

DOI: 10.17986/blm.1464

Adli Tıp Bülteni 2021;26(2):125-132

The Approach to Missing and Abducted Children Cases in Turkey: Criticism of First Response, Criminal Investigation and TV Programs

Türkiye’de Kayıp ve Kaçırılan Çocuk Olgularına Yaklaşım: İlk Müdahalenin, Suç Soruşturmasının ve TV Programlarının Kiritize Edilmesi

© Burak Miraç Gönültaş, Assoc. Prof. PhD.¹, © Charlie Hedges²

¹Sivas Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Letters, Department of Social Work, Sivas, Turkey

²AMBER Alert Europe, Brussels, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aims to criticize how to intervene and investigate in cases of missing children in Turkey in the context of first response, criminal investigation and TV Programmes. Thus, we can offer suggestions on how to make more effective interventions in missing children cases in the context of the current investigation of missing and abducted children cases.

Methods: The research adopted a qualitative analysis method and in order to collect data, interviewing and documenting technique from professionals related to Turkish approach (n=5), and speakers and producers of TV programmes (ATV-T.S. and Fox TV-K.Ç.) related to missing children (n=3) were applied. Then the collected data were analyzed with content analysis.

Results: Content analysis yielded three themes: 1-Administrative approach and first response, 2- Judiciary approach and criminal investigation, 3- The approach of TV programs. In the light of findings, many institutions participate in the intervention process, professionals from many different fields need to work together, investigation processes are also defined step by step. It has been observed that there is no certainty about standards on the issues of receiving the first report of missing children, how is the transition from administrative approach to judicial approach in the case of a criminal factor, coordination of the units and professionals involved in the process. The effectiveness of TV programs in mobilizing potential witnesses (the third eye) is significant; however, there are no standards in relation to the protection of witnesses, victims and their relatives against defamation and disclosure.

Conclusion: In the context of the Turkish approach, in order for the intervention and investigation of missing and abducted children to become more effective, standards should be determined at the following four points: Receiving missing reports, the importance of time in the context of criminal assessment, the coordination of approaches, using mass media for the third eye and participants rights in TV programs. Effective training must be developed that ensures all parties are aware of the processes, how to implement them and what information they might need to carry out for an effective investigation.

Keywords: Missing child, child abduction, Turkey, risk assessment



Address for Correspondence/Yazışma Adresi: Burak Miraç Gönültaş Assoc. Prof. PhD., Sivas Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Letters, Department of Social Work, Sivas, Turkey
E-mail: mburakgonultas@gmail.com
ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0001-9132-1464

Received/Geliş tarihi: 16.07.2020
Accepted/Kabul tarihi: 08.04.2021

ÖZ

Amaç: Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de kayıp ve kaçırılan çocuk olgularına müdahale ve bu olguların soruşturulma şeklini ilk müdahale, suç soruşturması ve TV Programları bağlamında eleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Böylelikle, kayıp ve kaçırılan çocuk olgularının hali hazırdaki soruşturulması bağlamında, kayıp çocuk olgularında nasıl daha etkili müdahalelerin yapılabileceği konusunda öneriler sunulması hedeflenmektedir.

Yöntem: Bu araştırma nitel bir metodoloji benimsemiştir ve veriler, kayıp çocuk olguları ile ilişkili profesyoneller (n=5) ve ülkemizde yayında olan (ATV-T.S. ve Fox TV-K.Ç.) programlarının uzmanları (n=3) ile yapılan görüşmeler ve konu ile ilgili dokümanlardan toplanmış ve toplanan veriler içerik analizi yöntemi ile değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular: İçerik analizi üç tema ortaya çıkarmıştır. 1-İdari yaklaşım ve ilk müdahale, 2- Adli yaklaşımı ve suç soruşturması, 3- TV programlarının yaklaşımı. Bulgular ışığında şu söylenebilir: Pek çok kurum müdahale sürecine katılmakta, birçok farklı alandan profesyonellerin birlikte çalışması gerekmekte, ayrıca soruşturma süreçleri adım adım tanımlanmaktadır. Kayıp çocukların ilk bildirimlerinin alınması, kriminal bir faktör durumunda idari yaklaşımdan adli yaklaşıma geçişin nasıl olacağı, sürece dahil olan birimlerin ve profesyonellerin koordinasyonu konularında standartların belirgin olmadığı gözlemlenmiştir. TV programlarının olası tanıkları harekete geçirmedeki etkinliği (üçüncü göz) önemlidir, ancak tanıkların, mağdurların ve yakınlarının unutulma ve kimliklerinin ifşa edilmelerine karşı korunmasına ilişkin herhangi bir standart olmadığı görülmüştür.

