The Views of University Students on Guilt in Turkey

Sevda Aslan

University of Kırıkkale, Kırıkkale, Turkey

In this study, it is aimed to determine the views of university students on guilt. The study group consisted of 272 students at all levels studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Ahi Evran University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Karabuk University Faculty of Engineering, and Nigde University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in Spring semester 2015. There were 155 female students and 117 male students participating in the study. In order to determine the views of university students, guilt form “University Students’ Views on Guilt” was developed by the researcher. Each form consisted of 10 open-ended questions related to the students’ views about guilt. The answers given to the 10 open-ended questions were combined and gathered under common headers. This is a descriptive study. The results of this study find that the opinions of university students on guilt include criminal actions in learned, especially from family, friends, and so on, and aggressive thoughts due to family insufficient, the characteristics nurtured by which can be easily hurt.

Keywords: university students, guilt, student views

Introduction

Infants are not good or bad. They are simply beings that are in interaction with their environment and undergoing constant growth. It is their experiences that make them good or bad. Crime, on the one hand, refers to the act that takes place in the public sphere and violates certain rules or laws, and as a result, is met with legitimate punishment and the intervention of the public authorities. Crime, on the other hand, is a social problem (Öztürk Çopur, Ulutaşdemir, & Balsak, 2015). Criminality results from a conflict that pits the individual against other members of the society. Factors that lead adolescents to crime can be divided into two main categories: Individual factors and environmental factors. Individual factors explain only a small proportion of the crimes committed by adolescents. The major environmental factors that lead adolescents to crime are family, school, workplace, city, and peers (Gültekin Akduman, Akduman, & Cantürk, 2007). Guilt is the result of the interaction between the individual and her/his environment. To eliminate feelings of guilt, its causes should first be removed (Küçük & Acet, 2002). Moreover, it is known that, during adolescence period, some personality structures are challenged more compared with the other periods, which gives rise to the disintegration of personality structures that is difficult to recover. The cases of committing crimes or suicide, and the bouts of mental illnesses are often observed during this period, and they are considered as unhealthy ways to cope with internal and external strains caused by unhealthy and insecure personality structures (Kılıçcı, 2000).

Literature Review

In a review of studies conducted on guilt, Köksal and Gençdoğan (2007) found that there were no significant differences between university students with and without depression in terms of feelings of guilt and shame. The authors found that concepts of guilt and shame were related. They also found that girls experienced feelings of guilt and shame more frequently than boys. In a survey of university students, Erden and Akbaş (2015) found that an increased sense of guilt was associated with higher levels of compatability and responsibility. They found that the personality trait of compatability was a positive predictor of feelings of guilt for both sexes, but the personality trait of responsibility was a predictor of feelings of guilt only among men. Emir Öksüz and Bilge (2014) found that levels of feelings of guilt and shame among university students were not significant predictors of suicidal tendencies. Sankır (2014) found that high self-esteem among 11th grade high school students inhibited deviant and criminal behavior, whereas low self-esteem accelerated and facilitated engaging in deviant or criminal behavior. Aslan (2015) found that the most positive perception of the relationship between parents and high school students who are crime-prone and pushed to commit crimes is that families trust these students in their drive to make the most suitable decision, develop the most appropriate concept and the most proper behaviour about themselves among other choices, and therefore select the most appropriate motive. The other perception is that, when families are concerned about their academic success and when these students are far away from home, families believe these students make the appropriate move.

From another perspective, Karasu (2008) found that more crimes are committed in highly urbanized and economically developed cities that have a high share of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and high population densities and net migration. Ayar and Öztürk (2015) found that master's theses in Turkey identified urbanization and socio-economic factors as the causes of juvenile delinquency, and Ph.D. dissertations identified social circumstances, cases of child abuse, and school-related factors amongst the causes. Sıgır, Tabak, and Sağır (2010) found that the dominant feeling among women was shame, whereas the dominant feeling among men was guilt. Özen and Sümer (2013), in their study on married couples, identified three dimensions of expressing guilt: apology/compromise, denial, and explanation. In conclusion, crime is one of the biggest obstacles to social development. In this light, this study aims to identify the opinions of university students on guilt.

Method

The studies aiming to define a situation, which already exists or existed in the past, are studies designed according to scanning model (Karasar, 2003). In this study, an existing situation was analysed since the study aimed to determine the views of university students on guilt. Therefore, this study is a patterned research designed according to scanning model.

Participants

In this study, it is aimed to determine the views of university students on guilt. The study group consisted of 272 students at all levels studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Ahi Evran University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Karabük University Faculty of Engineering, and Nigde University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in Spring semester 2015. The number of female students participating in the study was 155 (56.99%) and the number of male students participating in the study was 117 (43.01%).

Research Instrurment

The guilt form “University Students’ Views on Guilt” was developed in order to determine the views of university students on guilt. Each form consisted of 10 open-ended questions to determine their views about guilt.

The Analysis of the Data

The answers given to the 10 open-ended questions in the form were combined and gathered under common headers. Frequencies and percentages were calculated.

