

## An Analysis of Adolescent and Parental Views on the Psychoeducation Program for Coping with Aggressive Behaviors

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the views of parents and adolescents who participated in psychoeducation programs for coping with adolescent aggressive behaviors. Parents who participated in the study were provided with a program known as the “Non-Violent Resistance Parent Program,” and adolescents participated in the “Coping with Violence and Aggression Psychoeducation Program.” Both programs were designed based on systemic family therapy theories. The views of participating parents and adolescents were obtained through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. The interviews were subsequently analyzed using content analysis methods.

After the programs' culmination, participants stated that the programs reduced aggressive behaviors seen in adolescents, improved parents' parenting skills and family relationships, and significantly decreased parental inefficacy and stress levels. Results of the analysis of qualitative data obtained from interviews indicated that adolescents and parents generally benefitted from the programs, experienced positive emotions in the process, and gained significant awareness about their interaction styles and those of other family members. It was stated that conducting the two programs simultaneously was very helpful, for the participants reportedly experienced closer familial relationships as well as changes in their approach to problems. On the other hand, the participants noted that the program had some weaknesses: they sometimes had difficulty in expressing themselves and restoring family relationships in the process; fathers' absence in the program was challenging for them; and the process did not have much contribution to spousal relationships. Based on these results, it is recommended that these programs should be conducted with parental cooperation in all institutions providing service to adolescents, particularly in schools. Both the improvement of parenting skills and the establishment of constructive and warm familial ties have the potential for reducing violent and aggressive behaviors in adolescents.

**Keywords:** violence, aggressiveness, coping with violence and aggression program, non-violent resistance program, family relationships

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in violent and aggressive behaviors in Turkey and throughout the world. An analysis of the violent behaviors observed during childhood and adolescent periods shows that some genetic, biological, social, cultural, and emotional factors, combined with family structure and unhealthy family relationships and interaction styles within family, play a significant role. In this process, parental and adolescent communication habits could be fostered in a better way and the relationships might be reconstructed.

Various views exist on the subject of violence, which is one of the most common problems that occurs during adolescence, a critical period that every individual experiences. Freedman, Sears and Carlsmith (1993) define violence as “any kind of behavior that aims to hurt others.”

Research on families demonstrates the importance of effective, healthy parent and adolescent relationships for the mental health and the future of society (Cerit, 2007). Studies on the relationships of children with behavioral problems with their parents indicate that this process is very problematic (Polowczyk et al., 2000). This vicious cycle can be broken by maintaining healthy relationship habits between parents and adolescents. At this point, parent programs, based on the

positive effects of the program on rearranging parent and adolescent relationships, are expected to affect behavior styles of parents towards their children and thus decrease their behavioral problems.

With the effects of parental attitudes on the development of children's behavioral problems in mind, it becomes necessary to intervene in children's behavioral problems by shaping both parental and child behaviors (Arkan and Üstün, 2009). Violence and aggression in this study are not only viewed as a problem experienced by an individual, but also as a social and cultural structure problem that affects the entire family.

Review of the related literature indicates that there are various programs designed to cope with violence and aggression among adolescents in Turkey and across the globe. Some of these programs, at the individual level, include school-based programs such as social development programs, life skills education, conflict resolution, skills education, anger management, problem solving skills education, communication skills education, empathy skills, and peer education. Numerous meta-analytic studies in the literature report that prevention and intervention programs for students and families are effective methods in decreasing violence and aggression behaviors and yield positive outcomes for children and adolescents who have violent behaviors (Wilson, Gottfredson and Najaka, 2001; McCart, Prienter, Davies and Azen, 2006; Scheckner, Rollin, Kaiser-Ulrey and Wagner, 2002; Sukhodolsky, Kassinove and Gorman, 2004; Wilson and Mark, 2005; Wilson and Mark, 2007; Şahin & Kalburan, 2009; Bacıoğlu, 2014). Studies in Turkey generally focused on helping adolescents and parents to control emotions and behaviors and to increase empathy, anger management, and conflict resolution skills. In effect, there is a lack of studies viewing parent and adolescents as a whole. There is thus a need for studies that investigate family processes such as family relationships and interaction styles together.

The purpose of the education programs used in this study is to give structure to family life and to decrease problematic violent and aggressive adolescent behaviors demonstrated at home or in school by changing parent-adolescent interactions and teaching individuals skills about such topics as anger, tension, and stress and conflict management issues. Another goal is to prevent the behavioral problems in adolescents from arising by preventing negative attitudes and behaviors of parents toward each other and toward their children.

The fact that violence and aggressive behaviors in adolescents have a multiple etiology might indicate that comprehensive studies involving school, family, and society all together are required for effective prevention programs. The creation of education programs for parents are quite important for Turkey, particularly when it comes to the violence and aggression behaviors and to the dissemination of these programs. While related literature indicates that studies on this issue have generally been conducted in other countries, more studies need to be conducted in Turkey. Since this study is the first parent group study based on a systemic approach in Turkey, it is expected to contribute to the field, prevent violent and aggressive behaviors in adolescents, and therefore contribute positively to familial relationships.

### *1.1 Aim of the Study*

This study investigates parental and adolescent views on the effects of the programs provided to participants on aggressive behaviors seen in adolescents and in familial relationships. The programs are entitled "Coping with Violence and Aggressive Behaviors" (henceforth abbreviated as CVAB), which aims to decrease violent and aggressive behaviors among adolescents, and the "Non-Violent Resistance" parent program (henceforth abbreviated as NVR), which was formed for parents whose children demonstrate violent and aggressive behaviors.

The study explores participant views on the outcomes of the experiential procedures through the qualitative data obtained:

- What are the opinions of experiential group parents on the effects of the NVR parent program provided to parents and the CVAP program provided to their children?
- What are the opinions of experiential group adolescents on the effects of the CVAP program provided to them and the NVR parent program provided to their parents?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Participants*

After the programs were completed, in-depth interviews were conducted with parents and adolescents who participated in the psychoeducation groups regarding their experience and attainments in order to investigate the effects of the programs applied in the study. The participants were volunteer students who were enrolled in a secondary school in the 2014-2015 educational year and whose Aggression Scale (AS) scores were one standard deviation above the mean score, as well as volunteer 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students and their parents. 12<sup>th</sup> grade students were not involved in the study since they were approaching graduation, and most were preparing for the university exam. Hence, qualitative data were obtained from 34 participants (17 students and 17 parents), who participated in the psychoeducation experiential groups.

