

Increasing Trend of Suicide Among Youth: A Social and Psychological Problem

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Abstract

Suicide among young people appears to be a severe issue that requires immediate attention and concerted global initiatives. Suicide is now a leading cause of death in all parts of the world. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) estimate, low and middle-income countries account for approximately 77% of all suicides worldwide. Pakistan, which is also a developing country, has seen an upsurge in the number of suicides among its youth, but official suicide numbers in the country are still unclear. Pakistan neither submits suicide fatality numbers to the WHO nor compiles national suicidal statistics. Certain social and religious factors make reporting and collection of data on suicide difficult in Pakistan, however, research of several studies reveals that household problems are the leading cause of suicide in Asian countries. The research paper is divided into two sections: (1) variables that contribute to the rise of child and teenage suicide, and (2) evidence-based therapy of child and adolescent suicide. Academic success, physical condition, mental health and well-being, economic status, financial difficulties, and overall life enjoyment are all crucial matters to consider. According to a survey, the leading cause of mortality among persons in 2019 was suicide. As a global goal, WHO has prioritized the lowering of suicide moral. This paper indicates that the only way forward is to eliminate all risk factors through integrated and multi-sector prevention programs, with essential prevention methods that can be population-based as well as targeted to high-risk sub-groups.

Keywords: suicide, adolescent suicide, national suicidal statistics, suicide morality

Introduction

Suicide is a major public health concern among young people. It has now become an incredibly major societal issue in all modern societies. It is the second biggest cause of death among people aged 15 to 29. According to World Health Organization report (2019), almost 703,000 people commit suicide globally in 2019 (WHO, 2019). Several frequent elements interact to increase a person's proclivity to commit suicide. Personal, social, psychological, cultural, biological, and environmental aspects can all be considered. According to the WHO, 75 percent of suicides occur in poor and middle-income nations as opposed to Western ones (Shekhani et al, 2018). Furthermore, Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation and produced a serious mental health challenge around the world. Pakistan, as a developing country, witnesses a high suicidal rate; however, official statistics on suicide in the country are still lacking due to different socio-cultural and religious stigmas (Shekhani et al, 2018). Moreover, this article examines the reasons of adolescent suicide as well as techniques for preventing it.

Causes of Suicide among adolescents

There are two major factors which lead to suicide among adolescents. These are,

1. Psychological factors
2. Social factors

Psychological Factors

Mental Health Problems and Psychiatric Disorders

According to the study of Shaffer and Craft (1999), the 90% of adolescent who committed suicide had suffered from one or more psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or schizophrenia. These disorders brought a person to highest risks of committing suicide but due to combination of any of these two disorders, for instance depression and schizophrenia, will lead to highest risks of suicide. Among all other disorders, depression is the most common disorder resulting in the suicide among adolescents

Poor Coping Skill

According to research adolescents who are involved in suicidal behaviors seem to behave more aggressively and impulsively, have lack positive coping and problem solving skills, feel less supported by family and friends, and have a general feeling of hopelessness. They perceive their life as worthless and meaningless as they do not feel like any change or improvement in their life. They become hopeless and lack interest in any healthy activity. They do not know how to manage all the difficulties of the life and end up by committing suicide. Trait impulsivity, observed using self-report measures, has been shown to predict suicidal ideation and suicide attempt among adolescents and young adults.

Social Factors

Family Conflicts

Suicidal cases associated with family disputes are most common all over the world. Peer support and school environment are necessary elements for healthy life. Disruption and unhealthy environment of home makes thing more complex for adolescents. Peer relationship with a child has major impacts on the life of adolescents. When there is lack of support of parents, the adolescents feel insecure and unsafe. They lack the power to cope up with problems, which develops the sense of fear, uncertainty, and self-doubt among them and it increases with age. Bullying, social pressure and physical maltreatment during childhood and early adolescence causes higher risks of suicide among adolescents.

Social Media Usage

As cited by U.S department of health and human services in a report of September, the suicide rate for pediatric patients rose by 57.4% from 2007 to 2018. The report stated that problematic use of the internet causes poor mental outcomes (Allie Squires, 2020). The excessive use of internet results in sleep problems, eye vision issues, headache and it changes person's emotions at the same time. The adolescents who use social media more often exhibit lack of low self-esteem, an inferiority complex, a negative body image, and risk-taking behaviors. Teens who reported using social networking sites for more than two hours per day were substantially more likely to have negative mental health outcomes, such as anxiety and suicide thinking, according to Pew Research Center research from 2015.

