

THE CRISIS-CANCER CYCLE IN THE SHADOW OF COVID-19: EVIDENCE FROM TURKEY

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Abstract – Objective: Determining the existence of the cycle between the economic crisis-unemployment-cancer and implementing appropriate policies for this is important in the fight against cancer, which is an important public health problem. Mass unemployment caused by the practices in the COVID-19 process is worrisome in this sense. The cost of policies that may prevent the unemployment process will be much cheaper than the costs of cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment, care, organ-life losses, production and labor losses.

Materials and Methods: Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) Unit Root Tests, Engel-Granger, Johansen Cointegration Test, Granger Causality Test Over VAR Model.

Results: Unemployment and cancer incidence are not cointegrated in the long run, according to the research. A one-sided causality from unemployment to cancer incidence has been discovered in the short term. As a result, unemployment is a Granger cause of cancer.

Conclusions: The determination of unemployment as a cause of cancer incidence, implementation of emergency policies to prevent unemployment will reduce costs in fighting cancer. And it will prevent cancer cases caused by the increase in stress and anxiety caused by unemployment.

KEYWORDS: Economic crisis, Cancer, Unemployment, Cancer incidence, Cointegration, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

On a global scale, cancer is a major public health issue with a significant economic impact. This issue, which necessitates multidisciplinary work, harms economies due to prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, palliative care, organ and life loss, as well as a loss of productivity and workforce. Cancer is a terrible “expense item” for all economies, the cost of which can currently not fully calculated. It’s the result of a “cycle.” In 2018, 17 million new cancer cases were diagnosed worldwide, with 9.5 million cancer deaths. The global burden of cancer is projected to rise to 16.3 million cancer deaths and 27.5 million new cases by 2040 (American Cancer Society)¹. According to Sung et al (2021), new cancer cases

will reach 28.4 million in 2040, a 47% increase from 2020. This 47% increase will occur most in low and middle HDI countries, according to this study, which is based on the Human Development Index (HDI), the most widely used human development indicator. According to estimates, the highest increase in cancer incidence will occur in high HDI countries, with 4.1 million new cases in 2040 compared to 2020. According to these forecasts, an increase in the prevalence of risk factors, in addition to population aging, will be a significant factor. The most crucial step in reducing the cancer burden is identifying and preventing risk factors. As a result, it is critical demonstrate the existence of the crisis-cancer cycle, and multidisciplinary research is required. Policymakers’ decisions have an impact on more



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than just macroeconomic data. Economic crisis prevention and management are critical for public health and the economic burden they impose on economies. And may assist in mitigating this “expensive” outcome. The studies, which I named the “Crisis-Cancer Cycle” for the first time in 2019 and which I started to test whether there is a relationship between cancer and economic crises, are entirely aimed at this purpose². If there is a relationship between the variables, implementing harmonized policies between countries, rather than being burdened by such a large global burden, would almost certainly be much cheaper and more accurate in minimizing or even avoiding this disastrous outcome. The data of Turkey is discussed in this study to prove the existence of this cycle. The relationship between the phenomenon of unemployment, which is one of the significant indicators of the crises, and the incidence of cancer, has been empirically tested based on Turkey. Future studies on the cycle are crucial in terms of being complementary. Some policies that can be implemented by proving and acknowledging the existence of this cycle can help prevent this “expensive” result, albeit partially.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND METHODS

As a continuation of the Cycle of Crisis-Cancer study, the presence of relationship between unemployment and the incidence of cancer in Turkey, will be questioned in this section. E-views 10+ package program was used in the analyzes. As the first and mandatory step, Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) unit root tests were applied first. The ADF test, developed by Dickey and Fuller³, and the PP Test, developed by Phillips and Perron⁴, were used in the analysis. The Schwarz Information Criterion was used, as

well as its compatibility with MacKinnon criteria was analyzed. Different techniques are used. The presence of a long-term relationship between the series was tested with Engle-Granger. Based on the findings, Granger Causality Test was used over the Vector Autoregressive (VAR) Model to question the short-term relationship.

