



The Relationship between High School Students' Destructive Anger Expression and Self-control Skills

Erdal Hamarta¹, Faika Şanal Karahan^{2*}, Eyüp Zorlu³ and Izzet Parmaksız⁴

¹Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Turkey.

²Karapınar Aydoğanlar Vocational School, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey.

³Department of Guidance, Ereğli Erdemir Fine Arts High School, Zonguldak, Turkey.

⁴Ministry National Education, Turkey.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author EH designed the study, wrote the protocol and supervised the work. Authors IP and EZ carried out all laboratories work and performed the statistical analysis. Author EH managed the analyses of the study. Author EZ wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author FŞK managed the literature searches and edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this study is to determine whether there is significant correlation between high school students' expressing anger destructively and their self-control skills for coping with anger.

Methodology: The participants were 502 (201 male - 301 female) students whose ages varied between 14 and 18 and who were studying at various high schools in Ereğli, Zonguldak. The mean age and standart deviation of the participants were 15.24±3.67. In the collection of research data, Self-Control Scale and Multidimensional School Anger Inventory's positive coping skills and subscales of expressing anger destructively were used.

*Corresponding author: E-mail: faikakarahan@selcuk.edu.tr;

Results: Negative significant relationships were found between self-control skills of high-school students and experiential self-control ($r = -.232, p < .01$); reformative self-control ($r = -.213, p < .01$), redressive self-control ($r = -.250, p < .01$); and positive correlations were found between reformative ($r = .270, p < .01$), and redressive self-control ($r = .437, p < .01$) and destructive expression of anger. Also, there were found that high school students' self-control skills were important predictor for expressing anger destructively and coping with anger by self-control skills.

Conclusion: Adolescents with self-control skills could express their anger more positively, and they had less negative experiences by controlling their anger. They could think consciously, questioned their experiences, and they were aware of that their behaviours had certain consequences easily controlled by themselves.

Keywords: Anger; expression; positive coping skills; self-control.

1. INTRODUCTION

The number of individuals experiencing intense stress is increasing every day in today's world. They become physiologically and psychologically unbalanced, when they are exposed to stress stimulus. People follow experiences they enjoy, and avoid they ones they don't enjoy. Whichever concept is used to define this situation, people want to maximize the positive experiences and minimize the negative ones, which is the most basic and constant law of psychology. On the other hand, human beings wouldn't be able to achieve many things without the skill of ignoring impulses. For instance, saving money, maintaining a healthy life style, solving a discussion would be useless efforts without self-control [1]. Especially young people have difficulties in controlling themselves, and managing their stress and anger [2].

Self-control can be defined as regulating thoughts, feelings, impulses, task performances, and attention related processes [3], or as mental processes that enable people invalidate their thoughts and feelings; and therefore change their behaviours constantly in a coherent manner [4]. Controlled eating, acting correctly in danger, controlling feelings during anger without conflicts, maintaining relationships can be examples of self-control [5]. People use self-control to obey the rules or restrain the desire to delay the sudden pleasure. Without self-control, individuals exhibit the normal, typical or preferred behaviours (e.g. failure in delaying pleasure or automatic reaction). Self-control includes preventing or invalidating competitive impulses, behaviours, or desires [6]. This comprehensive and constant research interest is partially resulted from the idea that inactive self-control is the main reason for a number of individual and social problems, and vice versa; active self-control is the key to success [7]. Individuals with high-level self-control react to emotional stimulus

at low levels. This means that, individuals with high self-control experience limited emotional variation even in situations when emotions need to be completely lived [8]. Low-level self-control skill is the reason for many problems in daily life. It results in generally problematic behaviours that are hard to be frequently prevented and experienced [3]. From this perspective, we can claim that individuals with low self-control encounter some problems in controlling their feelings.

