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Nurten SARGIN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Necmettin Erbakan University,

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## **Metaphorical Perceptions of “Violence” among Students of Psychological Counselling and Guidance**

Nurten SARGIN\*

<sup>1</sup>Necmettin Erbakan University

### **Abstract**

It is seen that violence has been escalating across the globe. In parallel with the increase worldwide, violence takes place at larger scales especially in the geography we live in due to reasons such as wars, terrorism, domestic violence and school violence. Based on these harrowing experiences, we often see the news about violence in the media, social media, and on TVs. Exposure to such excessive violence seems to normalize the violence and leads to decreased awareness. The purpose of this study is to determine how violence is perceived by the preservice school counsellors (i.e., students enrolled in a psychological counselling and guidance training program) who, as school counsellors, are to take part in the efforts at schools to prevent violence. Accordingly, the present study is aimed at identifying the metaphorical perceptions of violence amongst the students enrolled in the Department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance, Necmettin Erbakan University. In the study, the research data was collected, analysed and interpreted using qualitative and quantitative research methods. In order to find out what kind of perceptions they have on violence, the students were presented with the following incomplete sentence “Violence is (like) ..... because .....” and then requested to complete it. Based on the descriptions, five categories were elicited; threat; purpose; destruction, psychological harm and (physical) harm; injury and death; force. It was seen that metaphors were mostly used in the category of threat, as opposed to the category of injury and death with the smallest number of metaphors. Recommendations were offered based on the results of the study.

**Key words:** Psychological counsellor and adviser, violence, metaphor, perception

### **Introduction**

In recent years, a substantial increase at both individual and social level has been observed worldwide in the violence that exists in every stage of human life. Kocacık (2001) acknowledges that violence is a phenomenon that manifests itself in a wide variety of forms and is experienced by the individuals as well as social groups. It is observed that violence has increasingly continued from past to present while it is expected to decrease in accordance with the development level of nations. It is seen that violence today is experienced both in its primitive form as in the past and in various forms resulting from the use of technology (Özgür et al., 2011). In a study on cyber bullying among university students, Sargin and Güven (2010) found that the participants had been exposed to cyber bullying particularly by the people they had met on the cyberspace via the Internet. Violence is a major public health problem worldwide. Each year, over 1.6 million people lose their lives to violence. Violence is among the leading causes of death for people aged 15-44 years of age worldwide, accounting for 14% of deaths among males and 7% of deaths among females (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002).

The most comprehensive definition of violence is given by the World Health Organization. The World Health Organization defines violence as: “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (WHO, 2002). Another definition provided for violence is as follows: purposefully harming a person, insulting, dishonouring, disturbing peace and quiet, violation of the rights of others, intimidation, hurting, using force to hurt, displaying disruptive and aggressive behaviours and showing great or excessive anger (Erten and Ardalı, 1996). TDK (2016) defines violence as the use of force on those who hold opposite views, the use of brute force and the extremes in emotions or attitudes.

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\* Corresponding Author: *Nurten Sargin, nurtensargin@hotmail.com*

Common features of violence include the use of force so as to hurt, injure, kill and damage property; the unlawful exercise of physical force; the use of violence or a threat to use of violence to perform an illegal action; the acts of physical destruction, breaking or destroying unnecessarily in a way to violate common laws and ethical codes; the act of force or compulsion going beyond boundaries of accepted behaviours in social relationships (Özerkmen, 2012). Kocacık (2001) notes that it is difficult to define violence as it has a complicated nature and reports that violence occurs in very different forms in all types of personal relationships and across all sections of society. It is argued that growing up in an environment of violence is a major factor in children's tendency to violence (İçli, 1997). The phenomena of violence is approached as a problem of perception and it is also covered within the different disciplines of science (MEB, 2008).

Conflicts arising from the violence between the individuals living in a society need to be regarded as one aspect of social life. Skills need to be improved not only to understand what underlies conflicts but to resolve the conflicts, as well (Kocacık, 2001). It is therefore essential to determine how it is perceived to settle the conflicts and prevent violence. A study points out that knowing the perceptions of violence amongst teachers and students is crucial to stop the events of violence increasing day by day and take educational measures (Şener and Özan, 2013).

