

ARAŞTIRMA / Research Articles

The Relationship Between Dating Violence and Ambivalent Sexism Among Emerging Adults: A Cross Sectional Study

Yetişkinliğe Geçişteki Bireylerde Flört Şiddeti ile Çelişik Duygulu Cinsiyetçilik Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi: Kesitsel Bir Çalışma

Seda KARAKAYA ÇATALDAŞ¹, Ayşegül AKATAY², Mukaddes KONYAR³, Merve ÖRNEK⁴

ABSTRACT

Aim: This study aimed to examine the relationship between dating violence and ambivalent sexism in emerging adults.

Material and Methods: This study adopted cross-sectional design with 154 participants using convenience sampling. Sociodemographic Information Form, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and Dating Violence Questionnaire were used as data collection tools. Spearman's correlations, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis analysis were performed for analysis.

Results: A statistically negative low correlation was found between Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and Dating Violence Questionnaire. There was a statistically significant difference between general violence, economic violence and sexual violence by gender; in which women were found to not support attitudes towards dating violence compared to men. We also found that a statistically significant difference in hostile sexism by gender in which the men had higher hostile sexism mean scores than the women. This study highlighted the association between dating violence and ambivalent sexism among emerging adults.

Keywords: emerging adult, dating violence, ambivalent sexism

ÖZ

Çalışmanın amacı: Bu çalışma, beliren yetişkinlerde flört şiddeti ile çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamıştır.

Materyal ve Yöntem: Kesitsel desenle ve kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 154 katılımcıdan veri toplanmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak Sosyodemografik Bilgi Formu, Çelişik Duygulu Cinsiyetçilik Ölçeği ve Flört Şiddeti Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Spearman korelasyon, Mann Whitney U ve Kruskal Wallis analizleri yapılmıştır.

Sonuçlar: Çelişik Duygulu Cinsiyetçilik ve Flört Şiddeti arasında istatistiksel olarak negatif yönlü düşük bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Cinsiyete göre genel şiddet, ekonomik şiddet ve cinsel şiddet arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark bulunmuş, kadınların erkeklere kıyasla flört şiddetine yönelik tutumları desteklemediği görülmüştür. Ayrıca, cinsiyete göre düşmanca cinsiyetçilik arasında da istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark bulunmuş, erkeklerin düşmanca cinsiyetçilik puan ortalamalarının kadınlardan daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Bu çalışmada, yetişkinliğe geçişteki bireylerde flört şiddeti ile çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik arasında ilişki olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni yetişkinler, flört şiddeti, çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik

Introduction

Dating violence is a prevalent psychological and social issue that harms the lives of many adolescents and young adults. While dating violence (DV) is commonly thought of as physically aggressive behavior by a man toward a woman, it is defined as men and women can be both perpetrators and victims at the same time (1). DV includes many forms including physical, psychological, sexual, and cyber (2).

1 Department of Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing, Koç University School of Nursing, İstanbul, Turkey

E-mail: skarakaya@ku.edu.tr Orcid ID: 0000-0002-1724-6360

2 Koç University School of Nursing, İstanbul, Turkey

E-mail: ayse543gul@gmail.com Orcid ID: 0009-0007-2414-4542

3 Koç University School of Nursing, İstanbul, Turkey

E-mail: bmkonyar04@gmail.com Orcid ID: 0009-0000-1212-952

4 Koç University School of Nursing, İstanbul, Turkey

E-mail: merveornek587@gmail.com Orcid ID: 0009-0000-8368-584X

Gönderim Tarihi: 25.11.2024 - Kabul Tarihi: 02.07.2025

Studies show that individuals subject to dating violence are generally in emerging adulthood (3).

The concept of “emerging adulthood,” defined as a developmental period that includes adolescence and adulthood between the ages of 18 and 25 (4). During emerging adulthood, romantic relationships tend to be experienced more clearly. In this period, the individual's behavior is formed, and the individual may show behaviors aimed at proving himself/herself. This may create a risk of dating violence (5). Research has highlighted the prevalence of dating violence among high school students in the United States, revealing that physical and sexual dating violence, as well as other forms of violence, such as bullying, are reported (6). Furthermore, research has explored the prevalence of dating violence among

undergraduate students in Nigeria and found high rates of both current and lifetime dating violence (7).

