

Awareness of and Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence in Turkish Society

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to identify domestic violence awareness and attitudes towards violence among adult individuals in Turkish society.

Materials and Methods. This descriptive and cross-sectional study was conducted online between September 15, 2021 and November 15, 2021 and included 353 individuals. The data were collected using the snowball sampling method, the Google Forms, the Socio-Demographic Descriptive Information Form, the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale, and the Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence (ADV) Scale. For data analysis, the number, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Student's t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), post hoc (Tukey, LSD) analyses, Cohen's d and Eta squared (η^2) coefficients, and correlation analysis were used.

Results. Most research participants were females (79.0%), with the average age of 30.53 ± 13.11 years. Of all the participants, 56.9% stated that they witnessed domestic violence, 22.7% stated that they experienced violence against women, 8.2% stated that they used violence. While the mean Domestic Violence Awareness Scale score was calculated as 41.09 ± 3.98 , the mean score of the ADV Scale was calculated as 20.18 ± 7.82 . The scores of domestic violence awareness differed significantly depending on education level ($p=0.042$; $\eta^2=0.018$). The scores of women's attitude towards domestic violence (19.10) were lower than those in men (24.26) ($p=0.05$; $d=0.684$; $\eta^2=0.072$). Participants' attitudes towards domestic violence varied significantly by family type ($p=0.006$; $\eta^2=0.029$), education level ($p=0.007$; $\eta^2=0.028$), and occupation ($p=0.007$; $\eta^2=0.040$). There was a significant positive relationship between awareness of and attitudes towards domestic violence ($r=0.226$).

Conclusions. Study participants had a high sense of awareness towards domestic violence and a negative attitude towards violence. Their awareness of domestic violence was affected by education level, while their attitudes towards domestic violence was affected by gender, type of family, education level, and occupation.

Keywords

Domestic Violence; Awareness; Attitude; Turkish Society

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Introduction

A global and increasing problem of violence describes all kinds of actions harming others. The World Health Organization describes violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" [1].

Domestic violence is a devastating problem that affects individuals all over the world [2]. This is all the aggressive behavior of an individual towards their spouse, children, siblings, parents, and relatives [3], especially towards

women, children, or elderly individuals. Domestic violence can occur in many different forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse [4]. About 90% of domestic violence victims in Turkey are women and children. This is due to the disproportionate power balance between men and women and a male-dominant Turkish society [5].

There are many studies in the literature on awareness of and attitudes towards domestic violence. A study analyzing child development candidates' attitudes towards domestic violence and children's rights stated the significance of the levels of domestic violence awareness, considering gender- and age-related factors [6]. In another study,

only 3% of married women in Mid-Anatolia were aware of economic violence as a type of violence [7]. A study conducted by Purnamasari I *et al.* to assess domestic violence awareness in Indonesia discovered that family members experienced no violence [8]. When studying university students' attitudes to domestic violence, the scores were low [9]. A significant proportion of women in a study evaluating women's perceptions of and attitudes towards domestic violence in Ethiopia stated that violence against women could exist in male-dominated societies as a natural conflict between spouses [10]. According to a study on newlywed couples, the level of normalization and generalization of violence increased with age [11]. Another study on university students' attitudes towards domestic violence found that students had negative views of domestic violence and they did not approve of it [12]. The authors of that study believe that examining awareness of and attitudes to domestic violence together will provide a different perspective on the subject and contribute to the literature in this area.

As violence awareness and attitude to violence can change depending on individual perception, becoming aware of this concept beforehand may be a primary step in violence prevention efforts [13]. Recognizing and preventing domestic violence is acknowledged to be very important in terms of next generations' mental health [13].

Authors team believe that this study, which **aims** to evaluate the level of domestic violence awareness and attitudes towards violence among adult individuals in Turkish society will be useful in creating legal norms to prevent domestic violence.

The research questions in the study were formulated as follows:

- What are the socio-demographic and domestic violence characteristics of the participants?
- What is the level of domestic violence awareness in the Turkish society?
- What is the attitude of the Turkish society towards domestic violence?
- Is there a correlation between awareness of and attitudes towards domestic violence?

Materials and Methods

Participants and Data Collection Method

This descriptive and cross-sectional study was conducted online among the Turkish society between September 15, 2021 and November 15, 2021. Turkish people formed the population of the study. When calculating the sample size, an unknown population size was calculated using the formula: $n = t^2 pq / d^2$ (t: the value taken from the t-distribution, p: the probability of occurrence, q: the probability of nonoccurrence, d: the margin of error) [14]. The sample size for a non-homogeneous population was calculated as $n = (1.96)^2 (0.2)(0.8) / (0.05)^2 = 246$. The study included 353 individuals at the age of 18 years and over who could read and understand Turkish and agreed to fill out the form.

