

MEDYADA İNTİHAR DAVRANIŞININ SUNUMU+

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ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışmada 1997 yılı içinde 5 gazete ve 2 dergide yayınlanan intihar ve intihar girişimi haberleri taranmıştır. Konuyla ilişkili haberlerin sıklığı, haber içeriğinde vurgulanan özellikler ve sunum tarzının araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Buradan hareketle intihar davranışı ile ilişkili haberler hem nicelik hem niteliksel açıdan değerlendirmeye alınmıştır. **Yöntem:** gazetelerde bildirilen intihar ve intihar girişimi haberleri hazırlanan bir kodlama formu üzerinden içerik analizi kullanılarak değerlendirilmiştir. **Bulgular:** gazeteler arasında intihar haberlerinin sıklığı, haber içeriğinde vurgulanan özellikler ve sunum tarzının farklılıklar taşıdığı saptanmıştır. Bazı gazetelerde intihar haberleri sıklıkla yer alırken, diğer bazı gazetelerde bu haberlere daha az yer verildiği gözlenmiştir. İntihar davranışına ilişkin haberlerin sıklıkla küçük punto birinci ve ikinci sayfada habere konu olan kişinin renkli fotoğrafıyla verildiği bulunmuştur. İntihar ve intihar girişimi haberlerinin 15-24 yaş grubuna ait haberlerde yoğunlaştığı gözlenmiştir. Haberlerin çoğunluğunda habere konu olan kişinin eğitim düzeyinin bildirildiği saptanmıştır. Eğitim düzeyinin bildirildiği haberlerin içinde ise yüksekokul ve üniversite öğrencilerinin sıklığı diğer eğitim düzeyleri-

ne göre daha sık olduğu görülmüştür. İntihar ve intihar girişimine neden olarak kişilerarası ilişkiler bildirilmiştir. Yakınlarla yaşanan gerginlik ve çatışmalar vurgulanmıştır. Ancak genel olarak intihar davranışının nedeni konusunda bilgi verilmeyen haberlerin sıklığı oran olarak yüksektir. Sonuç olarak bazı gazetelerin bu davranışı sansasyonel biçimde ya da taklit davranışına yol açabilecek tarzda sunduğu bulunmuştur. Buna karşılık önleme yaklaşımı açısından önem taşıyan bilgilere ve haberlerin içeriğinde kriz durumlarında koruyucu olabilecek yol gösterici bilgiye yer veren makalelerin yok denecek kadar az olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İntihar Davranışı, Medya, Model Alma

Suicide Reporting in Media

SUMMARY

This study was designed to evaluate publicized suicide and suicide attempt news in highly circulated 5 newspapers and 2 weekly published magazines of 1997. The present study aimed to investigate the frequency of reporting, the way of reporting suicidal behavior as well as how detailed circumstances related to the act in the content of the articles is presented. **Method:** the study quantitative and qualitative aspects of suicide news were evaluated. Data were coded on a coding form and were analyzed by using content

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analysis. **Results:** there were differences between the newspapers in frequency of reporting suicide and suicide attempt news as well as in presenting the sociodemographic information about the victim and characteristics of the suicidal behavior such as the method or reason of the act. Results showed that the rate of both suicide and suicidal attempt news was high in 2 newspaper. Most of the headings included the expression suicide and suicide attempt and were in small print. The majority of the articles were presented with a photograph and were published on the first and second pages of the newspapers. Both for suicides and suicidal attempt news the most striking age group presented in articles was 15-24. The level of education, considering the whole articles was not mentioned in most of the cases. However, university students and university graduated individuals were reported more commonly than the other educational levels. Though reasons for the suicidal behavior were not mentioned in some of the articles, the main reasons given for the suicide cases were mostly interpersonal problems, like problems with the family, spouse and authority figures. Overall results showed that some newspapers presented suicidal behavior in a sensational manner and such a way that will encourage susceptible people to imitate this behavior. However, there were information about when and from where professional help can be received in crisis situations in very few articles which can be considered as a preventive approach.

