



---

## Suicide amongst Teenagers

*Dr. Sankar Rajeev*

Former Professor KKWIEER, Nashik, India

---

### ABSTRACT

Suicide amongst teenagers is on the rise. There may be justifiable reasons for each individual who commits suicide but then the act leaves many distraught. Theoretical framework and mere statements do not provide any substantial solution, hence an attempt is made to explore the reasons in a scientific and suggest logical solutions. This analysis aims at evolving practical ways to obviate such a tendency by invoking concepts such as strokes, life positions, and emotional blackmail. A descriptive method has been used.

Key words; Suicide, teenagers, life positions, strokes, emotional blackmail

---

### Introduction

Suicide is generally considered as an act in pursuit of terminating one's own life. In the case of teenagers the common reasons such as mental disorders, physical disorders and substance abuse are rarely found to be a reason, but these are mainly impulsive acts due to stress such as financial, academic worries, breakups, harassment and bullying. These incidents have generally been found more in men than women. We have not yet been able to identify pathophysiology for suicide but low levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), Serotonin, and 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid are considered to be associated to a certain extent. As per a study every year in USA about 24000 college students attempt to commit suicide but fortunately barely about 5% succeed. In India a study carried out have found that people aged between 15 and 24 have the highest suicide rate and this is 35% of all the recorded suicide in each year. During the last year more than one and a half lakh people committed suicide, which roughly indicates that as a nation approximately 50000 youth terminated their life prematurely.

---

### Literature review

Stephanie S Daniel, David B Goldston, (2009), Interventions for Suicidal Youth. In this the authors have reviewed controlled studies on psychosocial treatment interventions for reducing adolescent suicidal behaviour. Further they have deliberated on interventions.

Johan Bilsen, (2018), Suicide and Risk Factors, International Public Health Conference 2017. The author deliberated on the risk factors which contribute towards suicidal tendencies in youth. The target group in this study has been late school-age children and adolescents. The study identifies societal, family reasons and availability of means of committing suicide.

DA Ruch, Jeffry A Bridge, (2022), Epidemiology of Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour in youth. The studies takes off from a belief that suicide is a leading cause of death amongst adults. Identifiable reasons are individual, family and social characteristics.

---

### Methodology

Descriptive Research has been used considering the various facets of human involvement in the development of youth. Here the characteristics of societal and organizational behaviour fundamentals are identified and analysed. In descriptive research the process does not answer questions about how/why/when the characteristics occurred but describe the features of the system under analysis.

---

### Discussion

There are many atypical characteristics of this age group which can be considered as risk factors. As one of my friend during school days wrote 'adolescence is synonymous with uncertainty', so the young age itself is a risk factor owing to psychological changes, social factors and impulsivity. Reversing the general trend, it has been found that the risk of young female adults is higher than that of males. Certain physiological factors identified are negative affect, maladaptive coping strategies, and impulsivity combined with aggression. Societal factors such as abuse in any form, trauma, sex difference, discrimination and economic instability increase risk of suicide. Why are teenagers resorting to suicide? The basic reason can be absence of

window. The race to get into a position sooner than later creates a shell in which they are trapped rather than trying to experience and understand the opportunities available. Possibly society does not have time to understand the reality, its acceptance and vulnerability of inexperience, because they themselves are in a race to nowhere.

It may not be incorrect to state that soon after graduation from schools, they experience excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. At this point of time absence of a window creates worry which they cannot cope up and we call it stress. Even in the experiment with the rats Prof Hans Syle identified that presence of another rat or a piece of wood provided an avenue for reducing stress and hence absence of ulcer in the rat. Hence the youth should be taken out from the mind traps such as; unrealistic expectations, taking things personally, all or not thinking, exaggeration and rigid thinking. Who can do it? Definitely the society which comprises of colleagues, family and teachers can help. When a problem which is generated in the mind is regulated through support network of friends, colleagues and family the subject gets ventilation and stressful condition is removed. If not they try to utilize one of the Freudian defence mechanisms; denial, repression, projection, rationalization, or reaction formation. But these are temporary in nature. It may be helpful to have Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) at frequent intervals of six months in schools, colleges and workplace.