A review of literature shows that studies conducted on violence are grouped under three categories. One of these categories is domestic violence ( Türkiye'de kadına Yönelik Aile içi Şiddet Araştırması, 2015; Page and İnce, 2008; Güler, Tel and Tuncay, 2005; Kocacık and Çağlayandereli, 2009; Ayan, 2007; Yetim, and Şahin, 2008; Bayındır, 2010; Açıkgöz, 2015; Baykal, 2008), the second category is school violence (MEB,2008; Altun, Güneri, and Baker, 2006; Kaya, Güneş, Kaya and Pehlivan, 2004; Ögel, Tari and Eke, 2006; Uzbaş, 2009; Avcı and Yıldırım, 2014; Kılıç, 2012) and the last one includes studies conducted to explain violence (Güleç, Topaloğlu, Ünsal and Altıntaş, 2012; Yorahan, 2011; Çeliktaş, 2013). A closer look into literature shows that there are no studies that have examined the violence tendencies of pre-service school counsellors. For this reason, it is the purpose of this study to explore how violence is perceived by the students enrolled in a psychological counselling and guidance training program who will be involved in efforts at schools to prevent violence as school counsellors in the future. The study is aimed at exploring the perceptions of violence amongst pre-service school counsellors. The study is significant in terms of identifying the perceptions of violence.

## Method

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used together in the study. In quantitative research, descriptive method was utilized and frequencies and percentages were given. In qualitative research, phenomenological design was used to analyse the metaphors used for the violence. Phenomenological design relies on the description of phenomena that are known yet not comprehended fully. Investigation of perceptions, tendencies and concepts is consistent with the design of this study. In phenomenological research, data sources are the individuals or groups who experience and display the phenomenon that the study focusses on (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

## Sample

The sample of the study was comprised of the students enrolled in the Psychological Counselling and Guidance Program at Necmettin Erbakan University during 2016-2017 academic year. Based on voluntary participation, 71 students were included in the study sample. As one participant did not provide sufficient information, responses of 70 participants were included in the analysis of the data. Of the participants, 48 were female and 21 were male with an age range of 18 to 32 years.

## Data Collection Instruments

In the study, participants were presented with the following incomplete sentence "Violence is (like) ..... because ....." and then requested to complete it giving their opinions and write only their gender and age as demographics. Also, they were asked to share their views by focusing on and using only one metaphor.

## Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study was analysed using the method of content analysis. The metaphors provided by the participants to describe violence were listed and categories were created with reference to the definition of violence. Five categories were elicited regarding the concept of violence and an evaluation was made according to the titles of these categories.

## Results

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis and their interpretations. The categories were grouped under five themes; Threat; Purpose; Destruction, Psychological Harm and (Physical) Harm; Injury and Death; and Force. Metaphors used by the participants were coded and presented along with their age and gender represented as F (female) and M (male).

The metaphors related to violence, frequencies and percentages, and the emotions, opinions and attitudes for the metaphors were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results regarding the metaphors produced for threat

