

## Original Article

## The Relationship between Submissive Behaviors and Violence Tendency in Nursing Students

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this study was to determine nursing students' violence tendency and level of their submissive behaviors, to determine the association between them.

**Methodology:** The study was conducted in a nursing faculty of a public university in Istanbul. The study sample consisted of 159 senior year nursing students. A descriptive information form, the scale of tendency to violence, and scale of submissive behaviors were used in the study. Institutional permission from the faculty, ethics board approval from the university, and written consent of the students who volunteered to participate in the study were obtained. One-way ANOVA test, Tukey HSD post hoc test, Pearson's correlation analysis and, cronbach alpha were used in addition to descriptive statistics.

**Results:** The mean age was  $22.18 \pm 0.87$  years, and 74.8% (n=119) were female. The mean score of submissive behavior was  $36.12 \pm 8.96$ , and the mean score of tendency to violence was  $37.82 \pm 10.20$ . A positive statistically significant association was detected between the scores of the scale of submissive behavior and scale of tendency to violence ( $r = 0.343$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The mean score of tendency to violence of males was found statistically significantly higher than the females ( $p = 0.001$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Conclusions:** The researchers found an association between the tendency to violence and submissive behaviors in nursing students. Discussion of the topic in the curriculum of undergraduate education of nursing students may contribute to training nurses who are outgoing, and have higher self-confidence, self-esteem, and enjoy their profession, and thus increase the quality of care.

**Key words:** Education, student, passive dependent personality, rehabilitation, violence

### Introduction

Around 1.3 million people are exposed to self-directed, interpersonal, and collective violence per year around the world. Violence, thus, constitutes 2.5% of global mortality and is the

fourth leading cause of death among individuals aged between 15 and 44 years worldwide (WHO, 2014a). Violence is defined as "the intentional use of physical or psychological force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another

person, a group or community which results in injury or the danger of injury, psychological harm, death, maldevelopment or deprivation” (WHO, 2014b). The effects of violence on health include physical injuries, depression, suicidal behavior, post-traumatic stress disorder, reproductive and physical health problems, high risk sexual behaviors, smoking, and alcohol and substance abuse. Violence is associated with heart diseases, cancer, diabetes, stroke, HIV-AIDS, and premature death (WHO, 2014b). Thirty percent of men commit physical/sexual violence in dating violence against women worldwide. It is reported that while 37% of women living in Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, and Southeast Asia regions experienced physical/sexual violence by their partners at one point in their lives, this rate is 30% in American continent and 7.2% across the world (WHO, 2013).

Submissive behavior is a personality trait whereby one tends to be a benefactor, tries to make everyone happy, is careful of not hurting anyone, struggles with expressing anger, continuously seeks approval, is overly devoted, tends to say yes rather than no to everyone, has difficulty in expressing distaste towards certain situations, and fails to defend their thoughts and rights (Gilbert & Allan, 1994). While submissive behavior is positive associated with depression (Kohler et al., 2019) negative associated with self-compassion, and self-confidence (Eraydin & Karagozoglu, 2017). In addition, submissive behaviors displayed by individuals during childhood are based on fear and prevent assertiveness (Gilbert et al., 2003).

In nursing education, in order to become a professional nurse, cognitive, affective and psychomotor fields of nursing students are developed (Ghadirian et al., 2018) while at the same time personality traits that contribute to becoming a professional member of nursing are developed (Eraydin & Karagozoglu, 2017). A professional nurse must have self-confidence and assertiveness to protect patient rights and strengthen leadership characteristics (Kanade, 2019).

The aim of this study is to assess violence tendency, submissive behavior of nursing students and the relationship between them.

## Research Questions

- What is the level of violence tendency of students?
- What is the level of submissive behavior of the students?
- Is there any relationship between the submissive behavior level and violence tendency level of the students?
- Is there a relationship between the descriptive characteristics violence tendency levels and submissive behavior levels of the students?

## Methodology

**Setting:** The study was conducted with fourth-year nursing students studying at a university in Istanbul between May and June 2017.

**Sample:** The population of the study consisted of the senior year nursing students at a university ( $N = 375$ ). It was planned to reach all voluntary students however since 7% of them ( $n=26$ ) were absent, 20% ( $n=75$ ) had no time, and 30.6% ( $n=115$ ) did not want to participate without reason; 57.6% of the students did not participate in the study. Therefore, the sample of the study consisted of 159 students (42.4%) who agreed to participate in the study. Sampling selection was not used. The data were collected from those who agreed to participate in the study.

