

RESEARCH ARTICLE/ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

# Examination of the social lives of individuals exposed to violence in adolescence

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## Abstract

Violence, which is defined as all kinds of harmful behavior by the strong against the weak; Unfortunately, it appears in every area of our lives, in every age group. In particular, individuals who are exposed to violence during adolescence, all kinds of negative situations they experience during the development stage cause them to be unable to develop themselves personally and socially. These social features that cannot be developed not only make communication difficult for individuals, but also make them helpless in situations that require them to take action in daily life. In this study; Although it happened in the past, it is aimed to raise awareness against violence by showing how the effects of violence affect the lives of individuals in the future.

In this study, in order to examine the effect of violence on social life, a survey was conducted on 100 people who were found to have been subjected to violence throughout Turkey. According to the results of the survey, the study was evaluated and the findings were examined.

**Keywords:** Adolescence, Violence, Social Life

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence is a phenomenon that should be prevented and studies should be carried out to prevent it. People who find strength in themselves and who aim to control the person in front of them by relying on this power or to cause harm for personal satisfaction resort to violence whenever they find the opportunity and inflict emotional and physical damage on the person in front of them. The frequency and dose of violence increase according to various factors. For example, violence as an age-related factor is more frequently applied to the elderly and children. The biggest reason for this is that these people do not have the conditions to adequately defend themselves. The adolescence period, which is considered as the transition phase from childhood to adulthood, is the most important point of the emotional and physical development stage, and those who are currently trying to overcome this process carry the traces of every violence they see from their environment, especially their parents, into their adulthood.

## 2. DEFINITION

### 2.1. Adolescence and Violence

According to Parlaz et al. (2012), the adolescence period, which is called the transition period from childhood to adulthood, is the period in which physical and emotional development is most intense. When the development in adolescence is considered in the emotional context, it is observed that children have difficulties in expressing themselves, avoiding communication with their environment, introversion, desire to be alone, anger and harming behaviors. At this stage, adolescents who need their parents to understand them the most and who are in this expectation, both the impatient and unsympathetic attitudes of the parents, and trying to solve the problems by approaching their child's problems from an adult perspective are exactly suffering for children (Boztaş, 2004). At this point, adolescents who conflict with their parents are often exposed to parental violence and they get over the effects of the violence they are exposed to late, and often carry these effects throughout their lives. Adolescent violence should be evaluated not only in ter-

ms of physical but also in the context of all types of violence, and perpetrators are not limited to parents. There are children who are also subjected to violence by their relatives, peers and strangers (Aras et al., 2016). At this stage, the situation that wears out a child and makes it most difficult for her to recover psychologically is that he/she is exposed to violence from the individuals she trusts the most. Children's reactions to these violence vary. The effects of violence are divided into long-term and short-term. Although behaviors such as anger and sadness are generally put forward as a short-term effect, the long-term effect is interpreted as a decrease in the child's trust in family members and leaving the house behaviors in adolescents that make it more difficult to return (Yıldız & Behice, 2011). As a matter of fact, all kinds of violence experienced by children will negatively affect their lives under all circumstances (Altan & Baltacı, 2016). The family is an important social factor in the child's outlook and orientation towards life, as well as playing an effective role in him/her individual development in a psychological sense (Stark et al., 2021). When examined in this context, there are studies that show that children with a tendency to violence do not have a healthy family function (Kılıç, 2012). There are also studies showing that individuals who are exposed to violent behaviors show serious behavioral disorders in adulthood and that they show more anger and aggressive behaviors to their own children in the future (Frias & Armenta, 2002; Dilillo et al., 2000). Violence witnessed in the family causes mental health problems such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as witnessing or being exposed to domestic violence in childhood is accepted as the source of internalization of violence as a form of conflict resolution (İbiloğlu, 2012). The attitude that supports aggression and violence in the family can help children develop a positive attitude towards aggression by helping them develop their self-efficacy about aggression, and it can also cause the emergence of violent behavior as a general strategy used in communicating with the environment and achieving goals (Gül & Güneş, 2009). Comparative studies conducted in the context of the families of adolescents displaying violent behavior show that these families experience more problems in

terms of their competencies in problem solving, communication, role distribution, and emotional reactions. However, in some studies, it was concluded that media and peer influences, rather than family conflicts, affect attitudes towards violence more (Avcı & Güçray, 2010; 2013). In the studies of Engel et al. (2022), it is shown that people who have been exposed to violence during adolescence in various countries have a higher rate of negative attitudes towards life.