The Data and The Empirical Results

Unemployment and cancer incidence were chosen as variables to investigate the crisis and cancer cycle in Turkey. Unemployment is a key indicator of the severity of a crisis. The unemployment rate is the percentage of the unemployed workforce⁵. Annual unemployment figures from 1990 to 2017 were provided from Turkstat.

Incidence is defined as the number of new cases of any type of cancer per 100,000 people⁶. Annual cancer incidence data for the same period was obtained from Worldbank. Table 1 shows the variables’ abbreviations and where they came from.

TABLE 1. The variables in the analyses, abbreviations, and the obtained sources.

Variable Name	Abbreviation	Source
Unemployment	U	TURKSTAT
Cancer Incidence	CA	Worldbank

Figure 1 depicts the progression of the variables over the relevant period.

To measure the impact of the changes of the independent variable on the dependent variable, the following regression model was created first:

$$CA_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 U_t + \epsilon$$

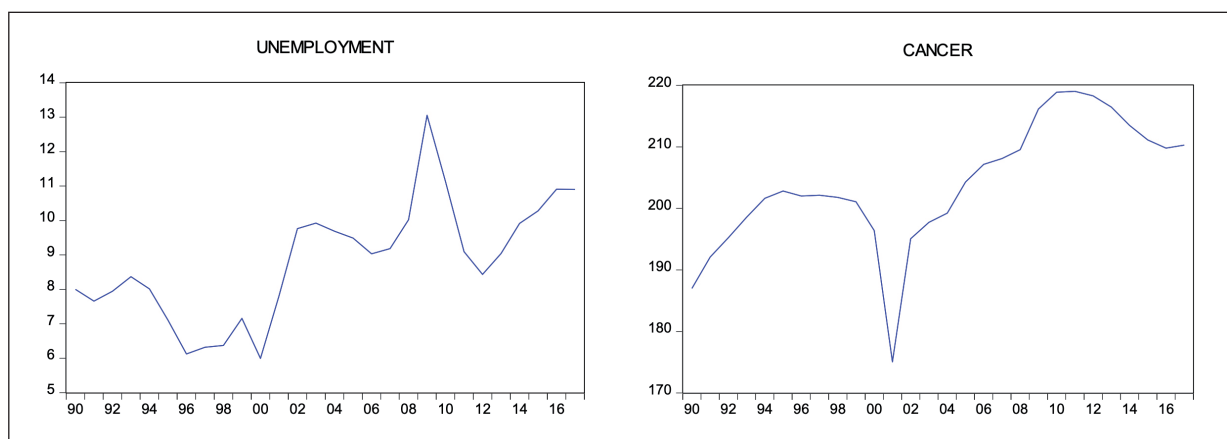


Fig. 1. The progression of unemployment and cancer incidence in Turkey between 1990-2020.

In the simple linear regression number 1, U was included in the analysis as an independent variable and CA as a dependent variable.

ϵ is the random error term (pure error term), and the parameters α_0 and α_1 show the quantitative values characterizing the behavior of the main mass. Null and alternative hypotheses are established as follows:

H_0 : Unemployment is the cause of cancer incidence

H_1 : Unemployment is not the cause of cancer incidence

In causality tests, the use of non-stationary series can lead to spurious causality results. For this reason, the existence of unit root is tested first in the study. The first unit root test was proposed by Fuller⁷, Dickey and Fuller⁸ and developed by Dickey and Fuller⁹.

Although various analyses were developed later, the most common ones, Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) unit root analyses, were used in this analysis. Table 2 shows the outcomes of the analysis. Analysis results show that the variables have a unit root at the level and become stationary after taking their first differences.

Cointegration Tests

The econometric literature offers a broad range of cointegration tests. The Engle-Granger¹⁰ two-step cointegration process, which is based on unit root analysis of residues, was used to analyze the presence of a long-term relationship between unemployment and cancer incidence in this research, and no cointegration was found between variables.

The Johansen¹¹ Test, which was designed to solve the shortcomings of the Engle-Granger¹² system and produce healthier results, was also used, but the results were identical to those of the Engle-Granger Test (Table 3, 4). Unemployment and cancer incidence were discovered not to be cointegrated in the long run.

