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Analysis of Suicides Related with Educational Failure

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ABSTRACT The aim of the present study is to analyse suicides of students and pre-service teachers related with Educational Failure (EF) in a pedagogical sense as it is reflected in the media, make comparisons with official records and put forward suggestions. Content analysis, which is one of the qualitative research methods used in social sciences, was used. ⁻News texts were obtained as a result of reviewing news pages about suicides related with educational failure published on the internet (between September 2004–2013). Frequency, percentage distribution and chi-square test were used in statistical analysis of data. According to the media, the number of people who committed suicide due to EF after program (2004/05) change was 196. Most of the suicides due to EF are mortal, committed by males in 15–19 age group adolescents in the cities. Suicides generally take place in the periods of central exams (35%) and school report (34%). According to the news in media, the number of suicides is nearly twice as official records.

INTRODUCTION

Suicide is accepted as an important indicator of the social and economic structure of society. Suicide should also be regarded as an educational problem which concerns students, teachers, schools, friends, private teaching institutions, family and society.

Educational success is a sought after feature for proceeding to upper levels of school, professional life and higher education. Simultaneously, it provides an important contribution to the individual related to future planning. Educational failure may originate from school interior school problems or exterior factors. Regardless of its reasons, the effect of educational failure continues in school, when school is abandoned, after graduation and during various the stages of the career. Educational failure is a risk factor for suicidal behavior.

Relationship between Educational Failure and Suicide

Although, there is a significant relationship between the school performances of individuals and completed suicides, a weak relationship was determined between school performance and thoughts of suicide thought (Kosidou et al. 2014a).

Although, mental problems are important risk factors for suicide in Europe and Northern America, impulsivity plays an important role in Asian countries. The suicide phenomenon composes a complex situation involving psychological, social, biological, cultural and environmental factors (WHO 2012; SUPRE 2012).

Most of the young students are under the risk of abuse and negligence. Half of all mental disorders start by the age of 14. Alcohol and substance use, school failure, violence, mental illness and impulsive behaviour are cited as reasons for suicide (PAHO 2007). The increase in the rate of adolescent suicide is related to their "living quality" (ASIONE 2010). The unsuccessful academic performance, low self-esteem and depressive mood together increase the risk of suicide in Australia (Richardson et al. 2005).

In a study carried out about young people's reasons for suicide, 53.4 percent pointed to "low marks and pressure of studying lessons" in the preceding year (CHOSUN 2011). The rate of suicide due to EF is 12.9 percent in Korea and 5 percent of suicide attempts made in Iran were due to EF (Shah 2005; Nazarzadeh et al. 2013).

In India, 240 suicidal cases in 2011 were reported to be the result of depending on educational failure (Hemalatha 2012). School performance and the stress caused by examinations effect the suicidal behaviour (Sharp 2013). A signif-

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icant relationship was determined between examination pressure / feelings of embarrassment due to failure in examinations and suicide (Vijayakumar et al. 2008). For instance, in China more suicide cases are observed due to the education system, which is highly focused on examinations (Xinying 2014).

Nearly half of the children of 11, 13 and 15 years old in Turkey feel under stress (from studying and exams). Children who come from economically disadvantaged families are also under stress since scholarship and free-boarding education depend on school success. All the handicaps of the exam-based system continue both in the sense of learning outputs and stress levels, in spite of the recent changes made to high school and university exams (UNICEF 2011).

The most common reasons for suicide in Turkey are disease, interparental conflict, financial difficulty, commercial failure, emotional relationships and not being able to marry the one desired and educational failure.

Official suicide data due to EF can be obtained by making a "dynamic inquiry" on the web page of Turkish Statistical Institution (TUIK). The number of suicides due to problems in educational life reached 429 people between 2002 and 2011 Suicides whose reasons are unknown account for half of the general suicide rate (TUIK, 2012). 19 people were included in this number after the 2012 records were published (TUIK 2013).

