



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychology

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FOCUS ON PREVENTING SUICIDE IN INDIA

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Dr. Deepthi Balla

(B.Sc., M.Ed., M.A(Psy)., Ph.D) T.P.T.Colony, Seethammadhara Visakhapatnam-530013 Andhra Pradesh

ABSTRACT

Every day in our Indian Newspapers, we see news of suicide among youth and adults alike. Many news articles report the rate of suicide incidence but due to the complexity of suicidal behaviour would suggest some interventions. Though it is a sociological act, it reflects psychological turmoil of the suicidal person. In this article, both sociological circumstances which are unique to Indians and also psychological basis are discussed. Individualized interventions based on gender and unemployment issues were discussed.

INTRODUCTION

India places in the 30th with 15.7 suicides per 100k in the world suicide ranking (Worldpopulationreview.com. ,2018). India today (2018) published an interesting article on the reasons for suicides in India and gave some interesting facts as followed:

- According to the data published by the WHO, nearly 8,00,000 people die due to suicide every year, which is **one person every 40 seconds**
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among **15-29-year-olds** globally **79 per cent of suicides occurred in low and middle-income countries in 2016**
- Suicide accounted for 1.4 per cent of all deaths worldwide, making it the 18th leading cause of death in 2016
- Failure in examinations led to 2,413 suicides by students in 2016 -- or seven every day -- accounting for 25 per cent of student suicides
- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in its 2015 data made a shocking revelation that in India, one student commits suicide every hour

Why do more Indians commit suicide?

What are the practical psychosocial interventions that can be conceptualized to control suicides in India?

Remember that in this article, I am addressing how to prevent suicide among normal population but not in people who are suffering with either physical or mental illness. For such there are doctors and psychiatrists.

1.WHY DO MORE INDIANS COMMIT SUICIDE?

India, the name of which is an epitome of good morals, serenity, unified living to the world, is now the contrast. India is facing lot of problems in providing the needs of 135 crore Population (worldmeters.info, 2018). But in India, people of all the age-groups were affected by severe dissatisfaction as contentment is depleting day by day as the society is changing with new technological comforts. Use of smartphones found to increase impulsivity among the users (Cawis, J. 2018). Impulsivity is found to be common among suicide attempters. J. Mark C. Williams and Leslie R. Pollock (2000) reported that impulsivity is one of the personality attributes that gives most cause for concern in preventing self-destructive behaviour. He pointed out the research of Schafii and Schafii (1982), who found that "the risk of suicidal behaviour was significantly increased when there was impulsivity or a lack of concern for danger in the histories of suicidal children and adolescents.". Hence, it is imperative to consider psychological aspects of suicide among the Indians by considering sociological triggers which are initiating suicide thoughts and investigate appropriate interventions for socio-demographic correlates.

When you first hear the report of suicide, we inquire of who (boy , girl or married women or married men or teenager) committed suicide. This alone initiates the process of attributing the cause of the suicide in general. Then comes how did he (she) kill himself (herself) –i.e., weapon or poison or hanged. Finally the attention is given to the reason for suicide. If one observes the pattern, very few think about the process used to commit suicide. Lot of attention is given to the reason for suicide by media and the

observers. So in this article, I am trying to give a whole overview of India (excluding state wise analysis) regarding suicide incidence. First one is Gender, Second is the reason unemployment or marital conflicts. By careful analysis, this was put under gender and gender roles and unemployment in another section. But the alarming rate of suicide among adolescents is also a concern so it is put in between the two that are mentioned above.

GENDER-GENDER ROLES:

Suicide is found among teenagers and young adults alike these days. But when you see the gender that is susceptible to suicide attempts, it is male. Male commit suicides more than female as female find appropriate channels of emotional disclosure and seek help actively than male. In one of the studies conducted on adolescents of age 16-19yrs of Bangalore city, it was found that perceived family support among low and severe suicidal ideation is significant correlate. Female, in this sample scored more on "cohesion, acceptance and caring" when compared to male irrespective levels of severity of suicidal ideation. Noteworthy point that this study showed is that the adolescents with sever suicidal ideation expressed "Poor acceptance, caring" and restrictions levied by parents (Savitha. S & N.L.Srimathi, Ph. D., 2016).

