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Araştırma Makalesi

Geliş/Received : 15.05.2020  
Kabul/Accepted : 31.05.2020

Research Paper

## Adolescents' Parental Rejection Perceptions and The Attachment Styles as a Parameter of Tendency to Violence\*

### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to gain an understanding of the quality of parent-child attachment relationship on the tendency to violence on high school adolescents with disciplinary penalties due to violence in Turkey. The sample group was composed of 145 volunteer adolescents aged 14-18 years from 8 different high schools in Istanbul. There are 43 adolescents who receive disciplinary penalties by the disciplinary boards of their schools for physical and verbal violence and 102 adolescents who not receive disciplinary penalties at all. Parental Acceptance /Rejection Scale, Violence Tendency Scale, Inventory of Experiences in Close Relationships and Personal Information Form were used to the collect the data. Results indicated that the perception of neglect/indifference which adolescents with disciplinary penalties receive from, only, their mothers has been found higher. There is a negative correlation between the avoidant attachment and the feeling of harming others in relation to adolescents' patterns of violence and attachment patterns. In addition, adolescents' feelings of warmth/affection perceived from their mothers and fathers reduce anxious attachment while feelings of indifference/neglect of adolescents increase the anxious attachment. The results emphasized the importance of perceived parental rejection and attachment style established in childhood on the tendency to violence in adolescence.

**Keywords:** *Adolescence, parental rejection, tendency to violence, attachment, disciplinary penalty*

### Ergenlerin Şiddet Eğilimi Parametresi Olarak Ebeveyn Reddi Algıları ve Bağlanma Stilleri

### ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de şiddet nedeniyle disiplin cezası alan ergenlerin, şiddete eğiliminde ebeveyn-çocuk bağlanma ilişkisinin niteliğini incelemektir. Çalışmanın örneklem grubu, İstanbul'daki 8 farklı liseden 14-18 yaş arası 145 gönüllü ergenden oluşmaktadır. Fiziksel ve sözlü şiddet nedeniyle okullarının disiplin kurulları tarafından disiplin cezası alan 43 ergen ve hiç disiplin cezası almayan 102 ergen bulunmaktadır. Verilerin toplanmasında Ebeveyn Kabul/Red Ölçeği, Şiddet Eğilimi Ölçeği, Yakın İlişkilerde Yaşantılar Envanteri ve Kişisel Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar disiplin cezası alan ergenlerin, yalnız annelerinden aldıkları ihmal/kayıtsızlık algısının daha yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Ergenlerin şiddet ve bağlanma paternleriyle ilgili olarak, kaçınan bağlanma ve başkalarına zarar verme düşüncesi arasında negatif bir korelasyon bulunmuştur. Ayrıca ergenlerin, annelerinden ve babalarından algıladıkları sıcaklık/şefkat hisleri kaygılı bağlanmayı azaltırken, ergenlerin kayıtsızlık/ihmal hisleri ise kaygılı bağlanmayı artırmaktadır. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, çocuklukta algılanan ebeveyn reddinin ve ebeveynle kurulan bağlanma stiline, ergenlik dönemindeki şiddet eğilimine olan önemini vurgulamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ergenlik, ebeveyn reddi, şiddet eğilimi, bağlanma, disiplin cezası*

\***Acknowledgements:** *The authors would like to thank all of our family members and all of our friends who have always felt their spiritual support in the most difficult moments during the studies. We would like to thank our esteemed colleague, psychological counselor Nesrin Konakçı who has always felt his criticisms, help and patience in every step of this study. We would like to thank all parents and students who have volunteered to study for their help during the data collection process.*

## Introduction

The family plays an important role in transferring the perception of society to individuals, which is necessary for the existence and development of all communities (Marsh, 2000). Parents show unconditional love and respect to their children, supervise them and meet their needs (Kulaksızoğlu, 2011). Additionally, the family is the unique position of the most intense emotional experiences during the life time of individuals.