Sonuç: Türkiye yaklaşımı bağlamında, kayıp ve kaçırılan çocuklara müdahale ve soruşturmanın daha etkin hale gelebilmesi için aşağıdaki dört noktada standartlar belirlenmelidir: Kayıp bildirimlerinin alınması, adli değerlendirme bağlamında zamanın önemi, yaklaşımların koordinasyonu, potansiyel tanıklar için kitle iletişim araçlarının kullanılması ve TV programlarında katılımcı haklarının korunması. Ayrıca sürece katılan tüm tarafların süreçlerden, bunların nasıl uygulanacağından ve etkili bir soruşturma yürütmek için hangi bilgilere ihtiyaç duyabileceğinden haberdar olmasını sağlayan eğitimler geliştirilmeli ve uygulanmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kayıp çocuk, kaçırılan çocuk, Türkiye, risk değerlendirmesi

INTRODUCTION

Negative experiences and a troubled childhood may harm a child’s development and socialisation processes, with going missing being one of the types of event that can cause significant harm (1). The child whose whereabouts is unknown by their parents may be faced with many dangerous situations (2). The missing child case is also a serious source of stress for families (3,4). Therefore, it is important how these cases are approached and interventions carried out.

Unlike the investigation of known crimes, the investigation of cases of missing children is different and specific (5), because in these investigations, it is not enough to only capture the perpetrator/perpetrators. At the same time, the police should be able to find the child alive/safe and delivered to his/her relatives (3). This situation necessitates a more extended approach in which the police, space and community components work together (6). In this context, it can be said that the missing child investigation process includes police investigation techniques (initial notification, risk analysis, interviews, investigation of the findings), the search for the child and the assistance of the society (7,8), because the investigation of missing children requires a race against time (1,9).

The reaction to cases of missing children has increased in Turkish society in the last fifteen years (7). For example in 2005-2006, many people reported to the police that organ mafia kidnapped children in some towns. These were rumours but Turkish society reacted seriously to them (3). This level of sensitivity was as a result of child abduction cases that resulted

in sexual abuse and murder (7). Some of these examples are Lost Children from Kayseri, Irmak baby, Leyla baby etc. cases (these children were abducted by someone close to their homes and then sexually abused and later murdered). Reactions towards missing children cases have engendered two important progressions and developments in Turkey: First, society started to question how the police should approach and intervene in these cases. Accordingly, the number of studies related to child abduction increased (Parliament preparing research reports, regional training programs for police officers, such as setting up special investigation teams). However, these initiatives have not reached a sufficient level and could be further developed. According to a Parliamentary Research Report (10), which was conducted throughout this period, the reasons for faults which are experienced during missing children investigations in general are as follows:

- The problems with informing the police (delayed, missing or false information by parents),
- Inter-institutional coordination problems,
- The problems that stem from distinction of judiciary and administrative approaches (delayed legal precautions),
- The problems during information gathering processes, the problems with participation of the society in search processes,
- Inefficient utilization of databases on missing children.

Secondly, during this period, TV programs in which the missing children were researched became very popular and the families whose children were lost started to join/participate with these programs in order to find their children. The participation

of families in such programs increased the perception that missing child research conducted by the police is not sufficient. Resulting from these two developments, the interest in the subject and how to approach and investigate the cases of missing children has increased in recent years.

