

VIOLENCE EXPERIENCE AND RELATION OF RISK-PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RECEIVING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Running head: Youth violence

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ABSTRACT

Violence is complex problem that affect all groups in the society.1260 students receiving vocational education in university were interviewed in this study. It was found that male students are exposed to and commit more violence over the course of education in comparison to female students. Male students' exposure to/engagement in violence in primary school and high school is significantly higher than female students. It is a remarkable finding of the study that those who commit and are exposed violence are successful students. Approximately half of the students smoke and drink alcohol. Majority of the participants contribute positively to the resolution of problems by sharing their problems with their families and friends. Approximately 1/3 of students who are exposed to and commit violence in university would consider applying to a violence bureau if there was any in their universities.

Keywords: Violence, vocational education, academic performance, university students

INTRODUCTION

Youth violence refers to harmful behaviors that can start early and continue into young adulthood. Risk factors for youth violence include: Prior history of violence, drug, alcohol, or

tobacco use, association with delinquent peers, poor family functioning, poor grades in school, poverty in the community (<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/YV-FactSheet-a.pdf> ET:13.01.2011). Emotional and physical violence victimization, whether from intimate partners, family members, friends, acquaintances, employers, or even relative strangers, can have significant negative health and psychosocial sequel for adolescents and young adults, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, poor school performance, and repeat victimization (Olshen 2007, DuRant 2007)

McGee and Baker (2002) expressed that a strong association between victimization experience and adjustment outcomes including internalizing (i.e. self-rejection, depression) and externalizing (i.e. of fences) problem behavior among African American youth. The results also suggest a linkage between victimization and avoidance as a coping strategy. With regard to gender differences, the findings indicate a greater influence of victimization on offenses, self-rejection, and avoidance among men and a stronger influence of victimization on depression among women in the sample.

A number of studies explore gender-specific violence exposure for either women alone (Katz 2008, Parks 2004) or men alone (Miller 2006, Lundeberg 2004), although women-only studies often focus on victimization, whereas men-only studies have more often focused on perpetration. A few studies offer gender comparisons of violence victimization (Forke 2008, Harned 2002, Hamberger 2005), although not always with university students (Hamberger 2005). The overall prevalence of violence (students who stated they participated in violent actions that occurred in university campus among students) at the three universities was 11.9% (Okour & Hijaze 2009).

Social problems increased the risk of becoming a victim or a victim-perpetrator, and these associations disappeared when baseline bullying status was adjusted. Ten months later, individuals who were victims at baseline showed increased risk of social problems, those who were perpetrators had increased aggression, and victim perpetrators had increased aggression and externalizing problems (Kim et al.2006).

Although there are studies related to youth violence in Turkey, they are not at national but at regional level. However, youth violence tends to increase in the news published in the press. Physical exposure to violence among university students was found to be 6.2-39.5% in female students and 7.9-31.7% in male students (Dağlı 2009), whereas emotional violence was found to be 23.7-62.4% in female students and 20.5-51.4% in male students (Ergonen et al. 2006, Dağlı 2009). 3.5% of female students and 4% of male students reported that they had been exposed to sexual violence in the last 1 year (Dağlı 2009). Lifelong exposure to physical violence in both genders was found to be 27% (Mayda et al. 2006).

Particularly in the recent years, there have been few studies conducted on the increasing severity of violence as a problem, variety of factors affecting violence, impact of violence on all periods from childhood to adulthood and even men's exposure to violence (Pinar & Algier 2006, Forke et al. 2008, Dağlı 2009, Krebs et al. 2009, Chen and Astor 2010). Thus, this study was planned to identify the level of violence suffered in primary school, high school and university by university students receiving vocational education the level of violence they committed against other people/groups as well as risk factors, protective factors and the relation between gender and violence. Furthermore, the relation between committing and exposure to violence in university and academic performance, approval of violence and call for help was examined.

