

The Role of Peer Pressure, Automatic Thoughts and Self-Esteem on Adolescents' Aggression

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Aggression is defined as any kind of behavior intended to hurt others. Aggression generally arises due to the interaction between individual (e.g., social and emotional difficulties, low self-esteem, peer rejection, academic failure) and environmental (e.g., poverty, lack of family supervision, limited social support, conflicts within the family) characteristics. Identifying the factors which cause aggressiveness in adolescents is vital to finding precautions against it.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem variables on the aggression levels of male and female adolescents.

Methods: This is a relational and quantitative research aimed to examine the effects of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem variables on the prediction of adolescents' aggression levels. The study sample consisted of 411 volunteer students who were chosen through random sampling from a total of 720 9th grade students from various high schools in Antalya, Turkey. Participants completed the Aggression Questionnaire, Peer Pressure Scale, Automatic Thoughts Scale and Self-Esteem Scale in their classrooms during counseling sessions. Data were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Findings and Results: In the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for female and male adolescents, it was found that peer pressure and automatic thoughts were effective predictors in explaining adolescents'

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aggression levels. Furthermore, it was found that automatic thoughts fully mediated the relationship between self-esteem and aggression for both male and the female adolescents.

Conclusions and Recommendations: It was found that peer pressure and automatic thoughts have a significant effect on adolescent aggression. In works related to the prevention of aggression, it is vital to teach adolescents how to cope with peer pressure and how to say “no”. On the basis of these results, we recommend that schools implement workshops to educate adolescents in aggression and violence prevention. In addition, we recommend using cognitive-behavioral techniques to raise adolescents’ awareness of nonfunctioning and aggression-triggering automatic thoughts in order that they may modify these thought patterns.

Keywords: Aggression, peer pressure, automatic thoughts, self-esteem, adolescents

Aggression is defined as “any kind of behavior intended to hurt others” (Freedman, Sears & Carlsmith, 1989, p. 191). Theories about the causes of aggression vary according to the subjects they emphasize. Many researchers, such as Freud, McDougall and Lorenz have claimed that people have aggressive urges and instincts from birth (Freedman et al., 1989, p. 194). Bandura (1973) states that children learn aggressive behavior by observing and modeling others. The opposite is also true: children learn not to be aggressive by observing nonaggressive models. Others claim that aggression occurs from the interaction between individual (e.g., social and emotional difficulties, low self-esteem, peer rejection, academic failure) and environmental (e.g., poverty, lack of family supervision, limited social support, conflicts within the family) characteristics (Coie et al., 1993; Miller, 1994). Today, this latter view is widely accepted.

Since adolescence is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood in which physiological, psychological and social changes occur, adolescence is a stormy and stressful period which can cause an imbalance in the adolescent’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The fundamental problem in this period is the concept of individuation, which refers to consistent self-development. One of the main areas of focus for adolescent behavior is friend and peer relations. Peer groups provide support, security, membership, autonomy, self-expression and common experiences to adolescents, and peer pressure is “the influences and pressures adolescents feel from their peers” (Adriaansz, 2002). Adolescents inevitably look to their peers for approval and support.

For adolescents who lack positive family relationships, peer pressure plays a larger role in their psychosocial development. Peer pressure can range from positive effects to negative effects such as criminal behaviors. Many researchers point out that adolescents feel an especially strong need to belong to a certain group, which can lead adolescents to engage in risky behaviors (Adriaansz, 2002; Berten, 2008). Austin and Sciarra (2012) express that aggression can be the result of wanting to assert

power, wanting to have an effect over peers or wanting to be a part of this kind of power. There are many studies which show the relationship between adolescent aggression and peer pressure (Berten, 2008; Farrell, Kung & White, 2000; Eldeleklioglu, 2007; Gunduz & Celikkaleli, 2009; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; May, Nichols & Eltzroth, 1999; Sahan, 2007; Yildirim, 2007).