To obtain data, the snowball sampling method was used. The data were collected using the Socio-Demographic De-

scriptive Information Form, the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale and the Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence (ADV) Scale created with the Google Forms. The link to questionnaire was sent to the participants via e-mail and on social media. The first questionnaire was sent to an individual in the researcher's inner circle, and through this individual, the questionnaire was intended to reach as many people as possible. Thus, the link was forwarded to people other than the first point of contact. Upon receiving and clicking on the link to the research, potential participants were automatically directed to a page containing information about the research and informed consent.

Data Collection Tools

Socio-Demographic Descriptive Information Form

It is an information form that consists of 21 questions designed by the researcher in accordance with the literature [2, 4, 11] and contains the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals.

Domestic Violence Awareness Scale

The scale developed by Özyürek A *et al.* [4] consists of 20 items and 5 subscales. The subscales are as follows: "Defining domestic violence", "Consequences of domestic violence", "Acceptance of domestic violence", "Normalization of domestic violence", "Awareness of children's rights". The higher the scores on the scale, the higher domestic violence awareness. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.92. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this study was calculated as 0.86.

Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence Scale

The scale was developed by Şahin *et al.* in 2009 [15]. The goal of the ADV Scale, designed as a five-point Likert scale, is to determine attitudes towards domestic violence. The responders specify their level of agreement to a statement in five points: (1) Strongly agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly disagree. The highest score of the scale is 65, while the lowest is 13. High scores indicate a positive attitude towards violence, while low scores indicate a negative attitude towards violence. The ADV Scale consists of 4 factors with 13 items in total. The factors are respectively entitled as follows: "Normalization of violence" (5 items – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5); "Generalization of violence" (3 items – 6, 7, 8); "Causes of violence" (3 items – 9, 10, 11), "Hiding violence" (2 items – 12, 13). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.72. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this study was calculated as 0.88.

Statistical Analysis

The research data were evaluated with IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 software package. Frequency and percentage analyzes were used to determine the participants' descriptive characteristics, and the statistics involving the mean and standard deviation were used for scale analysis. The kurtosis and skewness values were examined to determine whether the research variables showed a normal distribution. The research variables were found to be normally distributed.

Parametric methods were used for data analysis. The relationships between the dimensions determining the participants' scale levels were examined using correlation analysis. Correlation coefficients (r) were interpreted as 0.00-0.25 very weak, 0.26-0.49 weak, 0.50-0.69 medium, 0.70-0.89 high, 0.90-1.00 very high. The Student's t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc (Tukey, LSD) analyses were used to examine the differences in scale levels according to the participants' descriptive characteristics. Cohen's d and Eta squared (η^2) coefficients were used to calculate the effect size. The effect size indicates whether the difference between the groups is large enough to be considered significant. The benchmark values of Cohen's d 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 correspond to small, medium, and large effect size, respectively; η^2 benchmark values of 0.01, 0.06, 0.14 correspond to small, medium, and large effect, respectively.

Results

Most research participants were females (79.0%), with the average age of 30.53 ± 13.11 years. Of all the participants, 71.1% were single, 85.3% had nuclear families, and 74.2% had no children. A total of 73.7% of individuals had middle monthly income, 69.1% of participants had undergraduate degrees, 23.2% of respondents were healthcare professionals. Half of all participants (49.9%) resided in urban areas, and 36% of respondents mostly lived in the Marmara Region. Of all the participants, 56.9% stated that they witnessed domestic violence, 22.7% stated that they experienced violence against women, 8.2% stated that they used violence. A total of 16.4% of participants suffered from chronic diseases, while 4.8% of respondents suffered from mental illness (Table 1).

While the mean Domestic Violence Awareness Scale score was calculated as 41.09 ± 3.98 , the mean score of the ADV Scale was calculated as 20.18 ± 7.82 . The mean scores of the Domestic Violence Awareness subscales were as follows: the "Defining domestic violence" subscale - 14.06 ± 1.80 , the "Consequences of domestic violence" subscale - 14.58 ± 1.28 , the "Acceptance of domestic violence" subscale - 13.45 ± 2.27 , the "Normalization of domestic violence" subscale - 14.09 ± 1.91 .