The demographic characteristics according to official suicide records due to educational failure in official records (2002–2011) were examined. When demographic characteristics of suicide cases in the past decade due to EF were analysed, 230 males and 199 females were recorded. These numbers given in official records are mortal suicide cases.

Suicide cases due to EF are generally observed in the 15-19 age group (49.9%). There is a decrease in the below 15-years-old and 30–34 age groups. Suicide cases are most frequently observed among elementary school (46.4%) students. 79 percent of suicide cases are composed of people living in cities. Suicides due to EF are composed of those having no job/occupation which is housewives, retired, revenue owner (earning asset), student etc. according to job or profession group. There is an increase in suicides in the summer season, which covers June, July and August. The number of cases, which was 21.2 percent in the 2002/3 academic year, decreased to 3.5 percent in the 2010/11 academic year.According to suicide method 34.3 percent committed suicide by hanging, 30.8 percent with a chemical substance (drug, toxic material, etc.), 20 percent with a gun and 10 percent by jumping from a high place.

Suicides Due to Educational Failure in Turkey and the Media

In Turkey, news related to educational failure always draws the interest of the media. Especially during school report submission and central examination periods, suicides in schools, courses or homes are headline subjects. This creates the perception that suicides due to educational failure are concentrated at a certain time and place. Further, the media may cause a suicide-imitating effect in individuals (Ju et al. 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The researcher explained the relationship between educational failure and suicide. In this study, the case of suicides due to educational failure in Turkey was evaluated pedagogically based on media news and compared with official records.

With this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. Does the news of suicides due to educational failure taking place in the media significantly vary according to demographical properties?
2. Does the news of suicides due to educational failure taking place in the media significantly vary according to time and place?
3. Does the news of suicides due to educational failure taking place in the media significantly vary according to suicide method and reason?

In this direction the similarities and differences between suicide cases due to educational failure taking place in the media and official records were examined.

METHODOLOGY

It was aimed to reveal facts hidden within data by using content analysis, which is one of the qualitative research methods used in social sciences (Yildirim and Simsek 2008). Media

records were formed by making a content analysis of suicide news due to educational failure found through the Google search engine. The data were analysed statistically in the sense of specific variables such as gender, age, educational status, settlement place, method of suicide, place of suicide, reason of suicide, etc., and results were compared. Those who committed suicide due to EF in the last decade composed the study sample.Media news was used as the data collection tool. For media news, statements included in news from the years, 2004–2013 were scanned in the Google search engine and analysed, and similar concepts were combined and then coded. After content analysis, data were transferred to the SPSS program. Statistical evaluation of these data according to variables such as gender, age, educational status, settlement place, academic years, etc. was done via frequency, percentage and chi-square test.

RESULTS

News of suicides due to educational failure were analysed in the sense of various variables and results are presented below. In Table 1, the demographic properties of suicide cases due to educational failure taking place in the media are examined.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of suicides due to educational failure in media (2004-2013)

Variables		*n*	%
Gender	Male	84	42.9
	Female	85	43.4
	Unknown	27	13.7
Age Groups	Below 15	27	13.8
	15-19 age	92	46.9
	20-24 age	18	9.2
	25-29 age	22	11.2
	30-34 age	6	3.1
	Age 35 and above	1	0.5
	Unknown	30	15.3
Educational Status	Basic education (elementary school or primary education)	34	17.3
	High school and equivalent	107	54.6
	Higher education	43	21.9
	Unknown	12	6.1
Settlement Place	City	176	89.8
	Village	20	10.2
Job or Profession/ Status	Student	172	87.8
	pre-service teachers	21	10.7
	Other	3	1.5
Total		196	100

When the demographic characteristics of suicide cases in the past decade due to EF after the program changes which started in pilot cities in the, 2004–2005 academic period according to media news are analysed, cases involve 196 people in total: 84 males (42.9%) and 85 females (43.4%) (Table 1). 57.7 percent of suicide attempts ended in death, 31.6 percent recovered from death, 8.7 percent were in life-threatening situation, 2% were convinced. Males ended their life in higher rates in suicide cases (34.7%). Females attempt suicide more (18.9%) or struggle for living (4.6%). Suicide cases due to EF are generally observed in the 15–19 age group (46.9%). There is a decrease below 15 years old and in the 30–34 age group. There is no statistically significant difference (t-test:0.381; df:167; sig:0.704) in the sense of gender when suicide cases are compared according to years ($p>0.05$).