One good reason for why women are less likely to commit suicide was given two decades ago.

"Women value interdependence, and they consult friends and readily accept help. Women consider decisions in a relationship context, taking many things into consideration, and they feel freer to change their minds. (Murphy GE., 1998)"

In the same article, the author explains that though women are more depressed than men, when it comes to suicide attempts they consider their responsibilities over ending one's life

Here, the subtitle is 'gender roles'. The Newworldencyclopedia.org, (2018) defined gender roles beautifully.

"A gender role is a set of behavioural norms associated particularly with males or females in a given social group or system, often including the division of labour between men and women and the attendant complex of child-rearing and socialization processes leading youth toward maturing to perpetuate the same pattern."

The above definition could be interpreted that gender role gives a frame of thinking, also working and especially attitude one must exhibit in social situations. **Gender roles** seem to have greater effect on **women** than men.

As per the gender roles, women though are educated, were affected by these norms and marriage is not a protective factor to women. More married women (70.4%) were suicide victims than 21.9% unmarried in India (Rajiv Radhakrishnan and Chittaranjan Andrade , 2012; Soutik Biswas, 2016). When it comes to women between 30-45 years in India, women are coming close to the rate of suicide of men. Moreover, there are multiple reasons like feeling of not being needed, conflicts with in-laws and dowry. These rates vary from state to state depending on the family systems. It is more prominent among nuclear family system (Soutik Biswas, 2016)

Though male are more susceptible to suicide attempts (especially single men), female are also reaching the reported ratio to male suicides. When the rate of men who commit suicides were 2 times to 1 in comparison to women, in West Bengal, which topped among the states with high suicide rates in India, female rate of committing suicide reached 3 to that of male, i.e., 4 (en.wikipedia.org, suicide in India, 2018). The magnitude of marriage-related suicides (8%) is higher among females, as opposed to 0.8% for males, (Devanik Saha, 2017). The scenario of Indian girl is vulnerable. She is dependent on her family and if it is not safe to her, she feels fear and unable to escape from the family becomes a target of domestic violence. In North-India, more cases of child marriages are heard than South India and it is considered on part of the parents as easing their responsibilities. None considers whether she can bear a child when she is married at hardly 15 years. She must please the entire family and do household works and must bear a male child. Hence she becomes both physically and suffer from common mental health disorders such as anxiety, mood disorders and psychosomatic complaints such as headaches, for example. (Indira Sharma and Abhishek Pathak, 2015).

She has no source to express her mental agony of severe life events that cause a sense of loss, inferiority, humiliation or entrapment which in long run lead to severe depression, a symptom of which hopelessness, is the major cause behind suicide attempts (Rao GP, Vidya KL, Srirama V., 2015; Malhotra S, Shah R, 2015). This is shocking to know that all over the world if 5 women are killing themselves, among the 5, 2 i.e., 40%, are Indians as per LANCET study. The article, ascribed it to male violence and patriarchal culture. It also reported that these women are below 35 years age. (Safi, M., 2018). Women need more social, family support than therapies to the treatment of these common mental health disorders,

Gender role affects men purely from sociological perspective. In the patriarchal culture, like our India, men are supposed to head the family when women stay at home and take care of the household activities. Men feel satisfied with their role of masculinity by providing economical needs of the family. Hence self-humiliation of not being able to provide for the maintenance of the family and taunts related to such events, make men commit suicide. Productivity in form of Employment, reproductive capability in increasing family units (children), are more prestigious for their existence (Devanik Saha, 2017).

In search of employment roles in India, where more suicides are observed, an article by siliconindia.com revealed that the top 8 jobs in which more suicide attempts are found are –farmers, doctors, police, scientists, stock market brokers, Marine Engineers, lawyers and Veterinarians. The same article explained the reasons for each, but the common points are risk, disappointment for not able to serve others and shame. (Siliconindia, 2015). Available empirical data on farmers indicate that married male farmers (83.3%) committed suicide. Among these only 43% reported to commit suicide for relationship issues and 20.2% for marital conflicts (Kumar RS, Hashim U, 2017).

