

Youth Violence and Aggression Interventions in Türkiye: A Protocol for Systematic Review

Türkiye’de Gençlere Yönelik Şiddet ve Saldırğanlık Müdahaleleri: Sistemantik Derleme için Bir Protokol

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Abstract

Understanding and working violence and aggression in adolescents and young adults is critical for nurturing societal well-being and fostering developmental growth. This planned systematic review aims to reveal the accumulation of practical application examples to raise awareness in this field. It will systematically examine the interventions, educational tactics, and programs designed to decrease the prevalence of violence and aggression among adolescents and young adults in Turkey. This current study aims to clarify whether the current state of the research will be suitable for a systematic review. Despite the considerable impact of aggressive behavior on social relationships and cognitive development, research on this topic in Turkey is suggested to be limited. Strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, and a thorough search was conducted in databases including DergiPark, ERIC, Web of Science, and Scopus, employing terms such as ‘violence,’ ‘aggression,’ and ‘Turkish adolescent’. This approach has surfaced a significant yet underexplored corpus of relevant literature, suggesting a more substantial research foundation than previously acknowledged. Our initial query retrieved 4786 studies, of which 621 were redundant entries identified via Rayyan, spanning from 1995 to 2024. The planned review will seek to provide a comprehensive analysis of these interventions, offering insights that could inform policymakers, educators, and practitioners. While limitations exist, as with any literature review, the preliminary findings anticipate guiding evidence-based approaches and participating in the international conversation on culturally attuned preventive strategies. The initial data presents a landscape that underscores the importance for researchers to conduct a thorough literature review, given the substantial body of work already existing in this field. Thoroughly examining the existing literature can be crucial for informing new research as well as designing interventions and prevention measures.

Keywords: Violence, Aggression, Turkish Adolescent, Turkish Youth, Intervention.

Öz

Ergenlerde ve genç yetişkinlerde şiddeti ve saldırğanlığı anlamak ve üzerinde çalışmak, toplumsal refahı beslemek ve gelişimsel büyümeyi teşvik etmek için kritik öneme sahiptir. Planlanan bu sistemantik derleme, bu alanda farkındalık yaratmaya yönelik pratik uygulama örnekleri birikimini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye’de ergenler ve genç yetişkinler arasında şiddet ve saldırğanlığın yaygınlığını azaltmak için tasarlanan müdahaleler, eğitim taktikleri ve programlar sistemantik olarak incelenecektir. Bu çalışma, araştırmanın mevcut durumunun sistemantik bir incelemeye uygun olup olmayacağını netleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Saldırğan davranışların sosyal ilişkiler ve bilişsel gelişim üzerindeki önemli etkisine rağmen, Türkiye’de bu konuyla ilgili araştırmaların sınırlı olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Dahil etme ve hariç tutma kriterleri sıkı bir şekilde uygulanarak DergiPark, ERIC, Web of Science ve Scopus gibi veri tabanlarında ‘şiddet’, ‘saldırğanlık’ ve ‘Türk ergeni’ gibi terimler kullanılarak kapsamlı bir arama yapıldı. Bu yaklaşım, ilgili literatürün önemli

ancak henüz yeterince araştırılmamış bir külliyatını gün yüzüne çıkarmış olup, daha önce kabul edilenden daha sağlam bir araştırma temelini işaret etmektedir. İlk sorgumuz, 1995’ten 2024’e kadar uzanan, 621’i Rayyan aracılığıyla tespit edilen gereksiz girişler olan 4786 çalışmayı getirdi. Planlanan inceleme, politika yapıcılarını, eğitimcileri ve uygulayıcıları bilgilendirebilecek içgörüler sunarak bu müdahalelerin kapsamlı bir analizini sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Herhangi bir literatür incelemesinde olduğu gibi sınırlamalar mevcut olsa da, ön bulgular kanıta dayalı yaklaşımlara rehberlik etmeyi ve kültürel olarak uyumlu önleyici stratejiler hakkındaki uluslararası tartışmalara katılmayı öngörüyor. İlk veriler, bu alanda hâlihazırda mevcut olan önemli miktarda çalışma göz önüne alındığında, araştırmacıların kapsamlı bir literatür taraması yürütmesinin önemini vurgulayan bir manzara sunmaktadır. Mevcut literatürün iyice incelenmesi, yeni araştırmalara bilgi sağlanmasının yanı sıra müdahalelerin ve önleme tedbirlerinin tasarlanması açısından da çok önemli olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şiddet, Saldırganlık, Türk Ergeni, Türk Gençliği, Müdahale.

