

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigation of the Effects of Violence Tendency and Moral Maturity on Attitudes Towards Physical Violence

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Abstract

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Today, violence is one of the most important individual and social problems that modern society still has difficulty overcoming. The first condition for preventing or at least reducing violence in society is to be able to determine the biopsychosocial factors related to it. Therefore, the present study aimed to understand some of the psychological factors related to violence, and examined the effects of violence tendency and moral maturity on attitudes towards physical violence. A total of 398 people between the ages of 18-65 voluntarily participated in the study. The participants were selected via a haphazard sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods. Demographic Information Form, The Scale of Moral Maturity, The Violence Tendency Scale, The Scale of Attitudes on Violence and The Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) Scale were used to collect the data. The results were analyzed with descriptive statistics as well as Pearson Correlation Analysis and Hierarchical Linear Regression. The results revealed that the research model explains 19% of the total variance in attitudes towards physical violence. While 17% of the change in attitudes towards physical violence was explained by the tendency to violence, only 2% was explained by moral maturity. So, the research indicates that violence tendency is an important determinant of attitudes towards physical violence. The findings are believed to be significant for the prevention of physical violence, both theoretically and in terms of practical efforts, and shed light on a more comprehensive and wider perspective in this field.

Keywords: Violence, Violence Tendency, Moral Maturity, Attitudes Towards Physical Violence

Öz

Günümüzde şiddet, modern toplumun üstesinden gelmekte zorlandığı en önemli bireysel ve toplumsal sorunlardan birisidir. Toplumda şiddeti önlemenin ya da en azından azaltabilmenin ilk şartı ise öncelikle onunla ilişkili biyopsikososyal etkenleri belirleyebilmektir. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, şiddetle ilgili bazı psikolojik faktörleri aydınlatmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu amaçla çalışmada şiddet eğilimi ve ahlaki olgunluğun, fiziksel şiddete yönelik tutumlar üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir. Çalışmaya 18-65 yaş aralığında toplam 398 kişi gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Çalışmada, rastlantısal olmayan örnekleme yöntemlerinden gelişigüzel (haphazard) örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın veri toplama araçları Demografik Bilgi Formu, Ahlaki Olgunluk Ölçeği, Şiddet Eğilimi Ölçeği, Şiddete Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği ve Çocukluk Çağı İyi-hayaller Deneyimleri (BCEs) Ölçeğidir. Veriler betimsel istatistiklerin yanı sıra Pearson Korelasyon Analizi ve Hiyerarşik Doğrusal Regresyon ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular araştırma modelinin, fiziksel şiddete yönelik tutumlardaki toplam varyansın %19'unu açıklayabildiği sonucunu ortaya koymuştur. Bununla birlikte fiziksel şiddete yönelik tutumlardaki değişimin %17'si şiddete eğilimle açıklanırken, sadece %2'si ahlaki olgunlukla açıklanabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla araştırma şiddet eğiliminin, fiziksel şiddete yönelik tutumun önemli bir belirleyicisi olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Elde edilen bulguların fiziksel şiddetin önlenmesinde hem teorik hem de pratik çabalar açısından önemli olduğu ve bu alanda daha kapsamlı ve geniş bir bakış açısına ışık tutacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şiddet, Şiddet Eğilimi, Ahlaki Olgunluk, Fiziksel Şiddete Yönelik Tutumlar

Introduction

Violence continues to exist as a social problem of humanity in the 21st century and is a major public health problem. Anger, aggression, and violence intertwined with each other are phenomena that significantly affect the daily life, quality of life, interpersonal relationships, and safety of individuals. The World Health Organization (2002) defines violence as an act or threat that causes physical force or any coercion to be deliberately directed at oneself, another person or a group, resulting in or likely to result in injury, death, psychological harm, developmental delay or deprivation. Violence has also been defined as a strong, uncontrolled, extreme, sudden, relentless, conscious, collective or individual phenomenon that involves harming people or objects in varying degrees (Rogers & Follingstad, 2014). Violence is also expressed as the intense and destructive manifestation of hostility and anger towards people, animals and objects (Krug et al., 2002). Because the present study focuses on physical violence, the researchers are going to use the concept of violence to refer to behaviors such as forcing, causing physical or psychological pain, hitting, beating, injuring, torturing and an action that results in harming the person or people subjected to violence (Haskan and Yildirim, 2012).