## Sampling criteria:

- Being a senior nursing student,
- Speaking and understanding Turkish,
- Being healthy,
- Volunteering for the research.

## Instruments

**The Student Information Form:** This form consists of a total of four questions about age, gender, mother’s educational level and father’s educational level.

**The Violence Tendency Scale (VTS):** Developed by Goka et al. (1995) in order to determine aggressiveness and violence tendencies of individuals., this scale includes 20 questions with a scoring system ranging between 1 and 4. The developed scale; Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Family Research Institution "Violence in the family and in the social field" (1998) by providing content validity was used in the research on the basic structure intact (Prime Ministry Family Research Institution, 1998).

In the scale, 1-20 points signify very low violence tendency, 21-40 points low violence tendency, 41-60 points high violence tendency, and 61-80 points very high violence tendency. In Goka's study, the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.78, and 0.87 in test and re-test evaluations (Prime Ministry Family Research Institution, 1998). In the present study, this value was 0.90.

**The Submissive Acts Scale (SAS):** This scale was developed in 1994 (Gilbert & Allan, 1994). The items of this scale are rated five-point Likert type scoring system. The minimum and maximum scores of the scale are 11 and 80, respectively. High scores signify submissive behavior. In Gilbert & Allan's study, the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.89 and 0.84 in test and re-test evaluations. In 1997, the Turkish version was adapted by Savasir and Sahin. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.86 in the present study.

**Procedures:** The results of the study were collected from the students based on voluntariness. The researchers had verbally explained the study to the students in a classroom environment. Consent forms were delivered to those who wished to participate in the study, and then given back to the researcher after they read and signed them. The data collection forms were given to those who signed the consent form. Those who filled out the forms folded them in half and put them into a closed, unmarked box. The data were collected by keeping the identities of the participants anonymous and thus following the principle of privacy.

**Ethics:** Ethics committee approval from Istanbul University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (Date: 24.05.2017; No: 194828), institutional permission from the faculty, written consent from the nursing students participating in

the study and the necessary permissions from the scale authors were obtained for the study.

**Data Analysis:** The IBM SPSS Statistics 22 program was used for statistical analyses while assessing the results. The compatibility of the variables for normal distribution was assessed by using the Shapiro Wilk test. The data were found to be normally distributed. Descriptive statistical methods (mean, standard deviation, frequency) were used to assess the data and the student t test was used to evaluate the quantitative data between the two groups. One-way ANOVA test was used to evaluate quantitative data among more than two groups and Tukey's HSD post hoc test was used to determine the group causing the difference. Pearson's Correlation Analysis was used to assess the correlation between scale scores. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess for internal consistency of scales. Significance was evaluated at the level of  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

The students were between 21 and 26 years of age with an average of  $22.18 \pm 0.87$  years. 74.8% ( $n=119$ ) were female. Mothers of 54.1% ( $n=86$ ) and fathers of 39% ( $n=62$ ) had primary school education.

**Assessment of Scale Scores of the Students in Terms of their Descriptive Characteristics** Table 1 shows the assessment of the students' Submissive Behavior Scale and Violence Tendency Scale scores in terms of their descriptive characteristics.

**Submissive Behavior and Violence Tendency Levels of the Students and the Correlation Between Them:** A positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation was found between the students' scores of Submissive Behavior Scale and the Violence Tendency Scale ( $r = 0.343$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 1. Assessment of Submissive Acts Scale and Violence Tendency Scale scores of the students in terms of their descriptive characteristics (N=159)**

General Characteristics		Submissive Acts Scale	Violence Tendency Scale
		Mean±SD	Mean±SD
Age (year)	r	-0.036	0.158
	p	0.649	0.052
Gender	Female	35.68±8.27	35.48±8.59
	Male	37.48±10.72	44.78±11.49

	t	-0.966	-4.694
	p	0.338	0.001**
Mother's educational level	Illiterate	39.52±8.87	42.57±12.77
	Primary school	35.81±8.98	38.35±9.77
	Secondary school and higher	35.12±8.77	34.72±8.72
	F	2.047	5.169
	p	0.133	0.007**
Father's educational level	Primary school and lower	37.39±9.36	40.30±11.10
	Secondary School	36.19±9.05	37.03±8.21
	High school and higher	34.60±8.31	35.29±9.52
	F	1.537	4.072
	p	0.218	0.019*

r: Pearson's Correlation Analysis t: Student t Test F: One Way ANOVA \* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table 2. Submissive behavior and violence tendency levels of the students and the correlation between them (N=159)**

