Opinions of High School Students involved in Violence

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to assess the opinions of students in a variety of high schools at different class levels who received disciplinary punishment for violence. The research comprised 35 boys and 10 girls, for a total of 45 students. The data for the research were obtained with semi-structured interviews. The results show that the students used violence due to insufficient anger control, insufficient problem solving skills, and problems with delayed gratification and peer support. Additionally, it was found that the academic success of the students was low, they were repeating classes, had absences from school and problems with their families. During students' evaluation of the events for which they received disciplinary punishments, they stated that they would experience the same problems in similar situations or would quickly remove themselves from the scene as a solution. The guidance service, which is the school support service, helped; however this was insufficient and it was emphasized that management and teachers did not show sufficient interest. Additionally though some of the students were receiving medical treatment, it was observed that their problems continued. This situation was evaluated as showing that to solve the problem team work is necessary. In conclusion, in addition to medical evaluation of students for antagonism disorder and behavior disorder, it is proposed that projects with a holistic basis including family training, anger control studies, conflict resolution skills and peer mediation training supported by social services are necessary.

Key Words: violence in school, aggressiveness, disciplinary punishment

1. Introduction

People spend a significant portion of their lives in school. As a result school is a very important stage in a person's life adventure and socialization process. In other words, after the institution of the family school fulfils an important functional place for the individual to gain social behavior acceptable to societal expectations.

Violence is one of the leading problems in society today. Ergil (2001) defined violence as physical or psychological pain caused by an individual or group against the physical and moral integrity, property or cultural values of another individual or group.

Violence is generally defined as the use of physical force to hurt or harrass, Additionally, it is defined as "feeling or expressing irate or intense aggression or anger and commonly destructive actions or strength" or "hurting by distortion, violation or disrespect of important matters" (Korkut 2004). Violence, in short, is hard and painful behavior against the bodily integrity of a person from an external source (Unsal 1996). Violence is defined as the externalization and reflection toward another, at individual or societal scale, of the natural tendency for aggression in humans (Ayan 2006). In situations where no other conflict resolution method is known, it may occur as a form of self-expression. Within the complicated problem affecting all groups in society of violence, some groups are defined as being at greater risk. One of these groups is children. Children may be witnesses or victims of violence.

At school the concept of violence includes aggressive and criminal-like behavior producing negative results in the school environment, damaging the learning processes of students and preventing their development (Furlong & Morrison 2000). Generally, violence in school includes threats and physical attacks between students and students, and students and teachers or school management/personnel.

From past to present, it is necessary to present a safe education and learning environment to valuable irreplaceable part of education and learning activities of students, educational organizations and families. Generally, analyses of school climates mention "safe school" definitions. Among the properties of effective and safe schools are elements such as managment having an interest in student problems, cooperation between parents and school management, high level of participation of students in school activities and safe physical environment of the school. Welsh (2003) proposed that schools are like people with their own unique traits and

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climates. The school climate comprises the unwritten beliefs, values and attitudes observed within the interactions between students, teachers and management (Kizmaz 2006).

Currently schools are moving away from being locations where children can develop in terms of education and socializing due to increasing numbers of violent events. Today the majority of students are anxious about their physical safety in school (Walker & Walker, 2000). The belief by teachers that hitting is an effective disciplinary method has caused children to encounter physical abuse at school, as much as at home. Physical abuse is commonly used as a method of punishment in schools. Within the definition of physical abuse is behavior involving shaking, pinching, pulling ears, needling, forcing someone to stay in an uncomfortable position for long periods, excessive exercise as punishment, etc., in addition to hitting. Male children are exposed to more physical abuse. It appears that male teachers more commonly use physical punishment. This may be interpreted as due to the cultural authoritarian attitude of fathers at home being carried into schools (Beyazova & Sahin 2001).

To prevent violence in schools, the most common studies are violence action plans, family training and individual counseling studies. Research with school psychological counselors by Uzbas (2009) determined that 40% of counselors perceived themselves as unable to prevent the violence problem in school, while 70% stated they required in-service training on this topic. Additionally the most important expectation of counselors from in-service training studies was solution-based applicable training.

In terms of transferring the necessary information and gaining positive behavior within the education and learning process in schools, interpersonal interaction and communication has great importance. As a result, schools where violent behavior is observed should be investigated in a very careful manner. For students in schools to perform at the highest levels of their interest and abilities, it is necessary to prevent the increase in violent bullying behavior. As a result, the research investigated students receiving disciplinary punishment for threatening or using violence at high schools and equivalent in the region of Altınordu Guidance and Research center.

Violent events in schools are increasing both globally and in Turkey and in spite of precautions taken, our country cannot go beyond disciplinary rules. The fact that violence in schools affects the quality of life and success levels of students is too important to be ignored. As a result, this research aimed to investigate students receiving disciplinary punishment for threatening or using violence in schools in terms of violent tendencies in their own words.