Employment

Unemployment is an identified risk factor for suicide in a developing country. The research shows that the suicide rate increases with an increase in unemployment. It is the well-known cause of social stress among adolescents as the family tensions increase with time. Most companies employ the people with better experience. Companies do not prefer adolescent but due to the heavy responsibilities on their shoulder, adolescents feel hopeless and worthless. They lose the hope for struggling and ending up their life becomes the only best solution to them.

Poverty

Poverty is also the main cause of suicide in developing countries. Due to poverty some people do not have sufficient resources to fulfil their own needs and the needs of their family. It is stated that the risk of suicide is 37% higher in the countries which are facing the problems of poverty than developed countries. People living in poverty are having a stressful environment, worrying about how to fulfill needs of the family members. Adolescents who grow up in poverty live the life full of abuses and stress. They face many challenges to survive in the environment and get the experience of isolation, hopelessness and stress due to the limited opportunities.

Substance Use or Abuse

According to the research of Groves, Stanley and Sher (2007), the substance abuse also has an impact on the rates of adolescent suicide, as it causes self-destructive behavior (Groves et al, 2007) The Abuse of prescription and illicit drugs, excessive alcohol consumption, self-mutilation, and numerous dangerous or violent sexual experiences were all or part of the self-destructive activities. The combination of different mental disorders and substance use by adolescents can cause fatal results. According to research of Kolves and De Leo (2017), substance use increases the suicidal thoughts among males 17 times more than in a normal person who commits suicide without taking drugs (Kolves et al, 2017).

Gaming and Suicide - An Emerging Connection

These days, access to a game just requires a small installation due to advancement in gaming industry. Even though we are all aware of the enjoyable aspects of gaming, there is also a darker side to it. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey from 2007 to 2009

found that teens who spend five hours or more using social media feel depressed, have more suicidal thoughts, and plot suicide more frequently (Erick Messias et al, 2011). The excessive use of the internet and gaming causes depression, self-doubts and lack of coping power. Adolescents who play games are more likely emotionally less stable, having aggressive issues, severe anger, guilt, envious and mentally less stable. As they spend more time in gaming, they do not feel any need for social interactions so they even stop interacting with their parents and siblings. Sometimes, losing games makes them more aggressive and they start getting self-doubts, which leads them to commit suicide.

Facts and Figures About Suicide Worldwide

Suicide is the fourth most common cause of death for persons across the globe between the ages of 15 and 29 and happens throughout life. Every suicide is a tragedy that has an impact on the survivors as well as the families, communities, and entire nations. According to World Health Organization report (2019), almost 703,000 people commit suicide globally in 2019. (WHO, 2019). Men have a greater suicide rate than women, on the other hand women often have higher rates of suicidal thinking and action (Helene. S, 2019). The death rates, which are lower in women than in males, seem to be the source of the discrepancy. According to Denning et al. (2000), males prefer weapons and hanging whereas women choose drug overdose and carbon monoxide poisoning. This may explain variations in suicide death rates, as males tend to utilize more fatal methods such as weapons and hanging which offer minimal prospect of rescue or survival compared to drug overdose, carbon monoxide poisoning, or self-harm. It is observed that men are more impulsive than women, which is demonstrated by the fact that men are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior, accidents, injuries caused by violence, drug usage, and criminal activity, all of which have been connected to impulsivity. The greatest rates of suicide are seen in East European and East Asian nations, while the lowest rates are found in Latin American and Muslim nations. (John. S, 2018). In low and middle-income nations, suicide rates were highest (77 percent), while high-income countries have the highest age-standardized suicide rate (10.9 per 100 000). In 2019, the rate in lower-middle-income countries was slightly lower (10.1 per 100 000). (WHO, 2021). China and India account for the majority of global suicides, while South Korea has seen a significant increase in suicide rates over the last decade. (Steve. M, 2018)

Suicide in the Context of Pakistan

Pakistan, a country in South Asia, has the sixth-largest population in the world despite its tiny size geographically. Pakistan has a 97 percent Muslim majority, but there are sizable religious minorities there as well, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians. In 2008, there were 782,000 suicides worldwide, which accounted for 1.4% of all deaths and 15% of reported injury deaths (Sadiq et al, 2017). According to WHO report (2019), more than one in every 100 deaths (1.3%) in 2019 was the result of suicide (WHO, 2019). However, only about half of the world's nations have allowed the WHO to gather data from them. The WHO received no data from Pakistan about suicide mortality.