## 2.2. Types of Violence Against Adolescents

### 2.2.1. Physical Violence

Attacks that aim to cause all kinds of physical harm and are carried out in this direction are considered as physical violence (Tezel, 2002). Violence against adolescents is generally carried out in the form of kicking, slapping, punching, pushing, strangling and throwing in the context of physical violence (Polat, 2017). In the lethal dimension of physical violence, especially sharp and piercing tools, firearms and almost all imaginable tools are used as crime tools. For example, in August 2022, a child was reported to have died in Ankara after being beaten by his father with a picnic tube. While physical violence is generally encountered in homes in the context of domestic violence, streets and schools are other places where physical violence is encountered (Lök et al. 2016). While family members are perpetrators of violence at home, peers and strangers come on the streets, while teachers and peers are perpetrators of violence in schools (Kahraman & Çokamay, 2016).

A significant link has been established between physical abuse and depression towards children. Symptoms of depression based on exposure to physical abuse are generally seen as low self-esteem and lower consistency (Paslı, 2020).

### 2.2.2. Sexual Violence

According to the World Health Organization (2021), It is revealed that girls are more exposed to sexual violence in attacks carried out with the aim of harming sexual identity and taking advantage of sexual identity. Behaviors such as sexual violence, forcing them to positions they do not want, displaying, voyeurism, and trying

to have sexual intercourse when the individual does not want to, are described as sexual violence. Any sexual act that takes place causes many problems in the future sexual life of children. Sexual violence can be carried out not only for the purpose of satisfaction, but also for the purpose of controlling, controlling and humiliating the individual. In addition, it has been revealed that every child exposed to sexual violence has many problems in their future sexual life (Gurhan et al. 2020).

There are many sub-titles of sexual violence and each of them is a remarkable point that needs to be explored (Tavara, 2006).

### 2.2.3. Emotional/Psychological Violence

Emotional violence, which is not easily noticed by the society because it shows passive traces, but leaves great psychological damage when exposed to this type of violence, is the most common type of violence that adolescents encounter in their lives, especially by their parents. It is mostly in the form of swearing, insults, humiliation and threats (Özgentürk et al., 2012). Children are often exposed to insults from their parents when they perform an unsuccessful action or perform a behavior that their parents do not approve of. Emotional violence is carried out not only alone, but also in combination with physical violence. The emotional violence experienced by children who try to fully grasp their emotions and learn how to experience these emotions reveals how effective violence is in children's lives. As a result, there is an intimidation in emotional violence and adolescents who are exposed to emotional violence may experience difficulties in defending themselves, remaining passive, introverted and communicating (Topaloğlu, 2021).

Recognition, diagnosis and treatment of emotional abuse, it's very difficult to take legal action. The fact that it is more passive than other types of violence and that the findings are more abstract make it difficult to recognize emotional violence. Situations such as making fun of the child, insulting the child's thoughts and ideas, giving nicknames are types of violence that harm the child emotionally (Öztürk, 2007). When the adolescence periods of individuals who were stated

to have psychological disorders in adulthood were examined, it was determined that they were heavily exposed to emotional abuse (Crow et al, 2014; Chapman et al., 2004).

History of childhood sexual abuse; adulthood different psychiatric disorders considered an important risk factor for childhood sexual abuser in the later stages of people's lives; depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, substance addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep and have been found to have eating disorders (Jakubczyk et al., 2014).

#### 2.2.4. Economic Violence

Economic violence is encountered not only in underdeveloped but also in developed countries, and it is another type of violence that negatively affects children's lives. Children who are forced to work by their families, children whose earnings and savings are confiscated by their families are victims of economic violence (Akbulut & Günaydin, 2020).

