Reviewer's report

Title: Media suicide-reports, Internet use and the occurrence of suicides between 1987 and 2005 in Japan

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Reviewer: Paul S YIP

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The authors analyzed the suicide time series data in Japan to examine the relationship between newspaper coverage on suicide and actual suicide case. They also find that Internet use is a predictor of suicide.

The authors adopted a similar method as in Phillips (1974) and Bollen & Phillips (1982) with some major differences.

i) Phillips (1974) had used monthly suicide data for analysis but then he admitted in his later work that this was problematic and he used daily data instead in Bollen & Phillips (1982). Pls justify your choice of using monthly data in the paper.

ii) Phillips (1974) and Bollen & Phillips (1982) used number of suicide news at previous month and past 10 days respectively as independent variable, rather than at same month or same day, in order to establish a temporal relationship between stimuli (suicide news) and response (suicide death). Please also justify the choice of the number of newspaper article at same month as independent variable.

iii) The inclusive criteria of news article is by searching keyword of "suicide" in the headline. This approach may be too loose by including some articles which may not directly relate to "media suicide-report", say editorial, commentary, fictional story, "suicide bomber" or even the keyword "suicide" using in contexts nothing related to suicide. Pls explain. Also, is a suicide news headline containing type of suicide method rather than keyword "suicide" possible in Japanese newspaper?

iv) Do frontpage coverage, photo of deceased or illustration matter?

v) If the dummy variables for months (Feb to Dec) are included in the model to control for seasonality factor, why is "the number of monthly suicide cases in the previous year" required to include as independent variable?

vi) The authors correctly point out the limitations of this study. I suggest the authors to redo the analysis by comprising those possible "predictors" as indicated by them, say unemployment rate, bankruptcy rate or economical/stock index etc, to minimize the possible confounding effect.

vii) The result about Internet use should be interpreted cautiously since as indicated by the authors, the extent of exposure to Internet news was not determined. Most of the online user might use Internet for leisure or communication purpose rather than news reading. Maybe only small percentage of Internet user were exposed to suicide news and an even smaller proportion among them were influenced by the news.