

## Comparing adolescent self-perceptions and anxiety levels in relation to dating violence

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### Suggested Citation:

Atlas, E. & Kisa, C. (2023). Comparing adolescent self-perceptions and anxiety levels in relation to dating violence. *Global Journal of Psychology Research: New Trends and Issues*. 13(2), 152-161. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjpr.v13i2.9234>

Received June 12, 2023; Revised August 10, 2023; Accepted September 19, 2023.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Tulay Bozkurt, Istanbul Kultur University, Turkey.

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### Abstract

The study aimed to compare the self-perceptions and anxiety levels of adolescent individuals according to dating violence. This research is a descriptive study and the relational scanning method, known as the general scanning model, was preferred. In research conducted for this purpose, studies are carried out by considering the whole universe or with a specific sample selected from the universe. Data were collected online (Facebook, Instagram, email) with the random assignment method of data tools. For this research, 104 adolescent individuals between the ages of 12-18 were included in the study. When the relationship between dating violence and gender was examined at the end of the research, it was concluded that there was no significant difference. It shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between the marital status of the parents of the adolescents participating in the study and the adolescents' relationship status. This indicated that the marital status of parents does not affect the relationship status of adolescents. Regardless of exposure to violence in childhood, adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale are the same.

**Keywords:** Adolescent; anxiety; dating; self-esteem; self-perception; violence; youth.

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## 1. Introduction

Aggressive behavior and violence, which are frequently discussed phenomena all over the world, have been areas of interest for social scientists and practitioners for a long time (Berkowitz, 1993; ). Besides violence, interpersonal violence research has traditionally focused on domestic and child abuse (Mert, 2023; Durgun, 2022). The lack of consensus on the functional definition of dating violence, which falls under the categories of violence, complicates research on dating violence. When dating violence is mentioned, it is a term that comes to mind and includes threatening communication, verbal harassment, or physical aggression. Due to uncertainty regarding the concepts included in the definition, prevalence rates vary greatly depending on the definition criteria adopted for particular studies (Lewis and Fremouw, 2001). Although dating violence research was previously defined as interpersonal violence, in recent years researchers have shown differences in the variables related to dating violence. Violence, which includes physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse, and controlling behavior of intimate partners, is a serious social and public health problem occurring in all countries in the world (Matud, 2007; Naghavi, 2019; Ortensi & Farina 2020). In most cases, it is caused by jealousy, lack of satisfaction, low self-esteem, cultural norms, drug use, depression, and low relationship maintenance (Ventura-León et al., 2023; Penado Abilleira et al., 2019).

In studies conducted by the World Health Organization, it has been revealed that in the population of 48 different countries of the world, between 10% and 69% of females have been physically attacked by an intimate partner at some point in their lives (WHO, 2002). In a similar study conducted by García-Moreno et al., (2005) by interviewing 24,000 females in 15 different regions in 10 geographically, culturally, and economically diverse countries, the results showed that although the environments vary greatly both between and within countries, the results show that female are treated by their male partners. It shows that violence is widespread and has serious consequences (García-Moreno et al., 2005).

Aggressive behavior and violence, which are frequently discussed phenomena at the global level and in our country, have long been areas of exploratory interest for social scientists and practitioners (Berkowitz, 1993; Sahnurova & Gursesli, 2020). However, interpersonal violence research has traditionally focused on domestic and child abuse (Briere & Runtz, 1988; Hotaling & Sugarmale, 1986; Campbell, & Muncer, 2022).

In research, the phenomenon of violence is defined as any behavior that causes physical and moral harm to the human body. The phenomenon of violence is generally reduced to physical intervention at various levels that occurs within the family or marriage union, which is the smallest unit of society. However, violence is a concept that is not only physical but also has different types and other types remain in the background and are not emphasized both in the official institutions and among the public (Contreras et al., 2023). It is known that sometimes violence can start even before the partners become a family, while they are still in the dating stage (Zamba et al., 2022). For this reason, it is known that violence has become commonplace even during the pre-marital dating period and is portrayed as a situation that occurs in the normal flow of life. However, violence that occurs during premarital dating is called dating violence in the literature.