On the other hand, anger is one of the emotions that everybody experience in their lives. Also, anger is a normal human emotion, but it may cause damages when it is not controlled. Anger is defined as "Aggressive reaction to inhibition, offense or threat; temper, rage, violence" in Turkish Language Association (TDK) dictionary [9]. Anger is also defined as an emotional generally unwanted state that includes many elements such as physiological and biological reactions, social and cognitive structure [10,11]. Namely, we infer from all the different anger definitions that anger is a negative destructive emotion associated with grief, worry, rage and wrath; an objective emotional state involving the relationship between psychological elements and cognitive evaluation; a cognitive disorder; and a negative emotion related to physiological changes and behavioural reactions. So, anger is one of basic emotions which is experienced when plans, desires and requirements are inhibited, and this case is perceived as injustice or a threat [12].

Anger causes aggression [13,14] and results in aggressive behaviours when it is not controlled. Anger causes serious damages and worst-case scenarios, even murder. Thus, anger and aggression are generally perceived negatively, and they can show themselves as destructive emotional and behavioural expressions in social discussions [14]. The expression of anger can

occur in many forms such as violence, self-harm, and even physical or verbal aggression [15]. Therefore, anger causes more bad than good, and so it should be managed [16]. Moreover, the fact that inappropriate expression problems are as a result of anger is among the most important issues for parents, educators, and mental health societies [17]. Thus, anger and expression anger is a basic mental health problem for school age children and adolescents [15]. Moreover, if the anger of an adolescent occurs with aggression, it follows a series of negative outcomes [18].

Anger is classified as a common basic feeling by some researchers. On the other hand, other researchers classify the anger reaction as physiological reactions, expressions and acts [19]. Moreover, other researchers suggest that anger is based on social norms, cultural perceptions and implementations even in the presence of universal physiological reactions and the assessment of anger is based on past life memories, social norms and gender roles [20-23]. From this perspective, an anger experience can be assessed as the combination of many elements in a certain cultural or social context [24].

According to Spielberger's theory, anger refers to a multi-dimensional phenomenon which consists of interiorised anger, externalised anger and anger management [25]. The anger management refers to restraining the expression of anger by thinking the stimulus, and remaining calm [26]. So, it can be said that anger may be coherent or incoherent. Coherent anger is a mechanism that is used to cope with an inhibited objective or a perceived threat. Incoherent anger results in a greater conflict, and personal unrest [25]. Besides, anger reactions are different in adolescence. As it is known, adolescence is one of the most important periods in human life because it is a transition from childhood to adulthood. The fact that psychological, mental, sexual, and social changes are experienced in adolescence causes to experience some tensions and live a stressful and intemperate period for adolescents [27]. In other words, adolescence starts with biological changes and ends with physical, mental and spiritual development [28]. Consciously, or unconsciously, parents pose a verbal or behavioural model for their children in how to cope with their anger. Additionally, adolescents receive various messages about anger from their peers, siblings, teacher, other people in the society and the media [29]. Adolescents can hide

and mask anger. During the socialization process, adolescents learn that expressing anger is not a positive behaviour. Therefore, adolescents acquire the knowledge to how to express or hide anger in the society [30].

Recent studies also suggest that anger has an important place in adolescence, and contributes to physical and psychological problems among adolescents [31]. Experiences in adolescence, along with period-specific problems may result in very intense and frequent anger. Young people who can't express themselves appropriately and can't be understood by other people may experience inconsistency, aggression, violence, even suicidal tendencies; thus, they can't cope with these feelings and experiences. Adolescents feel more intense in conflicts than they do in other periods and they are in the centre of their anger and violence tendencies. During the process to create their own identity, they face the difficulties in understanding and expressing feelings, and this situation increases anger-related problems [32]. Also, if the intensity of temper increases and becomes anger, and an adolescent can't restrain or control this feeling, he / she may experience physiological, psychological, and social problems. In that case, the awareness of the feelings is the most important condition for adolescents to cope with anger. Adolescents can only make use of the control mechanisms when they are aware of their anger in their own emotional side [10,11]. Their awareness of anger and anger expressions in a controlled way is a skill that should be acquired by adolescents for a healthy adulthood and a healthy society [31]. On the other hand, anger management for adolescents is related with their self-control skills. Acquiring coping skills and self-control skills prevent negative incidents [2]. That is, an anger expression in a non-aggressive and positive way is the healthiest way. A positive anger expression means behaving oneself and others in a respectful manner. In addition, an anger restriction, or no anger expression cause many problems.

