THE VIOLENCE EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS AT SCHOOL: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Adölesanların Okulda Yaşadığı Şiddet Deneyimleri: Nitel Bir Araştırma

Zeynep KİSECİK ŞENGÜL[1] **Aylin GÜNEŞ**[1] **Yurdagül ERDEM**[1]

[1] *Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Science, Kırıkkale University, KIRIKKALE, TÜRKİYE*

ABSTRACT	ÖZ

Objective: This study was conducted with a qualitative method to examine in depth the violence experiences of adolescents at school.

Material and Methods: Twenty adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 participated in the study. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form. The interviews were conducted online and face-to-face and were audio recorded. Inductive content analysis was conducted through the MAXQDA 2022 package program. Ethics committee permission and adolescent and parental consent were obtained to conduct the study.

Results: The average age of the adolescents participating in the study is 14.2±2.76. Ten of the adolescents are educated at secondary school level and 10 of them are educated at high school level. In line with the research findings, four themes "experience of violence", "effects of violence", "coping methods" and "suggestions for preventing violence" were determined.

Conclusion: It was determined that all adolescents experienced or witnessed violence at school. Violence appears to be a significant problem at school. It is recommended to plan training to prevent violence in schools, to inform children and families, to increase security measures in schools, and for teachers and administrators to take an active role in preventing violence.

Keywords: *Adölesan, okul, şiddet, nitel araştırma*

Amaç: Bu çalışma adölesanların okulda yaşadığı şiddet deneyimlerinin derinlemesine incelenmesi amacıyla nitel yöntemle yapılmıştır.

Gereç ve Yöntemler: Çalışmaya 10-18 yaş aralığındaki 20 adölesan katılmıştır. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmıştır. Görüşmeler online ve yüzyüze olarak yapılmış ve ses kaydı alınmıştır. MAXQDA 2022 paket programı aracılığı ile tümevarımcı içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın yapılabilmesi için etik kurul izni, adölesan ve ebeveyn onamları alınmıştır.

Bulgular: Çalışmaya katılan adölesanların yaş ortalaması 14,2±2,76'dır. Adölesanların 10'u ortaokul, 10'u lise düzeyinde eğitim almaktadır. Araştırma bulguları doğrultusunda dört tema "şiddet deneyimi", "şiddetin etkileri", " baş etme yöntemleri" ve "şiddeti önleme önerileri" belirlenmiştir.

Sonuç: Adölesanların hepsinin okulda şiddet yaşadığı ya da şiddete tanık olduğu belirlenmiştir. Şiddetin okulda önemli bir sorun olduğu görülmektedir. Okullarda şiddetin önlenmesine yönelik eğitimlerin planlanması, çocuk ve ailelerin bilgilendirilmesi, okullarda güvenlik önlemlerinin artırılması, öğretmen ve idarecilerin şiddeti önlemede etkin rol alması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Adolescence, school, violence, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

School violence is defined as acts of violence that occur on the way to school, around the school environment, and within the school setting. School violence is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes physical and psychological violence, cyber threats, fights, sexual harassment, corporal punishment, discrimination, gossip, and swearing which cause physical and psychological harm to students and are carried out by teachers or students. When violence is perpetrated by schoolmates, it is referred to as peer bullying.[1-4]

School violence is an issue that affects children's health and is becoming increasingly dangerous over time. According to a survey conducted in seven countries on children and adolescents, it was found that 12.11%-44.63% of girls and 14.28%-53.85% of boys have experienced at least one form of violence; boys are more likely to be exposed to school-related violence and boys are more often subjected to physical violence by male classmates.[5] A study conducted by the CDC in 2019 revealed that about one in five high school students experienced bullying on school grounds within a year, 8% of students were involved in one or more physical fights on school grounds, and more than 7% were threatened or injured with a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, or stick) on school grounds at least once.[6]

Crimes and violence occurring in society can lead to an increase in violence in schools. Violence in schools can occur due to factors such as substance abuse, media influence, and socioeconomic issues.[7] The violence experienced in schools is not limited to the school environment and can escalate to affect the entire society. A large-scale meta-analysis has shown that both engaging in bullying and being a victim of bullying at school are associated with exhibiting violent and aggressive behaviors in later life.[8]