Key Words: Suicidal Behavior, Media, Imitation (modeling)

The suggestive power of mass media on society is a topic of interest for professionals. Media has a double influence on society. It can propagate negative norms, however it also has the power to promote a healthy interpersonal atmosphere (Martin et al. 1987). Media has the power to effect human behavior by passing on information, forming societal values and attitudes but it is also influenced by the public opinion and tendencies. The way how media reports social phenomena reflects the cultural values about various behaviors reported. Presenting topics on mental health such as suicide whether fictional or

non fictional in media could be considered as a risk factor for the suicidal act itself.

The effects of media on suicidal behavior has been discussed in the area of suicidology since the early reports which indicated the association between media reporting of self destructive behavior and the real act itself. The issue of suicide and mass media questions whether or not the publication or dramatic coverage of suicide in the media provokes imitative behavior.

In the context of the imitation of suicidal behavior, the effects of mass media as transmitters of models for imitation was the topic of discussion (Schmidtke & Schaller 1998). The discussion of this topic had been centered on two questions (Schmidtke & Hafner 1989). These two questions are:

- Does the specific way of presentation of suicide in media reflect existing attitudes or,
- Does reporting of suicidal acts itself influence social attitudes towards this behavior and the behavior itself and may it trigger suicidal behavior? These questions cannot be considered independently because the presentation and evaluation of a specific presentation by the media may have a normative effect on attitudes and also provide a model.

With respect to these questions several studies were undertaken in the area of suicidology (Motto 1967, 1970; Blumenthal & Bergner 1973; Phillips 1974, 1979, 1987; Baraclough et al. 1977; Littman 1981; Wasserman 1984; Biblarz 1987, 1991; Platt 1989; Schmidtke & Hafner 1989; Stack 1990; Sonneck et al. 1993; Michel et al. 1995; Fekete et al. 1998). Although the results of some of these studies were contradictory and some of the research designs were open to criticism, there is a significant relationship between reports of suicide in media and the subsequent increase in suicide rate. Furthermore, there was also broad evidence for imitative effect of suicidal behavior. Some studies also show clearly that suicide prevention by media is possible (Sonneck et al. 1993; Berman et al. 1998).

Schmidtke & Hafner (1989) pointed out that previously published investigations concerning attitudes towards suicidal behavior have not taken into consideration various parameters related to the phenomena. An example is cross cultural variation in specific ways of reporting suicidal behavior. In Italian newspapers marginal coverage was given to suicide and the reports were confined to essential facts in contrast to detailed reports of cases in supra-regional German language newspapers. However, sensationalism was generally avoided.

The findings of a study conducted by Michel et al. (1995) concerning Swiss print media indicated that there were enormous differences in the frequency of articles between the various print media. For some newspapers suicide had been an important topic while the others hardly covered it. German-Swiss newspapers had relatively more suicide articles than French and Italian-Swiss newspapers and these results also point to the role of cultural differences. The newspapers with frequent suicide reporting were those with the highest circulation figures. Authors concluded that certain papers used suicide and attempted suicide as news sensation.

Figures concerning the occurrence of suicide-related items in newspapers in a period of time also varied from country to country (Schmidtke & Hafner, 1989). Recently Fekete et al. (1998) investigated suicide related items in news papers in four countries and compared the findings obtained from these countries in the years 1981 and 1991. Comparing data from the two eras (1981 vs 1991) it was found that in Hungary the spectacular and heroic character of presentations, the moral evaluations as well as the extreme formulations had become less frequent. However, the changes in the presentation of suicide in countries where there was cultural stability like Germany and Austria were not significant.

In the past, the publication of suicide news were restricted in Türkiye based on the press law of the year 1931. Suicide news could be publicized only by taking a series of official permissions and photograph printing was definitely forbidden. In the year 1950 this law was changed and the new

press law did not include the above restrictions and limitations were more liberal. This 1950 law is still in effect in our country.