G/A	Violence	f	%	Because
F/23, M/18	An action that equalizes humans and animals	2	2.86	Humans compromise by talking to each other Occurs following violence
F/22	Habit	1	1.43	Harms both oneself and the others
F/23	Traumatic impact on women and children	1	1.43	Results from weakness, impotence and inability
F/24	An infectious disease	1	1.43	Those who exposed to violence from early years on are most likely to commit violence
F/22	A nasty insult	1	1.43	Leaves a person vulnerable and ends in loss of self-respect
F/18	Volcano	1	1.43	Its impact is painful
F/19	A threat against life	1	1.43	Restricts rights and prevents self-expression
M/21	Trauma	1	1.43	Leads to violence
M/22	The biggest weakness of human beings	1	1.43	Makes up the deficiency this way
F/20	Addiction	1	1.43	You desire more as you keep doing
F/21 F/20	Disease	2	2.86	Kills you if you cannot find the medicine
M/19	Polluted water	1	1.43	Supposed to give a sense of relief in the mistaken belief that it is clean
M/23	Erosion	1	1.43	Destroys everything on its way unless precautions are taken
M/20	Ignorance	1	1.43	Non-ignorant people solve their problems by talking
F/21	A beast without anger management	1	1.43	People compromise by talking
M/20	Being overwhelmed by sudden anger	1	1.43	Reveals one's character
F/20	Whirlpool	1	1.43	Sucks everyone into everything
F/19	Sea waves	1	1.43	Damages everyone on its way
F/17 M/22	A truck with a failed brake	2	2.86	Destructive if not stopped
F/18	Popcorn	1	1.43	Small at first but gets bigger in time
F/21	Enemy	1	1.43	Not certain when to arrive, stabs you in the back Approaches quietly, hurts and goes away even before you notice it, and you cannot understand what's happened.
F/21	Snake	1	1.43	
Total		25	35.75	

The metaphors produced for threat – a form of violence - show that 25 participants produced 23 different metaphors. Some examples of the interesting metaphors include *snake*, *popcorn*, *a truck with a failed brake*, *sea*

*waves, whirlpool, polluted water and volcano*. The main emotions arising from the metaphors are weakness, impotence and inability, loss of self-respect, restriction, inhibition, pain and inability to figure out what has happened. Threat can be included within the scope of psychological violence. It is seen that basic emotions regarding metaphors similar to those stemming from psychological violence. As to attitudes described by the respondents for the metaphors, a participant stated that people who were exposed to violence at early ages have a greater tendency to use violence. Social Learning Theory suggests that violence is a learnt behaviour and passes on from one generation to the next. Previous studies found that the majority of the adults perpetrating violence have a story of exposure to domestic violence in their childhood (Kaufman and Zigler 1987; Parke and Collmer, 1975). This finding is in agreement with other research findings in the literature. Some other attitudes described by the participants are self-harm and harming the others. This seems to be in line with the definition of violence “the intentional use of physical force or power against oneself, another person, or against a group or community”. Saying “Humans compromise by talking”, three participants emphasized a positive emotion among the others proposed for metaphors associated with violence.

Results regarding purpose – a dimension of violence – were given in Table 2.

Table 2. Results regarding the metaphors produced for *purpose*

G/A	Violence	f	%	Because
F/21	Committed against women	1	1.43	It is bullying
F/22	Bullying	4	5.71	Used by bullies
M/22				
M/22				
F/32				
F/21	Lifting the scab	2	2.86	It worsens problems, makes them complicated and hurts more
M/20				
F/21	War	1	1.43	There is blood and grudge in both
F/24	Massacre	1	1.43	It is a matter of cruelty to each other
Total		9	12.86	

The metaphors produced for purpose - a dimension of violence – indicated that 9 participants used 6 metaphors. *Lifting the scab* could be suggested as an original metaphor. *Committed against women, bullying, massacre and war* are the other metaphors produced.

Basic emotions arising from the metaphors were found to be negative ones and it was observed that bullying was more emphasized by the participants. Definitions and findings related to violence show that bullying is defined as a repeated harassment or harassment attempt by one or more other students against a weaker one in order to damage, hurt and humiliate (Olweus, 1993: 24), and purpose is regarded as a dimension of violence. The violence committed therefore leads to negative outcomes. Due to that reason, it is likely that participants stressed the outcomes of violence in the metaphor produced for purpose. It is seen that all the metaphors and emotions in this category are negative and related to the term “actual use”, which is used by the World Health Organization when defining violence. The situations indicated by the metaphors produced in this category could be associated with this term.

The findings about destruction, psychological harm and (physical) harm were presented in Table 3.

