

Suicidal Trends in Pakistani Population

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: - To study the prevailing trends of suicide in Pakistan.

Study Design: Retrospective study

Setting: Services Hospital, Lahore, Sir Gangaram Hospital, Lahore, Banzeer DHQ Hospital, Abbottabad.

Duration of study: 01-01-2012 to 30-09-2013

Materials & Methods: The socio-demographic profile of 100 cases of suicide was recorded.

Results: There were 63 % males and 37 % in females. **The** most vulnerable age to commit suicide was 21 – 30 years (26 %) and afterward there was decline in the tendency, 25 % at the age of 31 – 40 years, 20 % at the age of 41 – 50 years, 17 % at the age of 51 – 60 years, 5 % at the age of 61 – 70 years and zero percent at the age of 71. The suicidal tendency was maximum in laborers and factory workers (27 %) and minimum in businessman (0.2 %), more in rural population (39 %) than in urban population, more in illiterate persons 53 % as compared to literate persons (47 %), more in lower socio-economic class (49%) than upper class(14%) and more in addicts (62 %) than non addicts (38 %). The maximum victims committed% suicide with fire arm weapon and burning (27 % each) followed by hanging 15 %, bomb blast 13 %, drowning 07 %, suicidal jacket and poisoning 04 %, electric current 03 %.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The suicidal trends are at rise national as well as internationally. The contributory factors are a illiteracy, poverty, addictions, frustrations in life. It is recommended that social services in the society should be improved in the form of counseling of depressed persons. It will minimize the suicidal tendencies.

Key Words:- suicide, poverty, Illiteracy, frustration.

INTRODUCTION

Suicide is also called self murder or self damaging [1]. This is now a days very much crucial global issue (2). This issue involves victims of all ages, groups, sex, sects, and races on global basis (3). Now a days this trend is going to be increased even in Islamic countries in which suicide is prohibited (Haraam) (4). The causes of suicide are as under,(5).

1. Poverty
2. Illitracy
3. Frustration
4. For away from Islamic teachings
5. Feeling of non security
6. Failure in Love, Buisness or Death of beloved
7. Homicidal drone attacks
8. Target Killing
9. Un necessary tax on basic needs
10. Non beneficial policies of politicians

Suicide in Pakistan has been a long-term social issue and is a common cause of unnatural death. Incidents of suicide are often reported in the press and newspapers throughout the country as well as by several non-governmental organizations. However, diagnosing and

discovering suicide cases has generally been difficult in the local culture due to a number of social stigmas and legal issues that bind the problem; given that suicide is prohibited in Islam, there are various obstacles which come along in openly discussing the phenomenon in Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim country.[6] Suicide is considered a criminal offence, with punitive laws imposed in place for attempted suicide. National suicide statistics are not compiled on a formal level nor officially reported to the World Health Organization, thus leaving any obtained data to be neglected and underreported.[7] While suicide patterns have traditionally been low, there has been a slow but steep increase in the past few years. One analysis of suicide reports, based over a period of two years, showed over 300 suicidal deaths in Pakistan from 35 different cities.[8] The findings showed that men outnumber women by 2:1 and that the majority of men who commit suicide tend to be unmarried; the trend for women,

however, is the opposite. Research also indicated that the majority of subjects were under the age of 30 and that "domestic problems" are the main reason stated for suicide.^[9] These include unemployment, health issues, poverty, homelessness, family disputes, depression and a range of social pressures. Hanging, use of insecticides and firearms are the most common methods for carrying out suicide in Pakistan.^[10]

I am a Pakistani, and I want to commit suicide! So, this might seem like a very sensationalist statement. It probably is. Yet, alas it is a sensationalist statement, which is not that far off from the truth. According to one study suicide rates have increased in Pakistan by a shocking 24 percent this year. An HRCP report stated that 392 cases of suicide were reported in the first three months of this year, out of which the number of females committing suicide was 112 and number of males committing suicide was 280.

According to HRCP the growing number of people taking their own lives amid sheer hopelessness might continue to increase. Raja Khan from Naushero Feroze (Sindh) who committed suicide near parliament has joined nearly 1,600 people who have taken their own lives this year out of desperation can. This figure is in addition to more than 800 people who have attempted suicide. Yet the most distressing aspect is the apathy shown by the government in response. This apathy is not only giving way to violent behavior in society but also making people increasingly keen to launch vociferous protests in the hope that someone would take note of their plight.