Violence in schools can lead to injuries and deaths among children.[9-11] On the other hand, as a result of violence, depression, fear, time loss, lack of concentration, and a decrease in academic performance may be observed.[2,7] Therefore, it is important to conduct community-based studies related to preventing violence in schools. Interventions to prevent violence in schools can be implemented at three levels. Primary prevention includes identifying students' needs early before violent incidents occur, parent skills training, bullying prevention, conflict resolution education, risk reduction efforts, and teacher training on violence prevention. Secondary prevention involves early detection and rapid intervention to prevent the escalation of violent behavior. Tertiary prevention refers to rehabilitative measures to reduce the likelihood of re-victimization or re-offending.[7] Teachers play a key role in addressing violence in schools. The teacher's response to violence is important in shaping violent behavior.[4] On the other hand, school health nurses have various roles in preventing violence and bullying. Nurses can identify the phenomenon of violence, recognize risky behaviors, and develop violence prevention programs in schools.[12,13] To prevent violence in schools, it is crucial to assess the causes and consequences of violence. This study was conducted using qualitative methods to deeply explore the violence experiences of adolescents in schools. The research findings may provide scientific data for violence prevention programs in schools.

The following questions were sought to be answered in the research:

1. What are the experiences of adolescents with violence in school?
2. How do adolescents cope with violence?
3. What are the consequences of experiencing violence on adolescents?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

The study was conducted using a phenomenological design with one-to-one semi-structured interviews with adolescents aged 10-18 between March-April 2024.

Study Setting And Recruitment

Information about the research was distributed through social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram), targeting adolescents aged 10-18 for participation. A total of 30 adolescents and their parents showed interest; however, some were unable to take part due to challenges such as poor internet connectivity or scheduling conflicts. Additional participants were reached through existing ones, and eligible adolescents were included in the study sample.

Sample Size

The study targeted adolescents from various regions of Türkiye. A total of 20 adolescents who consented to participate formed the research sample. Data collection concluded once sufficient information was gathered to achieve saturation. The study sample was selected using maximum diversity sampling to encompass a wide range of perspectives and situations related to the research topic.[14]

Inclusion and/or Exclusion Criteria

Adolescents who were between the ages of 10 and 18, who were studying in middle school and high school, who had experienced or witnessed violence at school at least once, who had internet access, and whose parents agreed to participate in the study were included in the study. Adolescents without internet access were excluded from the study.

Data Collection

Data for the study were gathered using a "descriptive information form" with five open-ended questions (Table 1). To verify the clarity of the questions, a pilot study was conducted with two adolescents. After

confirming the participants had no difficulty understanding the questions, the main study commenced.

Adolescents who volunteered to participate were informed about the study, and an interview date was scheduled. A reminder message was sent one day before the interview. The interviews were conducted online via Google Meet, with a link shared based on the participants' availability. All interviews were audio-recorded for analysis.

The interviews were carried out by ZKS (Ph.D., Assistant Professor, female), who has experience in qualitative interviewing. Before starting the interviews, the purpose of the research was explained, and verbal consent was obtained from both the participants and their parents.

Table 1: Interview questions

Sociodemographic characteristics
At the beginning of the interview, adolescents were asked about their age, gender, educational status, family type, and the educational background of their parents.

Interview questions
1. Have you experienced violence at school? If so, what type of violence did you experience? Who was the perpetrator? What was the cause of the violence? Where did the violence occur?
2. How did you feel when you were exposed to violence, how did you react, and what did you do? How did the violence affect you?
3. Have you ever witnessed violence? Could you describe it?
4. What do you think are the reasons why adolescents experience violence at school?
5. What are your suggestions for preventing violence in schools?

Data Analysis

The findings from the interviews were evaluated by checking the compatibility of the transcribed texts with the recorded videos to ensure the accuracy of the qualitative data obtained through the "Semi-Structured Interview Form." Once the transcriptions were finalized, they were sent to the participants for verification, and their accuracy was confirmed.

The inductive content analysis method was applied to evaluate the data. To identify and model emerging patterns, computer-aided qualitative data analysis was employed, using the MAXQDA 2022 software. The texts were thoroughly reviewed multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the adolescents' experiences.