Violence is not just a problem of public health and peace; it also causes serious economic disruptions for countries. Every day and all over the world, thousands of people apply or taken to medical institutions and receive emergency medical, medico-legal, or other care because of violence in the form of violent crime, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child abuse, and homicide (WHO, 2022). Indeed, the cost of violence for economies greatly exceeds the cost of prevention and intervention. For example, while the three-year cost of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in Uganda in 2010 was just US\$ 8 million, the cost of violence occurring for just one year was estimated at US\$ 30.7 million (CARE, 2018). Because violence causes huge expenses for law enforcement, health care and lost productivity, it places a massive burden on national economies. According to Global Peace Index 2023 (GPI), over

the last 15 years the world has become less peaceful with the average country score deteriorating by 5 % and the economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2022 was \$17.5 trillion. Because violence is a risk factor for many negative health and social outcomes for all countries, ending or significantly reducing violence is explicitly called for in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by United Nations. According to WHO (2022), preventing violence will indirectly and significantly help to achieve other SDG targets like health, employment, gender issues, and urban safety as well. At the point of preventing and reducing violence, it is important to make sense of violence and to determine the factors related to it (Özgür et al., 2011).

The factors underlying violence are quite complex and therefore have been tried to be explained based on a systemic model rather than a theory. The social ecological model, which comes from a systemic perspective, suggests that violence arises from a combination of biological, psychological and social factors (Krug et al., 2003; WHO, 2002). Among the biological factors explaining violence, genetics, hormones, structural brain abnormalities, and physical and mental diseases that cause cognitive damages are pointed out (Bannon et al., 2015; Burrowes et al., 1988; Lee, 2015; Stevens, 1994). Among psychological factors, personality, psychopathology, attitudes towards violence, violence tendency, parental attitudes, early childhood experiences, values, moral maturity, inadequacy in communication and conflict resolution skills, and many others were detected (Akgün & Araz, 2014; Cornell et al., 1996; Ferragut et al., 2013; Flood & Pease, 2009; Jones et al., 2011; Palmer, 2003; Tarsha & Narvaez, 2019). Some of the social factors that explain violence are the tolerance of violence in the society, the use of violence as a problem-solving tool, media influence, gender roles, migration, and globalization (Atramentova et al., 2018; Donnerstein et al., 1994; LaFree & Jiang, 2023; Reidy et al., 2009).

Based on the social ecological model, this study focuses on four psychological factors because of the existing empirical evidence of their influence on violence. These are attitudes towards physical

violence, violence tendency, moral maturity and benevolent childhood experiences. The first factor, attitudes, has been a central concern related to violence because there is consistent evidence of an association between violent behavior and violence-supportive beliefs and values (Ferragut et al., 2013; Flood & Pease, 2009; Lopez et al., 2022). Therefore, educational and rehabilitative programs to prevent violence consistently focus on changing people's attitudes towards violence. However, in order to develop effective programs for attitude change, the factors affecting attitudes must be identified, and the programs must be prepared by taking these factors into consideration. Studies in the literature indicate that individuals' tendencies towards violence, and moral maturity levels may be important factors affecting their attitudes towards violence (Caprara et al. 2014; Palmer, 2003; Tarsha & Narvaez, 2019). Adverse childhood experiences also seem to be affective on aggression in adulthood (Erturk et al, 2020; Mumford et al., 2019). However, the effects of benevolent childhood experiences seem understudied (Redican et al., 2023).