Dating violence is a type of violence that occurs between partners and is defined as any behavior in the form of verbal, physical, digital, sexual, psychological, emotional, and social restriction that spouses engage in during romantic relationship periods (Fidan & Yeşil, 2018; Akcan, 2020; Gökkaya & Öztürk, 2021; Sikström & Dahl 2023). In other words, dating violence includes all kinds of abusive and aggressive verbal, psychological, economic, physical, emotional, or sexual discourses or actions, or a combination of these, to keep spouses, lovers, or partners under control during the pre-marital dating period (Durgun, 2022).

Dating violence can generally occur between individuals of all ages. However, when we look at the frequency, it is seen that dating violence is more common in young couples (Matud, 2007). In their study conducted in 2005, García-Moreno et al. concluded that females between the ages of 15 and 19 living in all countries except Japan and Ethiopia have a high risk of being exposed to physical or sexual violence by a partner. According to the World Health Organization, 1 in every 4 young female between the ages of 15-24 in a romantic relationship is subjected to violence by their partner when they reach their mid-twenties (Eslek et al., 2021).

### **1.1. Importance of Research**

The increase in cases of violence and the rate of young people in our country emphasizes the need to consider dating violence, which is common among young people, as a serious public health problem. However, existing research generally focuses on the causes of violence, relationship factors (Sahmurova, Balkaya & Alpar, 2021; Yıldırım & Terzioğlu, 2018; Çakaloz et al., 2020), and the prevalence of dating violence (Vagi et al., 2015; Karsberg et al., 2018). As well as understanding the causes of dating violence and the factors that may be associated with it, it is also important to know the consequences and effects of this problem; because dating violence can lead to negative consequences in the long or short term for individuals exposed to it. However, no research has been found in the literature on the relationship between dating violence, anxiety level, and self-perception. Therefore, it is thought that this study has the potential to fill this gap in the literature and serve as a reference for future studies. It is an important point that the findings obtained can also contribute to the development of preventive studies in this context. Since dating violence has become an important issue in recent years and has devastating physical, psychological, and economic consequences, our current research will examine its relationship with attitudes toward dating violence, self-perception, and anxiety symptoms in individuals who have and have not experienced dating violence.

### **1.2. Purpose of the research**

This study aims to examine the self-perceptions and anxiety levels of adolescent individuals who have been exposed to dating violence and those who have not been exposed to dating violence and to determine whether there are differences between their self-perceptions and anxiety levels according to socio-demographic variables.

The sub-objectives addressed in the research are listed below.

- Is there a difference between past relationship statuses of adolescents in terms of gender variables?
- Is there a difference in comparing past relationship statuses of adolescents' parents in terms of the marital status variable?
- Is there a significant difference between the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scales?
- Is there a significant difference between adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to gender?
- Is there a significant difference between adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to the variable of parents' marital status?
- Is there a significant difference in adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale regarding the variable of exposure to violence in childhood?
- Is there a significant difference in adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale depending on whether they have had a relationship in the past?

## **2. Materials and Method**

This research is a descriptive study, and the relational screening method, known as the general screening model, was preferred to examine the self-concept and anxiety levels of adolescent individuals in terms of dating violence. In the screening model, general information about a certain universe is obtained. In research conducted for this purpose, studies are carried out by considering the whole universe or with a specific sample selected from the universe. The relational scanning model, on the other hand, aims to explain whether there is a change depending on the coexistence of the variables in cases where there are two or more variables, and if there is a change, the direction and severity of the change.

