

## STIGMATIC ASPECTS OF CANCER THEME IN TURKISH CINEMA AND TELEVISION SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

Cancer is associated with stigma, due to misunderstanding and myths around cancer. The purpose of the study is to examine stigmatic aspects of cancer theme in Turkish cinema and television sector. Therefore, 18 Turkish TV series and 8 Turkish movies produced between 1973 and 2015 were reviewed in our study. We have seen that cancer is told in Turkish movies and TV series with tragic stories. We found some evidences of stigmatic aspects of cancer in these movies and series.

**Keywords:** Cancer, Stigma, Cinema, Television

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### INTRODUCTION

A society creates a system of categorizing individuals according to whether they possess attributes thought to be normal. Goffman (1963) defined stigma as “the phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute which is deeply discredited by his/her or her or her society is rejected as a result of the attribute. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity” (1). Stigmatization –to brand somebody with some mark of reproach or infamy- is the whole of the actions taken by the society against some patient groups -as much as to isolate them (2). When human beings meet something that intimidates them; they often resort to isolate and alienate it (3). This process contributes to the stigmatization on some diseases, too. Stigmatized patients are socially isolated, cannot find jobs, are frequently hospitalized and undergo situations that reduce recovery. Also; they have difficulty making friends and finding spouses (4).

Cancer is one of the diseases on which stigmatization is based most. Those not having cancer may remain distant from them due to the possibility to get cancer or death fears (5,6,7).

Today; cancer, which the whole world has been in difficulty to fight against, has already been in TV series and scenarios. Cinema, which has an important effect on the society and individuals due to the technical methods used, employs psychological components but sometimes it uses these components exaggeratively and falsely. Considering the power to affect the masses of the cinema sector, its potential to create stigmas in many issues is evident (8,9,10).

**METHODS:** The purpose of the study is to examine stigmatic aspects of cancer theme in Turkish cinema and television sector. Therefore, 18 Turkish TV series and 8 Turkish movies produced between 1973 and 2015 were reviewed in our study.

**Tablo 1. Turkish movies and TV series with cancer themes that produced between 1973-2015**

Series / Movie		Some features of the characters with cancer in the film or series				
Name of Series/ Movie	Released	Sex	Child or adult	The type of cancer	Location of treatment (domestic or abroad)	Outcome
CANIM KARDEŞİM	1973	Male	Child	Leukemia	Domestic	Died
SICAK SAATLER	1997	Female	Adult	Brain cancer	Domestic	Survived
GÜLE GÜLE	1999	Male	Adult	Cancer-unspecified	Domestic	Died
KOMSER ŞEŞKİR	2000	Female	Child	Leukemia	Domestic	Died
ASMALI KONAK	2002	Female	Adult	Lymphoma	Abroad	Survived
BİR İSTANBUL MASALI	2003	Female	Adult	Breast cancer	Domestic	Survived
DOKTORLAR	2006	Female	Adult	Lymphoma	Domestic	Died
BİNBİR GECE	2006	Male	Child	Leukemia	Domestic	Survived
SÖZÜN BİTTİĞİ YER	2007	Male	Child	Leukemia	Domestic	Died
ELVEDA DERKEN	2007	Female	Adult	Brain cancer	Domestic	Died
ASİ	2007	Male	Adult	Myeloma	Domestic	Survived
KAVAK YELLERİ	2007	Female	Adult	Leukemia	Domestic	Died
GÜNEŞİ GÖRDÜM	2009	Female	Adult	Uterine cancer	Domestic	Died
LALE DEVRİ	2010	Female	Adult	Breast cancer	Domestic	Survived
ÖYLE BİR GEÇER ZAMANKİ	2010	Female	Adult	Breast Cancer	Domestic	Died
ADINI FERİHA KOYDUM	2011	Female	Adult	Breast cancer	Domestic	Survived
MED CEZİR	2013	Female	Adult	Brain cancer	Domestic	Died
A.Ş.K.	2013	Female	Adult	Lymphoma	Domestic	Died
GÜNEŞİ BEKLERKEN	2013	Female	Adult	Breast cancer	Abroad	Survived
KÜÇÜK AĞA	2014	Male	Child	Leukemia	Domestic	Survived
KURLAR VADİSİ	2014	Female	Adult	Lung cancer	Domestic	Survived
PERİ MASALI	2014	Female	Adult	Lung cancer	Domestic	Died
SONSUZ BİR AŞK	2015	Male	Adult	Cancer-unspecified	Domestic	Survived

Those TV series listed above are selected considering the top-5 list in the rating list of 16 national television channels in Turkey. The films taken into this list are in Best-of-All-Time List in Turkey and are still and often broadcasting in national television channels in Turkey.

**Conclusion:** We are not stranger to the fact that cancer, being a merciless disease all the time, has been used in Turkish films and TV series. Today; cancer is treated in Turkish films and TV series with tragic stories. These films and TV series generally reflect some wrong messages that cancer treatment is not possible in Türkiye and is impossible. Despite the modern treatment opportunities in the developing health sector in Türkiye, attraction of cancer theme in Turkish films and TV series seems as if it were abused; which – it should be kept in mind - will drive cancer people to despair and intensify stigmatization.

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