METHODS

Participants

Population of the study is 5426 students registered in Vocational School of Technical Sciences (2476 students) and Vocational School of Social Sciences (2950 students) at Akdeniz University in the spring term of the academic year of 2009-2010. No sample was selected in the study, because the whole population was set as the target. However, the sample of the study consisted of 1260 students due to reasons such missing data in the questionnaire, refusal to participate in the study, and absence from school.

Procedure

The data were collected by way of questionnaire formed by the reviewing of relevant literature by the researchers. The questionnaire consists of questions inquiring about the demographic information and violence exposure or committing experiences of the students. Permission for the participation of the students was obtained from the deans. Before testing, an introductory statement was read to the students by the researcher to outline the purpose of the study, aspects of confidentiality, and to attain consent. The forms were distributed to all of the students who were willing to participate. Respondents were assured of anonymity and were encouraged to respond truthfully. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. The students completed the forms alone without indicating their names on the forms. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 20.0 with a significance level of .05.

RESULTS

The participants were 1260 undergraduate students (516 female, 744 male) and 983 of them were studying in the Vocational School of Social Sciences, 277 of them in the Vocational School of Technical Sciences at Akdeniz University. 67.8% of them were successful in their university education (academic achievement score ≥ 2.1) (Table 1).

Table 1. Some Characteristics of the Participants (N=1260)

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	516	41.0
Male	744	59.0
School		
Vocational School of Social Sciences	983	78.0
Vocational School of Technical Sciences	277	22.0
Academic performance		
Poor	153	12.1
Moderate	253	20.1
Good	471	37.4
Very good	383	30.4

48.8% of the participants smoked and 53.7% of the students drank. 5.6% of the students had a psychiatric illness diagnosis. 22.0% of the students had a drug addicted friend. 26.3% of the students carried cutters, 13.6% of them carried firearms. 5.8% of the students had a family member convicted of any crime. 89.0% of the students did not approve violence (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Violence Risk Factors

Risk Factors	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Smoking	615	48.8	645	51.2
Drinking	676	53.7	584	46.3
Being diagnosed with a psychiatric illness	71	5.6	1189	94.4
Having a drug-addicted friend	277	22.0	983	78.0
Carrying cutting tools	332	26.3	928	73.7
Carrying firearms	171	13.6	1089	86.4

Carrying protective tools	301	23.9	959	76.1
Presence of interparental conflict	111	8.8	1149	91.2
Conviction of a member of the family	73	5.8	1187	94.2
Receiving disciplinary punishment in university	151	12.0	1109	88.0
Approval of violence	139	11.0	1121	89.0

86.5% stated that they participated in sport activities, 25% listened to music, 96.3% went to cinema, and 69.6% read books. According to what they reported, 70.7% shared their problems with their family and 76.6% shared with their friends. 26.7% of the students stated that they could resort to a violence office if there was any in their university (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of Violence-Protective Factors

Protective Factors	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Engagement in sports	1090	86.5	170	13.5
Listening to music	315	25.0	945	75.0
Going to the cinema	1213	96.3	47	3.7
Reading books	877	69.6	383	30.4
Reading newspapers/magazines	782	62.1	478	37.9
Sharing problems with the family	891	70.7	369	29.3
Sharing problems with friends	965	76.6	295	23.4
Applying to a violence office if any	337	26.7	923	73.3

Participating students' exposure to and engagement in violence over the course of their education by their genders are indicated in Table 4. No significant difference was found between female and male students in terms of exposure to emotional violence, committing emotional violence, and exposure to sexual violence in primary school, high school and university as well as exposure to and engagement in physical violence in university. Exposure to (31.7%, 25.9% in males; 24.2%, 11.2% in females, respectively) and engagement in (43.1%, 40.3% in males; 34.7%, 22.7% in females, respectively) physical violence in primary school and high school are significantly higher in male students as compared to female students ($p < 0.01$). Committing sexual violence in primary school, high school and university is significantly higher in males as compared to females (7.4%, 13.4%, 8.5% in males; 1.9%, 1.2%, 1.9% in females) ($p < 0.01$).