Ambivalent sexism, as characterized by both hostile and benevolent attitudes towards women, has been associated positively with dating violence perpetration and victimization among young men and women (8). Ambivalent sexism is a complementary justification for gender inequality and is divided into two dimensions: Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism refers to the idea that men are naturally stronger than women and the perception of women as merely sexual objects, which leads to the promotion of traditional gender roles and the belief that women are dependent on men, powerless, and inferior. On the other hand, benevolent sexism is based on the acceptance of the existence of relationships in which men are cared for by women, the appreciation of women who meet traditional gender stereotypes, and the glorification and protection of women in their roles as wives and mothers. Hostile sexism, a component of ambivalent sexism, has been linked explicitly to dating violence (9). Therefore, adopting a traditional view of gender, the asymmetrical power relations between men and women due to the patriarchal social structure and the perception of violence as a normal behavior are the primary sources of dating violence (10). Studies have indicated the predictive nature of ambivalent sexism on perpetration and victimization in dating relationships and highlight the importance of addressing sexist beliefs in understanding and preventing dating violence among individuals (9).

Research exploring the relationship between dating violence and ambivalent sexism is limited in national and international literature. Studies examining the relationship between ambivalent sexism and dating violence attitudes have focused on university students. No specific study examines this relationship in emerging adulthood (3). In this context, this study is expected to contribute to the literature and the development of dating violence prevention and intervention strategies. This study aimed to examine the relationship between

attitudes toward dating violence and ambivalent sexism in emerging adults.

Method

Design

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional design

Procedure

An online data collection link was composed via Google Forms. Recruitment leveraged via social media and word of mouth. A poster was created, including the aim of the study and the study link, and shared on social media. The participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary—the participants who approved the individual consent form in the link were directed to data collection tools. The study data were collected between 1 December 2023 and 1 April 2024. 162 questionnaires were fulfilled, but when the incomplete questionnaires were removed, 152 data were considered for analysis.

Data Collection Tools

Sociodemographic Information Form

The sociodemographic information form included several questions about age, gender, marital status, working status, income level, to have a romantic relationship, to face dating violence, and if yes, the type of it (i.e., physical, psychological, severe, economic, sexual).

Dating Violence Attitude Questionnaire (DVQ)

The scale consists of a total of 28 items and five subscales, including general violence (5 items), physical violence (5 items), psychological violence (6 items), sexual violence (7 items) and economic violence (5 items). The scale is a 5-point Likert type, scoring as 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree. The 23 items scored reverse. The total score is close to 5, which means participants do not support the attitudes towards dating violence. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient is 0.91, and the subscales

range from 0.72-0.85. (11). The current study's Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was 0.84.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

The scale was developed by (12). Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by (13). The scale consists of 22 items, including 11 items to measure benevolent sexism and 11 items to measure hostile sexism. There is no item scoring in reverse. This is a 6-point Likert-type scale, scoring from "1=strongly disagree" to "6=strongly agree". High-scale scores indicate high levels of benevolent and hostile sexism. The Cronbach's Alfa for the ASI was .85. In the current study, the alpha coefficient for the total scale was .92.

Statistical analysis

All data were analyzed using SPSS version 28 for Windows. The data were not found to be normally distributed. Descriptive statistics were used, such as frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum values. Spearman's correlations were employed to determine relationships between variables. Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis analysis were performed. The statistical significance level was set as $p < 0.05$.

Ethical considerations

The Ethical permission was obtained by the Koç University Social and Human Review Board (2023.374.IRB3.167). All participants approved the informant consent before the study. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that all information to be obtained would be kept confidential.

Results

Participants

Participants ($n = 154$) were volunteers in the general population recruited through an online Google form. The mean age of participants was 23.27 ± 1.58 years. Of them, 83.1% were females, 89% were single, 61.7% were not working, and 45.5% had stated income equal to expenses.

