

## The Reflection of Violence Perception on Drawings at Preschool Period Children

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### Abstract

Children at preschool period could eyewitness the violence experienced at their families of the community they live in or be directly exposed to it. The way children are affected by violence or how they will react to it could reveal itself in various forms. It is likely to see that there happen some emotional, mental, behavioural and social disorders at children exposed to violence or witnessing to it, it might cause some psychological and physical damage and that it might also cause some behavioural disorders, such as aggression, at various levels. Due to its traumatic effects in its nature, violence could lead to some ill-effects on different functional domains and cause a threat on child's mental health. Therefore, violence at preschool period is an issue that should be assessed in a multidimensional way. The purpose of the current study was to determine the perception of violence (the reflection of it on their drawings) at preschool period children. Study group consisted of 50 children attending a kindergarten within a primary school in the city of Ankara in the academic year of 2011-2012.

The research is a descriptive study based on a quantitative analysis. The data of the study were collected through the solution of the depictive expressions children drew in their pictures over the perception of violence. Their perception of violence was assessed through the pictures they drew by making a descriptive analysis.

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Violence may occur in the character of physical, sexual, emotional and negligence owing to a variety of reasons at interpersonal, self-oriented or societal levels (Barter, Renold, Berridge and Cawson, 2004: 31; Margolin and Gordis, 2004: 152; Işıkhan and Yıldırım, 2006: 73). Children are the ones affected most and in the most vulnerable positions. Acceptability of violence and physical punishment towards children depends upon the values, attitudes and perceptions of societies. Besides, it is suggested that violence and physical punishment towards children should be handled with respect to human rights (Deveci, Karadağ and Yılmaz, 2008: 353; Yurtal and Artut, 2008: 149).

Children eyewitness violence sometimes at school, sometimes in friend circle or they are directly exposed to violence. The children eye witnessing and exposed to violence are influenced by this at every age and especially in the early childhood, they may exert some negative behavior. While the way children are affected by violence depends on age and cognitive development, there have been some somatic symptoms observed in the studies such as behavior disorders like aggressiveness and guilt, depression, emotional or psychological disorders, over-fear, post-traumatic stress symptoms (emerging in cases causing severe stress) like nightmare, sleep disorders, academic and cognitive disorders (Jaffe, Baker and Cunningham, 2004: 9; Rossman, Rea, Graham-Bermann and Butterfield, 2004: 30; Goddard and Bedi, 2010: 7; Ayan, 2011: 138; Kalkan and Karadeniz- Özbek, 2011: 35-36).

Emerging itself in such dimensions as emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, political and many more, violence has become a case so frequently encountered in school settings as it was in every sphere of society (Allen, 2009: 177). The concepts of violence and school, which should never accompany each other, have gradually entered into the school life. There are a lot of reasons for violence; however, such

factors as the features of children and directors at schools, the size of the school, and the location of the school are among the most important causes of violence children face at schools (Barter, Renold, Berridge and Cawson, 2004: 9; Demirtaş and Ersözölü, 2007: 180).

Violence at school creates a threatening atmosphere, causes physical and emotional injuries, thus hampering the success of the children involved. Through the effective educational programs, event of violence could be prevented (Deveci, Karadağ and Yılmaz, 2008: 352; Ayan, 2011: 139).

Violence, along with the psychological, social cultural and social economic dimension, take place in mass communication of media and especially in movies, series, cartoons broadcast on television channels. Fear, sadness, and emotional responses of adults towards the catastrophes and crises broadcast in mass communication of media such as the internet and television lead children to be seized with fear about the safety of the family. As a result, there might appear some problems in the sleep, eating and toilet habits of children as well as leading to isolation from play and social settings, showing more aggressive behavior and restlessness in the relations with others (Ayranıcı, Köşgeroğlu and Günay, 2004: 134; Erwin and Morton, 2008: 107; Yurtal and Artut, 2008: 150).

This study sets out to examine the reflection of violence perception on drawings at preschool period children.

### **Method**

The study is a descriptive one based on a quantitative analysis. The study group is comprised of the 50 children attending kindergarten at an elementary school in 2011-2012 educational terms in Ankara.

When the demographic features of the group is examined, it is seen that 54.0% is male, 46.0% is female, as for the age distribution of mothers, 60.0% is between 30-39, 20.0% between 40-49, and below 29 years of age, and as for the fathers, 68.00% between 30-39, 14.0% Between 40-49, 10% 50 and above and 8.0% 29 and below years of age. When their education level is considered, 40.0% of the mothers are high school graduates, 28.0% are elementary , secondary school and university graduates, 4.0% is literate , considering the educational level of their fathers, 42.0% of them are university graduates, 34.0% are high school graduates, 20.0% are primary-secondary school graduates and 4.0% are literate. On the other hand, when it comes to the employment status of the parents it is seen that 68.0% of the mothers are housewives, 22.0% are state employees, 2.0% are self-employed, while 42.0% of the fathers are workers, and 22.0% are self employed.

