



# RELIGION AND SUICIDE- RESEARCH

Dolma with a prayer wheel is preparing herself to die  
(Zanskar)

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# **Plan for the presentation**

- 1. Definitions as the basis of research**
- 2. Previous studies**
- 3. Religion as protective or risk factor –  
Results**
- 4. Research Considerations**



# Definitions

- 1. WHO's definition of suicide and attempted suicide**
- 2. Definition of self-harm**
- 3. Definition of religion**



## **1. Durkheim (1897)**

**Religion cannot be reduced to a question of social integration**

## **2. Mc Cullugh, 1999**

**The relation between religion and depression examined in over 80 published articles.**



### **3. Mueller 2001**

**1,200 studies have applied religion or spirituality as a variable.**



# Conclusion

**Religion as a concept is *not* defined, yet implies religious practice e.g. church, mosque or temple attendance**



# **1. Defining Religion**

**Latin: Religio**

**Relegere: (Cicero, 106-43)**

**To take care of, to observe carefully, to consider**

**Religare: (Augustin (354-430)**

**To bind together**



# RELIGION



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# CULTURE - RELIGION



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**The fundamental condition under which man  
lives is that he/she**

**Cannot grant himself/herself life**

**and**

**Cannot abolish death**



# Religion as a risk or protective factor for persons

- who have experienced suicidal ideation
- or
- attempted to commit suicide.



# CULTURE - RELIGION



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# Christianity

**The Old Testament**

**You shall not murder**

**The New Testament**

**No commandment**

**91 % are members of  
the Danish National  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church**

**2% attend it regularly**

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# Protective factors

## against attempted suicide

- **Moral/ethical considerations**
- **The sacredness of life**
- **Hope**
- **Self-confidence**
- **Social support**
- **Spirituality/religion**
- **Meaning of and purpose in life**
- **Fear of death**