In addition, 42.9 % of them have a romantic relationship, and 81.2% have experienced dating violence in their relationship. Considering the frequency of those who faced violence, the most common type was psychological violence, with 13.6%. Then, the cyber violence (4.5%) and sexual violence (0.6) were taken part (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants ($n=154$), Istanbul-2024

		n	%
Age			
	Mean $\pm$ SD	23.27 $\pm$ 1.58	
	Min-Max	18-25	
	Median	23	
Gender			
	Female	128	83.1
	Male	26	16.9
Marital Status			
	Single	137	89
	Married	15	9.7
	Living with partner	2	1.3
Working Status			
	Working	59	38.3
	Not working	95	61.7
Income Level			
	Income equal to ezpenses	70	45.5
	Income more than expenses	46	29.9
	Income less than expenses	36	23.4
Romantic relationship status			
	Currently yes	66	42.9
	No	49	31.8
	Used to be	39	25.3
Experience of dating violence			
	Yes	29	18.8
	No	125	81.2
Types of dating violence			
	Psychological violence	21	13.6
	Sexual violence	1	0.6
	Siber violence	7	4.5
Mean, SD: Standart Deviation			

A statistically difference was found the between general violence, economic violence, sexual violence by gender ($p < 0.05$). The women had higher general violence, economic violence and sexual violence mean scores than the men (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of General Violence, Physical Violence, Psychological Violence, Economic Violence and Sexual Violence Scores by Gender (n =154) , Istanbul-2024

Subscales	Gender	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
General violence	Man	26	60.56	1574.50	1223.5	0,015*
	Woman	128	80.94	10360.50		
Physical violence	Man	26	70.46	1832	1481	,323
	Woman	128	78.93	10103		
Psychological violence	Man	26	73.27	1905	1554	,591
	Woman	128	78.36	10030		
Economic violence	Man	26	38.94	1012.50	661.5	<,001**
	Woman	128	85.33	10922.50		
Sexual violence	Man	26	59.58	1549	1198	,009**
	Woman	128	81.14	10386		

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 3. Comparison of General Violence, Physical Violence, Psychological Violence, Economic Violence and Sexual Violence Scores by Gender (n =154) , Istanbul-2024

Subscales	Gender	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Hostile Sexism	Man	26	96.94	2520,50	1158.50	0,015*
	Woman	128	73.55	9414,50		
Benevolent sexism	Man	26	73.33	1906,50	1555.5	,601
	Woman	128	78.35	10028,50		

* p < .05. ** p < .01

A statistically difference was found the between hostile sexism by gender (p<0.05). The men had higher hostile sexism mean scores than the women (Table 3).

A statistically negative low correlation was found between Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and

Dating Violence Questionnaire (r= -,261, p<.01). A statistically correlation was found between the ambivalent sexism, physical violence (r= -,273, p<.01), psychological violence (r= -,360, p<.01) and economic violence (r= -,267, p<.01) (Table 4)

Table 4. Correlations and descriptive statistics for primary variables (n=154) , Istanbul-2024

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hostile Sexism	27,77	,96	1								
Benevolent sexism	30,63	,91	,590**	1							
Ambivalent Sexism	58,41	1,67	,897**	,886**	1						
General Violence	23,79	,17	-,144	-,021	-,094	1					
Physical Violence	23,62	,17	-,273**	-,213**	-,273**	,494**	1				
Psychological Violence	26,68	,27	-,288**	-,356**	-,360**	,304**	,527**	1			
Economic Violence	21,20	,24	-,296**	-,177*	-,267**	,337**	,356**	,334**	1		
Sexual Violence	32,48	,34	-,046	,077	,016	,583**	,339**	,215**	,271**	1	
Dating Violence	127,79	,84	-,282**	-,181*	-,261**	,735**	,713**	,674**	,647**	,743**	1

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between attitudes toward dating violence and ambivalent sexism in emerging adults.

In the present study, the 19.5% woman and 11.5% man indicated that they had experienced dating violence. While supporting our outcomes, a systematic review reported that types and severity of dating violence varied across studies, but overall, women were more likely to face violence than men (14). We found that 18.8% of participants were subjected to dating violence, which is 13.6% to psychological violence, 4.5% to cyber violence, and 0.6% to sexual violence. A study reported that 31.6% of women and 24.4% of men were found to have been subjected to physical violence among university students (15). In another study conducted with nursing students,

it was found that 18.0% of first-year students, 40.1% of fourth-year students, and 28.6% of all students were exposed to violence in dating relationships in which 39.5% of the participants were exposed to psychological violence, and 3.9% were exposed to sexual violence (16). In another study of 500 university students in Turkey, it was concluded that 19.4% of women were exposed to physical violence, 88% to psychological violence, and 7.8% to sexual violence (17). Considering the literature, the violence ratio in the present study is relatively small. 31.8% of the participants stated they had not experienced a romantic relationship. It can be thought that they may not have experienced dating violence because they have never had romantic relationships.

