



# The Relationships among Interparental Conflict, Peer, Media Effects and the Violence Behaviour of Adolescents: The Mediator Role of Attitudes towards Violence\*

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate interparental conflict, peer and media effects and its direct relationship with the violence behaviour of adolescents and the mediator role of attitudes towards violence. 2120 students, 964 girls and 1156 boys chosen from 7th and 8th grades of one private and eleven public elementary schools in Adana have made up the sampling group of this study. In this research, Attitudes towards Violence Scale, Aggression Questionnaire, Perceived Multidimensional Violence Sources Inventory and Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale have been administered to the students. Research data have been tested by using Structural Equation Modeling. The results reveal that variables except interparental conflict have positive effect on this model. It has been found that attitudes towards violence have partial mediator role in the relationship between media-peer effects and physical violence while they have entire mediator role in the relationship between media-peer effects and verbal violence. The research findings have been discussed within social cognitive model context.

## Key Words

Attitudes Towards Violence, Media, Peers, Violence, Interparental Conflict, Structural Equation Modeling.

Violence behavior in adolescents is a fundamental problem commonly encountered in today's world. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there is a great amount of research conducted on the issue. Kepenkçi and Çinkır (2005) reported that 35.5% of the high school students in Turkey resort to violence at least once in a school year. Alikasifoğlu,

Ercan, Erginöz, Uysal, and Kaymak Deniz (2004) conducted a study in Istanbul to investigate the prevalence of displaying violence behavior among high school students and they reported that 42% (n=1720) of the students were involved in at least one fight in previous year.

Different from developmental features of children and

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societal environmental factors (e.g. being subjected to continuous environmental stress), experiences both in peer groups and families have a very important role in the development of violence behavior (Avcı & Güçray, 2010; Brendgen, Vitaro, Tremblay, & Wanner, 2002; Peksaygılı & Güre, 2008). Particularly, inter-parental conflicts and aggressions within the family environment are seen to have an important role in experiencing a sense of externalization by children during the period of puberty (Peksaygılı & Güre, 2008). By the same token, Tornincaso (2006) found that problematic behaviors of an adolescent are an important predictor of inter-parental conflicts. Moreover, Mazefsky and Farrel (2005) argued that an adolescent's witnessing violence at home, low level of family support and inadequate parental practices are related to the demonstration of violence behaviors. Growing up in an environment where inter-parental conflicts exist may result in displaying aggressive behaviors by children by teaching them that such behaviors are appropriate and allowed (Grych & Fincham, 1990). At the same time, children may develop maladjusted social information processing. Children may develop a propensity to view environmental clues as hostile and the world as full of conflicts. For instance, Rutter (1994) showed that children displaying bias of assigning hostile meanings to events are more likely to behave aggressively. Moreover, these children can never develop conflict coping mechanism required to adjust; hence, they cannot acquire the ability to deal with interpersonal conflicts (Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994). The child may regard aggressiveness as an appropriate method of conflict management and develop poor problem solving capacity and destructive conflict resolution skills (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

Parents are expected to be the most prominent role models in the development of children's social behaviors. Therefore, modeling of parents results in children's learning aggressive behaviors by observing hostility and anger and accordingly provides children with direct explanation for adopting similar behaviors in their interpersonal relations (e.g., with their peers and siblings) (Stocker & Youngblade, 1999).

Similar to parents, peers may have both negative and positive effects on adolescents. Peers can consolidate positive social behaviors such as enhancing academic achievement and setting goals (Stein & Newcomb, 1999). Negative peer behaviors, on the other hand, are an indication of risk for many risky behaviors. Relationships with peers committing crimes are one of the strongest

variables leading the adolescent to the behavior of committing a crime. Peers upholding substance abuse and committing a crime may encourage their peers to show similar behaviors (Conger & Reuter, 1996). Brendgen et al. (2002) stated that problematic peer groups have an important role in children and adolescents' resorting to violence behavior to commit a crime. In a longitudinal study by Werner and Crick (2004), it was found that in the emergence of physical violence, peer groups experiencing some adjustment problems have significant influences for both males and females. In a similar manner, Mesch, Fishman, and Eisikovits (2003) revealed that peers have significant influences on the demonstration of violence behavior by the adolescent.

