

Causes of Suicide in Gilgit-Baltistan Region

BIBI RAHNUMA

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology
Nanjing University of Science and Technology, China

JI FANGTONG

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology
Nanjing University of Science and Technology, China

MASOOD ALI KHAN

Iqra University, Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

KAMRAN SADDIQUE¹

School of Journalism and Communication, Wuhan University, China

INTIKHAB AHMAD

Department of Science and Technology Communication and Policy
University of Science and Technology, China

Abstract:

According to World Health Organization, more than 804,000 people took their own lives in 2012 across the world. Suicide is one of the public health challenges faced by contemporary world. It persists in both developing and developed world. Pakistan is also facing this social menace but due to very little academic research, this domain of social science is scarce in knowledge and statistics. Hunza a district of Gilgit-Baltistan Pakistan is in spot light due to its high suicide rates for last few years. The main focus of this research is to find out the perception of youth of Hunza district Gilgit, its causes and how can it be prevented and possible relationship between suicidal thoughts. Quantitative and qualitative research method was utilized to conduct this research. Furthermore, data from 251 respondents was collected by using survey method technique with the help of a questionnaire.

¹ Corresponding author: kamransaddique82@gmail.com

Moreover, previous literature revealed that social anomie is a strong risk factor of suicide, by considering suicidal process a continuum of suicidal ideation, attempted suicide and completed suicide, risk factors of suicide among youth of district Hunza can also be acknowledged.

Key words: suicide, teenagers, causes of suicide, multiple factors.

INTRODUCTION

Suicidal ideation is defined as thoughts to commit suicide (Shagleand Barber 1993:965). Moreover, thoughts of harming or killing oneself are also termed as suicidal thoughts (Zhang and Wu 2014:1). Traditionally, there are three aspects of suicide: suicidal thoughts, try to commit and complete suicide. This distinction explains relationship between suicidal ideation and suicide. Suicidal ideation means imaginary thoughts to self-harm, it is the planning phase toward suicide and there is clear link between intention and action, on the other hand, suicide describes an action leading to death (Potard et al. 2013:471) or several loss which is the instant or ultimate result of any positive act like killing oneself or harmful one like snubbing to consume, able by the sufferer himself is also termed as suicide (LotfiAyarand Shams 2012:1052). According to World Health Organization, suicidal behavior includes thinking for suicide, planning to commit it, suicide attempt and complete suicide. Risk factors are classified into societal, community and individual level factors (WHO 2014:15).

Durkheim's (1952/1897) work in the subject of Suicidology is still considered vital; his theory of suicide concentrates on the outcomes of social integration and regulation. Strong integration among individuals in a particular group promotes strong social bonds and common values, while high social regulation gives meaningful lives to individuals. Low integration leads to egoistic suicide when a person feels isolated; on the other hand when common interest surpasses

individual interest it leads to altruistic suicide. Under regulation in society leads to chaotic environment and consequences are anomic suicide; fatalistic suicide occurs when there is overregulation in society and individuals perceive life meaningless (Thorlindss Onand Bjarnason 1998:95-96). Contrary to it, psychologist and psychiatrist affiliate suicidal behavior with disorders related to brain, individual traits and distress (Hawton and Heeringen 2009:17). Furthermore, socio-demographic variables like employment status, poverty, marital status, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion play crucial role towards suicidal attitudes. Moreover, elderly people, males, unemployed, single and indigenous people are more vulnerable to suicides (Brunoni 2015:556; Hawton et al. 2013:26).

Suicide is still an unexplored domain of social sciences in general and sociology in particular. Nevertheless, high suicide rates among adolescents compelled social scientist to work on this sensitive subject and created enormous amount of literature related to the implicit causes of self-destructive behavior. Freeman (1998:184) classified following three broad factors of youth suicide: Individual factors, such as psychological disorders, substance abuse, education failure, sexual orientation and personality. Family characteristics, such as family history of self-harm, prevalence of violence in family, parental separation and lack of support Socio-economic factors, for instance economic conditions, demography, social environment and poverty.

Furthermore, suicide is generally considered as taboo in many parts of the world, people feel reluctant to discuss it with others and those bereaved by suicide rarely share their grief. Their lives are deeply affected socially, emotionally and economically (Fleischmann and Bertolote 2003:69). It takes the life of individual on one hand and affects immediate family, friends and community as a whole on the other hand. Moreover,

it is perceived as an immoral act, so it is prohibited in many societies (Khan and Mian 2010:288).