During the year of 1993 there was an increase in reporting of murder cases, violence and suicide news in the press and in private TV channels. With respect to newspapers, the content of the news were detailed, presented with a photograph of the deceased or of the individual over a bridge or some high place in front pages and with dramatic headings. Due to these observations a study was conducted by Palabrykoğlu et al (1994) to describe quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of suicide reported in media.

The results of this study showed that a total of 384 cases consisting 298 of suicides and 86 suicidal attempts were published in six newspapers during the year 1993. Newspapers which had the highest rate of suicide news had also the highest circulation in the country. The monthly distribution indicating the frequency of the suicide news was highest in December and lowest in October.

In the majority of the articles reporting cases of suicide, age, sex, marital status and occupation of the individual were reported frequently. The most frequently reported age group was 15-25 for suicide and suicidal attempts. Sex of the individual was stated in all of the articles. With respect to occupation in most of the articles the occupation of the individuals were reported. Suicidal behavior of government officials were most frequently reported and followed by sales workers and students. Mental status of the suicide victim or the suicide attempter were mostly stated in the articles.

Methods used for suicide and suicidal attempt were given in almost all of the articles. Only 10 articles out of 384 had not any information about the suicidal method. Types of suicidal methods were; jumping down from a high place followed by the second most frequent which was hanging. The frequently reported method for suicide attempts was jumping down from a high place and the second most frequent method was overdose.

The reason for suicidal act was specified nearly in all the articles and the reasons which were emphasized frequently were a crisis situation and psychiatric disorders, experiencing conflict with family members, loss of a lover and economical problems or unemployment for suicide and for suicide attempt news.

With respect to the form of articles, approximately 80% of the news had been presented with a colored photograph of the victim or the victim with family members on a special day and the article was published either on the first page or between the first and third pages. The headings in articles were in small print and the printing the word 'suicide' on the headline was not frequent. However, there were very sensational headings which may effect the behavior of public and may lead to the imitation of the suicidal method. For example; heading such as 'Bargaining taking place on a roof' is an inappropriate expressions of problem solving and may lead to imitative acts in vulnerable and susceptible people.

When the overall results were reviewed it was observed that suicidal behavior was reported in unfavorable ways and there was not any information or comment related to prevention of suicide (Palabiyıkoğlu et al 1994). Due to these observations, guidelines concerning suicide reporting were prepared and sent to administrators of media from Ankara University.

From 1993 up to the year 1997 media professionals started criticizing harshly the presentation of violence and suicide on TV channels and press. Besides the National Press Council in their meetings discussed this issue of negative presentations which they thought will effect the society and they published some rules restricting their presentation. Between these years mental health professionals spared sessions (in every scientific meeting) to discuss media effects on mental health with participating representatives of media (Palabiyıkoğlu 1995a, 1996). Finally a council was established to put into effect certain legislative rules about the coverage of news especially on TV and radio broadcasts. Moreover, the Ministry of Health prepared guidelines on

topics of health for all administrators in media from the Ministry of Health.

Due to these new developments in the Turkish press and media coupled with rising criticism towards media in the society, we planned the present study to investigate suicide reporting in media once more in the year of 1997. We aimed to search how media reports self-destructive behavior and whether preventive measures and factors minimizing imitation effect is considered in presenting this behavior due to the changes within the media and criticism towards media in the society.

METHOD

The present study was designed to investigate qualitative and quantitative aspects of suicide reporting in media. Suicide and suicidal attempt news from 5 highly circulated Turkish daily newspapers and 2 weekly published magazines were carefully screened by the authors and data were coded on a coding form and were analyzed by using content analysis. Coding included the format and content of the article and consisted of variables regarding the characteristics of the article (heading, page, photograph), sociodemographic information about the victim (sex, age, marital status, education level), reported characteristics of the suicidal behavior (method, reason, destination). Also mention on the strategies for prevention of suicidal behavior in the reported articles is searched (opinions of an expert, professional help, available names and adresses of institutions for help).

