

# Communication Problems Affecting the Lives of High-School 12<sup>th</sup>-Grade Students<sup>1</sup>

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In this study, it is aimed to reveal the communication problems faced by high school 12th grade students in their lives. Semi-structured interview model, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. Interview form was used as data collection tool in the study. The study group of the research consists of 24 high school students in Pendik district of Istanbul province. The data obtained from the interviews have been analyzed using the method of descriptive analysis. The findings obtained in the research are given below: 1- The communication problems that high school 12th grade students face with their families are mostly not to understand and to make pressure. 2- High school 12th grade students' communication problems with their friends are mostly insecurity, selfishness, gossip and slang speeches. 3- The communication problems that high school 12th grade students encounter with their teachers are mostly misunderstanding and humiliating behavior. 4- Communication problems that high school 12th grade students encounter in social life are mostly rude behaviors and intolerance. 5- According to high school 12th grade students, effective communication should be most within the framework of understanding, listening and respect for each other.

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a concept that applies to humans and to all other living beings. It is one of the most important activities necessary for every living thing to exist and survive. Living beings therefore have to communicate for the continuation of their existence. However, unlike other living things, human beings have developed communication by using and speaking their mind, their abilities and their creativity. Communication is a phenomenon inherent in human nature and has a special importance for human life. In this context, it can be said that the most important feature which distinguishes humans from other living things is that although other living things can develop an intensive and meaningful communication in their own way, only people have the ability to empathize and mutually understand each other (Dökmen, 2008; Gönenç, 2007). Communication is deeply involved in people's lives from birth to death. Communication, with its messenger and instructive feature, is effective and extremely important in influencing people's intellectual reactions and attitudes (Gönenç, 2007) because people cannot think, decide or engage in any activity without communication (Erdoğan, 2011).

People's encounter with communication, which is the main determinant of life and development as a social being, begins in the womb and continues to gain more importance after birth (Demiray, 2008). Basically, it requires a very difficult effort for people to understand the shaping created on themselves at the age they were born and raised as infants because man's relationship with nature and everything else is constantly changing form. Here, it is the phenomenon of communication and the nature of communication tools which constantly shape the functioning of these relationships. Beyond relationships, what shapes people's thoughts is the structure of communication (Aydoğan, 2013). In this context, communication can be defined as the process of transferring information or meaning (MEGEP, 2011). In other words, information exchange is the most important phenomenon in life and this is what we call communication.

This indispensable element of human life has emerged and developed with the existence of people throughout an historical process and has always attracted attention at the interpersonal and social level. It can be said that communication has turned into an historical, cultural, political, economic and social power with the influence of factors such as the scientific, technological, knowledge, supply and value understanding experienced by humankind over time. Communication processes and the accompanying technologies have

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varied from a primitive society to an agricultural society and then from an industrial society to a consumer society and have shown continuous development and transformation, and communication methods have evolved from hand signals to verbal communication to writing, from printing to telegraphy, from television to smart tools, and the power of management has evolved from tribal and clan to empires, from nation states to global organizations (Taşçıoğlu, 2020). Today, communication has become a form of power through information transmission and is increasing in importance. For this reason, the current age is called 'the age of communication' and 'the age of information' because it is possible to transmit information which exists as a value only through communication (MEGEP, 2011). However, communication should be considered not only as the sending and receiving of messages, but also as a process of mutual interaction which is also affected by many social, cultural, mental and emotional factors (Aytekin, 2018).

Human beings need to live collectively and this makes it necessary to establish relationships with other people and with nature. For this reason, every individual who wants to maintain and make sense of his/her life has to establish a relationship with nature and other people. The only way to realize this relationship is through communication (MEGEP, 2011). It can be said that the reasons for people to communicate are to explain themselves, to understand others, to be together with other people and to influence them; that is, to socialize. Communication includes the sharing of feelings and meanings such as being able to explain ourselves to others, to understand them, to make ourselves loved and to love them, and is the most basic phenomenon necessary for living individually or collectively successfully in everyday life. As social beings, humans realize themselves by influencing and being influenced by other people at every moment of daily life through the ability to communicate. It can be said that it is impossible to continue daily and social life without communication. So communication is a process which has its own rules and individual and social peace can be found when these rules are followed (Doğan, 2017).

Human communication is not just words. If that were the case, human communication problems would be very limited. Today, despite the radio, television and telephone which transmit the human voice all over the world and instantly, the concept of the lack of communication caused by disconnection and technological problems are frequently encountered (Thompson, 1994). Without communication, there can be no thinking, nothing can be explained and relationships cannot be established (Erdoğan, 2011), so it is obvious that communication is not an option for humans such as individual taste and life choices, but a necessity (Erdoğan, 2011).

