

# ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND BOTH DEPRESSION AND THE OTHER POSSIBLE RELATED FACTORS ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ESKISEHIR RURAL AREA, WESTERN TURKEY

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**ABSTRACT:** **Aim:** To determine the frequency of school violence, and to evaluate possible relations between school violence with depression and other some characteristics among high school students in a rural area, western Turkey. **Method:** This cross-sectional study was conducted between from 01 November 2012 to 31 December 2012. The study group has occurred in 1158 (87.7% of target population) high school students. Within the last 1 year, at least one of the physical, verbal, emotional and sexual violence types in the school and at least one-time exposure student has been accepted as "the student who has school violence". Beck Depression Scale was used to determine of depression level. For statistical analyses; Qui square test was used. **Results:** Of the study group, 637 (55.0%) were the girl. The frequency of the violent applied student of school was 36.8% (n: 426). The most frequently verbal violence (36.8%, n: 426) and at least sexual violence (11.5%, n: 133) were reported. The frequency of depression was 23.7% (n: 275). The frequency of the violent applied student was higher in boys, 17 and older age groups, the students of 11th and 12th grade, those with A-Type personality, smokers, and those with fragmented family structure than the others (for each one;  $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of the student with the school violence victimization was 12.1% (n: 141). The students with the school violence victimization have higher the frequency of depression than the others ( $p < 0.05$ ). **Conclusion:** This study showed that close to half of the students who participated in the study were exposed to school violence. Among students with stories of school violence, depression was more likely to occur. It would be appropriate for the teachers, parents, and the students to work in cooperation to prevent school violence against students.

**Keywords:** School Violence, Depression, High School Students.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

School violence is a really important problem in developed or developing countries. And it has various definitions in many countries. This problem is addressed in various ways depending on the socio-cultural structures of the countries and solutions are tried to be produced (Cornell, 2017; Robinson and Cristyn, 2012). School violence concerns especially educators because it obstructs opportunities of education. It is reported that girls at school are at risk for physical and sexual violence (Smith *et al.*, 2003). And also it is reported that a lot of studies about school violence are from U.S. According to studies from U.S., in the upper classes of the high school as violence increases, the risk of becoming violent victim in the first years of high school is higher. In addition, high school students in urban area are exposed to more violence in rural areas than those in high school (Lunenburg, 2010). In U.S., according to a research of "systematic review and meta-analysis", bullying at school increases the risk of exposure to school violence. For the reasons of violence in school it is put forward the existence of a more general and long-term antisocial inclination instead of a specific underlying tendency to violence (Ttofi *et al.*, 2012). The studies in African Americans, a risk group of violence at school due to poverty and racism shows us that there is a decrease of a self-esteem and academic success in the victims of violence (Patton *et al.*, 2012). The studies of school violence reduction which is intended for this risk groups, is maintaining with the studies including students (Akiba, 2010; Johnson *et al.*, 2011). The reflection of the violence in the community can lead the violence at school and to a fall in academic achievements (Borofsky *et al.*, 2013). For the results of a study, comprehensive preventions are not enough to avoid school violence. Except this, there should be the social preventions too (Blosnich and Bossarte, 2011).

The study's aim was to determine the frequency of school violence, and to evaluate possible relations between school violence with depression and other some characteristics among high school students in a rural area, Eskisehir province, western Turkey.

## 2. MATERIAL METHOD

This cross-sectional study was conducted between from 01 November 2012 to 31 December 2012. The study area was four high schools of Beylikova district of Eskisehir province, western Turkey. The population of the district of Beylikova is approximately 7,000 (2010). Beylikova is a rural settlement. About half of the population lives in the center, the other half lives in the villages. Livelihoods are agriculture and animal husbandry. In Beylikova, the nuclear family structure is dominant. Families with two children and is often like that in western Turkey ([Republic of Turkey Governorship of Beylikova, 2018](#)).

The total number of high school students in this county is 1320. These students are the target population of our study ([Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education, 2018](#)). During the study period, a study group was formed in 1158 (87.7% of target population) high school students who were ongoing school and who were accepted to participate in the study.