The data coding process was conducted independently by two experts. Feedback from both experts with qualitative research experience was incorporated, and the themes were refined until consensus was achieved. The results were then organized and presented in tables, categorized into themes, sub-themes, and codes. To maintain confidentiality, participant numbers were used in place of their real names in the finalized texts.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics committee permission of the Kırıkkale University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee dated 20.03.2024 and numbered 2024.03.17 was obtained to perform the study. Verbal consent was received from the adolescent and their parents at the beginning of the interview.

Rigour and Reflexivity

Instead of validity and reliability in quantitative studies, consistency, transferability, credibility, and confirmability are more prominent in qualitative studies.[14-16]

Consistency: Since it was important to collect and analyze data by a single researcher in terms of consistency, the researcher collected the data (ZKS). The codes, sub-themes, and themes were developed by researchers (ZKS and AG), who hold Ph.D. degrees in nursing and have experience in qualitative research.

Transferability: In the findings, the participants' statements were given as they were, without the researchers' comments, and the COREQ guideline was used in reporting the research data.

Credibility: Diversification was considered by utilizing an in-depth interview method while posing the questions, and the answers were made clearer with participant confirmation.

Confirmability: To ensure confirmability in this study, the researchers will keep the data collection tools and all related records confidential for a period of three years.

RESULTS

In the study, interviews were conducted with 20 adolescents (11 girls, 9 boys). The average duration of the interviews was 8.35 ± 3.71 minutes (min = 3.27, max = 18.35). The adolescents who participated in the study were aged between 10 and 18, with an average age of 14.2 ± 2.76 years. Ten adolescents were attending middle school, and ten were attending high school. The descriptive characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 2.

In our study, four themes related to the violence experiences of adolescents were identified: violence experience, effects of violence, coping strategies, and suggestions for preventing violence (Table 3).

Table 2: Descriptive characteristics of the participants (n=20)

Number*	Duration (min)	Age	Gender	Educational Status	Family Type	Mother's Education Level	Father's Education Level
A1	8.13	10	Female	Middle School (Public School)	Single parent	University	University
A2	6.23	15	Female	Vocational High School (Public School)	Single parent	Primary school	University
A3	5.49	14	Female	Middle School (Public School)	Nuclear	University	University
A4	6.10	11	Male	Middle School (Public School)	Extended	Primary school	High school
A5	7.34	14	Female	Middle School (Public School)	Nuclear	High school	University
A6	6.07	10	Male	Middle School (Private School)	Nuclear	University	University
A7	15.45	10	Male	Middle School (Private School)	Nuclear	University	University
A8	6.44	18	Female	High School (Public School)	Nuclear	Primary school	High school
A9	4.23	15	Female	High School (Public School)	Extended	High school	High school
A10	3.27	15	Female	High School (Public School)	Nuclear	High school	High school
A11	7.32	17	Male	Vocational High School (Public School)	Nuclear	University	University
A12	7.54	18	Male	High School (Private School)	Nuclear	High school	University
A13	6.32	17	Female	Science High School (Public School)	Nuclear	High school	High school
A14	13.11	17	Male	High School (Public School)	Nuclear	Primary school	Primary school
A15	9.32	16	Male	High School (Public School)	Nuclear	Primary school	High school
A16	11.49	13	Female	Middle School (Public School)	Nuclear	Primary school	University
A17	10.01	12	Male	Middle School (Public School)	Nuclear	University	University
A18	18.35	11	Female	Middle School (Public School)	Nuclear	University	University
A19	8.18	17	Male	High School (Public School)	Nuclear	High school	University
A20	5.01	14	Female	Middle School (Public School)	Nuclear	High school	High school

*A: Adolescent

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Table 3: Themes, sub-themes, and codes

