

Register for Suicide Attempts – Why do people try to commit suicide?

BN. Anne Katrine Thru Mikkelsen & MHS. Christina Petrea Larsen, Centre for Suicide Research, Denmark

Kindly supported by H. Lundbeck A/S. Special thanks to Prof. Dr. Jørgen Aagaard, Aalborg University Hospital

Introduction

Knowledge of the extent of attempted suicides in Denmark can be found in the Register for Suicide Attempts. The purpose of this study is to extend the data collection area from the former County of Funen to cover nationwide in time. The Register for Suicide Attempts includes the variable “Circumstances” and thus we are able to gain greater knowledge of the potential triggering and underlying factors for the individual's suicide attempt that allows us to elucidate why people try to commit suicide.

Methods

We received transcripts of all civil registration numbers that had been in contact with an emergency ward (somatic) due to a suicide attempt in 2012 - 2015. From each registered patient's medical record, we registered the following variables: time, date, age, gender, place of registration, code for cause of contact 4 (suicide attempt), method, medicine, circumstances in relation to the attempt: proximal- and distal factors defined in various triggering and underlying causes. There are 18 different variables of triggering and underlying proximal and distal circumstances which can be registered presented results show the two most frequent proximal and distal factors in relation to registered suicide attempts by gender.

Results

The results of this study presented below are based on 2,272 registered suicide attempts (women $n=1456$) (men $n=816$) during 2012-2015 collected from two Regions of Denmark -not the entire country.

The two most frequent proximal and distal circumstances in relation to registered suicide attempts by gender in 2012 - 2015:

The two most frequent proximal factor women:

Women ($n=305$) 2012:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=76$).
	2. 'Argument/disagreement/conflict' ($n=49$).
Women ($n=296$) 2013:	1. 'Argument/disagreement/conflict' ($n=63$).
	2. 'Unknown' ($n=58$).
Women ($n=430$) 2014:	1. 'Unknown' ($n=111$).
	2. 'Mental illness' ($n=94$).
Women ($n=422$) 2015:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=114$).
	2. 'Argument/disagreement/conflict' ($n=75$).

The two most frequent distal factor women:

Women ($n=385$) 2012:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=181$).
	2. 'Unknown' ($n=62$).
Women ($n=377$) 2013:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=176$).
	2. 'Alcohol & euphoric drugs' ($n=38$).
Women ($n=539$) 2014:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=261$).
	2. 'Unknown' ($n=63$).
Women ($n=524$) 2015:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=253$).
	2. 'Unknown' ($n=76$).

The two most frequent proximal factor men:

Men ($n=150$) 2012:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=40$).
	2. 'Unknown' ($n=24$).
Men ($n=166$) 2013:	1. 'Unknown' ($n=41$).
	2. 'Mental illness' ($n=31$).
Men ($n=229$) 2014:	1. 'Unknown' ($n=44$).
	2. 'Mental illness' ($n=34$).
Men ($n=271$) 2015:	1. Unknown' ($n=54$).
	2. 'Mental illness' ($n=51$).

The two most frequent distal factor men:

Men ($n=209$) 2012:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=72$).
	2. 'Unknown' ($n=38$).
Men ($n=229$) 2013:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=83$).
	2. 'Alcohol & euphoric drugs' ($n=47$).
Men ($n=290$) 2014:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=96$).
	2. 'Alcohol & euphoric drugs' ($n=62$).
Men ($n=360$) 2015:	1. 'Mental illness' ($n=126$).
	2. 'Alcohol & euphoric drugs' ($n=76$).

The 'Unknown' circumstance includes cases where the patient's medical record has been insufficient to collect data on the circumstances of the suicide attempt.

Discussion

The number of registered attempted suicides is only the tip of the iceberg as not all suicide attempters have subsequent contact with somatic emergency wards. The information in the patient's medical record depends on what information the attending doctor is able to gather, sometimes the patients are hesitant about sharing information about the circumstances of the suicide attempt, which affects the results of this study. Thus conclusions based on the registered circumstances must be made with caution and reservations.

Conclusion

The answer of why people try to commit suicide is complex as there are often several circumstances that influence on that decision. Results are consistent with existing research in this field. The variables proximal- and distal factors must be further investigated during the ongoing data collection for the Register for Suicide Attempts.