The data of the study was obtained through the analysis of the drawings of the children on the perception of violence. Children were interviewed through asking questions such as what violence is, whether they eyewitnessed any event of violence, and whether they were exposed to violence. Then, children were requested to draw a picture about violence and they were asked to narrate what they drew. What they narrated was written at the back of the paper on which they drew pictures. The perception of children on violence over the pictures were assessed through a descriptive analysis.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Violence Cases by Children's Drawings

Person Resorting to Violence	n	%
Mother	10	17,0
Father	12	20,4
Sibling	6	10,1
Friend	13	22,0
Other People	10	17,0
Irrelevant Drawing	8	13,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 reports the findings of the answer to the question “who resorts to violence?” by children at kindergarten. According to the table, in the first place comes friends with 22.0%, the follows father with 20.04, next mother with 17.0 and lastly other people with 17.0%. The percentage of the cases of violence among siblings were found to be 10.1%.

The table suggests that the people resorting to violence, according to the reflections of violence on drawings, are in the family with 47.5%.

Bayındır (2010) investigated the responses by children to intra-family violence. In accordance with the findings obtained from mothers exposed to violence, it was found out that a majority of the children (68.2%) eye-witnessed the intra family violence and were aware of the cases of violence.

A majority of the USA citizens and at least 750.000 children in the United Kingdom exposed to intra-family violence (Sterne, Poole, Chadwick, Lawler and Dodd, 2010). When the studies into violence are examined closely, it is observed that a majority of children in Turkey and worldwide witness violence or are exposed to

violence for the first time in family. Hence, it is possible to say that the findings reported in Table 1 match up with the results of previous studies.

**Table 2.** Distribution of who resorts to and is exposed to violence by the drawings

Who to Whom		n	%	%
<b>Intra-family</b>	Mother-Father to each other	5	21,7	
	Mother to child	5	21,7	
	Father to child	7	30,5	<b>48</b>
	Among Siblings	4	17,4	
	Child to Father	2	8,7	
<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>At School</b>	Among Friends	13	100	<b>27</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Around</b>	Among People	11	91,6	
	People to Animals	1	8,4	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 2 reports the distribution of who resorts to and is exposed to violence by the drawings of children. According to Table 2, the intra-family violence is in the first place with the percentage of 48%, then follows violence among friends with 27% and lastly comes violence around children with 25%.

When we take a close look at, the intra-family violence rates given in Table 2, violence from father to child is in the first place with 30.5%, mother to child with 21.7%, among siblings with 17.4% and child to father with 8.7%.

Ayan and Kocacık (2009) found out in their study that off all the family members, children are scared of father more compared to mother. It can be said that this result supports the finding, given in Table 2, that mostly fathers resort to violence to children.

When the distribution of violence given in Table 2 is examined, there is the view that violence is among the friends with the percentage of 100%.

In studies by Kapcı (2004), Özcebeci, Çetik and Üner (2006), and Bozkurt, Akbıyık, Yüzük, Gördeles Beşer and Sağkal (2011), it was found out that both in preschool period and at higher education levels, the rate of violence among children is high and as for the content and the type of violence, it is usually in the shape of physical and verbal. This result is in harmony with the finding that violence is common among friends.

When the views on the violence taking place around, it is seen that violence among people takes the first place with 91.6%, and then follows violence from people to animals with 8.4%.

Çetinkaya-Yıldız and Hatipoğlu Sümer (2010) found out in their study that the rate of violence in house, school and neighborhood settings is high.

When the literature in the field is examined, it is seen that violence to animals is common, and among the reasons of violence to animals are intra-family violence, adaptation challenges to school and peer-related problems. In particular, the intra-family violence is shown to be a major source of violence to animals (Merez-Perez, and Heide, 2001: 556). Considering this, the result of their study and the related literature support the findings given in Table 2.

**Table 3.** Expression of Violence based on the reflections of drawings by children

Expression of Violence	n	%
Hitting, fighting, beating	26	57,8
Ear pinching, hair gripping, nipping	3	6,7
Using a weapon (Knife-gun)	4	8,9
Shouting, distressing, reproaching	12	26,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

The Table 3 reports the views on expression of violence based on the reflections of drawings by children. According to the table, hitting, fighting, and beating takes the first place with the rate of 57.8, then comes Shouting, distressing, reproaching with 26.6%, following this comes using a weapon with 8.9% and lastly ear pinching, hair gripping and nipping with 6.7%.

In their studies into violence at elementary schools, by Deveci et al. (2002), Kapçı (2004), Çankaya (2011), Bozkurt et al. (2011), it was found out that hitting, slapping, punching, hitting, scratching, tripping, spitting, pushing, hair gripping, scaring, insulting, threatening, swearing and mugging as expression of violence behavior among students. These results support the findings in Table 3.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The results of the study reveal that nearly half of the cases of violence happen within the family, the one resorting to violence in the family is usually father, the events of violence at school take place among friends, the events of violence which children eyewitness in their environ are among people, a small rate of violence is towards animals. It has also been found out that the majority of the children reflected events on violence on their drawings.

- Based upon the results, awareness of parent on child development and education, communication with children and discipline could be enhanced.
- They could be encouraged to participate in the educational programs developed by preschool education institutions.
- In particular, programs on the negative effects of violent behavior broadcast in the visual media and parent should be made aware of this.

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