

Prevalence Rates of Depression, Hopelessness, Emotional Stability and Suicide among Secondary School Students in Nyamira and Kisii Counties, Kenya

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Abstract: - Suicide is a desperate attempt to escape suffering that has become unbearable. Blinded by feelings of self-loathing, hopelessness, and isolation, a suicidal person can't see any way of finding relief except through death. But despite their desire for the pain to stop, most suicidal people are deeply conflicted about ending their own lives. They wish there was an alternative to suicide, but they just can't see one. Globally, suicide rates are highest in people aged 70 years and over. In some countries, however, the highest rates are found among the young. Worryingly, suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-29 year olds globally. Suicide has become a menace in Kenya with rates going high by the day. This study was carried out among the Gusii people of Kenya which targeted secondary school students. The purpose of this study is to establish if students of secondary school have social interactions, friends, peers, relationships and feel burdensome to parents by secondary school students as this are predictors of suicide. The study utilized a qualitative research design and data was collected by use of questionnaires and data was analyzed by use of simple percentages. The study revealed that majority of the students 70% of the respondents said that they spend time with friends at home and at school and 21% do not enjoy spending time with family or even with friends whereas 9% remained neutral. On how they feel with their peers 40 (26%) feel comfortable majority 99 (66%) do not like the idea of being with peers. The study gave recommendations based on the findings of what needs to be done to reduce the predictors of suicide.

Key words: Suicide, Student, Peer, Relationship, Family, Friendship

I. BACKGROUND

Hopelessness is one of the most commonly cited risk factors for suicidal behaviors. One of the most oft-cited risk factors for suicidal behavior is hopelessness. First formulated by Beck (1967), the hopelessness theory of suicide states that hopelessness – a negative attribution style about prospects for the future – leads depressed individuals to view suicide as the only way out of insoluble problems. Hopelessness is thus conceptualized as an important cognitive vulnerability for suicide.

Suicide is one of the top causes of death in the U.S., with rates rising across the country. Nearly 45,000 Americans died by

suicide in 2016, according to the CDC. Suicide is most often the result of profound pain, hopelessness and despair: it is the triumph of pain, fear and loss over hope (Bertolote, 2000)

Suicide is one of the top ten leading causes of death in the United States and was responsible for almost 45,000 deaths in 2016. Many more people are hospitalized as a result of nonfatal suicidal behavior (i.e., suicide attempts) than are fatally injured, and an even greater number are either treated in ambulatory settings (e.g., emergency departments) or not treated at all.^[1,2] Among adults aged 18 years and older, for each suicide there are about 30 adults who reported making a suicide attempt. In the United States, suicide was responsible for 44,193 deaths in 2015, which is approximately one suicide every 12 minutes (CDC, 2015)

Suicide, like other human behaviors, has no single determining cause. Instead, suicide occurs in response to multiple biological, psychological, interpersonal, environmental and societal influences that interact with one another, often over time. According to CDC (2015) the social ecological model—encompassing multiple levels of focus from the individual, relationship, community, and societal—is a useful framework for viewing and understanding suicide risk and protective factors identified in the literature.

WHO (2018) Suicides happen in all countries and regions, whether rich or poor. However, most occur in low and middle-income countries, which accounted almost four-fifths of global suicides in 2016. Every year, close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year, it is estimated that the method used for 20 per cent of global suicides is pesticide self-poisoning, most of which occur in rural agricultural areas in low- and middle-income countries. Other common methods of suicide are hanging and firearms. In high-income countries, there is a well-established link between suicide and mental health issues such as depression and alcohol use disorders, but many suicides take place on an impulse, during moments of crisis.

Standard digital (2019) Central Kenya region is losing at least five lives every day through suicide in what officials and

residents say is a never seen-before catastrophe that should now trigger community reawakening to restore social ethics.

The worst hit, according to police records available to Mt. Kenya Star is Nyeri County where on average, four people are killing themselves every day.

Kirinyaga follows with at least one death per day while in Murang'a at least four people commit suicide every week.