Gilgit Baltistan is prosperous within its distinctive traditions, standards and owns many beautiful valleys and most delicate peaks in Pakistan. Unluckily, suicide is becoming an frightening subject in the mountain region. According to Shumaila Jaffery “The beautiful valley is described as the gemstone of Pakistan, but it has a problem. The rate of suicides among women there is the highest in the country. Adolescence in the area especially between ages of 14-28 is extremely influenced in Gilgit Baltistan region. According to Ghizer Times, from 1996 to 2010, more than 300 cases of suicide were recorded at different Police Stations of Ghizer. However the number may be much higher as some cases are unseen and not reported to the Police Department due to some domestic issues and family pressure (Times 2014). Because 1995, more than 260 people have committed suicide at different community of Ghizer districts, keeping in view it’s a small inhabitants district and annoying for the region. (Brooshaal Times). According to an anonymous shopkeeper of Ghizar District, there are several cases of honor killing in the district, currently reported suicide by the pressure of family members or villagers. According to Aziz Ahmed and Sultan Rahim Barcha that Female suicide ratio in Ghizer from 2000 to 2004, 49 women committed suicide in the Ghizer district. The following years saw expansion in suicide rates. According to mass media reports, 340 women committed suicide in the era from 2005 to 2011. Although the importance of the situation, no research has been conducted to identify the socio psychological line of female suicides in Ghizer district. No validate data has yet been assembled from the other districts of Gilgit-Baltistan which might be much more alarming than expected.

Similarly, Hunza District is well known for its highest literacy rate, tourism focus and very good private enterprise disclose annoying outcome on suicide. In the preceding year’s

numerous suicide cases have been highlighted through the local media reports. Three school girls jumped into the river when could not pass their matriculation exams and the same male students ended their lives after knowing about their failure in the examinations or any life challenges. The close one like Families friends and many others come across upon students who fail in their exams. Such an impression squash inhalation space for adolescent people. Finally a few of them try to find suicide as an ease and end their lives. In upper Hunza (Gojal Valley) 13 suicides execute have been reported in the last two years (2013-2015) according to an anonymous government source. Mostly young male (20-35), commit suicide by hanging themselves with trees or pillars located at traditional homes. Females use lethal food or jump into the river and end their lives. The inexplicable death of youth has not yet been investigated at government level and not has any significant research has been set to accomplish the basic causes of this unbearable incidents accruing in the region. Trouble of transformation, rising acquisitiveness, wisdom of association and communal opposition seem to strive the circumstances, likewise, the expansion gap between age old tradition and career change leave the community unsure which is again responsible for rising of these issues. According to Samina Sher, Humera Dinar Modernity has empowered the mind, but could not provide space to celebrate freedom.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study focuses GilgitBaltistan a federal administered part of Pakistan its two clusters of districts Hunzaas Hunza proper and Upper Hunza, where the suicide rate is high now a days. The data was collected through questionnaire, interviews from teenagers, and online interviews from the family of suicide attempters and collected the basic information from villages of the district. The target of the study was teenagers between the

ages of 15 to 25, family members of suicide attempters and institutional stock holders. Rate of suicide is increasing in this age group in GilgitBaltistan. The secondary data is collected from different institutions and further information was collected from the local community based organizations. The research design in my research was qualitative and quantitative as the primary data was collected specifically from the youth and effected family members and the area where the ratio of suicide attempts are observed to be high as compare to other areas/villages. The target study area as mentioned above was Gilgit-Baltistana federal administered part of Pakistan. The data has been collected from one district i-e. Hunza divided in two clusters as proper Hunza and Upper HunzaGojal. This part is located in the extreme North of Pakistan. The education ratio of the area is rated as 99% based on primary data and reports recorded through different research studies and the information prevails in the administrative system of the region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present study is an expressive and qualitative examination of perception of youth causes of suicide among teenagers in province Gilgit Baltistan district Hunza Gojal. Total respondents were 251 from different districts of Gilgit. Out of the total sampled size 129 respondents were female however the remaining 122 were male youth members representing different districts of Gilgit. The districts included Hunza, Nagar, and Gilgit. The data was collected through questionnaire and meetings with the respondents for clarity of the indicators mentioned in the data collection tool. Below graph shows the data segregation based on their gender. The youth were mostly noted as of the age from 21 to 30 years and are mostly enrolled in different colleges and universities across the county i-e. Pakistan.

This depicts the major causes of suicide among youth according to respondents there were not one cause of this act or behavior multiple reasons not a fix opinion or only one specific motive.

DOMESTIC ISSUES AND FINANCIAL PROBLEM

It shows that from 251 totals, 8.7 percent respondents believed were domestic issue is the major cause of this act whereas 32.6 percent opinion were financial problem is the root cause.

Relationships with reference to marriage and societal interference in success or failures of individuals

27 percent respondents were agreeing with relationships with reference to marriage though 30.2 percent respondents view were societal interference in success or failures of individuals.

As the rapid social change leading towards capitalist society, a shift among mountain communities is visible which form pastoralism is to agriculturalism then to government and non government jobs, which now moving towards merchant society.

During all these transformations we have become self centered, which led many souls towards isolation and the end results were quite obvious. The concepts of rich and poor, weak and influential were rare among mountain people, but this has recently been surfaced that there is an increasing gape, which ultimately leads to class differences. To be part of the race many young souls struggle to maintain their status. If they succeed well enough but if they fail they quit. Many young souls have found charm in secret services, some join to get authority so they can fix any one, some join as a passion some do this job as contractor to earn their side income.

