



Triggers, motives and religiosity among self-poisoning in rural Sri Lanka

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Objective: Deliberate self-poisoning (DSP) is a major public health problem. Better understanding of the motives of DSP may facilitate prevention strategies. To identify the main triggers and motives of DSP. To determine the association of socioeconomic factors, level of religiosity and DSP.

Methods: A matched case control and a qualitative study was conducted at the tertiary care centre (THK), which receives 60% of deliberate self-poisoning (DSP) cases, of the Kurunegala district, in August 2016. Cases (n=96) included consecutive DSP patients admitted to THK, aged 15 to 54 years. Sex & age (± 3 yrs) matched (n=96) patients were selected as controls after excluding history of deliberate self-harm. Both the cases and controls with Psychiatric Illnesses were excluded. Religiosity was measured using a ten-point scale. In depth interviews were conducted as an exit interview on cases. Thematic analysis was done to identify the taggers and motives.

Results: Majority (63.5%) of the cases consisted of females. Median age was 21 (IQR 17-27) years. Income below the median monthly household income of the District, poor educational attainments and being unemployed carried 5.4, 13 and 3.5 fold excess risk for DSP, respectively. Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Ranked test analysis showed that cases had significantly lesser scores for religiosity, $p=0.003$. Having a low level of religiosity carried 3.1 fold excess risk for DSP (95%CI 1.6-6.3). Conveying a message to a significant other was the commonest motive among DSP patients. The prominent submotives within that was to make someone sorry/guilty and to change someone's mind/behavior. Most proximal risk factors could be categorized into four main domains; interpersonal disputes, painful medical conditions, life events/stresses, and, alcohol intoxication. Among them, interpersonal disputes were the most prominent.

Conclusions: DSP is a way of expressing emotions and a way of conveying a message to a significant person, in difficult situations by vulnerable people. Interventions that improves religiosity and life-skills may be promising preventive strategies.