

Saving Young Lives Everywhere (SAYLE) - Family Support

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Introduction

The study examines the prevalence of self-harm and suicidal behaviour among adolescents aged 13-19 years in Denmark. In addition, factors that decrease or increase the risk for suicidal behaviour are identified as well. The project is part of the Saving Young Lives Everywhere (SAYLE) programme and is financially supported by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. It is ongoing and these results are just the first of many to be published.

Method

Data is collected through a questionnaire administered to schools in Denmark that agree to participate in the project. The questionnaire is web-based and includes questions about self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts and different socio-demographic factors. Results from each school are presented directly to the school afterwards. Nationwide results are presented at conferences, seminar, via newsletters, reports and this homepage.

This poster process the latest data from spring 2014. In total, 1,285 adolescents aged 13-19 years from 12 different schools have completed the questionnaire.

Data was cleaned from unserious responses through assessment of text answers and response patterns.

Calculations were done by logistic regression analysis to control for gender differences.

Definitions

The category "overall functioning family" was developed from a question were the respondents had to put words on their current family. Positive associations were "harmony", "comfort", and "protective". Negative associations were "stress", "uncertainty", "distressing". In addition, an open response could be filled.

Results

228 adolescents were identified with suicidal ideation while 215 adolescents were identified with one or more self-mutilating act. Of the 215 adolescents, 122 were identified with attempted suicide by cross-checking their answers with sub questions about frequency and method. 93 were habitual self-mutilators.

The table shows that family constitutes an important factor in reducing the risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among adolescents.

By analysing the effect size, an overall functioning family is the most important factor. Subsequently, the possibility to receive emotional help and support as needed and to be able to share problems is important as well. To a lesser extent the risk is reduced when the family really tries to help including when making decisions.

This study shows no significant gender differences between perceived family support and suicidal ideation or suicide attempts.

A good relation to one or more grandparents does not statistically reduce the risk of suicide behaviour even though the percentage distributions suggest an association. One explanatory factor is that only very few adolescents responded that they didn't have a good relation to one or more grandparents. Another explanatory factor could be that grandparents are too peripheral to the adolescent to really matter at the moment of need.

Conclusion

The role of family is widely recognised as one of the most important factors in suicide prevention and intervention - as family both can decrease and increase the risk of suicide among adolescents (Brent et al., Weich et al.).

References

- Brent DA, McMakin DL, Kennard BD, Goldstein TR, Mayes TL, Douaihy AB. Protecting adolescents from self-harm: a critical review of intervention studies. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2013 Dec;52(12):1260-71. doi: 10.1016/j.jaac.2013.09.009. Epub 2013 Sep 29.
- Weich S, Patterson J, Shaw R, Stewart-Brown S. Family relationships in childhood and common psychiatric disorders in later life: systematic review of prospective studies. *Br J Psychiatry*. 2009 May;194(5):392-8. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.107.042515.

Table: Adolescents with suicidal ideation or suicide attempts distributed on family support (controlled for gender differences).

	% with suicidal ideation			% with suicide attempt		
	No	Yes	OR	No	Yes	OR
Overall functioning family	31,7%	9,3%	0,22***	12,8%	6,2%	0,45**
Good relation to one or more grandparents	23,9%	17,3%	0,67	13,6%	9,2%	0,64
Family really tries to help	29,2%	14,8%	0,42***	13,5%	8,4%	0,59*
Receive emotional help and support as needed	33,7%	13,3%	0,30***	14,9%	8,0%	0,49**
Can come to family with problems	31,9%	11,5%	0,28***	14,1%	7,4%	0,48**
Family helps making decisions	25,7%	15,5%	0,53***	12,1%	8,7%	0,69

* = p<0.05 ** = p<0.01 *** = p<0.0001