The Parental Acceptance/Rejection Theory (PARTheory), developed by R. Rohner in 1978, shows that the child's perception of acceptance/rejection from parents affects the emotional, behavioral and social-cognitive development of the individual (Rohner, 1986). The theory is based on the fundamental assumption that all people in the world need to receive positive feedback and feel warmth from people who are important to them (Rohner, Khaleque & Cournoyer, 2005).

Parents' acceptance of the child means that the parent expresses love, affection, care, comfort, emotional support and warmth towards the child in both physical and verbal ways. On the other hand, the parental rejection refers to diversity of hurtful behaviors, including coldness, hostility, aggression, indifference, lack of affection and neglect that children can experience from their primary caregivers, typically mother. Parental rejection is also characterized by the parent's approach is below the child's expectation of love, interest and warmth (Rohner, et al., 2005). Consistent this view, a large portion of the past examinations on this, people in each mainland – with the exception of the Antarctic-comprehend themselves to be accepted or rejected in these four different ways: aggression/hostility, warmth/affection (or lack of affection/coldness), undifferentiated rejection and neglect/indifference (Ali, Khaleque & Rohner, 2015).

Infants improve attachment relationships through interactions with their primary caregivers, typically their mothers. Attachment is defined as strong emotional ties that are framed and developed towards individuals whom they consider imperative to them (Bowlby, 1973). Attachment theory point to the quality of the relationship between the infants and parents for the development of later peer relationships. Bowlby stated that attachment styles created during childhood affected the mental wellness of individuals in adulthood (Bowlby, 1988). Maintaining closeness and social interaction with the parental figure in childhood encourage secure attachment and children's adjustment to the environment (Eken, 2010).

Many examines have demonstrated the association between the nature of children's relations with their primary caregivers to maladaptive behaviors and emotional rigours (Steinberg et al., 1991; Garber, Robinson, & Valentiner, 1997; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Pettit et al., 2001; Rubin & Burgess, 2002; Üstün, Yılmaz & Kırbaş, 2007). Likewise, in a meta-analysis of Fearon et al., it was found that insecure attachment was significantly connected with externalizing behaviors in 69 investigations (Fearon et al., 2010). For a healthy mental development, an individual should have a warm, close and uninterrupted relationship with the primary caregiver during infancy and childhood (Bretherton, 1992). Negative attitudes and aggressive behaviors will develop in individuals who have not met their needs in infancy and childhood and have developed an insecure attachment relationship characterized by anger, insecurity and fear with the caregiver (Dodge & Newman, 1981).

The quality of the attachment relationship lies at the root of many mental disorders which are encountered in childhood and adolescence (Soysal et al., 2005). It was observed that adolescents with secure attachment styles had more emotionally close friendships and developed a more careful concept of friendship than adolescents with insecure attachment. In addition, it was found that adolescents with secure attachment can be included in large peer groups, use appropriate emotion-regulation skills and have less hostile attitude when conflicted with close friends (Zimmermann, 2004).

The tendency to violence is defined as the occurrence of an individual's feelings, thoughts and behaviors about violence. This concept is not limited to the individual's violent behavior, as well as having the idea that the use of violence is correct (Haskan & Yıldırım, 2012).

Family is an important factor in the tendency to violence. Adolescents whose parents divorced, witnessed or experienced domestic violence and grew up in families with low socio-economic status display more aggressive behavior due to mental and social deprivation (Coşkun & Bebiş, 2014). Individuals whose parents are prone to violence, emotionally distanced, have a rejectionary attitude towards their physical/emotional needs, and do not respond consistently their needs, develop negative thoughts such as abandonment, emotional deprivation and social withdrawal later in their lives (Young, 1999).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) data, violence during adolescence is related to factors such as parental problems in early childhood, weak attachment between parents and children, high number of children in the family, early maternity and weak interdependence of family members. Many of these factors may adversely affect the child's social/emotional development and behavior in the absence of social support (Krug et al., 2002).

This study will attempt to organize a heuristic model that may serve as an assistance to find out connections between attachment styles, parental rejection and tendency to violence. The object of this paper is to gain an understanding of the nature of parent-child attachment on the tendency to violence on high school adolescents with disciplinary penalties due to violence in Turkey/Istanbul.