## 2.2 Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

Qualitative data of the study were obtained from the students and parents who were provided with psychoeducation programs. The participants' personal successes and feedback were obtained through interviews using a "semi-structured interview form" developed by the researchers. One of the mothers was not interviewed because she was diagnosed with cancer. As her illness progressed, she had to continue her treatment at the hospital.

The interviews based on a specific form enabled researchers to obtain both systematic and comparable information from different individuals. While formulating the interview questions, researchers ensured that: special attention would be given to make the questions easy, thereby encouraging the interviewee to speak; the questions be focused; and that they move from specific to general questions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). Therefore, by asking the preparatory questions first, and focused and specific and general questions later, the researcher asked the parents and adolescents seven questions. They were asked to reflect upon the following: a) emotions experienced in the process; b) newly acquired skills and attainments; c) self-awareness of the participants and their families; d) effects of the program on the participants' relationships with their family; e) views on the effects of the program administered simultaneously on other family members; f) strengths and weaknesses of the program; and g) thoughts on any challenges experienced in the process and any suggestions.

## 2.3 The Coping with Violence and Aggression Psychoeducation (CVAP) Program

The group work provided to adolescents was designed in a way to support the NVR applied to parents. Aims of the program include being less vulnerable to violence, empowering self-control, enhancing perception skills regarding one's own behaviours, developing empathy for the victim, improving communication and social skills, increasing self-respect, and raising awareness about the individual's behaviours and family interaction network. It was based on a systemic psychotherapy approach. Instead of attitudes and behaviors such as verbal and physical aggression, hostility and hate, the program sought to teach adolescents to cope with any tension they experience in the face of conflicts by improving their communication and social skills such as constructive conflict resolution, as well as communication and social skills. On the other hand, in cases where anxiety and anger were experienced, by benefitting from cyclical questions about the effects of intra-family interactions on behaviors and the effects of behaviors on intra-family interactions, the program aimed to contribute to awareness of the demonstrated behaviors and therefore strengthen their coping mechanisms.

The CVAP program included skill development activities with a focus on preventing violent behaviors among adolescents. This study focuses on students who draw attention with violent behaviors or high aggression levels at home and school. It was conducted with a group of 17 students aged between 15 and 18. Group sessions took 90 minutes on the average and were conducted on weekly basis.

The content of the CVAP program was constructed this way: 1<sup>st</sup> week: Meeting, Introduction, Aggression, What are Aggressive Behaviors?; 2<sup>nd</sup> week: What is Conflict? What Are its Sources and Effects?; 3<sup>rd</sup> week: Noticing and Expressing Emotions; 4<sup>th</sup> week: Effective Listening Skills, Communication Skills; 5<sup>th</sup> week: Empathy Skills; 6<sup>th</sup> Week: Family Interaction; 7<sup>th</sup> Week: Anger and Anger Management; 8<sup>th</sup> Week: Relaxation Exercises; 9<sup>th</sup> Week: Conflict Resolution Skills; and 10<sup>th</sup> week: Closure, Evaluation. The topics that are covered in a process-driven way included the following issues: Development of one's own Violent Behaviour, Self and External Evaluation of one's own Violent Behaviour, Focusing on one's own Needs and Emotions, Current Violent Behaviours of the Group Members, Perspective and Emotions of the Victim, Results of Violence, Alternative Communication and Action Strategies, Effects of Family Experiences and Emotions on Anxiety and Violence, and Negative Effects of Violence on Family Interactions. Main Methods and Techniques used in the CVAP program: Act-out activities where adolescents took various roles and thereby realized different aspects of their behaviours. Administration of the scales that enabled them to evaluate themselves and others. Administration of "Result-benefit Analysis" to evaluate the results of the adolescents' behaviours. Intervention to crisis: An adolescent's current conflict is discussed in the group, and beneficial solution opportunities are analysed.

Administration of family tree (Genogram) and family constellation techniques that aimed to explore the effects of family interaction network on individuals' attitudes and behaviours and the effects of individual attitudes and behaviours on family structure and interactions, and hot chair technique specifically designed to help adolescents face their own violent behaviours.

## 2.4 Non-violent Resistance Program (NVR)

The experiential group, consisting of parents of students with violent and aggressive behaviors, was administered the NVR parent program (Elizabeth and Elizabeth, 2010). The program comprises individual parent interviews, with ten sessions of skills education: 1. Tension Increase; 2. Parent existence at home; 3. Baskets; 4. Supporters and Support systems; 5. Announcement technique; 6. Parent Values, Announcement, Acts of Reconciliation; 7. Active

Resistance/Opposition; 8. Sit-in, 9; Parent Existence out of home; and 10. Summary and Certification, and supplementary three sessions (1: Announcement/Proclamation, 2. Sit-in, 3. Self-care). In addition to the program, one extra session, which included family tree (Genogram) and Family Constellation techniques, was conducted for the purpose of exploring the effects of family interaction networks on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, and the effects of individual attitudes and behaviors on family structure and interactions. In addition to the NVR program, role playing activities, and watching videos, the parents were provided with support via telephone throughout the program. Those who needed additional support were paid home visits.

The NVR program was designed with the purpose of helping parents cope with children's disciplinary problems such as activities that may cause to harm themselves, skipping school, and other acute discipline problems (Omer, 2011, 2004). The program aims particularly to help helpless parents who feel anxious about their children to gain their parenting back by teaching them to oppose violent and self-destructive behaviors in an effective way, without provoking others or giving up. Although the treatment is applied to parents, the main viewpoint centers on both children and parents (Omer, Steinmetz, Carthy and Schlippe, 2013).

