

Economic Crisis during the COVID-19 Pandemic is Likely to Increase Suicide Risk

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Dear Editor

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), also known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), is a cluster of acute respiratory illnesses for unknown reasons that first occurred in December 2019 in Wuhan, China.¹ With continuation of the coronavirus transmission, various health authorities, including the World Health Organization, advise people stay at home for restricting people from exposure to the virus.² Although staying at home can reduce the spread of the disease, the COVID-19 epidemic had a destructive global economic impact.³ In this regard, studies show that the number of suicides in people has increased during the economic crisis. For example, in the 2008 European and American economic crisis like other economic crises such as that in 1997 in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Asia, the number of suicides has risen and the economic crisis has been cited as one of the most important factors in increasing suicide rates. In this period of economic crisis, the number of unemployed individuals has increased and suicide rates have increased in countries with higher levels of job loss.⁴ However, the increase in the number of suicides shows a small part of the emotional distress of the economic crisis. In addition to successful suicides, there are many more thoughts about killing oneself without preparatory behavior, a self-destructive and non-lethal act and other suicidal behavior and preparatory acts, but a closer look reveals that although the results of studies show that the suicide rate has increased in many countries during the economic crisis, it has not been the same in all countries that have been affected by the crisis, and these results can be explained by the fact that in countries where there are social assistance networks, suicide prevention activities are being carried out, and national suicide prevention programs have been developed, the rate of suicide is more controlled at a time when economic insecurity is high. In other words, the lack of a clear correlation between suicide rates and the economic crisis shows that suicide rates are influenced by a number of national factors.⁵ Finally, it can be said that, in times of economic crisis, vulnerable people use suicide as the only way to escape the problems. Therefore, the existence of social support and also supporting the labor market in different countries can reduce the harmful psychological effects of economic recession.

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