Although many studies have examined the relationship between aggression and self-esteem, this relationship still remains controversial. According to one opinion, aggression and anti-social behavior is a sign of low self-esteem (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Duncan, 1999; Sahan, 2007; Yavuz, 2007). This view suggests that individuals with low self-esteem behave dominantly or aggressively mostly in order to increase their own self-esteem. On the other hand, some researchers claim that aggression is due to high (i.e., inflated) self-esteem (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman et al., 2009; Perez, Vohs & Joiner, 2005; Schreer, 2002). According to this perspective, if children's high self-evaluations of behavior and competencies do not correspond with their peers' evaluations, children may act aggressively toward those who with divergent evaluations. In other words, children with high self-esteem may choose to protect it by acting aggressively towards people who do not agree with their evaluations. In addition, while the self-esteem of arrogant people increases, their anger experiences and anger expressions also increases. Furthermore, researchers have found that high self-esteem is sometimes characterized by hostility and aggressiveness, by disregarding others and by, self-centered and egotistic attitudes. Because of this, high self-esteem may be linked to aggression (Perez et al., 2005). According to a third view, there is no link between aggression and self-esteem (Aricak, 1995; Bushman & Baumeister, 2002).

According to Beck's cognitive theory, experiences in childhood cause certain fundamental thoughts and belief systems to be formed through learning, a structural-level development called "schema". Life events activate the schemas and bring about "negative automatic thoughts", which lead to unpleasant feelings like anger, anxiety, guilt and sadness (Demiralp & Oflaz, 2007). Automatic thoughts are "the interpretations that people make related to a situation" (Beck, 2001). They are the internal dialogues that individuals have about themselves, their world and their future. Generally, being spontaneous, latent and serial, they can appear suddenly in the human mind. They are combined with certain feelings based on their content and meaning. Individuals are not generally aware of automatic thoughts, though they are aware of the accompanying feelings. According to Beck (2001), there are five fundamental cognitive distortions that cause emotional stress. These are personalization, polarized thinking (all-or-nothing thinking), selective abstraction, arbitrary inference and overgeneralization. The cognitive structure in Beck's model has been created mostly to explain disorders such as depression and anxiety. Therefore, there is not much research that studies the relationship between this cognitive structure and externalizing disorders. In their study of the relationship between psychological symptoms and the structure of automatic thoughts, Calvete and Conner-Smith (2005) found that negative automatic thoughts lead to anxiety and

aggressive behavior. Schniering and Rapee (2004) state that automatic thoughts on hostility or revenge were the strongest predictors of aggression. Beck and Freeman (1990) observed that individuals with passive aggressive behavior disorder have automatic thoughts such as "How dare they tell me to do that", "I will do what I want to do", "People are using me", "Nothing is going my way" or "People should respect me more". Furthermore, Calvete, Estevez, Arroyable and Ruiz (2005) found a relationship between cognitive schemas, emotional disorders (depression, anxiety and anger) and automatic thoughts (positive, depressive, anxious and anger-related). In addition, Kurtoglu (2009) found a positive significant relationship between adolescents' levels of aggression and automatic thoughts (negative feelings and thoughts towards themselves, bewilderment, -run-away fantasies, personal incompatibility and a desire to change, loneliness-isolation, and hopelessness). Identifying the factors which cause aggressiveness in adolescents is vital to finding precautions against it. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem variables on the prediction of male and female adolescents' aggression levels.

The recent rise in aggressive behaviors in adolescents calls for research related to the causes of this aggression and ways to reduce it. Investigating the variables related to aggression will certainly help identify and prevent the problem. Moreover, the present study is important because there is currently little research like it, and it can serve as resource for future research in the field.

Method

Research Design

This is a relational and quantitative study aimed to examine the effects of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem variables on male and female adolescents' aggression levels.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 411 volunteer students who were chosen through random sampling from a total of 720 9th grade students from various high schools in Antalya, Turkey. Two hundred thirty-eight (57.4%) of these participants were female, and 173 (42.6%) were male.