Overall, the relationship of these factors with violence has been described in many studies. However, data on the factors affecting attitudes towards violence, which is one of the most important antecedents of violent behavior, is quite insufficient. Thus, violence tendency and moral maturity as potential factors affecting attitudes towards violence may be a way to understand the violence and to take preventive measures. Another factor, benevolent childhood experiences, which partly explains better mental health outcomes among individuals affected by adverse childhood experiences, was taken as a controlled variable in the study. Given this, the aim of this study was to assess the effect of violence tendency and moral maturity on attitudes towards physical violence.

Attitudes Towards Violence

The relationship between attitudes towards a behavior and the tendency to exhibit that behavior has been the subject of many psychological studies. Eagly and Chaiken (1998, p. 269) define the attitudes as "a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a given entity with a certain degree

of favorability or unfavorability". Attitudes are one of the most important determinants of the occurrence of a behavior, especially when there are no social norms or sanctions, or when the consequences of the behavior are in the direction of the person's desire or advantage (Anderson & Heusmann, 2003; Fazio, 1990). Attitudes have been a central concept for violence studies as well and many studies have revealed the relationship between attitudes towards violence and violent behaviors (Fraguas et al., 2020; Guerra et al., 1995; Lopez et al., 2021; Markowitz, 2001). In one important longitudinal study, Huesmann and Moise (2002) concluded that exposure to violence in the media in childhood leads to the development of attitudes that favor violence in adulthood and that this change in attitude is associated with a tendency toward violence in adulthood. There are also marked cultural differences in attitudes towards aggression and violent behaviors (Fraczek, 1985; Fujihara et al., 1999; Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 1996). For example, in one study, individuals in Spain, the United States, and Poland considered verbal violence to be relatively harmless, while in Japan and Iran, it was considered as aggressive behavior. Similarly, in Iran and Japan, aggression was seen as highly acceptable as punishment, while in Spain, the United States, Poland, and Finland an extremely negative attitude towards aggression was observed (Ramirez, 2001).

Fazio (1990) suggests that the more clearly a behavior and attitude toward it is defined, the greater the power of that attitude to predict that behavior. Therefore, determining the attitude and behavior relationships is very important for predicting violent behaviors, designing violence prevention programs, and improving the existing ones. However, to improve understanding of the determinants of violence and to design more effective violence-prevention tools, the factors affecting attitudes towards violence must be determined and, as the literature indicates, violence tendency, moral maturity and childhood experiences may be influential factors in attitudes towards violence (Jones et al., 2011; Lee, 201; Mumford et al., 2019; Palmer, 2003; Pinos et al., 2016).

Violence Tendency

Violent behaviors differ from person to person in terms of direction, severity or type. Under the same conditions, while one individual resorts to violence, another individual does not, suggesting that some personal factors can be related to violence (Hawkins et al., 2000). So, it can be suggested that people vary in their tendencies towards violence. While violence tendency refers to the physical aspect of aggression, such as physically hurting, hitting or crushing others (Anderson ve Bushman, 2002), it also consists of individuals' feelings and thoughts related to violence. Therefore, this concept is not limited to individuals' violent behaviors. Thinking that the use of violence is justified was also considered as a tendency to violence. (Haskan and Yildirim, 2012).

Studies have shown that a tendency towards violence begins to manifest itself in the preschool and primary school years and that an early tendency towards violence is an important risk factor for these individuals' own children in the next generation as well (Eron et al., 1971; Farrington, 1982; 1995, 2002; Huesmann et al., 1984; Huesmann & Moise, 1998; Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Magnusson et al., 1975; Olweus, 1979). When the long-term course of the tendency towards violence is examined, it has been determined that in most children who exhibit both low and high levels of aggression, this tendency continues into adulthood, in some it ends, and that the incidence of those who do not exhibit this tendency in childhood but in adulthood is very rare (Brame et al., 2001; Huesmann et al., 2009).