Table 4. Students' Exposure to and Engagement in Acts of Violence by Their Genders

	<i>Gender</i>				<i>Gender</i>			
	Female F (%)*	Male F (%)*	X ²	p	Female F (%)*	Male F (%)*	X ²	p
	<i>Exposure to physical violence</i>				<i>Committing physical violence</i>			
<i>Primary school</i>								
Yes	125 (24.2)	236 (31.7)	8.374	0.004	179 (34.7)	321 (43.1)	9.100	0.003
No	391 (75.8)	508 (68.3)			337 (65.3)	423 (56.9)		
<i>High school</i>								
Yes	58 (11.2)	193 (25.9)	41.276	0.000	117 (22.7)	300 (40.3)	42.858	0.000
No	458 (88.8)	551 (74.1)			399 (77.3)	444 (59.7)		
<i>University</i>								
Yes	42 (8.1)	51 (6.9)	0.736	0.391	59 (11.4)	106 (14.2)	2.119	0.145
No	474 (91.9)	693 (93.1)			457 (88.6)	638 (85.8)		
	<i>Exposure to emotional violence</i>				<i>Committing emotional violence</i>			
<i>Primary school</i>								
Yes	126 (24.4)	170 (22.8)	0.417	0.518	159 (30.8)	264 (35.5)	2.980	0.084
No	390 (75.6)	574 (77.2)			357 (69.2)	480 (64.5)		
<i>High school</i>								
Yes	103 (20.0)	149 (20.0)	0.001	0.977	139 (26.9)	226 (30.4)	1.751	0.186
No	413 (80.0)	595 (80.0)			377 (73.1)	518 (69.6)		
<i>University</i>								
Yes	74 (14.3)	91 (12.2)	1.192	0.275	102 (19.8)	131 (17.6)	0.943	0.331
No	442 (85.7)	653 (87.8)			414 (80.2)	613 (82.4)		

	<i>Exposure to sexual violence</i>				<i>Committing sexual violence</i>			
<i>Primary school</i>								
Yes	20 (3.9)	28 (3.8)	0.011	0.918	10 (1.9)	55 (7.4)	18.528	0.000
No	496 (96.1)	716 (96.2)			506 (98.1)	689 (92.6)		
<i>High school</i>								
Yes	26 (5.0)	46 (6.2)	0.740	0.390	6 (1.2)	100 (13.4)	59.613	0.000
No	490 (95.0)	698 (93.8)			510 (98.8)	644 (86.6)		
<i>University</i>								
Yes	34 (6.6)	34 (4.6)	2.433	0.119	10 (1.9)	63 (8.5)	23.802	0.000
No	482 (93.4)	710 (95.4)			506 (98.1)	681 (91.5)		

* Percentages are column percentages.

When the academic performance of students who were exposed to violence is compared to their exposure to violence, it is found that the ratio of students with good academic performance is higher among students who were exposed to violence, but this difference is not statistically significant. It was found that 40.2% of those who were exposed to physical violence, 36% of those who were exposed to emotional violence, and 40.3% of those who were exposed to sexual violence had a good academic performance. Likewise, it was found that the ratio of students with a good academic performance was higher among students who committed violence (39.9% physical violence, 37% emotional violence, 39.7% sexual violence). However, it was also found in the statistical analysis that there was a significant difference only between engagement in sexual violence and academic performance ($p < 0.01$) (Table 5).