RESULTS

From five newspapers and two magazines a total of 546 articles including 394 (72.2%) suicide and 152 (27.8%) suicidal attempt news were collected. The circulation rate of the 5 newspapers and 2 magazines illustrating 'Sabah' as the highly circulated newspaper followed by 'Hürriyet' correspondingly, the rate of both suicide and suicidal attempt news was the highest in 'Sabah' (n=197, 36.08%) and in 'Hürriyet' (n=170, 31.1%) newspapers (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1- Frequency of suicide and attempt news in 5 newspapers and 2 magazines

NEWSPAPERS	SUICIDE		ATTEMPT		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sabah	138	35.1	59	38.8	197	36.1
Hürriyet	118	29.9	52	34.2	170	31.1
Yeni Yüzyıl	95	24.1	32	21.1	127	23.3
Zaman	24	6.2	3	2.0	27	4.9
Cumhuriyet	16	4.1	5	3.3	21	3.8
Tempo	2	.5	1	.7	3	.6
Aktüel	1	.3	0	.0	1	.2
TOTAL	394	100	152	100	546	100

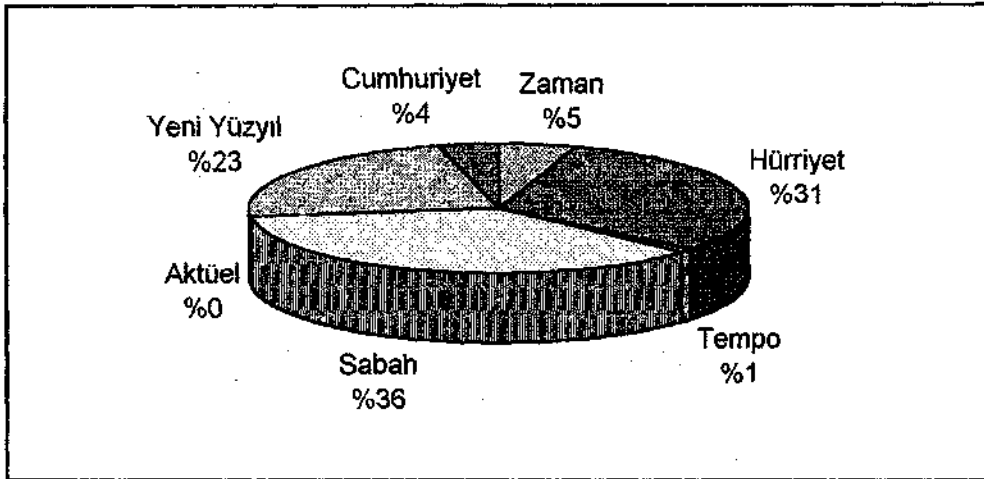


Figure 1- Percentage of suicide news in Press.

The monthly distribution of the collected news indicates that both suicide and suicidal attempt news were most frequently reported in July (n=78) followed by January (n=59) and the frequency of the reported suicide news was least in December (n=28).

283 of the articles (51.8%) included the expressions 'suicide' and 'suicidal attempt' printed in the headline and most of the headings in articles were in small print (f=368, 67.4%). 292 of the

articles (53.5%) were presented with a photograph. The majority of the articles were published on the third, second, and first pages with the frequencies of 327 (59.9%), 50 (9.2%) and 48 (8.8%) respectively.

When presenting the suicide news whether the victim is a prominent or not the full name of the victim was given in 360 of the articles (91.3%) and the initials of the victim's name were presented in 8

of the 394 articles (2.1%). On the other hand, there was no information of the victim's name in 26 of the articles (6.6%). Regarding the attempt news, 130 (85.5%) of the 152 articles were presented

the victim or the attempter (51.5%). However, married individuals (f = 127, 23.3%) were reported more than the others in the whole articles.