Generally, adolescent students are prone to apply negative methods instead of positive communicative methods when conflicts exist. These individuals may be intolerant to each other's dissimilarities, and exhibit tense, angry attitudes to each other without considering the consequences. The most effective way for young people to protect themselves from many dangerous situations is to gain required awareness. At this point, self-control skills can

help adolescents in these situations. Young people who can think consciously, question their experiences, and find out the consequences of their acts don't have difficulty in controlling themselves. Young people who have self-control skills discover that they are responsible for their behaviours. By being aware of their feelings, they can control them in social difficulties [5]. The important assumption is here not to get rid of anger completely, but to acquire the anger management skills. In order to cope with anger in positive way, adolescents need to be able to control their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, and manage internal and external control. Adolescent with self-control skills are expected to control their feelings and emotions, to solve their conflicts and problems through healthy methods, to maintain anger management, to make correct decisions, to have a planned life, and to be able to say no in certain circumstances [33]. This research studies the relationships between self-control skills, and expression of anger in a destructive manner and anger-management skills.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research adopted general survey method. The research was conducted on 502 (201 male, and 301 female) students between the ages of 14 and 18, who study at different high schools in the Ereğli district of the province of Zonguldak. The participants were Self-Control Scale and positive coping skills and expressing anger destructively sub-dimensions of Multidimensional School Anger Inventory were used as data collection tools in the present research.

2.1 Self-control Scale

Self-Control Scale was developed by Rosenbaum [34], and validity and reliability studies for Turkey were conducted by Duyan, Gülden and Gelbal [1]. It is used to measure individuals self-control behaviours related repertory, and their tendencies to use this repertory when they encounter problems in their daily lives. The scale enables to estimate the use of cognitions and expressing oneself, use of problem-solving procedures (planning, defining the problem, evaluating options, guessing consequences), short-termed delay of satisfaction (such as discovering options before making decisions), and self-sufficiency perception, in order to monitor emotional and

physiological reactions such as anxiety, pain, anger, and boredom.

Sub-dimensions of self-control are considered as a personality repertory that includes 3 functions, which are redressive self-control, reformative self-control, and experiential self-control. Redressive self-control helps individuals to regulate internal reactions such as pain and emotion and cognitions. Reformative self-control enables individuals to change sudden behaviours in order to attain a greater award in the future using planning skills, problem solving skills and delaying sudden satisfaction. Experiential self-control makes individuals experience new and pleasing activities and to enjoy these [33]. The scale consists of 36 items. The participants are asked to state their opinions for the expressions in the items, by grading between +3 "completely describes me", and -3 "completely doesn't describe me". Self-Control Scale was developed as a unidimensional scale. However, three dimensions were defined for the scale as; indirect, experiential, and redressive. Therefore, the total score to be obtained from Experiential Self Control and Redressive Self-Control sub-scales ranges between -33 and +33; total score to be obtained from Reformative Self Control sub-scale ranges between -42 and +42; and total score to be obtained from the whole Self-Control Scale ranges between -108 and +108. Higher scores obtained from the scale indicate high self-control, and lower scores indicate low self-control levels [1]. First, item analysis was conducted on the scale, and item features were specified. Then, total scores for the items and the correlations were calculated. Item total score correlations range between 0.371 and 0.617 for Experiential Self-Control dimension; between 0.262 and 0.500 for Reformative Self-Control dimension; and range between 0.249 and 0.503 for Redressive Self-Control dimension. Correlation coefficients were statistically significant, and sufficient for item discrimination. Results for test-retest and internal consistency coefficients were both high, and so Self-control Scale was considered as reliable [1]. According to test-retest results, correlations values were for Experiential Self-Control dimension, 0.816; for Reformative Self-Control dimension, 0.733; for Redressive Self-Control dimension, 0.717 and for total value, 0.809. Internal consistency coefficient values were for Experiential Self-Control dimension 0,836; for Reformative Self-Control dimension, 0.758; for Redressive Self-Control dimension, 0.725 and for total value 0.809. For validation of the scale, language and construct