The relationships defined by this model are not considered causality in the strict sense, but they do provide an idea of causality. In addition, thanks to this model, it is possible to make predictions about the status of another variable by knowing the current status of the variable. "Sociodemographic Characteristics and Data Form" was prepared by the researcher to determine sociodemographic characteristics, "Rosenberg

Self-Esteem Scale" to determine perceived violence in dating relationships; "Dating Violence Attitude Scale" was given to determine people's attitudes towards violence in dating relationships, and "Beck Anxiety Scale" was given to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms.

### 2.1. Participants

One-hundred and four (104) adolescent individuals, consisting of secondary school and high school students, participated in the research. Considering their gender, 61.5% are female and 38.5% are men.

### 2.2. Data Collection tools

The scales to be used in the research were prepared in a computer environment using the Google Form tool. Data tools are spread on the internet (Facebook, Instagram, email). Participation in the research is voluntary. Data was collected online using the random assignment method. It was planned to include adolescent individuals between the ages of 12-18 in the research. Sociodemographic Characteristics and Data Form, Dating Violence Attitude Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Beck Anxiety Scale were given to the participants, respectively. The data were collected on the Internet, and people who gave up filling out the surveys during data collection were not included in the study. In the research, an interview form prepared online was used as the data collection method.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Answers were recorded via Google Forms (<https://docs.google.com/forms>), a Web 2.0 tool. SPSS 24.0 package program was used to analyze the data.

## 3. Results

As a result of the research, the findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the data collection tools were presented and interpreted in tables. Descriptive statistical findings of the scales applied to adolescents are given in tables. In the study, firstly, the comparison of past relationship statuses of adolescents in terms of gender variable was examined.

### 3.1. Comparison of past relationship statuses of adolescents in terms of gender variable

Table 1 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in relationship status between female adolescents and male adolescents. Considering that 63% of female adolescents are not in a relationship, whereas 37% of male adolescents are in a relationship, there is a clear disparity between these two groups in terms of gender. Additionally, the finding that 80% of female adolescents are not in a relationship indicates that there is a significant difference in female's preferences for relationships compared to men. The fact that the p-value was found to be less than 0.05 as a result of the chi-square test confirms that this difference is statistically significant.

**Table 1**

*Comparison of past relationship statuses of adolescents in terms of gender variable – Chi-Square (X<sup>2</sup>) test*

Gender	Past Relationship Status				Chi-square (x <sup>2</sup> )	Asymp. Sig (p)				
	A relationship	More Than One Relationship	Didn't Have a Relationship	Total						
Female	n	17	15	32	12.8676 <sup>a</sup>	,002				
	%	63,0%	40,5%	80,0%			61,5%			
Male	n	10	22	8			12.8676 <sup>a</sup>	,002		
	%	37,0%	59,5%	20,0%					38,5%	
Total	n	27	37	40					12.8676 <sup>a</sup>	,002
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%						
					p < ,05					

Table 1 shows that 63% of the female adolescents included in the study did not have a relationship, while on the contrary, 37% of the male adolescents did. While multiple relationship statuses were balanced in terms of gender, a significant majority (80%) of female adolescents were found not to have sexual intercourse compared to men. As a result of the analysis, the fact that the p-value was found to be less than .05 as a result of the Chi-square test reveals and confirms that there is a statistical difference.

### 3.2. Comparison of past relationship statuses of adolescents' parents in terms of marital status variable

**Table 2**

*Comparison of past relationship statuses of adolescents' parents in terms of marital status variable – Chi-Square (X<sup>2</sup>) test*

Marital status	Past Relationship Status				Chi-square (x <sup>2</sup> )	Asymp. Sig (p)	
	A relationship	More Than One Relationship	Didn't Have a Relationship	Total			
Together	n	25	27	35	5.097 <sup>a</sup>	,078	
	%	92,6%	73,0%	87,5%			
divorced	n	2	10	5			
	%	7,4%	27,0%	12,5%			
	n	27	37	40			p > ,05
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%			

In Table 2, when the marital status of the parents of the adolescents included in the study was compared with the adolescents' relationship status, the p-value was found to be greater than .05 as a result of the Chi-square test, which revealed that there was no statistical difference. In other words, it can be said that adolescents' relationships are similar regardless of their gender.