2. Method

2.1 Population and Sample

The population of the research comprised high schools in the Altınordu Guidance and Research Center region. From the whole population of students receiving disciplinary punishments, the sample comprised 45 students who volunteered with parental permission. The type of high school, sex and class level of students participating in the research are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

School Codes	Gender		Clasis			
	Male	Female	9	10	11	12
AMTAL	14	-	7	3	4	-
FAL	3	-	1	2	-	-
GŞAYAL	2	5	2	2	2	1
GAŞÇPAL	3	-	1	2	-	-
KÇPAL	2	1	-	-	1	2
CAL	3	-	3	-	-	-
ZKMTAL	4	-	2	2	-	-
BMTAL	-	3	2	1	-	-
OL	2	1	2	-	1	-
UMETEM	2	0	1	1	-	-
Toplam	35	10	21	13	8	3

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

To obtain opinions on violence held by participants in the research a semi-structured interview form was prepared. The interview form initially included statements aiming to gain the trust of the individual, was prepared in accordance with the research, with short-answer questions on the school information of the individual in the introduction section. Later the students were asked semi-structured open-ended questions on the students' tendency toward violence prepared for the research. To ensure internal validity of the interview form, the form was first applied to 5 students who received disciplinary punishment for use of violence. The questions and answers were shown to experts and investigated. It was concluded that the interview questions provided data for the intended 5 dimensions and the data collection process began.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data obtained in the research were assessed with content analysis methods. Content analysis is used for data obtained from observations and interviews; "the purpose of this method is to obtain the concepts and associations that can explain the collected data" (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). Content analysis investigates the depth of the data; describing and interpreting the data after organizing the concepts revealed in logical fashion. In this way data were assessed in 3 stages for content analysis;

2.3.1 Coding the data: In the first stage of content analysis each participant was given a number and after interviews the data obtained were investigated within the framework of the research, with significant sections noted and the conceptual understanding named and coded. The code list, previously prepared for the conceptual framework of the research and based on interview questions, was given its final form after investigating all data. The key list was used to organize the data on the code list. Data outside of the research questions were left out of the coding.

2.3.2 Finding Themes: In this stage the codes determined by data coding were each accepted as a category and assessed as separate themes. For example; the statements "I used violence because I was cursed at and insulted" and "I used violence because my friend looked at me funny and teased me" were evaluated within the concept of "student reasons for using violence" in the sub-theme "verbal abuse".

2.3.3 Interpretation of findings: The detailed description and presentation of findings were interpreted by the researcher and some conclusions were reached in the final stage. The collected data were interpreted after passing through the necessary stages for qualitative research and a range of conclusions were reached. The importance of the conclusions was supported by the literature.

3. Results

In this section of the research, the data obtained from participants in 5 semi-structured questions were assessed within 5 themes.

3.1 Theme: Reasons for violence by students

The rates and sub-themes for opinions of 45 students participating in the research related to the first question are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Reasons for violence for students

Opinions of Participants	N	≈ %
Verbal Abuse	30	66
Bad mental state	17	37
Negative criticism of family	12	26
Exposure to physical violence	10	22
Behavior they did not like	11	24
Expectations not met	9	22
Increased incidence of accusations related to problems	4	9
Reaction to people they do not like	3	6
Substance abuse	1	2

- *A sample student opinion related to the theme of **verbal abuse***: "When my friends offend me, using words and sentences that upset me. In other words I'm a bit short-tempered, and when they say ridiculous things to me, I get very angry. Honestly, when they make fun of me, I get annoyed very quickly, if talk makes fun of appearance I get violent."
- *Sample student statement related to **bad mental state***: "When someone comes at me, especially at times when I'm feeling down, I can't take it, and then in those times when I have a particular issue it affects me negatively. When is it like that? Since I started high school it's been like this."
- *Sample student statement related to **negative criticism of family***: "If someone decides something wrong about me or my family or if they misinterpret things, I get angry and violent. I have a problem with irritability, before I used to get very angry and got treatment. I've been using medication for 1.5-2 years. I don't get annoyed as quickly as I used to."
- *Sample student statement related to **exposure to physical violence***: **"**When there's pushing and shoving. If someone doesn't hit me, I won't hit. Anyway I use medication because I'm neurotic. And I get very angry when someone curses at me. I fought a lot with my father, that's why I use medication for treatment."
- *Sample student statement related to **behavior they did not like***: "When playing football on the pitch, I hit my friend if he trips me. I get violent if I think people I love, my family, my girlfriend; my close friends are being harmed."
- *Sample student statement related to **expectations not met***: "When things I say aren't done. If I say don't and they insist and do it, I get violent. The fight was in the physical education lesson. In the second lesson when friends tried to enter the game, I said no. When they said the teacher had allowed it, the teacher came at me, and I took my anger out on him."
- *Sample student statement related to **increased incidence of accusations related to problems***: "I have problems and troubles I don't understand, I don't know who can understand but I know I'm going under slowly. At school I'm tired of these punishments and so on, when they come at me, immediately someone says something, I get annoyed.
- *Sample student statement related to **substance abuse***: "I'm an addict, when I can't get drugs I get violent."