validity studies were conducted. According to language validation correlation coefficients and expert opinions, the translation of the scale was accepted as in agreement with the original form of the scale. As for construct validity, model-data fit values provided almost perfect fit, and therefore the scale presented construct validity. Items in the scale were accepted to measure self-control latent variable [1].

2.2 Multidimensional School Anger Inventory

Multidimensional School Anger Inventory was developed by Smith, Furlong, Douglas and Bates (2000). It was adapted to Turkish by Canbuldu [35]. Destructive Anger Expression and Positive Coping Skills sub-scales of Multidimensional School Anger Inventory (MSAI) were used in the present research. MSAI consists of 33 items, and Destructive Anger and Anger Expression Style sub-scales were 4 level Likert type scales, which are answered as 1 "Never", 2 "Sometimes", 3 "Often", and 4 "Always". Construct validity studies of the scale revealed that the scale consists of four factors, and these factors explained the 41.49% of the variance [34]. These sub-scales are called as Anger Experience, Hostility, Destructive Anger Expression, and Positive Coping Skills. In another validity study, the correlations between sub-scales and the whole scale were calculated as; .14 between Anger Experience and Hostility; .46 with Destructive Anger Expression; .30 with Positive Coping Skills; and .76 with the whole scale. The correlation between Hostility sub-scale and Destructive anger was calculated as .40; .35 with Positive Coping Skills; and .61 with the whole scale. The correlation between Destructive Anger Expression and Positive Coping Skills was calculated as .50; and was .79 with the whole scale. The correlation between Positive Coping Skills and the whole scale was calculated as .66. Criterion related validity was tested and, the correlations between MSAI and Constant Anger was calculated as .50 with Anger Experience; .25 with Hostility; .63 with Destructive Anger Expression; .20 with Positive Coping; and .58 with the whole scale. For reliability of the scale; internal consistency coefficients for the whole scale and all sub-scales and the results respectively were; .76, .85, .77, .73 and .86. Additionally, test-retest method was applied and reliability coefficients were calculated as respectively; .74, .76, .82, .62 and .85. With the data collected within the extent of the present

research; internal consistency coefficient of Destructive Anger Expression sub-scale was calculated as .80; and .70 for Positive Coping [35].

Data collected in the present research were analysed with SPSS 16. Following findings were obtained with the statistical analyses such as correlation analyses, variance analyses and regression analyses.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows that there are negative correlations between self-control skills of high-school students and destructive anger expression. The correlation between destructive anger expression and experiential self-control is weak ($r = -.232, p < .01$); the correlation between destructive anger expression and reformative self-control is weak ($r = -.213, p < .01$); the correlation between destructive anger expression and redressive self-control is at a medium level ($r = -.250, p < .01$). There are positive correlations between self-control skills and Positive coping skills. The correlation between positive coping and reformative is at a medium level ($r = .272, p < .01$); the correlation between positive coping and redressive self-control is at a medium level ($r = .437, p < .01$); the correlation between positive coping and experiential self-control doesn't exist ($r = .001$).

Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between self-control skills of high school students and destructive expression of anger ($r = .35, p < .05$). Self-control skills explain the 12% of variance in destructive expression of anger. Experiential self-control, redressive self-control, and reformative self-control were found to be the important predictor of destructive expression of anger.