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Violence Experience	Causes of violence	Dating relationships
		Jealousy
		Conflict
		Showing superiority
		Economic inadequacy
		Learning from family and lack of education
		Lack of family attention
		Tobacco/drug addiction
	Types of violence	Physical (hitting, pushing, beating, kicking)
		Emotional (threatening, swearing, forcing to smoke, name-calling)
		Sexual (pulling down underwear, using sexually explicit swear words)
		Economic (taking money or belongings)
	Witnessing violence	Peer violence
		Teacher's violence
	Location of violence	Classroom
		Schoolyard
		Toilets
		School surroundings
	School's attitude towards violence	Indifference
		Violence prevention approaches
		Disciplinary punishment
Effects of Violence	Emotional	Anger
		Feeling inadequate
		Sadness
		Regret
		Fear/anxiety
	Behavioral	School Absenteeism
		Withdrawing from Friendships
		Compulsive behaviors
Coping Strategies	Problem-focused	Telling parents, teachers, or school administration
		Trying to resolve by talking
		Responding with violence
	Emotion-focused	Walking away
		Submitting
		Ignoring
Suggestions for Preventing Violence	Suggestions for families	Raising awareness of the family / family education
		Providing attention to the child / providing psychological support
	Suggestions for the child	Protecting oneself
		Reporting violence
	Suggestions for school administration and teachers	Teachers' supervision and attention
		Educating the child
		Expulsion / punishment of the child who perpetrates violence

Theme 1: Violence Experience
Sub-theme 1: Causes of Violence
Adolescents have stated that violence at school is caused by dating relationships, jealousy, conflict, showing superiority, economic inadequacies, learning from the family and lack of education, lack of family attention, and tobacco/drug addiction.
Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows:
"*Since I am in high school, there are fights between boys, and girls fight because they think I looked at my boyfriend. The fights happen because of the boys.*" A2;
"*Since my school is a science high school, there is a competitive environment and jealousy, which leads to verbal and psychological violence. Friends can't accept*

each other's success and blame it on something else, not believing that the person worked and achieved it.*" A13;
"*My friend sometimes asks me for something, and when I don't give it to him, he gets angry at me. For example, when we can't agree on a game and I tell him to leave the game, he hits us and shouts. These small things can lead to fights.*" A1.
"*People might cause violence to prove themselves and because they see themselves as superior.*" A3.
"*Children with a poor economic background might steal pencils and erasers. When we went to physical education class, we had to leave a monitor in the classroom because children from other classes could*

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steal money from the room. A person might be forced to steal because their economy is bad." A14.

"One of the reasons for violence is the lack of education in the family; when a child sees something from their family at a young age, they might do the same to their friends." A5; "The reasons for fights are mostly the lack of family attention, children being left unattended, and lack of education." A11; "Some of my friends used drugs; the troublemakers would drink at the corner of the park and bother people. They didn't bring drugs to school, but they brought e-cigarettes." A16.

Sub-theme 2: Types of Violence

Adolescents reported experiencing physical (hitting, pushing, beating, kicking), emotional (threatening, swearing, forcing to smoke, name-calling), sexual (pulling down underwear, using sexually explicit swear words), and economic (taking money or belongings) violence at school. Both girls and boys primarily reported experiencing emotional violence. Additionally, both girls and boys stated that they have been involved in physical fights. One male adolescent shared that his male friends pulled down his underwear, which deeply affected him.

Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"I had an argument with my friend, then he kicked me, and my stomach bruised. I tried to defend myself, and then they separated us before the situation escalated. I didn't hit him." A12; "I had a fight with a child. He bullied me and tried to corner me after school. He was threatening to beat me." A16; "I experienced another incident of violence last week. I was outside when two older guys came and asked if I had taken the ball. I said I hadn't, and when they asked again, I repeated that I hadn't. Then one of them showed me a butterfly knife and said it was a knife." A17; "Swearing happens a lot, but I don't care much because it has become a way of addressing people. It's constantly used at school and has turned into normal language, so people don't pay attention to it." A12; "In the classroom, they made fun of my physical features, like my height, glasses, and weight." A8; "They kept insisting I smoke, saying 'Come on, just once, it won't hurt, smoke.'" A16; "My friends pulled down my underwear, and I felt really bad." A7; "They hang over the toilet and look into the other restroom." A17; "Do you have cigarettes, drugs, e-cigarettes, or money? They pressure me about these things from time to time." A16.*

Sub-theme 3: Witnessing Violence

Adolescents reported that violence at school mostly occurs between peers. Additionally, two students mentioned that teachers swear at and insult students. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"I was subjected to a lot of violence by my friends." A1; " Teachers can also insult us, calling us things like 'retarded'." A10; " Teachers actually apply*

violence as well, like our math teacher calling us 'stupid' and 'idiots'." A17.