There are some factors affecting violence tendency. One of the leading sources of violence tendency is the family factor. Witnessing violence in the family, exposure to violence, low socio-economic level, psychological and social deprivation in the family, domestic neglect and abuse are seen as risk factors in the development of aggression and violence (Coşkun and Bebiş 2014; Kashani et al., 1992). Communication, interaction or conflict within a family and inconsistent disciplinary practices applied by parents are also evaluated as individual risk factors (Clark, 2009; Leary & Tangney, 2012). So,

childhood experiences seem to be very important for developing a tendency to violence. The media is also an important risk factor for violence tendency. In his review, Huesman (2007) emphasizes that many experiments have demonstrated that exposure to media violence immediately increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior for children and adults in the short run. In addition, developmental disorders due to prenatal, perinatal and postnatal complications, low intelligence, learning difficulties, psychological disorders (psychosis, anxiety, etc.), attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, personality disorders related to aggression, anti-social personality traits, exposure to violence in early life, low tolerance to frustration, poor impulse control, low problem-solving and communication skills, and substance/alcohol use have also been shown among the risk factors that increase the tendency to violence (Reid, 2006; Clark, 2009). Therefore, it can be suggested that educational or rehabilitative programs designed to prevent or reduce violence by changing attitudes should not be implemented by ignoring these individual differences that create a predisposition to violence.

Moral Maturity

Morality is another factor that is related to attitudes towards violence. It is defined as the set of principles and rules that guide individuals, and all the rules of behavior that are good and correct (Köknel, 2006: 111). Bandura (1986, 1999, 2001) made a major contribution to the field of morality with social-cognitive theory by putting forward the concept of moral disengagement. Moral disengagement refers to a psychological scheme that causes a person to violate his own moral rules by mentally transforming harmful actions into acceptable actions. Therefore, a negative attitude towards an action does not guarantee that the person will not do it. The person still maintains a negative attitude towards the action, but when it is in his own interest, this mental process causes the person to depart from his own moral rules without feeling guilty (Bandura, 1991; Caprara et al., 2013; Gini, 2006).

As morality's psychological aspect, moral maturity is a personality trait that is acquired as a result of moral development and is expressed as the level of perfection in an individual's feelings, thoughts, judgments, attitudes and behaviors (Watlington and Murphy, 2006). One of the indicators of moral maturity is that a person internalizes the values accepted by society and conscientiously integrates these values and does not act in thoughts and behaviors that are contrary to these moral values (Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988). Therefore, it can be suggested that higher moral maturity is related to lower moral disengagement, as in the study of Gini (2006) which revealed that bullying children were found to be more ready to show moral disengagement mechanisms, whereas defenders against bullying showed higher levels of moral sensibility. For this reason, moral maturity is a concept that deserves studying as an important factor related to attitudes towards physical violence, and it has the potential of increasing the predictive value of attitudes towards violence.

Method

This research is designed with the relational survey model, which aims to examine the effects of violence tendency and moral maturity on attitudes towards physical violence. Because it focuses on determining the presence, degree, and direction of the relationship between multiple variables, the relational survey model is suitable for this research objective (Karasar, 2012).

Participants and Procedure

In the study, a haphazard sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was used. Data was collected from online responses to survey questions prepared via the Qualtrics program. The Informed Consent Form was presented to the participants, then the scales were provided. In order to eliminate the order effect, the demographic information form was kept constant at first and then the other scales were presented to the participants in a different order. The forms were sent to 482 people between the ages of 18-65 and a total of 398 people (246 female and 152 male)

voluntarily participated in the study ($Mean = 29.9$, $SD = 8.5$, $N = 398$). The average response time was 15-20 minutes. The G*Power 3.1.9 program was used to calculate the number of participants in the study. While calculating the effect size for the parameters specified according to the type of test was examined through a literature review, but no study was found where the variables in the study were of the same. For this reason, Cohen's (1988) effect size table was used for regression analysis, and 0.08, which is approximately between small (0.02) and medium (0.15), was taken as 0.05 for the margin of error, 0.95 for the power value, and 4 for the number of predictors. As a result of the calculation, the minimum number of participants was found to be 237. Descriptive statistics regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants are given in

Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Women	246	61.8
Men	152	38.2
Education		
Literate	2	0.5
Primary School Graduate	5	1.3
Secondary School Graduate	8	2.0
High School Graduate	78	19.6
Associate Degree	38	9.5
Bachelor's Degree	197	49.5
Master's Degree/Doctorate	70	17.6
Marital Status		
Single	238	59.8
Married	136	34.2
Living Together	5	1.3
Divorced	19	4.8

Materials

Demographic Information Form: Participants' age, gender, educational status, and marital status were asked through the demographic information form.