NVR has been developed as a socio-political strategy to resist violence (Sharp, 1973; Lavi-Levavi, Shachar, Omer, 2013). Adapting NVR to family context was based on the observations that indicated parents' feelings of desperation and anger (Bugental, Blue and Cruzcoza, 1989). Defenders of the NVR treatment program hypothesize that the program would help them to effectively resist children's violent and self-destructive behaviours in a way that would not increase violence or tension. NVR is assumed to enable parents to build a reassuring and stable relationship for their children (Omer, Steinmetz, Carthy and Schlippe, 2013). By learning how to control themselves and how to resist their children's behaviours persistently, but not in a violence-increasing way, parents could be protective and keep their children in balance in dangerous situations.

Three features used in parent education form base for the socio-political principles of NVR: a) *Presence*, or direct personal involvement, which means "We are your parents and will remain your parents. You cannot get rid of us, leave us or put us away". b. *Self-control* (instead of having control over the child) or taking a non-violent position, which means "We cannot control you (child), but we can control ourselves. We will do our duty and will not raise the tension", and c. *Support*, which means that parents learn to speak and act using first person plural (we) instead of "You will do what I tell". Parents develop a transparent attitude in this process. This attitude is a strong antidote for the compelling and haphazard atmosphere that develops under confidentiality conditions. For strategies and tactics, special techniques developed by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. were taken as models. Parental autonomy notion in NVR should be built upon a determinant presence that does not increase tension and that enables parent-child relationship combined with discipline and safety issues. Various approaches point to relational and disciplining (limiting) aspects of parenting. However, these two fields generally represent different aspects and are even seen as different phases of the treatment that include "relational phase" (parents are educated for developing positive communication with the child) and "empowerment phase" (parents react to the child's positive or negative behaviours). Fundamental attitude in NVR is quite different: it develops a stable relationship framework in establishing parents' presence, self-control and support networks and show same consistent reaction to negative behaviours. Parental connection and parental empowerment develop together (Lavi-Levavi, Shachar, Omer, 2013).

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Interviews conducted with the group members who participated in the experiential study were recorded using a voice recorder after participant consent was obtained. Data from the voice recordings were transcribed, and the texts were then analyzed using content analysis methods. The purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships through the data obtained. The process includes bringing similar data together in the framework of some concepts and themes, and then organizing and interpreting the data in a comprehensible way (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

The data obtained from the interviews and transcribed in the framework of an evaluation form were first read by a researcher. Furman, Langer and Taylor (2010) report that repeating the coding process after some time lend credibility to the qualitative data analysis. Therefore, the researchers waited for one week following the first coding procedure, reviewed the previous coding, and made some revisions and new coding. Hence, special attention was paid to make the coding coherent and accurate with the data. Then, themes were identified with the codes from data obtained from adolescents and parents. The findings were presented through the tables showing codes/concepts belonging to the themes and theme codes, and the participants' expressions were presented using their direct quotations. Expert opinions were received for the codes and the themes obtained. Validity and reliability of the data were enhanced by taking into consideration the consistency between the codes conducted by the researcher and the expert, as well as the principles of time invariance and consistency between the independent observers.

### 3. Findings

This section presents findings in relation to the participants' views on the CVAP program provided to the adolescents and "Non-Violent Resistance" program provided to the parents. The findings were presented by directly quoting the participants' expressions during the interviews; and parents' statements were represented with "P" and those of adolescents with "A" in order to preserve anonymity. The participants were numbered from 1 to 17, according to the order of the transcriptions.

#### Views of the Parents and Adolescents in the Experiential Group in relation to the Programs

This study investigates participants' views on the CVAP program provided to the adolescents, and the NVP program provided to the parents. Data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis techniques. Qualitative data obtained from the adolescents and parents were analyzed separately, but the findings were presented in the same table. Table 1 lists the emotions expressed by adolescents and parents in the process.

Table 1. Emotions Expressed by Adolescents and Parents during the Process

Emotions Experienced in the Process			
Parents' Emotions	f	Adolescents' Emotions	f
<b>Pleasant Emotions</b>		<b>Pleasant Emotions</b>	
Calm	16	Calm	33
Self-confidence	6	Happiness	7
Contentment	6	Comfort	5
Pleasure	4	Feeling valued	5
Feeling well	3	Self-confidence	3
Relief	3	Having fun	3
Happiness	3	Support	2
Surprise	2	Feeling well	2
Approval	1	Being Free	2
Satisfaction	1	Confidence	1
<b>Unpleasant Emotions</b>		Feeling understood	1
Tension	1	Important	1
Uneasiness	1	Patience	1
Anxiety	1	Respect	1
Guilt	1	Relaxation	1
Increased strength	1	<b>Unpleasant Emotions</b>	
Dread	1	Embarrassment	1
Fear	1	Offence	1
Nervousness	1	Excitement	1
		Anxiety	1
		Neglect	1

An analysis of Table 1 indicates that adolescents and parents generally experienced positive emotions such as calm, comfort, self-confidence, feeling valued, happiness, as well as support, contentment, and having fun. Unpleasant feelings, including tension, anxiousness, uneasiness and dread were experienced less often.

The following quotes reflect emotions experienced by the participants during the group process:

*"It was good both for me and for my child. My emotional wellbeing was also really bad when I came here. I was feeling too bad. It was good for me, too. I gathered myself up. I began to feel more confident I felt stronger". (P-4)*

*"It was like medicine for me, like a painkiller or tranquilizer. It was really good because I had been feeling helpless, I did not know what to do, and I did not know how to approach that situation. Learning the approaches really helped me". (P-5).*

*"Before the training my family did not use to understand me; now they do. In fact, they can even show empathy. I mean that they make me feel that they understand me. I am happy because they understand me and know my feelings". (A-3).*

*"It was good to be part of this group. Knowing that my friends also experience similar problems that they could also experience them surprised me a little, I mean, I felt different. Expressing their emotions and finding that their emotions were similar to mine was surprising" (A-8).*

Table 2 presents findings on adolescents and the skills and attainments they gained in the process.