A questionnaire form was prepared by the researchers in accordance with the literature (5-10). The students were asked about gender, age, class, personality type, smoking status, family type, and family income. The questionnaire included also questions about school violence and its types.

A questionnaire form was applied to students under the observation by researchers. The questionnaire form took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Those who report hurry, enthusiastic, hasty are considered as "A-Type" personality. On the contrary, those who say that they are quiet, calm, patient, planned programs are accepted as "B-Type" personality ([Yetiskinlere yonelik testler ve anketler, 2018](#)).

The student who smoked at least one cigarette per day was defined as smokers ([Unsal and Tozun, 2014](#)).

According to the statements of the students; family type was grouped as "nuclear, extended and fragmented".

According to the perception of the students, family income was classified as "high, middle, low". Within the last 1 year, at least one of the physical, verbal, emotional and sexual violence types in the school and at least one-time exposure student has been accepted as *"the student with the school violence victimization"*.

Within the last 1 year, at least one of the physical, verbal, emotional and sexual violence types in the school and at least one-time, student who applied of violence has been accepted as *"the violent applied student of school"*.

Beck Depression Scale was used to determine of depression level. Depression was measured with a Turkish version of Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). The BDI was developed by [Beck et al. \(1961\)](#) and later modified by [Hisli \(1998\)](#) to suit the Turkish culture and norms. The student who obtained 17 scores or over from BDI was accepted that *"the student with depression"*.

Eskisehir Provincial National Education Directorate and Beylikova District National Education Directorate have given necessary permissions for the study to be done. The students gathered in their classes were informed about the subject and purpose of the study and verbal approvals were obtained.

The results of the study were presented as a poster at the 16th National Public Health Congress (Antalya, Turkey, 27-31 October 2013).

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0 was used for data entry and analysis. For statistical analyses; Chi square test was used. For statistical significance,  $p < 0.05$  values were accepted.

## 3. RESULTS

Of the study group, 637 (55.0%) students were girl and 521 (45.0%) students were boy. The mean age was  $15.88 \pm 1.11$  years (min: 14; max: 19). The frequency of the violent applied student of school was 36.8% (n: 426).

The most frequently verbal violence (36.8%, n: 426) and at least sexual violence (11.5%, n: 133) were reported. Physical and emotional violence frequencies were 25.3% (n: 293) and 13.5% (n: 156), respectively.

The frequency of the violent applied student was higher in boys, 17 and older age groups, the students of 11th and 12th grade, those with A-Type personality, smokers, and those with fragmented family structure than the others (for each one;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Distribution of some characteristics according to the violence applying students was presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of some characteristics according to the violence applying students

Some characteristics	The Violence Applying Student			Test value $X^2$ ; p
	<sup>a</sup> No (%)	<sup>a</sup> Yes (%)	<sup>b</sup> Total (%)	
<b>Gender</b>				6.206; <b>0.013</b>
Girl	423 (66.4)	214 (33.6)	637 (55.0)	
Boy	309 (59.3)	212 (40.7)	521 (45.0)	
<b>Class</b>				15.570; <b>0.001</b>
9	261 (70.9)	107 (29.1)	368 (31.8)	
10	166 (62.6)	99 (37.4)	265 (22.9)	
11	152 (57.1)	114 (42.9)	266 (23.0)	
12	153 (59.1)	106 (40.9)	259 (22.4)	
<b>Age group (year)</b>				15.232; <b>0.002</b>
≤14	83 (70.3)	35 (29.7)	118 (10.2)	
15	245 (69.0)	110 (31.0)	355 (30.7)	
16	194 (62.0)	119 (38.0)	313 (27.0)	
≥17	210 (56.5)	162 (43.5)	372 (32.1)	
<b>Personality type</b>				6.162; <b>0.013</b>
A	463 (60.7)	300 (39.3)	763 (65.9)	
B	269 (68.1)	126 (31.9)	395 (34.1)	
<b>Smoking</b>				47.129; <b>&lt;0.001</b>
No	694 (66.4)	351 (33.6)	1045 (90.2)	
Yes	38 (33.6)	75 (66.4)	113 (9.8)	
<b>Family type</b>				19.755; <b>&lt;0.001</b>
Nuclear	662 (65.6)	347 (34.4)	1009 (87.1)	
Extended	43 (50.6)	42 (49.4)	85 (7.3)	
Fragmented	27 (42.2)	37 (57.8)	64 (5.5)	
<b>Family income</b>				19.726; <b>&lt;0.001</b>
High	257 (65.9)	133 (34.1)	390 (33.7)	
Middle	459 (63.8)	261 (36.2)	720 (62.2)	
Low	16 (33.3)	32 (66.7)	48 (4.1)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	732 (63.2)	426 (36.8)	1158 (100.0)	