Most of the police investigations in the UK relate to missing cases (5). Two-thirds of them are children and the most frequent age range is in 15-17. Of these missing incidents, 2000 were lost for one year. 80% of those reported missing are returned to their home without the intervention of the police. Reported missing children in Turkey in recent years, has been moving towards the salient points (10). The total number of children lost between 2006 and 2010 is 29,223. In these years, 27,741 of these children were found but 1,482 of them are still missing. The number of children lost between 0-9 years of age was 1,208, 1,121 of them were found and 87 of them are still missing (10). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's (11) data 75,874 children disappeared in the last period (2013-2017). There are no more detailed statistical data about the number of missing children (the number of missing children and estimated number of missing children) and also the number of missing cases resulting in the death of the child.

Although studies on the subject of missing children and child abduction have increased, it is not enough (1,12-14). In the studies, the challenges of the missing person investigations, the behaviour of the missing people, the geographic information in the missing investigations, the importance of the risk assessment and immediate response were discussed and suggestions were made to help the police investigations (1,5,8,13,15-17). While these studies generally mention the investigation of missing persons, they rarely touch on the characteristics (e.g. using media parties such as alert systems etc.) of investigation of missing children cases specifically. In Turkey, these studies are also very rare. In a study, by İnci and Altıntop (18), n=296 lost children's investigation file were analysed. In this study, demographic and family information of the missing children were analysed. According to the findings, cases of children going missing are affected by anomalous conditions and social problems. However, how to conduct missing child investigations, its dynamics and processes, is not mentioned in the study.

In this context, the present study is using a qualitative approach, trying to criticise how to intervene and investigate in cases of missing children in Turkey in the context of first response, criminal investigation and TV Programmes. For this purpose data was collected from professionals of investigation units, reports and documents on missing and abducted children and TV programmers. TV programs on the cases are very popular and some missing children were found via live broadcast. Therefore it is also an aim to see of the role and contribution of TV programmes in the search and investigation of missing

and abducted children. Thus we can offer suggestions on how to make more effective interventions in missing children cases in the context of the current investigation of missing and abducted children cases.

MATERIALS and METHODS

Research Design

A qualitative research method is adopted to uncover the details of the investigation of the missing and abducted children cases from the documents (manual and reports on missing children) and professionals (investigators and programmers) with a descriptive approach. In order to examine intervention and investigation of missing and abducted children in Turkey, data was collected with a two-step process following the guidelines of Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Research procedure (19). The first was documentary analysis: Documents (Parliamentary Research Report, Parliamentary Question and Missing Children Guide of General Directorate of Police) are analysed in order to see how missing and abducted children cases are investigated by police and other institutions. These documents have information about the approach to missing children cases in terms of first response (searching) and criminal investigation. In the first stage, institutions such as police, safe guards, search and rescue teams etc. and their handling techniques on missing cases were examined. The research question is "what and how is the intervention and investigation of missing and abducted children in Turkey?"

The second stage is interviewing the professionals and TV programmers. Professionals are engaged in order to see more details about missing and abducted children cases with interviewing. Thus, we have a chance to see some details about searching, investigating, crime scene investigation and the forensic aspect of them in practice. In the second stage, specific details related to practice of intervention and investigation were examined with semi-structured interviews. Thus, the shortcomings of the general approach regarding practice were understood and completed via the second stage. The questions to professionals were determined in terms of issues related to practice such as "in which circumstances do you prefer search dogs in missing cases or how do you coordinate the other units and agencies? Data from stages were brought together and then analyzed with content analysis.

Sample

In order to see how missing and abducted children cases are responded to and investigated in Turkey, data were collected from two sources. One source is documents of manuals and reports. The documents were determined by their being an official document containing information about intervention and investigation of missing-abducted children. These are Parliamentary Research Report (10), Parliamentary Question

(20) and Missing Children Guide of General Directorate of Police (21). The second source is professionals. For the semi structured interview, twenty four professionals were invited to participate in the study by email. Only five professionals responded to the semi-structured questions. These are investigators (n=2), crime scene investigation expert (n=1), forensic scientists (n=2). In addition, TV programme makers (n=3) were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the producer and coordinator of the two TV programs (n=3) (ATV-T.S-Müge Anlı and Fox TV-K.Ç.-Muhammet Fırat, Mecit Beştepe). Producers and presenters on TV programmes were interviewed in order to see how the programmes conduct the cases and contribute to investigation.

