Investigation of the Correlation Between Self-Esteem and Coping Strategies of Students Attending Secondary School

Esin Özer [i]
Aydın Adnan Menderes University

Hamdi Korkman [ii]
Afyon Kocatepe University

Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between self-esteem in secondary school students and coping strategies. This study was carried out with 523 participants from the 6th, 7th and 8th grades of two secondary schools in Aydın. The 292 participants were female students and 230 male students. Of the applicants, 157 are in 6th grade, 238 are in 7th grade and 127 are students in 8th grade. The Coping Scale for Adolescents (Kidcope) and the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale were used as a data collection tool. The Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation Coefficient Technique was used to evaluate the relationship between (Kidcope) CSA scores and the total Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale score. Multiple regression analysis has tested the predictive intensity of dealing with self-esteem. It has been determined, according to the results, that there is a significant and positive relationship between self-esteem and strategies for coping.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Coping Strategies, Secondary School Students.

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[i] **Esin Özer,** Assist. Prof. Dr., Departmant of Education, Aydın Adnan Menderes University, ORCID: 0000-0002-1896-7362

Correspondence: eozer@adu.edu.tr

[ii] **Hamdi Korkman**, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Social Work, Afyon Kocatepe University, ORCID: 0000-0001-6025-9696

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important developmental stages in people's lives is adolescence, which takes place between childhood and adulthood (Shullman & Ben-Artzi, 2003). Adolescence is a period in which a young individual experiences many biological, psychological, social changes and developments. Adolescents constitute an important group, especially in preventive mental health studies, since it is a transition period between childhood and adulthood in which brand-new adaptations occur (Yavuzer, 2005). Adolescence is an important critical period in the development of the individual and the transition from childhood to adulthood in which the individual becomes independent, creates new relationships, develops social skills, and learns behaviors that extend to the rest of their lives.

Self-esteem plays a very important role in adolescence period. Self-esteem is closely related to the definition of mental, mental health and life goals. The formation and development of self-esteem constitutes the adolescent and its relationship with the world around it, its competence and the quality of the activities shown (Minev, Petrova, Mineva, Petkova & Strebkova, 2018).

Self-esteem, which is defined as an individual's self-worth, belief that he is competent and equipped to achieve his goals, and is not only related to academic success but also to conditions such as life satisfaction and happiness (Taku & McDiarmid, 2015). Self-esteem is part of our personality and is a personal sensitivity that comes from our achievements in situations where we challenging life (Minev, Petrova, Mineva, Petkova & Strebkova, 2018). Individuals with high self-esteem are individuals who make every effort to be happy, healthy, productive and successful, who do not hesitate to do more challenging activities, act more determined and more determined to cope with the difficulties they encounter, and show a positive attitude towards themselves (Coleman and Hendry, 1999). High self-esteem in adolescents attracts attention with its aspect that leads to psychological well-being, better social relationships, higher academic success and decreases the occurrence of emotional problems. In addition, self-esteem is a motivating factor in adolescents' search and practices for self-realization (Petrulye, 2019).

Physical and social changes that occur during adolescence cause fluctuations in self-esteem and low self-esteem affects adolescents' susceptibility to depressive states. Low self-esteem is not only a disturbing emotion, but also plays a role in the emergence of psychopathological conditions ranging from anxiety to psychosis (Masselink, 2018). Individuals with low self-esteem are anxious, pessimistic, have a negative perspective about the future, and expect failure, attributing more worthlessness and inadequacy to themselves when they fail (Balat & Akman, 2004). Individuals with low self-esteem are individuals who are suspicious of their own abilities, sensitive to failure, and who experience intense burnout (Orth,2016). Individuals with low self-esteem have difficulties in accepting praise and criticism, give up their job at the slightest disappointment, avoid making new experiments, and are highly affected by negative peer behaviors towards themselves (Yavuzer, 2000).

Low self-esteem is considered a risk factor. When the individual does not "position" himself as valuable, he or she faces many problems such as addiction, eating disorder, unhealthy relationship problems, poor communication skills, negative thinking, failure at school and work, and inability to use coping skills effectively. Therefore, enhancing low self-esteem leads to positive results such as increasing psychological well-being and producing desired changes in human behavior (Leary, 1996).

The crucial role of self-esteem continues to attract the attention of researchers. In some studies, self-esteem was found to be associated with self-efficacy (Güler & Bedel,2018), computer addiction (Aydıner, 2017), life satisfaction (Akcan, 2018), social skill level and locus of control (Çutuk,2017), parent attitudes (Gürler,2017), hopelessness (Karataş&Çakar,2011), perceived social support (Bedel&Kutlu,2018), psychological resilience (Sarıkaya,2015), psychological well-being (Çelenk & Peker,2020), social emotional health and empathy (Petrulyte, Guogiene, and Rimiene, 2019).