Research Instruments

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ). Developed by Buss and Perry and updated by Buss and Warren (2000), the Turkish version of the Aggression Questionnaire scale was prepared by Can (2002). The scale consists of five-point Likert responses and 34 items. The highest possible score is 170 and the lowest is 34 (Buss & Warren, 2000; Can, 2002). The Aggression Questionnaire is made up of five subscales: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, hostility and indirect aggression. While both the subscale scores and the total scores can be examined, this study used the total scores. Can (2002) applied the scale to 300 healthy volunteers who were not diagnosed according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Disorders IV criteria. In

Can's test, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was $r=0.91$. For test-retest reliability, the correlation coefficient between the two applications in total scores was $r=0.85$. For similar scale reliability, the Permanent Anger-Anger Expression Scale was used with an Aggression Questionnaire. In the sub-scales, correlation coefficients varied from $r=0.55$ to $r=0.74$ (Can, 2002). Kula (2008), Karatas and Gokcakan (2009), Eroglu (2009), Yavuzer and Ure (2010), Gundogdu (2010) and Donat Baci (2011) used the scale after testing its validity and reliability. In this study's context, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.89.

Peer Pressure Scale (PPS). Developed by Kiran-Esen (2002), the Peer Pressure Scale consists of 34 items. It is a five-point Likert scale and uses the ratings of "never" (1 point), "infrequently" (2 points), "sometimes" (3 points), "frequently" (4 points), "always" (5 points). The lowest possible score is 34 and the highest is 170, with higher scores indicating high levels of peer pressure. Factor analysis was applied for the scale's structure validity, and it was found that 19 out of 34 items were combined in the first factor and 15 items were combined in the second factor (Kiran-Esen, 2002). The total variance that was explained by the two factors was 40.527%. For all of the 34 items, the consistency correlation coefficient was 0.90. As a result of the test-retest method, the stability coefficient for the whole test was 0.82. In this study, the total points were used and the internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.93.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Developed by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted into Turkish by Cuhadaroglu (1986), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has 12 subscales and 63 items. This study used the Self-Esteem subscale, which consists 10 items. It is a four-point Likert-type scale including the ratings of "Strongly Disagree" (1 point), "Disagree" (2 points), "Agree" (3 points) and "Strongly Agree" (4 points). The possible scores range from 10 to 40 points, with a higher score indicating high self-esteem for that individual. In the test-retest that was done four weeks after, the correlation between the two measurements was found to be $r=0.71$ (Cuhadaroglu, 1986). In this study, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.83.

Automatic Thoughts Scale (ATS). Developed by Hollon and Kendall (1980) and adapted into Turkish by Sahin and Sahin (1992), the Automatic Thoughts Scale contains 30 items. It is a five-point Likert-type scale consisting of the ratings "Never crossed my mind" (1 point), "Rarely crossed my mind" (2 points), "Occasionally crossed my mind" (3 points), "Frequently crossed my mind" (4 points) and "Always crossed my mind" (5 Points). The lowest possible score is 30 and the highest is 150, and a higher score indicates that the individual's automatic thoughts emerge frequently. According to Sahin and Sahin (1992), item total correlation between points taken from each item and from the whole scale was 0.30-0.69. In this study, the scale's internal consistency coefficient was 0.97. The Automatic Thoughts Scale was developed to identify the automatic thoughts accompanying depression. In the literature, it has also been used in studies examining the relationship between automatic thoughts and externalizing disorders (Calvete & Connor-Smith, 2005; Calvete et al., 2005; Kurtoglu, 2009).

Data Analysis

In the study, a t test was used to identify the effect of gender on aggression, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to identify the relationships between variables, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to identify the variables that predict aggression. Prior to analysis, the hypothesis of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis was tested. It was found that the normality and linearity hypotheses met. In the data analysis, data were examined in terms of outlier value. Ten observations from the female participant data and 10 observations from the male participant data which had outlier value and Mahalanobis distance value were taken out of the data set. A moderate level of two-point correlation between variables indicates that there was no multicollinearity between the variables. In addition, the tolerance and VIF values were within the accepted limits. A Durbin-Watson coefficient was used to test autocorrelation, yielding Durbin-Watson values of 1.694 and 2.142. A 0.05-level of significance was taken into account in the data analysis. The data from the study were analyzed with a SPSS 13.00 package program.

Procedure

The scales were applied to the participants in their own schools and classrooms during students' guidance hour. Basic information about the purpose of the study was given to the participants and scales were distributed to the adolescents who volunteered. They were informed that there would be a collective evaluation, and they were not asked for their credentials personal information. The scales took approximately 30-35 minutes to complete.