In our life we receive various types of communications which can be verbal or nonverbal that are called as strokes in transactional analysis. As per Eric Berne it is a way one person acknowledges another. These strokes can be positive/ negative, verbal/nonverbal, conditional/unconditional. A positive unconditional or conditional stroke can reduce the risk factor and thus the suicidal tendencies. These strokes a person receives before adulthood plays important role in the life positions. When a person during the childhood receive strokes which are in line with the age and mental development, there is a balanced mix of strokes. A balance mix of positive and negative strokes results in an even emotional and cognitive outlook translating into a life position I'm OK, you are OK. But in case there is an imbalance with too many positive strokes or negative strokes, the person struggles with a fair sense of the world or writhe to see other's point of view or considers others to be more important or in extreme case seeing nothing good at all. These states are I'm OK, you are not OK or I'm not OK, you are OK or I'm not Ok, you are not OK. It is believed that personality development takes place at a very young age. Youth who are at the I'm OK you are OK life positions generally do not fall into suicidal tendencies but those of the other groups are vulnerable.

Dr Susan Forward coined a term emotional blackmail. This is the other extreme. It is about scheming people in relationships. Here the transactional dynamics such as fear, obligation and guilt are used between the controller and the controlled, which creates an unusual demand in the controlled person. In the event the controlled person is able to extricate from the behaviour of the controlled person he or she is not in danger, otherwise they are prompted to do uncomfortable, undesirable, burdensome or self-sacrificing acts for the controller. Forward and Frazier went ahead to classify these emotional blackmail in to four categories, each one having an effect on major life decisions or demands that are dangerous or illegal. So, under these transactional dynamics the individual loses the much needed rationality.

Wider the gap between ambition and aspiration can be a cause for suicidal tendency, so is ambition with unmatched potential/capability. Many students are driven to such a state by the expectations of the parents. It has been identified that realization of the student on joining a professional course that qualifying an entrance examination is different from capacity to undertake the professional course may drive them to dire straits. Another recurring phenomenon is unfulfilled commitments. Quite a lot of professional education institutions claim of 100% placements with high salaries which are far from truth, wherein many a time they have less than 10% placements. This puts a student in dichotomy after the completion of the course wherein he finds it difficult to face the family and society. This result in choosing a life position I'm not OK, you are not OK. If adequate ventilation is available at this stage the adult recovers otherwise may increase the tendency to commit suicide.

---

## Analysis

How can we reduce the suicidal tendency amongst youth? Having interacted with large number of students undergoing professional courses certain solutions can be suggested. Parents by responsible actions can obviate some of the risk factors. Most of the cases of youth suicide is found when the child has no avenue to express their feelings. Parents consider that paying the fees, providing a motor cycle/scooter and pocket money is all they are required to do. Surprisingly these are less important. In the so called mad race for power, position and money, they fail to take time out, sit with the children, talk to them and frame a balance mix of positive and negative strokes in order to develop their personality, sense of self-worth and define beliefs in them, the world and others for transforming into a life position I'm OK, you are OK.

All through the school educations, teachers have an important role in framing the life position. Schools should develop student ownership program where the teachers sit with them as frequently as possible and interact on issues other than course curriculum such as personality, social and psychological development. The present system of grading needs to be changed. A student who gets 91% is unhappy to find a colleague with 95%. As qualitatively there is not much difference between the two, it may be worthwhile to consider transforming to grade system which would be more appropriate and reduce stress; A up to 70, B 40-69, C less than 40. It is reasonable to consider that this would provide relief to youth who are constantly pressurised by parents and school to get more than 90% marks. Admission to professional colleges are based on entrance tests. In quite a number of cases students go and take admission to coaching centres under a tacit agreement with school authorities with the aim of getting a good place in the merit list. Such a student who qualifies in entrance test is not reflecting the true potential and fails to progress in curriculum. This later on creates a dichotomy and is disastrous for students in professional colleges. Therefore while making the merit list it should be considered to give 60% weightage to school final results and balance 40% to marks obtained in entrance test. By such a way the students who obtain admission to professional institutions are potentially matched to undertake the curriculum.

Drug is menace has started influencing students in schools and colleges in a large way. Quite a number of suicides are drug related cases. Discrete monitoring of youth by law enforcing agencies, school authorities, teachers and parents with certainty can drive drugs away from schools and colleges.

