

RELIGION OR SPIRITUALITY AS A RISK OR PROTECTIVE FACTOR FOR MALE SUICIDE BEHAVIOUR

Introduction:

Numerous international studies have mentioned religion or spirituality as a protective factor against suicidal behaviour. Religion and spirituality, on a par with medicine, is an established subject. It has its own terms, theories, and research methods, which constitutes the basis of research. However, there is great uncertainty on how to define religion and spirituality and how it may figure in suicide research.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to examine whether religion or spirituality is a risk or protective factor for men going through vulnerable phases in life. In this study, religion and spirituality is defined in accordance with the theories and research methods employed in the subject of religion and spirituality.

Method:

- 1) Interview (male in age group: from 50 years)
Answers from 40 men in a small community in Denmark
- 3) Two-days seminar (male in age group: from 50 years)
Answers from 12 men who had been through vulnerable phases in life
- 2) Questionnaire (male in age group: from 50 years)
Answers from 82 men in a small community in Denmark

Results:

Results show that the various elements within religion or spirituality can be either protective or straining, or be of no importance. Believing in God does not constitute a protective factor; however, ethical principles and moral instructions act as protective factors prior to suicidal behaviour. Another significant protective factor is the value of life itself. The research shows the necessity of defining religion and pinpointing which aspects are protective and which are straining.