The mean scores of the ADV subscales were as follows: the "Normalization of violence" subscale - 6.58 ± 3.35 , the "Generalization of violence" subscale - 3.97 ± 2.15 , the "Causes of violence" subscale - 6.67 ± 2.08 , the "Hiding violence" subscale - 2.94 ± 1.74 .

The scores of women's attitude towards domestic violence (19.10) were lower than those in men (24.26) (Table 2; $d=0.684$; $\eta^2=0.072$). Participants' attitudes towards domestic violence varied significantly by family type (Table 2; $\eta^2=0.029$). The reason for the difference was that the scores of attitudes towards domestic violence in respondents whose family was extended were higher than those of respondents from the nuclear and broken families ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2).

The scores of domestic violence awareness differed significantly depending on education level (Table 2; $\eta^2=0.018$). Participants' attitudes towards domestic violence varied significantly depending on their education level (Table 2;

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of participants (N=353).

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	279	79
Male	74	21
Marital status		
Married	102	28.9
Single	251	71.1
Number of children		
No children	262	74.2
One child	32	9.1
Two or more children	59	13.3
Family type		
Nuclear	301	85.3
Extended	30	8.5
Broken	22	6.2
Income Status		
High	67	19
Middle	260	73.7
Poor	26	7.4
Education level		
High school	39	11
Undergraduate	244	69.1
Graduate	70	19.8
Occupation		
Student	155	43.9
Healthcare professional	82	23.2
Academician	22	6.2
Teacher	27	7.6
Other (Freelance)	67	19
Place of Residence		
Metropolitan	176	49.9
Province	103	29.2
District	57	16.1
Village/town	17	4.8
Longest-term residence place (Region)		
Aegean	53	15
Marmara	127	36
Black Sea	18	5.1
Mediterranean	69	19.5
Central Anatolia	36	10.2
Eastern Anatolia	26	7.4
Southeastern Anatolia	24	6.8
Knowing someone experiencing domestic violence		
Yes	201	56.9
No	152	43.1
Being exposed to violence		
Yes	80	22.7
No	273	77.3
Practicing violence		
Yes	29	8.2
No	324	91.8
Presence of chronic disease		
Yes	58	16.4
No	295	83.6
Presence of mental illness		
Yes	17	4.8
No	336	95.2
Age (Mean±Standard deviation)	30.53±13.11	

Table 2. Comparison of the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale and the Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence Scale scores according to the participants' socio-demographic characteristics.

Socio-demographic characteristics	n	Domestic Violence Awareness Mean±SD	Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence Mean±SD	Socio-demographic characteristics	n	Domestic Violence Awareness Mean±SD	Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence Mean±SD
Age				Place of residence			
18-24	171	41.38±4.91	20.54±8.29	Metropolitan	176	40.90±3.11	20.01±7.23
25-34	75	40.49±2.73	19.42±6.95	Province	103	41.16±5.50	20.68±9.33
35-44	40	40.60±2.49	18.40±4.20	District	57	41.19±2.39	18.70±5.46
45-54	41	41.39±2.79	19.56±6.76	Village/Town	17	42.35±5.33	23.76±9.52
55 and above	26	41.30±3.62	23.65±11.37	p=	0.545	0.105	
p=		0.48	0.073	Longest-term residence place (Region)			
Gender				Aegean	53	41.24±2.85	20.58±7.04
Female	279	40.86±3.35	19.10±6.18	Marmara	127	41.04±3.25	18.78±5.33
Male	74	42.00±5.71	24.26±11.30	Black Sea	18	41.61±4.86	18.05±2.10
p=		0.104	<0.001	Mediterranean	69	40.92±5.41	21.88±11.13
Marital status				Central Anatolia Region	36	41.05±3.02	20.66±7.34
Married	102	40.91±3.08	20.59±8.93	Eastern Anatolia	26	40.73±3.28	22.23±10.88
Single	251	41.17±4.30	20.00±7.33	Southeastern Anatolia	24	41.62±6.01	20.37±7.70
p=		0.574	0.521	p=	0.979	0.096	
Number of children				Knowing someone experiencing domestic violence			
No children	262	41.13±4.21	19.99±7.28	Yes	201	41.01±3.41	19.66±6.66
One child	32	40.75±4.04	20.31±10.84	No	152	41.21±4.64	20.85±9.11
Two or more children	59	41.11±2.78	20.93±8.31	p=	0.629	0.158	
p=		0.874	0.704	Being exposed to violence			
Family type				Yes	80	41.08±2.79	19.73±6.24
Nuclear	301	41.05±4.08	19.86±7.42	No	273	41.10±4.27	20.30±8.23
Extended	30	41.76±3.22	24.43±11.69	p=	0.976	0.567	
Broken	22	40.77±3.54	18.63±4.33	Practicing violence			
p=		0.601	0.006	Yes	29	41.20±2.79	21.86±9.05
Post Hoc=			2>1, 2>3 (p<0.05)	No	324	41.09±4.07	20.02±7.70
Income status				p=	0.879	0.227	
High	67	41.07±4.08	20.34±9.45	Presence of chronic disease			
Middle	260	41.03±3.79	19.79±6.73	Yes	58	40.89±3.33	20.55±7.20
Poor	26	41.76±5.51	23.57±11.91	No	295	41.13±4.10	20.10±7.94
p=		0.672	0.062	p=	0.673	0.692	
Education level				Presence of mental illness			
High school	39	41.43±3.66	23.25±12.07	Yes	17	42.23±5.59	18.11±3.18
Undergraduate	244	41.35±4.30	20.21±7.69	No	336	41.04±3.89	20.28±7.97
Graduate	70	40.02±2.62	18.32±3.82	p=	0.229	0.266	
p=		0.042	0.007				
Post Hoc=		2>3 (p<0.05)	1>2, 1>3 (p<0.05)				
Occupation							
Student	155	41.38±4.62	20.27±7.66				
Healthcare professional	82	40.86±3.67	18.53±3.91				
Academician	22	40.13±3.35	19.27±4.69				
Teacher	27	40.96±2.15	18.37±3.52				
Other	67	41.09±3.51	23.00±12.05				
p=		0.664	0.007				
Post Hoc=			5>1, 5>2, 5>3, 5>4 (p<0.05)				