Another element having influences on aggressiveness and violence behavior is media. Research has revealed that adolescents spend considerable time in front of the screen. In America, children and adolescents aged 2-17 watch TV for between 19 and 40 hours a week (AC Nielsen Company, 2000). In a similar manner, according to a study conducted in Ankara (Belviranlı et al., 2008), daily TV watching time of children and adolescents ranges from 2.2 to 2.7 hours. Violence behavior is reinforced by models watched by children on TV, the internet, in video games and music videos. Research provides important evidence indicating that exposure to violent films, video games and music is an important variable increasing the occurrence of aggressive and violence behaviors of adolescents (Anderson et al., 2003).

There is some research showing that children exposed to violence occurring in media will have greater tendency to exhibit aggressive and violence behaviors in their adolescence and adulthood (Anderson et al., 2003; Huesmann & Eron, 1986; Huesmann & Kirwil, 2007; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003; Slater, Henry, Swaim, & Andersen, 2003). The common point of all this research is the claim that watching violence behavior supports the emergence of violence behavior. Huesmann ve Eron (1986) carried out a longitudinal study in five different countries (Israel, Finland, Poland, Australia and USA,) and they found that in childhood TV watching patterns of both boys and girls predict their aggression in adolescence. Paik and Comstock (1994) conducted a study to investigate the influence of violence occurring on TV and films on the behaviors of children and adolescents and provided evidence showing that media increase violence behaviors on the part of children and adolescents. Social cognitive theory argues that

violence behavior is a learned behavior rather than an innate behavior (Bandura, 1978). According to social cognitive theory, individuals learn violence through the processes of modeling and reinforcement. Individuals model aggressive behavior in three different ways; directly (from family and friends), media (from news, television or internet) or society (neighborhood and city). These models may cover the child's peers, parents, siblings or characters depicted in media. Particularly, children witnessing the aggressive behaviors of parents, peers and characters in media against others may learn that aggressiveness is an acceptable and effective method employed to achieve a desired goal (Bandura, 1986; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Eron, 1994; Huesmann, 1997).

Above-mentioned modeling processes contribute to the development of positive attitudes towards the use of violence through the emergence of cognitive schemata directed to the demonstration of violence behavior and expectation of positive outcomes related to aggressiveness. As a result, violence behavior and violence behavior strategies are more commonly generalized. If a great value is attached to observed models such as a parent, a close friend or a beloved hero, it is highly possible to learn violence through observation (Berkowitz, 1993). Moreover, aggressive parents and friends may activate negative reinforcement methods by not punishing for violence behavior or submitting such behaviors and in this way, they may encourage adolescents to resort to violence (Patterson, 1982). On the other hand, it is seen that use of positive reinforcements such as praise or some other positive responses can be another factor promoting the use of violence (Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996). Such behavioral patterns may help children to improve their aggressiveness-related self-efficacy and acquire a positive attitude towards aggressiveness. This positive attitude may encourage the use of violence behavior as a general strategy employed to interact with others not only in close relations but also in various social contexts and to achieve goals.

The tendency to resort to violence in adolescence is determined by attitudes towards problematic behaviors (Sussman, Skara, Weiner, & Dent, 2004). Among the psychological traits of the adolescent prone to demonstrate violence behavior are his/her attitudes towards and beliefs about violence and aggressiveness. It is likely for such individuals to behave aggressively, bully and display anti-social behaviors (Cunningham, Henggeler, Limber, Melton, & Nation, 2000; Furlong & Morrison, 2000). Individuals having this risk factor usually

show greater tendency to approve violence as a means of solving their daily problems.