Table 2. Newly Acquired Skills and Attainments

Newly Acquired Skills and Attainments			
Adolescent Views		Parental Views	
Communication Skills	f	Communication Skills	f
Communication and self-expression skills	24	Communication and self-expression skills	12
<b>Understanding others</b>		<b>Understanding others, Learning from others, and sharing</b>	
Empathy skills	20	Seeing different viewpoints	9
Effective listening skills	9	Developing new friendships	4
Risk taking/assertiveness	1	Learning different information	3
Improvement in friendships	1	Knowing and understanding people	1
<b>Conflict Resolution and Anger Management</b>		Learning to communicate with children	1
Anger management	11	Helping others	1
Thoughtfulness	5	<b>Conflict Resolution and Anger Management</b>	
Discussing less	3	Anger management	2
Giving a break	1	Problem solving	1
Decrease in lash out	1	Not showing reactions, (remaining neutral)	1
<b>Conflict and Problem Solving Skills</b>		Being patient	1
Helping others	4	<b>Relaxation Skills</b>	
Positive thinking	3	Relaxation exercises	3
Problem solving skills	3		
Ignoring problems	1		
Checking one's limits	1		
Resisting without violence	1		
<b>Relaxation skills</b>			
Relaxation exercises	8		
Ability to calm down	5		

An analysis of Table 2 shows that under communication skills, adolescents improved themselves in areas such as communication and self-expression, as well as understanding others (empathy, effective listening skills and risk taking). Under the anger management category, adolescents improved their anger management, conflict and problem solving skills, and relaxation skills. As for parents, they improved themselves in communication and self-expression, understanding others, learning from others and sharing, seeing different points of views, developing new friendships, conflict resolutions, anger management and relaxation skills.

Below are some examples of participant statements about their newly acquired skills and attainments:

*“About myself... I think I have improved. I think I am now more comfortable. It is so hard to set aside time for oneself; but I see that one can do that if one really wants. I have realized that if I want I can do something for myself and my family” (P-12).*

*“I have learned many things. I did not expect this much participation. I saw that everybody needed it, not just me. I mean felt that I was not alone. I realized how I should communicate with my children. I understood how to stay calm in case of a problem (P-16).*

*“Generally I have begun to understand people around me...How and why they behave in a specific way. I have begun to act accordingly. I now distance myself from people with problems. I mean, I used to attack immediately when someone came at me. Now, I pause momentarily and then try to speak” (A-1).*

*“First of all, the relaxation exercises have really worked. I can express myself without fighting with, for example, my brother. This will prevent constant troubles. I mean, I have learned that instead of reacting immediately, I should wait for a while and give a break so that people can calm down. I believe I have calmed down” (A-8).*

Table 3 presents findings on the effects of the training provided to other family members.

Table 3. Views on the Effects of the Program on Family Members

Effects of the Program on Family Members			
Parental Views	f	Adolescent Views	f
<b>Improvement in Intra Family Communication and Relationships</b>		<b>Improvement in Intra Family Communication and Relationships</b>	
Increase in intra family communication	12	Increase in sibling relationships	13
Improvement in sibling relationships	4	Increased family ties	11
Spending time together	3	Increase in communication	7
Valuing family members	2	Listening	6
Respect	2	Empathy	4
Listening Skills	1	Decrease in the tone of voice	3
No quarreling	1	Expressing feelings of love	3
Kindness	1	Being kind and soft	3
Expressing themselves	1	Expressing themselves	2
Decrease in the tone of voice	1	Increased discussions	2
Understanding one another	1	Being understanding	1
Increase in spousal communication	1	Increase in familial relationships	1
<b>Social Skills</b>		Decrease in Problems	1
Apologizing	2	<b>Social Skills</b>	
Accepting mistakes	2	Anger Management	11
Being sociable	1	Conflict and problem resolution	3
Avoiding violence	1	Knowing one another	1
<b>Emotional Awareness/Pleasant Emotions</b>		<b>Emotional Awareness/Pleasant Emotions</b>	
Calm	14	Being calm	16
Hope	2	Feeling understood	11
Self-confidence	1	Decrease in tension	3
Happiness	1	Sharing emotions	1
<b>Benefiting from the training/behavioral change</b>		<b>Democratic Attitude</b>	
Behavioral change	9	Increase in interest	6
Applying what has been learned	4	Decrease in pressure	3
		Guiding	1
		Flexibility in strict rules	1
		Increased responsiveness	1

An analysis of Table 3 indicates that parents think their children experienced pleasant emotions in the psychoeducation program provided to them. For example, they reported increased calm and feelings of hope. In particular, intra family communication and relationships improved, sibling relationships improved, there has been an increase in such behaviors as spending time together and family members' valuing and respecting each other, their social skills increased, the child's reactional behaviors decreased, and they applied what was learned. Adolescents, meanwhile, reported observed improvement in intra family communication and relationships such as closer family ties; increase in sibling relationships and listening and empathy; experienced emotional awareness and pleasant emotions such as parents' being calm and comfortable and decrease in tension; and changes such as adopting a democratic attitude.

These changes are reflected in the following parent and adolescent statements;

*"I have become calmer, and so has my child. These days he is calm, I mean that he is becoming a better listener. His father is similar, our communication is better now. We can solve some problems by talking, so it has contributed in that sense" (P-4).*

*"These two programs have been useful for both of us. I have observed some changes in my son. He did not used to spend time with us. He used to be in his room, on his tablet or telephone. He was not sociable. Now he wants to go out. He has begun to socialize. This case has improved family relationships" (P-6).*

*"I have observed some changes, specifically with my mother, who has begun to understand me. Now she understands what I feel and think because I am young. She does not interfere with me anymore. Yes, she has become more sensitive. We do not experience conflicts anymore; if we do, we can solve them quickly" (A-3).*

*"My dad did not participate in the training. There have been very important changes in my mother. Her behaviors have changed a lot. She used to get angry quickly, now she has become more sensitive. Now, at least she is listening. We did not use to be able to say "I love you" before. (A-17).*

Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate adolescent and parental views on the psychoeducation group process under the themes of weaknesses/negative aspects and strengths/positive aspects.