	Min-Max	Mean±SD (Median)
<b>Submissive acts scale</b>	<b>16-65</b>	<b>36.13±8.96 (36)</b>
<b>Violence tendency scale</b>	<b>20-74</b>	<b>37.82±10.20 (35)</b>
<b>r, p</b>	<b>0.343</b>	<b>0.001**</b>

r: Pearson's Correlation Analysis \*\* $p < 0.01$

## Discussion

Previous studies (Babacan Gumus et al., 2015; Goldag, 2015; Kodan Cetinkaya, 2013) pointed out that violence tendency was higher in male students than female counterparts. In this study, the male students had higher scores of violence tendency scale than the female students, which was parallel to the literature. Males are becoming more interested in studying on nursing profession in Turkey in recent years. Involving the concept of violence and violence prevention approaches in nursing education may potentially decrease particularly violence behaviors of men in the future years by providing family education.

One previous study revealed that there was a negative correlation between education level and violence tendency of mother. This can be explained by the fact that the mother is a role model and identification in gaining violence

attitudes and behaviors. As a mother's level of education decreases, her violence tendency increases (Babacan Gumus et al., 2015). Another study found no significant difference in violence tendency of university students in terms of education level of their parents (Kodan Cetinkaya, 2013). In this study, as parents' level of education decreased, the students' violence tendency scale scores increased. This suggests that violence behavior can reduce through education.

The results of the study revealed that the Violence Tendency Scale mean score was  $37.82 \pm 10.20$  and the nursing students displayed a mild violence tendency. In a study, it was reported that the mean score of VTS is  $28.13 \pm 6.28$  (Yagiz et al., 2019). Babacan Gumus et al., (2015) reported that 57.3% of general undergraduate students had scores ranging between 21 and 40 from this scale,

thus indicating that they exhibited mild level of violence tendency (Babacan Gumus et al., 2015).

In this study, the Submissive Behavior Scale mean score of the nursing students was  $36.12 \pm 8.96$ . In the literature, the Submissive Behavior Scale mean scores of nursing students were reported as  $34.72 \pm 8.56$  in a study (Arslantas et al., 2012),  $37.14 \pm 9.26$  in other study (Torun et al., 2012), and  $38.24 \pm 10.95$  in another study (Eraydin & Karagozoglu, 2017). In the literature, some studies have similar results and nursing students have moderate level of submissive behaviors. Nurses who have a Bachelor's degree are expected to have leadership characteristics, teach others, express themselves, communicate and solve problems effectively, act quickly by making decisions, take responsibility for their decisions, and be qualified and competent nurses. Hence, nursing students need to have a positive self-image and professional identity before they graduate in order to establish strong and therapeutic relations with their patients (Omura et al., 2016). It believed the nurses who display less submissive behaviors can more easily gain autonomy.

In this study, a positive, moderate correlation was found between the Submissive Behavior Scale and Violent Tendency Scale scores of the students ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Some mental illnesses increase violence. Likewise, mental illness can develop in individuals who show a tendency towards violence. Individuals who exhibit submissive behaviors are also known to be exposed to violence by others (Can Gurkan, 2016). In their study, Kaya et al. (2004) determined that the presence of physical violence between two parents had a significant correlation with submissive behaviors exhibited by students (Kaya et al., 2004). The correlation between submissive behaviors and violence may appear in a way that facilitates the development of submissive behaviors and timidity through despair, depression, and unresolvedness (Allan & Gilbert, 2002). The presence of a positive correlation between submissive behavior and violent tendency scores in the present study was thought to be associated with the problems stated in the literature with regards to the mental state of the students.

**Limitations:** One limitation is that sample of this study consisted only of students studying in nursing faculty only at one university. Another limitation is that the forms used as data collection

tools were examined only based on reports of the sample group. In contrast, one strength of the study is that validity and reliability of these scales were conducted.

**Conclusion:** The researchers found a correlation between the nursing students' violence tendency and submissive behaviors. Nurses must have their own health before they can provide effective and quality care. It can be suggested that topics including violence tendency and submissive behavior and rehabilitation of these problems should be included in undergraduate education.

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