Results

Results on University Students’ Perception of Guilt

In this section, you can see the frequency (*n*) and percentage (%) distributions according to the answers given to the items in the “University Students’ Views on Guilt.”

Table 1

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on the Characteristics to Facilitate the Emergence of Guilt Behavior Features

Opinions	Frequency (<i>n</i>)	Percentage (%)
Social class conflict	70	25.74
High unemployment rate	64	23.53
Migration from the village to the city	55	20.22
Poverty	48	17.65
Belong to subcultures	35	12.86

As seen in Table 1, 25.74% of the students mentioned “social class conflict” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 12.86% of the students mentioned “belong to subcultures” as the least important characteristics.

Table 2

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on the Characteristics to Complicate the Processing of Crime

Opinions	Frequency (<i>n</i>)	Percentage (%)
Security cameras	104	38.24
Preventive patrol services	77	28.31
Private security staff and systems	63	23.16
Physical environment regulations	28	10.29

As seen in Table 2, 38.24% of the students mentioned “security cameras” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 10.29% of the students mentioned “physical environment regulations” as the least important characteristics.

As seen in Table 3, 59.19% of the students mentioned “criminal actions in learned, especially from family , friends, and so on” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 40.81% of the students mentioned “criminal behavior learned in relationships with other individuals in the interaction process” as the least important characteristics.

Table 3

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on the Process to an Individual's Criminal Behavior

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Criminal actions in learned, especially from family, friends, and so on.	161	59.19
Criminal behavior learned in relationships with other individuals in the interaction process.	111	40.81

Table 4

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on Self-Harm Behavior Showing Youths of Family Features

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Family insufficient, the characteristics nurtured by which can be easily hurt.	136	50
Having conflicted marital relationships.	136	50

As seen in Table 4, 50% of the students mentioned “family insufficient, the characteristics of which can be easily hurt” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 50% of the students mentioned “having conflicted marital relationships” as the least important characteristics.

Table 5

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on Overcoming Feelings of Guilt

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Build positive relationships with others.	98	36.03
To understand the feelings of empathy towards making.	88	32.35
Strives to eliminate the negative status.	86	31.62

As seen in Table 5, 36.03% of the students mentioned “build positive relationships with others” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 31.62% of the students mentioned “strives to eliminate the negative status” as the least important characteristics.

Table 6

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on Relation Between Education Level and Crime Behavior

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Train to influence the behavior of individuals and relationships.	92	33.82
Create humane and rational solution to the problems of education.	90	33.09
To create awareness in people's education.	90	33.09

As seen in Table 6, 33.82% of the students mentioned “train to influence the behavior of individuals and relationships” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 33.09% of the students mentioned “to create awareness in people's education” as the least important characteristics.

As seen in Table 7, 34.93% of the students mentioned “the low education level of the parents” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 17.28% of the students mentioned “divorce of parents” as the least important characteristics.

As seen in Table 8, 37.87% of the students mentioned “to eliminate the factors driving the trends in the crime of child” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 6.98% of the students mentioned “criminals and modify child support” as the least important characteristics.

Table 7

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on the Reason to the Criminal Behavior of Individuals

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
The low education level of the parents	95	34.93
Poverty	66	24.26
Parental unemployment	64	23.53
Divorce of parents	47	17.28

Table 8

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on Criminals Children's Reintegration

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
To eliminate the factors driving the trends in the crime of child	103	37.87
To help society adapt to changing conditions	81	29.78
To guarantee the rights of the child	69	25.37
Criminals and modify child support	19	6.98

Table 9

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on Parental Attitudes in the Emergence of Guilt Feelings in Children

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Repressive attitude of parents	100	36.76
The punitive attitude of parents	68	25
The admonishment attitude of parents	67	24.63
Extremely intimidating attitude of the parents	37	13.61

As seen in Table 9, 36.76% of the students mentioned "repressive attitude of parents" as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 13.61% of the students mentioned "extremely intimidating attitude of the parents" as the least important characteristics.

Table 10

Distribution of Frequencies (n) and Percentages (%) of Student Opinions on Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

Opinions	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Aggressive thoughts	141	51.84
Emotional arousal	131	48.16

As seen in Table 10, 51.84% of the students mentioned "aggressive thoughts" as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 48.16% of the students mentioned "emotional arousal" as the least important characteristics.

Discussion

Reasons for resorting to guilt as listed according to the opinions of university students are as follows, according to priority: criminal actions in learned, especially from family, friends, and so on (161); aggressive thoughts (141); family insufficient, the characteristics nurtured by which can be easily hurt (136); security cameras (104); to eliminate the factors driving the trends in the crime of child (103); repressive attitude of parents (100); build positive relationships with others (98); the low education level of the parents (95); train to

influence the behavior of individuals and relationships (92); and social class conflict (70). In the development and socialization of the individual, factors, such as structural characteristics of the family in which they were born and raised, whether the family performs its functions, and intra-family conflict, can all play a role in leading individuals to crime. The socioeconomic conditions of the family, social environment, and individual, genetic, and psychological factors also have an indirect effect on crime. A review of the literature shows that many children who commit crimes coming from broken homes, due to reasons, such as death, divorce or abandonment, having many siblings—with an average number of five children in the family, or were separated from their families while growing up. Children who commit crimes usually have other people in their families or in their immediate social environment who were involved in crime. One of the most important factors leading children to commit crimes is being the victim of intra-family violence, negligence, or abuse. It is also argued that children with parents who have low levels of education are more at risk of getting involved in crime. Poor communication among parents or between parents and children is also a factor leading children to commit crimes (Acar, Demir, Görmez, & Keser, 2015). The findings of this study are parallel with those of Acar et al. (2015) and Gültekin Akduman, Akduman, and Cantürk (2007).