Research provides increasing amount of evidence indicating a connection between the attitudes towards violence and violence behavior. Generally, it is believed that attitudes affect behaviors and they particularly have an important affect on violence behavior (Krauss & Krauss, 1995; Upmeyer, 1989). Research shows that positive attitudes towards violence are an important risk factor related to violence behavior (Borum, 2000; Markowitz, 2001; Vernberg, Jacobs, & Hershberger, 1999). In addition to this, Funk, Elliot, Urman, Flores, and Mock (1999) argued that adolescents who are the victims of violence have stronger positive attitudes towards violence. Therefore, investigation of variables affecting the development of positive attitudes towards violence among adolescents may have important contributions to the efforts made to understand aggressiveness and violence in adolescents and prevent them.

Beliefs about violence behavior have a function serving the enhancement of self-esteem and social image. Furthermore, believing that victims deserve the violence they have been exposed to and they have not suffered enough may reinforce aggressive behavior. In addition to this, aggressiveness' being acceptable, its having some reasons and believing that it is deserved are closely associated with the demonstration of violence behavior (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Hence, such attitudes towards the use of violence may give rise to violence behavior towards others. In this line, Vernberg et al. (1999) found a strong correlation between positive attitudes towards violence and violence behavior. Moreover, observation of aggressiveness between parents (Spaccarelli, Coatsworth, & Bowden, 1995) and aggressiveness of friends (Brendgen et al., 2002; Mesch et al., 2003) may have positive impacts on the development of positive attitudes towards violence. Research argues that media play an important role in the formation of such behaviors by means of modeling and reinforcement processes (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Balkis, Duru, and Buluş (2005) revealed a positive correlation between media and attitudes towards violence.

As a conclusion, when research findings are reviewed, it is seen that parents, peers and media and attitudes towards violence are viewed to be an important risk factor causing the demonstration of violence behavior by children and adolescents. The present study is believed to make contributions to national and international literature. First, this is the first study investigating the mediator role of violence

behavior in relationships among inter-parental conflicts, media, and peers and between physical and verbal violence in Turkey. Second, there is a scarcity of research assessing the mediator role of attitudes toward violence in international literature conducted on children (Brendgen et al., 2002). As this study tests hypotheses by involving both genders, it will enhance the related literature. Third, the findings of the study may help practitioners working in Turkey to intervene with and prevent violence by showing the variables mediating the occurrence of violence. Fourth, it is seen that both national and international studies deal with violence behavior within the context of delinquency-related violence (Brendgen et al., 2002). In the present study, in addition to physical violence, verbal violence is also included. In this way, it is aimed to obtain more comprehensive findings about the issue. As a result, in the present study, based on social cognitive violence model, response to the question "Do the attitudes towards violence play a role as a mediator variable in relationships among inter-parental conflicts, peer and media effects and physical and verbal violence?" was sought.

## Method

### Research Design

The present study was designed according to survey model, one of the qualitative research methods. Relational survey models are research models aiming to determine the existence of relational change and/or its degree between two or more variables (Büyükoztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2008; Karasar, 2000).

### Research Group

The research group of the study consists of totally 2120 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders; 964 (45.5%) girls and 1156 (54.5%) boys, from 12 different elementary schools in the city of Adana. The ages of participants range from 12 to 17 and mean age is 13.67.

### Data Collection Instruments

**Attitudes towards Violence Scale:** This scale was developed by Blevins (2001) to elicit students' attitudes towards violence. The scale is one-dimensional four-point scale including 11 items describing students' attitudes towards violence. Students are asked to define their opinions about each item by selecting options ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). Total

score is calculated by adding scores taken from each item. High total score shows that the student has more positive attitudes towards violence. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Balkis et al. (2005). The reliability and validity of the scale was determined via a study carried out on 400 elementary school students from secondary level and internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .74 and total items correlations in the scale were between .39 and .53. Construct validity of the scale was analyzed through factor analysis and it was observed that factor loadings are gathered on one factor with a value of 2.493 and explaining 36.8% of the variance. Measurement model was tested for the latent variable of attitudes towards violence used in the present study. In the study, items 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are used as indicators. Moreover, error variances of items 5 and 6 were correlated with each other. As a result, it was found that latent variable of attitudes towards violence shows perfect fit ( $\chi^2/\text{sd}(8.38/4)=2.09$ ; GFI= 1.0; AGFI= .99; NFI=1.0; NNFI=1.0; RMSEA=.02; SRMR=.01).