### 3.3. The relationship between the scales

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale used within the scope of the research is evaluated between 0-6 points, the Beck Anxiety Scale is evaluated between 1-4 points, and the Dating Violence Attitude Scale is evaluated between 1-5 points. The mean and standard deviation values of the grand totals of the scales are given in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Mean and standard deviation values of the scales*

Scale	$\bar{X}$	SS
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	4,61	,908
Beck Anxiety Scale	2,54	,347
Dating Violence Attitude Scale	1,94	,696

When Table 3 is examined, it can be said that adolescents are at a good level of self-esteem at the beginning of the high level ( $\bar{X}$  4.61; SD=0.908) when the general average of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale is examined. When the average score of the adolescents' opinions on the Beck Anxiety Scale was examined ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.54; SD = 0.347), it was seen that it was at a moderate level. That is, the opinions of adolescents can be said to be not pleasant, but I could bear it." Finally, when the average score of the adolescents' opinions on the Dating Violence Attitude Scale was examined ( $\bar{X}$ =1.94; SD = 0.696), it was seen that they were at the disagree level. In other words, adolescents stated that they were against violence during dating.

Findings regarding the normality analysis of the scales are given in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Normality Test*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	,226	104	,000	,887	104	,000
Beck Anxiety Scale	,113	104	,002	,960	104	,003
Dating Violence Attitude Scale	,105	104	,006	,947	104	,000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As a result of the normality of the data obtained for the three scales in the study and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for distribution in subgroups (Table 4), it was understood that the data was not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ). For this reason, non-parametric tests were used to compare the scores of the variables in this research.

### 3.4. Comparison of three scales by gender

"Is there a significant difference between adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to gender?" An answer to the research question was also sought.

**Table 5**  
*Comparison of scale items according to gender variable*

Scale	Gender	N	Average of Ranks	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	female	64	56,29	3602,50	1037,500	0,087
	Male	40	46,44	1857,50		
Beck Anxiety Scale						
Dating Violence Attitude Scale	female	64	54,88	3512,00	-1,017	0,309
	Male	40	48,70	1948,00		
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale						
Beck Anxiety Scale	female	64	55,66	3562,00	-1,351	0,177
	Male	40	47,45	1898,00		

As a result of the Malen-Whitney U test, when the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale scores were compared in terms of gender, it was understood that the opinions of male and female participants were similar ( $p > 0.05$ ). In other words, it can be said that regardless of the gender of adolescents, their self-esteem, violence, and anxiety levels during the dating process are the same.

### 3.5. Comparison of three scales according to parents' marital status

"Is there a significant difference between adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to the variable of parents' marital status?" The research question was also answered in this study.

**Table 6**  
*Comparison of scale items according to parents' marital status variable*

Scale	Mother and Father's Marital status	N	Average of Ranks	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Together	87	53,78	4679,00	628,000	0,300
	Divorced	17	45,94	781,00		
Beck Anxiety Scale	Together	87	50,32	4377,50	549,500	0,095

Dating Violence Attitude Scale	Divorced	17	63,68	1082,50		
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Together	87	50,60	4402,50	574,500	0,147
	Divorced	17	62,21	1057,50		

As a result of the Malen-Whitney U test, when the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale scores were compared in terms of the marital status of the parents, it was understood that the opinions of the adolescents were similar ( $p>0.05$ ). In other words, it can be said that adolescents' views on self-esteem, violence during dating, and anxiety are the same regardless of their parents' marital status.

### 3.6. Findings Regarding Exposure to Violence in Childhood

Adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale were compared with the Kruskal Wallis H test in Table 7, according to their exposure to violence in childhood.