Table 2- The presentation of identity in suicide and attempt news

IDENTITY	SUICIDE (N=394)		ATTEMPT (N=152)		TOTAL (N=546)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
name						
Full name	360	91.3	130	85.5	490	89.7
Initials	8	2.1	15	9.9	23	4.2
no information	26	6.6	7	4.6	33	6.1
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0
sex	f	%	f	%	f	%
male	216	54.9	73	48.0	289	52.9
female	156	39.5	71	46.7	227	41.6
no information	22	5.6	8	5.3	30	5.5
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0
age groups	f	%	f	%	f	%
<15	11	2.9	4	2.7	15	2.7
15-24	125	32.1	48	31.6	173	31.7
25-34	65	16.7	27	17.8	92	16.9
35-44	47	11.9	10	6.6	57	10.4
45-54	26	6.9	5	3.4	31	5.7
55-64	8	2.1	0	.0	8	1.5
>65	5	1.4	1	.7	6	1.1
no information	107	27.2	57	37.5	164	30
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0

with the attempter's full name, 15 (9.9%) were presented with the initials and 7 (4.6%) of the articles did not give any information about the attempter's name (Table 2).

Regarding the gender of the individuals, only in 30 (5.5%) of the 546 cases there was no information. According to the data collected, males (f=289, 52.9%) were reported more than females (f=227, 41.6%) in the articles of suicidal act.

In 281 of the reported cases there was no emphasis on the marital status of

Both for suicide and suicidal attempt articles the most striking age group was 15-24 with the frequencies of 125 (32.1%) out of 394 suicide articles and 48 (31.6%) out of 152 suicidal attempt articles. 164 (30%) of the whole articles were presented without information regarding age.

Detailed information is given in Table 3 with respect to the professions and level of education of the suicide victims and suicide attempters. 201 (51%) out of 394 suicide and 87 (57.2%) out of 152 attempt news did not include information regarding

the profession of the victim or the attempter. However, among the suicide articles which include this information students were most frequently reported (f=38, 9.7%) followed by the policemen (f=37, 9.5%). Workers were the most frequently reported suicide attempters (f=11, 7.2 %) followed by students (f=10, 6.6%) as well as people with private professions (f=10, 6.6%).

The level of education, considering the whole articles was not mentioned in most of the cases (f=477, 87.4%). However, university students and university graduated individuals were reported more commonly (f=32, 8.2%) than high school (f=20, 5.1%) and illiterate / primary school graduated individuals (f=3, 0.8%) (Table 3).

In the articles the methods used for suicidal act were hanging, cutting, shooting, overdosing, burning oneself, jumping down from a high place, drowning and using chemicals. Shooting (f=132, 33.6%), hanging (f=92, 23.3%) and jumping down

from a high place (f=92, 23.3%) were the most favourite methods reported in the whole suicide articles (f=394). For the suicidal attempt news (f=152), jumping down from a high place (f=73, 48%) is the most favourite method used, followed by overdosing (f=28, 18.4%) (Table 4).

Though reasons for the suicidal act were not mentioned in some of the cases (f=143, 26.2%), the main reasons given for the suicide cases were; interpersonal problems (f=100, 25.5%) like problems with the family, spouse, opposite sex, authority; emotional crisis (f=43, 10.9%); illness (f=39, 10%) both psychiatric (f=30, 7.7%) and physical (f=9, 2.3%); and economical problems (f=24, 6%) such as bankruptcy, getting into debt, gambling, struggle to make a living. Regarding the suicidal attempt cases interpersonal problems (f=66, 43.4%), emotional crisis (f=17, 11.2%) and economical problems (f=16, 10.6%) were stressed as important factors for the individuals realizing the suicidal act (Table 5).