### Perceived Multidimensional Violence Sources

**Inventory:** Perceived Multidimensional Violence Sources Inventory (PMVSI) aims to determine the basic sources directing students towards violence. The scale was developed by Balkis et al. (2005). The scale is a four-point scale consisting of 19 items. The scale requires participants to select one of the options ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). The construct validity of the scale was tested through factor analysis conducted on 400 elementary school students from secondary level. According to the results of this factor analysis, Self-efficacy explains 20.24% of the variance, Belief about Violence explains 12.11% of the variance, Media explains 7.669% of the variance, Peer Group explains 5.745% of the variance, Sense of Belongingness explains 5.118% of the variance. It is seen that five factors explain 50.883% of the total variance together and factor loadings vary between .48 and .78. Besides exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was also conducted on the scale. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, fit indices were found to be  $\chi^2 = 653.75$  ( $df = 142$ ,  $p < .001$ ), ( $\chi^2/df = 4.6$ ), RMSEA = 0.08, RMR = 0.13, SRMR = 0.063, GFI = 0.85, AGFI = 0.080 and CFI = .90. The internal consistency coefficients of the scale are as follows: .62 for Media sub-scale, .62 for Peer Group sub-scale, .52 for Belief about Violence sub-scale, and .71 for Perceived Self-efficacy sub-scale. Within the context of the present study, media (3 items) and peer (4 items) sub-scales are used.

Measurement model was tested for Media and Peer latent variables to be used in the study and variables were found to show a perfect fit ( $\chi^2/\text{sd}(61.36/13)=4.7$ ; GFI= .99; AGFI= .98; NFI=.99; NNFI=.98; RMSEA=.042; SRMR=.024).

**Aggression Questionnaire:** This scale was developed in 1992 by Arnold H. Buss and Mark Perry and updated by Arnold H. Buss and W. L. Warren in 2000 and then adapted to Turkish by Can (2002). This 34-item questionnaire has 5 sub-scales; physical aggression (8 items), verbal aggression (5 items), anger (8 items), hostility (7 items) and indirect aggression (6 items). The questionnaire is a 5-point Likert type scale and possible highest score to be taken from the scale is 170. If the total score taken from Aggression Questionnaire is high, it indicates a high level of aggression (Buss & Warren, 2000; Can, 2002). Reliability and validity of the questionnaire determined via a study conducted on healthy and volunteer 300 people in line with DSM IV criteria. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the questionnaire was found to be "r = .91" for the whole scale, r = .82 for physical aggression sub-scale, .60 for verbal aggression sub-scale and .54 for indirect aggression.

It was found that the correlations of the five sub-scales within the aggression questionnaire vary from r=.55 to r=.73 and total score ranges from r=.75 to r=.87. It was decided that the questionnaire has a high reliability value. Test retest reliability was tested with Pearson correlation. The questionnaire was re-administered at one-week interval and it was found that r = .85 for physical aggression sub-scale, r=.70 for verbal aggression sub-scale and for total score, r=.86 is highly significant (Can, 2002). Similar scales validity method was employed in the determining validity. In order to test similar scales validity, Constant Anger-Anger Style Scale developed by Spielberger (1988) was used. The correlation coefficient of physical aggression with constant anger (CA), internal anger (IA) and external anger (EA) is r=.70; the correlation coefficient of verbal violence with CA, IA and EA is r=.55; the correlation coefficient of indirect aggression with CA, IA and EA is r=.56.