Statistical Analysis

For the present study, in order to reach an in-depth understanding of responding intervening and investigating missing and abducted children cases, data collected from documents and responses of professionals to semi-structured questions were subjected to a content analysis. The first author, as a coder, first read all data, grouped them, and constructed data-driven themes to different common points: data related to intervention and investigation of missing children presented a step by step approach to cases and finally the content analysis yielded three themes. 1-Administrative approach and first response, 2- Judiciary approach and criminal investigation, 3- The approach of TV programs. Then data were distributed under these three themes. For reliability of analysis, another coder was introduced to themes and given two documents and three semi-structured interview forms. Then he individually read them and distributed data. A comparison of two coders put forward an interrater reliability of 89% and this rate is quite adequate as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994).

RESULTS

The investigation differs according to the circumstances and type of disappearance. The approach to the investigation is determined by whether or not the case includes any criminal activity. When the police are informed about the case, if there is no possibility of abduction or suspicion of life risks, then the case is regarded as an “administrative” issue. Administrative approach stands for the preventive police work and such work does not require any criminal investigation. Under these circumstances, the police continue to search for the missing child until case is resolved. If any possibility of criminal activity is suspected, an administrative case turns into a judiciary case. Prosecutors are then informed about the case and the criminal investigation procedure is actuated and the search for the missing child also goes on. TV programs also based on investigative reporting.

Administrative approach and first response: In Turkey, missing children cases are generally reported to police stations. In the

police stations, there are not any special desks or specialists for receiving missing children reports or taking special care of parents of missing children. When a missing child case is filed, some information, such as the I.D of the child, description of him/her and clothing worn when missing, is written down. The officer who receives the report, radios the information to all available police patrols in order to make the situation known to the units and begin the search process. Any police unit receiving a missing child case informs the Missing Children Office and transfers the file to them as it is responsible for investigation of missing children cases. Working under Children’s Unit of Police, the Missing Children Office is the unit in charge of the search for missing children.

The Missing Children Office opens a “Missing Child Form” containing detailed information about the missing child. The information about the missing child is uploaded to “PolNet” (intranet program of police). As the first step of the investigation, they interview the informant or parents of the missing child. Officers want to know whether the child was missing previously, and possible whereabouts. Some other information that can be related to the missing child’s situation such as social status of family members and dependence to each other, custody of the child, whether he/she had money or clothing when they had gone missing, whether he/she left any note before going missing, social media profiles, illness etc., is also gathered. At that point, in accordance with the evidence, the scope of the search is extended, and the search continues. Via a method that can be regarded as “fieldwork”, school mates and teachers of the missing child are interviewed, emergency services and pharmacy records are checked, and inter-city bus stations, train stations, abandoned buildings, playgrounds and woods are searched based on the last known whereabouts of the missing child. For the efficiency of the searching process, sleuths, search and rescue teams and helicopters are utilized. No assessment of risk factors is carried out in terms of evaluating the absence of the child. At this level, it is taken into consideration whether the missing child is a victim of a crime or not (This evaluation can be regarded as some kind of risk assessment in general terms but it is not done to any standards but within the experience of the officer). The searching process goes on until the missing child is found. Moreover, via the “Missing Person Alert Project”, which was introduced by General Directorate of Police in 2014, information and visuals of the missing child are uploaded to the internet and directed to the people’s mobile phone around the child’s last known position for social media share. By this way, society is utilized for some extra help.

If the child is still missing, notwithstanding the steps above having been taken, then the next level search procedure is actuated. At this level, the first stage search activities are extended. Field work is done in a more detailed manner. Photographs of the missing child are copied and distributed to

the town; public transportation records, dwellings of relatives and friends, records of surveillance cameras, rented car records, persons convicted of child abuse and possible shopping points for children are controlled. Also, while consideration is given to whether the missing child is a victim of crime or not and help may be requested from mass media.

