

SUMMARY

Akoğuz G. The Prevalence of Asperger Syndrome among High School Students in Aydın and Theory Of Mind in Asperger Syndrome

As a neurodevelopmental disorder, Asperger Syndrome can interfere with different diagnoses in adolescents and adults, so this diagnosis might be ignored most of the time. Because of this, information about the prevalence of this disorder is limited. In this disorder, social interaction and verbal/nonverbal communication areas can be problematic. Empathy is also one of these areas. In studies, it has been found that people with autistic traits have less empathy skills. Theory of mind is a part of empathy system and it allows understanding mental states and the relationships among mental states. In this context, it has been considered that people with autistic traits have difficulties in theory of mind development. Even though there are studies about these topics in other countries, it was seen that there is very few studies in Turkey. So this study can be important for Turkey's literature. In this study, the aim was to investigate the prevalence of Asperger Syndrome among high school students and examining theory of mind in Asperger Syndrome. The participants were 9th, 10th and 11th grade students in the high schools in Aydın. They were totally 525 students and their ages ranged from 14 to 18 years. The instruments were Autism Spectrum Quotient, Empathy Quotient and Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test. As a result of this study, the prevalence of Asperger Syndrome has been found as 0,8% for high school students when other studies' cut-point was used for the reason that there is no cut off point for Turkish sample. Additionally, it has been found that people with more autistic traits had less empathy and theory of mind skills. Furthermore, it has been found that people with less empathy skills had less theory of mind skills. In the study, it has been concluded that males rather than females had autistic traits and females rather than males had empathy skills.

Keywords: adolescent, asperger syndrome, empathy, theory of mind, autism spectrum quotient, empathy quotient, reading the mind in the eyes test