Devanik saha, in the same article, reiterated the comment made by Dr Vikram Patel, a renowned mental health expert, and a professor at the Harvard Medical School in The Health Collective, that *"Masculinity plays a role in male suicides in multiple ways, for e.g. as a barrier to acknowledgement of mental health problems and help seeking, as well as unique stressors related to being the bread-winner and the higher propensity for alcohol abuse, a key risk factor for suicide."* He also reiterated the research findings of professor Nilotpal Kumar on the farmer's suicide in Andhra Pradesh, who reported that the farmers concern for their familial duties such as marrying his daughter into a well-off family and ridicules for failing to prove masculinity, feelings of disgrace after failed suicide attempt due to the comments of their neighbours, made them repeat suicide attempts. Male farmers tend to 'alcohol abuse' before suicide attempt, while past attempts would propel repeated suicide attempts among women farmers (Ravi S Kumar, Uzma Hashim, 2017).

AGE –RELATED PRESSURES

Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and is the second leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds globally as per WHO suicide data. (suicide data, 2018)

"The Global Burden of Disease Study" report published in the Lancet Public Health journal, stated that 63 per cent of all suicide deaths reported in India were in the age group of 15-39. [India accounts for 37 per cent Of Global Suicide Deaths Among Women, Marriage May Be a Cause: Study. Lifestyle Desk]. In a review on trends and socio-economic determinants of suicide in India: 2001-2013, it was observed that age and gender are associated with suicides in the observed period. The reported age for female suicide victims is between 15 to 29 years, whereas for male it is 45-59. (Arya V, Page A, River J, Armstrong G, Mayer P, 2018).

Age here should be considered from developmental stages perspective, the one which is of most importance amongst the developmental stages is adolescence. Adolescents (11-19 years) are more indecisive and in moments of impulsivity commit suicide. For adolescents in India, the major problem is "identity crisis" and especially "expectation stress, which is developing in them depressive symptomatology.

Times of India, recently published a report in which, it is reported that one student commits suicide for every 55 minutes and the age range is between 14 to 17 years. This range means, the students are in tenth class and Intermediate (junior) college students. The study done in Hyderabad showed that 20% of students in a class are suffering from anxiety and depression. The article questioned the scenario to "pressure of perfection" issue. This data was for 2017-18 academic year (Iyer, S., 2018). In 2014 itself in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, a study was done to find out the reasons for depression and suicidal ideation among intermediate college students. Parental influence on choosing the course even seemed to correlate with suicidal ideation among adolescents between 14-19 years age. Most of the depressed students are feeling stress of self-standards and are eager to get a secured job quickly. They expressed no definitive profession as their dream job. Those who reported that they either do teacher or bank jobs had more depressive symptoms. But the students who reported that they joined the course for their parents sake reported to have suicidal ideation (Prof. V. Harilakshmi and Deepthi Balla, 2014).

These incidents were found in states where high coaching pressure is observed. Example of which is Kota of Rajasthan. Frustrated to fail in the desired outcome or competition lead some students aiming for NEET, IIT commit suicide (Hindustan times, 2018; Sirin Kale, 2018). These show that the depression generated due to failure in exams and fear of facing future has exceeded one's wish to live.

One more additional observation done in 2014 in IIT college, Gauhati, is that a student of IIT committed suicide, such incidents were given importance since 2014 as the media is bringing them to the notice of public but still such incidents occur once in a while in IITs of India. The reasons need to be explored more as the suicide notes are not available for examination. IIT Kharagpur to reduce this problem implemented innovative programs like tree-hugging movements, dance, singings to ease the burden of studies in the students (FEindia, 2008).

