

# An Investigation of School Violence and School Safety Based on Opinions of High School Students and Teachers in Ankara, Turkey.

Ankara'daki Lise Öğrenci ve Öğretmenlerinin Okullarda Şiddet ve Okul Güvenliği Algısı Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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Bu çalışma Keçiören Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğüne bağlı 15 lisede 815 öğrenci ve 74 öğretmen üzerinde 'Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence' de geliştirilmiş ve Türkçe'ye uyarlanmış okullarda şiddet algısı ölçeğinin uygulanması ve değerlendirilmesiyle, bu sosyo-psikolojik olgunun demografik, coğrafi ve sosyo-psikolojik sebeplerinin irdelenmesi çalışmasıdır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: **Okul Şiddeti, Keçiören, Lise**

This study, conducted on 815 students and 74 teachers in 15 high schools within Keçiören County based on the 'Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence' survey adapted to Turkish is a report of results of perceptions towards school violence and the demographic, geographic and socio-psychological bases of this condition.

Key Words: **School Violence, Keçiören, High School**

Creating an environment for emotional and social well-being is an important responsibility of a health-promoting and child friendly school (1). Life Skills Based Education for Violence Prevention and Peace Building promotes the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural change that will enable children, youth and adults to: prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; resolve conflict peacefully; and create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level (2).

School violence is an act of violence committed within an educational facility. School violence can occur in several forms, including bullying, physical assaults, sexual assaults, gun violence, and gang violence. In recent years, incidents of school violence have grown in number and appear in higher frequencies. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 1.5 million violent incidents take place in US public schools a year, with 38%

of public schools reporting at least one or more serious violent incidents (3).

In response to the problem of school violence, a variety of programs have been introduced to help make schools safer. But the first step in implementation of prevention programs is assessment.

This study was conducted in Keçiören County of Ankara, Turkey to investigate the present situation concerning school violence to contribute to the advise to Turkish National Ministry of Education for effective programs to prevent and cope with school violence (4,5).

## Subjects and Methods

### *Study Population and Sampling:*

The study population consists of 15 schools including 13 general High Schools and 2 Anadolu High Schools ( where curriculum is educated in English language) with 21,615 students and 905 teachers working at these schools. All schools were within the administrative district of Ankara

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İletişim

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Province Keçiören County National Education Directorate. The selection of the schools were made under the permission, supervision and advise of the Directorate during the 2006-2007 academic year.

The sample was constituted on selection of 5 schools from different communities and 1 school selected randomly included among the general population of the above mentioned 15 schools. Among the students of the high schools included in the sample, 10% of the registered students (815 students in total), and 20% of the teachers (74 teachers in total) were selected as sample members. The 45 students and 10 teachers previously questioned to assess the reliability of the translated assessment tool recruited from a school other than the sampled, were finally also included in the study sample size totaling to a resultant sample size

of 860 students and 84 teachers. The students selected as sample members were included on a voluntariness base from among the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders the teachers were selected among the volunteers giving priority to those with higher lecture-hour load.

## Data Collection

### The Assessment Survey Form

During the data collection phase, different assessment survey forms were utilized for the students and teachers. For the students; a new form was established mostly based on 'The Adolescent Violence Survey' prepared by its author Kingery in 1998 (6) was used after special permission from Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence. The survey form includes 41 questions on crimes and violations, victims, carrying assault

tools and weapons and avoidance of violence behaviours, with 11 taken from 15 questions of the original of the Kingery form and 8 more included by ourselves (Cronbach's alpha: 0.95 and Pearson r:0.91)

For the teachers, another survey form again by Kingery (7) again based on the original from Hamilton Fish Institute was utilized. The form had 9 questions, 5 recruited from the original with 13 questions of 5 with interventional quests excluded and 4 added by ourselves. No reliability pre-testing was done for our translated and re-organized teacher survey.

### Data Collection Phase

The data were collected on application of the surveys to the sample members during October on 2007-2008 Academic year.

**Table 1:** The results associated with acknowledgement of teachers on the school rules as well as the implementation of these rules at school environment