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, family plays an important role in preventing criminal behavior in childhood. Aggression in family and among friends may encourage crime. Positive relationships should be established to prevent criminal tendencies, parents should be better educated to eliminate abusive behavior, and steps should be taken to avoid conflict between the individual and the society, improve children's social integration, and help social development. In light of these findings, the following recommendations are made: Families should be provided crime prevention guidance that fits their biological, psychological, and social characteristics. In addition, efforts should be made to raise awareness among children concerning the concept of crime.

References

- Acar, G., Demir, A., Görmez, D., & Keser, I. (2015). Aile ve çocuk suçluluğu ilişkisi (Family and juvenile delinquency relationship). *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi* (Hacettepe University Faculty of Health Sciences Journal), 1(12), 651-656.
- Aslan, S. (2015). Suça eğilimi olan lise öğrencilerinin ailelerine ilişkin algıları (The perceptions of tendency to crime's high school students regarding their family). *Erzincan Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* (Erzincan University Journal of the Faculty of Education), 17(1), 282-294.
- Ayar, D., & Öztürk, C. (2015). Türkiye'de lisansüstü çalışmalarda çocuk suçluluğu (Juvenile delinquency in post graduate studies in Turkey). *The Journal of Pediatric Research*, 2, 17-20.
- Emir Öksüz, E., & Bilge, F. (2014). Üniversite öğrencilerinin intihar olasılıklarının incelenmesi (Examining the suicide probabaility among university students). *Eğitim ve Bilim* (Education and Science), 39(171), 407-420.
- Erden, S., & Akbağ, M. (2015). How do personality traits effect shame and guilt? An evaluation of the Turkish culture. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 58, 113-132. Retrieved May 5, 2015, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2015.58.4>
- Gültekin Akduman, G., Akduman, B., & Cantürk, G. (2007). Ergen suçluluğunda bazı kişisel ve ailesel özelliklerin incelenmesi (Investigation of the some personal and familial characteristics of juvenile delinquency). *Türk Pediatri Arşivi* (Turkish Archives of Pediatrics), 42, 156-161.
- Karasar, N. (2003). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemi-kavramlar, ilkeler, teknikler* (12. Baskı.) (Scientific research method-concepts, principles, technique [12th ed.]). Ankara: Nobel.
- Karasu, M. A. (2008). Türkiye'de kentleşme dinamiklerinin suça etkisi (The effect of Turkey's urbanization dynamics on crime). *Ankara Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi* (Ankara University Journal of Law Faculty), 57(4), 255-281.
- Kılıççı, Y. (2000). *Okulda ruh sağlığı* (Mental health in school). Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

- Köksal, F., & Gençdoğan, B. (2007). Depresif olanlar ile olmayanların suçluluk, utanç ve öfke tarzlarının incelenmesi (Depressive and non-depressive ones, examining their guilt, shame, and anger). *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* (Journal of Graduate School of Social Sciences), 9(1), 163-175.
- Küçük, V., & Acet, M. (2002). Bir kişilik özelliği olarak suçluluk ve sporla ilişkisi (Guilt and sports relations as a personality trait). *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* (Dumlupınar University Social Science Journal), 7, 369-375.
- Özen, A., & Sümer, N. (2013). Evlilikte kızgınlık, üzüntü ve suçluluk duygularının ifade biçimlerinin ölçümü (Marriage anger, sadness, and measuring the expression of guilt). *Türk Psikoloji Yazıları* (Turkish Psychological Articles), 16(31), 36-55.
- Öztürk Çopur, E., Ulutaşdemir, N., & Balsak, H. (2015). Çocuk ve suç (Child and guilt). *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi* (Hacettepe University Faculty of Health Sciences Journal), 1(2), 120-124.
- Sankır, H. (2014). Gençlerin sapmış ve suçlu davranışlara yönelmelerinde benlik saygısının etkisi: Lise 11.sınıf örneği (Influence of self esteem on youths who tend to involve deliquent and deviant behaviors: Case study among 11th grade students). *Turkish Studies International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 9(2), 1311-1333.
- Sığı, Ü., Tabak, A., & Sağır, A. (2010). Çalışanlarda suçluluk ve utanç duygusunun cinsiyet-yaş durumuna göre mukayesesi ve örgütlerde utanç yönetiminin kullanılması (A comparison of guilt and shame emotions of workers in terms of gender-age differences and "shame management" in organizations). *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi* (Cumhuriyet University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences), 11(1), 71-85.