Sub-theme 4: Location of Violence

Adolescents stated that violence occurs in classrooms, schoolyards, the school environment, and toilets. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"There is tension in the classroom, with people insulting and swearing at each other." A16; " My friend hit me in the schoolyard as a joke, but I didn't take it as a joke, it was very hard." A2; "Children who report to the principal are threatened outside and sometimes cornered in the toilets by 20-30 people. They don't report it to the principal because they fear getting beaten again." A16; "Bulling usually happens after school, and a small amount happens in the toilets." A16.*

Sub-theme 5: School's Attitude Toward Violence

While adolescents stated that most teachers try to prevent violence, some students felt that the school is indifferent to violence, and others stated that students who engage in violence are expelled. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"They only give a reprimand, suspension, or discipline. Besides that, they don't give many warnings. Teachers are indifferent and ignore us. They leave us to ourselves." A2; "Generally, teachers prevent violence, as they are everywhere." A3; "Our teachers are very supportive, they prevent violence, and because students respect their teachers, they listen to them and are afraid to act out." A13; "As a result of violence, students are punished, and they may be expelled. We had one student who was expelled from our class because he was disruptive and causing harm to others." A4.*

Theme 2: Effects of Violence

Sub-theme 1: Emotional

Adolescents reported experiencing feelings of anger, inadequacy, sadness, regret, fear, and anxiety after being victims of violence. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"When my friends subjected me to violence, I got angry. But I try to keep my anger inside. I say, 'Look at me, now look at them.'" A18; "I felt inadequate and ugly." A15; "It makes a person sad. You start wondering, 'Am I really like this?' It makes you dislike yourself." A2; "I got into a fight with the girls, and I regret what I did. It turned into a verbal argument." A9; "I felt fear, I felt insecure, like something could happen at any time. For example, when I walk on the street, I think someone might harm me, and I worry that I'll be subjected to violence." A16,*

Sub-theme 2: Behavioral

Adolescents reported skipping school, distancing themselves from friends, and engaging in compulsive behaviors after experiencing violence. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"I didn't want to go to school, I felt a lack of confidence, and anxiety. I can't speak comfortably in social situations anymore."*

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A8; *"I used to like math, but after the teacher insulted us in class, I lost interest."* A17; *"I was at the point of quitting school, I had crying fits, I wanted to quit."* A11; *"I stopped talking to my friend, we're still not on speaking terms. My perspective on them changed."* A2; *"During the pandemic, I was constantly washing my hands. After experiencing violence, I started having obsessive behaviors, and I sought therapy."* A11.

Theme 3: Coping Strategies
Sub-theme 1: Problem-focused
Adolescents reported using problem-focused strategies such as telling parents, teachers, or school administration, attempting to resolve the issue by talking, and responding with violence. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"If it's really serious, and if it's harming others, I would tell a teacher, or I could tell the teacher on duty, or I would tell my mom or dad."* A1; *"I tried to solve the problem myself, I sat down and talked, told them I was uncomfortable, and said that if they continued treating me this way, I would end the friendship. They never did it again."* A14; *"I was really angry, they kept bothering me, they mocked me, so I responded verbally."* A9.

Sub-theme 2: Emotion-focused
Adolescents reported using emotion-focused strategies such as distancing themselves, giving in, and ignoring the situation. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"It happened in the cafeteria, chairs were flying around. We distanced ourselves from the situation."* A3; *"In the past, I used to try to stay close to the kids to prevent bullying, I did whatever they asked."* A16; *"I ignored it at first, but after a while, their comments started to get to me. I could manage it at first, but then it became overwhelming. I didn't tell my family or teachers, I tried to deal with it on my own, but I wish I had told my teachers, they could have helped, and the situation could have ended sooner."* A15,

Theme 4: Suggestions for Preventing Violence
Sub-theme 1: Suggestions for Families
Adolescents emphasized the need for parents to be educated and informed about the issue, to care for their children, and to provide psychological support. Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"Parents should teach their children that looking down on others is not the right way to behave."* A9; *" It's hard to change something that's already habitual, but education can be effective. Both parents and children can be educated."* A12; *" To prevent violence, psychological support and therapy should be provided. Both sides should be supported, and parents need to be informed and involved."* A11.