The Scale of Moral Maturity: It was developed by Kaya and Şengün (2007) to evaluate the moral maturity levels of individuals based on behavior. The scale is a five-point Likert self-assessment scale with 1 "No, never" and 5 "Yes, always". The scale has a total of 66 items, 14 of which are reversed. High scores obtained from the scale indicate higher moral maturity. For the reliability

of the Moral Maturity Scale, the test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.88, the split-half reliability coefficient was 0.89, and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.93. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient determined for the whole scale was 0.91 in this study. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher indicates that this scale is sufficient for reliability in general (Büyüköztürk, 2004). A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the factor structure of the scale. The fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results of the scale are as follows: $\chi^2 / sd = 2.14$, $p < .001$, CFI = .86, TLI = .84, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06.

The Violence Tendency Scale: This scale, which aims to measure the violence tendency levels of individuals, was developed by Haskan and Yıldırım (2012). The scale includes four sub-dimensions. These are feelings of violence, violence through information technologies, the thought of harming others and inflicting violence on others. The Violence Tendency Scale is a triple Likert scale that covers the range from 1 "never" to 3 "always". The scale consists of 20 items, one of which is reversed. High scores obtained from the scale indicate a higher violence tendency. As a result of the analysis, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.87 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.83. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient determined for the whole scale was 0.82 in this study. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the factor structure of the scale. The fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results of the scale are as follows: $\chi^2 / sd = 2.62$, $p < .001$, CFI = .89, TLI = .87, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05.

The Scale of Attitudes on Violence: The scale developed by Velicer, Huckel, and Hansen (1989) and updated by Anderson, Benjamin, Wood, and Bonacci (2006) was adapted into Turkish by Özkan et al. (2018). The scale consists of 46 items. The answers given to the questions in the scale are in the form of a 7-point Likert, ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree". As a result of the analysis, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the scale was calculated as 0.94. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's

Alpha) for the sub-dimensions of the scale were calculated as 0.76 for punishment-coded violence, 0.87 for war-coded violence, 0.81 for physical violence, 0.89 for interpersonal violence, and 0.85 for intimate violence. In this study, the physical violence sub-dimension of the scale was used. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the physical dimension of the scale. The fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results of the scale are as follows: $\chi^2 / sd = 3.71$, $p < .001$, CFI = .87, TLI = .85, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .06.

The Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) Scale: The Turkish validity and reliability of the scale was conducted by Gunay-Oge, Pehlivan, and Isikli (2020). The Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) Scale, which was recently developed by Narayan, Rivera, Bernstein, Harris and Lieberman (2018), is used to assess positive childhood experiences in the first 18 years of life. Items pertained to perceived safety and support (e.g., at least one safe caregiver, at least one good friend) and internal and external motivation (e.g., beliefs that gave comfort, enjoyment of school, a teacher who cared). The scale consists of 10 questions which are answered as yes, or no. A higher number of questions answered with "yes" indicates higher levels of positive childhood experiences. The scale has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties (Narayan et al., 2018). This self-report scale consisting of 10 items in the form of yes/no questions has been developed to collect data about positive experiences during childhood. The internal consistency coefficient was found 0.61, the test-retest validity coefficient was found 0.91. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the factor structure of the scale. The fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results of the scale are as follows: $\chi^2 / sd = 3.78$, $p < .001$, CFI = .85, TLI = .80, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .05.