Introduction

For many years, the investigation of violence and aggression has been a primary focus of psychological research, demonstrating their enduring importance and profound impact on societal dynamics. Closely examining the antecedents and consequences of these behaviors not only enriches our theoretical understanding but also informs the development of interventions and policies aimed at mitigating harm and promoting peaceful coexistence. The literature defines aggression as a type of behavior that manifests with the intent to inflict harm on another person, despite the individual’s lack of desire for such harm. The characteristics that distinguish aggressive behavior from other antisocial behaviors include the observable nature of the behavior, the presence of harm to the other party, meaning that there is no possibility of unintentional or accidental occurrence, and the involvement of at least two individuals. People often use the terms “anger” and “aggression” interchangeably, but “aggression” does not represent an emotion or thought, unlike “anger,” which only expresses an emotional state (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010). Bushman and Anderson (2002) defined human aggression as follows: ‘Human aggression is any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm.’ (p.28). In addition, to emphasize the distinction between aggression and other related behaviors, they added that the individual exhibiting the behavior must be aware of the intention to cause harm, and the target must be motivated to exhibit avoidance responses to this behavior. The literature occasionally conflates violence and aggression, necessitating this distinction. Violence can be defined as aggression to cause serious physical harm to the other party. In contrast to aggression, violence entails a deliberate intention that causes serious harm to the other party (Allen, Anderson, & Bushman, 2018; Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

The adolescent demographic disproportionately manifests aggressive tendencies, making it a crucial area of study within this developmental phase. Adolescents report behaviors akin to aggression more frequently than any other age-related demographic (Moffitt, 1993). The prevalence of aggressive behaviors among adolescents yields a constellation of deleterious effects, disrupting the social integration, cognitive advancement, and emotional equilibrium essential to healthy maturation during this formative stage. When teens and young adults act aggressively, they may experience several negative effects, such as feeling alone, not being able to relate to others, taking things too personally, reacting emotionally and impulsively, not being able to think matters through, misinterpreting friendly actions as hostile or aggressive, and losing sense of certain morals. Such circumstances are prevalent in adolescents with heightened levels of aggressive behavior (Feindler & Engel, 2011). The period between the ages of 6 and 17 is a critically decisive phase in determining whether an individual will become an antisocial adult or a beneficial member of society. Within the demographic prone to perpetuating antisocial traits at this time, challenges are observed in learning and understanding, reduced motivation for personal growth and acquiring new information, early initiation of substance abuse, and a tendency to engage in sexual activities at a young age (Hawkins & Herrenkohl, 2003).

According to the 2023 report by the World Health Organization, globally, 37% of homicides affect individuals aged 15 to 29, making it the third leading cause of death in this demographic (World Health Organization: WHO, 2023). In Turkey, it is possible to access some data regarding violence and aggression among youth; however, unfortunately, finding a recent comprehensive empirical study is quite challenging. Consequently, the inferences drawn are often

based on statistical data from several years ago. An analysis of data from the Turkish Ministry of National Education reveals a troubling rise in adolescent violence, with 6569 violence related incidents reported among students from 2006 to 2010. Research indicates that the 15- to 16-year-old cohort is particularly affected, predominantly within educational settings (Ozcebe et al., 2006). These empirical findings support the need to explore sociocultural and psychological variables contributing to this trend. A 2007 report by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) Research Commission delineated the key characteristics of these violence cases across various urban and educational contexts, prompting the formulation of comprehensive action plans. The Social, Economic, and Cultural Research Center (SEKAM, 2016) conducted interviews with approximately 3000 young individuals living in Turkey as part of a study on youth issues. The study reported that 43.8% of these youths admitted to perpetrating violence. Furthermore, when asked who they most frequently perpetrated violence against, they primarily targeted friends, followed by siblings and partners. The study by Nair (2019), which compiled thesis studies conducted in Turkey on the topic of youth violence between 2010 and 2018, reported several interesting findings. These findings indicated a tendency for violent behavior in the age group under 16 to increase in subsequent years. Furthermore, data obtained from the studies supported the notion that male adolescents exhibit more acts of violence compared to female adolescents. The 2021 Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Study (ABES) illuminates the evolving landscape of adolescent bullying, revealing that amidst COVID-19, 12.5% of high school students experienced bullying on school grounds, while 13.8% encountered cyberbullying. This digital harassment occurs through text messages and social media platforms like Instagram or Facebook, signifies an adaptation in bullying behavior which is possibly a consequence of increased online activity during the pandemic. Comparatively, over the last year, physical altercations involved 15.9% of students, and a concerning 3.3% reported carrying weapons on school premises (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: CDC, 2021). According to Kapci (2004), 44% of students reported being pushed, in addition to other common acts of bullying such as being kicked, slapped, subjected to offensive jokes, or having hair or ears pulled. Ozgur et al. (2011) found high incidences of physical (78.9%) and psychological (45.6%) violence among students. More recently, Tasar (2019) indicated that half of all students were involved in some form of violence, and research by Kubar and Kiral identified a staggering 79.5% prevalence of chiefly physical violence among students. Studies indicate that students learn about the concept of violence through mass media and believe that responding to violence with violence is the solution. The study's findings indicate the need for immediate action to break this cycle. Furthermore, the research reveals that violence among youth is directly linked to social factors as well as individual factors, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing this issue (Avcı & Yıldırım, 2015; Ozgur et al., 2011).