Judiciary approach and criminal investigation: Upon receiving the missing child report, if any suspicion of criminal activity (being victim of a crime, life threat) arises about the absence of the child or if no success is achieved by the end of the administrative process, then the judiciary approach is actuated. Possible suspects who may have a connection to the absence of the child are considered as part of the investigation. DNA samples are gathered from relations. Prosecutors get involved in the process and warrants for domiciliary visits, communication taps and detention are given. Hotel records, city surveillance systems record and corpses are investigated. If the missing child case turns into a kidnap case upon basis of solid evidence (kidnap for ransom etc.), the Criminal Investigation Unit gets involved in the case. This unit is responsible for the investigation of felonies such as homicide, kidnapping and looting, and the officers of this unit are more talented and experienced at investigation of such crimes. If the child is still missing after following these three stages, the Missing Children Unit keeps searching for the child. According to the Missing Children Guidelines, the general approach in missing children cases is broadly as above.

TV programs: These TV programs, which are on-the-air during daytime every weekday, handle missing person and unsolved murder cases. Photographs and information about the missing child are requested from the family and broadcast on these programs for public help via some hotlines. One of the most important factors in obtaining results in missing children cases is acting fast, the object of the case is a child “besides all, absence of a child has something humane to it” (M.B., K.Ç. TV Program). It was realized that a lot of feedback was received from people in a chapter of T.S. beginning with a child murder case and format of the show was designed again. “...With this case the attitude of people became clear to us. We think that people follow the idiom ‘Let the sleeping dogs lie’, but we are proven wrong because we have such conscientious people that, upon watching suffering people on TV, with moral motives they helped us with their reports. This attitude made us redesign the show...” (M.A., T.S. TV Program).

As the shows become popular, people share their knowledge about the missing people cases via the show and the information is reported to the police units who are in charge of those cases. This show is a good means of receiving information about missing people cases, in fact some information is directly reported to the police before being broadcasted in case it may cause problems with the investigation. These shows have their

investigation teams (T.S. employs a team of 62 investigators). The teams go to crime scenes and have interviews in the area thus more eye witnesses can be interviewed. Some of the eyewitnesses interviewed around the crime scene are invited to participate in a live show. Also, forensic specialists, psychiatrists and psychologists are employed for their supervision.

Through social consciousness, society is utilized as the third eye because some people who accidentally witnessed an incident may not be aware of the reality of the situation at the time the crime was committed. While they are watching the TV program, upon seeing a photo of a missing child, they may realize that it is a missing child case and if that happens, this realization transforms the potential witnesses into active witnesses. “... the program gives the people, who witnessed a scene, the opportunity to make sense out of it. Our advantage is making a case known to millions of people at an instant...” (M.A., T.S. Program).

Briefly, the data provides information on how to intervene in and investigate missing and abducted children cases. In the light of this information, 1- many institutions participate in the intervention process, 2- professionals from many different fields need to work together, 3- investigation processes are also defined step by step. When the responses of professionals and the parliamentary research report are examined in the context of practicing the three points above, it has been observed that there is no certainty about standards on the issues of 1- receiving the first report of missing children, 2- how the transition from administrative approach to judicial approach in the case of a criminal factor, 3- coordination of the units and professionals involved in the process. In interviews with TV program makers, referrals to these programs are quite high, and the programs result in intervention in cases with an investigative logic and get quite significant results. However, in addition to the effectiveness of TV programs in mobilizing potential witnesses (the third eye), it has been observed that there are no standards in relation to the protection of witnesses, victims and their relatives against defamation and disclosure.

DISCUSSION

According to literature, immediate response and investigation are brought to the fore to enable the success of missing children cases (22,23), because the longer it takes for the police to respond, the later the missing children are found (1). In this context, this study aims to put forward some criticisms on intervention and investigation of missing children cases in Turkey in order to make improvements. Considering our findings, certain standards should be adopted in order to enable the investigation of missing and abducted children cases to be effective and to protect the rights of their victims and relatives. Activating the intervention and investigation, particularly in Turkey, is considered to be as follows:

The first one is receiving missing reports. For receiving missing reports, staff at the police station are only responsible for receiving the report, the interviews with informants are undertaken by professionals from the Missing Children Unit, who take over the case. There are no specially trained staff at police stations who can take care of the parents who are giving the information, and who experience tension and fear and suffer through this. As the units receiving and investigating the case are different, time may be wasted. According to Hanfland et al. (23) study on child abduction murder cases (n=577), it is emphasized that missing person cases should receive a fast response. Thus, initial reporting is important for all investigations.