Within the context of the study, measurement models were tested for physical and verbal aggression dimensions. In the study, latent variable of physical aggression is represented by items 8, 10, 11, 17 and 23. Moreover, modification index was used between items 8 and 11. For the latent variable of verbal violence, items 1, 4 and 6 were used. It was found that these two latent variables show perfect

fit ( $\chi^2/\text{sd}(63.09/18)=3.5$ ; GFI= .99; AGFI= .98; NFI=.98; NNFI=.98; RMSEA=.03; SRMR=.02).

#### **Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale:**

The scale was developed by Grych, Seid, and Fincham (1992) to measure children's perception of inter-parental conflicts. The scale consists of 51 items and three sub-dimensions, characteristics of conflict, threat and self-accusation. The scale that can be administered to children aged at 9-12 was found to yield reliable and valid results when used with adolescents aged at 17-21 (Bickham & Fiese, 1997). A high score taken from the scale indicates that the perception of conflict is high. Internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .86, test retest coefficient is .96. The internal consistency coefficients for sub-scales are as follows: .83 for the characteristics of conflict, .76 for threat and .85 for self-accusation.

The scale was adapted to Turkish by Öz (1999) and as a result of the factor analysis conducted; it was found that as in the original scale, it has three factors. These sub-dimensions are: characteristics of conflict (17 items), threat (9 items) and self-accusation (9 items), totally 35 items. The scale was responded based on 3-point Likert type format (2 = Correct; 1 = Sometimes- a bit correct; 0 = Wrong). For sub-dimensions, internal consistency coefficients were found to vary between .74 and .84 and test retest coefficients were found to vary between .75 and .88. Peksaygılı and Güre (2008) conducted a validity and reliability study for the scale and found that it is a three-factor scale. Moreover, for each sub-scale, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were found to be as follows: .83 for characteristics of conflict, .81 for threat and .77 for self-accusation.

Within the context of the study, measurement model was tested for the latent variable of children's perception of inter-parental conflict. For the sub-dimension of threat, items 15, 12, 17, 23, 32, 10, 29 and 35; for the sub-dimension of self-accusation, items 21, 13, 18, 16, 30, 26 and 3 and for the sub-dimension of characteristics of conflict, items 20, 9, 15, 19, 25, 28, 2 and 24 were used in the analyses. For the latent variable of inter-parental conflict, sub-dimensions of the scale were used as an indicator variable and it was observed to yield good fit values ( $\chi^2/\text{sd}(1068/227)=4.7$ ; GFI= .96; AGFI= .95; NFI=.95; NNFI=.96; RMSEA=.04; SRMR=.05).

#### **Procedure**

After determining the schools to be included in the sampling, necessary permissions were granted from

Adana Directorate of National Education to conduct a study in these schools. The study was conducted with students who were volunteers and permitted the use of their data. The scales were administered to all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at the schools by school psychological counselors and the researcher. Each administration was completed within 40-45 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

Statistical analyses of the data collected were conducted through SPSS 15.0 and LISREL 8.70 package programs. In the current study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to test measurements models. Exploratory factor analysis was administered to the measurement models not yielding the adequate fit index values as a result of CFA. Then Confirmatory factor analysis was run again. Moreover, correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the relationships between latent variables. At the following stage, Structural Equity Model (SEM) was tested. In the model yielding adequate fit values, mediator role of attitudes towards violence was tested through the method proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). Measurement models and structural models were tested through LISREL by using Robust Maximum Likelihood Estimation technique and asymptotic covariance matrix. Moreover, in order to test the fit index of the model, S/ X<sup>2</sup> ratio was used as X<sup>2</sup> test is susceptible to sample size. In addition to this, GFI (goodness of fit index), AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index), NFI (normed fit index), NNFI (non-normed fit index), RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) and SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) fit indicators were examined.