Table 5: Students' Exposure to and Engagement in Acts of Violence in University by Their Academic Performance

	Academic Performance				X ²	p
	Poor	Moderate	Good	Very Good		
Exposure to Physical Violence						
Yes	10 (10.9)	22 (23.9)	37 (40.2)	23 (25.0)	2.024	0.568
No	143 (12.2)	231 (19.8)	434 (37.2)	360 (30.8)		
Exposure to Emotional Violence						
Yes	14 (8.5)	33 (20.1)	59 (36.0)	58 (35.4)	3.651	0.302
No	139 (12.0)	220 (18.9)	412 (35.4)	325 (33.7)		
Exposure to Sexual Violence						
Yes	4 (6.0)	13(19.4)	27 (40.3)	23 (34.3)	2.758	0.431
No	149 (12.5)	240 (20.1)	444 (37.2)	360 (30.2)		
Committing Physical Violence						
Yes	15 (9.2)	40 (24.5)	65 (39.9)	43 (26.4)	4.494	0.213
No	138 (12.6)	213 (19.4)	406 (37.0)	340 (31)		
Committing Emotional Violence						
Yes	23 (10.0)	50 (21.7)	85 (37.0)	72 (31.3)	1.540	0.673
No	130 (12.6)	203 (19.7)	386 (37.5)	311 (30.2)		
Committing Sexual Violence						
Yes	9 (12.3)	24 (32.9)	29 (39.7)	11 (15.1)	12.426	0.006
No	144 (12.1)	229 (19.3)	442 (37.2)	372 (31.4)		

13.2% of those who were exposed to physical violence, 10.8% of those who were exposed to emotional violence and 6.1% of those who were exposed to sexual violence in university approve violence. No significant difference was found between exposure to violence in university and approval of violence. However, a statistically significant difference was found between committing physical, emotional and sexual violence in university and approval of violence ($p < 0.05$) (Table 6).

Table 6. Students' Exposure to and Engagement in Acts of Violence by Their Approval of Violence and Willingness to Apply to a Violence Office

	Approving violence					Willing to apply to a violence office			
	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Once in a while F (%)	X ²	p	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	X ²	p
Exposure to Physical Violence									
Yes	12 (13.2)	78 (85.7)	1 (1.1)	4.132	0.127	29 (32.6)	60 (67.4)	1.715	0.190
No	91 (7.8)	1044 (89.3)	34 (2.9)			307 (26.2)	864 (73.8)		
Exposure to Emotional Violence									
Yes	17 (10.8)	136 (86.0)	5 (3.2)	1.753	0.416	49 (29.9)	115 (70.1)	0.994	0.319
No	86 (7.8)	986 (89.5)	30 (2.7)			287 (26.2)	809 (73.8)		
Exposure to Sexual Violence									
Yes	4 (6.1)	61 (92.4)	1 (1.5)	0.870	0.647	23 (33.3)	46 (66.7)	1.659	0.198
No	99 (8.3)	1061 (88.9)	34 (2.8)			313 (26.3)	878 (73.7)		
Committing Physical Violence									
Yes	30 (18.5)	129 (79.6)	3 (1.9)	26.758	0.000	46 (28.4)	116 (71.6)	0.284	0.594
No	73 (6.6)	993 (90.5)	32 (2.9)			290 (26.4)	808 (73.6)		
Committing Emotional Violence									
Yes	28 (12.2)	192 (83.5)	10 (4.3)	8.982	0.011	68 (29.6)	162 (70.4)	1.209	0.272
No	75 (7.3)	930 (90.3)	25 (2.4)			268 (26.0)	762 (74.0)		
Committing Sexual Violence									
Yes	12 (16.7)	57 (79.1)	3 (4.2)	8.104	0.017	21 (29.2)	51 (70.8)	0.244	0.621

No	91	1065	32	315	873
	(7.7)	(89.6)	(2.7)	(26.5)	(73.5)

32.6% of those who were exposed to physical violence, 29.9% of those who were exposed to emotional violence in university and 33.3% of those who were exposed to sexual violence in university would consider resorting to a violence office if there was any in the university. 28.4% of those who committed physical violence, 29.6% of those who committed emotional violence and 29.2% of those who committed sexual violence in university would consider resorting to a violence office if there was any in the university. No significant difference was found between exposure to and engagement in violence and those who would consider resorting to a violence office (Table 6).