Despite the grave consequences of the matter, political leaders and especially the governors are yet to mainstream the issue on the region's debate, leaving the burden to the regional administration and the church.

WHO (2019) Suicide cases have been on the rise here in Kenya, according to WHO the number of suicides reported in Kenya rose by 58 per cent between 2008 and 2017 to reach 421. The report also shows that more men are likely to commit suicide than women. Out of the 421 suicide cases in 2017, 330 involved men. Within Universities here in Kenya, there have been a worrying statistic of students committing suicide. Universities have been reluctant in sharing statistics however there have been slight over twenty documented cases of students who have committed suicide.

TUKO (2019) Suicide cases have been on a steady increase raising concern across the country - Police records show that at least 80 people took their own lives in the past one month - This was attributed to stress, depression and mental illnesses - Some of those who took their own lives were mourning deaths of their spouses At least 80 people have committed suicide in the country in the last four weeks according to police records. Five of the victims were facing serious criminal cases including murder, attempted murder and stealing and all committed suicide while in police custody.

Kegochi the district commissioner, Kisii counties on suicide in Kisii noted "The cases of men taking their own lives in Kisii are worrying. My appeal to men is that they should guidance and counseling anytime they are faced with difficulties in life," Kegochi stated. Junior (2019) The commissioner challenged local chiefs to conduct weekly baraza in their respective places of jurisdiction to advise the public accordingly. He noted that losing men prematurely is increasing the number of orphans and widows in the region.

MHA (2018) A suicide attempt is a clear indication that something is gravely wrong in a person's life. No matter the race or age of the person; how rich or poor they are, it is true that most people who die by suicide have a mental or emotional disorder. The most common underlying disorder is depression, 30% to 70% of suicide victims suffer from major depression or bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder. It is estimated that around 20% of global suicides are due to pesticide self-poisoning, most of which occur in rural agricultural areas in low- and middle-income countries. Other common methods of suicide are hanging and firearms. Knowledge of the most commonly used suicide methods is

important to devise prevention strategies which have shown to be effective, such as restriction of access to means of suicide

Gregory.C. (2019) notes that The most cited risk factors for suicide include psychiatric disorders, genetics, co-exist. Access to weapons and other methods of suicide also increase risk. For example, rates of suicide in homes with guns are greater than in homes without them. Mental disorders play an overwhelming role in the increased risk of suicide – with estimates suggesting up to 90% of individuals who take their own life suffer from some type of psychiatric disorder. Risk of suicide for individuals suffering from mental disorders drastically decreases once admitted to treatment The mental disorders with the greatest prevalence of suicide risk associated with them include major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders. Individuals suffering from major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder are at the highest risk of suicide – with risk of suicide increasing 20-fold. Gregory.C. (2019)

Behind major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder, substance abuse ranks as the second highest risk factor for suicide. Statistics indicate that alcoholism is present at the time of death in up to 61% of completed suicide cases. Heroin and cocaine use is also a common risk factor for suicide, with heroin users having a 14-fold greater risk of suicide and cocaine users having a higher risk of suicide during withdrawal drug use. Cannabis use has not been found to increase suicide risk among users. Gregory.C. (2019)

Genetics is thought to play a role in risk of suicide – such that a family history of suicide tends to indicate an increased risk of suicide among other family members – accounting for up to 55% of suicidal behaviors. Family history of mental disorders and substance abuse is also a risk factor for suicide. In a similar respect, exposure to suicide (e.g., watching a family member commit suicide or finding their body) is also indicative of an increased risk of suicidal behavior.

Family and socio-economic problems are also contributing factors to suicide risk. Unemployment, homelessness, poverty, childhood sexual abuse, social isolation, loss of a loved one, and other life stresses can all increase the likelihood of suicide. Sexual abuse alone is thought to contribute to 20% of the overall risk of suicide. Rates Suicide Rates by Age Gregory.C. (2019)

In 2017, the highest suicide rate (20.2) was among adults between 45 and 54 years of age. The second highest rate (20.1) occurred in those 85 years or older. Younger groups have had consistently lower suicide rates than middle-aged and older adults. In 2017, adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 had a suicide rate of 14.46. Gregory.C. (2019)

Suicide Rates by Race/Ethnicity

In 2017, the highest U.S. age-adjusted suicide rate was among Whites (15.85) and the second highest rate was among American Indians and Alaska Natives (13.42). Much lower

and roughly similar rates were found among Black or African Americans (6.61) and Asians and Pacific Islanders (6.59).