**Results**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Correlation values concerning the latent variables used in the study are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Correlation values concerning the latent variables*

	Physical violence	Verbal violence	Attitude	Media	Peer	Inter-parental conflict
Physical violence	1					
Verbal violence	.65**	1				
Attitude	.49**	.33**	1			
Media	.58**	.34**	.65**	1		
Peer	.55**	.32**	.66**	.81**	1	
Inter-parental conflict	.21**	.18**	.20**	.28**	.27**	1

\*\*p<.01 Note Attitude = attitude towards violence.

As can be seen in Table 1, correlation values of the latent variables involved in the study have significant relations ranging from .18 to .81.

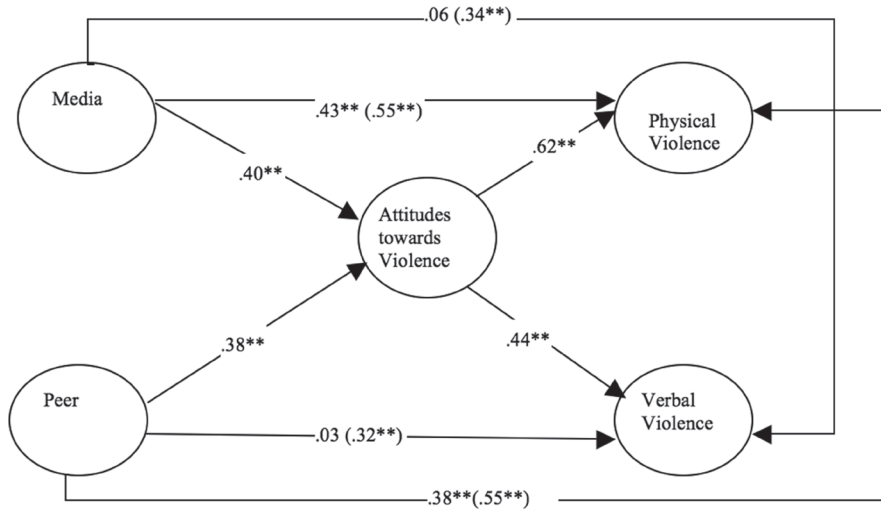
**Structural Model**

When the model proposed in the present study was tested, it was seen that the coefficient of the way leading from inter-parental conflict to attitudes towards violence (.02) is quite low. When the t value of this coefficient was examined, it was found that t value is non-significant. The model was retested after the variable of inter-parental conflict was discarded from the model. The structural model was found to have good fit values ( $\chi^2$ /sd(827.64/163) = 5.07; GFI= .96; AGFI= .95; NFI= .96; NNFI=.96 ; RMSEA=.04; SRMR=.05).

**Mediation Test**

As can be seen in Figure 1, attitudes towards violence have a partial mediator effect between the variables of media and physical violence. Initial significance level of the relation (.55) dropped into .43 significance level. On the other hand, when the fit indices of the model were examined, it was seen that this way has a very low contribution to the goodness of the model (GFI = .97; AGFI = .96; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .04; NFI = .96; NNFI = .96). It is seen that the way added to the model between media and verbal violence has a very low standardized coefficient (.06) and it is statistically insignificant. In addition, when the fit indices of the model are investigated, it is seen that this way does not have a significant contribution to the goodness of the model (GFI = .96; AGFI = .95; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .04; NFI = .96; NNFI = .96). As a result, it was found that the whole effect of media on violence is caused by attitudes towards violence. Attitudes towards violence were found to have partial mediatory effect (.38) in the relationship between peers and physical violence. When the fit indices of the model are examined, it is seen that this way has a little contribution to the goodness of the model (GFI = .97; AGFI = .96; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .04; NFI = .96; NNFI = .96). Finally, it is seen that the standardized coefficient of this way added to model between peers and verbal violence is quite low (.03) and this way is statistically insignificant. In addition to this, when the fit indices of the model are examined, it is seen that this way does not have a significant contribution to the goodness of the model (GFI = .96; AGFI = .95; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .04; NFI = .96; NNFI = .96). As a result, the effects of peer groups on verbal violence completely come from attitudes towards violence.