The use of active coping strategy, which draws attention as a characteristic of individuals with high self-esteem, includes defining the problem, thinking about solution options, applying and evaluating, brings highly effective and functional results for the individual. It is assumed that effective coping evokes high self-esteem caused by high-quality psychological responses triggered by behavior (Bednar, 1989). The characteristics of individuals with high self-esteem, such as making every effort to be happy, healthy, productive and successful, not hesitating to do more challenging activities, and being able to cope with the difficulties they encounter more decisively (Coleman & Hendry, 1999), also in individuals with developed coping strategies. It draws attention as they are the features encountered.

Individuals are faced with problems of different nature in many areas of life, including school. Coping skills are very important for individuals to interpret these problems they encounter and to solve them successfully and effectively. Coping strategies are a dynamic process that includes individual, cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses that are used to reduce the sources of events or factors that cause stress or psychological distress and to combat their negative effects.

The coping strategy to be used draws attention with its structure that varies from situation to situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The process of choosing a coping strategy depends on the stressor itself and the person's coping with it. When individuals perceive the source of stress as controllable, they use problem-focused coping strategies to solve the problem, but when they perceive the stressful situation as uncontrollable, emotion-focused coping strategies become operational as an attempt to manage the situation (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Spirito, Stark, and Williams (1988) classified the coping strategies used by adolescents as active coping, negative coping and avoidant coping strategies.

Active coping strategy: Stands out as a constructive coping strategy. It takes a positive attitude towards the problems, it consists of defining and understanding the problem, generating solution options, deciding which solution to apply and evaluating the results.

Avoiding coping strategy: It has non-functional features in problem-solving, such as avoiding problems, not taking action to solve them.

Negative coping strategy: It includes features such as perceiving the problem as a threat, not believing that it can be solved, and blaming oneself and others (Bedel & Kutlu, 2018).

Coping strategies that secondary school students implement in case of problems they confront have an important role (Positive coping lead to better psychological and mental health status among students) among the development tasks expected to be completed in the fields of individual and social development. In schools, a broad range of planning and implementation of facilitates for the purpose of early intervention and prevention in order to support adolescents academically, personal and social development. This kind of preventive implementations is also important in terms of being included within the scope of the Ministry of General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance and Counseling Services (2017).

In this study, in secondary school students; It is aimed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies. It is thought that the results to be obtained from the study will contribute to self-esteem and coping strategies literature, as well as preventive and developmental guidance literature. Within the scope of this aim, a response to the following sub-goals wanted to search.

1) Is there a significant relationship between students' self-esteem scores and coping strategies scores?

2) Do students' self-esteem scores significantly predict coping strategies?

The results obtained in this study are expected to guide psychological counselors working in schools, to organize preventive guidance and psychological counseling programs. Planning and implementations for early intervention and prevention in schools are fundamental studies for psychological counselors.

METHOD

Research Model

This study was designed in a correlational design to reveal in the relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies. The correlational design is used to determine whether there is a relationship between two or more variables, and if so, what level it is (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The dependent variable in the research is coping strategies, independent variable is self-esteem.

Participants

This study was carried out with 523 participants from the 6th,7th and 8th grades of two secondary schools in Aydın. The demographic information of the participants is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

Gender	N	%	Grade	N	%
Male	230	44.2	6th	157	30.2
Female	292	55.8	7th	238	45.5
Total	523	100	8th	127	24.3
			Total	523	100

As seen in Table 1, the participants consist of 523 students, 230 males (44.2%) and 292 females (55.8%). In addition, when the distribution according to the classes is examined, it is seen that 157 of the participants (30.2%) are 6th grade, 238 (45.5%) are 7th grade and 127 (24.3%) are 8th grade students.

Data Collection Tools

Kidcope

The Coping Scale for Adolescents which was developed by Spirito, Starkand, and Williams (1988) and known as KIDCOPE in the international literature, was adapted into Turkish by Bedel, Işık and Hamarta (2014). Kidcope consists of 3 subscales: active coping, avoidant coping and negative coping. Internal consistency reliability coefficient of Kidcope was found as .72 for active coping, .70 for avoidant coping and .65 for negative coping. The test-retest reliability coefficient, which was evaluated three weeks apart, was found as $r = .66$ for active coping, $r = .61$ for avoidant coping, and $r = .76$ for negative coping. These results show that the Turkish form of the three-factor Kidcope is a valid and reliable measurement tool.