Results

Examination of the effect of gender on aggression

The effect of gender on aggression scores were meaningful ($t= 3.363, p<0.001$). According to this finding, male adolescents' aggression scores ($M=89.598, SD=19.633$) were higher compared to female adolescents' aggression scores ($M=83.259, SD=18.269$).

Correlation among the variables

For aggression, correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis based on preliminary analysis showing the gender differences was done separately for female participants and for male participants. Table 1 shows the correlations among the variables.

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients between the Variables and Mean and Standard Values Related to the Variables

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
Male	1.AQ	89.530	19.590	1.000		
	2.PPS	59.028	16.239	0.590*	1.000	
	3.ATS	55.872	21.658	0.437*	0.226*	1.000
	4.RSES	31.971	5.630	-0.230*	-0.087	-0.661*
Female	1.AQ	83.277	18.305	1.000		
	2.PPS	44.458	12.672	0.464*	1.000	
	3.ATS	57.399	26.067	0.421*	0.425*	1.000
	4.RSES	31.256	5.713	-0.293*	-0.173*	-0.631*

* $p < 0.01$

Note: AQ= Aggression Questionnaire, PPS=Peer Pressure Scale, ATS= Automatic Thoughts Scale, RSES=Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Table 1 demonstrates that there is a moderate level and a positive correlation between male adolescents' aggression scores, peer pressure scale scores ($r=0.590$; $p < 0.01$) and automatic thoughts scores ($r=0.437$; $p < 0.01$), as well as a moderate level and negative correlation between self-esteem scores ($r=-0.230$; $p < 0.01$). The data related to female adolescents suggests that while there is a moderate level and positive correlation between aggression scores peer pressure scale scores ($r=0.464$; $p < 0.01$) and automatic thoughts scores ($r=0.421$; $p < 0.01$), there is a moderate level and negative correlation between self-esteem scores ($r=-0.293$; $p < 0.01$). Predictors of aggression were examined in three steps using hierarchical multiple regression analysis to consider the correlation coefficients between variables. The first step evaluated peer pressure; the second step, automatic thoughts; and the last step, self-esteem. The analysis results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Results Related to Predicting Adolescents' Aggression Scores

	Mod.	Independent Variables	β	<i>t</i>	R^2_{ch}	F_{ch}
Male	1	PPS	0.590	9.565*	0.349	91.483*
	2	ATS	0.320	5.460*	0.097	29.812*
	3	RSES	-0.047	0.615	0.001	0.378
Female	1	PPS	0.464	8.041*	0.215	64.664*
	2	ATS	0.273	4.454*	0.061	19.841*
	3	RSES	-0.102	1.412	0.006	1.994

* $p < 0.001$

Note: PPS= Peer Pressure Scale, ATS= Automatic Thoughts Scale, RSES= Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Table 2 shows that two variables (peer pressure and automatic thoughts) are significant predictors in explaining the aggression level of male adolescents. The results of the first step of analysis indicate that peer pressure had a significant effect ($\beta=0.590$, $p<0.001$). The findings also show that peer pressure scores account for 34.9% of the total variance in male adolescents' aggression levels. Furthermore, it appears that the contribution of the automatic thoughts entered in the second step of the model was significant ($\beta=0.320$, $p<0.001$), accounting for 9.7% of variance related to aggression. Together, these two variables explain 44.6% of the male adolescents' aggression. On the other hand, it appears that self-esteem, entered in the third step, was not a significant predictor ($\beta=-0.047$, $p>0.05$).

It was found that peer pressure and automatic thoughts are significant predictors in explaining female adolescents' aggression levels as well. It appears that the contribution of peer pressure, which was entered into the model in the first step, was significant ($\beta=0.464$, $p<0.001$), accounting for 21.5 % of the total variance in the female adolescents' aggression levels. Immediately following was automatic thoughts, with a 6.1 % contribution to the variance ($\beta=0.273$, $p<0.001$). The two variables together explain 27.6 % of the female adolescents' aggression. It is found that self-esteem, which was entered in the last step, was not a significant predictor ($\beta=-0.102$, $p>0.05$).