	Totally Agree (1)		Agree (2)		Undecided (3)		Disagree (4)		Totally Disagree (5)		Median
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Behavioral Rules are Imposed with Power	21	25.0	40	47.6	10	11.9	11	13.1	2	2.4	2
Students Know the School Rules	14	16.7	52	61.9	7	8.3	9	10.7	2	2.4	2
No Discrimination is Applicable on Penalties due to Misobedience	28	33.3	36	42.9	14	16.7	5	6.0	1	1.2	2
Students Approve penalties due to Misobedience	12	14.3	43	51.2	15	17.9	10	11.9	4	4.8	2
Students Know the reasoning behind Penalties	9	10.7	54	64.3	9	10.7	10	11.9	2	2.4	2
Students are obedient to penalties	4	4.8	30	35.7	21	25.0	23	27.4	6	7.1	3
Teacher know school rules	43	51.2	37	44.0	-	-	2	2.4	2	2.4	1
Families support Discipline at School	1	1.2	14	16.7	23	27.4	35	41.7	11	13.1	4
Teachers self-decide on penalties	8	9.5	34	40.5	23	27.4	10	11.9	9	10.7	2.5
Penalties are given on approval by at least two superordinates	7	8.3	43	51.2	9	10.7	18	21.4	7	8.3	2
Students are respectful to school personnel	33	39.3	42	50.0	6	7.1	1	1.2	2	2.4	2
School personnel is responsible towards students	5	6.0	50	59.5	18	21.4	6	7.1	5	6.0	2
Students hide misbehaviour	25	29.8	44	52.4	10	11.9	4	4.8	1	1.2	2
Students can not express misbehaviour to authorities	3	3.6	21	25.0	19	22.6	32	38.1	9	10.7	3
School personnel can not express students treated by peers	16	19.0	25	29.8	19	22.6	20	23.8	4	4.8	3

n:84

Ethical Board Application was approved by the Ankara University, Faculty of Medicine Ethical Board and official permit was obtained from Ankara Provincial Directorate of National Education in addition to acknowledgements to each one of the school principals. The pre-test or survey reliability was performed on 45 students and 10 teachers with a repeat in one week. The questions were assessed understandable and clear after minor changes.

**Data Processing and Statistical Evaluation**

The data was obtained by face to face interview with 860 students and 84 teachers. Each resultant survey form was given a call number and entered on MS Office-Excell sheets. For the statistical evaluation SPSS for Windows 11.5 package was used. The demographic data were classified as frequency and percentages. The questions related to violence patterns were evaluated in frequencies and the questions 13-19 were evaluated as Means ± SD as descriptive statistics. For the rest of questions in the Student’s survey Chi Square, Student’s t-tests and one way ANOVAs as well as Bonferoni tests were applied. For testing the comprehensibility of each question in the student’s survey a Kappa test was employed. Results were intercorrelated with Pearson’s analysis. To correlate demographic information (educational status of parents, economical status,

ANOVA and a Cronbach alpha quotient was determined as well.

**Results**

The results associated with acknowledgement of teachers on the school rules as well as the implementation of these rules at school environment is summarized in Table 1.

The opinions of teachers on the security of the school and its surroundings is shown on Table 2.

When the average income of the families that participated to the study were considered, it was found that approximately 30% received more than 800 YTL, 21.7% received 601-800 YTL, 1.3% received 0-200 YTL per month as shown in Table 3.

The attitudes of students to self-parting in a fight are given on Table 4 and the situation of students’ related to bringing-in a harmful tool to the school within last 30 days is shown on Table 5.

Finally, the parting of students’ in a violence act in school or surroundings within last 30 days is shown on Table 6.

**Discussion**

Violence among youth is an issue of growing concern. Still, a systematic coverage of this entity at schools as integrated in the educational curricula is rare (8). Here, it is important to differenti-

do be strongly applied’, it is observed that 47,6% agreed to this statement which indicates the powered imposition of school rules on the students.

Looking at the statement; ‘Students well-know when they will be punished upon disobedience to school rules’ again 64,3% of the teachers commented on agreement. However, it was given out that, during the period April-October 2006, 6334 cases of violence at school were recorded by the Turkish National Educational Ministry (9). Also, in the United States, similar incidents were reported among secondary education attendees (10). Thus, it may be concluded that, even though, students acknowledge the school rules and the penalties related to disobedience, still they get engaged in violent acts and crimes. The etiology of this controversial finding needs to be reinvestigated.

According to a study conducted at the CDC, the insecurity feelings of the students upon this threatening environment causes absentism and this absentism to to insecurity has been suggested to be rising statistically since 1993 (11).

As seen on the results, no statistical correlation was found between the opinions of teachers towards security of schools and surroundings and the existence of cases of violence in schools (p>0.05). This may indicate that, the teachers do not seem to be bothered on the existing incidence of violence cases in school surrounds.

**Table 2:** The opinions of teachers on the security of the school and its surroundings

	Very Secure (1)		Secure (2)		Neither secure, nor insecure (3)		Insecure (4)		Very insecure (5)		Median
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Within School Building During Lecture Hours	25	29.8	46	54.8	10	11.9	2	2.4	1	1.2	2
Within School Building Before and After Lecture Hours	10	11.9	55	65.5	15	17.9	2	2.4	2	2.4	2
In the School Yard	5	6.0	40	47.6	29	34.5	7	8.3	3	3.6	2
In the Surrounds of School	1	1.2	13	15.5	29	34.5	30	35.7	11	13.1	3

n:84

number of siblings ) the total points acquired from the survey by each participant was analyzed by Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis.

The teacher’s surveys were also evaluated through Student’s t test, One-way

ate daily quarrels or struggles from violence behaviours and the etiology of violence needs to be well-defined (5).