Note: Post Hoc: Tukey, LSD.

$\eta^2=0.028$) as well.

The scores of domestic violence awareness differed significantly by occupation (Table 2; $\eta^2=0.040$). The reason for the difference was that the scores of attitudes towards domestic violence in other professionals (self-employed)

were higher than those in students, healthcare workers, academicians, and teachers ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2).

There was a positive weak relationship between the total scores of attitude of and awareness towards domestic violence, the total scores of domestic violence attitude

Table 3. Comparison of the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale and the Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence Scale scores according to the participants' socio-demographic characteristics.

	Domestic violence awareness, total	Defining domestic violence	Consequences of domestic violence	Acceptance of domestic violence	Normalization of domestic violence
Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence, total	0.226**	-0.387**	-0.459**	0.493**	0.557**
Normalization of violence	0.220**	-0.324**	-0.412**	0.427**	0.531**
Generalization of violence	0.194**	-0.331**	-0.405**	0.420**	0.489**
Causes of violence	0.115*	-0.210**	-0.282**	0.284**	0.289**
Hiding violence	0.211**	-0.453**	-0.429**	0.529**	0.526**

Notes: * - $p < 0.05$; ** - $p < 0.01$.

and the “Defining Domestic Violence” subscale, one of the sub-dimensions of the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale and its results. There was a moderate negative correlation between the two groups, and a moderate positive correlation between the total score of domestic violence attitude and acceptance and normalization of violence (Table 3). In addition, there was a weak positive correlation between the total score of domestic violence awareness and the subscales of domestic violence attitude such as “Normalization of violence”, “Generalization of violence”, “Causes of violence”, “Hiding violence”.

Discussion

This study, which was conducted to determine domestic violence awareness and attitudes towards violence among adult individuals in Turkish society, found that the participants had high domestic violence awareness and negative attitudes towards domestic violence.

Most participants lived in urban areas. Those living in big cities were found to have higher domestic violence awareness and negative attitudes towards domestic violence as compared to those living in rural areas. In a study on university students' attitudes towards violence against women in the family, traditional attitude towards violence was found to increase from cities to countryside [16]. In a study comparing domestic violence among women living in Nigeria, the proportion of women who considered violence acceptable was significantly higher in rural areas than in urban areas [17]. This might be due to cultural and religious factors, as individuals living in big cities are more educated and economically stronger than those living in rural areas.

Most participants of this study resided in the Marmara region. Bulut MB [18] in a study on university students' attitudes towards domestic violence discovered that the attitudes of individuals living in the Marmara region towards domestic violence were the most negative as compared to other regions, while in Mid-Anatolia, only 3% of participants stated that they were aware of economic violence as a type of violence [18]. The Marmara region is known as the most developed region of Turkey. Hence, individuals living in this region are expected to have higher awareness of and more negative attitudes towards domestic violence.