Note that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) records Hispanic origin separately from the primary racial or ethnic groups of White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian or Pacific Islander, since individuals in all groups may also be Hispanic.

WHO (2012) A comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and intervention - characterized by multiple strategies implemented across an array of key contexts, over time - is likely to yield the greatest benefit in reducing the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour. The delivery of high quality assessment and treatment services, focused on both reducing the risk factors for suicidal behavior, while simultaneously bolstering protective factors, is a central component in overall suicide prevention efforts.

(CDC, 2015) Suicide and nonfatal self-directed violence result in an estimated \$69 billion in combined medical and work loss costs.^[1] However, because that estimate does not include other societal impacts (like those on families), the true cost of suicide is likely much higher.

Gender Differences

NCH (2019) Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 10-19 years in the U.S., with rates historically higher in males than females. However, recent reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal female youth are experiencing a greater percent increase in suicide rates compared to males. Bridge said females have higher rates of non-fatal suicidal behavior, such as thinking about and attempting suicide, but more males die by suicide than females. "One of the potential contributors to this gender paradox is that males tend to use more violent means, such as guns or hanging," said Bridge. "That makes the narrowing of the gender gap in suicide by hanging or suffocation that we found especially concerning from a public health perspective."

Prevention

Suicide prevention methods and treatment are based on patient risk factors. Treatments are prescribed in light of underlying conditions in addition to prevention of suicidal thoughts and acts. If you are suffering from a mental disorder, a treatment plan to treat this condition is implemented first. One of the most common suicide prevention techniques is psychotherapy – also known as talk therapy – in the form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) (Gregory, 2019)

MHA (2018) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a common treatment option for individuals suffering from a variety of mental disorders. In this method of psychotherapy, you are taught new ways of dealing with stress and stressful life experiences. In this manner, when thoughts of suicide arise,

you can redirect those thoughts and cope with them in a different way than attempting to take your own life.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy is used to help an individual recognize disruptive or unhealthy feelings or actions. In relation, this therapy method then introduces techniques on how to deal with difficult or troubling situations. More research is needed on psychotherapy related to suicide prevention though, as DBT, in particular, has been shown to decrease the prevalence of attempted suicide but has shown no effect on completed suicides.

Medications can also be prescribed as a prevention method to suicide; however, controversy exists in this method, as many medications used in the treatment of mental disorders include increased risk of suicide as a side effect. Antidepressants especially carry a risk of potential increase in suicidal thoughts and behavior – but this risk might be dependent on age. Clinical research has shown that young adults increase their risk of suicide and suicidal thoughts when taking antidepressants, but in older individuals, this side effect diminishes.

Sheikhmoonesi and Zarghami (2014) Increased awareness among doctors is also a prevention technique. Research indicates that many individuals who have completed suicide or attempted suicide did seek medical attention in the year prior; however, warning signs may have been missed. Increased education and awareness among medical professionals might decrease suicide rates in the future.

WHO(2018) Popular “crisis hotlines” have not received solid data indications in the research that suggest their use is effective or not. Though, one positive side effect of these hotlines is that they are generally well-known and common – increasing the general population’s awareness of suicide. In an additional effort to bring awareness to suicide and risk factors associated with suicide, September 10 has been observed as World Suicide Prevention Day in partnership with the International Association for Suicide Prevention and the World Health Organization.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Republic of Kenya is a country in Eastern Africa, with a population of approximately 41.61 million people. It lies on the equator and is bordered by Ethiopia (North), Somalia (East), Tanzania (South), Uganda (West), and Sudan (Northwest), with the Indian Ocean running along the southeast border. It has an extension of 582,646 sq. km. The country is named after Mount Kenya - before 1920, the area now known as Kenya was known as the British East Africa Protectorate. Kenya is a diverse nation of 42 distinct ethnic groups. Official languages are Swahili and English and the currency is Kenyan Shilling. The exact place the study was carried out among the larger Gusii people that are surrounded by The Luo to the south and Kipsigi to the North Masaais to the Eastern. The paper used primary data sources to investigate the state of suicidal ideation among secondary

school students both males and females. The sample size consisted of only 30 students of Form three from each of the five (5) schools selected. These respondents were sampled by use of simple random sampling. The study adopted qualitative approach design of analysis of data