DISCUSSION

The study determines the violence experiences of students receiving two-year vocational education in previous education periods and in university. Approximately half of the participants smoke and drink alcohol (Table 2). Some study results indicate that student who drink alcohol and/or smoke tobacco are more likely to engage in violent behavior in school (Chen & Astor 2010, Philpart et al. 2009, Saewyc et al. 2009). This finding may be associated with exposure to or engagement in violence.

26.3% of the students carried cutters and 13.6 of them carried firearms. According to Dağlı (2009), male students who carry cutters and firearms, and witnessed and were exposed to violence in childhood commit more violence as compared to other males. In the logistic regression analysis, the most important risk factors for committing physical violence were found to be carrying cutting tools, having a drug-addicted friend, absence from school and violence history in childhood. It is thought that carrying firearms and cutting tools poses a risk in terms of engagement in or exposure to violence.

In this study, 86.5% of the participants stated that they engaged in sport activities, 25.0% listened to music, 96.3% went to cinema, and 69.6% read books. Likewise, Dağlı's study (2009) indicates that a great majority of the youth participate in social activities, share their problems with their friends and have some hobbies. Although engagement in sports is a protective factor, male students who engage in sports committed more physical and sexual violence. The reason for this may be that those who believe they have bodily power resort to violence more easily or that those who desire to demonstrate their bodily power engage in continuous sport activities in order to maintain this power. Therefore, positive impact of protective factors may have been not identified.

According to what they report, 70.7% of students shared their problems with their family and 76.6% shared with their friends (Table 3). In his study, Dağlı (2009) states that even listening to the problems of the children in a family is effective in protection from violence. It may be said that family support is exceptionally important in protection from violence. In a study conducted by Can (2007), students were asked to answer whether they would report to their family if they were exposed to violence in school. In such case, 50% of students state that they would always report the incident to their family, whereas 16.5% state that they would never inform their family of the incident. Moffit (1993) claims that low levels of problem-solving skill and inadequacy in areas of social skills are associated with low levels of verbal intelligence. What underlie the acceptance of violent behavior as a problem-solving behavior are reasons such as the individuals having a problematic family life, communicating with problematic peer groups, or being influenced from mass media as well as the erosion of traditional structures and values of individuals by the modernization process (Kızmaz 2006). It was found that students in primary, secondary and higher education resort to various forms of violence to resolve the problems between them (Sanger et al.2007). Students sharing their problems with their families to a large extent in this study make one infer that they exhibit positive behavior in seeking solutions for their problems.

It is one of the unexpected findings of the study that those who exert violence also approve it (Table 6). It becomes unavoidable for young people who are exposed to or witness violence in the family or school environment and perceive violence as a normal pattern of behavior to resort to violence when faced with anger (Mayda et al. 2006). When the engagement in violence is accepted, the young person regards it as a normal pattern of behavior.

No significant difference was found between male and female students in terms of exposure to emotional and sexual violence in primary school, high school and university, and exposure to physical violence in university. Exposure to physical violence in primary school and high school is significantly higher in male students as compared to female students (Table 4). In his study, Dağlı(2009) found that 39.5% of female students and 31.7% of male students had been exposed to physical violence, and 62.4% of female students and 51.4% of male students had been exposed to emotional violence in the last 1 year. In another study conducted with university students, the ratios of female and male students who stated that they had been exposed to emotional violence are 23.7% and 20.5%, respectively (Yigitalp, Ertem, Ozkaynak, 2007). In his study, Dağlı (2009) represents that 3.5% of female students and 4% of male students were exposed to sexual violence in the last 1 year. Nearly 17% of students reported committing acts of sexual violence against a female friend during the current academic year (Philpart et al. 2009). Saewyc and colleagues (2009) stated that an equal percent of men as women reported violence exposure in the past 6 months among university students. However, the type of violence differed

between genders; women were significantly more likely to report emotional abuse, whereas men reported higher prevalence of physical abuse. The reason for male students' exposure to physical violence during high school may be associated with the tendency of males to take risks and chances at such ages. Especially the adolescence period is the period in which the individual is less tolerant of frustration; anxiety and fear are more intensive, and in which the individual has difficulty in controlling his/her negative feelings.