Detecting from the study results, when the attitudes of teachers towards the statement ‘the school rules need tree-

**Table 3:** The Family Income Status of Students

Family Income Status (TL)	n	%
0-200	11	1.3
201-400	22	2.6
401-600	113	13.1
601-800	187	21.7
801-1000	259	30.1
1001 and above	263	30.6
Total	855	99.4

**Table 4:** The attitudes of students to self-parting in a fight

	Totally Agree (1)		Agree (2)		Undecided (3)		Disagree (4)		Totally Disagree (5)		Median
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
If One Pushes Me	234	27.2	212	24.7	192	22.3	132	15.3	90	10.5	2
If One Starts a Fight With Me	230	26.7	229	26.6	175	20.3	153	17.8	73	8.5	2
If One Threatens Me	217	25.2	229	26.6	177	20.6	143	16.6	94	10.9	2
If One Gossips About Me	258	30.0	215	25.0	179	20.8	130	15.1	78	9.1	2
If One Disrespects Me	264	30.7	234	27.2	174	20.2	116	13.5	72	8.4	2

n:860

In studies conducted in some other countries, the participants of school violence studies have not reported bringing in harmful tools to the school within last 30 days (12). In this mentioned study by Pickett et al, the students also expressed that they would not deny even if they bring in harmful tools to school. According to CDC, the percentage of students bringing in harmful tools to school within last 30 days was determined to be 6.5% (13). According to Aspy et al., this ratio was 14% (14). The ratio of students bringing in harmful tools to the school risen in the US from 21% in 2003, to 24% in 2005 (10). The CDC report explains that students bringing in these harmful tools do so because they are threatened by the insecurity conditions at school surroundings (15).

The students denied that if they were faced with treat of in the survey mentioned type of violence acts, they would themselves interrogate. The, parting in quarrel behaviour is very common worldwide (16) and in the US the daily and weekly prevalances of school fights were reported to be 24% (10).

The students in our study were found to be indecided and confused about in-

terrogating the disrespectful attitudes of adults towards them. In 2005-2006, students in US were reported to interrogate to their teachers with rate of 18% (10). The same study illuminates the fact that 9% of the teachers have misbehaved to the students and have been interrogated in return (10).

The communal unity is a factor that impacts on youth violence. The low communal unity may cause disqualification at school and anti-social behaviour (16). Additional, inability to adapt to demographic changes (migration, modernisation etc) causes violent behaviour in youth (16). The attitudes towards imparting in quarrel when faced with a treat showed differences among 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders. The new-comers to High school are less self-confident to impart in violent actions. These results are opposite to the CDC results which indicate highest ratio of imparting in quarrel in 9<sup>th</sup> Graders (11).

The ratios of being the victim of sexual, physical and emotional violence have been shown to be higher in girls than boys (17) However, the ratio of being harmed physically is higher among students bringing in harmful toys and among boys who are treated and in-

**Table 5:** Situation of students' related to bringing-in a harmful tool to the school within last 30 days

	n	%
Yes	11	1.3
No	848	98.6
Total	859	99.9

terrogate with these tools (10).

The overcrowding in the family and instable families (eg. Single parent families) also attenuates violent behaviour in schools. The low-socio-economic status of the families (18,19) also serve as a risk factor to increase school violence in addition to social injustice (20). In our study, no correlation has been detected between socio-economic status of the family and violence of students.

## Conclusion

In order to avoid violence and serve our students at the school communities within a secure and high quality environment, the first step to be taken is the assessment and evaluation of the etiologies of violent behaviour. On the attainment of this object, precautions should be targeted to the educational system, family environment, the community and the society as well as the media to alleviate the manifestations.

**Table 6:** Parting of students' in a violence act in school or surroundings within last 30 days

	Never (1)		1-2 Times (2)		3-5 Times (3)		6-9 Times (4)		10 Times or More (5)		Median
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Hit, Slam or Fist Fight	830	96.5	22	2.6	6	0.7	-	-	2	0.2	1
Kick or trip	797	92.7	54	6.3	7	0.8	-	-	2	0.2	1
Push or shove	713	82.9	116	13.5	19	2.2	7	0.8	5	0.6	1
Hit with an object	840	97.7	16	1.9	2	0.2	2	0.2	-	-	1
Use Language to Threaten	767	89.2	71	8.3	13	1.5	4	0.5	5	0.6	1
Pull, twist, squeeze, pinch body	785	91.3	57	6.6	11	1.3	1	0.1	6	0.7	1
Use body language to treaten	781	90.8	58	6.7	13	1.5	1	0.1	7	0.8	1
Language Harrassment	746	86.7	86	10.0	19	2.2	3	0.3	6	0.7	1
Physical Assault	845	98.3	6	0.7	6	0.7	1	0.1	2	0.2	1
Swear	693	80.6	132	15.3	27	3.1	2	0.2	6	0.7	1
Attack with a weapon	846	98.4	8	0.9	5	0.6	-	-	1	0.1	1

n:860

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