Numerous studies have been conducted globally to mitigate aggression in children and adolescents (Cappella & Weinstein, 2006; Fraser et al., 2005; Leff et al., 2009; VanSchoiack-Edstrom et al., 2002). These studies test a variety of interventions, categorized broadly into individual and group psychotherapy, behavior modification, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and social skills training programs (Tolan & Guerra, 1994). Research indicates that prevention and intervention programs, especially during school years, not only reduce aggressive tendencies in the short term but also have lasting impacts on adulthood, potentially offsetting the development of antisocial behaviors (Hawkins & Herrenkohl, 2003). Systematic reviews from different countries agree on how important it is to use both preventative and intervention strategies together. However, the conversation has moved beyond questioning the number and effectiveness of these programs to highlighting the growing body of research on both topics (Sawyer et al., 2015). However, the current state of literature in Turkey remains uncharted. This gap has impelled us to undertake a systematic review tailored to the Turkish context, which is potentially unique due to cultural, societal, and policy variables. We posit that the absence of comprehensive research synthesis in this field has contributed to a fragmented understanding, impeding the development of targeted programs. This planned systematic review aims to fill that void, providing insights likely to inform both local and international strategies. Moreover, by critiquing the global literature through a Turkish lens, we will contribute to proposing a framework that addresses identified shortcomings and offers guidance for future research and practice within the region and beyond.

It is believed that writing such a protocol before a systematic review would help determine whether the current state of the research is suitable for a systematic review, given that there may not be many intervention studies on violence and aggression with young people in Turkey (Kapci, 2004; Nair, 2019), despite the subject's importance.

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Method

This planned systematic review aims to systematically examine the interventions, educational tactics, and programs designed to decrease the prevalence of violence and aggressive conduct among adolescents and young adults in Turkey. The systematic review will be rigorously conducted and presented following the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA-2020) checklist, ensuring adherence to the latest standards for reporting systematic reviews. The PRISMA approach can be used by anyone to create a structure for carrying out systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The PRISMA method facilitates transparent and standardized conduct of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, thereby enhancing the credibility and usefulness of the findings (Page et al., 2021).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria will consist of (1) interventions, techniques, education, and programs specifically designed to reduce violence and aggressive behavior; (2) a sample of Turkish adolescents and young adults, strictly defined as individuals aged between 10 and 24 years; and (3) research articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals to ensure the credibility and quality of the sources.

Exclusion criteria will be (1) types of literature such as review studies, case presentations, and descriptive studies, which do not meet the required level of empirical research evidence for this review and (2) incarcerated children and adolescents, as this would require a different analytical framework due to the unique context of the prison environment. (3) Individuals with specific physiological or psychological conditions, as these populations require tailored research approaches to address their unique needs. This study focuses on the general population to achieve its objectives without the influence of variables introduced by these conditions.

Although non-randomized studies could make a significant academic contribution, we did not create specific inclusion or exclusion criteria to accommodate them, given the limited availability of randomized controlled studies in reducing violence and aggressive behavior. Studies not published as peer-reviewed journal articles, such as conference abstracts, theses, and gray literature, will be excluded during the initial identification phase. This ensures the inclusion of studies that have undergone rigorous academic scrutiny, thereby maintaining the scientific standards of this review.