When coming to the young adults, nearly 31 million Indians are jobless (TOI-ONLINE, 2018). According to the available data on suicides, i.e., 2015 suicide statistics, unemployment is the reason for suicide among 2% of those suicide cases. Love affairs (3.30%), marriage related (4.80%). But the major reasons are family problems (27.60%), illness (15.80%). But some of the major contributors were in the category of other causes (26.20%) and Cause not known (12.10%) (Chrisy Ngilneii, 2017). Hence, there is nothing to infer with certainty what caused such hike in percentage of suicide incidence in that year.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Employment makes one independent in fulfilling one's needs, responsibilities. But deprived of this, Indian youth lose self-confidence, unable to bare the humiliation of not getting jobs are committing suicide.

The Economicstimes.indiantimes.com (2018) revealed that the "International Labour Organisation (ILO) has projected unemployment in India at 18.6 million in 2018, higher than 18.3 million in 2017."

This indicates escalation in Unemployment problem in India.

Jayshree Sengupta(2017), in an article on Youth unemployment, a cause for concern, reported that -"Youth who are less educated seem to be finding jobs more easily than those with graduate degrees and more. Unemployment among educated youth was high at 10.5% and it was higher for those who had studied above the graduate level. Most of the better educated youth is unable to find suitable jobs because they are looking for better pay which is hard to find and so they remain unemployed."

Divya Nayak (2018) with in an article on the 'Unemployment in India Is rising despite Rapid Economic Growth', reiterated the India Economic Survey report as followed.

"according to the India Economic Survey 2017 by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD)..... The education system and syllabus don't meet the standards of the fast-paced, ever-changing business requisites. The necessity of soft skills, advanced technology adoption, and the flexibility to adapt for the contingency of sorts now is plain-as-day. Moreover, the job creation has been low. ."

The above paragraph explains the concerns of all the unemployed in India. Vivek Trivedi (2018) interviewed Akshay Hunka., Convenor of Berozgaar sena, Madhya Pradesh, Mr.Akshay Hunka opined that ""Madhya Pradesh leads in unemployment-related suicides." Only 1 per cent of the registered employees are getting jobs and implementing of reservation system in an unusual way did increase unemployment, he says. But the reasons for unemployment were ascribed to faulty immobility of the unemployed youth of both genders in search of jobs where they can be plenty is also escalating the problem of unemployment in India. Other major causes are establishment of industries that suit the needs of Indian people, training the personnel for it and mentalities of the job pursuers (Ajit Sen,2014).

Review shows that the psychological consequences of unemployment are Social Isolation, Mental disorders, Crime, Suicide (Asfiya Kidwai , Zain Sarwar , 2015). Repeated suicide attempts were found to correlate with hopelessness (Platt S.D and Dyer J.A.T, 1987)

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR SUICIDE IN INDIA

Psychology plays an important role in understanding the "why " of the suicides in any country. Irrespective of country, psychological research found that both personality and social constructs make an individual to take an action of suicide. Below I am only touching upon a couple of articles, which debriefed the reasons.

J. Mark C. Williams and Leslie R. Pollock (2000) reported that impulsivity is one of the personality attributes that gives most cause for concern in preventing self-destructive.

Israel Orbach(2007) , in her article on self-destructive processes and suicide, compiled psychological evidence on the link. She found that "Aggression turned inward and impulsivity, rigidity and dichotomous thinking (all or nothing) Self-generated stress and self-defeating behaviour, provocative behaviour and negation of help, self-hate, guilt and self-devaluation, perfectionism and impulsivity, guilt feelings, self-entrapment as a way of life" are processes that are related to suicide.