Sometime these young ones get tough assignments if they do it lucky enough but if they fail they quit or they are brought to this stage, where they find no other way but death,

From joint family nuclear this change has been damaging to cultural and social fabric of mountain communities.

In past people used to live together where they also shared their good and bad with all member of the family, if it was good they surly celebrated but if it was bad they helped or tried to find best solution, this helped the individuals.

The recent changes have made individuals more independent this led to less dependency on others but the bas side is such people limit themselves to certain circles and if any bad happens to them they hardly find to shame their problems. Such events gradually lead to solitary confinement and the ultimate result is death.

An immature persons dying because of devastating depression or disappointment is unbearable and awful for the family, parent's siblings, friends, and society. Class fellows and neighbors may be left astonished if they might have ended something to stop that adolescent person turning to suicide. The reasons behind a youth suicide or attempted suicide can be difficult. While suicide is relatively unusual between youngsters but the rate of suicides and suicide attempts increases significantly throughout adolescence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Agree with the respondents that social institutions require working out on this sort of circumstances and try to find out solution to get rid of this unbearable situation.

It needs special attention toward teenagers and do not let them or take their problem easy and also try to involve them in productive activities to get rid of suicidal thought.

Parents need to give more time to their children and open environment they can easily share their problems of life Through new technologies like mobile phones, facebook, YouTube etc. to raise awareness that can reach teenagers.

Conduct awareness sessions for teenagers to express views death, failing and a desire to leave this life.

For the prevention of teenage suicide society needs to empower teenagers with communication skills required when they face situations like stressful, depressive and anxious position such as parental divorce, bullying, the suicide or unexpected death of family or peers etc

An important part of such unit would also be preparing teenagers with the ability to classify and support peers going through difficult times.

Raising awareness of services available through posters of suicide help lines.

There is a need for more education of youth about this event within the institutions or any other social gatherings as the lessons has open indication of limited knowledge and false impression about suicide there is a need for addressing this gap. While there has been misled conflict to the idea of 'suicide talks' at institutions on relation that this might motivate some helpless teenager to think over this chance. Must listened them if someone talking about suicide and more importance needed to give on the spot and to find out any solution.

Poor family dynamics and clash with parents as an important part in the fundamental reason for teenage suicide, there is a basic need for education and empower parents about the handling of teenagers with handle difficulties. These planned actions can give to tackle this alarming act.

It is compulsory for the death investigators to be aware of the frequent situation, risk factors, methods and victims as well as difficulty that may be come upon.

REFERENCES

1. Brunoni, Andre, Maria Nunes, Paulo Latufo, and Isabela Bensenor. 2015. "Acute suicidal ideation in middle-aged adults from Brazil. Results from the baseline data of the Brazilian Longitudinal Study of Adult Health (ELSA-Brasil)." *Psychiatry Research* 225:556-562.
2. Dad, Aziz Ali 2014 Self, Society and Suicide in Gilgit. International the News.
3. Durkheim, Emile. 1952/1897. *Suicide: A study in sociology*. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
4. Fleischmann, Alexandra and Jose Bertolote. 2003. "Suicidal Behavior in a Global Public Health Perspective." *International Journal of Mental Health* 32(1):67-78.
5. Fleischmann, Alexandra and Jose Bertolote. 2003. "Suicidal Behavior in a Global Public Health Perspective." *International Journal of Mental Health* 32(1):67-78.
6. Hawton, Keith and KeesHeeringen. 2009. "Suicide." *The Lancet* 373(9672):1372-1381.
7. Khan, Murad and Ayesha Mian. 2010. "The one truly serious philosophical problem: Ethical aspects of suicide." *International Review of Psychiatry* 22(3):288-203
8. Lofti, Yaser, Ali Ayar, and Simin Shams. 2012. "The Relation between Religious Practice and Committing Suicide: Common and Suicidal People in Darehshahr, Iran." *Social and Behavioral Sciences* 50:1051-1060.
9. Potard, Catherine, ViolaineKubiszewski, Guillaume Gimenes, and Robert Courtois. 2013. "Validation of the French version of the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire among adolescents." *Psychiatry Research* 215(2014):472-476.

10. Samina Sher, Humera Dinar (2010), Ethnography of Suicide: A Tale of Female Suicides, In Gilgitbaltistan.
11. Shagle, Shobha and Brian Barber. 1993. "Effects of Family, Marital, and Parent-Child Conflict on Adolescent Self-Derogation and Suicidal Ideation." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55(4):964-974.
12. World Health Organization. 2014. "Preventing suicide: A global imperative." Annual publication, Geneva.
13. Zhang, Xiaoyun and Li-Tzy Wu. 2014. "Suicidal ideation and substance use among adolescents and young adults: A bidirectional relation?" *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 142:63-73.