People may not always understand each other correctly, even if they want to. If communication is not used correctly and effectively in interpersonal relationships, there is failure, loss of empathy, conflict and obstacles. This negativity can happen in every dimension of an individual's life such as family, school, work, street and the wider environment (Erdoğan, 2011; Ünlü, 2008; Yavaşgel, 2017). The main reason why people often experience communicative conflicts is the belief that other people will only understand what they say through their own thoughts. This notion should be abandoned. A key way to minimize communicative problems is to have harmony between the things which people say and their body language, and this can create a sense of trust between people (Thompson, 1994). In addition, during interpersonal relationships, other than our conversations, intentional and involuntary behaviour, such as gaze, sighing, gestures involving hand and arm movements, anger, resentment, even silence, and other non-verbal expressions are all disguised forms of communication. It is therefore important to be able to hear what is not said, and not simply what is said. It is necessary to be able to read and hear between words effectively, to feel the emotions accompanying the ideas rather than the content of the ideas, and to interpret unclear messages accurately (Aytekin, 2018). In essence, effective communication requires these skills in all communication processes.

Today, it can be seen that the social media have mostly replaced face-to-face communication and that this new form of communication is causing serious communication problems. This is also the case in Turkey. When people have problems with each other or misunderstand each other, they often state that the main source of this situation is the Turkish language, that Turkish is a flexible language and that it can easily be converted to any meaning. However, language is not the source of the lack of communication, it is the people who use and interpret language who cause this problem (Karataş, 2008). Communication problems can therefore be considered as one of the most important problems faced by people today. Nevertheless, this problem is a natural condition for human beings who must live as social beings because people living in society inevitably encounter interpersonal problems while communicating and socializing.

In this study, the communication problems experienced by high-school students in adolescence are discussed. When the previous literature on this issue is examined, it can be seen that the communication problems experienced by high-school students have been examined within a wide range of variables. Akin (2018) studied Vocational High-School students and found that group work increased their communication skills. Demir (2016) found that in high-school students at different grade levels, their intensive use of social media was related to the level of communication within the family. Bedel and Küçükköse (2014) studied Vocational High-School and Anatolian High-School students and identified the factors which affected adolescents' stress levels as their tendency to approach problems negatively, not to trust themselves and not to be able to solve constructive problems. Gers (2012) studied pupils at Imam Hatip High School, General High School, Girls Vocational High School, Anatolian High School and Industrial Vocational High School and found that the general communication skills of adolescents studying in the 12th grade were relatively low compared with those of adolescents studying in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades. Erözkan (2009) studied pupils in different high schools and found that gender, age, grade level and socio-economic level did not have predictive characteristics on interpersonal relationship types. Türnüklü (2007) found that students mostly emphasized verbal violence, negative emotions, personality traits and intellectual conflicts in their communications whereas teachers and administrators emphasized the family factor.

In this study, it was aimed to reveal what communication problems they faced in their lives compared to high school 12th grade students. Within the scope of this main purpose, in the research sought answers to the following questions:

- 1- What are the problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their families?
- 2- What are the problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their friends?
- 3- What are the problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their teachers?
- 4- What are the communication problems faced by high school 12th grade students in social life?
- 5- According to high school 12th grade students, how should effective communication be?

It is considered that the results of this study will contribute to raising awareness among parents, teachers and school administrators within the scope of revealing the communication problems experienced by high school students and producing solutions and to the knowledge in the literature and to the people who will produce policies related to the subject.

## **METHOD**

In the study, a semi-structured interview model, one of the qualitative research methods, was applied. Semi-structured interviews provide answers to pre-prepared interview questions. In addition, it allows to reach detail on the subject examined (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2019). The study group of the research consists of 24 high school students studying at a private Anatolian High School in Pendik district of Istanbul in the 2020-2021 academic year fall term. Of the students who participated in the interviews, 8 were male and 16 were female. The ages of the students are between 16-18. Semi-structured interview form was used as data collection tool in the research. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed by descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis that includes summarizing and interpreting the data obtained by various techniques according to predetermined themes (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008).

**FINDINGS**

**1. What are the problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their families?**

**Table 1.** Problems High School 12th Grade Students Face in Their Communication with Their Families

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
Problems encountered in communication with their families	Incomprehension (S3,S5,S6,S10,S14,S17,S18,S19,S21)	9	36
	Pressuring (S1,S7,S8,S9,S22)	5	20
	Not listening (S10,S11,S12,S19)	4	16
	Discussing (S13,S15,S20,S21)	4	16
	Interfering (S4,S15,S16)	3	12
	Not having problems (S2,S23,S24)	3	12
	Not caring (S11)	1	4
	Judging (S12)	1	4
	Not talking (S22)	1	4

According to Table 1, it is seen that the problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their families are mostly incomprehension (36%). Other problems are pressuring (20%), not listening (16%), discussing (16%), interfering (12%), not having problems (12%), not caring (4%), judging (4%) and not talking (4%).