Table 3) Findings about the metaphors used for Destruction, Psychological Harm and (Physical) Harm

G/A	Violence	f	%	Because
M/22	A devastating action	1	1.43	It betrays trust
M/20	Destroys you when used	1	1.43	It leads to financial and emotional effects
M/22	Dark corner of human nature	1	1.43	Its results are bad for everyone

M/20	Psychological pressure	1	1.43	Physical pain disappears but nonphysical does not
M/22	Devastating events	1	1.43	
M/22	Resentment	1	1.43	It drives a person to suicide
F/21	Ruins Family	1	1.43	It causes anger; violence freezes the hearts
M/23	A drop in the ocean	1	1.43	It is the worst action ever
M/21	Stopped watch	1	1.43	Showing oceans of love and a drop of violence
F/21	Sadness, disappointment	2	2.86	Violence is sometimes right, just like a stopped watch is right twice a day
F/20				Person's negative point of view on life
F/21	A dark, imprisoned darkness	1	1.43	
F/19	Snowflake	1	1.43	It makes one's life upside-down when exposed to
M/21	Evil	1	1.43	It gets larger as it is scattered and it causes more damages as it gets larger
F/21	Pen	1	1.43	It kills social life
M/18	A tear	1	1.43	Its traces are never lost
M/22	Writing on the walls what is not written in your destiny	1	1.43	It exhausts one much more than a punch or a slap does
				Whatever you write, the result is never what you expect
Total		17	24.31	

It was found that participants used 16 metaphors for the destruction, psychological harm and (physical) harm. It was seen that 4 of the metaphors (*a devastating action, destroys you when used, devastating events*) were related to destruction, 6 of them (*pen, imprisoned darkness, psychological pressure, dark corner of human life, resentment, sadness and disappointment*) were connected with psychological harm and 6 were produced for harm (*a drop in the ocean, stopped watch, sadness, snowflake evil, tear and writing on the walls what is not written in your destiny*). Some examples of the original metaphors include *pen, imprisoned darkness, dark corner of human nature, a drop in the ocean, stopped watch, snowflake* and *writing on the walls what is not written in your destiny*. It is seen that the original metaphors were used in the category of psychological harm and (physical) harm. Analysis of the emotions indicated that the emotions connected with the metaphors produced for destruction were all negative and they emphasized the extremes like committing suicide that are caused by violence. A research study reported violence as a risk factor for suicide attempt and pointed out that suicide was the 17<sup>th</sup> leading cause of global deaths in 1990s and it is estimated to stand 14<sup>th</sup> on the list by 2020 (Violence and Health, 2000). Self-directed violence according to World Health Organization (2002) is divided into subcategories: suicide and self-abuse. The act of suicide here can be considered to be the most extreme of self-directed violence.

It is seen that the emotions provided by the metaphors produced for psychological harm were negative and participants put the emphasis on the traces of violence and the permanency of these traces.

The emotions and attitudes revealed by the metaphors generated for harm showed that five of these emotions and attitudes were negative. It is seen how harmful and destructive the violence is no matter how insignificant all this negativity is. The emotions described based on the metaphors used in this category can be associated with the outcomes of violence. It is acknowledged that the outcomes of violence seriously affect an individual physically, emotionally and socially (Güler, Tel, Tuncay, 2005). It seems that the views shared by the participants are in line with the effects of violence. Given the metaphor of stopped watch, it might be suggested that it is emphasized that the use of violence sometimes could be a solution and the right thing to do.

Findings about injury and death were indicated below in Table 4.

Table 4. Results regarding to metaphors created for injury and death

G/A	Violence	f	%	Because
F/22	It is like an injury or murder	1	1.43	The purpose is to harm a person
F/21	A savage assault	1	1.43	No one deserves it
M/21	Breaking of a glass	1	1.43	You put back together the pieces yet it never becomes the same as before
F/18	Oil stain	1	1.43	Permanent trace
Total		4	5.72	

As can be seen in Table 4, the participants produced 4 metaphors for the categories of injury and death. *Breaking of a glass* and *oil stain* can be given as examples of original metaphors. It is seen that the emotions expressed on the basis of metaphors are all negative ones. It is noteworthy that “harming a person”, as described in these emotions, is in conformity with the following definition of violence provided above; “violation of the rights of others, intimidation, hurting, using force to hurt”. It could be suggested that other emotions emphasized here, which are “permanency of violence, changing back into the original form and no-one deserves it”, are related to the effects of physical violence presented in the literature.