Table 4. Parental and Adolescent Awareness of the Weak and Negative Sides of Their Life

<b>Parents' and Adolescents' Awareness about the Weak and Negative Sides of Their Life</b>			
<b>Parent views</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Adolescent Views</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Weaknesses/Negative Sides</b>		<b>Weaknesses/Negative Sides</b>	
<b>Family related</b>		<b>Anger Management, Conflict and Problem Solving</b>	
Distance from one's family	6	Lashing out	9
Challenging root family relationships	4	Noticing the effects of anger on family	5
Limited intra family relationships	3	Inability to speak when angry	2
Noticing intense family stress	1	Inability to cope with tension	2
<b>Spouse related</b>		Experiencing much conflict	1
Hiding problems from one's spouse	8	<b>Communication/Relationship</b>	
Seeing the effects of spousal problems	5	Effective Listening	3
Noticeable lack of cooperation from one's spouse	1	Insufficient family relationships	2
<b>Child related</b>		Familial tension	2
Limited communication with one's child	1	Spending no time with one's family	1
Taking advantage of the child's problem	1	Improper communication	1
<b>Self</b>	1	Noticing disconnections in the family	1
Taking on excessive responsibilities		<b>Self</b>	
Setting aside no time for herself	16	Difficulty in expressing oneself	1
Seeing the inefficacies	9	Facing one's problems	1
Dealing with too many problems	2	Noticing the role of the problem	1
Difficulty in expressing oneself	2	Needing more time	1
Evading one's problems	1	Having limited number of people in life	1
Paying no attention to others	1	<b>Emotional Awareness</b>	
Useless coping reactions	1	Having difficulty in expressing oneself	2
Believing that life is wasted	1	Offended by family	1
<b>Emotional Awareness</b>	1		
Being without support and alone			
Feeling guilty	4		
Lack of Self-confidence	1		
Being too anxious	1		
Being too hasty	1		

As Table 4 demonstrates, this process has helped parents develop awareness of unpleasant emotional cases between themselves and all other family members. Negative aspects, as expressed by parents, included taking on too many responsibilities, setting aside no time for themselves, seeing inefficiencies, and dealing with too many problems. Reported weaknesses included relationships with the challenging root family relationships, hiding problems from the spouse, lack of cooperation from one's spouse, problems with one's child, and lack of intimate and positive familial ties. Adolescents noticed inadequacies in anger, conflict and problem solving skills, lashing out, expressing their emotions, and the effects of their anger on their families. These inadequacies were reflected in intra family relationships and communication in a negative way.

Table 5 demonstrates findings in relation to adolescent and parental awareness of the positive and strong aspects of their lives.

Table 5. Parental and Adolescent Awareness of Strengths

<i>Awareness about Strengths and Positive Sides</i>			
<b>Parental views</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Adolescent Views</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Strengths</b>		<b>Strengths</b>	
<b>Related to self</b>		<b>Communication and Relationships</b>	
Knowing that they are not alone	4	Understanding people	3
Knowing themselves better	3	Importance of intra family communication	3
Seeing strengths	3	Seeing distances in the family	2
Noticing parental attitudes	2	Communicating more openly	2
Seeing that they need help	2	Results of ineffective listening	1
Advantages of behaving calmly	2	Importance of listening skills	1
Noticing the source of the problem	2	Expressing oneself	1
Awareness of being a good mother	1	Importance of kindness	1
Understanding the importance of parent consistency	1	Apologizing	1
Accepting one's problems	1	Getting along with the family	1
Need for showing effort for oneself	1	<b>Anger Management and Problem Solving</b>	
Importance of decreasing tension	1	Being able to solve conflicts	1
<b>Learning from others</b>		Decrease in the tone of voice	1
Acknowledging that others also have problems	12	Being able to problem solve	1
Seeing the advantages of the group	6	<b>Related to self</b>	
Positive effects of sharing	3	Acknowledging that the training could be beneficial	8
Advantage of two programs	3	Noticing the need to struggle	1
Seeing different life styles	1	Needing more friends	2
Seeing other problems	1	Learning new things	1
Having various experiences	1	Noticing that one is not alone	1
Advantages of having a support system	1	<b>Emotional Awareness</b>	
Learning from one other	1	Noticing emotions	2
		Increase in self-confidence	2
		Being able to be calm down	2
		Effectiveness of relaxation	1
		Realizing that one is valued	1
		Being comfortable with the group	1
		<b>Learning from others/Sharing</b>	
		Seeing the problems of others	5
		Seeing different sides of people	3
		Meeting new people	2
		Learning from other friends	1

At the culmination of the programs, parents reported that they had gained awareness of themselves and learned from others. They reported that the group activity had positive aspects, including seeing that they were not alone, knowing themselves better, noticing strengths, noticing attitudes as parents, acknowledging that others could also have the same problem, and noticing advantages of the group.

Adolescents reported that they developed increased awareness about such issues as improvement in themselves and family communication and relationships, understanding each other, noticing the importance of intra family relationships, seeing that others could also have problems, knowing people with their different sides, communicating more openly, increasing pleasant emotions, learning from others, and sharing.

The following excerpts are participant statements on their strengths and weaknesses:

*"I used to feel sorry for everything before. I used to occupy myself with sorrowful thoughts. I used to worry. I realized that I have been worn out. I was feeling really bad, even my participation was like a miracle. I used to burn myself out. I realized that I had the power to stand up for my rights"* (P-4).

*"First of all, I realized that I never set aside time for myself. There are sick people in my family, I have to take care of them. Thus, I ignored myself"* (P-9).

*"I have realized that I am actually a calm person, and I can be that way if I choose to. I realized that one should work hard in order to prevent fights. I can now hold myself back. I do not get angry quickly. Most importantly, I have realized that everybody has problems. I mean, it is not only me. Everybody has a different story"* (A-2).