The Granger Causality Test Over Vector Autoregressive (VAR) Model

The Granger Causality Test is an extensively used test to define the presence of a causality relationship between two (or more) variables¹³. VAR models are used to predict the future¹⁴, and

TABLE 2. The results of unit root tests used in analyses.

Variables		Test Statistic	Critical Values		
			1%	5%	10%
UNEMPLOYMENT					
ADF	Unemployment, level	-3.217638	-4.356068	-3.595026	-3.233456
	Unemployment, 1st level	-4.204201	-4.356068	-3.595026	-3.233456
PP	Unemployment, level	-2.679549	-4.339330	-3.587527	-3.229230
	Unemployment, 1st level	-4.248594	-4.356068	-3.595026	-3.233456
CANCER INCIDENCE					
ADF	Incidence, level	-2.361092	-4.339330	-3.587527	-3.229230
	Incidence, 1st difference	-5.766137	-4.356068	-3.595026	-3.233456
PP	Incidence, level	-2.375650	-4.339330	-3.587527	-3.229230
	Incidence, 1st difference	-5.805452	-4.356068	-3.595026	-3.233456

Note: “*** represents a significance level of 1%. The number of delays in the ADF tests is determined according to the Schwarz criteria. In the PP tests, the number of delays determined according to Newey-West Bandwith is taken. As a test format, fixed and trend equation options are used for all variables at the level value. The fixed equation option is used to obtain the first difference of the variables. MacKinnon critical values are contemplated”.

TABLE 3. The results of the Engle-Granger Test.

t Statistics	Mac-Kinnon Critical Values			Result
	(%1)	(%5)	(%10)	
-2.392429	-4.339330	-3.587527	-3.229230	No Long-term relationship



TABLE 4. The results of the Johansen Test.

<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Λ Trace Statistic</i>		
	<i>Λ trace</i>	<i>0.05 C.V.</i>	<i>Prob.</i>
0.437407	20.15141	25.87211	0.2184
0.181150	5.196224	12.51798	0.5684

<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Λ Max-Eigen Statistic</i>		
	<i>Λ Max</i>	<i>0.05 C.V.</i>	<i>Prob.</i>
0.437407	14.95519	19.38704	0.1960
0.181150	5.196224	12.51798	0.5684

the predictive adequacy of a variable is based on Granger (1969)¹⁵. In this research, the Granger Causality Test over VAR Model was applied to inquire whether there is a short-term relationship between variables whose cointegration could not be detected in the long run.

As a result of the examinations, a unidirectional causality amongst variables discovered; unemployment is the Granger cause of cancer incidence.

RESULTS

The study examines the long and short-term relationships between unemployment (defined as the percentage of the unemployed workforce¹⁶) and cancer incidence (defined as the number of new cases of any type of cancer per 100,000 people¹⁷). According to the analysis results:

- Unemployment and cancer incidence are not cointegrated in the long term (Table 4).
- A unidirectional causality has been detected between variables. Unemployment is a Granger cause of cancer incidence (Table 5, Figure 2).

DISCUSSION

Cancer is defined as “a group of diseases with numerous potential causes”¹⁸. Recent research has determined that immune system impairments and telomere length shortening are among the causes of cancer. Stress and anxiety disorders impair immunity and shorten telomeres. Stress and anxiety disorders suppress immunity and shorten telo-

meres. According to the “Crisis-Cancer Cycle,” which adds a new reason to the list of detectable triggers, economic crises cause unemployment, income declines, and poverty; and thus anxiety, stress, immune system disturbances, telomere shortening, and a cancer-causing mechanism emerge. Several studies have been conducted that are related to various stages of this cycle. According to studies, crises, for example, result in a loss of output and workforce, as well as a significant impact on health¹⁹. According to the findings of this study²⁰, health issues are linked to poverty, inequality, and other social and economic indices of health. According to studies, the 2008 financial crisis, the world’s first, harmed people’s health by deteriorating their socioeconomic status²¹, and the crisis has been linked to serious consequences, particularly in terms of mental health^{22,23}.

