

Oral Presentation – 04

Impact of Life-Skills, Help Seeking Ability and Mental Health on Acute Deliberate Self- Poisoning in Kurunegala District, Sri Lanka: A Case-Control Study

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Abstract

Background: Since 1950, suicide rates in Sri Lanka are among the highest national rates in the world. The highest numbers of suicides rates in the last ten years were reported in the Kurunegala District. It remains unclear the reason for this occurrence.

Objectives: To establish the association between acute deliberate self-poisoning (DSP) and life-skills, ability of help seeking, psychiatric illnesses.

Methods: A randomly selected sample of DSP patients admitted to the Teaching Hospital Kurunegala (THK), for successive 18 months, June 2011 to December 2012, (n=435), were recruited as cases. Age and sex matched randomly selected 435 patients with no history of attempted suicide visiting the Out- Patient Department of THK during the same period were interviewed as controls. A Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV-TR axis I disorders-Research version (SCID) was used to assess psychiatric illnesses. Sinhala translations of General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) were used to assess the help seeking intentions. Sinhala translation of Daily Living Skills Questionnaire was used to assess level of skills related to decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication and goal setting. Culturally-based validated scenario self-administered questionnaire was used to assess the respondent's ability of skills for decision making and coping with emotions. Data analysis was done using Mann Whitney U test and paired t test.

Results: Cases consisted of 205 (47.2%) males and 230 (52.8%) females, ages ranged from 12 to 70 years. Forty-eight (11%) had psychiatric disorders. Thirty-seven (8.5%), 4 (0.9%) and 2 (0.5%) had depressive disorder, alcohol- related problems, and schizophrenia respectively. Among the controls, 6 (1.4%) had psychiatric problems and of that 4 (0.9%) had depressive disorder. Having any type of a psychiatric illness, except personality disorders, showed 10.1 times higher risk for DSP behavior (OR 10.1, 95% CI 4.3 - 29). Controls showed statistically significant higher intention to seek help from partner, friends or parents ($p < 0.001$). Mean score for decision making skills, critical thinking ability, communication skills, goal setting and problem solving ability of cases were 15.2 (SD 4.9), 14.8 (SD 4), 21.5 (SD 4.9), 13.8 (SD 3.9) and 18.8 (SD 4.9). Controls scored 18.7 (SD 3.6), 17.5 (SD 3.4), 23.2 (SD 3.6), 15.7 (SD 2.9) and 22.1 (SD 3.8) for those skills respectively. It showed controls were having significantly better skills compared to cases ($p < 0.001$). Scores showed that controls were having significantly higher application ability of skills related to decision making and coping with emotions in real life situations.

Conclusions: Having a poor level of help-seeking ability and life-skills were shown as a strong predictor of DSP in the present study. Life-skills training may act as an effective prevention strategy for DSP. In-depth exploration on this is therefore important.