**Table 7**

*Comparison of adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to their exposure to violence in childhood.*

	Exposure to Violence in Childhood	N	Avg.	Sd	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Never	55	52,03			
	Rarely	32	54,70	4	4,740	,315
	Occasionally	10	61,40			
	Often	4	27,25			
	Always	3	41,67			
Dating Violence Attitude Scale	Never	55	50,28			
	Rarely	32	50,95	4	2,407	,661
	Occasionally	10	61,10			
	Often	4	67,13			
	Always	3	61,50			
Beck Anxiety Scale	Never	55	49,19			
	Rarely	32	57,63	4	1,966	,742
	Occasionally	10	49,95			
	Often	4	59,63			
	Always	3	57,50			

In Table 7, it was determined that there was no significant difference as a result of the Kruskal Wallis H test, which was conducted to examine adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to their exposure to violence in childhood [ $p>0.05$ ]. In other words, regardless of exposure to violence in childhood, adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale are the same.

### 3.7. Comparison of three scales according to whether they are related or not

Adolescents' opinions on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale were compared with the Kruskal Wallis H test in Table 8, according to whether they had a relationship in the past.

**Table 8**

*Comparison of adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to whether they have had a relationship in the past.*

	Having an Affair in the Past	N	Avg.	Sd	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	I Had an Affair	27	60,85			
	I've Had More Than One Relationship	37	48,82	2	3,171	,205
	I Didn't Have a Relationship	40	50,26			
Dating Violence Attitude Scale	I Had an Affair	27	48,06			
	I've Had More Than One Relationship	37	54,99	2	,861	,650
	I Didn't Have a Relationship	40	53,20			
Beck Anksiyete Ölçeği	I Had an Affair	27	51,54			
	I've Had More Than One Relationship	37	57,26	2	1,568	,457
	I Didn't Have a Relationship	40	48,75			

In Table 8, it was determined that there was no significant difference as a result of the Kruskal Wallis H test, which was conducted to examine adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale according to their past relationships [ $p > 0.05$ ]. In other words, regardless of whether they have had a relationship in the past, adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale are the same.

#### 4. Discussion

In the findings obtained from the research, it was concluded that there was no significant difference when the relationship between dating violence and gender was examined. This result is supported by other research. Dating violence has been a topic studied by male researchers from male disciplines. Researchers have conducted several studies addressing the prevalence of dating violence, its relationship to demographic factors, its causes, and its consequences. For example, Kaya (2019) conducted a study involving 700 females who were university students and found that 84% of the participants were exposed to sexual violence and that violence was most often committed by lovers.

It shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between the marital status of the parents of the adolescents participating in the study and the adolescents' relationship status. This indicates that the marital status of parents does not affect the relationship status of adolescents. It also supports the conclusion that adolescents' relationship situations are similar regardless of gender. This finding suggests that relationship status is independent of the marital status of adolescents' parents and that other factors affect this situation more.

Various studies show that self-esteem decreases in individuals exposed to dating violence (Akcan, 2020; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017). However, a study conducted by Şimşek and Kavas (2018) suggests that high self-esteem may play a role for both females and men among the risk factors associated with dating violence.

The literature on the relationship between attitudes associated with dating violence and self-esteem indicates that various studies point to different conclusions. Self-esteem increases as attitudes toward dating violence increase. However, other sources, such as studies by Lewis and Fremouw (2000), suggest that positive dating violence attitudes are associated with low self-esteem. Therefore, the mixed results of existing research indicate the need for further review and research on this topic.

#### 5. Conclusion



Regardless of exposure to violence in childhood, adolescents' views on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Beck Anxiety Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale are the same. This situation is quite thought-provoking. It is thought that this result may have arisen due to the low number of participants in the study. It is seen that there are different results in the literature review. It can be said that people who were subjected to violence in childhood have low self-esteem, but the explanatory power of childhood traumas as a determinant of the level of self-esteem is weak.

The sample of this study is limited to 104 people between the ages of 12-18. Research findings; It is limited to the data obtained from the Demographic Information Form, Beck Anxiety Scale, Self-Perception Scale, and Dating Violence Attitude Scale used in the research.

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