**Figure 1.**  
 Mediator role of attitudes towards violence \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Discussion**

The findings obtained as a result of testing of the model indicate that inter-parental conflicts do not have any contributions to the model. Hence, inter-parental conflict does not lead to violence behavior through attitudes towards violence. However, media and peer effects cause physical violence through attitudes towards violence. It was also found that the relationship between media and peer effects and verbal violence is completely realized through attitudes towards violence. When the results are examined within the context of cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), it is seen that adolescents' exposure to violence from parents, peers and media reinforces attitudes towards violence and this results in an increase in violence behavior of the adolescent. Within the framework of this model, the present study shows that inter-parental conflict does not strengthen attitudes towards violence. Research looking at the effects of inter-parental conflict on children's violence behavior indicates that exposure of children to violence from their parents is a predictor of violence behavior. Marcus, Lindhal, and Malik (2001) conducted a study and though they found some direct influences of inter-parental conflict on violence behaviors at school, they also reported that social cognition has a partial mediator effect in this relationship. In a similar manner, Haskan (2009) reported that among adolescents whose family members commit violence towards each other, propensity for violence is witnessed more widely. Risser

(2007) found a significant relationship between inter-parental conflict and social aggressiveness of children. However, this study concurs with the research suggesting that inter-parental violence does not predict their adolescence's violence behaviors (Capaldi & Clark, 1998; Simons, Lin, & Gordon, 1998; Truscott, 1992). Harris (1995) stated that there is a very weak relationship between parents' attitudes and children's attitudes and argued that parents' attitudes do not predict bullying behavior of children. These findings conflict with the hypothesis that parents' attitudes affect children's attitudes and behaviors (Harris, 1995). In early adolescent period, the time spent with peers increases; accordingly, relationships with peers gain greater importance (Brown & Larson, 2009). In this regard, it can be assumed that adolescents take their peers and popular figures as their models. Moreover, they develop more loyal and intimate relationships with their peers (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Thus, during the period of adolescence, peers may have more powerful influence on violent behavior. As a result, during this period, socialization experiences with peers are more influential than those with parents.

Social cognitive theory argues that when children witness parents committing violence towards each other, they observe violence behavior basically resulting in one's being victim with concern rather than associating this with positive outcomes of aggression. This can be interpreted according to the social learning theory as witnessing the inter-

parental violence may result in not developing positive outcome expectation. Moreover, the child's experiencing inter-parental aggression may affect this. According to Bandura, each person has the capacity to regulate his/her own life (self-regulation). Hence, adolescents may avoid engaging in such behaviors by using their self-regulation capacity. Though the child's modeling paradigm related to inter-parental conflict is both enough and necessary to explain its effects on the child's behaviors, children are rarely passive receiver of environmental effects (Bandura, 1986). During the modeling process, children may develop different cognitive interpretations related to their parents' behaviors. According to the social learning theory, due to lack of expectation for positive outcome for the behavior of the child or low level of self-efficacy to demonstrate violence behavior, the child may not be engaged in violence behavior.

While attitudes towards violence have partial mediator effect between peer and media effects and physical violence in the model, they have a complete mediator effect between peer and media effects and verbal violence. Within the context of social cognitive theory, the proposed model has been confirmed. Relationships with aggressive peers can be associated with one's particularly having strong attitudes towards violence (Brendgen et al., 2002). Attitudes towards violence result in occurrence of physical and verbal violence behavior in adolescents. In this respect, adolescents learn violence from their peers through attitudes towards violence. As adolescents start to spend more time with their peers in this period of development, they have more intense interactions with their peers. Accordingly, crime committing risk of adolescents having close contacts with aggressive and anti-social behaviors increases because adolescents start to adopt irrational and aggressive behaviors (Elliott, Huizinga, & Morse, 1985; Henry et al., 2000; Matsueda & Heimer, 1987). An adolescent's exposure to anti-social norms and values within peer groups may function as a model reinforcing violence behavior and normalizing violence and negatively affect the adolescent's behavior (Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano, & Neckerman, 1995). Peer relationships may have some effects on violence by shaping attitudes towards violence (Bruinsma, 1992; Matsueda & Heimer, 1987). Moreover, aggressive friends not only become a model for the adolescent but also they reinforce the aggressive behaviors of the adolescent (Kandel & Wu, 1995). In this regard, Dishion et al. (1996) stated that adolescents are clearly supported by their peers when they express anti-social opinions.