III. FINDINGS

The study sought to find out why cases of suicide were on the rise in Kenya with reference to Kisii county. The respondents were asked several questions ranging from pre-disposing factors, signs and symptoms and possible interventions. When asked if they have ever found themselves turning to alcohol or other addictive behaviours to make them feel better from negative thoughts. The respondents responded thus; smoke bhang to avoid stress since it makes them feel strong to overcome any problem or person, engages in sexual immorality to relieve anger and stress, pornographic movies on phone, addicted to mobile phone they downloads bad movies to overcome bad emotions, turn to females to pass time, watch dirty pornographic videos as company because friends have stigmatized them, using it to keep awake in order to study for examination, watching movies reading novels and listening to gospel songs to give them encouragement, sneaking from home as they feel uncomfortable at home and reading novels and electronics materials to isolate themselves from friends so as to avoid thinking a lot.

When the respondents were asked whether they think going to school is important they responded thus; feels that school will give life skills and have healthy interactions, feels like pursuing a career in teaching, many feel school will make him have a better future, feel that school benefits few people, pursue/achieve his dreams, achieve discipline and life skills, get literacy and better future, school is an avenue for true friendship, help solve challenges in family and a better future, creates unity when they socialize with others, shape ones morals, that education is key to life, for career progression and many noted that school makes him forget his stressful life. A small percentage 20 (13.3%) noted that life can go on and some people prosper without going to school meaning school does not add value to them.

The respondents were asked if they display unexplained anger, emotions or have been disciplined recently for anger towards friends or family. All 100% of the respondents answered to the affirmative that they occasionally display unexplained anger, emotions or or have been disciplined recently for anger towards friends and family. The respondents gave reasons to the fact thus; short tempered and can't control their emotions, feels so because they have no one to comfort them, discrimination by fathers, family, friends who see them as a burden, feels no one cares, betrayed by friends that are untrustworthy, have many challenges, unfulfilled promises from parents, for indecently touching a lady teacher was punished yet it wasn't intentional, academic failures, low self esteem, because of depression, because of financial constraints, punished unfairly, family

members isolate and parents are separated and are not happy to stay at grandparents home. People who display anger and expression of anger may be associated with suicidal behavior via their relationship with the behavioral activation and behavioral inhibition systems. it is possible that any observed relationship between anger and suicidal behaviors simply may be reflective of the association between anger and major depressive and substance use disorders, which also convey risk for suicidal behaviors.

When asked whether they have a history of feeling depressed, 75(50%) of the respondents responded to the affirmative and gave the reasons for getting depressed thus; felt so because they get stressed due to lack of school fees, felt so after suspension from school, friends gossip about them and use abusive language to them, because of death of close relatives, jilted by boyfriend/ girlfriend, because of poor academic performance, worries about the grade they will score at the end of the year, poor performance had made them have low self esteem, parents abandoned them after they separated

Depressed people may also fail to live up to their potential, doing poorly in school and staying on the social margins. Depression is frequently ignored or untreated; the condition often prevents people from taking steps to help them. This is unfortunate, as effective help is available.