Legal Aspects of Suicide in Pakistan

Islam views suicide as a sin, and as Pakistani law is based on Islamic principles, engaging in suicidal conduct or attempting suicide is a crime subject to fines and/or imprisonment. The Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, contains the penal provision known as Section 325, which is in force all across the nation. According to the law, "Anyone who tries suicide or commits any act that contributes to the commission of such an offence will be punished with simple imprisonment for a time that may not exceed one year, or with fine, or with both." According to the legislation, attempts at suicide and suicides must be reported to the police for further investigation.

Suicide Prevention

Treatment

Suicidal thoughts frequently have a treatable underlying mental health condition. If this is the case, the patient should consult a psychiatrist or another medical professional with expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. Likewise Suicidal thoughts may occasionally be related to an underlying physical health issue. To find out if this is the case, the person would undergo blood testing and other examinations. Treatment for suicidal thoughts and behavior is based on one's individual circumstances, including suicide risk and any underlying issues that might be driving them (Jo Robinson, 2016).

Media

Adults frequently use social media and most of the interactions take place on digital platforms nowadays. In comparison to the virtual world, face-to-face discussion takes far less time (Prakash Singh, 2019). The quick introduction and advancement of smartphones is to blame for the sudden rise in young people's use of digital media. Therefore, it is preferable to approach them through social media or digital media by conducting awareness campaigns.

Youth Participation and Engagement

Youth participation and engagement among different preventions programs can reduce the suicide risk. Adolescent pregnancy, delinquency, substance misuse, and depression are all risk factors and correlates of suicide that have been demonstrated to be effectively prevented and/or reduced by school-based programs using a health promotion approach. (Heather L Ramey 2010). Additionally, these programs foster interpersonal problem solving, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and social support as protective factors against suicide

Family Support

Family members and other caregivers have a crucial role in preventing suicide and can become involved in a variety of ways. They can boost a person's life's protective aspects, for instance by aiding in the development of interpersonal relationships and

life skills. They can also urge the person to seek and adhere to therapy, offer support during suicidal crises, and aid in keeping the person safe (John Wiley, 2021).

Restriction of Access to Common Means of Committing Suicide

By way of restricting access to common means of suicide, which include firearms, poisonous gas, pesticides and other, has been proven effective in reducing rates of suicide. Among all means, firearms are the most commonly used means. Overdose of medicinal drugs is another method which can be minimized by decreasing the amount of drugs. Many suicide attempts take place in the course of a short-term crisis, so it is essential to consider someone's access to deadly means during those durations of increased risk (Marco Sarchiapone et al, 2011).

Education

Interventions in education at the school level greatly reduce young suicidal thoughts and attempts (LynsayAyat, 2022). Hence awareness through education is much needed at school and college level because teens are more likely to have suicidal thoughts (Christina M. Cammart, 2020)

Health Facilities and Health Workers

To prevent the risk of suicide before it occurs two main categories of strategies can be supported and implemented by health workers.

The Prevention strategies that health workers may consider include:

1. Increasing access to mental health screening tools for self-assessment.
2. Increased access to mental health services (e.g. employee assistance programs) and easier access to employee support services (e.g. mental health, medicines, and financial advice) (Hope Tiesman, 2021).

Poverty

Suicide rates are on peak in those nations where rates of poverty are high. It has been observed that 75% of suicides occur in low and middle earning nations (J. Bantjes, 2014). Research has shown that suicidal behavior is also linked to financial status of the individuals (Government of such nations need to take control of unemployment and provide basic resources and jobs to meet the needs of people so that they live their life fairly in a better way and they do not commit suicide in order to solve their problems (Maria Cohut, 2020).

It indicates that suicide among young people is a major issue that calls for quick attention and organized actions on a worldwide scale.

Conclusion

When someone commits a suicide, psychological issues are key contributing factors. Mental illness is a significant psychological risk factor for a suicide. However, other risk factors are also significant; they often have to do with societal systems and particular stresses. Pakistan, an Islamic nation, is one of the nations that forbids suicide. Suicide attempt is a crime in Pakistan under Section 325 of the Penal Code, which needs to be reassessed. The concept of social and public health recognizes the possibility of preventing suicide. Modifying attitudes about suicide through educational initiatives and legal tools is an important step in such a strategy.

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