When the results obtained related to model are evaluated in relation to media effects, it is seen that media effects contribute to the occurrence of violence through attitudes towards violence. This finding shows that exposure to media violence may lead to the acquisition of aggressive opinions and attitudes by both children and adolescents and this may result in an increase in violence behaviors (Anderson et al., 2003). Social cognitive theory assumes that under certain conditions, children watching TV learn the behaviors they see on TV. By observing the models presented by media, children learn various behavioral patterns (Bandura, 1977). By observing and watching models, the child learns which behaviors are socially approved and rewarded and which behaviors are punished and condemned.

Social cognitive theory states that violence in media affects children's attitudes, opinions and behaviors. In the cognitive schemata of the children watching programs including violence a hostile world is represented. Adopting violence-based problem solving strategies in their cognitive scenarios, adolescents may view violence as an acceptable phenomenon according to their normative beliefs. Children socializing in an environment where inter-personal relationships are based on schemata, scenarios and belief systems may imitate these behaviors by observing them. When observing extreme cases of violence in their environment, their cognitive schemata of such a world may result in their assigning hostile meanings to the behaviors of others and this may increase the likelihood of demonstrating violence behavior. Just as children's their own behaviors play a role in the development of their normative beliefs, the interaction patterns they observe in media can shape these normative beliefs (Huesmann et al., 2003; Ledingham, Ledingham, & Richardson, 1993). Over time, as a result of repetition of schemata, the strengths of links are enhanced. In this way, schemata become continuously available and automatic (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Hence, children have many generalized schemata related to violence and demonstrate aggression and violence behavior.

Research provides evidence pointing out the connection between exposure to violence programs and aggression (Gentile, Walsh, Ellison, Fox, & Cameron, 2004; Huesmann et al., 2003; Ledingham et al., 1993). This finding is supported by the findings of the present study. Huesmann et al. (2003) conducted a longitudinal study on violence on television and violence behaviors of individuals, and they found that watching violence programs at



the ages 6-10 is a predictor of violence behavior to be demonstrated by males and females even 15 years later. In a similar manner, Cheung (1997) found that media can predict crime committing behaviors in adolescents. Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) performed a meta-analysis study and they found consistent evidence showing the relationship between watching television programs and films including violence by small children and increase in aggressive behaviors. In a study conducted in Turkey, Balkis et al. (2005) found that media effects and beliefs about violence are positively correlated. Tokdemir et al. (2009) reported that students watching programs including intense violence more likely resort to physical violence and view violence as a solution.

### Discussions and Suggestions

As a conclusion, media and peers occupying an important place in the lives of adolescents have been observed to reinforce adolescents' attitudes towards violence and contribute to the demonstration of violence behavior. In this line, protective, preventive and intervention programs can be developed to change adolescents' attitudes towards violence.

Moreover, some suggestions can be made for researchers thinking of conducting research beyond the limitations of the present study. The model tested within the framework of the present study can be tested with different sample groups. The data of the present study were collected from adolescents. In another study, similar data can be collected from adolescents, peers and family members. In addition, the present study investigated the mediator role of attitudes towards violence in relationships among inter-parental conflict, media and peer effects and violence. Further studies may test nested models including other theories and concepts related to violence behavior. Finally, longitudinal studies to analyze the occurrence of attitudes towards violence can be conducted.

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