Periodical counselling, lectures by psychologists and social workers in schools and colleges on the ill effects of drugs must be made as a habit and not routine to fill the engagement calendar. Elderly persons of the society can contribute a lot by occasional talks with youth in the schools and housing societies for framing their personality and life positions.

Online gaming is also a factor which develops financial stress. It has driven quite a number of teenagers to suicide or creates suicidal tendencies when they are in a dilemma. Government has a role to play in this by banning on line gaming irrespective of age.

---

## Results

Teenagers fall into the category where certain risk factors increase suicidal tendencies. Even though men in general are more risk prone as per a study, the trend is reversed in youth where it has been found that the risk of young female adults is higher than that of males. As per analysis the physiological factors which increase chances of risk are negative effect, poor coping strategies, and irrationality. Certain societal factors such as abuse in any form, prejudice and economic instability increase risk of suicide. Teenagers are resorting because of the absence of window. When society realises this flaw and reduce its tendency of suicide amongst youth will reduce.

Present education system places excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. Rather than becoming stress busters in certain cases parents and teachers create worry. Ideally they should be taking the youth out from the mind traps such as; unrealistic expectations, taking things personally, all or not thinking, exaggeration and rigid thinking. Youth would find that the stressful condition is removed when a problem which is generated in the mind is regulated through support network of friends, colleagues and family. In the absence of such a mechanism they try to adapt any one of the Freudian defence mechanisms, the effect of which is temporary. Schools, colleges and workplace may conduct Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) at frequent intervals of six months.

A positive unconditional or conditional stroke can reduce the risk factor and thus the suicidal tendencies. These strokes a person receives before adulthood play an important role in the life positions. Youth who are at the 'I'm OK you are OK' life positions generally do not fall into suicidal tendencies but those of the other groups are vulnerable.

Emotional blackmail is about scheming people in relationships, which creates an unusual demand in the controlled person. If the affected person can come out of it then the danger is averted otherwise they are prompted to do uncomfortable, undesirable, burdensome or self-sacrificing acts for the controller. In transactional dynamics the human being loses the much needed lucidity.

Crisis develops in the mind when goal and reality mismatch takes place. So is ambition with unmatched potential/capability. Another recurring phenomenon is unfulfilled commitments. If adequate ventilation is available at this stage the adult recovers otherwise may increase the tendency to commit suicide. In the so called mad race for power, position and money, parents fail to take time out, sit with the children, talk to them and frame a balance mix of positive and negative strokes in order to develop their personality, sense of self-worth and define beliefs in them. The coaching and entrance tests culture creates a halo effect and youth who are trapped realise at a later stage of the mismatch.

Drug is a menace and it has influence in many of the educational institutions. They go under report due to a false sense of integrity and surfaces when the stage is beyond any active interference. Periodical counselling, lectures by psychologists and social workers in schools and colleges on the ill effects of drugs must be made as a habit and not routine to fill the engagement calendar. Elderly persons of the society can contribute a lot by occasional talks with youth in the schools and housing societies for framing their personality and life positions. On line gaming is an activity which interferes with the peaceful life of a youth. It derails a youth mentally and morally.

---

## Conclusion

Suicide by youth is on the increase each year by 10% which is a negative indicator of human development. However the society tries to transfer the blame to the youth, it has a lot to do with the behaviour of parents, school/college authorities, and authorities. Together we can reduce it. Let us try at least.

---

## References

1. Are mass shootings an American epidemic? 2020, the Conversation
2. DA Ruch, Jeffrey A Bridge, (2022), Epidemiology of Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour in youth James Densley, School shootings are a record high this year, 2021, Metropolitan State University
3. Jillian Peterson, 2022, Mass shootings are happening at Grocery stores Hamline University
4. Johan Bilsen, (2018), Suicide and Risk Factors, International Public Health Conference 2017
5. Robbins, Judge, Sanghi, 2010, Organizational Behaviour
6. Stephanie S Daniel, David B Goldston, (2009), Interventions for Suicidal Youth
7. Zac Lang, 2021, In gun debate both sides have evidence to back them up, University of Missouri