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale

Coopersmith's self-esteem scale was used to determine students' self-esteem levels. The scale was developed by Coopersmith (1967) and it was adapted to Turkish by Aksoy (1992) and Pişkin (1996). The scale, which consists of 25 items, consists of expressions marked in "like me" or "not like me". In order to make an evaluation over 100 points, positive statements are scored as 4 and negative statements are scored as 0 points. Positive expression items in this form of the scale; These are the 1st, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 14th, 19th and 20th items. Negative expression items are; 2., 3., 6., 7., 10., 11., 12., 13., 15., 16., 17., 18., 21., 22., 23., 24., 25. items. There is no clear limit on the scale showing low or

high self-esteem level. Therefore, 50 points is considered average and evaluation is made according to whether self-esteem is lower or higher than average. If the scores are below the average, the self-esteem is low, and the above average self-esteem is high. In the adaptation of the scale to Turkish, the reliability coefficient was calculated as .76 and the internal consistency reliability coefficient as .81 (Pişkin, 1996).

Data Collection and Analysis

The scales were applied to the students in groups, including classrooms. Relationships between CSA scores and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Scale total score were analyzed using the Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation Coefficient Technique. The predictive power of coping on self-esteem was tested by multiple regression analysis. Analyzes were made with IBM SPSS 20.0 package program.

RESULTS

Whether there is a significant relationship between coping and self-esteem was investigated using the Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation Coefficient Technique. The results for testing these relationships are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson's correlation levels regarding the relationship between coping and self-esteem

		Active Coping	Avoiding Coping	Negative Coping	CSA Total Score
Self-Esteem	**r**	.289***	-.262***	-.420***	.149***
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	523	523	523	523

*** p<.001

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there are significant and positive relationships between the variables of CSA total score (r = -. 149, p <.001) and active coping (r = .289, p <.001) and self-esteem.

On the other hand, it is observed that there is a significant and inverse relationship between avoiding coping (r = -. 262, p <.001) and negative coping (r = -. 420, p <.001) and self-esteem.

Accordingly, it is understood that as the self-esteem score increases, the total score and active coping score of CSA increase, while the avoidant coping and negative coping scores decrease.

Findings Regarding Whether Coping Predicts Self-Esteem Significantly

The power of coping to predict self-esteem was tested by multiple regression analysis and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis results regarding the power of coping to predict self-esteem

Variable	B	Standard Error	β	t	p	Binary r	Partial r
Constant	66.165	.714	-	92.619	.000	-	-
Active Coping	.528	.077	.289	6.872	.000	.289	.292
Avoiding Coping	-.858	.119	-.426	-7.209	.000	-.262	-.302
Negative Coping	-1.264	.114	-.479	-11.129	.000	-.420	-.440
CSA Total Score	.450	.072	.396	6.211	.000	.149	.264

R=.504, R^2=.254, F (3,519) = 58.559, p=.000

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the coping variable has a high level and significant relationship with self-esteem (R = 0.50, R2 = 0.25, p <.001). Accordingly, coping explains 25% of the

total variance in self-esteem. According to the standardized regression coefficient, the order of relative importance of the predictor variables on self-esteem is as follows: negative coping, avoiding coping, CSA total score, and active coping. When the t-test I results regarding the significance of the regression coefficients are examined, it is seen that negative coping, avoiding coping, active coping and CSA total score are significant predictors on self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

In the study, the relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies in secondary school students was examined and a significant relationship was found. Consistent with their search findings, there are studies in the literature showing that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies. The finding that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies obtained from the study is supported by other studies showing the significant relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies (Dolenc, 2015; Gücüyeter, 2003).

When adolescents use problem-focused coping, they deal with the problem in a more constructive way and feel better when dealing with a stressful situation. The use of an active coping strategy, which includes defining the problem, thinking about the solution options, applying and evaluating them, brings highly effective and functional results for the individual (Dolenc, 2015). Gücüyeter's (2003) study, which examined the relationship between the coping strategies used by adolescents and their self-acceptance levels. It was found that adolescents used more problem-solving and seeking social support strategies as their self-acceptance levels increased, and they used more avoidance strategies as their self-acceptance levels decreased supports the finding obtained from the study.

Findings obtained from other studies (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2007; Hasegawa, 2018) support the findings of the study. In the study conducted by D 'Zurilla and Nezu (2007), it was concluded that positive emotions increase performance in the process of problem-solving, while negative emotions suppress or inhibit problem-solving performance. Negative emotions such as negative self-evaluation and fear of dealing with the problem decrease problem-solving efficiency. Rather than seeing problems as an unsolvable situation, positive emotions felt when they are perceived as situations that can be overcome somehow facilitate the effectiveness of the problem-solving process (D 'Zurilla &Nezu,2007; Nezu, Nezu, D' Zurilla, 2007).

