

# INVESTIGATING THE LEVEL OF DESPAIR OF INMATES LIVING IN THE PRISON DEPENDING ON AGE AND MARITAL STATUS FACTORS ( TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS SAMPLE)

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study is to determine whether there is a big difference between the level of inmates living in a prison located in North Cyprus connected to Ministry of Internal Affairs, depending on factors such as age and marital status. Sample of the study consists of 110 prisoners living in the prison in Cyprus. Data is collected by means of the personal individual form designed by the researcher and Beck Despair Scale (BUO). Average and standard deviations are used in defining data while variant analysis ANOVA and then Duncan TEST (5%) are used in analysing data. The most hopeful group observed in the study is prisoners at the age interval 31- 40 ( $X=4.97$ ). no significant change between the groups seen in terms of marital status factor statistically ( $P=0,117$ ). However, the difference between the married ones which is the most hopeful group ( $X=4.26$ ) and divorced ones as the most hopeless group ( $X=7,76$ ) is significant.

**Key words:** Prison, Inmate, Despair.

## INTRODUCTION

Prisons can be described as environments in which the prisoners' independence comes to an end as they face to face with privation. A prisoner living in a prison is away from a series of stimulus which are very important for the person such as their lifestyle, family and house having the necessity and obligation of staying with people who experience the same problems. Yet, they are not able to contact their parents when they need, they can't feel secure, being excluded by individuals of the society as unwanted members. Özkurkcugil (1998), states that as the prisoners feel they aren't wanted and liked anymore by people with whom they lived mostly together, is a handicap for them in trying to adapt the life inside the prison. After feeling this, they cannot get used to the life inside the prison. Also, a person who always thinks about their situation within the prison and life after sent back to normal life may come face to face with psychological problems. Therefore, prisons may be settings where privations applied psychologically and bodily having special atmosphere in which the prisoners have no freedom. Deaton, Aday and Wahidin, 2009-2010; Keaveny and Zauszniewski, 1999; Özgüven and friends, 2003; Özkurkcugil, 1998; Palmer and Connelly, 2005) state that in such atmosphere, the ability of prisoners of standing decreases causing negative outcomes such as depression, despair, feeling lonely and suicide. Gencoz Vatan and Lester (2006), state that despair can be defined as; having a bad mood due to negative and pessimistic thoughts about one's future aims and fear of failure losing their hope. Cuhadaroglu (1993), indicates that despair includes negative perceptions of the person's themselves, their future and their world. The person having despair can perceive that he/ she is hopeless in coming up with the problems and conditions available currently. They may feel worthless and have the idea that it is unnecessary to go on living. Such

changes on the person can be signs of depression and suicide. One of the approaches to depression, despair and suicide is Beck's cognitive approach. According to this approach, people who tend to have depression evaluate themselves, their future and life outside as meaningless things. (Beck, 1963; Durak and Palabıyıkoglu, 1994), state that depressed people see themselves as insufficient, poor, worthless and faulty seeing life as full of problems and hard conditions. Deaton, Aday and Wahidin, 2009-2010; Keaveny and Zauszniewski, 1999; Palmer and Connelly, 2005) inform that in a series of studies on prisoners, it is seen that hopelessness and despair is a cognitive factor causing suicide showing that there is a close relationship between despair, depression and suicide.

Studies available in the literature done in Turkey and other countries as well which shows despair levels of inmates. However, no study observed in the literature on the issue that prisoners in TRNC have different levels of despair depending on factors such as age and marital status. In this sense, it is suggested that the study is important to remove this lack.

### **Sentence of the problem (research question)**

Is there a significant difference between despair levels of inmates depending of age factor and marital status?

### **Sub-problems of the study**

1. Is there a significant difference between prisoners' despair levels depending on age factor?
2. Is there a significant difference between prisoners' despair levels depending on marital status?

## **METHOD**

### **Model of the research**

This is a screening research which investigates whether there is significant differences in despair levels of prisoners depending on age factor and marital status.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of the study consist of inmates living in the prison in Cyprus. Sample of the study consist of prisoners living in a prison in Cyprus connected to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 4 of the participants are women (3.6%) and 106 men (94.6%) who have been choosen among prisoners randomly.

### **Data collection Tools**

*Beck's Scale of Despair:*The scale was developed by Beck and his friends. It is used to determine expectations of a person from the future. It consists of 20 items having the interval 0-1. Is is assumed that the level of the person's despair is high when the score is high.