## Method

### Sample

The sample group of the study is the adolescents studying in 8 different public high schools in Istanbul. In this study, 145 adolescents, 62 girls and 83 boys, were the participants. 43 adolescents were punished for violence (physical and verbal) by the Disciplinary Board in their schools for violence; 102 participants are adolescents who were never punished by random sampling method. 62 (42.8%) of the adolescents were girls and 83 (57.2%) were boys. Official approval was obtained from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education and the parents of the adolescents to apply the scales to adolescents.

### Measures

**Parental acceptance/rejection questionnaire (PARQ):** It was developed in 1978 by Rohner et al.. The questionnaire was arranged as separate forms of mother and father. The Parental

Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) (Child/Adolescent Form) measures children's perceived acceptance/rejection in their relationships with caregivers between 9 and 17 years of age. In the meta-analysis study conducted by Khaleque and Rohner in 2002, the internal consistency of parental rejection in PARQ's Child Form was .89 (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002).

**The violence tendency scale (VTS):** It was developed in 2012 by Haskan et al. (Haskan & Yıldırım, 2012). The scale consists of 20 items including 1 reverse 19 flat items. It is a Likert Type scale based on triple grading (3= always, 2= sometimes, 1= never). Flat items were measured by normal scoring; the reverse item were measured in reverse order. The total score of the scale is between 20 and 60. A high score indicates that the individual has a high tendency to violence. Findings related to the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha Reliability coefficient was .87 and test-retest reliability coefficient was .83 (Haskan & Yıldırım, 2012).

**Experiences in close relationships:** It was developed in 1998 by Brennan et al. (Brennan et al., 1998). The inventory was obtained from the factor analysis of 60 subscales used to measure the attachment in romantic relationships. As a result of the analysis, the two dimensions that determine attachment styles and are considered to be independent from each other are the factors of "avoidance" and "anxiety" (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998). The Turkish adaptation, validity and reliability studies of the inventory were conducted by Sümer and Güngör in 2000. In the study, it was found that the dimensions of avoidance and anxiety were represented by two strong factors consisting of items with a factor load of .30 and above. These dimensions were found to have a high level of internal consistency (.81 for avoidance; .84 for anxiety) (Güngör, 2000).

**Personal information form (PIF):** PIF included questions about demographic characteristics of the participants, and questions related to doing sports, emotional intimacy (belonged) and social relations, violence in the neighborhood and school, and domestic and non-family violence.

### Statistical Analysis

The data obtained through the data collection scales were processed into the computer as a numerical expression. The analysis of the data was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 18.0 statistical software. In the analysis results, statistical significance levels were accepted as  $p < 0.05$ . Kruskal-Wallis analysis was used for statistical significance of the difference between more than two independent variables and Mann Whitney-U Test was used for statistical significance of the difference between the means of two variables. The relationship between the dependent and independent variables of the study was tested with Spearman correlation coefficient.

## Results

**Table 1.** Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire (Mother and Father Form) According to the Adolescent's Disciplinary Penalties due to Violence Variables and "Mann Whitney-U" test Results

Questionnaire (Mother)	Discipline	N	Mean Rank	Total	U	z	p
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Warmth/ Affection	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	68,52	2946,50	2000,500	-,847	,397
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	74,89	7638,50			
Hostility/ Aggression	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	83,01	3569,50	1762,500	-1,884	,060
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	68,78	7015,50			
Indifference/ Neglect	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	87,17	3748,50	1583,500	-2,659	
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	67,02	6836,50			
Undifferentiated Rejection	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	80,49	3461,00	1871,000	-1,454	,146
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	69,84	7124,00			
<b>Questionnaire (Father)</b>	<b>Discipline</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>p</b>
Warmth/ Affection	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	73,90	3177,50	2154,500	-,167	,867
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	72,62	7407,50			
Hostility/ Aggression	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	79,77	3430,00	1902,000	-1,281	,200
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	70,15	7155,00			
Indifference/ Neglect	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	78,35	3369,00	1963,000	-1,001	,317
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	70,75	7216,00			