*"I realized that I myself was the source of my anger. I could not express my emotions clearly, and I could not speak when I was angry. I realized that it was not only me; others also experience these kinds of problems. I realized that I was not alone and could actually settle down and solve this in some way"* (A-9).

Table 6 presents parental and adolescent perspectives on the difficulties they experienced in the process.

Table 6. Perspectives on the difficulties experienced in the process

<b>Difficulties Experienced in the Process</b>			
<b>Parent Views</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Adolescent Views</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Related to self</b>		<b>Related to self</b>	
Having difficulty in expressing themselves	10	Having difficulty in expressing themselves	14
Inability to use the support system	4	Being misunderstood	2
Being criticized	3	Knowing/socializing with new people	2
Dread	2	Difficulty in eye contact	1
Concern for privacy	2	Facing with the problem	1
Difficulty of being determined	1	Having intra family problems	1
Difficulty of communicating with the child	1	<b>Emotions</b>	
<b>Related to spouses and children</b>		Dread	6
Other children's care	5	Embarrassment	2
Lack of spouse cooperation	2	Being excited	1
Not calming down the spouse	2	<b>Time</b>	
<b>Transportation / Time</b>		Time Problem	2
Transportation Difficulty	5	<b>Related to the activities</b>	
Sparing time	3	Anger management	3
Problem with the workplace	2	Practicing relaxation	2
No difficulties	2	Guided Dream Technique	1
<b>Related to programs and activities</b>		Difficulty in conflict resolution	1
Homework	1	Difficulty in empathizing	1
Not understanding some of the information	1	<b>Group Nature and Rules</b>	
Difficulty in practicing relaxation	1	Concerns about privacy	3
		Crowd	1
		Not obeying group rules	1

An analysis of Table 6 indicates that parents experienced difficulties mainly within themselves, spouses and children, and with the program transportation and the timing of programs and activities. They also reported difficulties with issues such as expressing themselves, not being able to use the support system effectively, care and needs of other children in the process, lack of spousal cooperation of the spouse, and adjusting the timing of the program. Adolescents experienced negative emotions such as difficulties in expressing their thoughts and feelings, worries about being misunderstood, dread, embarrassment, group structure, breaking rules, adjusting the timing of the program, large groups; and had difficulties in benefitting from some activities such as applying anger management and relaxation exercises. Two parents had no difficulties with the process.

The following excerpts demonstrates some difficulties in the process reported by the participants:

*"I brought my young daughter with me, which was hard. It took 40 minutes to get here. Coming here, going back, and waiting there took hours. I got anxious when my little girl made noise, for I was worried that she would disturb others. I had doubts about being here with a little girl"* (P-12).

*"The most difficult part was not being able to express myself in that environment. The group was very crowded. Everybody was there due to their problems. I had difficulty in expressing myself. I accept that we need to express ourselves"* (P-6).

*"I had difficulties in understanding my emotions and expressing them. I cannot express my emotions to other people, including my parents. Well, it is the same for them as well, this is how it is. I actually could not express myself. I had difficulty doing so, I did not want them to know that much about me"* (P-4).

*"I experienced difficulties in expressing myself. I am so shy. I cannot socialize easily in these kinds of environments. However, after this meeting I became more sociable after a while".* (A-6).

Table 7 presents the strengths of the program provided to adolescents and parents.

Table 7. Adolescent and Parental Views on the Strengths of the Programs

<b>Strengths of the Program</b>			
<b>Parental views</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Adolescent Views</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Activities</b>		<b>Activities</b>	
Prioritizing problems	5	Anger Management	8
Relaxation exercises	5	Fun nature of the ice-breaking activities	5
Guided Dream technique	5	Relaxation exercises	
Support System	3	Conflict Resolution skills	3
Sit-in	3	Guided Dream Technique	3
Family constellation	2	Problem Solving	2
Announcement technique	1	<b>Emotions</b>	1
Understanding the source of the problem	1	Increased calm	
Not avoiding the problems	1	Feeling comfortable	4
Opposing the tension increase	1	Feeling valued	2
Problem solving methods	1	<b>Communication</b>	1
<b>Effect on/Contribution to the Family</b>		Expressing oneself	
Contribution to the family	7	Effective listening skills	6
<b>Emotions</b>		Increased friendship	2
Self-confidence	3	Empathy skills	1
Increased calm	2	<b>Family Relationships</b>	
<b>Of the self</b>		Increase in intra family interaction	9
Meeting new friends	4	Increased calm within the family	1
Setting aside time for oneself	3		
Expressing oneself	4		
Applying new approaches	1		
Increase in parental presence	1		
Being with others	1		
Increase in spousal interaction	1		
<b>Approach to the problem</b>			
Refraining from blaming or judging	2		
Being able to help others	1		
Discussing freely	1		
Articulating the problem	1		

Table 7 demonstrates findings in relation to the strengths of the program provided to the participants. According to parents, the program had strengths such as contributing positively to themselves and to the family, prioritization of the problems, increased relaxation skills, gaining a support system, and experiencing positive emotions; meeting new people personally, setting aside time for themselves, working with new friends, and the opportunity to express themselves. As for adolescents, they mentioned that program strengths included anger management and conflict resolution, increased relaxation skills, enjoyable warm up activities, communication skills, effective listening skills, experiencing positive emotions, and improvement in familial relationships.

The following are sample statements on the adolescent and parent program strengths:

*“Those little group works were good. We learned from each other because there were some people who were older or younger than us. It is not about age; maybe their education, conditions, and experiences are different” (P-4).*

*“I was impressed by the Family Constellation a lot. I saw distance in the family. I noticed that I had no supports. In that crowded group I had had only one supporter, my mother, and she is not alive anymore. When I went home after the training, I cried all night (P-10).*

*“Family interaction was very important, because I did not have good relationship with my family. I benefitted from Family Constellation because I was affected mostly by that; but I felt that I did not have many people around me. I realized that I was offended.” (A-4).*

*“I think the best thing was the Family Constellation. When my friend participated in it, I tried to visualize mine in my mind. My parents are always with me. No matter what I do, or what I’ve done, my parents have always been with me. I realized this and it touched me. Knowing this affected me and made me happy. I benefitted mostly from the family interaction” (A-6).*

Table 8 demonstrates participant views on the program’s weaknesses.