In the study of Olufunmiyaló (2008), it is reported that economic violence against girls is more common in African countries and adult women are also affected by this situation, and they experience difficulties in the economic context.

Working when they should continue their education and training in Turkey. The number of children in need is increasing. 292 thousand in the 6-14 age group and 15-17 age group in Turkey. 601 thousand child workers are employed in the group (Yalçın, 2007). The abuse and neglect that children are exposed to cause irreversible damage to children, and these pressures experienced in adulthood are quite abrasive.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A survey study was conducted to reveal how the effects of violence experienced by adults and adolescents during their adolescence are manifested in their lives today, and a qualitative research method was determined. In the prepared questionnaire, 6 questions were asked to the participants, 3 of which were open-ended and 3 of which were multiple-choice, and people aged 15 and over were determined as the target audien-

ce. The data were obtained from Turkey and the questions were aimed at determining the type of violence and revealing the effects of violence in adulthood.

The data obtained together with the field work were analyzed and the questions were; It is aimed to determine the types of violence experienced in adolescence, to determine how the effects of violence reach in adulthood and how violence affects the lives of the people who are exposed to it.

### 4. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

100 people across Turkey participated in the research. While 56.4% of the individuals participating in the research were women, 43.6% were men.

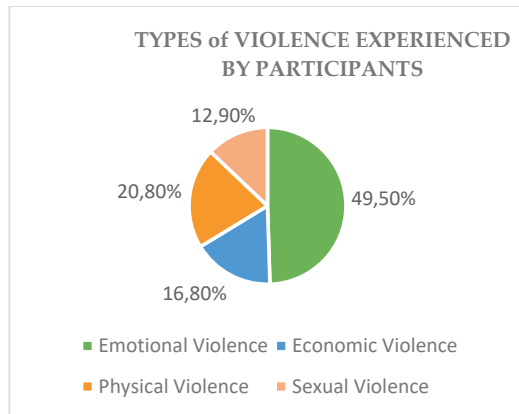
The average age of the participants aged 18 and over is 37.3%. Participants contributed to the research mostly from Istanbul, Ankara and Sivas.

### 5. RESULTS

Violence is a phenomenon encountered in every moment of life and is at a dangerous level. Every individual who has been subjected to violence, regardless of age, carries the traces of violence throughout their lives, but the dangerous dimension of violence in adolescents is that they are potentially open to all kinds of dangers at a time when they are very sensitive emotionally.

The data obtained in the field study show that the effects of violence that the individuals participating in the research were exposed to during adolescence still continue today. Considering the number of individuals exposed to psychological violence, especially during adolescence, the unconscious behaviors of parents towards their children and the pressure they apply to keep their children under control during the adolescence period, which they describe as dangerous, show that they have problems such as difficulty in communicating and inability to express themselves.

**Figure 1.** Types of violence experienced by participants during adolescence

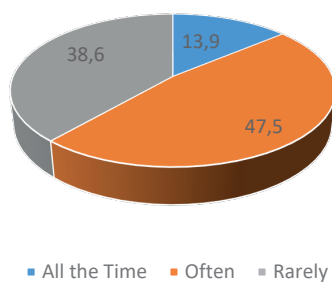


While %49.5 of the individuals who participated in the research stated that they were most exposed to emotional violence during adolescence, the rate of individuals who stated that they were exposed to economic violence was 16.8%, the rate of individuals who were exposed to physical violence was %20.8 and the rate of individuals who were exposed to sexual violence was %12.9 (Figure-1).

When asked to what extent individuals were exposed to the types of violence they voiced, 38,6% of the participants stated that they were exposed to violence rarely, %47,5 often and %13,9 all the time (Figure-2).