Anxiety and depression are exacerbated by underemployment²⁴, unstable or temporary employment^{25,26}, and lack of income²⁷. Job insecurity increases the risk of depression symptoms²⁸ and the use of antidepressants²⁹. In the United States, it has also been discovered that sudden loss of wealth increases depression and antidepressant use³⁰. Unemployment and declines in investment income caused depression rates to burst³¹, according to a study conducted in Hong Kong both prior to and following the 2008 financial crisis. Important genetic evidence on the relationship between stress and cancer has also been obtained³². The global financial crisis of 2008 has been linked to a substantial increase in cancer mortality between 2008 and 2010. Over 260,000 (preventable) deaths were attributed to unemployment as a result of the recession during this period³³.

TABLE 5. The findings of the short-run analysis.

<i>Findings</i>	<i>Directions of Causality</i>
I find that Unemployment causes Cancer Incidence (one-sided causality)	Unemployment → Cancer Incidence

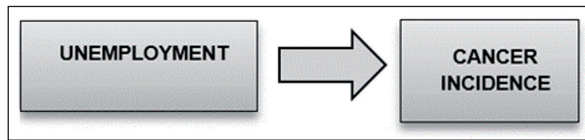


Fig. 2. The result of the Granger Causality Test over VAR Model.

Job and income losses as a result of economic crises, anxiety, and depression for the future, bring along telomere shortening. Telomere shortening also causes cancer. Many studies of parts of the Crisis-Cancer Cycle provide important evidence in the medical field. For example, many studies show that economic crises and the increase in psychiatric morbidity are related³⁴⁻⁴⁰. Wang et al⁴¹ found that during the economic crisis, the rates of major depressive disorder have increased significantly. Tennant⁴² also proved that major depression is linked to an increased risk of job insecurity. In addition to these studies, studies showing that telomere length is shortened considerably with anxiety, depression, stress, mood disorders, and adjustment disorders⁴³⁻⁵¹ completes the cycle in a sense. However, I have not come across any study that establishes a correlation between cancer and macroeconomic phenomena such as crisis, unemployment, and poverty with a multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, these studies are a contribution to the literature.

Turkey taken up in this study is a continuation of the Crisis-Cancer Cycle test run, which will be questioned whether the relationship between unemployment and the incidence of cancer. When compared to developing countries, it is seen that the Turkish economy is far from providing sufficient employment. The unemployment rate has not dropped below 9% since the 2001 crisis, except for the small drop seen in 2012 (Figure 1), and this rate is much higher than in developed and developing countries. The OECD average as of 2020 is 71.5% of the labor force participation rate in Turkey is 54.9% and is below the OECD average (Figure 3)⁵². It is thought that this low participation in the workforce may be due to the “discouragement” of the employees. “Ready to work but not seeking work” when about 2.5 million people also are included, the unemployment rate in Turkey rose 18.5%⁵³. According to statistics, about one-quarter of Turkey’s young people and more than one-third of its women are unable to obtain an education or a job. The extremely low female labor force participation rate in Turkey is one of the most visible manifestations of gender inequality. Also, the NEET rate (those who are at risk of being pushed out of the job market and exclusion from social life)⁵⁴, which is 24.8% in Turkey, which is alarming⁵⁵.