Caroline Maskill and Dr Ian Hodges, Velma McClellan, Dr Sunny

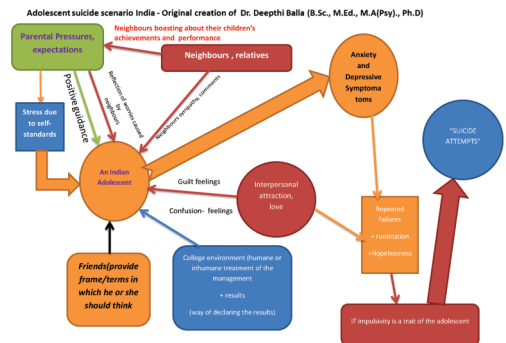
Collings (2005) in a report on patterns of suicide, reviewed Taylor's social psychological model of suicide. According to Taylor's model, suicide depends on the degree of certainty or uncertainty that suicidal individual feels and the degree of attachment or detachment from other people. If the individual feels the detachment from others at the same time his existence is over then the suicide act is a **purposive one**, with his own submission, hence it is a submissive suicide. When the person feels detachment from others and also feels that his existence is problematic, then it is **thannation suicide** indicative of the suicide act an ordeal. When the suicidal individual feels he knows nothing and needs concern of others then it is an **appeal suicide** done in an ordeal manner. But if the suicidal ascribes the reason to others who made it impossible to live and believes that he knows everything, then it is a purposive suicide made in sacrificial manner (**sacrificial suicide**).

Before thinking about the interventions, we must first look about the way of life of Indian people which motivate them to commit suicide.

In India, a male is perceived through his economic status, caste and also his personal qualities of how he takes care of his family. But for women in India, the case is totally complex. To be perceived as a respectable women here, she must have wealthy family background, caste, must perform gender roles and must have good looks. I am not saying all Indians are like that. But this stigma is still prevalent in the country. Women in India, irrespective of social positions in the society go through domestic violence, bear it calmly and so women in India are suffering more with Common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Fig.1: Psychological turmoil of Indian Adolescents and its probability to commit suicide (original). First remember that "Adolescence begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty, and ends when an adult identity and behavior are accepted. This period of development corresponds roughly to the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years, which is consistent with the World Health Organization's definition of adolescence.(Dr Diane Sacks, 2003)"

In the figure 1, some patterns are in blue indicating normalcy or dependent on perception of the individual of whom it belongs to. Orange is indicative of moderate state of experience, and red of severe impact. Green indicated general tendency, which results out of pure concern for the individual's benefit.



Though the figure explains everything, I would like to reiterate the importance of neighbours on adolescents. They can influence or persuade parents' mind to admit them in a particular college. Neighbours are the ones who make parents to decide on a college as the agents of spreading the rumours about getting marks as the symbol of achievement and marks are the true reflectors of one's capability. These neighbours and relatives are the ones who project that admitting one's child into a specific college is a status symbol. I put the college environment in blue as it depends upon the perception of the adolescent. If there is inhumane treatment like punishment for every single mistake in front of girls, as is detrimental to the victimized adolescent, severe action should be taken by the parents but it needs disclosure of the event to the parents. I heard students explaining such incidents in my research,

but they were unable to tell these to their parents. The evidence that repeated failures leading to suicides was given by Maris in 1981, who said that "suicide is the end result of suicide career".

He also said that suicidal people use self-destructive coping strategies, like drugs, alcohol etc. As a last effort to escape from pain after repeated failures, the only option that suicidal people

feel as left with is suicide (J. Mark C. Williams and Leslie R. Pollock, 2000). Hence, there is an urgent need for the parents to recognize the emotional cry of their children that are expressed by their discontentment with the college either in words or in actions.

So what can we offer to the suicidal in India? I am here with putting forth a table in which these will be described.

TABLE 1: INDIVIDUALISED INTERVENTIONS FOR PREVENTING PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF SUICIDES IN INDIA