The findings indicate a moderate level and negative correlation between male and female adolescents' aggression scores and self-esteem scores. It was therefore decided to examine the mediation role of ATS and the relationship between RSES and AQ. A regression analysis of the mediating role of ATS in the relationship between AQ and RSES was conducted in 3 steps, following the model of Baron and Kenny (1986). The findings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Regression Analysis of the Mediating Role of ATS in the Relationship between AQ and RSES

	Model	Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	β	t	R^2_{ch}	F_{ch}
Male	1	AQ	RSES	-0.230	-3.093*	0.053	9.566*
	2	ATS	RSES	-0.661	-11.511**	0.437	132.510**
	3	AQ	RSES	0.104	1.139		
Female	1	AQ	ATS	0.509	5.529**	0.197	20.893**
	2	ATS	RSES	-0.293	-4.702**	0.086	22.108**
	3	AQ	RSES	-0.631	-12.497**	0.396	156.181**
			ATS	-0.045	-0.589	0.178	25.517**
			ATS	0.393	5.151**		

* $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.001$

Note: AQ= Aggression Questionnaire, ATS= Automatic Thoughts Scale, RSES= Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

For the male adolescents, in the first step RSES negatively and significantly predicted AQ ($\beta = -0.230, p < 0.01$), and explained 5.3% of the variation. In the second step RSES negatively and significantly predicted ATS ($\beta = -0.661, p < 0.001$), and explained 43.7% of the variance. In the third step, ATS was identified as a mediating variable that positively and significantly predicted AQ ($\beta = 0.509, p < 0.001$). RSES and ATS together explained 19.7% of the variance. Furthermore, RSES together with the mediating variable (ATS) did not significantly predict AQ ($\beta = 0.104, p > 0.05$). For the female adolescents, RSES negatively and significantly predicted AQ ($\beta = -0.293, p < 0.001$), and explained 8.6% of the variation. In the second step RSES negatively and significantly predicted ATS ($\beta = -0.631, p < 0.001$), and explained 39.6% of the variance. In the third step, it was observed that taken together with the moderator variable (ATS), there was a reduction in the strength of the correlation between the RSES and the AQ (see Table 3). These findings indicate that ATS fully mediated the relationship between RSES and AQ for the male adolescents (*Sobel* $z = 2.714, p < 0.01$) and for the female adolescents (*Sobel* $z = 2.584, p < 0.01$).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study of the effects of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem on predicting female and male adolescents' aggression levels, it was found that there was a moderate level and positive correlation between male and female adolescents' aggression scores, peer pressure and automatic thoughts scores and a moderate level and negative correlation between self-esteem scores. Furthermore, in the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for female and male adolescents, it was found that peer pressure and automatic thoughts were significant predictors in explaining adolescents' aggression levels. The findings also suggest that the most important contribution to the prediction of adolescents' aggression score levels was peer pressure. This finding is in agreement with previous research findings which demonstrate that peer pressure in adolescents is related to aggression (Berten, 2008; Farrell et al., 2000; Eldeleklioglu, 2007; Gunduz & Celikkaleli, 2009; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; May et al., 1999; Sahan, 2007; Yildirim, 2007). Adolescents' social needs such as belonging to a group, bonding, and finding acceptance may encourage adolescents to submit to the control of a peer group potentially leading them to participate in risky behavior. The literature generally agrees that aggression may be the result of wanting to affect and ascertain power among peers, or of wanting to be a part of such power (Adriaansz, 2002; Austin & Sciarra, 2012; Berten, 2008).

In predicting adolescents' aggression scores, automatic thoughts came in second place. A number of research findings which prove that automatic thoughts cause aggressive behavior (Beck & Freeman, 1990; Calvete & Connor-Smith, 2005; Calvete et al., 2005; Kurtoglu, 2009; Schniering & Rapee, 2004) support the findings of this study. Safran and Segal (1990) point out that there are many non-functional thoughts, and that in some cases the individual may exhibit behavior which is consistent with these thoughts. For example, if the individual perceives other people as aggressive, he/she may act defensively or aggressively.