Undifferentiated Rejection	Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	43	77,92	3350,50	1981,500	-,979	,327
	Not Receiving Disciplinary Penalty	102	70,93	7234,50			

\*p&lt;.05

- As a result of the “Mann Whitney-U” test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference according to the adolescent’s disciplinary penalties due to violence there was no a significant difference in the warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, undifferentiated rejection sub-dimensions for Mother Form.
- As a result of the “Mann Whitney-U” test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference according to the adolescent’s disciplinary penalties due to violence there was a significant difference in the indifference/neglect sub-dimensions for Mother Form. Adolescent’s disciplinary penalties due to violence have a high level of neglect/indifference perception about mother.
- As a result of the “Mann Whitney-U” test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference according to the adolescent’s disciplinary penalties due to violence there was no significant difference in the warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, neglect/indifference, undifferentiated rejection sub-dimensions for Father Form.

**Table 2.** The Relationship Between the Adolescents’ Perception of Violence and the Pattern of Attachment

		Avoidance	Anxiety	
<b>The Violence Tendency Scale</b>	The Feeling of Violence	r	-,149	,021
		p	,073	,801
	Violence Through Information Technologies	r	-,143	,008
		p	,087	,921
	The Feeling of Harming Others	r	-,176	,107
		p	,034*	,200
	Applying Violence Against Others	r	-,326	-,024
		p	,000*	,774

\*p&lt;.05

- In order to measure the relationship between the feeling of harming others and avoidant attachment score, one of the sub-dimensions of The Violence Tendency Scale (VTS), as a result of spearman correlation, a significant negative relationship was found. In adolescents who receive disciplinary penalty, avoidant attachment decreases as the feeling of harming others increases than in adolescent who are not receive disciplinary penalty. Therefore, there is a negative correlation between the feeling of harming others and the avoidant attachment in adolescents who receive disciplinary penalty.

- In order to measure the relationship between applying violence against others and avoidant attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant negative relationship was found. In adolescents who receive disciplinary penalty, avoidant attachment decreases as the applying violence against others increases than in adolescent who are not receive disciplinary penalty. Therefore, there is a negative correlation between the applying violence against others and the avoidant attachment in adolescents who receive disciplinary penalty.

**Table 3.** Relationship Between Parental Acceptance/Rejection Perception and Pattern of Attachment

		Avoidance	Anxiety
<b>Parental Acceptance/ Rejection Questionnaire (Mother Form)</b>	Warmth/Affection	r	-,147
		p	,077
	Hostility/Aggression	r	,058
		p	,487
	Indifference/Neglect	r	,130
		p	,119
	Undifferentiated Rejection	r	,046
		p	,579
<b>Parental Acceptance/ Rejection Questionnaire (Father Form)</b>	Warmth/Affection	r	-,138
		p	,099
	Hostility/Aggression	r	-,047
		p	,574
	Indifference/Neglect	r	,126
		p	,130
	Undifferentiated Rejection	r	,013
		p	,872

\*p<.05

In the study, the relationship between parental acceptance/rejection perceptions and attachment styles of adolescents who received disciplinary penalty and adolescents who did not receive disciplinary penalty was examined. The findings are as follows:

- In order to measure the relationship between warmth/affection (Mother Form) and anxious attachment score, which is one of the sub-dimensions of PARQ, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant negative relationship was found. While the feeling of warmth/affection increases towards the mother, anxious attachment decreases. There is a negative correlation between warmth/affection and anxious attachment towards the mother.
- In order to measure the relationship between hostility/aggression (Mother Form) and anxious attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant positive relationship was found. Anxious attachment increases as the feeling of hostility/aggression towards the mother increases. There was a positive correlation between the feeling of hostility/aggression and the anxious attachment towards the mother.