Suicide cases are most frequently (54.6%) observed in high school and its equivalents, composed of active students (n:73), high school graduates (n:33) and those who left education (n:1). The rate of suicide in higher education grades drops by 21.9 percent. When active students (n:16) and graduates (n:27) at university are compared, suicide cases due to EF are more frequent among graduates.

Most of the suicides take place in city centres and the rate of females committing suicide in cities is higher (89.9%). More cases were observed in the school report period in cities and villages. There is a statistically significant difference between educational status according to gender (x2:16.229; df:6; sig:0.013) and settlement status according to gender (x2:10.112; df:2; sig:0.006) ($p<0.05$).

Suicide cases due to EF are more common among students (87.8%) and are observed among the unemployed group of pre-service teachers (10.7%) (Table 1). There were two mothers who committed suicide due to low marks in the school reports of their children and one elder brother who committed suicide due to failure in an exam. There was one research assistant and one prospective judge in student status.

In Table 2, the distribution of educational failure originated suicide cases reported in the media according to time (months/ season, academic years, school report/exams/course periods, critical days) was examined.

There is an increase in the summer season (n:72), which covers June, July and August. This result confirms official records. There is no statistically significant difference between seasons (x2:5.123; df: 6; sig:0.528) according to gender (p>0.05). However, it is seen that there is an increase in spring and summer (Table 2).

According to academic years least (n:5) educational failure originated suicide cases were observed in the 2003-2004 academic year while most (n:37) educational failure originated suicide cases were observed in the 2011-2012 academic year.

There is no decrease when the past five years are considered. (Table 2). There is no statistical difference in suicide cases in academic year according to gender (x2:0.492; df:2; sig:0.782) and educational status (x2:2.570; df:3; sig.0.463) (p>0.05).

Suicides due to EF were analysed in three groups: school report, course and central examination period. The total rate of suicides in school report period (34.2%) is close to suicide rates in the central examination period (35.6%). The suicide rate in the course period is 16.9 percent (Table 2).

Of all the suicide cases, there are ±7 days of proximity between "the day when suicide took place" and critical days (school report/n:67; central examination/n:33; exam result announcement days/n:37) in 137 suicide cases (Table 2).

Suicides due to EF display significant difference in critical days according to gender (x2: 10.484; df:4; sig.0.033) (p<0.05). School reports and central exams caused more suicides among women. In the school report period, there were higher rates of suicide among students in the

Table 2: The distribution of educational failure originated suicide cases reported in the media according to time (months/ season, academic years, school report/exams/course periods, critical days)

Seasons	*Months*	*n*	*%*
Autumn(n:12; 6.1%)	September	5	2.6
	October	5	2.6
	November	2	1.0
Winter(n:51;26.0%)	December	17	8.7
	January	27	13.8
	February	7	3.6
Spring(n:61;31.1%)	March	18	9.2
	April	29	14.8
	May	14	7.1
Summer(n:72; 36.7%)	June	40	20.4
	July	19	9.7
	August	13	6.6
Academic Years	2003-2004	5	2.6
	2004-2005	9	4.6
	2005-2006	12	6.1
	2006-2007	10	5.1
	2007-2008	12	6.1
	2008-2009	18	9.2
	2009-2010	29	14.8
	2010-2011	31	15.8
	2011-2012	37	18.9
	2012-2013	33	16.8
Periods	School Report	67	34.2
	Central Examination	70	35.6
	Course	23	16.9
	Other	26	13.3
Critical Days:School Report Holiday(n:67)	a week before the school report	26	19.0
	the day of the school report	5	14.6
	a week after the school report	36	7.3
Critical Days: Central Examination(n:33)	a week before the exam center	20	3.6
	the day of the exam center	2	1.5
	a week after the exam center	11	2.2
Critical Days: Examination Result (n:37)	central exam results being announced a week ago	10	26.3
	the day of the announcement of the central exam results	3	8.0
	a week after the central exam results announced	24	17.5