One-to-one excerpts from students' opinions are presented below:

(S4): "It bothers me that my father's wishes are always fulfilled."

(S5): "I resent them belittling some of my problems."

(S11): "Indifference. When I try to communicate with my family, I see that they do not listen to me, they turn to technological tools."

(S15): "They get too involved with me, so we argue all the time."

(S22): "We can't talk, they're always pushing for lessons."

**2. What are the problems faced by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their friends?**

**Table 2.** Problems Encountered by High School 12th Grade Students in Their Communication with Their Friends

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
Problems encountered in communicating with friends	Insecurity (S15,S16,S18,S20)	4	16
	Selfishness (S6,S14)	2	8
	Gossip (S12,S18)	2	8
	Slang speeches (S13,S23)	2	8
	Prejudice (S3)	1	4
	Indifference (S5)	1	4
	Misunderstanding (S11)	1	4
	Ingratitude (S14)	1	4
	Disliking friends (S7)	1	4
	Not having problems (S1,S2,S4,S8,S9,S10,S17,S19,S21,S22,S24)	11	44

According to Table 2, almost half of high school 12th grade students stated that they did not have problems in their communication with their friends (44%). The problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their friends are listed as insecurity (16%), selfishness (8%), gossip (8%), slang

speeches (8%), prejudice (4%), indifference (4%), misunderstanding (4%), ingratitude (4%) and disliking friends (4%).

One-to-one excerpts from students' opinions are presented below:

(S2): "I do not encounter problems. We solve the issues we are wrong by talking."

(S3): "Since I have a slightly serious attitude towards the environment, they may be biased against me and this causes me to have difficulty in establishing a friendship."

(S11): "Misunderstandings. Sometimes my friends and I use the wrong words and phrases when expressing ourselves."

(S14): "Sometimes I think my friends are selfish and ungrateful."

(S18): "I get upset when I hear what I tell a friend I worry about from others. The stories must remain there, not spread."

### 3. What are the problems faced by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their teachers?

**Table 3.** Problems High School 12th Grade Students Face in Their Communication with Their Teachers

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
Problems encountered in communication with teachers	Misunderstanding (S4,S17,S21)	3	12
	Humiliating behavior (S12,S14,S16)	3	12
	Tension (S5,S21)	2	8
	Not being taken seriously (S13,S22)	2	8
	Not being listened to (S10)	1	4
	Not being able to express themselves (S1)	1	4
	Not having problems (S2,S3,S6,S7,S8,S9,S11, S15,S18,S19,S20,S23,S24)	13	52

According to Table 3, more than half of high school 12th grade students do not have problems in their communication with their teachers (52%). The problems encountered by high school 12th grade students in their communication with their teachers are listed as misunderstanding (12%), humiliating behavior (12%), tension (8%), not being taken seriously (8%), not being listened to (4%), not being able to express themselves (4%).

One-to-one excerpts from students' opinions are presented below:

(S1): "I can't properly express what I can't do."

(S13): "I get sad when they don't take me seriously."

(S14): "Some teachers' egos bother me."

(S17): "Sometimes they misunderstand what I say or do."

(S22): "When I ask something, they answer sloppily."

#### 4. What are the communication problems faced by high school 12th grade students in social life?

**Table 4.** Communication Problems High School 12th Grade Students Face in Social Life

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
Communication problems encountered in social life	Rude behaviors (S5,S15,S16,S19,S20)	5	20
	Intolerance (S11,S15,S21,S24)	4	16
	Abusive talk (S5,S13,S20)	3	12
	Misunderstanding (S8,S9,S17)	3	12
	Hesitation when talking to strangers (S2,S23)	2	8
	Lying (S6,S22)	2	8
	Idle talk (S12)	1	4
	Materialism (S14)	1	4
	Insincerity (S18)	1	4
	Inability to express oneself (S1)	1	4
Not having problems (S3,S4,S7,S10)	4	16	

According to Table 4, 12th grade high school students (16%) stated that they did not have communication problems in social life. On the other hand, it is seen that the communication problems faced by high school 12th grade students in social life are mostly rude behaviors (20%). Other problems are intolerance (16%), abusive talk (12%), misunderstanding (12%), hesitation when talking to strangers (8%), lying (8%), idle talk (4%), materialism (4%), insincerity (4%) and inability to express oneself (4%).

One-to-one excerpts from students' opinions are presented below:

(S2): "Sometimes I hesitate when talking to someone I am not very close to or know."

(S11): "People are always busy, everyone is in a rush. No one tolerates or listens to anyone."

(S16): "I don't like rude behavior. There are people who don't behave properly even when they're waiting in line somewhere."

(S18): "Insincere artificial behaviors seem strange and funny to me."

(S22): "People lying and denying it."