Pakistan is under the wave of many gigantic problems. Corruption, unemployment, poverty, load-shedding, terrorism and insecurity all contribute to this increasing trend. All that has become much worse over the past few years.

This whole situation is further exasperated by the fact that a large majority of our people are living without proper access to basic facilities like educations, health, and proper housing which have created the new upsurge of depression in the country. Problems and living conditions are frustrating Pakistanis. The former President of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS) and Prof Emeritus King Edward Medical University Professor Dr Khalida Tareen said, "frustration is the major factor behind the increasing trend of suicide attempt in our society and the young generation has no direction and lacks purpose in

life and negative attitude including aggression so that the suicide attempts are developing among them."

Three fundamental factors, which have increased the amount of depression and frustration in people and thus contributed to this trend, are the energy crisis, bleak youth outlook and the dismal economic situation.

The energy crisis is growing day by day. Electricity shortfall has reached up to 6000 MW and with no electricity for up to 18 hours a day, the searing heat make living a very hard experience. This is also causing a severe health impact on people because of heat, and especially on infants, leading parents to further depression. The overall attitude in society has become unwelcoming since everyone is irritated, annoyed and depressed as a result of these problems. Having caused a great impact on the youth's mental state by an increase of up to 15% in fear, depression and unwillingness to study/work has been observed among them.

Similarly, the problem of fuel and gas shortage is becoming massive. People have to queue for hours and hours just to get a tank of CNG. It is not only humiliating and degrading process to wait to keep pushing one's car in the queue and wasting one's time but also one, which depresses you again and again by reminding the situation you are in.

Then on top of that CNG is also not available on all days of the week. Transport expenses as a result have also increased and thus it is becoming even more difficult for families to make do with their incomes.

The outlook of our youth about the situation of this country is also getting bleak. With many having no access to a good education, and others suffering under the burden of mismanaged policy and redundancies in our education system.

The Punjab Exam Boards Scandal last year resulted in many students killing themselves out of frustration and anger that their futures were being played with. The youth also doesn't see a viable future for itself considering the growing problems including the law and order situation, and bleak future economic and employment prospects. A survey on social media site Facebook says that a whopping 34% young people said that they were having suicidal tendencies.

Both of the above factors have a link to and are affected by the overall economic situation of the country. Massive corruption and an extremely deplorable economic mismanagement has brought

our country to a standstill. Businesses are unable to perform and make money, and the energy crisis has destroyed them. Our local industries are closing down, business is flying away. Pakistani businesses are now looking to Bangladesh and the Emirates to setup their businesses.

It is estimated that almost 60 percent of Pakistanis are living below poverty line in reality, which ultimately becomes one of the major cause of suicide in our society. We also have an ever increasing unemployment rate where businesses are not only not hiring because of a lack of growth but downsizing due to business shrinkage.

Experts say that over the years more and more people in Pakistan are slipping towards this trend. Apparently the government's cash grants or last ditch half hearted efforts for Pakistanis are not really resolving the crisis.

The government or the future government should think up workable projects to tackle issues. Pakistan has already seen its image tarnished because of suicide bombings and terrorism, one can only hope that the increasing ratio of suicide raises some alarms for the government.

If committing suicide is a criminal offense, then the leaders and authorities who are creating an environment which is driving people towards it must also be held accountable. Those in power are unfortunately disconnected from these issues. Load shedding is not a problem because of the generators which run all the time. The children of our ruling class are either studying in elite schools, and they carry forward the businesses of their parents. It doesn't matter to them.

It has been four years that the electricity crisis has been continually getting worse. It has been four years that the CNG crisis has been getting worse. It has been four years that the law and order situation has been getting worse. It has been four years that the economy has been declining. It has been four years that the people of this country have been suffering. Yet, sadly it has also been four years that this government has chosen not to do anything about it, and continues to ignore the plight of the people of Pakistan. It has been four years and the people of Pakistan are now forced to take their own lives. Yes, in four years people have been forced to say, "I am a Pakistani, and I want to commit suicide!"

The study has been designed to see the current suicidal trends in Pakistani population.