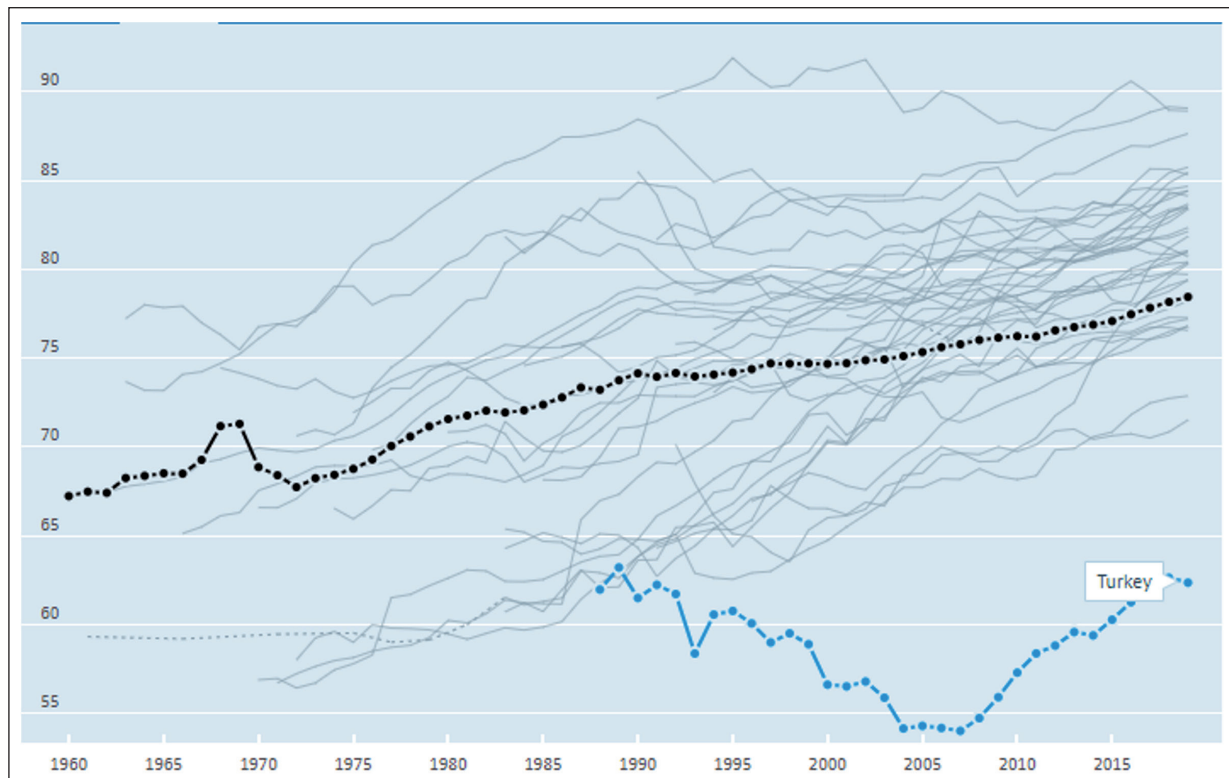


Fig. 3. Comparison of labor force participation in Turkey and OECD.



Turkey experienced serious crises in 1929-32, 1958-61, 1969-1970, 1978-83, 1988-1989, 1991, 1994, 1998-2001, 2008-2009. In Turkey, about 40% of the liberalization/globalization period was crisis years⁵⁶. In addition to all these, having higher unemployment rates than other countries, in Turkey, is there a link between cancer and unemployment? In this study, which seeks the answer to this question, the unemployment rate used is the percentage of the unemployed workforce⁵⁷. Incidence is the number of new cases of some cancers per 100,000 population⁵⁸. This study is a contribution to *the Crisis-Cancer Cycle*.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, the uncertainty shock created by COVID-19 is evolving into a global depression. And COVID-19, with the promotion of social isolation, is driving mass unemployment and firm shutdowns. The priority of clinging to life and stopping the pandemic from spreading also obscures the economic impact of the shock. Different managers in different countries have different practices and financial capabilities, which lead to different outcomes. The success or failure achieved can destroy all efforts at once due to the rapid spreading power of the virus. There is a more critical cycle; COVID-19 is creating mass unemployment. Unemployment is another cause of cancer, and according to the research shared by the American Cancer Research Association, cancer increases the death rate from COVID-19 three times more. Some types of cancer impoverish the immune system and are at risk of increasing COVID-19 complications. It has been revealed that cancer patients living in China have worse results compared to the general public and that cancer cases have a higher risk of COVID-19⁵⁹. In the United States, approximately 5000 new cancer cases will be diagnosed each day, and reports draw attention to the fact that COVID-19 can be fatal in cancer patients⁶⁰.

During the pandemic process that starts with a health crisis and turns into a global economic problem, unemployment, which is between two sharp ends, namely COVID-19 and cancer, is an important macro-economic phenomenon that should be prevented with policies. And this study offers important empirical evidence that unemployment is one of the causes of cancer. In the shadow of COVID-19, future multidisciplinary studies towards *the Crisis-Cancer Cycle* are important.

ETHICAL STATEMENT:

The data presented in this document are the results of previous studies, so it was not necessary to seek opinions from the Ethics Committee.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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