Procedure

The SPSS 23 program was used in the statistical analysis of the data. First, Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between violence tendency, moral

maturity, physical violence, age, and benevolent childhood experiences. Then, Hierarchical Linear Regression (HLR) was conducted to investigate the effects of violence tendency and moral maturity on physical violence. Age and positive childhood experiences were entered consecutively in each set to control the effect of violence tendency and moral maturity on physical violence.

Findings

Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the study variables. The results showed that violence tendency had a statistically significant relationship with both age and attitudes towards physical violence. There was a small-sized negative relationship with age ($r = -0.13, p < 0.05$) while the relationship between violence tendency and attitudes towards physical violence was medium-sized and positive ($r = 0.40, p < 0.05$). It was found that moral maturity also had a statistically significant relationship with both age, benevolent childhood experiences and physical violence. Moral maturity had a small-sized positive relationship with age ($r = 0.21, p < 0.05$) and benevolent childhood experiences ($r = 0.17, p < 0.05$), while a medium-sized negative relationship with attitudes towards physical violence ($r = -0.40, p < 0.05$). However, attitudes towards physical violence had no statistically significant relationship with age ($r = 0.03, p > 0.05$) and benevolent childhood experiences ($r = 0.02, p > 0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Zero-order correlations between study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1- Physical Violence	1				
2-Age	0.04	1			
3-BCE	0.03	-0.01	1		
4-Violence Tendency	0.40*	-0.13*	0.07	1	
5-Moral Maturity	-0.03	0.21*	0.17*	-0.40*	1

Note: BCE=Benevolent Childhood Experiences. * $p < 0.05$

three-stage hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with attitudes towards physical violence as the dependent variable. Age and benevolent childhood experiences were entered into the equation at the same time. Violence tendency was entered into the model in Step 2. The addition of violence tendency significantly contributed to the model ($p < 0.05$). Then, moral

maturity was entered in Step 3 to test its effect on attitudes towards physical violence. The addition of moral maturity at the last step significantly contributed to the model ($p < 0.05$).

The model had a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.47$) in Step 2 when violence tendency was added into the model. After the addition of moral maturity to Step 3, where both violence tendency and moral maturity entered the model, there was a small change in the effect size ($f^2 = 0.48$) but the model still has a medium-sized effect (As a result, it was determined that violence tendency and moral maturity had a statistically significant effect on attitudes towards physical violence after controlling for age and positive childhood experiences. The research model explains 19% of the total variance in attitudes towards physical violence. While 17% of the change in attitudes towards physical violence was explained by the tendency to violence, 2% was explained by moral maturity.

Table 3). As a result, it was determined that violence tendency and moral maturity had a statistically significant effect on attitudes towards physical violence after controlling for age and positive childhood experiences. The research model explains 19% of the total variance in attitudes towards physical violence. While 17% of the change in attitudes towards physical violence was explained by the tendency to violence, 2% was explained by moral maturity.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression examining incremental validity of Violence Tendency and Moral Maturity in predicting Physical Violence

	R ²	ΔR ²	β	f ²
Step 1	0.002			0.05
Age			0.03	
BCE			0.03	
Step 2	0.171	0.169		0.47
Age			0.09	
BCE			-0.00	
Violence Tendency			0.41**	
Step 3	0.188	0.017		0.48
Age			0.06	
BCE			-0.01	
Violence Tendency			0.47**	
Moral Maturity			0.15*	

Note: BCE = Benevolent Childhood Experiences. R² = R² from Step 1 of the regression; ΔR² = change in R² in Step 2; β = standardized beta coefficients. f² = f-square effect size. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion and Conclusion

This research has examined some of the important psychological factors related to violence. Although the relationship between attitudes towards violence and violent behavior has been addressed in many studies so far, investigating the factors that are effective in these attitudes will contribute to the literature for a deeper understanding of violence and for more effective practices. Therefore, in the guide of the previous research but different from them, this study particularly attempted to reveal the effect of two important factors on attitudes towards physical violence and an important contribution has been made to the very limited literature on this subject.