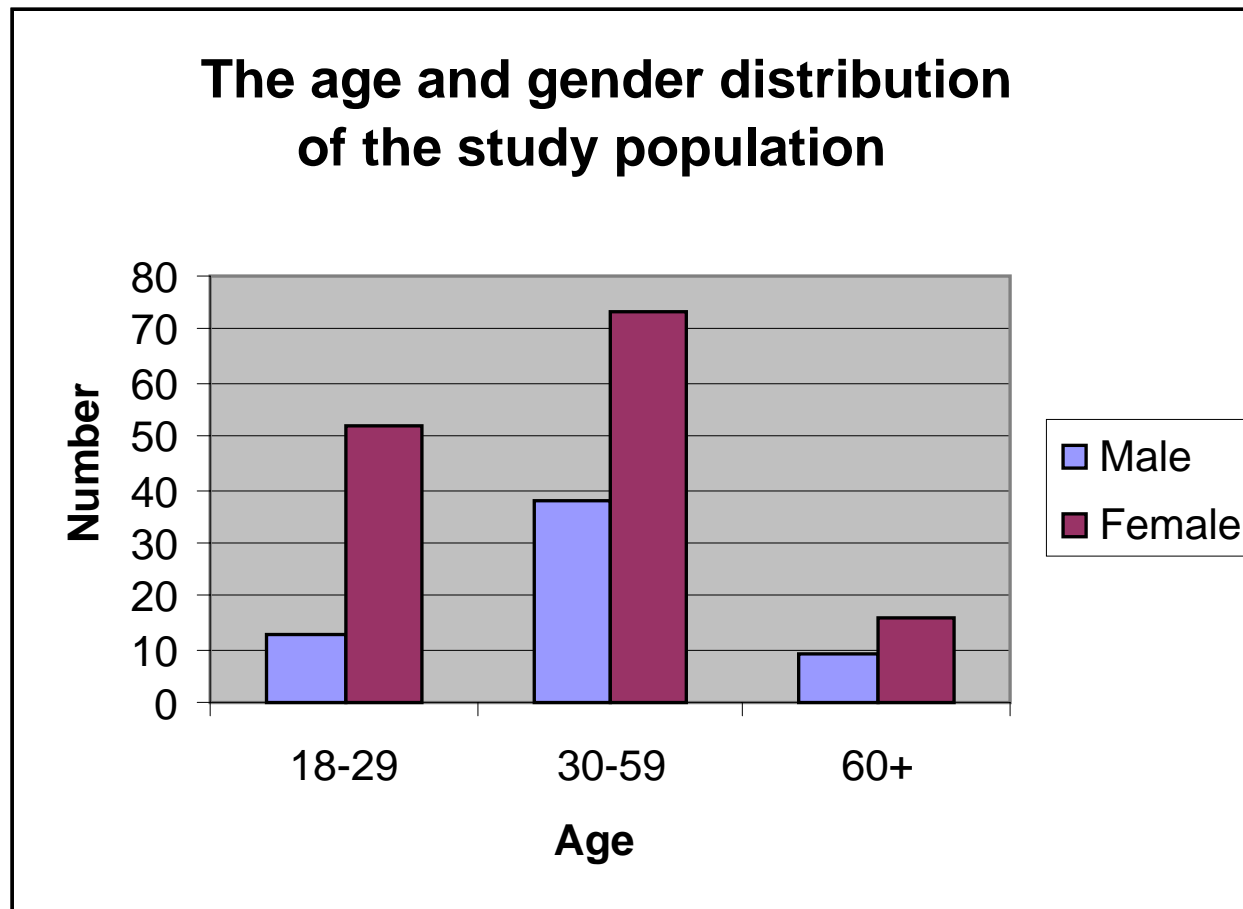
# Data

- Questionnaire (age group: from 18 years)
- Interview (age group: from 18 years)



# Studiepopulation

201 responder





# Moral and ethical reflections

as protective factor against attempted suicide

	Attempted suicide	Serious suicidal ideation	All	Odds ratio	Significance
<b>Suicide is morally wrong</b>	29 %	85 %	52 %	0,07	$p < 0,0005$
<b>Suicide is selfish</b>	40 %	89 %	60 %	0,08	$p < 0,0005$

Woman, 42 years old, serious suicidal ideation

*"My mother committed suicide, I found her, that incident really burnt itself into my memory, I would never expose my surroundings for that"*

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# Self-confidence & hope

## as protective factor against attempted suicide

	Attempted suicide	Serious suicidal ideation	All	Odds ratio	Significance
<b>I like myself so I want to continue living</b>	15 %	40 %	25 %	0,27	$p < 0,0005$
<b>I believe my life will improve in the future</b>	29 %	59 %	41 %	0,28	$p < 0,0005$

Man, 46 years old, serious suicidal ideation

*"I truly believe that self-confidence has contributed to get rid of my gloomy thoughts, otherwise I don't know what might have happened."*

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# Social support

## as protective factor against attempted suicide

	Attempted suicide	Serious suicidal ideation	All	Odds ratio	Significance
<b>I can get support from my family and friends</b>	29 %	68 %	45 %	0,13	$p < 0,0005$
<b>My family and friends need me</b>	41 %	78 %	54 %	0,17	$p < 0,0005$

Woman, 20 years old, serious suicidal ideation.

*My friends are very supportive and that means a lot. They need me and I need them. I reject suicide, my mother and my friends deserve better, they need me.*

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# Spiritual and religious reflections

## as protective factor against attempted suicide

	Attempted suicide	Serious suicidal ideation	All	Odds ratio	Significance
<b>There is a higher meaning with my life</b>	22 %	45 %	31 %	0,34	$p < 0,0005$
<b>Life has value no matter how it turns out</b>	20 %	35 %	26 %	0,46	$p < 0,05$
<b>My religion forbids or prevents me</b>	9 %	10 %	10 %	0,94	

Man, 51 years old, serious suicide ideation

*I try to focus on the positive even in difficult situations, because I want life and also have many plans. I'm curious about life.*

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# Meaning and purpose in life

## as protective factor against attempted suicide

	Attempted suicide	Serious suicidal ideation	All	Odds ratio	Significance
<b>I control myself and my life</b>	24 %	43 %	31 %	0,41	$p < 0,01$
<b>My daily existence gives me joy</b>	14 %	27 %	19 %	0,46	$p < 0,05$



# Fear of death

## as a protective factor against attempted suicide

	Attempted suicide	Serious suicidal ideation	All	Odds ratio	Significance
<b>I am afraid of dying</b>	17 %	77 %	41 %	0,04	$p < 0,0005$





## Considerations

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**”Religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study. It is created for the scholar’s analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no existence apart from the academy.”**

*Jonathan Z. Smith in Imagining Religion*







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