Table 3- Professions and education levels of victims and attempters in reported news

Profession	SUICIDE		ATTEMPT		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Student	38	9.7	10	6.6	48	8.8
Housewife	1	.3	3	2.0	4	.7
civil servant	12	3.1	0	.0	12	2.2
Policeman	37	9.5	9	5.9	46	8.4
Worker	20	4.9	11	7.2	31	5.6
Independent traders	25	6.2	10	6.6	35	6.4
Retired	9	2.3	3	2.0	12	2.2
Doctor	3	.8	0	.0	3	.6
Engineer	11	2.8	0	.0	11	2.1
Press	3	.8	1	.7	4	.7
Secretary	1	.3	2	1.3	3	.6
Jurist	3	.8	0	.0	3	.6
artist	10	2.6	7	4.6	17	3.1
businessman	6	1.5	2	1.3	8	1.5
unemployed	5	1.3	4	2.6	9	1.6
other	9	2.3	3	2.0	12	2.2
no information	201	51.0	87	57.2	288	52.7
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0
education	f	%	f	%	f	%
illiterate/primary school	3	.8	2	1.3	5	.9
secondary school/high school	20	5.1	8	5.2	28	5.1
university	32	8.2	4	2.6	36	6.6
no information	339	85.9	138	90.8	477	87.4
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0

Table 4- Methods used for suicides and suicide attempts

method	SUICIDE		ATTEMPT		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
hanging	92	23.3	3	2.0	95	17.4
cutting	6	1.5	11	7.2	17	3.1
shooting	132	33.6	19	12.5	151	27.7
overdosing	15	3.8	28	18.4	43	7.9
burning oneself	4	1.0	5	3.3	9	1.6
jumping (vehicle)	8	2.1	1	.7	9	1.6
jumping (high place)	92	23.3	73	48.0	165	30.2
drowning	4	1.0	5	3.3	9	1.6
other methods	21	5.4	5	3.3	26	4.8
no information	20	5.0	2	1.3	22	4.1
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0

Table 5- Reasons for suicides and suicide attempts

reasons	SUICIDE		ATTEMPT		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
interpersonal problems	100	25.5	66	43.4	166	30.4
economical problems	24	6.0	16	10.6	40	7.3
psychiatric disorder	30	7.7	8	5.3	38	7.0
physical disorder	9	2.3	2	1.3	11	2.0
abuse	7	1.9	7	4.6	14	2.6
failure	9	2.4	4	2.7	13	2.4
crisis	43	10.9	17	11.2	60	11.0
sociopolitical reasons	9	2.3	2	1.3	11	2.0
religious order (tariqat)	6	1.5	1	.7	7	1.3
loss	10	2.6	5	3.3	15	2.7
humiliation	14	3.6	2	1.3	16	2.9
guiltiness	7	1.8	2	1.3	9	1.6
condemnation	3	.8	0	.0	3	.6
no information	123	31.1	20	13.2	143	26.2
TOTAL	394	100.0	152	100.0	546	100.0

Despite the fact that media has a critical position in taking measures for prevention and decreasing the rate of suicidal behavior, for some of the items placed in the coding form we obtained surprising results. Out of 546 articles only 9 (1.6%) included an expert's opinions about the event reported. Also, when and how the individual could receive professional help was mentioned in 5 (0.9%) of the articles out of 546. Only 1 article (0.2%) was found to be presented with the available names and addresses of institutions where the individual could apply.

DISCUSSION

Research on the impact of suicide reporting in print media indicates that a special way of reporting and the frequency of the news can trigger additional suicides among susceptible persons. With regard to the effect of the press, reports on suicide could lead to suicidal events induced by imitation, some studies provided firm evidence in favor of the imitation hypothesis for suicidal behavior. These studies have demonstrated not only effects on general suicide rate, but also age and sex-specific modeling effect with respect to suicidal behavior (Phillips 1974, 1979, 1987, Schindtke, Hafner 1989). According to the studies on imitation hypothesis increase in suicides will be greatest in groups whose age and sex most closely resembles the model and the method of suicide reported. On the other hand, changes in the policy of suicide reporting in print media can also reduce the possible negative effects on human behavior.