Negative thoughts and interpretations about himself, situations and future events may lead to a negative orientation to the problem. These negative interpretations can lead to an avoidance style that prevents him from solving the problem (Hasegawa, 2018). The findings obtained from the results of previous studies on the subject, that individuals who have deficiencies in self-esteem are individuals who have weak social problem-solving skills (Warden & Mackinnon,2003),and who have deficiency in acquiring and using effective coping strategies (Wagner, 1993) support the findings of the study. In another study (Aşıcı &Sarı,2021) the finding that coping strategies have a mediating effect on the relationship between well-being and cognitive flexibility supports the results of the study. The finding obtained from the study of Yıldırım and Demir (2017), that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and self-inhibition, is similar to the findings of the study. As students' self-esteem increase, their self-inhibiting tendency decreases.

Those with high self-esteem can cope with the situation by using their positive characteristics alternately when they perceive a threat to their self-worth, but those with low self-esteem can be more fragile and develop a defensive attitude because their repertoire of positive traits is limited (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2017). Self-esteem is also important in demonstrating positive social behavior. It was found that there was a significant and positive relationship between positive social behaviors and self-esteem level, and a significant and negative relationship with negative social behaviors (Çutuk,2017).The finding of a positive relationship between social emotional health and self-esteem obtained from the study conducted by Petrulyte, Guogiene, and Rimiene (2019) can be stated to be similar to the findings of the study. As self-esteem increases, social and emotional health of

adolescents also increases. It can be stated that the finding obtained by Moksnes (2018) in the study that there is a mutual relationship between self-esteem and mental health, and self-esteem positively predicts mental health,supports the study.

The finding obtained from another study (Çelenk&Peker,2020) that self-esteem has a full mediating effect between coping styles with stress and psychological well-being supports the findings of the study.

Self-esteem development of adolescents is important in coping with changes in daily life and the distressing situations that may arise from these changes. High self-esteem individuals exhibit a more challenging attitude towards the problem, and are able to identify and use more individual and contextual coping resources. Individuals with low self-esteem may make more negative evaluations about themselves and their sources of coping. They may have difficulties in researching and using coping resources to cope with the problematic situation (Moksnes, 2019).

SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the relationship between self-esteem and coping strategies was examined and a significant relationship was found. It is very important to intensify consultation studies for families and teachers on attitudes that will nurture self-esteem in order to reach effective and productive results. In addition, it may be advisable to draw attention to the importance of students 'participation in the teaching process and feeling successful in the classroom in terms of increasing their self-esteem, and in this direction, they may be advised to organize activities at a quality and level that will increase students' sense of success. Efforts should be made to prepare intervention programs that support students emotionally and socially and strengthen their self-esteem. Programs that increase self-esteem in school environments should be prepared, implemented and it is important to develop group activities.

Considering that children with low self-esteem may have low self-esteem in their adulthood, they may be more prone to pathological (anxiety, depression, etc.) factors and this will prevent individuals from establishing healthy and social relationships. From this point of view, the preparation and implementation of self-esteem enhancing programs for students with low self-esteem at their schools will bring long-term positive and productive results. Within the scope of preventive guidance and psychological counseling activities, intervention programs can be created for students to gain awareness of coping strategies and to make effective coping strategies work. Within the scope of these studies, activities of personal-social counseling (social problem-solving, effective communication skills, assertiveness, social problem-solving, etc.) can be included in the development of coping strategies.

In the study conducted by Gücüyeter (2003), it was found that as the level of self-acceptance of adolescents increased, they used more active coping strategies in problem situations, and they used avoidance strategy as their level of self-acceptance decreased. Psycho education programs to increase students' self-esteem can be expanded.

Adolescents who face many emotional, physiological and psychological problems may not be at a sufficient level to use coping strategies effectively. Social support from family, teacher and friends is very important in dealing with the problems experienced effectively. It is very important to involve parents and teachers in the intervention studies that aim to provide students with the skills to use coping skills effectively.

In the regulation prepared by the Ministry of National Education (2017), the importance of raising awareness by using interviews, home visits and education programs in providing guidance service to families on this issue has been emphasized again. Seminars on the subject can be organized by field experts for the school administration, staff and teachers. Individual and group counseling can be used to improve effective coping strategies and self-esteem.

LIMITATIONS

This study contains some limitations on the characteristics of the study group. These limitations should be considered while generalizing the results. This study is limited to a sample of public secondary school students in Aydın. Working with students from public and private secondary schools in different cities can be enriched. Repeating similar studies in samples other than secondary school students (primary school and high school) will contribute to the literature. It is thought that the larger the size of the sample and its repetition on larger samples will be beneficial.

The data obtained from this study are only based on students' self-expression. In new research, teachers 'and parents' observations on coping strategies and self-esteem can be included.

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