3.2 Theme: Conflict resolution methods of students

The rates and sub-themes for opinions of 45 students participating in the research related to the second question are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Conflict resolution methods of students

Opinion of participants	N	≈ %
Physical violence	26	57
Verbal abuse and physical violence	14	31
Verbal abuse	15	33
Self-harm	1	2

- *Sample student statement related to **physical violence***: "When I get in a rage I threaten that I'll hang you, cut you, I beat them up or they beat me. If something's going to happen, I don't calm down. If someone comes and threatens me or hits me, I respond with the same. If someone comes and shoots their mouth off, I think bad things, then I can't control myself."
- *Sample student statement related to **verbal abuse and physical violence***: "Let me explain, when I've suffered an injustice, first I warn in a hard way but if they don't understand I say it openly and hit them. I don't want to injure them, I throw a punch at them, it doesn't matter if they're stronger than I am, the important thing is that I hit them. Even if I get beaten, I'm at ease."
- *Sample student statement related to **verbal abuse***: "I give a verbal answer, I answer teasing, trying to offend them with the same technique. I try to understand before the event, if it's related to me I show my reaction. If someone tells the truth to me, if they fairly criticize me I look at how they talk."
- *Sample student statement related to **self-harm***: "I hurt myself. For example I punch the wall."

3.3 Theme: Student expectations of non-violence

The rates and sub-themes for opinions of 45 students participating in the research related to the third question are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Student expectations of non-violence

Opinion of participants	N	≈ %
Respect and love	34	75
Justice	13	18
No comparisons	5	11
Empathic approach	7	15

- *Sample student statement related to **respect and love***: "I really don't know that, if they behave well I don't get violent. For example a teacher sends me to discipline for something related to the teacher, why do I go, we are in lessons, the teacher can't fully say anything, nagging and grumbling. I don't say anything but he won't stop. I don't have to take nagging from anyone, they can't annoy me. Ok, so do you abide by the rules in class? Mostly not, I won't lie, I won't say a bad word to the teacher, if the teacher warns me I'll accept my guilt. For example we have a philosophy teacher, acts fatherly, I pay attention to his warnings. Because he behaves well, ok son, sit down in your place. If a teacher approaches me conditionally, I feel excluded. If the teacher comes to me, I'll go to them."
- *Sample student statement related to **justice***: "If they do things I want, if they behave the way I like, sure. They shouldn't be things that go against my structure, my personality traits, should never include unfairness. I work from the idea that you act how a person acts, if they behave positively toward me, I'll behave the same.
- *Sample student statement related to **no comparisons***: "If my family didn't compare me to others, if they got along with me, if they didn't say hurtful things, if they didn't get in my way, I wouldn't need to be violent."
- *Sample student statement related to **empathic approach***: "If I'm late for lessons, if they ask why, if I don't get marked absent, if teachers acted equally toward all students, if they respected all students, if my friends behaved with respect and love toward me, if my teachers and friends tried to be empathic, there'd be no need for violence."

3.4 Theme: Effectiveness of disciplinary punishment

The rates and sub-themes for opinions of 45 students participating in the research related to the fourth question are given in Table 5.

Table-5. Effectiveness of disciplinary punishment

Opinion of participants	N	≈ %
Attempts to talk, removal from environment	29	64
Display similar behavior	9	20
Non-violence due to fear of disciplinary punishment	7	15

- *Sample student statement related to **attempts to talk, removal from environment***: "I wouldn't go to his classroom, now I don't even go to other classes. If I called and he didn't come I'd go alone. From now on, I'll tell the vice principal about any events directly."
- *Sample student statement related to **display similar behavior***: "I wouldn't act the same, in any case the kid wouldn't act the same to me, he's been beaten, I know I don't need to do the same again. If someone else did it? I wouldn't stand it, I'd beat them up."
- *Sample student statement related to **non-violence due to fear of disciplinary punishment***: "If there's another punishment above reprimand again, it'll be suspension and I won't do it."

3.5 Theme: Effectiveness of psychological counseling and guidance related to violence

The rates and sub-themes for opinions of 45 students participating in the research related to the fifth question are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Effectiveness of psychological counseling and guidance related to violence

Opinion of participants	N	≈ %
Satisfied	26	62
Insufficient	15	35
No guidance teacher	3	6
Rejection	1	2

- *Sample student statement related to **satisfied***: "I met them. They met with me a lot, the guidance teachers were really interested. What the vice principals in the school couldn't do, the guidance teachers do."
- *Sample student statement related to **insufficient:*** "We didn't do anything, just talked. I explained the event, they said send your parents, didn't comment. They gave me paper, I wrote my defense and then they sent me back to class."
- *Sample student statement related to **rejection***: "I went and explained my problem once before going to discipline. I wouldn't go a second time, but they try to help students."