Table 8. Adolescent and Parental Views on the Program's Weaknesses

Program Weaknesses			
Parent Views	f	Adolescent Views	f
<b>Group climate, time and conditions</b>		<b>Group climate, time and conditions</b>	
Privacy concerns	2	Breaking of group rules	11
Members who do not speak	2	Crowded groups	6
Occasional tension	1	Limited opportunities for expressing oneself	3
Crowded groups	1	Time constraints	3
Insincerity	1	<b>Participants</b>	
Time constraints	1	Absence of the other parent	6
<b>Participants</b>		<b>Inability to understand/apply the activities</b>	
Absence of spouses	13	Relaxation skills	5
Lack of contributions to spousal relationships	6	Guided Dream technique	1
Lack of cooperation with the spouse	3	Effective listening skills	3
<b>Inability to understand/apply the activities</b>		Intra family interaction activity	3
Inability to apply sit-in	2	Problem Solving Skills Education for families	2
Inability to understand the videos	2	No change in communication with one's father	2
Inability to apply relaxation skills	1	Conflict Resolution	2
Inability to prioritize problems	1	No weaknesses	3
Difficulty in practicing what has been learned	1		
Uninteresting topics	1		
No weaknesses	1		

An analysis of these concepts indicate that parents mentioned inadequacies such as: lack of spousal participation; lack of program contributions to spousal relationships and lack of cooperation; inability to understand or apply the activities; privacy concerns about the group environment; time and conditions; members who do not contribute to discussions; time constraints; crowded groups; and an inability to create a friendly atmosphere.

Adolescents indicated the following program weaknesses: lack of opportunity to express oneself; not fully obeying group rules in the process; crowded groups; other parents' lack of participation; inability to benefit from or apply some activities; inability to fully apply relaxation skills; conflict resolution; intra family communication; effective listening skills; and insufficient time allocated to conflict and problem solving with parents. Despite being few in number, some participants stated that the program did not have any faults.

The following are sample participant statements on the problematic aspects of the program.

*"I did not benefit from the support system much because it is not something we need in our family. Our spouses did not participate. For me, this was the only fault. No matter how much training I receive, I might not achieve something if my husband does not support it"* (P-9).

*"Only I had the training. It would have been more beneficial if all family members had been involved. If all spouses and children had been involved, more peace would be maintained in the family; at least in my family. We could have been a model for other people; we could have cooperated."* (P-7).

*"It was time allocation really, if it had been two or three hours instead of one to one-and-a-half hours, people could have expressed themselves more. Each week centered on a different topic. Everybody had problems, no one was there without any problems and therefore more time was needed"* (A-5).

*"I wish we could have worked on more questions that would help us communicate better or play more games. I cannot express myself, so some games and role-playing activities could have been included"* (A-7).

Table 9 presents the suggestions of adolescents and parents regarding the program applied.

Table 9. Suggestions of Adolescents and Parents Regarding the Program

Suggestions about the program			
Parental Views	f	Adolescent Views	f
<b>Participants</b>		<b>Participants</b>	
Spouses should participate together	7	Parents should receive training together	9
Fathers should participate	6	Full family participation required	4
Children should be involved	3	Only interested people should participate	1
Full family participation required	3	<b>Group climate, time and rules</b>	
Only interested people should participate	1	Should be held during weekends	8
<b>Group climate, time and rules</b>		There should be fewer participants	8
Should be held during weekends	5	Participants should obey the rules	5
Should be in the evenings	1	Should be held during weekends	5
Should be constructive	1	More flexible hours	2
Everybody should be respectful	1	Should be held in an open area	1
What is told should be applied	1	More time should be allocated	1
There should be fewer participants	1	Should be conducted in a quieter setting	1
		Group members should not know each other	1
		<b>Content</b>	
		There should be individual counselors	9
		Family constellation should be conducted with everyone	2
		Families should be given more information	2
		More games	1
		More role-playing activities	1
		Increased conflict resolution skills	1
		Increased listening skills	1
		Participants' desires should be considered	1

An analysis of Table 9 demonstrates that parents made program suggestions including: enhancing couple participation;, full family involvement in the program; involving people who are interested; being respectful to the group environment; program timing and rules; applying what was taught; and conducting trainings in the evenings or during the weekends so that more people can participate.

Adolescents had various suggestions that included: involving both parents and all family members in trainings; flexible group timings (e.g., during the weekends or evenings); and groups with fewer people. As for content, they suggested enabling individual help, applying Family Constellation to all participants, giving families more information, and increasing games and role-playing activities.

The following excerpts are sample participant suggestions regarding the program:

*"It would have been much better if my husband and children had been here with me. I wish it had been so. Yes, it would have been more beneficial if fathers and children had been together. This training should be given to parents and children together (P-12).*

*"Attending the program during weekdays could be more convenient for me. I have a son who attends secondary school. I always think of him. I had difficulty getting here" (P-6).*

*"It would be better if the program were held during weekends and conducted with the participation of both mothers and fathers. If my dad had been here, for example, I would now have no problems with him" (A-1).*

*"It is more logical to have smaller groups, with the participation of those who would attend in earnest. I think uninterested people affect the group in a negative way. Groups should be smaller" (P-6).*

#### 4. Discussion

This study investigated the views of parents who participated in the 'Non-Violent Resistance' program with regard to their training. Interviews conducted with parents about the emotions they experienced during the process revealed that they experienced mainly positive/pleasant emotions such as: calm; relief; happiness; feeling valued; feeling support from non-family members; and having the freedom to express oneself.

Parents generally reported that they gained new skills with the program. According to them, they improved largely in areas such as intra family interaction, conflict resolution, and anger management and relaxation skills. The Guided Dream technique and relaxation skills are the two items in particular that made great contributions to themselves and other family members. Parents stated that their self-awareness and awareness of their family increased with the program. They realized that they took on many familial responsibilities, that they could not set aside time for themselves, that everybody has different problems, that they were not alone, and that there was distance in family interactions. Parents also thought that the psycho-education program provided to their children had very positive effects on them, increasing their children's level of

calm, intra family communication, anger management skills, while decreasing reactional behaviors.