The present study found there was a statistically significant difference between general violence (0,015), economic violence (<,001), and sexual

violence (.009) by gender, in which women were found to not support attitudes towards dating violence compared to men. Ambivalent sexism, a concept that incorporates both hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women, has been linked to dating violence among emerging adults. A statistically low negative correlation was found between ambivalent sexism and dating violence ($r = -.261$, $p < .01$). The present study found a statistically significant difference in hostile sexism by gender ($p < .05$) in which the men had higher hostile sexism mean scores than the women. Hostile sexism is a form that is characterized by hostility towards women, humiliating attitudes, and openly negative beliefs. It reflects opposed views of gender relations in which women are perceived as trying to control men, challenging traditional gender roles, or advocating for their rights. Gender is the basis of sexism. Gender shapes people to form a man-woman identity in the socialization process and to learn the social roles and patterns (independent-dependent, rational-emotional, etc.) of this identity (18). Therefore, as a result of negative stereotypes towards women, women are discriminated against and seen as inferior to men.

Our outcomes were in line with the literature. In the study with participants aged 18-54 years and found a relationship between dating violence attitudes and benevolent and hostile sexism (19). It is found that individuals who perpetrated violence against their partners exhibited higher levels of sexism than those who did not engage in such behaviors (20). In addition, the study revealed a relationship between both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism and the occurrence of dating violence in young people. A study revealed that there is a relationship between sexism and the perspective on dating violence (9). The study showed a positive relationship between women who exhibited hostile sexism, men who exhibited benevolent sexism, and their attitudes towards dating violence, including both psychological and physical forms, perpetrated by individuals of all genders. It is emphasized the relationship between dating violence and benevolent sexism, which was underscored

despite its implicit and relatively moderate nature (21). Research indicated that gender role attitudes had a predictive role in all dimensions of dating violence attitudes (22). Research has indicated that individuals who affirm hostile sexism are more likely to understate the magnitude of dating violence, which suggests a link between sexist beliefs and the adoption of harmful behaviors in relationships (23). This suggests that individuals with ambivalent sexist views may be more likely to engage in or be victimized by dating violence. Studies have also investigated the impact of ambivalent sexism on relationship quality among new adult straight-dating partners. Results suggest that ambivalent sexist attitudes play a role in forming perceptions of relationship quality in such couples (24). Moreover, ambivalent sexism was associated with the endorsement of rape myths among male college students, emphasizing a significant correlation between attitudes toward dating violence and ambivalent sexism (25).

This study has several limitations. Although online surveys provide convenience and enable data collection from diverse geographic locations, there may be a self-selection bias among participants who choose not to participate in online surveys, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim to include larger samples to enhance representativeness. Also, the sample of this study consists only of emerging adults. This situation creates a limitation in terms of generalizability of the study results. Furthermore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between dating violence and ambivalent sexism.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the association between dating violence and ambivalent sexism among emerging adults. Therefore, combating sexism is crucial to diminish dating violence. Campaigns that aim to reduce sexism in public and educational settings are essential considerations in tackling the challenges of dating violence. These efforts would pave the way for combating sexism and contribute to tackling dating violence.