Another finding was that self-esteem was not a significant predictor of female and male adolescent aggression. This finding is consistent with the findings of Arıcak (1995) and Bushman and Baumeister (2002). However, previous studies related to the relationships between self-esteem and aggression has reported conflicting results. There are studies showing that low self-esteem is related to aggression (Donnellan et al., 2005; Duncan, 1999; Sahan, 2007; Yavuz, 2007) and other studies showing that high self-esteem is related to aggression (Baumeister et al., 2000; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman et al., 2009; Perez et al., 2005; Schreier, 2002). The present study found a moderate level and negative correlation between male and female adolescents' aggression scores and self-esteem scores. After examining the mediation role of ATS on the relationship between RSES and AQ, it was found that ATS fully mediated the relationship between RSES and AQ for both the male and female adolescents. This result shows that, low self-esteem results in automatic thoughts and that automatic thoughts leads to aggression. As developed by Beck et al., the concept of the cognitive triad is explained as "a state of having negative thought for one's self, the world, and the future". Individuals with this kind of thinking come to humiliating conclusions about their self-esteem and identity they perceive themselves as incomplete, worthless, or problematic (Hicdurmaz & Oz, 2011). The related literature agrees that once automatic thoughts increases, self-esteem decreases (Daly & Burton, 1983; McLennan, 1987; Nielsen et al., 1996; Koydemir & Demir, 2008; Hamarta & Demirbas, 2009; Nasir et al., 2011). According to some, aggression is a sign of low self-esteem (Donnellan et al., 2005), so adolescents may act aggressively in order to increase their own self-esteem.

Another finding was that peer pressure and automatic thoughts predicted adolescent aggression in the same prediction order for both sexes but that the prediction values were different between females (27.6%) and males (44.6%). It was found that automatic thought provided a 9.7 % contribution in males and 6.1 % contribution in females, which explains the variance (Table 2). The differences among the values may be attributed to the peer pressure value. It has been proven previously that male adolescents are exposed to more peer pressure than female adolescents (Cigdemoglu, 2006; Gunduz & Celikkaleli, 2009; Demir, Baran & Ulusoy, 2005; Sari & Kuguoglu, 2009). Moreover, it is more likely for boys to find friends with negative behavior characteristic (Erdem, Eke, Ogel & Taner, 2006). The reason why peer pressure is a stronger predictor of male adolescents' aggression is likely due to the effect of gender-related perceptions and cultural values. In contemporary culture, male gender roles are more extroverted compared to those of women. In this context, male adolescents who spend more time outside the house with their peers may be more exposed to greater peer pressure.

It was found that peer pressure and automatic thoughts have a significant effect on adolescent aggression. In this study, it was found that ATS fully mediated the relationship between RSES and AQ for male and female adolescents. In works related to the prevention of aggression, it is vital to teach adolescents how to cope with peer pressure and how to say "no", and for that reason we recommend workshops in schools to teach students skills in aggression and violence prevention. In addition, we recommend using cognitive-behavioral techniques to raise

adolescents' awareness of nonfunctioning and aggression-triggering automatic thoughts so that they may change and better control these thoughts.

The study group consisted of adolescents at different high schools in the Antalya city center. Therefore, the results can be generalized to groups with similar characteristics. In addition, the data was obtained based on adolescents' self-evaluations. In future studies, self-evaluations and observers' (e.g., peers') ratings will be used together. Another limitation of the study is that the study group consisted only of adolescents in the 9th grade. However, as the grade level (age) increases, adolescent aggression and peer pressure levels may change. Finally, this study only considered adolescents' total scores from the applied scales. In future studies, there can be further investigation using scores obtained from the various subscales.

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Akran Baskısı, Otomatik Düşünceler ve Benlik Saygısının Ergenlerin Saldırganlığı Üzerindeki Rolü

Atf:

Yavuzer, Y., Karatas, Z., Civilidag, A. & Gundogdu, R. (2014). The role of peer pressure, automatic thoughts and self-esteem on adolescents' aggression. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 54, 61-78.