Table 3: Distribution of suicides depending on educational failure included in media as to "Suicide Methods" (2004-2013)

	By hanging	*Taking chemicals*	*Using firearms*	*Throwing from a high place*	*Other (jumping into water, sharp object and unknown)*	*Total*
n	49	63	29	49	6	196
%	25.0	32.1	14.8	25.0	3.1	100.0

15–19 age group, those attending high school and its equivalent and those living in cities.

In Table 3, the distribution of educational failure originated suicide cases taking placereported in the media according to used methods used was examined.

People commit suicide predominantly by hanging themselves (25%), using a gun (14.8%) or jumping from a high place (25%) (Table 3). Females mostly prefer death by taking drugs, males mostly prefer death by hanging themselves.

The suicide method does not display significant differences according to critical periods (x2:15.273; df:8; sig.0.054) (p>0.05). In addition to this, in the period of school report and central exams people use drugs (from which they may recover), while in the periods when results of central exams and replacement are announced people tend to commit suicide by hanging themselves (from which most do not recover).

In Table 4, the distribution of educational failure originated suicide cases reported in the media according to suicide reason was examined.

Table 4: Distribution of suicides depending on educational failure included in media as to "Suicidal reasons" (2004-2013)

	Variables	*n*	*%*
School Report	Having bad school report	37	18.9
Course	Courses are bad/failure/bad mark	25	12.8
	Grade point average is low for pedagogical formation	1	0.5
Maintaining Education	Absenteeism/Failing in the class/grade retention	6	3.1
	Grade retention (could not pass to higher grade due to course failure)	2	1.0
	Anxiety of not being graduated/could not complete school	2	1.0
	Dropping out education	1	0.5
	Being dismissed from school	1	0.5
	Do not want to attend the school	2	1.0
Family	Intensity of courses and being remote from family	1	0.5
	Is not allowed to attend the school	1	0.5
	Family pressure/Have a certificate of appreciation/ You must pass the examination/Do not have low marks/ Your dad will get angry/Turn off your computer/Study	6	3.1
Adaptation to School	Discipline incident/anxiety of being dismissed from the school/Getting suspension penalty from school/ being anxious whether family is informed about this	11	5.6
	Teacher behaviours/threatening with failing	3	1.5
	Quarrelling with friends	3	1.5
Central Examinations	Exam stress	28	14.3
	Studying intensively for central examinations	1	0.5
	Getting bad/low mark from pilot test conducted in preparatory courses for central examinations	3	1.5
	Central examination went bad	7	3.6
	Got low mark from central exam	21	10.7
	Could not pass central examination	15	7.7
	KPSS appointment was not performed	15	7.7
Other	Other/failure in life/not assisting his/her brother/sister to pass the examination/course cancellation	4	2.0
Total		196	100.0

Bad school report (18.9%), low marks (13.3%), not being able to sustain education (7.1%), family pressure (4.1%), not adapting to school (8.6%), stress (14.3%), central examinations (31.7%) and other reasons (2.0%) can be listed as reasons for suicide due to educational failure (Table 4). Bad school reported and low marks in central exams were primary reasons for suicide in primary education grades, below 15 years old. The suicides due to a bad school report, exam stress, low course marks, low marks in the central examination and disciplinary cases stand out among the 15–19 age group in high school and its equivalents.

In Table 5, the distribution of educational failure originated suicide cases reported in the media according to place was examined.

According to suicide media news, generally home (60.7%) or places close to home, schools, private teaching institutions and dormitories were chosen as the place for the suicide (Table 5). Suicide methods at home are, from most to least frequent, drugs, hanging, jumping from a high place and using a gun.