The second one is criminal assessment. Upon receiving the missing child report, the Missing Children Unit staff actuate the first response process, namely administrative approach. During this period, it can be complicated by whether any evidence can be found about the absence of the child. Therefore, for as long as no evidence indicating the criminal activity is found, passing to the judiciary approach will be delayed. For instance, in a study analysing abductions resulted in murders of the children, it was found out that 60.2% of the investigations were started as missing children reports, 9.7% were abduction reports and 8.5% were runaway children reports at the beginning (24). In addition, while the Missing Children Unit of Turkey is responsible for looking for the missing children and to investigate, it is not determined how to involve the Criminal Investigation Unit into the case. On the other hand, the search for the child must be carried out successfully to discover any criminal involvement in the case. Gathering intelligence and reaching potential witnesses is also of very high significance. As time is vital in such investigations, it is essential to find concrete evidence as fast as possible (25). For instance, in a study of missing children cases which resulted in death of the missing children, it was found out that 21,9% of the abductors' identities were determined during the initial response, 39,8% were determined in the following 24 hours and 57% were found in the following week (24). Therefore, the more time is spent, the weaker the chances of finding the abductor becomes. According to Park and Cho (1), it is emphasized that the prompt arrest of an abductor is significant in child abduction cases. In another study, in 33% of the abduction cases, there were direct eyewitnesses who had intelligence about the cases but were not able to be reached initially (24). In this context searching for the missing child and conducting criminal investigation must be carried out in cooperation with searching and investigation. Additionally, in terms of criminal assessment, an evaluation that considers whether criminal activity is present in missing children cases in Turkey will be highly beneficial.

The third one is the coordination of approaches. In terms of missing children investigations, the approach includes not only

conducting the investigation and inquiring, but also informing the parents of the missing child, and providing them with legal, social and psychological support. At the same time, informing and utilizing mass media with the aim of actuating the whole of society, using geographical analysis and getting help from all possible units increases the probability of finding the missing child. In this context, the need for involvement of many different units and professionals may result in losing valuable time in the investigation, therefore, qualified professionals take control of such cases to coordinate and supervise their management. The Missing Children Unit of Turkey uses some elements (helicopter, searching dog, rescue teams, etc.) for searching and rescuing a missing child. However, some of these elements are under control of other institutions and the units that are supposed to provide liaison, geographical analysis, psycho-social and legal support to families of missing children do not exist in the police. In this process, involvement of such units in the case increases the chance of success.

The forth one is using mass media: The third eye in the society is very important for reaching children and conducting investigation. The Missing Person Alert Project has been active in Turkey since 2014. However, this method covers only the people in that area and the people who do not have mobile phones cannot be reached to help find the children. Also, lack of utilization of other media (billboards, bus stops, etc.) means that a smaller number of people are made aware of this information. Alternatively, TV shows have been of significant help in solving many cases in Turkey. It can be considered that the TV programs in our sample have a similar kind of function to Child Rescue Alert and alternative investigation unit. Taking one step further, these TV shows not only broadcast the photographs and information of the missing children, but by following investigative journalism methods, they also actuate any person that can be involved with the case. As a result of the methods followed, it is thought that TV shows function as a medium that leads the process in favour of the missing child. However, there are no standards on how to protect the rights of relatives of children who participate in programs..

CONCLUSION

In the context of the Turkish approach, in order for the intervention and investigation of missing and abducted children to become more effective, standards should be determined at the following four points:

- 1- Receiving missing reports,
- 2- The importance of time in the context of criminal assessment,
- 3- The coordination of approaches,
- 4- Using mass media for the third eye and participants rights in TV programs.

First, in order to be able to run effective missing child investigations in Turkey, employment of capable professionals

is needed in order to collect data and reports with missing children in the first response.