Björklund and colleagues (2010) found that as a whole, men reported experiencing both more violence and threats, compared to female victims. Furthermore, almost one third of the students reported experiencing more serious forms of physical violence, and 5.3% reported sexual violence/attempting sexual violence. Male respondents reported significantly more violence compared to female respondents regarding almost all types of violence. These findings are consistent with the findings of our study.

On the contrary, Dağlı (2009) states in his study that female students were more exposed to physical and emotional violence in the past 1 year as compared to male students.

No significant difference was found between female and male students in terms of committing physical and emotional violence in primary school, high school and university and committing physical violence in university. Committing physical violence in primary school and high school is significantly higher in male students as compared to female students. Committing sexual violence in primary school, high school and university is significantly higher in male students as compared to female students (Table 4). These findings we obtained may be associated with the growth and development characteristics of male students in such age groups as well patriarchal family structure (violence and gender relation). In his study, Dağlı (2009) found that the ratios of male students who committed physical violence and of female students who committed emotional violence in the last 1 year are higher as compared to the opposite gender. The high ratio of physical violence committed by male students is consistent with the findings of this study.

When the academic performance of students who were exposed to violence is compared to their exposure to violence, it is found that the ratio of students with good academic performance is higher among students who were exposed to violence, but this difference is not statistically significant. Likewise, it was found that the ratio of students with a good academic performance was higher among students who committed violence (Table 5). In the study conducted by Mayda et al. (2006), no statistically significant difference was found between university entrance score and students' exposure to or witnessing of violence. It is a remarkable finding of the study that students who commit and are exposed to violence are successful students.

13.2% of those who were exposed to physical violence, 10.8% of those who were exposed to emotional violence and 6.1% of those who were exposed to sexual violence in university approve violence. No significant difference was found between exposure to violence in university and approval of violence. However, the statistically significant difference found between committing physical, emotional and sexual violence in university and approval of violence is consistent with other findings obtained from the study (Table 6).

It was found in the study that males commit or suffer from more violence than females. It is seen that mostly young males are exposed to any form of violence. Men exposed to violence committed by other men commit violence against women. Furthermore, males often become the victims of organized or institutional forms of violence as well due to reasons such as inclusion into a group or proving oneself. Men are taught violence and also encouraged to commit it. Men are both explicitly and implicitly forced to commit cultural and political violence in various ways. Patriarchy is linked to violence in all social, cultural and legal areas, including the violence based on gender. Family, media, society and other institutions induce the learning or experiencing of violence.

Approximately 1/3 of young people who are exposed to or commit violence would consider applying to a violence office if there was any in their university (Table 6). In the study conducted by Yesildal (2009), 39.1% of female students and 33.0% of male students stated that they could resort to an application centre related to violence if there was any. It is one of the conspicuous findings of the study that students related to the matter at hand are willing to receive assistance. It is an expected course of action for all university students to receive assistance in cases of violence. However, social norms and taboos require victims of violence to keep it as a secret, which in turn leads to the constant presence and unrestrainable image of violence in our society.

CONCLUSION

Effectiveness of intervention programs depends on good definition of a etiologic factors. It is important to identify the risk factors in the society on which the study is being conducted, and to take measures to reduce such factors. It is required to have sufficient information regarding protective factors as well. Protective factors are more complex. On top of that, the maintenance of order and security and feeling safe in school is one of the most essential conditions to carry out educational activities. Students should be informed about what they should do when faced with violence and aggression, and encouraged to share it with their families and teachers. Any measure should be taken to prevent students from being harmed and regretting having talked about it when they share it with other people.

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