Sub-theme 2: Suggestions for Children
Adolescents emphasized the importance of children learning to protect themselves and reporting violence.

Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"We need to learn to protect ourselves."* A17; *"If we are subjected to violence, we should tell our parents."* A1.

Sub-theme 3: Suggestions for School Administration and Teachers
Adolescents suggested that teachers should supervise students, provide education, and ensure that students who engage in violence are expelled or punished.

Some of the adolescents' statements are as follows: *"Teachers should report to the parents if students engage in violence, and they can try to intervene with the child. They should tell the children to be careful and explain that violence is wrong."* A1; *" Guidance counselors should provide education. The school is not taking this issue seriously enough, and more attention should be given to it."* A9; *" The school should discipline bullies. They need to be stopped."* A7; *" Those who engage in violence need to be expelled from the school. Just skipping school for a day or two won't help. They should be given proper lessons, and guidance counselors should do their part well."* A2.

DISCUSSION
School violence is a significant issue that threatens the health and safety of students.[17] In this study, based on interviews conducted with 20 adolescents about their experiences with violence at school, four main themes emerged: experiences of violence, effects of violence, coping strategies, and suggestions for preventing violence.

All adolescents participating in the study reported experiencing or witnessing violence at school. The participants discussed the socio-economic and cultural causes of violence in schools. It was observed that the reasons for violence varied according to the characteristics of the schools. For example, in high schools, flirting relationships between male and female students were among the main causes of fights. A female vocational high school student stated that girls fight for boys. Similar to our study, other studies have also identified that relationships between boys and girls are a reason for fights.[18,19] It is thought that this situation is due to the increased interest in the opposite sex and feelings of competition in adolescence. It was determined that academic competition between students in science high schools, especially grade jealousy, led to conflicts. In the study of Güngör et al., it was shown that violence was experienced more intensely in vocational and technical high schools where there was uncertainty about setting goals for the future, whereas there was no physical violence in science high schools.[20] It can be said that emotional violence is experienced more in schools with high achievement levels.

On the other hand, factors such as conflicts between friends, jealousy and efforts to show superiority trigger

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violence. In our study, it was stated that especially children with economic problems caused economic violence by stealing at school. Okagbue et al. also reported that 9 out of 1000 students were victims of theft.[21] Adolescents stated that violence was learned from the family or family indifference triggered violence. According to Bandura's social learning theory, individuals can learn violence by seeing it from their environment.[22] Therefore, it is critical for families to be good role models for their children.

Some adolescents stated that their friends became aggressive due to smoking and drug use and demanded money from students by force. Substance use leads to security problems in the school environment and increases incidents of violence.[17] On the other hand, there is a relationship between bullying behavior in schools and victims and substance use.[23] For this reason, it is of great importance to identify adolescents who smoke and use substances in school and to increase security measures around the school.

In our study, adolescents stated that they encountered physical, emotional and economic types of violence: Physical violent behaviours such as hitting, pushing, beating and kicking were found to be more prevalent in the middle school period. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) report, violence rates of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students (27%-28%) are higher than 9th, 10th and 12th grade students (16%-19%).[17] High school students reported that they encountered emotional violence such as threats, swearing, name-calling and ridicule more frequently. Especially adolescents who wore glasses and had weight problems were exposed to emotional violence. A large-scale meta-analysis study similarly found that children with obesity were more likely to be bullied.[24] Most of the adolescents stated that swearing has passed into normal spoken language and therefore it is not defined as an element of violence among young people. There are other studies indicating that violence is normalized among adolescents.[25] This may cause desensitization to violence.[25,26] In our study, the fact that adolescents perceived swearing as normal was evaluated as a sign of degeneration and cultural changes in the use of language among adolescents.

Behaviours such as theft, asking for money and asking for cigarettes were shown among the types of violence that students were exposed to within the scope of economic violence. Incidents of sexual violence were also encountered. Male students stated that students watched each other in the toilets and swear words with sexual content were used. One male student stated that his friends mockingly pulled down his underwear and he had to change his school after this situation.