Screening Process

The initial literature review was conducted by systematically searching the following databases: DergiPark, ERIC, Web of Science, and Scopus. The scope of the research was limited to studies published within the period from 1995 to 2024. The systematic review search was conducted from March 10 to April 15, 2024.

Fourteen key terms were incorporated into the search: “violence,” “aggression,” “aggressive behavior,” “Turkish adolescent,” “Turkish children,” “Turkish teenager,” “Turkish students,” “Students living in Turkey,” “Turkish youth,” “education,” “intervention,” “training,” “treatment,” and “program.” The search strategy consisted of the following terms: (“violence” OR “violence*” OR “aggression” OR “aggressive behavior” OR “aggressive*”) AND (“Turkish adolescent” OR “Turkish children” OR “Turkish teenager” OR “Turkish students” OR “Students living in Turkey” OR “Turkish youth” OR “Turkey”) AND (“education” OR “intervention” OR “training” OR “treatment” OR “program”). Furthermore, this search expanded to include Turkish language equivalents for these terms, specifically when querying the databases DergiPark and ERIC, which may contain Turkish literature.

Study Records

Data Management

To effectively collate and manage the results of our comprehensive search, we will employ Rayyan, a web-based platform described by Ouzzani et al. (2016), specifically developed for systematic reviews. This tool will help us import search results and streamline the removal of duplicate articles to ensure a clean dataset for screening.

Selection Process

Two reviewers (SM and BK) will individually assess the titles and abstracts of the studies obtained through the search process, excluding duplicate documents. Following this preliminary filtering, they will then engage in a thorough examination of the full texts corresponding to the short-listed studies to determine their suitability based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Throughout this stage, the reviewers will operate independently, with discrepancies resolved via mutual discussion. If a consensus is not reached, the divergences will be adjudicated by a third reviewer (BU), whose input will serve as the decisive factor. To offer complete transparency of our systematic process, the selection methodology will be demonstrated

through a flowchart as recommended by the PRISMA-P guidelines (Figure 1), detailing the journey from the initial identification of records to the final selection of studies.