#### 5. What are the views of high school 12th grade students on effective communication?

**Table 5.** High School 12th Grade Students' Opinions on Effective Communication

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
Opinions on effective communication	Should listen and understand each other (S3,S5,S9,S11,S14,S15,S16,S18,S19,S20,S22,S23,S24)	13	52
	Being respectful (S2,S5,S6,S9,S13,S15,S20,S21,S23)	9	36
	Respectful language (S8,S10,S11)	3	12
	Face-to-face (S1,S7)	2	8
	Empathizing (S3,S21)	2	8
	Not judging (S3,S21)	2	8
	Having a proper diction (S8,S17)	2	8
	Meeting at a common point (S4)	1	4
	Keeping eye contact intact (S10)	1	4
	Having less conversation (S12)	1	4
	Not interrupting when speaking to the other person (S15)	1	4
	Having a certain level of humor (S6)	1	4

According to Table 5, the opinions of high school 12th grade students about effective communication are that should listen and understand each other the most (52%). Other views include being respectful (36%), using respectful language when speaking (12%), communicating face-to-face (8%), empathizing (8%), not judging

(8%), having a proper diction (8%), meeting at a common point (4%), keeping eye contact intact (4%), having less conversation (4%), not interrupting when speaking to the other person (4%), and having a certain level of humor (4%).

One-to-one excerpts from students' opinions are presented below:

(S1): *"In my opinion, effective communication should be face-to-face."*

(S8): *"It is necessary to communicate with a level language and proper diction."*

(S10): *"We must communicate gently, speaking, without disturbing eye contact."*

(S15): *"By listening to each other respectfully, we can communicate effectively without interrupting each other."*

(S24): *"Effective communication occurs by listening to each other patiently."*

## **RESULT, DISCUSSION and SUGGESTIONS**

The aim of the current study was to determine the communication problems encountered by high-school, 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students in their everyday lives. The respondents reported that communication problems with their families were the most prominent problems, such their parents as not understanding them and putting pressure on them. This situation can be seen as caused by the fact that their age and the characteristics of the teenage developmental period prevent them from getting the necessary support from their families simply because of the difficulties caused by this developmental period. These results support those of Şahin and Aral (2012) who found that, based on the importance of communication within the family in order for children to have healthy development, the factors which negatively affected communication in the family were not accepting children as individuals, generational conflicts, not understanding each other, not being able to speak comfortably to one another and having feelings and thoughts which were not clearly expressed.

Another finding of the current study was that the communication problems encountered by the participants with their friends were mostly involved with insecurity, selfishness, gossip and slang words. However, Avcı (2006) found that adolescents who wanted to move away from the locus of control of their families wanted to spend more time with their friends because they could express their own thoughts more comfortably in a free environment away from the family because adolescents maintain an authority-oriented relationship with their parents, whereas they have an egalitarian relationship with their friends.

More than half of high-school, 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students involved in the current study did not have problems in their communication with their teachers. Communication problems encountered with teachers were mostly misunderstandings and degrading behaviour. This shows that teachers can not always communicate effectively with students and can be a source of the problems which their pupils experience. These results confirm those of Nartgün and Atik (2014) who studied pupils in a Technical and Industrial Vocational High School and found that the reasons for them to experience conflict in the classroom were the teachers being biased in the classroom, communication skills, the value which the teacher gives to the students, the behaviour of complying with the class rules and the behaviour of other students.

Another finding of the current study was that the communication problems faced by high-school, 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students in their social life were predominantly rude behaviour and intolerance. This can be considered as a communication problem which applies to all segments of society, so high school students, as members of society, face the same communication problems as those experienced by the general public. Thompson (1994) studied non-verbal communication and stated that civilized people try not to kill each other by forming a crowd and living within it, but they develop a kind of ceremonial 'killing' method which can be equally effective by "withdrawing [in]to their cocoons and ignoring the people around them". In this case, each individual becomes an "individual without an id" who has to fend for himself/herself in the crowd and has no consideration for others.

According to the adolescent respondents in the current study, communication should take place primarily within the framework of people understanding, listening to and respecting each other. Utma (2019) stated that the indispensable elements of effective communication are effective speech and effective listening, and that misunderstandings caused by false listening can lead to communication conflict or disconnection.

The most important limitation of this study is that generalization cannot be made due to the fact that the findings belong to a small group of samples. Suggestions for future research based on the results of the study may be as follows: 1- Training programs should be organized for families to gain effective communication skills with their children, especially during adolescence. Supporting this, seminars, social, cultural and sportive activities should be organized to periodically teach communication skills to teachers, adolescents and school administrators. 2- Clubs should be established and actively run to maintain school-family-student communication, cooperation and collaboration. 3- As a complementary part of this study, studies should be conducted on the communication problems of parents and high school teachers with high school level children. 4- Studies with similar content should be conducted for high school students of different types and grade levels throughout Turkey.

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