The study results showed that the individuals were aware of domestic violence (the mean Domestic Violence

Awareness Scale score - 41.09 ± 3.98) and had a negative attitude towards domestic violence (the mean ADV Scale score - 20.18 ± 7.82). A study conducted by Sevim *et al.* with university students revealed that young people had a significantly negative attitude towards violence [19]. Another study found that the participants had similar attitudes towards domestic violence (the mean ADV Scale score - 30.10 ± 8.52) [11].

Over half of participants experienced violence and most of these cases involved violence against women. In a study conducted by Jahromi *et al.*, domestic violence against women was discovered to be very high [20]. According to a study on women's exposure to domestic violence, 43.1% of women were exposed to violence [21]. In another study, the prevalence of domestic violence was found to be 32.3% [22]. According to a study conducted by Efe *et al.*, all women were exposed to violence, while women with certain socio-demographic characteristics were exposed to violence more than others [23]. A study on domestic violence against women in Kosovo stated that poverty, patriarchal culture, and strongly defined gender roles relegated women to secondary positions and made them more vulnerable to domestic violence [24].

It has been found that one third of individuals are subjected to violence, and most of them are exposed to violence by their fathers. According to a study on students' exposure to domestic violence, 38.5% of them were exposed to violence by their fathers [25]. Experiencing violence inflicted by very close people creates a negative role model for the families that young people will create in the future. Violence is passed on from generation to generation through social learning [26]. Individuals who are exposed to or witnessed violence in their families are considered as more prone to violence.

The levels of domestic violence awareness and attitudes towards violence significantly differ depending on gender. Women demonstrate higher domestic violence awareness than men, their attitude towards domestic violence is more negative. Female participants' awareness of domestic violence was higher than that in male ones. A study on domestic violence awareness conducted by Zyrek *et al.* stated that the level of violence awareness in women was higher [4]. Men and women were found to have different opinions on violence. A study conducted by Deles *et al.* found that the levels of domes-

tic violence awareness differed significantly depending on gender [6]. Men had a more moderate attitude towards violence than women and gave reasons to justify violence, and they thought that women were the source of violence against women [27].

Education level affects individuals' awareness of domestic violence. A study on domestic violence awareness found that those with university education were more likely to seek help in the face of violence than those with secondary or incomplete education [28]. In a study on the determinants of domestic violence, women whose spouses had secondary or higher education were 48% less likely to experience domestic violence than women whose spouses had no education [29]. According to Akkuş *et al.*, the level of violence committed by men against their spouses increased with the decrease in the level of their education [30]. Hence, the level of education influences violence. Increasing the education level in the society is inevitable for preventing violence.

When the participants were evaluated on the Domestic Violence Awareness subscales, they received the highest score on the "Consequences of domestic violence" subscale and the lowest one on the "Acceptance of domestic violence" subscale. We can say that individuals normalize and define the consequences of violence after witnessing it, and finally accept it. It can be assumed that people are aware of domestic violence but do nothing because they accept it.

When the participants were evaluated on the ADV Scale, they received the highest score on the "Causes of violence" subscale and the lowest one on the "Hiding violence" subscale. It can be concluded that people are not inclined to hide violence. In this study, most respondents were women with high education level, and therefore, they felt no need to hide violence.

There was a significant positive correlation between the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale and ADV Scale scores. The scores of the Domestic Violence Awareness Scale increased with the increase in the scores of the ADV Scale. With the increase in domestic violence awareness, attitudes towards domestic violence became negative.

Conclusions

According to the results of the study, participants' awareness of domestic violence was high, and they had a negative attitude towards violence. There was a significant positive correlation between domestic violence awareness and attitudes towards violence ($r=0.226$). Participants' awareness of domestic violence was affected by their education level, while their attitudes towards domestic violence was affected by gender, type of family, education level, and occupation.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study was that the study was conducted online with individuals who had access to the Internet. Another limitation of the study was that the accuracy of the acquired data depended on people's responses. Despite

the snowball sampling method for used for data collection, there was a female predominance in the sample. This group is the most vulnerable in terms of domestic violence. This could be seen as a limitation of the study as the number of male participants was lower; thus, there was a less chance of observing violence. It can also be concluded that women are much more sensitive and concerned about violence.

Ethical Statement

The study was conducted according to the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Kütahya Health Sciences University (dated September 07, 2021, decision No. 2021/13-03).

Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all the subjects online.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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