Second, even before the differentiation of the cases as administrative or juridical, detailed evaluation must be carried out in the light of the information gathered, and in consideration of the evaluation, the intervention, which is relevant to the risk level, must be executed immediately. Particularly with abduction cases, effective risk assessment is vital in terms of time loss (Figure 1). In this context, standards that can scale the risk level for children and create understanding of the reasons for going absent must be established and, in accordance with the risk level, intervention methods must be determined. The criteria must be established according to the profiles of missing or abducted children in Turkey and must be expressed in a such a clear style that it does not mean the officer(s) has to take initiative; and intervention methods that are relevant for each risk level must be lined up in the form of a check list. The initial report must be filled in and risk assessment must be done on software that makes it possible to see the assessment by all units. Moreover, in order to be able make the processes appropriately controlled, check-lists must be developed and the controls must be carried out by the professionals who receive the missing case report. In addition, scope of the PolNet must be extended, for the ease of the staff doing the risk assessment, and for the fast and easy upload of the information about the missing person case to the system. In order to be able to designate the possible routes and areas which might have been used by the missing child, the police must utilize geographical analysis. The number of

the scientific studies, which can be of help for missing children investigations must be increased.

Thirdly, for the aim of swift intervention and coordination of the search units and criminal investigation units, supervisor professionals, who can coordinate the staff, institutions, organizations and volunteers taking part in the processes, must be assigned, authorized, commissioned and given responsibility. Moreover, these professionals must be authorized in informing parents of missing child, superiors and public. Within the police departments, in the sense of informing and supporting families, social workers must be assigned, and having the contacts with the relations of the missing people through these professionals would be convenient also.

Finally, for the high-risk cases alert systems and visual methods that can actuate public (billboards, public screens at metro, train and bus stations and flash news on TV channels) must be enhanced in order to increase the efficiency of search and investigation. TV shows about the missing people must be supported. However, ethics must be developed in terms of private life of the children and families public by broadcasting. Any child or family participating to such shows must have the rights of “right to privacy and right to be forgotten”. On the other hand, as it was previously mentioned, the coordination of informants that call the shows and investigating units by supervising investigators would be of vital importance in terms of safety of the investigations. Effective training must be developed that ensures all parties are aware of the processes, how to implement them and what information the might need to carry out an effective investigation.

Time Line

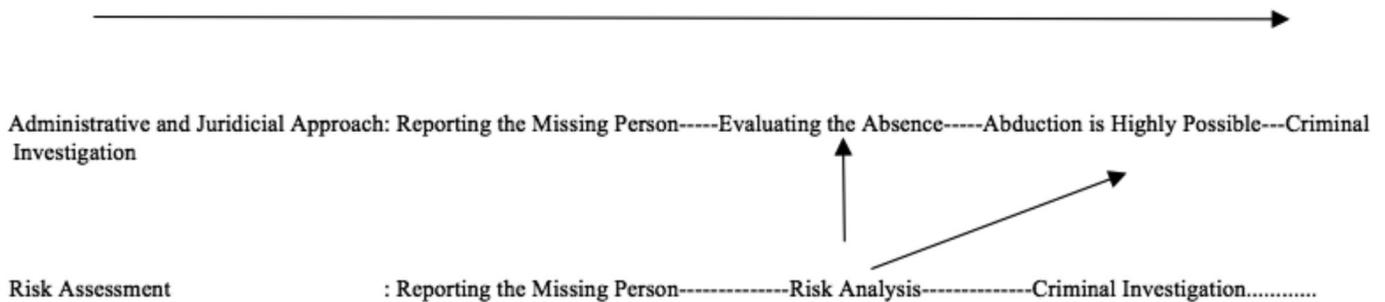


Figure 1. Significance of risk assessment in terms of time loss

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We also thank to AMBERAlert EUROPE for their assistance.

ETHICS

Ethics Committee Approval: Our study was written in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and it does not need ethical permission.

Peer-review: Internally peer-reviewed.

Authorship Contributions

Concept: B.M.G., Design: B.M.G., C.H., Data Collection or Processing: B.M.G., Analysis or Interpretation: B.M.G., C.H., Literature Search: B.M.G., Writing: B.M.G., C.H.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests regarding content of this article.