<sup>a</sup> row percentage, <sup>b</sup> column percentage

Source: Author

The frequency of depression was 23.7% (n: 275).

The frequency of the student with the school violence victimization was 12.1% (n: 141).

The students with the school violence victimization have higher the frequency of depression than the others ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Distribution of depression according to the school violence victimization was presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of depression according to the school violence victimization

Depression	The School Violence Victimization			Test value $X^2$ ; p
	<sup>a</sup> No (%)	<sup>a</sup> Yes (%)	<sup>b</sup> Total (%)	
Yes	193 (70.2)	82 (29.8)	275 (23.7)	104.967; <b>&lt;0.001</b>
No	824 (93.3)	59 (6.7)	883 (76.3)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	1017 (87.9)	141 (12.1)	1158 (100.0)	

<sup>a</sup> row percentage, <sup>b</sup> column percentage

Source: Author

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Violence in schools is affecting children's psycho-social development negatively. Children's cognitive abilities and psychological functions are affected negatively by school violence (Unalmis and

[Sahin, 2012](#)). For example, it was observed that problem-solving skills decreased in students who were more exposed to violence in a study conducted in Eskisehir, Turkey ([Turkum, 2011](#)).

Starting from the 1990s until the early 2010s, Turkey realized that there an increasing trend in school violence frequency. However, it is reported that apply disciplinary punishment generally, in the fight against school violence in this period in Turkey ([Ogulmus, 2006](#)). Especially in schools in neighborhoods with low socioeconomic level, parents are concerned about sending their children to school for fear to be violence victimization ([Ozgur et al., 2011](#); [Yavuzer, 2011](#)). The Republic of Turkey, The Ministry of National Education has begun collecting data on school violence since 2006 and introduced an Action Plan ([Yavuzer, 2011](#)). In the scientific literature, the researches on school violence topic from Turkey have a large space in the literature in up to 2010 is observed ([Atik, 2011](#); [Deveci et al., 2008](#)).

By the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Research Commission Report (2007), 2006-2007 academic year in the last three months, in secondary schools, physical, verbal, emotional and sexual violence frequencies 22%, 53%, 26.3% and 15.8% were reported, respectively ([Yavuzer, 2011](#)).

In our study, more than two-thirds of the students were violent at school. The frequency of violence victims was 12.1%. In a study reported in the west of Turkey (Aydin province), It was reported that 10.3% of the students were exposed to violence in school, and 51.4% of them were exposed to violence by their friends ([Ozgur et al., 2011](#)). In the other study, from eastern Turkey (Elazig province), 75% of school-age children reported experiencing physical abuse at least once in their lives, and 43.4% reported physical violence within the previous 12 months ([Deveci et al., 2008](#)). Turkey's largest metropolis Istanbul, in 2004, in a study on high school students, at least once, the frequency of which has been involved in a physical fight in the past year was about 50% ([Ogel et al., 2006](#)). Turkey's 2nd biggest city and capital of Turkey, Ankara province (2006), at three different high schools, it was reported that 16.1% of students has been reported that exposure to violence ([Ozcebe et al., 2006](#)). In Istanbul (2006), a study which 1955 high school girls participating, the frequency of sexual abuse was reported as 13.4% ([Alikasifoglu et al., 2006](#)). This studies how the frequency of violence in school and being the victim suggests that high in Turkey. The frequency of the violent applied student and the frequency of the school violence victimization are somewhat lower than the other studies' results. The reason for this may be that we only work in the rural area. Because violence in school to occur more frequently in congested urban environments such as cities, metropolises, are known ([Durmus and Gurgan, 2005](#)).