The main result of the present study is that violence tendency and moral maturity are important determinants of attitudes towards violence. In his social learning theory, Bandura (1983) argues that attitudes are learned through social learning and that children and adolescents who are exposed to violence in their families or environments or who observe violence will both develop unhealthy attitudes towards violence and develop a tendency towards violent behavior. Similar to the results obtained in our study, many researchers suggest that a positive attitude towards violence increases the incidence of violent behavior and that engaging in violent behavior also increases attitudes towards violence (Adilogullari et al., 2017; Dodge & Crick, 1990; Hoge et al., 1996; Lacasse & Mendelson, 2010; Pinos et al., 2016; Yagiz et al. 2020). Therefore, violence tendency, as in line with the theory and research findings, is an important determinant of attitudes towards violence.

Similarly, moral maturity is another important factor in attitudes towards violence. Moral development theory states that rule-violating behaviors can be predicted by moral reasoning both directly and indirectly (Kohlberg, 1963; Blasi, 1980). Therefore, attitudes towards violence which is an indirect way of predicting violent behaviors, can be predicted by moral reasoning. So, based on the theory, it can be expected that violence tendency and moral maturity are correlated. This hypothesis has been confirmed by many studies, as

in our study (Avci, 2010; Bowes & McMurrin, 2013; Rubio-Garay et al., 2019; Visu-Petra et al., 2008). Cohn et al. (2009) emphasizes that the role of cognitive development is very important for understanding rule-violating behavior and for the development of youth prevention programs, and to detect cognitive development, researchers usually either use moral reasoning or legal reasoning by implementing different tools (Lerner et al., 2005; Raaijmakers, Engels, & Van Hoof, 2005). These studies consistently revealed that less sophisticated moral reasoning is related to more rule-violating behavior.

Another finding of the study indicates a positive relationship between benevolent childhood experiences and moral maturity. This finding corresponds with the results of other studies. Emler (1998) emphasizes that significant interpersonal relationships create cognitive schemas that filter the interpretations and evaluations of one's own and others' actions and through this process, child develops in a moral sense, whether in a positive or negative way. Similarly, Tarsha & Narvaez (2023) put forward that childhood experiences and interpersonal neurobiological development can be seen as pillars of moral functioning and positive childhood experiences lead to neurobiological structures that are apparent in social well-being. Similarly, the study of Mammen et al. (2019) found that interaction with parents is seen to contribute to the moral development of children.

A negative relationship between age and violence tendency is another finding of the study and this finding is in line with the results indicating that violence tendency decreases with age (Fountoulakis et al., 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Kennedy et al., 2011; Liu, 2011). When age and violence tendency relationship is examined, it is seen that physical violence decreases significantly from young adulthood to the age of 50-60, whereas the decrease in indirect aggression is lower and there is no significant decrease in verbal aggression (Vigil-Colet et al., 2015; Walker & Richardson, 1998; Walker et al., 2000). Researchers suggest that as people lose their strength and the risk of being injured increases by

aging, they prefer more indirect ways of aggression.

One other finding of the study indicates a positive relationship between age and moral maturity. As Kohlberg (1963) stated in his theory of moral development, this finding is consistent with the existing literature and moral maturity, especially in relation to prosocial or justice-oriented becoming more mature with age (Colby et al., 1983; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Rest, 1979; Rest, 1983). Similarly, Lawford et al. (2001) demonstrate that older children show a higher moral understanding of harm than younger ones and this indicates that as people grow, so do their moral judgements.

When we looked at the relationship between moral maturity and attitudes towards physical violence, the findings indicate a negative relationship between two. Again consistent with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, this finding reveals a similar result to the literature. In a similar study, Uygun et al. (2020) examined the relationship between moral maturity and attitudes towards animal rights and found that moral maturity is a significant predictor of attitudes towards animal rights (Uygun et al. 2020). Another study by Yıldırım (2014) found that moral maturity is a significant predictor of social maturity, and as students' moral maturity levels increase, their social maturity levels also increase. Another similar finding indicates that students who have internalized moral values tend to have lower levels of violence and aggression (Avcı, 2010). Therefore, we can suggest that as moral maturity increases, attitudes in favour of physical violence decrease.