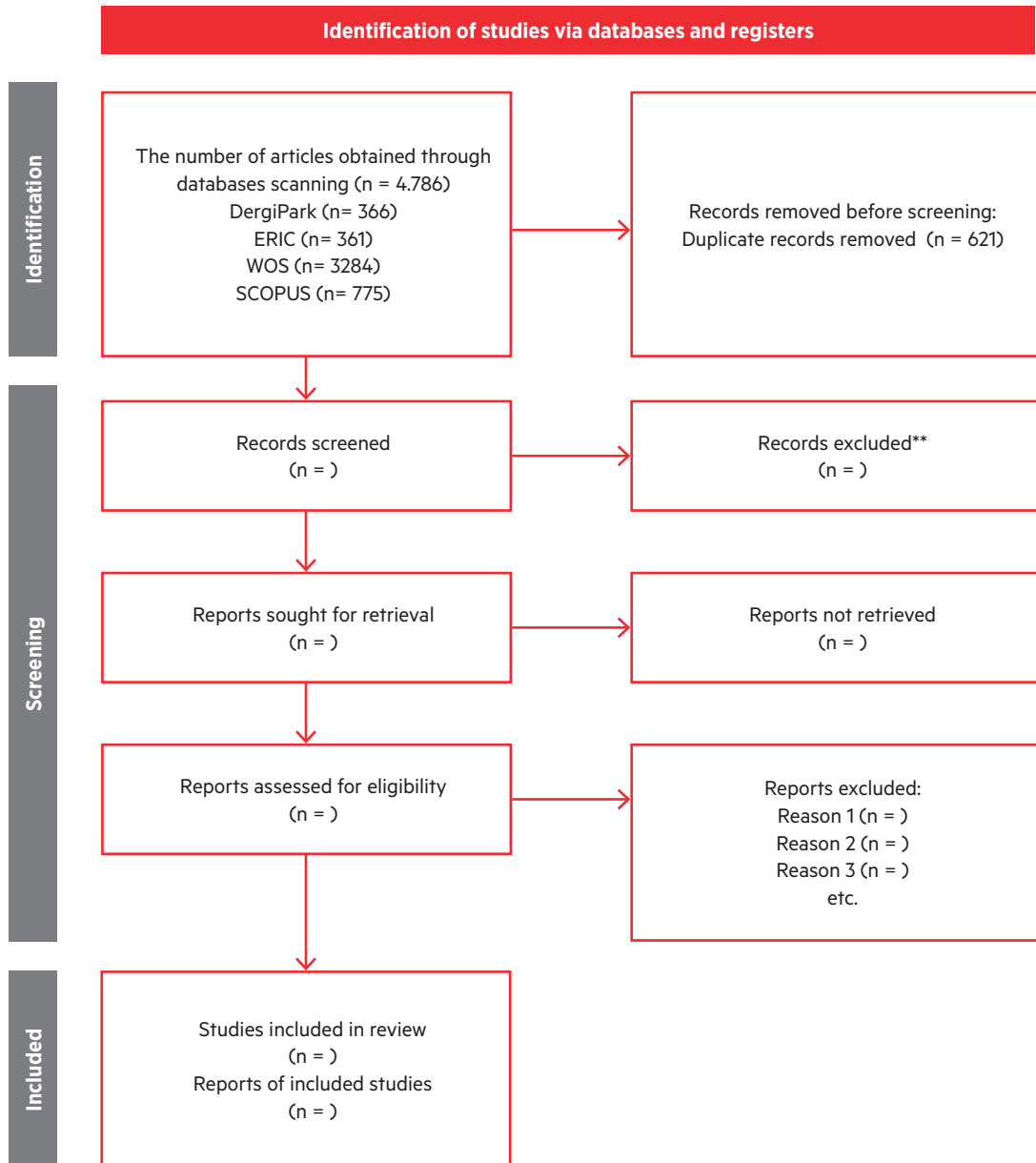


Figure 1: Prisma flow diagram

Discussion

This planned systematic review is aimed at providing a comprehensive practical perspective on the field to researchers who work on aggression and violence in youth by revealing the intervention programs and their effects on young people in Turkey. This systematic review protocol is aimed at providing a comprehensive practical perspective on the field to researchers who work on aggression and violence in youth by revealing the intervention programs and their effects on young people in Turkey. An important point to note is that when looking at studies conducted with Turkish youth living in different countries, problems with Turkish young people are associated with violence as a form of antisocial behavior compared to local young people (Stevens et al., 2003; Van Oor et al., 2006; Baier & Pfeiffer, 2007; Enzmann, 2010). This planned, systematic review study will not present any findings regarding this observation, but it will be valuable to study and compile what is being done in practice in Turkey regarding these issues that have gained importance in the international literature on Turkish youth. It is important to underline that our primary objective in formulating this systematic review protocol was to clarify whether the current state of the research will be suitable for a systematic review.

The impact of violence on young people can have long-lasting effects on the mental health of both the attackers and the victims. Longitudinal studies suggest victims of early violence may be predisposed to lower self-esteem and heightened anxiety levels, along with a persistent sense of insecurity (Morrison & Furlong, 1994; Liang et al. 2007). Conversely, there is evidence suggesting that aggressors in their early years frequently carry these behavioral patterns into adulthood, potentially exacerbating issues such as substance dependence and educational disengagement (Hanish & Guerra, 2002; Stouthamer-Loeber, 2002). This systematic review is poised to contribute to the existing literature by addressing the paucity of aggression and violence intervention programs in Turkey. The comprehensive analysis provided by this review will enable researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the current state of interventions within this context. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the findings will underscore the necessity for the development of novel interventions as well as the advancement of preventative research in this domain.

Despite prior notions concerning the scarcity of studies on aggression and violence among youth in Turkey (Nair, 2019), our systematic review protocol has brought a larger corpus of intervention research to light. This discrepancy

raises an essential question: Why is there a prevailing impression of limited research in this area? The keywords used in previous searches could be a key factor. Our experience indicates that the selection of keywords, tailored to the nuances of this field, has unmasked a wealth of relevant studies. This underscores the critical need for researchers to meticulously consider their choice of keywords and share this methodology for replicability and thoroughness. The propensity to limit searches to Turkish-language databases may have contributed to this oversight. Our review protocol, which includes Turkish and international databases, revealed a significant presence of Turkish sample studies in English-language journals accessible via well-established databases such as Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus. This finding suggests that comprehensive research requires an inclusive approach to database selection, transcending language, and regional barriers.