- In order to measure the relationship between indifference/neglect (Mother Form) and anxious attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant positive relationship was found. Anxious attachment increases as the feeling of indifference/neglect towards the mother increases. There was a positive correlation between the feeling of indifference/neglect and the anxious attachment towards the mother.
- In order to measure the relationship between undifferentiated rejection (Mother Form) and anxious attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant positive relationship was found. Anxious attachment increases as the feeling of undifferentiated rejection towards the mother increases. There was a positive correlation between the undifferentiated rejection and the anxious attachment.
- In order to measure the relationship between warmth/affection (Father Form) and anxious attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant negative relationship was found. While the feeling of warmth/affection increases towards the father, anxious attachment decreases. There was a negative correlation between the feeling of warmth/affection and anxious attachment towards the father.
- In order to measure the relationship between indifference/neglect (Father Form) and anxious attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant positive relationship was found. Anxious attachment increases as the feeling of indifference/neglect towards the father increases. There was a positive correlation between the indifference/neglect and anxious attachment towards the father.
- In order to measure the relationship between undifferentiated rejection (Father Form) and anxious attachment score, as a result of spearman correlation, a significant positive relationship was found. Anxious attachment increases as the feeling of undifferentiated rejection increases towards the father. There was a positive correlation between the undifferentiated rejection and the anxious attachment towards the father.

## Discussion

### **In Adolescents Who Receive Disciplinary Penalties, Does the Violence Tendency Vary According to PARQ?**

The results of the current research indicated that family support contributes to the reduction of aggressive attitudes and behaviors on individuals. The perceived social support of adolescents from their families is thought to have an effect on decreasing the maladaptive behaviors in interpersonal relationships such as violence tendency. In the research, neglecting the warmth, appreciation, interest and love of the parent causes the adolescent to feel emotionally indifferent and tend to violence.

The findings of the current study are in line former literature that an individual perceives his parenting as rejection in childhood prone to experience more hostility and anger (Muris, Meesters, Morren & Moorman, 2004), internalizing and externalizing problems (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005) and lack of emotional control (Ebrahimi, Kharbou, Ahadi & Hatami, 2004).

Children who are rejected by their parents have a strong tendency to apply to violence. When rejected children reach puberty, they turn into individuals who are prone to violence and frequently use



violence with their friends (Değirmencioğlu, 2006). Steady with this view, it was found that parents who share their opinions with their kids and know the majority of their friends had kids with lower bullying involvement (Shetgiri, Lin, Avila & Flores, 2012).

Yalçın's study indicated that adolescents' level of aggression increases as the level of social support perceived by the family decreases (Yalçın, 2004). It was found that aggressive adolescents had lower family trust, less parental support, higher level of aggression between their parents, and parent-child relationship was more defensive than non-aggressive adolescents (Lopez, Olaizola, Ferrer & Ochoa, 2006).

### **Is There a Significant Correlation Between The Violent Tendencies of Adolescents and Their Attachment Styles?**

No significant relationship was found between the sub-dimensions of the tendency to violence scale and anxious attachment. There is a negative correlation between the tendency of violence scale and avoidant attachment in the sub-dimensions of harming others and applying violence against others. Adolescents cannot empathize while harming or applying violence to another person. The adolescent's lack of empathy in the tendency to violence will increase the level of aggression. Supplementary proofs that promote this evidences is have in many studies. Bowlby, proposed that children with insecure attachment with their caregivers prone to distrust and have very low levels of empathy and worry for other in their peer relations later in lives (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1973).

It is emphasized that parental attachment is an important predictor of well-being through social competence (Rice, Cunningham & Young, 1997). In different relationships, it is stated that secure attachment predicts the level of well-being and has a positive relationship with mental health (La Guardia, Couchman & Deci, 2000; Murdock & Love, 2004).

In this study, which investigated the effect of mothers' attachment styles and perceived acceptance/rejection on children's mental health, the experimental group included children and their mothers who apply to the child and adolescent psychiatry clinic; the control group consisted of randomly selected children and their mothers. As a result of the study, it was found that the children in the experimental group perceived more maternal rejection and their psychological adjustment was low, and the rejection and self-esteem were lower in the experimental group children than the control group children (Kayahan, 2006).