When respondents were asked if they had ever attempted to harm themselves. 54(33.3%) agreed they have ever attempted to harm themselves against 101(63.13%) who responded not having thought of harming themselves while 5(3.54%) did not respond to the question. A good number of students that responded to the affirmative gave reasons thus; had been punished by parents mistakes they feel did not commit, they think everybody is harsh to them, evade the world that is full of challenges, un caring parents, isolation from friends, too much blame, world against them, neglect from significant others, mistreatment by parents, punishment by teachers severely and some feel they are seen as failures. Self-harm is thought to be directly linked with suicide but this isn't the case. The two are actually as different as night and day. Unfortunately the two oftentimes get grouped together because both are inflictions of pain and sometimes people who begin with self-harm may later commit suicide. Generally people who self-harm do not wish to kill themselves; whereas suicide is a way of ending life. Care should be taken to save those with ideations of self harm since self harm are highly associated with suicide.

The respondents were further asked to if they know whom to go to or whom to contact when they feel suicidal. The respondents 111 (69.4%) answered to the affirmative as 32(20%) do not know where to go or even whom to go to and 12 (7.5%) did not respond to the question. Those who responded knowing where to go said thus; youth church leader has always been of great help by giving pieces of advice, parents, teachers as they understand them, Yes mother and father they always guide her, pastor they give advice and

know how people are supposed to live spiritually, counselor for encouragement, close relatives helps with finances, cousins, boy / girl friends, school principal, siblings, Guidance and counseling, peer educator that are upright morally advises people to the best of knowledge, member of County government (MCA) and church counselor understanding and ready to listen. It is important that people wanting to harm themselves be directed to supportive people around who are always important. Ask them to surround themselves with people that they trust, who will listen to them without judgment and whom they enjoy being with. It's good to work on some things that they can do for themselves, and one should not face this challenge alone. It's important to let others know how you feel when things don't go to plan. Don't build up worries, anger or disappointments – talk about them. A counselor, psychologist or GP can help to work out what is triggering self-harm and begin to work with you on managing your difficult thoughts and feelings.

When the respondents were asked what they think about the future, 150(93.7%) know what they want for the future but 10 (6.3%) did not know what they want for the future. Those who responded they know what they want for the future said; Wishes to be a role model and fight against low self esteem, Wishes to become a bank manager, Wishes to be an engineer and assist the mother, Wishes to build a church, Wishes to have a bright future with a happy family, Study law and help people in society, medical doctor, neuro -surgeons, lecturer in the field of health sciences, successful businessmen, counsel people especially the youth, mentor others not to lose hope, Become renewed persons in the society, To be successful and live a life that's the opposite to the one they are living now, help many people out there who want to commit suicide, G/C teacher, best parents to their kids, first female president of Kenya , To be a neuro- surgeon , pilots , teachers to help society and parents, nurses help parents and those in need, Journalists, Preachers, Help street children, Chemical engineers and work as part time doctors. Those who do not know what they want 10(6.3%) noted ; Wants to live a free style lives, do not have any wishes about the future, feel that the future will be miserable because they doesn't have help from anyone, Can't predict the future "so always wait to see what will come up". Such persons are easily swayed and can easily Harper thoughts of suicide. Hopelessness is one of the most commonly cited risk factors for suicidal behaviors. One of the most oft-cited risk factors for suicidal behavior is hopelessness. First formulated by Beck (1967), the hopelessness theory of suicide states that hopelessness – a negative attributional style about prospects for the future – leads depressed individuals to view suicide as the only way out of insoluble problems. Hopelessness is thus conceptualized as an important cognitive vulnerability for suicide.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing information on suicide it has come out clearly that social interaction help in preventing suicidal

ideation and family and friendship is an important aspect in supporting positive growth to the students in schools. . Students must be engaged so that they have no free time to engage in thoughts that are negative. Parents and schools to collaborate in meeting the basic needs of survival for students at home and at school.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students who have no future aspirations and hope should be carefully because they are hopeless and vulnerable to suicidal ideation
- Schools have a responsibility of helping those students who like keeping to themselves as they easily become victims of suicidal ideations.
- Parents need to take responsibility of providing basic needs of their children especially paying their fees, provision of shopping, pocket money and appreciate them even when they have not performed well in school as expected
- Students to be encouraged to participate in peer group activities as interaction is a health thing for any human being.
- Guidance and Counseling have a significant role in the assessment, clinical management, and treatment of students who are at risk for suicide

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