**Figure 2.** Frequency of exposure to violence in adolescents

FREQUENCY OF EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE (%)

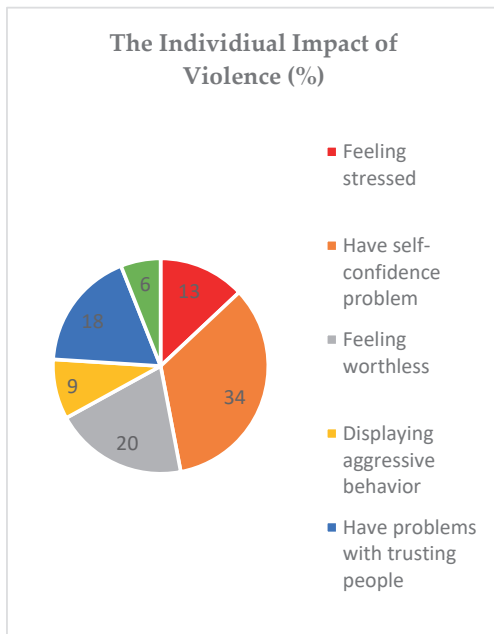


Individuals who stated that they were rarely exposed to violence stated that although they evaluate this rarity because of the time that has passed since the violence they have experienced, they are still exposed to the violence they have mentioned in most places today. When analyzed graphically, it is stated that individuals are exposed to psychological violence not only in adolescence but also in adulthood.

Considering the ratio of female participants in the study, it is stated that women witness psychological violence mostly because of their sexist approaches. Adolescent participants, who expressed the violence they have experienced in the context of psychological violence, stated that they constantly have arguments due to parent-child conflict and the pressure their parents put on them. As can be seen in Table-1, it is seen that the most common type of violence that individuals are exposed to after psychological violence is physical violence. The participants described physical violence with its generally known definition and stated that they were subjected to physical violence by their parents as a result of the argument between them and their parents, while they also expressed that they were often exposed to physical violence by their peers. Participants over the age of 18 who mentioned economic violence stated that they were generally forced to work by their parents during adolescence, and today's adolescents stated that the problems they experienced due to the current economic conditions negatively affected their lives and that the arguments between them and their parents were mostly due to financial reasons.

### 5.1. Individuals Effect of Violence

The participants who participated in the study and experienced violence were asked the question of what the individual effects of the violence they were subjected to, and the answers given in general terms were; It is said that individuals feel inadequate, have self-confidence problems, are alienated from the environment, skeptical, tired and stressed. In line with the answers given, the individual effects of violence are an explanatory concept for violence. The statements of the participants regarding the evaluation of violence are as follows:

**Figure 3.** The individual impact of violence

The participants explained the effects of the violence they experienced as generally experiencing self-confidence problems. In particular, the fact that some female participants stated that they have experienced violence by their family members gives a clue as to why they have self-confidence problems. From a proportional point of view, the lack of self-confidence, which occupies a large area of the graphic pie with a rate of 34%, shows that the most fundamental point of the effects of violence causes a lack of self-confidence. Individuals who lack self-confidence keep themselves in the background at many points in life and stay away from all initiative. Considering that individuals are generally exposed to emotional violence in the research, it shows that the behaviors of parents towards their children during emotional violence have very destructive effects on the future lives of adolescents. Situations such as self-confidence, distrust towards the environment, aggressive behavior, and stress-anxiety reveal that the effects of violence take place in the lives of individuals permanently, not instantaneously, even if it has been a long time. The rate of individuals who feel worthless as a result of the violence they have suffered is explained as 20%, and this thought shows that violence affects the position in which individuals see themselves in terms of self-esteem. How people put themselves in an individual context as a result of the treatment they receive by their parents and their environment is closely related

to the evaluation of violence by the society. Individuals who have been exposed to sexual violence state that they have confidence problems in the environment in general, mainly due to their self-confidence problems, because they are exposed to violence by their close relatives, and they see themselves as quite inadequate in terms of sexuality. As a matter of fact, the same findings have been found as a result of other studies on individuals who have been exposed to sexual violence, revealing how sexual violence affects individuals. As a result of this research, although the number of participants who have been subjected to sexual violence is low, the effect of sexual violence is the same as in other studies and the result does not change. The participants, who stated that they had a prejudice against sexuality at the rate of 6%, stated that they also saw themselves as insufficient in terms of sexuality. Considering that those who have experienced physical violence in the study are generally men, it has been reported that they consider their aggressive attitudes as traces of physical violence they have been exposed to in the past. Considering the individuals who reported that they exhibit aggressive behavior individually, it is seen that 9% of the data were obtained. Based on these data, it is observed that aggressive attitudes are exhibited in the approach to events as a result of physical violence, and individuals have aggressive attitudes in many aspects of daily life.