REFERENCES

1. Üstünel AÖ. Eşit, güvenli, özgür ilişki: Üniversite öğrencilerine yönelik bir flört şiddeti önleme programının etki değerlendirmesi. *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları*. 2020;23(45):19-41.
2. Rodenhizer KAE, Edwards KM. The impacts of sexual media exposure on adolescent and emerging adults' dating and sexual violence attitudes and behaviors: A critical review of the literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. 2017;20(4):439-452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017717745>
3. Atasever İ. Ergenlerin ve beliren yetişkinlerin bakış açısıyla flört şiddeti. (Yüksek Lisans Tezi). Başkent Üniversitesi Eği Bilimleri Enstitüsü; 2022.
4. Arnett JJ. Learning to stand alone: The contemporary American transition to adulthood in cultural and historical context. *Human Development*. 1998;41(5-6):295-315.
5. Mihçioğur S, Akın A. Flört şiddeti- "şiddet'li sevgi". *Sağlık ve Toplum*. 2015;25(2):9-15.
6. Basile KC, Clayton HB, DeGue S, Gilford J, Vagi KJ, Suarez NA, Lowry R. Interpersonal violence victimization among high school students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *MMWR Supplements*. 2020;69(1):28-37.
7. Adamu H, Oche OM, Isah MA, Muhammad SA, Abdullahi A. Prevalence, pattern and risk factors of dating violence among undergraduate students of a tertiary institution within Sokoto Metropolis of Sokoto State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Tropical Disease & Health*. 2021;42(10):12-26. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ijtdh/2021/v42i1030487>
8. Ibabe I, Martínez AA, Elgorriaga E. Ambivalent sexism inventory: adaptation to Basque population and sexism as a risk factor of dating violence. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*. 2016;19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sjp.2016.80>
9. Erdem A, Şahin R. Undergraduates' attitudes toward dating violence: its relationship with sexism and narcissism. *International Journal of Higher Education*. 2017;6(6):91. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n6p91>
10. Öztürk R, Duygu METE, Altıntaş M, Pekmez MA. Sağlık bilimleri öğrencilerinin flört şiddeti tutumlarının şiddete karşı profesyonel rolleri ile ilişkisi. *Turkish Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*. 2021;15(1):142-153.
11. Terzioğlu F, Gönenç İM, Özdemir F, Güvenç G, Kök G, Sezer NY, Demirtaş Hiçyılmaz B. Flört Şiddeti Tutum Ölçeği Geçerlilik ve Güvenirlilik Çalışması. *Anadolu Hemşirelik ve Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi*. 2016;19(4):225-232.
12. Glick P, Fiske ST. The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1996;70(3):491-512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>
13. Sakallı UN. Cinsiyetçilik: Kadınlara ve erkeklere ilişkin tutumlar ve çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik kuramı. *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları*. 2003;6:1-20.
14. Duval A, Lanning BA, Patterson MS. A systematic review of dating violence risk factors among undergraduate college students. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. 2020;21(3):567-585. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018782207>
15. Aşar Baldan G, Akış N. Flört şiddeti. *Uludağ Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Dergisi*. 2017;43(1):41-44.
16. Koçak YÇ, Can HÖ. Flört şiddeti: Tanımı, sınıflaması ve değerlendirilmesi. *Türkiye Klinikleri Obstetric-Women's Health and Diseases Nursing-Special Topics*. 2019;5(3):43-53.
17. Dikmen HA, Özyıldın T, Yılmaz SD. Üniversitedeki kadın öğrencilerde yaşanan flört şiddeti ile anksiyete ve umutsuzluk düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki. *Acıbadem Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi*. 2018;(2):170-176.
18. Danış MZ, Erkoç B, Çınar EG, Usta Ş. Çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik algısına yönelik bir araştırma. *Yalova Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*. 2020;10(20):138-151.
19. Çıvgın BG. Flört şiddeti tutumunun yordayıcısı olarak çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik, bağlanma stilleri ve kişiler arası bağımlılık. *Başkent Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü*. 2022.
20. Ayral S. Flört şiddetine yönelik tutumların çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik ile şiddetin ve erkek egemenliğinin meşrulaştırılması açısından incelenmesi. *Başkent Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü*. 2021.
21. Dosil M, Jaureguizar J, Bernaras E, Sbicago JB. Teen dating violence, sexism, and resilience: A multivariate analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2020;17(8):2652.
22. Turan R, Duy B. Self-esteem, attachment, gender roles and social approval as predictors of the attitudes toward dating violence. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*. 2020;10(56):1-36.
23. Lee M, Begun S, DePrince A, Chu A. Acceptability of dating violence and expectations of relationship harm among adolescent girls exposed to intimate partner violence. *Psychological Trauma Theory Research Practice and Policy*. 2016;8(4):487-494. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000130>
24. Leaper C, Gutierrez B, Farkas T. Ambivalent sexism and reported relationship qualities in emerging adult heterosexual dating couples. *Emerging Adulthood*. 2020;10(3):776-787. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696820934687>
25. Poerwandari E, Utami C, Primasari I. Ambivalent sexism and sexual objectification of women as predictors of rape myth acceptance among male college students in Greater Jakarta. *Current Psychology*. 2019;40(12):5909-5918. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00500-w>