DISCUSSION

The findings obtained from the study were supported by domestic and foreign research and some important results were attained. These are:

The number of suicides due to EF in the past four years is double the number given in official records. When compared with official records, the number of suicides in the past four years is different from that in the suicide news given by the media. According to the Ministry of Health and WHO (2004), the number of suicides which are brought to hospital are not the actual indicator that would explain the social extent of the problem, because there are cultural problems such as hiding suicide as the reason of death (religious, shame) disapproval and preventing its inclusion in official records.

Similar findings were obtained in a research study where officially recorded suicide cases that occurred between 2007 and 2012 in Turkey were evaluated. It is stated that suicide statistics are not too reliable and that the subect of suicide is still considered to be a taboo (Enginyurt et al. 2014).

Most of the suicides due to EF are mortal, committed by males in 15–19 age group adolescents in the cities (Table 1). According to media news, nearly 60 percent of suicide cases are mortal. The rate of death is higher among males in suicide cases. While there is no difference in the sense of gender according to years in media news ($p>0.05$), the rate of suicide is higher among males in official records ($p<0.05$). Male children's rates are higher than females both in the sense of schooling, general suicide, and suicide due to EF according to official records. Suicides due to EF are observed in primary education grades according to official records but in high school and its equivalent according to media. A significant difference between educational status and critical periods when suicides take place according to gender was seen in the media ($p<0.05$).

Suicide attempts are twice as high among females than males in Turkey (Tatlilioglu 2012; Ministry of Health and WHO 2004).

Table 5: Distribution of suicides depending on Educational Failure included in media as to "Location where suicide is committed" (2004-2013)

Variables		*n*	*%*
Accessible Location (n:173)	House	119	60.7
	Quarter/Street	13	6.6
	Barn	3	1.5
	House garden/greenhouse/field	4	2.0
	School	17	8.7
	Country	11	5.6
	Private teaching institution/institution	5	2.6
	Pharmacy	1	0.5
Non-accessible Location(n:8)	Empty building	2	1.0
	Highway	1	0.5
	Workplace	2	1.0
	Irrigation canal	2	1.0
	Viaduct	1	0.5
Other	Not known	15	7.7
Total		196	100.0

In a research study performed with 550 people aged between 18 and 60 to determine how interpersonal relation styles, gender roles, social support and hopelessness variables play a role in the prediction of the possibility of suicide in women and men, it was determined that gender roles have a significant relation with these variables (Arsel and Batigün 2011).

The suicide is observed more in the 15–19 age group both in the media (46.9%) and in official records (49.9%). Adolescent periods qualify as risky. "Educational failure" is defined as a risk for students in USA. Thus, the teachers and school personnel who work together with adolescents under risk should be provided a separate course about this subject in the university education (Prater et al. 2000). According to settlement place, the rate of suicide is higher in cities both in the media (89.8%) and in official records (79%). There was a statistically significant difference in the sense of settlement place according to gender in media news and the rate of male suicide cases due to EF is higher in cities and villages ($p<0.05$). In a study covering the years between 1974 and 1999, it was observed that the rate of suicide is higher in cities compared to villages, and the rate of male suicide is higher in both cities and villages (Alptekin 2002).

Drugs, hanging and jumping from a high place were used as methods in suicides due to educational failure (Table 3). Females are more likely to use chemical substances and males to hang themselves as the method of suicide due to EF, according to media news. Students below 15 years old tend to hang themselves, the 15–19 age group use drugs and the 20–24 age group are likely to either hang themselves or jump from a high place to end their life. The suicide method does not display significant difference according to critical periods ($p>0.05$). According to official records, suicide methods display a difference in the sense of gender ($p<0.05$). Females tend to end their life by using drugs, males are more likely to hang themselves. Males use methods which contain violence (hanging, gun); females use non-violent methods (drug-taking). Many attempts made by drug support the idea that drugs are easily accessible Restricted access would be helpful in order to prevent unplanned impulsive suicides (Tüzer et al.1995; Ajdacic-Gross et al. 2008; Tatlilioglu 2012).