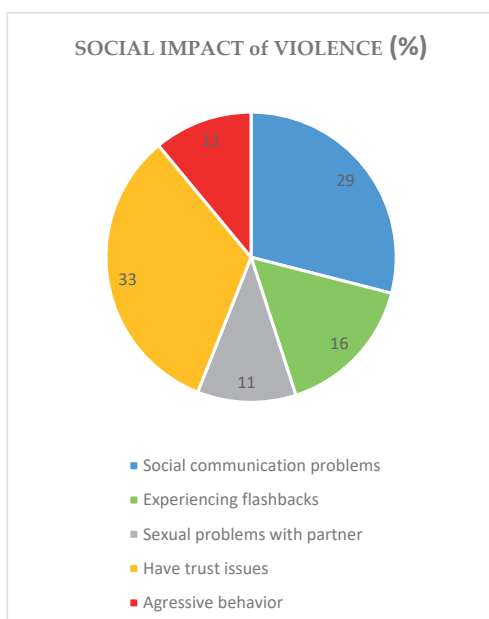
Adolescents, who are tried to be controlled and directed by their parents, interpret the effects of unhappiness and stress according to their parents' behaviors towards them. As for the individual effects of economic violence, the participants claim that their lives consist of only home and business life in general, that they cannot find the opportunity to socialize since they have started to play an active role in business life since their youth, and that they cannot develop themselves for this reason. Expressing that they were brought into business life by their parents at a young age due to their living conditions and that they were exposed to physical and emotional violence from time to time by foreigners due to their working conditions, the participants expressed that they not only experienced economic violence but also the effects of physical and emotional violence that they experienced toget-

her with economic violence. they have brought. Individuals who have been exposed to economic violence have also expressed that they feel inadequate in this context. In general, the prominence of family members as perpetrators of violence among individuals participating in the research is suggested as the reason for the individual problems adults and adolescents have.

## 5.2. Social Lives of Individuals Victim of Violence

Violence; If it is applied, it affects individuals negatively not only individually but also socially. When its social effects are examined, violence occurs in the form of difficulty in communicating, inability to express oneself, avoiding communication, distrust towards the social environment, and skepticism towards society. Considering the statements of the individuals participating in this study, the available data show that the thoughts about social life in general are the same as previous studies. According to the results of the study, 29% of the participants stated that they had problems in social communication, 16% experienced flashbacks, 11% had problems with their sexual life with their partners, and 33% felt completely insecure about the environment. On the other hand, 11% stated that they were aggressive towards their environment as a result of the violence they suffered.

**Figure 4.** The effect of violence on social life



Behaviors such as asocial behavior as a manifestation of violence, difficulty in self-expression and avoidance of communication in the social lives of individuals who have been subjected to emotional violence are among the most important problems experienced by individuals on the subject. The fact that women who are exposed to emotional violence are exposed to emotional violence based on sexism in the workplace, even though they have survived the adolescence period, shows that they experience emotional violence in their adulthood as well. For example, a female participant participating in the research says that the biggest problem she has in terms of difficulty in social communication is that male employees often say, "This job is not for women, you can't do it" and that they put themselves under pressure in this way. It has been reported that individuals who feel under the intense psychological pressure of their parents during adolescence experience flashbacks in similar problems they experience in adulthood.