Özet

Problem Durumu: Saldırganlık, başkalarını incitmeyi amaçlayan her türlü davranış olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Saldırganlığın bireysel (sosyal ve duygusal zorluklar, düşük benlik saygısı, akran reddi, akademik başarısızlık gibi) ve çevresel (yoksulluk, ailenin denetim eksikliği, sosyal desteğin sınırlı oluşu, aile içi çatışmalar gibi) özelliklerin etkileşimi sonucunda oluştuğunu öne süren görüşler de bulunmaktadır. Günümüzde ergenlerdeki saldırgan davranışların bireysel ve çevresel özelliklerin bileşimi sonucunda oluştuğu görüşü yaygındır. Ergen davranışlarının odaklandığı temel alanlardan biri arkadaş ve akranlarıyla ilişkileridir. Akran baskısı olumlu etkilerden olumsuz ya da suçlu davranışlara kadar uzanabilir. Birçok araştırmacı ergenlik döneminde bir gruba ait olma ihtiyacının çok güçlü olduğunu ve bunun da ergenlerin riskli davranışlara katılmasına neden olduğunu belirtmektedirler. Saldırganlık ve benlik saygısı arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen çok sayıda çalışma yapılmasına rağmen bu ilişki halen tartışmalı bir konudur. Bir görüşe göre saldırganlık ve anti-sosyal davranış düşük benlik saygısının bir işaretidir. Diğer taraftan bazı araştırmacılar, saldırganlığın yüksek (şişirilmiş) benlik saygısından kaynaklandığını ileri sürmektedirler. Bir diğer görüşe göre ise saldırganlık ve benlik saygısı arasında bir ilişki yoktur. Otomatik düşüncelerin ise dışavuruk bozukluklarla ilişkisini inceleyen çalışma çok fazla değildir. Bu çalışmalarda özellikle düşmanlık ve intikamla ilişkili otomatik düşüncelerin saldırganlığın en güçlü yordayıcıları olduğu saptanmıştır. Türkiye'de bu konuda yapılan araştırmalar oldukça azdır. Son yıllarda gençler arasında saldırgan davranışlardaki artış; ergenlerde saldırganlığın nedenlerini ve bu tür davranışların azaltılmasını sağlayacak yolları araştırmayı gerekli kılmaktadır. Kuşkusuz, saldırganlıkla ilişkili olabilecek değişkenlerin incelenmesi sorunu betimleme ve önleme süreçlerini destekleyecektir.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı, akran baskısı, otomatik düşünceler ve benlik saygısı değişkenlerinin kız ve erkek ergenlerin saldırganlık düzeyleri üzerindeki rolünü incelemektir