As for the positive effects of the program on their families, the parents stated that relationships in their family increased, particularly with their children; family members became closer to one another, there was an increase in communication, and the home atmosphere began to relax. On the other hand, the parallel programs enabled parents and their children to set positive communication, feel less helpless and more adequate as parents, and feel like they did something special for themselves. The participants stated that they had difficulties primarily in self-expression, and they also had difficulties in their children's care and use of support system, the program did not have much contribution to spouse relationships, and was also inadequate with issues such as absence or lack of spousal contribution. They suggested that spouses should be involved in the trainings, fathers should be involved, children should also have training in the same environment, and that participation could be increased by holding trainings during weekends or evenings.

An analysis of experiential studies on parental skills in literature indicates that these studies are mainly quantitative in nature in Turkey and throughout the world. Although they are very few in number, there are some qualitative studies that include participant views as well. Yeşiltepe (2001) administered trainings for mothers and found that parents' self-confidence increased after the programs, they began to communicate with their children more effectively, they learned to cope with problems better, children began to share their problems and emotions with their mothers more frequently, and children's decision making and problem solving skills increased.

An analysis of some of the similar experiential studies conducted in Turkey indicates that parents displayed differences in their relationships with their children, their problem solving skills increased, this effect caused positive changes in parental life and various aspects of parenting, negative parent attitudes decreased, self-respect and satisfaction levels increased, and parental skills toward establishing close relationships with their children increased (Özdemir, 1991; Pehlivan, 2008; Kocayörük and Sümer, 2009). Results of this study are generally parallel to the qualitative and quantitative findings of the studies conducted before. Experiential studies conducted in other countries report that in a similar vein, positive parenting practices increased after the program's completion; stress, anxiety and depression levels of parents decreased; there was a decrease in conflict between parents and children and between parents; dysfunctional parenting practices decreased; parents' anger levels decreased and self-confidence levels increased; and problematic behaviors in their children decreased (Sanders, 2000; Sanders, Cann, Markie-Dadds, 2003; Stallman and Ralph, 2007; Sanders and Ralph, 2009).

Adolescent opinions on the process indicate that the experiential group reported to have benefited from the "Coping with Violence and Aggression" program. Interviews conducted with students at the end of the process indicated that they experienced mainly positive or pleasant emotions such as calming, relief, self-confidence, worthiness, happiness, and joy. The students also stated that they sometimes experienced negative or unpleasant feelings such as anxiousness, uneasiness, and difficulty in expressing themselves. The adolescents also stated that they gained new skills thanks to the program, and that this circumstance contributed to their relationships with friends and family members. They stated that they made self-improvements in communication skills, conflict resolution, anger management, and relaxation skills. They stated in particular that their parents' having received education also contributed positively to their approach styles and trust levels.

Additionally, adolescents learned the importance of meeting and socializing with new friends and communication, the effects of lash out when angry and intra family interactions on individuals and family members, and insufficient communication with their family. As for positive effects of the program on their familial relationships, the adolescents stated that their intra family relationships increased, family members became closer to one another, and there was a calmer family atmosphere. They also stated that they sometimes had difficulty in expressing themselves, experienced anxiety regarding privacy, and had difficulty in applying the relaxation exercises. The participants indicated that some program weaknesses included the breaking of rules from time to time, crowded groups, and involving only one parent in the program. Some suggestions included having the opportunity to receive individual help, involving both parents in the trainings, obeying the rules, and forming groups with fewer participants.

Studies that focus on aggressive behaviors and family relationships in adolescents indicate that the studies that investigate participant opinions on the effects of these experiential programs are quite limited in number. An analysis of studies on violence and aggression in adolescents in Turkey and in the world indicates that the education programs decreased adolescents' negative attitudes and behaviors such as anger, violence, and aggression, while increasing communication, problem solving, negotiation and mediation, anger management, conflict resolution, healthy family functions, and social skills (Siyez and Tan-Tuna, 2014; Bacioğlu, 2014; Yavuzer, Karataş and Gündoğdu, 2013; Bedel and Arı, 2011; Yavuzer and Üre, 2010; Shechtman and Ifargan, 2009; Gültekin, 2008; Şevkin, 2008; Ando, Asakura, Ando and Simons-Morton, 2007; Akdeniz, 2007; Tekinsav-Sütçü, 2006; Fong, 2006; Uysal, 2006; Şahin, 2006; Karataş, 2005; Duran and Eldeleklioğlu, 2005; Herrmann and McWhirter, 2003; Aber, Jones and Brown, 2003; Sharp, 2003).

In sum, the results of this study, which is based on family interactions and functions and which aims to decrease

adolescents' aggressive behaviors, demonstrate parallelism with many studies in Turkey and across the globe. Experiential studies conducted in Turkey focused mainly on children and adolescents, or parents; and the number of studies on violence and aggression that investigated parents and their children together are quite limited. This program, which is based on the notion that the family is handled as a unit and that the interaction formed in this system could affect attitudes and behaviors of all family members, thereby contributing to increased parent and adolescent communication in Turkish families. Application of the program in tandem with school psychological counselors at schools could help parents who feel inadequate and helpless about coping with their children's violent and aggressive behaviors. Involving not only adolescents and parents experiencing problems but also school administrators and teachers in the program in a framework of a holistic approach could be more beneficial in coping with the multidimensional issues of violence and aggression. Generalizations of the findings of this study are limited with the nature of the activities in the program, its duration, and the effectiveness of its researchers' practices. Results of this experiential study can be generalized only in the student and parent groups with similar features.

### Appendix

This article is part of a doctoral thesis. It was presented as a summary oral presentation at the Conference of the Turkish Psychological Counselling and Guidance Association on December 1-3, 2016. I would like to thank the Çukurova University Scientific Research Fund for their support.

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