Individual	Precursors	Psychological mechanism	Interventions
Male	Unemployment	Frustration, low self-esteem, hopelessness	To learn new skills, relating to your psychological strengths, irrespective of the trends of the job market. It is that knowing your true strengths will open up your mind to see the actual jobs that are suiting you, which are masked in the clouds of social rumours that a specific kind of jobs only had market value in India. Most of the wonderful jobs in India are not known to many due to these social masking.
	Stress related to job To maintain the • current job, • relationship between employees and • deadlines to finish a job	Prolonged stress	Do not take the point of view that your job is your whole life. Give time only as specified at the time of your job appointment. But do it sincerely. Do not take overload or do not try to impress boss or management. Do your job but save as much as energy possible for loving your family members when you return home. It is only possible when you do not try to please other to get a promotion but content with your present life. It is that you will get real promotion when you can manage the current position with less stress and While using adequate effort needed for the task at hand. Remember when you try to please other you lose some part of your own dignity. Your children, wife and parents need your company before they go to sleep. By doing this you can keep your home environment too healthy.
Female	Marital conflicts To please • in-laws, • husband and • maintain tradition and customs; • especially dowry	Helplessness, anger, despair	It all starts when you compromise for any reason to marry who demand "Dowry." So stop listening to those who took your money and treat you like a servant. Respect others but first try to respect yourself and defending assertively is best option. Read the stories of similar women who came out of such position from books or blogs. If you are mature enough you can ponder these situations and start a blog and know about similar people and by helping them you would feel "great achievement" and purposeful
	Child related problems • Giving birth to male child, • attending all issues related to raising the children	Stress, mental exhaustion, apathy	Stand firm for your child whether he is a boy or girl. The true criminal is one who treats child as + (boy) or – as girl child. Look at your child whatever the child's gender is, as a precious sculpting base given to you and you are the sculptor and none is best at making him the best citizen of India. If it is Male make him become a man worthy to treat women honourably and if it is a girl, make her strong enough so that she will be a guide to others, who would come to her for help. Note the time you spend for them in a dairy and just love yourself and do in the leisure time at least a small activity which you wanted to do for a long time.
	Independence • To earn money for own needs • Privacy and security at social places • Harassment at work place	Fight or flight response i.e., to move forward or escape	Whether it is fight or flight, just list your feelings in an array with the help of a counsellor and come to a conclusion on a task for which you want to move forward or take a decision to move forward.
Adolescent	High academic pressure	Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the help of counsellor learn about an appropriate stress reduction technique suitable for you. If it is purely due to academics and pressure related to it, ask parents first then teachers about it. But the major point here is your attitude towards learning. Ask yourself- "Is the education life for me? "Am I spending too much or too little time for education? "Do I compare myself with others (classmates, siblings, etc) when it comes educational performance?"
	Infatuation	Confusion and guilt	Please talk about infatuation situations with your parents whom you trust. Parents, please listen to them by remembering your adolescent days. Please empathize with them that their feelings are the result of their hormones.
	Peer acceptance To boast with friends about their accessories (latest mobile, possessing a bike for boys, girls- Facebook, twitter and boyfriends)	Striving for Independence from parents.	Please check whether all of your feelings are overwhelmed by your peers' judgments or not? If you truly think that you are independent, your thinking should be balanced. If you cannot do that ask of elders guidance, because they speak through their experience.

By following the above, each individual can at least control their helpless feelings but proper psychological assistance should be provided to them. There is a need for social change because society has a great impact on suicidal tendencies in India.

Social change can happen if there is a change in attitude of people living in the society and improved standard of living.

- Attitude change could be done through qualitative education, with curriculum which must be fitting to the local settings.
- Standard of living could be improved if the per capital income of people living in the country increases and is dependent on generation of money. It is possible if Government encourages Basic Education system proposed by our father of Nation Mahathma Gandhiji, which emphasizes on learning of crafts and recreation. It increases employment opportunities to those who are now in low socio economic status, true artists. It would also produce more creative people in India. Then most people in India will feel purposive. Failures in academics in such case, would not lead to suicides in India amongst adolescents and youth. It is possible to change parents' attitude too.
- One broad intervention category would be the induction and utilization of Government creative programs, which are aimed for mitigating unemployment in India. Today, the programs that are started by Government of India need to be advertised properly in social media so that all Indian Unemployed would know about them. Graduations are available for many courses, but jobs are available for few courses. This is increasing the dilemma of the graduates. A clear solution need to be arrived at by the elite and educated of the Government. Education system too should revert from corporate to Basic Education system suggested by Mahathma Gandhiji,

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