Systematic reviews are crucial in illuminating the full spectrum of available research. Through engagement with these reviews, researchers can attain a deeper understanding of the existing body of work, a step that is fundamental for informing the development of evidence-based interventions. Lastly, exploring the broader impact of these findings on future research trajectories and policy-making in Turkey could enrich the current position of research findings, making it a valuable guide for subsequent inquiries and applications in the field. The review acknowledges the significance of cultural context in the manifestation of antisocial behaviors and seeks to bridge a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on practices within Turkey.

While this review rigorously compiles relevant studies through specific keywords, it must be recognized that systematic reviews have, of course, limitations and may not encapsulate the entire scope of research in the field. The selection of studies is inherently influenced by many factors, primarily authorial discretion when setting inclusion and exclusion criteria. Efforts have been made to mitigate this bias, including a peer-reviewed protocol for study selection. Despite these limitations, it is anticipated that the insights gleaned from this review will be instrumental for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, offering a synthesized overview that may highlight research trends, best practices, and areas in need of further investigation. The extent to which these findings can be generalized will be contingent upon the breadth and diversity of the included studies. Nevertheless, the knowledge compiled is expected to provide a foundation for informed decision-making and future scholarly work in the field.

Concluding Remarks

The preliminary screening results indicate that if such a systematic review protocol were followed, a wealth of literature in this area would be obtained. In contrast to some assumptions, the number of studies addressing violence and aggression within Turkish samples is notably high. A total of 4,776 studies were identified through the initial search. It was clear that descriptive studies (Avci et al., 2016; Cetin & Erdogan, 2017; Cetinkaya-Yildiz & Hatipoglu-Sumer, 2020; Evcili & Guclu, 2022; Yurtal & Artut, 2010), intervention studies (Akgun & Araz, 2014; Serin, 2019; Turnuklu et al., 2010), psychoeducation programs (Akan, 2020; Akan, 2021; Demirci & Arslan, 2020; Kilicarslan & Atici, 2017), and prevention studies (Dogan et al., 2017; Parlak & Canel, 2021; Ustunel, 2023) were among these findings. While our main focus was on intervention studies, we also came across some descriptive studies during our search.

These descriptive studies examine various aspects of aggression and violence across different samples. They examine the psychological factors that influence violent tendencies among young adult males (Cetin & Erdogan, 2017), parental influences on physical aggression among urban adolescents mediated by beliefs that support aggression (Cetinkaya-Yildiz & Hatipoglu-Sumer, 2020), and the prevalence of aggression among adolescents and its contributing factors (Avci et al., 2016). Each study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors that shape aggressive behavior in different populations and contexts. In addition to descriptive studies, there are intervention studies that focus on reducing or preventing the problem at hand. These intervention studies focus on addressing aggression and conflict through targeted programs. Each initiative aims to equip participants with the skills and strategies to effectively manage conflict, promote peaceful resolution, and reduce aggressive behavior. Through these interventions, the studies aim to provide individuals with the tools necessary to address conflict in positive ways and foster healthier interpersonal relationships. Since the ongoing systematic review will encompass the specifics of intervention programs, we will not address them in this protocol.

When analyzed in terms of the subject matter, it became apparent that a notable focus was placed on the topics of violence and aggression (Karatas & Gokcakan, 2009; Kirkbir, 2020; Sagkal et al., 2016), anger (Ekitli & Ozgur, 2022; Kelleci et al., 2014; Lok et al., 2018; Uzar-Ozcetin & Hicdurmaz, 2017; Yilmaz, 2009), and bullying (Evgin &

Bayat, 2020; Marlow et al., 2023; Uzunboylu et al., 2017). The numerous studies in this field demonstrate its considerable depth and richness. This planned systematic review will go beyond merely compiling extant literature on aggression and violence interventions in Turkey's youth. It serves as a springboard for future research, policy-making, and a deeper understanding of culturally sensitive preventive strategies that can inform evidence-based practice and international discourse.

Current Status

The search conducted with Turkish and English keywords in the specified four databases resulted in 4,786 articles, 621 of which were determined to be duplicates. In the subsequent phase, exclusion and inclusion steps will be made considering the criteria and relevant articles will be thoroughly examined.

Reporting of this Review

The systematic review will be reported following the PRISMA guidelines. The systematic review will include the necessary tables and checklist of PRISMA.

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