When suicide rates are considered Türkiye is not among the countries with high suicide rates but it can hardly be said that this is also true for suicide attempts. In the time trend analysis of State Institute of Statistics (1996) a striking increase in the total number of suicide cases in 1993 and 1994 is reported which showed a continuity up to the year 1996. It was observed that it came to the peak point in the year 1996. When the total number of suicide with respect to gender and age is considered it is highest for females in 15-24 age group from 1993 to

1996. Though it is hard to obtain correct and reliable data for suicide attempts in a study conducted by Sayil et al (1998) which included hospitals in Ankara the rate was found 107 per hundred thousand for the year 1990 and 113 for the year 1995.

In 1993 there was an increase in the statistical data reported by State Institute of Statistics when also an increase in the coverage of suicide phenomena was observed. In addition to this increase, regarding the content of the news the style of writing which could cause an imitation effect was also observed in a study conducted by the author. It is hard to say that suicide reporting in media increases the national rate of suicides. However, one must not dismiss the power or influence that the mass media has on society. Several studies were undertaken to discover whether the appearance of suicide related stories in the media have in any way increased the overall number of suicides. Primarily the studies have examined the effects of suicides of prominent individuals as reported in newspapers and statistically documented the suicide rate following publication. Phillips (1987) has demonstrated that after the death by suicide of prominent persons the number of suicides increases. Similarly, Barraclough (1977) found some correlation between the reporting of coroners inquest into suicides and an increased number of suicides in men over 45.

In the present study we found 546 news related to suicidal behavior. Several studies found different figures concerning the occurrence of suicide related items. For example in a study of the contents of six daily newspapers in Salzburg over a 1 year period, 631 articles were found. In another study, Viennese editions of an Austrian newspaper in a one year period, 251 reports dealing with suicide was found. Figures of suicide related items varied from country to country in a period of time. These figures does not show the real number of suicides but the increase of frequent suicide reporting and how it is reported seems more important. We noticed that the frequency of reporting suicide news was high in the two central highly circulated newspapers. On the other hand, in another newspaper that was not

highly circulated there were 7 suicide news reported. There were significant differences between the newspapers. This difference can be explained by the different publishing policies of the newspapers which rarely reported the suicide news and the ones which suicide was the topic of major public interest. For newspapers with different policies suicide news may or may not be a major topic but frequent or over reporting an act like suicide may create an impression that "everybody seems to do it" and that the act is a common understandable way for many people. However, apart from the importance given to the coverage of suicide news, the presentation of the news or content of the news was also of great importance. Therefore, the content of the news was also analyzed.

In a study conducted by Michel et al (1995) investigating the Swiss newspapers it was reported that there were differences between the newspapers with the frequent suicide reporting and the ones in which the suicide news were rarely reported. For the German Swiss tabloid paper he found that the topic was covered once a week on average. In the content analysis, it was revealed that in the newspapers with the frequent coverage of the topic more violent methods were described explicitly and the circumstances which bring on the act were reported in a detailed manner. Those news were found to be shorter than the ones in newspapers with less frequent coverage of the topic.

Considering the monthly distribution of the suicidal news in the year 1997 the frequency of the reported news was highest in January which was followed by April and July. In these months generally two suicidal act news per day were reported on average. According to the statistical data reported in 1993 the increase in the rate of suicide lasted in 1994 and arrived at the peak point in 1996. So this brings the question of, 'Is this a long term consequence of the imitation effect?' into mind. In Schmidtke and Schaller's (1998) article it was pointed out that reporting of suicidal behavior and the presentation of fictional suicide models might influence a population's suicidal behavior in two ways, the

short and the long term. They also suggested that there may be different types of responders, early and late responders who differ in their response characteristics. Therefore we can say that media may also play a role in future suicidal behavior of individuals.