In this study, the most common type of violence was verbal. However, other studies from Turkey ([Deveci et al., 2008](#); [Durmus and Gurgan, 2005](#); [Ogel et al., 2006](#); [Ozgur et al., 2011](#)) were reported to occur more frequently in physical violence than other violence types. Approximately one-third of Istanbul's high school students reported aggressive behavior as "beat other students" ([Kaya et al., 2012](#)). In a study among high school students in Istanbul, during the last 12 months, 42% of the students reported that they were in a physical fight (29). In our study, reporting more verbal violence than physical violence may be associated with to conduct in the rural area of the study.

In various studies, it was reported that the violence application risk was higher in boys than in girls ([Alikasifoglu et al., 2004](#); [Bulut, 2008](#); [Ogel et al., 2006](#)). A similar result was obtained in our study ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In a study conducted in Istanbul, it was reported that the 15-16 age group is a risk group for violence, increased risk of joining gangs in 16-17 age group and decreased the risk of violence after 17 age years ([Ogel et al., 2006](#)). On the contrary, in our study, 17 and above age group students had the higher frequency of violence practice ( $p < 0.05$ ). In relation to this, school violence practice frequency was higher in the 11th and 12th-grade students than the 9th and 10th-grade students ( $p < 0.05$ ). This may be due to the fact that the concerns of the students at the end of the high school as to the entry of the university are at the forefront in the urban area and in the big cities. Additionally, the students of the rural area may be worried about entering the business life instead of going to the university. Hereby, high schoolers living in urban areas may be more distant from violence towards the end of high school.

It is reported that the victims of bullying behaviors in Istanbul high school students have lower socioeconomic status, have difficulty in talking with their partners and have difficulty in making new friends ([Alikasifoglu et al., 2007](#)). The characteristics of these victims are similar to the B-Type personality traits. On the contrary, students with A-Type personality tend to be more inclined to apply school violence. In our study, those who had A-Type personality had the higher frequency of school violence ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Smoking, as in other developing countries, in Turkey is perceived as a sign of growth and maturity among adolescents. Smokers can physically commit violence to be stronger than the other students. A



study from Istanbul reported that the tendency to violence in smokers was higher than the others among high school students (Alikasifoglu *et al.*, 2007). The result of our study was similar ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Situations such as having a low socio-economic level or living in broken families are signs of their inadequate interest by their parents. Children of such families are more prone to violence in the school environment. This is reflected in the results of the scientific studies (30). In our study, the frequency of school violence was higher among students with low family income and children with fragmented families (for each one,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Cross-sectional studies cannot tell us whether depressed people are more exposed to violence or are symptoms of depression due to exposure to violence. In our study, approximately one-quarter of the students were depressed and the frequency of depression was found to be higher in victims of school violence. (Moses, 1999) reports that victims of violence are depressed, in girls particularly. (Holt and Espelage, 2005) report that physical and emotional violence victims are more often associated with anxiety / depression. Swearer *et al.* (2001), in particular, report that bully-victims and bullies are more susceptible to depression than to victims or non-violent youth. Research that investigates the relationship between school violence and depression was mostly based on U.S. and other western countries. But we can also present a study result from the Far East. It has been reported from Taiwan that the exposure of students to violence leads to depression, not to a decrease in the self-esteem of students. However, it is also reported that depression due to school violence victimization can be controlled by peer support (Chen and Wei, 2011). The results of these studies indicate a relationship between school violence and depression. Our study results are similar ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Limitations:** This study does not reflect cause-effect relationships because it is a cross-sectional study. The results provide evidence of the rural area of Eskişehir, not the students living in the urban area. Teachers' violence against students and domestic violence could not be included in the scope of this study. Because in the planning phase of the study, it was thought that we may do not get the right answer to the relevant questions. In line with the sociocultural factors of this study area and permits taken, the violence of the students towards the students was examined, only.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study showed that close to half of the students who participated in the study were exposed to school violence. Among students with stories of school violence, depression was more likely to occur. It would be appropriate for the teachers, parents, and the students to work in cooperation to prevent school violence against students.

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