Financial Disclosure: This work is funded by Koc University, Research Prize of Prof. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, UNESCO Chair of KOC-KAM Gender Studies Center, İstanbul, Turkey

REFERENCES

- Park J, Cho JT. Call the police immediately: Factors influencing perpetrator arresttime in child abduction cases in South Korea. *Child Abuse and Negl.* 2019;89:40-47.
- Hegar RL, Greif GL. Abduction of children by their parents: a survey of the problem. *Social Work.* 1991;36(5):421-426.
- Gönültaş MB. Activating of investigation in the cases of missing child and child abduction. *Turk J Forensic Sci.* 2014;13:42-50.
- Clark J. You are going to drop the ball on this ...': using siblings' stories to inform better interprofessional practice when someone goes missing. *Police Pract Res.* 2012;13(1):31-43.
- Fyfe NR, Stevenson O, Woolnough P. Missing persons: the processes and challenges of police investigation. *Policing Soc.* 2015;25(4):409-425.
- Fyfe NR. The police, space and society: the geography of policing. *Prog Hum Geogr.* 1991;15:249-267.
- Gönültaş MB. Türkiye'de Kayıp ve Kaçırılan Çocuklar Sorununa Bütüncül Bakış. Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi; 2018.
- Hedges C. *Police Officers Guide to The Investigation of Missing Persons.* London: Home Office; 2002.
- Geberth V. Sex related child abduction homicides. *Law Order.* 2004;52(3):1-7.
- Parliamentary Research Report. Kayıp Çocuklar Başta Olmak Üzere Çocukların Mağdur Olduğu Sorunların Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi. Turkish Assembly, 23. Dönem, Number: 589; 2010.
- Turkish Statistical Institute (2018). Child Victims (2013-2017). Available from: http://tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1070.
- Sowerby A, Thomas SD. A mixed methods study of the mental health and criminal justice histories of missing persons. *Police Pract Res.* 2017;18(1):87-98.
- Fyfe N, Parr H, Stevenson O, Woolnough P. To the end of the world: space, place, and missing persons investigations. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice.* 2015;9(3):275-283.
- Lord BW, Boudreaux MC, Lanning KV. Investigating potential child abduction cases. *FBI Law Enforcement Bull.* 2001;70(4):1-13.
- Shalev K, Schaefer M, Morgan A. Investigating missing person cases: how can we learn where they go or how far they travel? *Int J Police Sci Manag.* 2009;11:123-129.
- Collie J, Greene KS. Examining modus operandi in stranger child abduction: A comparison of attempted and zcompleted cases. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling.* 2019;1:1-19.
- Newiss G. A study of the characteristics of outstanding missing persons: Implications for the development of police risk assessment. *Policing Soc.* 2005;15(2):212-225.
- İnci Y, Altıntop S. Türkiye'de kayıp çocuk sorununun sosyo-kültürel ve ekonomik sebepleri ve sonuçları (doğu anadolu bölgesi'nde orta ölçekli bir büyükşehir belediyesi örneklemleri). *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi.* 2018;8(38):604-618.
- Levitt HM, Bamberg M, Creswell JW, Frost DM, Josselson R, Suárez-Orozco C. Journal article reporting standards for qualitative research in psychology: the APA publications and communications board task force report. *Am Psychol.* 2018;73(1):26-46.
- Parliamentary Question. Missing Children in Mus, Kayseri and Diyarbakır. Turkish Assembly, Number: 7/10084; 2010.
- General Directorate of Police. Missing Children Guide. Publications of Asayış Daire Başkanlığı, Number 11, Ankara; 2010.
- Brown KM, Keppel RD, Weis JG, Skeen ME. Investigative case management for missing children homicide: Report II. Olympia, WA: Attorney General of Washington and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; 2006.
- Hanfland, KA, Keppel R, Weis J. Case management for missing children homicide investigation. Olympia, Washington: Attorney General of Washington and U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; 1997.
- Steidel SE, Hoever R, Sheppard HW. The initial response. USA: Missing and Abducted Children. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; 2011.
- LePard D, Demers S, Langan C, Rossmo K. Challenges in serial murder investigations involving missing persons. *Police Pract Res.* 2015;16(4):328-340.