RESULTS

There were 63 % males and 37 % in females. (Table 2) **The** most vulnerable age to commit suicide was 21 – 30 years (26 %) and afterward there was decline in the tendency, 25 % at the age of 31 – 40 years, 20 % at the age of 41 – 50 years, 17 % at the age of 51 – 60 years, 5 % at the age of 61 – 70 years and zero percent at the age of 71. (Table 1)The suicidal tendency was maximum in laborers and factory workers (27 %) and minimum in businessman (0.2 %) (Table 3), more in rural population (39 %) than in urban population (Table 5), more in illiterate persons 53 % as compared to

Table 1: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with reference to age

S.No	Age	Cases	Percentage
01	01 – 10	02	02 %
02	11 – 20	05	05 %
03	21 – 30	26	26 %
04	31 – 40	25	25 %
05	41 – 50	20	20 %
06	51 – 60	17	17 %
07	61 – 70	05	05 %
08	71 – above	00	00 %
	Total	100	100 %

Table 2: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to sex

S.No	Sex	Cases	Percentage
01	Male	63	63 %
02	Female	37	37 %
	Total	100	100 %

Table 3: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to occupation

S.No	Occupation	Cases	Percentage
01	Students	13	13 %
02	Home / Office servants	25	25 %
03	Laborer	27	27 %
04	Factory worker	27	27 %
05	Farmers	06	06 %
06	Businessman	02	02 %
	Total	100	100 %

literate persons (47 %) (Table 6), more in lower socio-economic class (49%) than upper class(14%) (Table 4)and more in addicts (62 %) than non addicts (38 %) (Table 7). The maximum

victims committed% suicide with fire arm weapon and burning (27 % each) followed by hanging 15 %, bomb blast 13 %, drowning 07 %, suicidal jacket and poisoning 04 %, electric current 03 % (Table 8).

Table 4: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to Socio-economic status

S.No	Socio-economic status	Cases	Percentage
01	Lower class	49	49 %
02	Middle class	37	37 %
03	High class	15	15 %
	Total	100	100 %

Table 5: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to Residential area

S.No	Residential Area	Cases	Percentage
01	Urban	39	39 %
02	Rural	61	61 %
	Total	100	100 %

Table 6: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to literacy

S.No	Literacy/Illiteracy	Cases	Percentage
01	Literate person	47	47 %
02	Illiterate person	53	53 %
	Total	100	100 %

Table 7: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to Addiction

S.No	Addiction	Cases	Percentage
01	Addict person	62	62 %
02	Non addict person	38	38 %
	Total	Total	100 %

Table 8: Frequency distribution of suicidal cases with relation to its Method

S.No	Method of Suicidal	Cases	Percentage
01	Hanging	15	15 %
02	Burning	27	27 %
03	Drowning	07	07 %
04	Fire arm weapon	27	27 %
05	Bomb blast	13	13 %
06	Suicidal Jacket	04	04 %
07	Electricity	03	03 %
08	Poisoning	04	04 %
	Total	100	100 %

DISCUSSION

The trend of suicidal deaths is increasing worldwide as the problems, stresses and miseries

are increasing with advancement of technology.^[11] The stress factors and failures in life cause depression which is significant for increasing trend / tendency to commit suicide.^[12]

In our study the most vulnerable age to commit suicide was 21 – 30 years (26 %) and afterward there was decline in the tendency, 25 % at the age of 31 – 40 years, 20 % at the age of 41 – 50 years, 17 % at the age of 51 – 60 years, 5 % at the age of 61 – 70 years and zero percent at the age of 71 and above as shown in Table No 1. The trend of suicidal deaths was 63 % in males and 37 % in females as the male is more exposed to the violence and stress in the society as shown in Table No 2. It was seen that the trend of suicidal deaths was maximum in laborers and factory workers (27 %) and minimum in businessman (0.2 %) as shown in Table No 3. The trend of suicidal death was maximum in lower class population (49 %) as compared to middle class and high gentry (37 % and 14 % respectively). As the population of lower class is exposed mostly to stress and miseries as shown in Table No 4. The trend / tendency was higher 61 % in population in rural area as compared to 39 % in the population of urban area. As the population of the rural area face more problems as compared to urban area as shown in Table No 5. The trend of suicidal death was more in illiterate persons 53 % as compared to literate persons (47 %) as shown in Table No 6. The tendency / trend of suicidal death was 62 % In addicts and 38 % in non addicts as shown in Table No 7. It was also seen that the trend of suicidal death was maximum with fire arm weapon and by burning (27 % each), then hanging 15 %, bomb blast 13 %, drowning 07 %, suicidal jacket and poisoning 04 %, by electric current 03 % as shown in Table No 8.

CONCLUSIONS

The suicidal trends are at rise national as well as internationally. The contributory factors are a illiteracy, poverty, addictions, frustrations in life. It is recommended that social services in the society should be improved in the form of counseling of depressed persons. It will minimize the suicidal tendencies.

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