In our study, adolescents reported that violence was usually inflicted by their peers at school and sometimes

teachers inflicted emotional violence including swearing and insults. In the literature, there are studies describing physical and emotional violence perpetrated by teachers against students[27,28] but there are also studies showing violence perpetrated by students against teachers.[17,29] In this respect, it can be said that violence is a multidimensional issue that needs to be addressed.

In our study, adolescents stated that violent incidents were mostly experienced around the school; in addition, violence was also experienced in the classroom, school garden and toilets. Adolescents stated that their friends with whom they had disagreements threatened them, showed them knives and even used physical violence after school. Especially female students reported that they were subjected to threats and physical violence by being squeezed in to toilets. In another study conducted in Türkiye, it was found that students were exposed to violence mostly in the school garden, but also in the classrooms, school environment, corridors, toilets and canteen.[20] These findings show that violence is not limited to a certain area, on the contrary, it can be experienced in all areas and surroundings of the school. Therefore, it is of great importance to take security measures in and around all school areas.

In our study, adolescents stated that they experienced anger and sadness after the violence and felt humiliated and inadequate. They also stated that they experienced fear and anxiety due to the possibility of recurrence of violence. Some adolescents felt regret for getting involved in the fight. Adolescents are psychologically affected by violence; they may experience problems such as self-harm, suicidal tendency, depression, decreased self-esteem, antisocial behaviours, academic success decreases and school dropout is observed.[30] On the other hand, the tendency to violence may lead to a decrease in self-esteem.[31] Emotional problems are also reflected on the behaviours of adolescents. The participants stated that they did not want to go to school, were absent, changed schools, distanced themselves from their friends and exhibited compulsive behaviours because they were afraid of violence. For this reason, some adolescents received psychiatric treatment. Research results show that adolescents are affected both psychologically and behaviourally by violence. Therefore, it is important to identify violence at an early stage and to implement effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Adolescents stated that they mostly told the situation to their teachers or parents in order to cope with violence. Some of them stated that they tried to solve the problem by talking to their friends and some of them ignored the situation and gave in. Adolescents who participated in the study by Midgett et al. said that violence at school was ignored by their teachers.[26] In our study, some adolescents stated that teachers were insensitive to

violence. It is important that violence incidents are reported without concealment and teachers intervene in the issue in order to prevent violence. In this context, it can be said that students' knowledge on coping with and preventing violence is insufficient.

Adolescents made various suggestions about the prevention of violence. In particular, they emphasized that schools and teachers have great responsibilities. They stated that students should be constantly monitored in schools, perpetrators of violence should be identified and necessary sanctions should be applied. Mehdinezhad and Rashki reported that internal factors such as teachers' characteristics, school management and school structure play an effective role in students' exposure to violence.[32] The principal's attitude towards violence is also seen as a critical factor in prevention efforts.[32] Therefore, teachers and administrators should be educated about violence and they should definitely not tolerate violence. In addition, adolescents emphasized the importance of the education of families. They stated that it was critical for children to be able to protect themselves, say 'no' and share the violence they experienced.

The findings are limited to the statements of the adolescents participating in the study and cannot be generalized. In addition, the study's limitation is that the sample was not homogenous enough in terms of school diversity.

In this study, adolescents' experiences of exposure to violence, psychological and behavioural effects, methods of coping with violence and prevention suggestions were discussed. The findings show that violence has profound effects on adolescents, causing negative emotions such as anger, sadness, feelings of inadequacy, fear and anxiety, as well as a decrease in self-esteem, a decrease in academic success and school dropout. In addition, it has been determined that adolescents who are victims of violence feel lonely, withdraw from their friends and in some cases have to seek psychiatric support.

Adolescents stated that schools, teachers and families have a great responsibility to prevent violence. Increasing students' awareness of violence, identifying perpetrators of violence and taking necessary measures will be effective in preventing violence. At the same time, it is critical that school administration and teachers have a clear attitude toward violence and that families support their children.

These findings suggest that violence should be detected at an early stage, effective intervention strategies should be implemented and educational institutions, families and society should act in cooperation. Awareness-raising activities and comprehensive education programs should be implemented to prevent violence and ensure that adolescents have a healthy development

process. Teachers and school management can implement training programs. In addition, school health nurses can take an active role in the identification and prevention programs of violence in schools.

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