With respect to the content analysis of the present study, it was obvious that suicidal behavior news were reported mostly for 15-24 age group young persons. According to the data obtained from State Institute of Statistics 15-24 age group young persons have the highest rate of suicidal behavior when compared to other age groups. It seems that the frequent reporting of non-celebrity individuals in this age group with the frequent methods used such as hanging, jumping down from a high place would facilitate the identification with the model for the young group.

Michel et al (1995) points to the suggestion of Schmidtke & Hafner and Fekete & Mascaj that there is an age and gender specific imitation effect especially in adolescents and young adults. Michel also in his article points out that the coverage of non-celebrity suicides of young people and the suicide rate were proportionate to each other, i.e. the higher the coverage of non-celebrity suicides, the higher the suicide rate will be.

In most of the newspapers we found that people with non-celebrity status were reported frequently and the rate of suicide news was highest for 15-24 age group individuals. The results indicated that young persons could easily be influenced and the role of the media could be great in their suicidal act. It was suggested that identification with the model works for other age groups, however more studies need to be carried out regarding this issue.

The main reasons for the suicidal behavior reported in media were crisis situations and psychiatric disorders which were followed by conflicts in the family, relations with family members. These results are similar to the results

of study conducted earlier (Palabiyıkoğlu et al 1994) We found that interpersonal problems were reported most frequently which the family problems were also included in it We can say that the emphasis on family problems as reasons for suicidal behavior for the young group could serve as a model or develop a coping strategy for the individual during the process of identification As the feeling of independence is a part of the developmental process it is expected for 15-24 age group to experience conflict within the family

Similar to the data obtained by Fekete et al (1998) we found some excessively heroic and romantic expressions placed in the headings like,

'Suicide Hand in Hand'

'Alliance with Suicide'

'A Tragedy of Suicide in front of the Lover'

It seems evident that media offers unhealthy solutions to individuals and we could not meet with any measures that would compensate these presentations

When the characteristics related to the newspapers were investigated more than half of the news were presented with a photograph In attempt news the photograph was placed in first and third pages and in suicide news the photograph belonged to the victim and was taken in past Presenting the victim or the attempter with a photograph of happy times together with significant others around him/her could convey a wrong message to public Ending one's life, as though there were no problems in his/her life, would carry the message for other individuals that they could refer to the model's act at the time they encounter a triggering event So, media increases the likelihood of a person choosing suicidal behavior as a problem solving strategy in a stress situation Although presenting the victim or the attempter by a photograph with significant others will contradict with the principles of intimacy and personal rights, it will on the other hand, impress

the individual or public by pointing out the negative consequences that people left behind would probably experience after the act.

In a community based attitude study conducted by Palabiyıkoğlu et al (1995b) people display negative attitudes for the presentation of the suicide news with photographs It was determined that especially presenting photographs with family members arouse the feelings of 'sadness' in public Probably this reflects the negative consequences of suicidal behavior on other people

Based on the findings of the study in 1993, guidelines were prepared and sent from Ankara University to the newspaper editors about the potential risks Media assumed a criticizing attitude in itself In scientific meetings the subject was discussed with the journalists

As we observed several changes (such as lessening of sensational headings in the front page of some newspapers and short reporting of the news without presenting it with a photograph) in respect to the coverage of suicide news after a four year period we planned to carry out this present study

When we compare the findings of 1993 study with 1997 we found that the rate of presenting suicide news was highest in 'Sabah' newspaper as it is for this study As it was in the past, there were newspapers which the suicide was the topic of major public interest and there were some with the minimum coverage of the suicidal news However, we found some differences in regard to the content of the news 15-24 age group was again the highly reported age group

Unfortunately, in the newspapers of 1997, presentation of an expert's opinions, available names and institutions for application and guidance for professional help were reported in very few of the articles

We think that discussions that had already been made were influential and in order to reach better solutions mental health professionals and journalists should form such settings when possible

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