Findings concerning force were presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings concerning the metaphors produced for force

G/A	Violence	f	%	Because
F/21	Use of force	1	1.43	Those resorting to violence always believe that they are the powerful
F/24	Disproportionate use of force	2	2.86	Causes harm to others
F/22				
F/19	Intense pressure	1	1.43	It is the source of violence
F/22	Intimidation	1	1.43	Assaulting by using violence shatters him/her
M/23	Use of force	1	1.43	Nobody is superior to anyone
F/19	Weakness of the weak ones	1	1.43	Deprived of certain things if they use violence
F/23	Done by those who lack the love of humanity	1	1.43	An effort to prove oneself
M/20	A method of defence for fools	1	1.43	Humans compromise by talking to each other Done by so-called human beings
M/19	The stronger beats the weaker	2	2.86	The perpetrator wants to hide his/her faults
F/21				
F/21	Tent	2	2.86	One knows that s/he is wrong, yet chooses it to dominate
F/22				
F/21	Sign of inability and weakness	1	1.43	Choosing the hard path over the easy one
F/22	Use of force against the weaker by the powerful	1	1.43	Causes severe depression
Total		15	21.45	

Findings concerning force indicated that 15 participants produced 13 metaphors. *Tent*, among others, stands out as an original metaphor. Here, the emotions explaining the metaphors can be discussed under two headings; 1. From the perspective of the perpetrator of violence, it is seen that there are explanations made for the reasons of violence. These reasons include “perpetrator’s attempt to show his/her power (violence is power), those who are deprived of certain things use violence, an effort to prove oneself, one’s struggle to mask his/her injustice, people know that they are wrong, doing it to seem to be right while actually not, choosing the hard path over the easy one”. It was reported in a study (Avcı 2006:45) that adolescents exhibiting violent behaviours have parents who have inadequacies in problem solving, communication, emotional responsiveness, roles within the family, behaviour management, the care of children and common family functions, when compared to the parents in the control group. The findings obtained were found to be in line with the causes of violence. 2. From the perspective of the victim of violence, the emotions and views shared by the participants involve effects such as suffering from harm and having severe depression experienced by the victim of violence. The explanations given for the effects were negative and this finding could be associated with the common effects of violence.

## Conclusion

This study was aimed at identifying the metaphoric perception of violence among students enrolled in the Department Psychological Counselling and Guidance at Necmettin Erbakan University. Consisting of 70 students initially, the study was completed with 69 students, with one student left out due to missing data. The data obtained was analysed after being divided into five categories related to violence; threat; purpose; destruction,

psychological harm (physical) and harm; injury and death; and force. It was found out that the greatest number of metaphors were produced in the category of threat whereas the least number was detected in the category of injury and death. It was seen that bullying was the most produced metaphor. In general, it was observed that the participants had difficulty in creating original metaphors, and they could come up with just a few original ones. It might be suggested that the original metaphors were mostly found in threat and destruction, psychological harm and (physical) harm. The smallest number of original metaphors were observed in the category of force. It was discovered that the metaphors produced for violence and the emotions and attitudes related to the metaphors were in line with the definitions and the theoretical knowledge in the literature. In terms of gender and age, those who produced these original metaphors were female students between 18 to 21 years old. On the basis of threat, purpose, destruction, psychological harm, (physical) harm and force, the emotions, opinions and attitudes concerning the metaphors used were framed with the effects of violence, perpetrator of violence and causes of committing violence. Following recommendations were made based on these results.

## Recommendations

Further studies need to be done to investigate the awareness and perception of violence using larger sample sizes from different departments of universities. Projects should be planned to increase the awareness of violence. There is also a need to carry out research studies focusing on the prevention of violence.

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