Exposure to rape or other forms of sexual violence, while slowly starting to realize the characteristics of him/her sexual identity, causes severe emotional damage and will cause him/her to develop negative thoughts about sexuality in her future life. The main problems expressed by the participants who have experienced sexual violence regarding their social life are primarily sexual problems experienced with their partners, while indifference and prejudice towards sexuality are expressed. Individuals participating in this research not only conveyed their prejudices against sexuality, but also expressed their severe trust problems towards their environment. In particular, individuals who have been exposed to sexual violence by their close relatives attribute their trust problems towards their social environment to this reason. As a result, individuals also expressed that they were suspicious of their parents and family members, and that they were distant towards their friends. They also stated that individuals experience nausea when any topic related to sexuality is brought up and they have the behavior of leaving the environment.

Individuals who have experienced economic violence have expressed the problems of their soci-

al life as not being able to find the opportunity to socialize and problems experienced financially. They stated that they had a busy work schedule due to economic conditions and that they also experienced the tiring effects of the intensity of the work life they lived during their adolescence period, also in their adulthood. The participants, who stated that they spend a lot of effort to support their families in today's economic conditions, stated that their social life consists only of home and work. Individuals who complained about not being able to spare enough time for their families evaluated economic violence as difficulty in communicating with the social environment. Considering that the majority of the participants who stated that they had been subjected to physical violence were men, these people expressed the problem of trust in the environment and aggressive behaviors based on sudden outbursts of anger as the social effect of physical violence. Although adult individuals stated that they carried out aggressive behaviors mostly to protect their families and defend themselves, it was also reported that they considered this event as a difficulty in communicating. In addition, participants who evaluated physical violence stated that their aggression towards problems that could be solved by talking was wrong, but they reported that they imitated a parent as an effect of the violence they were exposed to in the past.

## 6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Violence is a phenomenon in which the harm it causes to the individual changes depending on the way it is applied, and its effects are seen as short or long term. All kinds of violence experienced by adolescents who are trying to absorb the effects of emotional and physical changes and who have a very sensitive period not only affect this development negatively, but also cause them to show various negative behaviors and effects in adulthood. As a result of the data obtained within the scope of this research, it has been reported that individuals who have been exposed to all kinds of violence have negative traces in their lives, and as a result of these traces, they encounter many problems both socially and individually. At the beginning of these problems,

it is seen that individuals feel inadequate as a result of violence, while they also have behaviors and thoughts such as low self-esteem and self-confidence, skepticism and aggression. The effects of these thoughts expressed by individuals also have a great place in their social lives, and these problems appear in every interaction they enter with their environment. Actions such as difficulty in communicating, inability to express oneself, displaying asocial behaviors, aggressive behaviors and insecurity limit the social lives of individuals to a great extent, and this situation creates an individual profile that is even more withdrawn. Individuals who cannot get rid of the effects of violence cannot develop a healthy solution to the problems they already have, and they allow the damage of this violence to reach a more dangerous level with each passing day. The thoughts about getting psychological support, which are settled in the minds of the society, cause individuals who are exposed to violence to deprive themselves of psychological support most of the time. However, developing positive thoughts about receiving psychological support and raising awareness about violence in society is one of the effective measures that will help prevent violence and reduce its effects. So much so that almost all of the people participating in the research understand physical violence first and foremost when it comes to violence. Especially when in-depth interviews are conducted, they often see violent behavior towards them negatively, but in general they tend to see violent behavior as legitimate. For example, participants who have been subjected to physical violence by their parents stated that they were exposed to violence because of their misbehavior, and they argue that for this reason, violence should take place and it is natural to carry out violence in order to ensure the upbringing of the child within the family.

Based on all these, it is necessary to seek solutions for domestic violence in society and to prevent violence for healthier generations. Providing families with a general education about violence will create a result in raising parents' awareness of the negative effects of violence on adolescents in families experiencing violence, and will contribute to reducing violence, if not eliminating it



completely. In addition, minimizing the economic problems, which are the leading factors that increase violence, will also create a result that reduces violence. Especially when economic violence is taken into account, the fact that parents throw their children into business life at an early age in order to eliminate financial difficulties leaves a great mark in the lives of children. For this reason, increasing supervision and studies on child workers, especially in order to prevent economic violence, and a detailed examination of parents' thoughts on child labor can be considered among the measures to prevent children from being exposed to economic violence.

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