The relationship between age and attitudes towards physical violence was another finding of our study and the result revealed no significant relationship between these variables. Existing literature seems to reveal controversial results on this issue. For example, while Demirtas-Madran (2018) found no statistically significant relationship between age and attitudes towards violence, Valdivia-Peralta (2018), which looked at the differences in age in a relatively narrow age group, found greater justified attitudes towards violence in early adolescents than in late adolescents. In another study, Borg, & Hermann (2023) found that although the older a person, the

more negative his/her attitude toward crimes in general, some petty crimes like fare evasion, and smoking pot are exceptions to this trend. So, they suggest that the attitude towards criminal behaviors depends mostly on the seriousness of the crime, not on the age of the person. Another study on intimacy violence found that attitudes towards violence do not decrease with age, as expected in the criminology literature, but that it is related to the prolongation of the relationship process rather than to age (Johnson et al., 2015). So, the literature offers controversial results on this issue.

As the last finding, we found no significant relationship between benevolent childhood experiences (BCEs) and attitudes towards violence. The ecological systems' perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) emphasizes that childhood development occurs within multiple interconnected and co-dependent environmental contexts including individual, family, school, peers and neighbourhoods, and in these different environments, BCEs may emerge as different experiences like 'having at least one good friend', 'opportunities to have a good time', 'predictable home routine' or 'having at least one caregiver with whom one felt safe'. Just like the presence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), limited BCEs are also related to many unfavourable mental outcomes (Crandall et al., 2019; Doom et al., 2021; Narayan et al., 2018). When we searched for the literature, we could not find any direct study about the relationship between benevolent childhood experiences and attitudes towards violence. However, there are lots of studies on the effects of adverse childhood experiences on aggression, violence and criminality. Literature indicates that risk of arrest, aggression in young adulthood, intimate partner violence and recidivism increase with adverse childhood experiences, while positive childhood experiences act as a moderator between negative childhood experiences and recidivism. Therefore, decreases the power of relationship (Barnert et al., 2023; Dinç & Küçük, 2021; Whitfield et al., 2003). So, it seems that BCEs act as a protective factor. The effect of benevolent childhood experiences on violence seems understudied (Redican et al., 2023) and this

indicates a need for more studies about the role of the BCEs in violence.

Recommendations

In the light of the research findings, some recommendations can be made for both future studies and applications. Since it has been determined to be an effective factor on attitudes towards physical violence and is a characteristic that emerges in early childhood and often continues into adulthood, violence tendency is a risk factor that needs to be identified and intervened in early childhood. Therefore, families, schools, and other related institutions should not ignore the problem that has just begun to emerge and should cooperate on the issue in early childhood. Furthermore, a detailed analysis of violence tendency may provide educators and policymakers with the necessary tools to develop effective educational or rehabilitative programs against violent behaviors in different contexts. Hence, to comprehensively understand the role of violence tendency in attitudes towards violence future research could benefit from integrating studies on personality, and psychopathology, and neuropsychological factors as well. In addition, since moral maturity emerges as another important factor in attitudes towards physical violence, both families and educational institutions should implement effective practices and educational programs to increase moral maturity in young children. Finally, it would be useful for future studies to conduct research on these variables with qualitative methods, with different and larger sample groups, and with different measurement tools. Similarly, as seen in the literature, since cultural differences can create significant differences in attitudes towards violence, conducting cross-cultural studies on the subject in the future would be useful in terms of generalizability of the results.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. The first limitation of the present study may be related to sample size. Although it was sufficient for the

current study, expanding the research sample would increase the strength and generalizability of the findings obtained in this study. The second limitation of the study would be related to the use of self-report measures. While the use of these measures is common in survey research, it may result in inaccurate or untruthful responses because of a lack of self-awareness or social desirability.

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