and acceptable behavior and to convert violence into behavior. Exposure to violence might create issues such as drug use, anxiety, depression (Goldstein, Walton, Cunningham, Trowbridge, and Maio, 2007; Hanson et al., 2009; Sarah, Laurissa, Niti, and Chiara, 2011; Vahip and Doğanavşargil, 2006), posttraumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, hopelessness (Fields and McNamara, 2003; Hanson et al., 2009), and suicide (Vahip and Doğanavşargil, 2006) in later years for youths.

In this study, youths were exposed to physical violence (beating, brute force, hair pulling) most (91.6%, n=109) followed by verbal violence (13.4%, n=16) and emotional violence (11.8%, n=14). Similar studies conducted in Turkey reported that the exposure to physical violence rate during childhood was 38% to 62.8% (Ergönen et al., 2006), the verbal violence exposure rate was 46% to 80.2% (Ergönen et al., 2006; Kaya, Güneş, Kaya, and Pehlivan, 2004) and the emotional violence exposure rate was 23.7% for women and 20.5% for men (Yiğitalp et al., 2007).

Black et al. (2009) and McKinney et al. (2009) reported that youths were commonly exposed to violence. Leitenberg, Gibson, and Novy (2004) reported a physical violence exposure rate for youths of 18% and a sexual violence exposure rate of 11%. Some young people stated that they had been exposed to more than one type of violence. None of the youth discussed sexual abuse. Sexual violence was not reported by our participants. Yiğitalp et al. (2007) also observed that sexual violence was not reported by their subjects. However, according to National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey (The Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Directorate General on the Status of Women, 2009) the sexual abuse rate was 7% for women under 15 years. The fact that sexual violence was not reported by male or female participants does not mean that sexual violence was experienced. It may be that participants avoided reporting it.

In the present study, similar to other studies youths were exposed to violence through mostly mothers, fathers (Ergönen et al., 2006; Hıdıroğlu et al., 2006; Sternberg, Lamb, Guterman, Abbott, and Dawud-Noursi, 2005; Sünter et al., 2010; Tunçel, DüNDAR, and Peşken, 2007; Yiğitalp et al., 2007), friends, and teachers (Alikaşifoğlu et al., 2004; Sünter et al., 2010; Yiğitalp et al., 2007). Şahin et al. (2008) observed in their study that

11.4% of individuals with children used violence toward their children.

Youth's exposure to violence in the family, the most secure environment, and by the closest people (mother, father), is a tragic situation that should be considered. Mothers and fathers use violence because they don't know how to cope with their children's problems during their developmental periods, because they use violence as a discipline method, and because they reflect violence to their children in a legal context (Kocacık, Kutlar, and Erselcan, 2007; Vahip and Doğanavşargil, 2006).

Exposure to violence perpetrated by teachers was also found by Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu (2005). This finding shows that violence is being used in the education system. They reported that violence used by teachers toward youths lead youths to develop negative attitudes to teachers, learning, class and class objects, to be unsuccessful, passive, shy, to drop out of classes and school, and to reduce "self" and "worthiness" concepts about themselves (Hatunoğlu and Hatunoğlu, 2005).

Exposure to violence has a negative impact on youths (Sünter et al., 2010). In this study, youths developed negative feelings as a response to violence such as anger, stress, hatred toward life and considered suicide, shame, unhappiness, and weakness. Different from other studies, in our study youths (27.7%, n=33) wanted to get revenge on the person who used violence toward the individuals. This finding shows that youths try to cope with anger that they felt as a response to their experiences by using violence.

Similar to other research finding ratios (Herrera, Wiersma, and Cleveland, 2008), the frequency of violence use ratio among youths is not low (22.9%). The result indicated that youths used physical violence most and reported their reasoning as "I used violence because I got angry / I wanted to defend myself," similar to what Quinn et al. (2007) found in their study. Youths use violence mostly toward their siblings, cousins, and friends. Youths direct violent behavior they learned from their family and environment as indicated by social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Kocacık et al., 2007; Turla, 2006). Men who are exposed to violence or witnessed violence tend to use violence more (Herrera et al., 2008; McKinney et al., 2009; Riggs et al., 2000; Shaffer and Ruback, 2002)

This findings differ from the current literature in that our respondents believed that there might be reasonable excuses for use of violence, exposure to violence, alcohol usage, exposure to father's violence, exposure to teacher's violence, exposure to mother's violence, watching sports programs on TV, and primary school graduates or less educated mother have used more violence (OR: 1.4–5.1). These findings are a significant

contribution to the literature.

The factors that affect the use of violence show that the transfer of violence from generation to generation in our society is an important indicator. Youth who think there are reasonable excuses for use of violence, such as exposure to violence perpetrated by their father, mother, or teacher, might internalize the use of violence while using it. In addition, these findings reveal that children of mothers with less education use more violence. These findings show that no matter how educated, a youth's opinions of violence are not different from the community.

## CONCLUSIONS

In our study, it was obvious that among the youth, the perpetration, victimization of violence were not different from the society in which they live. Although they were university students, their belief related to the justifiability of violence, justifying the use of violence for disciplining children and women, are similar to traditional views and attitudes. Young people should play an important role in developing a culture with no violence. To reduce violence in our society, anti-violence training should be given to young people at every stage of their education, and youths should be used as agents of change. In our study, the youth were frequently exposed to violence during their schooling and in the family. Thus, parents and teachers responsible for the violence should be identified and undergo rehabilitation. To identify youths with the potential for perpetrating violence, the risk factors identified in our study should be used.

To reduce the prevalence of the phenomenon of violence widespread in our country and in the world, universities, governments, and international and national non-government organizations should raise awareness, provide information and be pioneers on issues related to decreasing violence.

## LIMITATIONS

Limitation of this study are the low male participation rate, the single campus, and lack of response to some questions.

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