*Personal Information Form:* The form includes information about the individuals such as age, sex, marital status, education, occupation, economic status, reason of their being sent to prison and the crime, duration in the prison, period of time left to leave the prison, how they entered the prison, emotions when they arrived, whether they got psychological support in the period they spent in the prison, whether they harmed themselves when

living in the prison, frequency of their family members' and friends' visits, how their crime and prison life to affect their life in the future and fear of this, are included and judged.

### Data analysis

Data is analysed by SPSS 13.00 package program. Level of despair of the inmates is investigated according to age factor and marital status. In defining data, average and Standard deviations are used. As two of the groups (age and marital status) have more than 2 variables ANOVA and after it Duncan Test are used. The level of importance is calculated on 0.01.

### Process

In advance of data collections, inmates were informed about the content of the study and volunteer ones were included. When data analysed, items and questions left empty were not included.

### FINDINGS

The first sub-problem of the study: Is there a significant difference in levels of despair of the prisoners according to their age?

**Table 1: comparison of inmates' scores depending on age factor with average and Standard deviations on ANOVA and Duncan Test (5%)**

age	N	average	Standard deviation	Duncan Sig. P value(%5)
15-20	11	6,3636 ab	2,50091	
21-30	41	5,2195 b	4,90669	
31-40	38	4,9737 b	5,51405	
41-50	12	5,1667 b	4,68718	,030
51-60	4	6,0000 ab	4,54606	
60+	3	11,0000 a	7,21110	
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>5,4312</b>	<b>4,97469</b>	

As it can be seen from table 1, the despair level of 3 prisoners above the age of 60 is almost two times much more comparing to the other groups observed to be over 50%. In this sense, it can be said that level of despair becomes greater as the prisoner is older.

**Table 2: comparison of inmates' scores depending on marital status with average and Standard deviations on ANOVA and Duncan Test (5%).**

Marital Status	N	average	Standard deviation	Duncan Sig. P value (%5)
Evli	38	4,2632 a	4,09142	,117
Dul	2	5,0000 a	5,65685	
Bekar	52	5,5385 a	4,56956	
Boşanmış	17	7,7647 a	7,11977	
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>5,4312</b>	<b>4,97469</b>	

As it can be seen from table 2, there is no significant difference between despair levels of the prisoners depending on marital status. However, it was seen that the hopelessness levels of divorced and single inmates were higher. Also, it was observed that married prisoners had lower levels of being pessimistic. Hoplessness levels of married group is the lowest ( $x=4.26$ ) while the most hopeless group is divorced ones ( $x=7.76$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It was observed that the despair level of 3 prisoners above the age of 60 is almost two times much more comparing to the other groups was over 50%. The most hopeful group is the group of prisoners between the ages 31-40 ( $x=4.97$ ). However, the difference between the married ones which is the most hopeful group ( $X=4.26$ ) and divorced ones as the most hopeless group ( $X=7,76$ ) is significant.

Dibaz and Seber (1993), in their study on inmates, state that prisoners think their future is ruined and their aims ended which caused them to be hopeless, depressed, fear resulting in negative outcomes.

Colsher, Wallace and Loeffelholz (1992), state that number of old prisoners increases due to aging of the generation and changes in punishment system.

Rikard and Rosenberg (2007) state that number of old prisoners in the USA in 1990s was 4% while it became almost three times much more reaching 13% in 2000.

Apart from these, it is indicated in different studies from different countries that suicide risk rate of people living in the prison is greater than that of normal people Kariminia, Law, Butler and Corben ).

For Zibardo, the cost of a prisoner older than 60 is approximately 69.000 dollars while it is 21.000 dollars for a prisoner around the age of 30.

Rikard and Rosenberg (2007) state that young prisoners observed to have infectious diseases, drug addiction and psychiatric morbidity mostly while results of researches on physical problems of old prisoners aren't clear.

There are some limitations to the study. The study is carried out only in 1 prison in cyprus. Therefore, it is possible to make generalization with prisoners from this prison only. In further studies, more prisons and bigger samples can be included. The study is the first done on despair levels of prisoners living in the prison depending on age factor and marital status. Results of the study show that social support factor affects despair level and psychosocial status after living prison. Therefore, psychologists and social support experts working in prisons in order to provide social support to the inmates have great deal of responsibilities.