4. Discussion

When the data related to the first theme in the research are evaluated (Table 2), the reasons for violence by students receiving disciplinary punishment may be linked to factors related to responding to violence, self-regulation and addiction. The students stated they used violence in response to verbal abuse (66%) and physical violence (22%). Similar to studies, this supports the idea that when individuals, whether young or in certain situations, are exposed to violence they respond with violence (Deveci *et al.* 2008). Ogel *et al.* (2006) stated the exposure to violence was a cause of using violence. The other factor of self-regulation is one of the significant problems encountered by adolescents. According to Tanribuyurdu &Yildiz (2014), self-regulation is the capacity of an individual to delay or suppress their behavior, tendencies and wishes, to abide by social rules, to control and regulate their emotions, focus on purpose-oriented warnings and sustain concentration Accordingly the problems related to self-regulation of students are revealed by the sub-themes of behavior they don't like (24%), expectations not met (22%), negative criticism of family (26%), increasing incidence of problems relating to accusation (9%) and reactions to people they don't like (6%) as stated in Table 2. It was identified that in terms of self-regulation students could not suppress their tendencies and wishes or controls their emotions to abide by rules. There was a correlation between addiction and violence (Raskin White & Gorman 2000). Research into detained and convicted adolescents reported that the rate of effect of substance addiction on crime was 29.7% (Ogel *et al.* 2006).

The evaluation of the second theme of the research, as given in Table 3, identified that students receiving disciplinary punishment were indexed toward physical and verbal violence for conflict resolution behavior, did not control their anger and displayed aggressive behavior. Ogel *et al.* (2006) states that insufficient anger control is among the risk factors for violent behavior. Similarly, research by Gündoğdu found male students had high levels of aggressiveness, and low levels of problem-solving. For female students the internal levels of anger were found to be high (Gundogdu 2010).

The evaluation of the third theme (Table 4) of expectations necessary for students not to use violence listed the concepts of respect and love (70%), justice (18%), lack of comparison (11%) and empathy (15%), which may be explained within the auspices of "safe school". A study on violence by Ogel *et al.* (2006) included the mentioned concepts within the factors necessary to create a safe school. Similarly Yavuzer stated that in terms of school climate and culture schools without safety and fairness led to violence. Again Welsh (2003) emphasized respect for students among three variables of school climate with being bully and victim. Additionally research found that among problems identified in high schools was the reality that students did no show each other love or respect (Karahan & Sardogan 2004). A study by Uste (2007) identified that students did not receive educations in a loving and respectful school environment in terms of human rights.

The fourth theme assessed the positive change among students receiving disciplinary punishment for violence. Accordingly (Table 5), it was identified that disciplinary punishment of students did not cause an educational change in behavior. Students stated they would display similar behavior (15%) or get out of the area as they were worried about disciplinary punishments (64%) or would not commit to action (15%). Yavuzer (1997) listed strengthening the love and trust relationship and personal values and to show respect to the environment as the aims of discipline and emphasized social cohesion. Erden & Akman (1997) stated that punishment did not cause a change in behavior but contrarily created feelings of fear and hate. Similarly Stein (1997) emphasized that punishment caused frustration, anger, indignation and irritation.

The fifth theme researched the effectiveness of psychological counseling and guidance services. Nearly 62% of students were satisfied with guidance services, while the remaining portion (15%) stated services were insufficient (Table 6). Though the satisfaction rates appear high, the insufficient rate shows that guidance services had lower than expected performance. Similarly in research into violence by Uzbas, 40% of counselors perceive themselves as unable to prevent violence in school, while 70% state they required in-service training related to violence (Uzbas 2009).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Among the reasons for students in the study using violence, factors were identified such as being victims of violence and experiencing problems related to self-regulation, having deficient conflict resolution skills, not receiving education in safe schools, lack of modern disciplinary policy in schools and insufficient counseling and guidance services.

According to the data obtained, it is necessary that "safe school" projects including love and respect in schools, allowing students to experience their interests and skills, emphasizing the importance of all democratic values in a tolerant environment with a modern disciplinary policy should be applied in the shortest time possible. At the same time in-service training to provide efficient counseling including anger control and conflict resolution skills should lower violence rates in school by a meaningful level. In conclusion, in addition to medical evaluation of students for antagonism disorder and behavior disorder, it is proposed that projects with a holistic basis including family training, anger control studies, conflict resolution skills and peer mediation training supported by social services are necessary.

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