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, Antalya il merkezindeki farklı liselerde 9. sınıfta öğrenim gören toplam 720 ergenden seçkisiz olarak belirlenen 411 ergenden oluşmaktadır. Ergenlerin 238'i (%57.4) kız, 173'ü (%42.6) erkektir. Araştırmada Saldırganlık Ölçeği, Akran Baskısı Ölçeği, Rosenberg Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği ve Otomatik Düşünceler Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Ölçekler katılımcılara öğrenim gördükleri okullarda kendi sınıflarında ve rehberlik saatlerinde uygulanmıştır. Katılımcılara, araştırmanın amacına ilişkin kısa bir bilgi verilmiş ve gönüllü olan ergenlere ölçekler dağıtılmıştır. Toplu değerlendirme yapılacağı belirtilerek kimlik bilgileri istenmemiştir. Ölçeklerin uygulanması yaklaşık olarak 30-35 dakika sürmüştür. Araştırmada cinsiyetin saldırganlık üzerindeki etkisini belirlemek için t testi, değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemek için Pearson Momentler Çarpımı Korelasyon analizi, saldırganlığı yordayan değişkenlerin belirlenmesi için çoklu hiyerarşik regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Analiz yapılmadan önce çoklu hiyerarşik regresyon analizinin varsayımları test edilmiştir. Normallik ve doğrusallık varsayımlarının karşılandığı belirlenmiştir. Veri analizinde veriler aykırı değer açısından incelenmiş Mahalanobis uzaklık değerine sahip olan aykırı değerlerin yer aldığı kızlara ait verilerden 10 ve erkeklere ait verilerden 10 gözlem veri setinden çıkarılmıştır. Bağımsız değişkenler arasındaki ikili korelasyonların orta düzeyde olması değişkenler arası çoklu bağlantının (Multicollinearity) olmadığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, Tolerans ve VIF değerleri de kabul edilir sınırlar içindedir. Otokorelasyonu test etmede Durbin-Watson katsayısı kullanılmıştır. Durbin-Watson değerleri 1.694 ve 2.142'dir. Verilerin analizinde .05 anlamlılık düzeyi esas alınmıştır. Araştırmadan elde edilen veriler SPSS 13.0 paket programıyla çözümlenmiştir.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Akran baskısı, otomatik düşünceler ve benlik saygısı değişkenlerinin kız ve erkek ergenlerin saldırganlık düzeylerini yordamadaki katkılarını inceleyen bu araştırmada cinsiyet farklılıklarını gösteren ön analize dayalı olarak korelasyon analizi kızlar ve erkekler için ayrı ayrı yapılmıştır. Kız ve erkek ergenlerin saldırganlık puanları ile akran baskısı ve otomatik düşünceler puanları arasında orta düzeyde ve pozitif yönde, benlik saygısı puanları arasında ise orta düzeyde ve negatif yönde bir ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır. Diğer taraftan, kız ve erkek ergenler için yapılan aşamalı regresyon analizinde, ergenlerin saldırganlık düzeylerini açıklamada akran baskısı ve otomatik düşüncelerin anlamlı yordayıcılar oldukları görülmüştür. Ergenlerin saldırganlık puanlarının yordanmasına en önemli katkısı akran baskısının yaptığı bulunmuştur. Ergenlerin saldırganlık puanlarının yordanmasında ikinci sırada otomatik düşünceler gelmektedir. Araştırmanın diğer bulgusu benlik saygısının kız ve erkek ergenlerin saldırganlığı üzerinde anlamlı bir yordayıcı olmadığıdır. Ancak, korelasyon analizinde ergenlerin saldırganlık puanları ile benlik saygısı puanları arasında negatif yönde bir ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır. Bu nedenle saldırganlık ve benlik saygısı arasındaki ilişkide otomatik düşüncelerin aracı rolü olabileceği düşünülmüştür. Otomatik düşüncelerin saldırganlık ve benlik saygısı arasındaki ilişkide otomatik düşüncelerin aracı rolüne ilişkin hiyerarşik regresyon analizi sonucunda, otomatik düşüncelerin tam aracı rolü olduğu bulunmuştur.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Akran baskısı ve otomatik düşüncelerin ergenlerin saldırganlıkları üzerinde önemli derecede etkili oldukları saptanmıştır. Ayrıca araştırma bulguları saldırganlık ve benlik saygısı arasındaki ilişkide otomatik düşüncelerin tam aracılık rolünün olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Saldırganlığı önlemeye yönelik çalışmalarda akran baskısıyla baş etme becerileri ve hayır diyebilme becerilerinin kazandırılması oldukça önemlidir. Uygulamalarda bu becerilerin de okullarda saldırganlık ve şiddeti önleme çalışmaları kapsamına alınması önerilebilir. Ayrıca, ergenlerin işlevsel olmayan ve saldırganlığı tetikleyen otomatik düşüncelere ilişkin farkındalık kazanması ve bu düşüncelerini değiştirebilmesi için bilişsel-davranışçı tekniklerin kullanılması önerilebilir.

Araştırmanın çalışma grubu Antalya il merkezindeki farklı liselerde öğrenim gören ergenlerden oluşmaktadır, dolayısıyla sonuçlar sadece benzer nitelikli gruplara genellenebilir. Ayrıca, veriler ergenlerin öz-değerlendirmelerine dayalı olarak elde edilmiştir. Gelecek çalışmalarda öz-değerlendirme ve gözlemci değerlendirme birlikte kullanılabilir. Araştırmanın sınırlılıklarından biri de çalışma grubunun yalnızca 9. sınıfa devam eden ergenlerden oluşmasıdır. Oysa sınıf düzeyi (yaş) arttıkça ergenlerin saldırganlık ve akran baskısı düzeyleri değişebilir. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada ergenlerin kullanılan ölçeklerden aldıkları toplam puanlar incelenmiştir. İlerde yapılacak çalışmalarda ölçeklerin alt boyutlarından elde edilen puanlarla daha detaylı inceleme yapılabilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Saldırganlık, akran baskısı, otomatik düşünceler, benlik saygısı, ergenler.