Table 3 shows that there is a positive significant relationship between self-control skills of high school students and positive expression of anger ($r = .44, p < .05$). Self-control skills explain the 18% of the variance in positive expression of anger. Only redressive self-control of self-control skills is an important predictor of positive expression of anger.

4. DISCUSSION

Self-Control is a thinking skill that helps anybody learn to control his / her feelings and behaviors in order to make good decisions, while aiding in reducing impulsive actions and

Table 1. The relationship between self control skills and destructive expression of anger and positive coping

		Destructive	Positive
Experiential self control	r	-.232	.001
Reformative self control	r	-.213	.272
Redressive self control	r	-.250	.437

p<.01

Table 2. Self-control skills' prediction of destructive expression of anger

Predictors	R	R²	R²_{ch}	F	Beta	β
Invariant	.35	.12	.12	23.103**		
Experiential self control					-.113	-.231**
Reformative self control					-.044	-.129*
Redressive self control					-.060	-.165**

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

Table 3. Self-control skills' prediction of positive expression of anger

Predictors	R	R²	R²_{ch}	F	Beta	β	p
Invariant		.19	.18	39,391**			
Experiential self control					-.007	-.018	.661
Reformative self control					.008	.029	.553
Redressive self control					.117	.421	.000

dealing effectively with frustration. It puts a person in control of his / her life, behavior, and reactions. It improves his / her relationships, develops patience, and is an important tool for success and happiness. On the other hand, destructive anger expression is a situation in which the angry person wants to win at any cost. It involves behaving aggressively toward the person who is object of anger [36].

The purpose of the present research is examining whether there significant relationships between self-control skills of high school students and destructive expression of anger and positive coping skills. The literature doesn't include many researches on the relationship between anger and self-control. However, according to the findings of the relationship between competence perceptions and destructive expression of anger; there isn't a significant relationship between social competence perception and destructive expression of anger, and there are negative significant relationships between academic and emotional competence perceptions and destructive expression of anger. According to the findings of the present research, there are negative significant relationships between sub-dimension of self-control skills and destructive expression of anger. We think that the reason for this finding is that adolescents perceive anger

and anger-related aggressive behaviours as a way of self-expression and they behave this way to be accepted by their environment.

According to another finding of the relationship between competence perceptions and positive coping with anger; there are positive significant relationships between social, academic and emotional competence perception and positive coping with anger [37]. According to the findings of the present research, there are relationships between reformative and redressive dimensions of self-control and positive coping with anger. The reason for this finding may be that individuals with high redressive self-control skills can control their internal reactions, and they can develop more healthy and constructive solutions to problems creating anger with their reformative self-control skills. Due to their social environments and self-expression skills adolescent can express their anger with an appropriate way before it turns aggression. Therefore, it has been suggested that adolescents can solve the problems which they encounter with, and so they live their anger as a normal feeling without hurting themselves and others [37]. From this perspective, according to Rosenbaum [34], individuals with strong personalities use positive expression, and problem solving strategies, postpone pleasure, and use other self-management procedures.

Managing inner incidents is directly related to self-control skills, like coping with emotional and physiological reactions, planning, problem solving, decision-making, postponing sudden satisfaction, and regulating inner incidents.

5. CONCLUSION

The most effective way for young people to protect themselves from many dangerous situations is that they reach at the necessary awareness level [3]. At this point, self-control skills, and their awareness will help young people at difficult situations. Young people who can think consciously, question their experiences, know that their behaviours have certain consequences will be easily control themselves. Consequently, individuals with self-control skills can express their anger more positively, and they have less negative experiences by controlling their anger. The present research examines the relationships between self-control skills and destructive expression of anger and positive coping skills through general survey method. Further experimental studies can be conducted on the subject matter to study the efficiency of educational program.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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