When the attachment styles of the adolescents who are prone to violence and apply to violence are considered, the inadequacy of social norms about violence and the lack of social empathy are encountered. The fact that there is a negative correlation in the sub-dimensions of harming others and applying violence to others supports this situation. However, there are few findings in the literature on this subject, it is thought that these research findings will help further studies.

In sum, this study findings seem to be consistent with the Bowlby's assertions propounding that insecure attachment relations with primary caregiver are related to the disclosing maladaptive behaviors, aggression, anti-social behavior, conduct disorder, and lack of social skills (Allen, Borman-Spurrell & Hauser, 1996; Allen, Marsh & McFarland, 2002; Lyons-Ruth, 1996; Lyons-

Ruth, 1993; Spender & Scott, 1996). In line this view, in a later meta-analysis, it was confirmed that weak attachment to primary caregivers is related with increasingly delinquent conduct (Hoeve et al., 2012).

### **Is There a Significant Correlation Between the Adolescent's Parental Acceptance/Rejection (Mother and Father Form) and Attachment Styles?**

In the relationship between attachment and rejection perceived from the parents by the adolescent; perceived warmth/affection feelings from parents decrease anxious attachment; feelings of indifference/neglect increase anxious attachment. In the attachment relationship between an anxious attachment adolescent and his father; although there is no significant relationship between anxious attachment and hostility/aggression, the feeling of hostility/aggression increases the anxiety in the adolescent's anxious attachment relationship with the mother. Similar results were obtained between adolescents' perceived acceptance/rejection from their parents and their attachment styles.

It was found that individuals who were understood by their families, who were interested, whose success was appreciated and who helped to solve their problems had a lower tendency to violence. Previous researches shown that an individual who perceives parental rejection in childhood prone to experience interpersonal problems and mental health problems such as isolation because of having poor interpersonal relationships, depressive symptomatology and low self-esteem (Saleem, Asghar, Subhan & Mahmood, 2019). Individuals who do not see the related behaviors from their family, do not receive sufficient financial and moral support, and who are not trusted by their family, whose mistakes are harshly criticized, whose problems are not shared, and who do not have a feeling that they are understood, are found to have a higher tendency to violence (Haskan, 2009).

Numerous studies suggest that a very significant relationship between the quality of parent-child attachment and individuals' results like social skills, self-esteem and aggression (Kenny, Lomax, Brabeck & Fife, 1998; Lyons-Ruth, 1997; Rice et al., 1997; Simons, Paternite & Shore, 2001). Keeping in view the importance of parental acceptance-rejection, according to Rohner and Kuyumcu (2018), experience parental acceptance in childhood helps account for self-acceptance in adulthood.

In their study conducted by Wolchik et al. with children and their mothers aged 8-15 years, they found a significant relationship between the degree of acceptance/rejection in mothers and their children's social communication skills. It was found that the children of the mothers with the rejective attitude had lower self-confidence than the children of the mothers with the acceptive attitude, and that these children had a feeling of inadequacy in emotional skills such as sharing their feelings and their communication skills were weak (Wolchik, Wilcox, Tein & Sandler, 2000).

### **Limitations**

There are number of limitations observed in the current study. Initially, this research was performed distinctly in the Turkish setting. Consequently, it is hard to differential factors that may impress the nature of parent-child interactions across cultures. Second, the parental acceptance/rejection level perceived by the adolescents examined in the study is limited only to the Parental

Acceptance/Rejection Scale measurements.

Despite this limitations, this current study gives new understanding about the relationship between the attachment styles, parental rejection and tendency to violence.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

It is significant to be opened these parameters for the improving and planning more efficacious prevention and intervention programs including parents, peers, and teachers. These programs can be developed for students at risk groups of schools or they can be prepared to meet the needs of the school with ready programs. Thus, educating parents, teachers and students about the violent behavior of the students will contribute to the prevention of violence in the school.

In educational institutions, the press plays an important role in the studies on violence. It is important for the public to raise public awareness that the media, which conveys the incidents of violence in educational institutions, reduce fear and anxiety by using constructive language and approach a solution-oriented approach to the possible causes and consequences of violence (Altun, Güneri, Baker, 2005).

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