Suicides due to EF display periodical characteristics (Tables 2 and 4). There is a nominal increase in the spring semester according to academic periods. There is no statistically significant difference according to gender and seasons in official records and according to gender and educational status in media news in the sense of academic periods ($p>0.05$). The suicides due to EF increase in critical periods. According to media news, suicides are committed more in periods when school reports are given (34.2%) and in central exam periods (35.6%). There are ±7 days of proximity between the actual suicide day and critical days (school report and central examination days). There is a significant difference between "critical periods" according to gender ($p<0.05$). Frequency of exams, the importance given to exams by the school and parents are sources of stress; there are cases when sometimes this stress drive children to suicide.

In an experimental study it was determined that stress is effective on university students regarding fear of failure, approaching examinations and academic skills (Hughes 2005). The precautions taken related to the children and adolescents who are under risk of educational failure were observed to be effective in preventing suicidal behaviour (Carver et al. 2010). The negative life events of adolescents who performed suicide attempts (aged 12-18) and healthy individuals were compared. In the group that attempted suicide, the number of negative life events was found to be higher compared to the control group. In the list of negative life events, the negative events that create the significant difference between two groups are "school absence, school failure/class repetition, school change" (Akin and Berkem 2013). The other factors connected to coping with problems such as bad school performance may increase the risk of suicide (Kosidou et al. 2014b).

The suicides depending on educational failure are committed in the home environment or in nearby places (Table 5). In this study, the home or its vicinity was largely chosen the suicide environment. People commit suicide by taking drugs or hanging themselves at home or by jumping from a high place outside the home. Family members and especially children of people who commit suicide suffer more trauma from deaths which take place at home.

In a study which was carried out in Korea, there was a close relation between being exposed

to suicide of close relatives and suicides of people who are exposed to suicide. A completed suicide has an important effect only on female suicide. The effect of being exposed to unsuccessful suicide attempt does not display differences according to gender (Lee et al. 2013).

After having experience of adult suicide, children learn how to make use of death to warn others (Suvarli 1995).

In this study there was an increase in school and private teaching institution (by jumping from a high place) suicides due to educational failure. Projects can be helpful to create a more secure environment in schools (Piskin et al. 2011).

It was seen that cases in which suicide attempts are analysed among young adults have common properties. These are listed as having specific difficulties with friendships, in family and school life, thinking of suicide within three hours after discussing it with a friend, mother or couple partner attempting unplanned suicide at home with an easily accessible/attainable method (by taking a drug) and seeking help actively or passively to escape death as a result of the action (Alptekin 2008).

Further, the parent's attitudes affect the approach of the child towards success or failure and his behaviour. In a research study, it was observed that there is a significant and negative correlation between the perfectionism of parents and academic success (Esmaili et al. 2014). In children and adolescents the suicides due to educational failure being committed mostly in the home environment and family members witnessing it can be considered as a reaction to the family.

In Turkey, more information can be provided by the media compared to official records about suicides due to educational failure.

Further, there are many cases when open identity information and video records before and after suicides are given in media. Suicide news can lead to the "Werther effect" in young people (Savur et al. 2012).

CONCLUSION

According to media news, the number of suicides nearly doubles official records. Most of the suicides due to EF are mortal, committed by males in 15–19 age group adolescents in the cities. There is a statistically significant difference between educational status and settlement status according to gender ($p<0.05$). Reasons of suicide due to EF can be listed as bad school report, low mark from course exam, exam stress, and fear of not being successful at central exam, wish of sustaining/not sustaining education, absence, school and family pressure. Suicides due to EF display significant difference in critical days according to gender ($p<0.05$).

As a result, the suicides due to educational failure in Turkey should be considered as an important problem in terms of the education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

People concerned can be informed that school reports and central exam dates of future years may lead to a nominal increase in suicides due to EF. Media has multivariate effect in media. They may both cause negative situations and provide healthy interpersonal environments. Children and adolescents can be enabled to participate in activities which support them and where they can explain their feelings. School education programs can be updated in a way that would consider the mental health of students.

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