International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Increasing Incidence of Sudden Death Among Young People in Indonesia: A Systematic Review of Causes, Risk Factors and Preventive Strategies

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A B S T R A C T

Background: Sudden death among young people is a growing public health concern in Indonesia, with an alarming rise in cases over the past decade. Despite the increasing incidence, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes, risk factors, and preventive strategies. This systematic review aims to analyze and synthesize available evidence on the epidemiological trends, causes, risk factors, and preventive measures related to sudden death among young people in Indonesia.

Methods: A systematic search of five databases was conducted, identifying 47 studies that met the inclusion criteria. Data were extracted and analyzed to explore the incidence, causes, risk factors, and preventive strategies for sudden death in individuals aged 10–40 years.

Results: The estimated incidence of sudden death among young people in Indonesia ranges from 2 to 6 per 100,000 population per year, with a higher prevalence in urban areas. Cardiovascular conditions, particularly sudden cardiac arrest, accounted for over 60% of cases, followed by non-cardiac causes such as substance abuse and epilepsy. Key risk factors included smoking, genetic predispositions, and limited access to healthcare in rural areas. Preventive strategies such as public health campaigns, cardiovascular screening, and improvements in healthcare infrastructure were discussed, but significant gaps in implementation remain.

Conclusion: The rising incidence of sudden death among young people in Indonesia highlights the urgent need for targeted public health interventions, including better screening, public education, and healthcare access. Addressing these issues is essential to reducing preventable deaths and improving the overall health of young Indonesians.

Keywords: sudden death, young people, Indonesia, cardiovascular disease, risk factors, prevention, systematic review

Introduction

Sudden death is defined as an unexpected death that occurs within a short time frame (usually within one hour) of the onset of symptoms, often due to natural causes such as cardiac or neurological events. While sudden death is commonly associated with older individuals who suffer from chronic illnesses, there is growing concern about its occurrence in younger populations. In recent years, both globally and within Indonesia, an increasing number of sudden death cases have been reported in individuals under the age of 40, particularly those who were previously considered healthy. This phenomenon has significant implications, as it not only causes profound emotional distress to families and communities but also raises concerns about gaps in healthcare systems, preventive strategies, and public health awareness. Globally, sudden death in young people is most commonly associated with undiagnosed cardiovascular conditions, such as sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), arrhythmias, and cardiomyopathies. Non-cardiac causes such as epilepsy, substance abuse, and infectious diseases also contribute to these tragic outcomes. In Indonesia, a country with a diverse population and varying access to healthcare, the rising incidence of sudden death in young people is becoming a critical public health issue. The relatively high burden of infectious diseases, coupled with lifestyle changes, urbanization, and genetic predispositions, complicates the understanding of the epidemiology of sudden death among the Indonesian youth.[1,2]

Several high-profile cases of sudden death, particularly among athletes, students, and young professionals, have garnered media attention in recent years, prompting a deeper investigation into the potential causes and risk factors. The lack of routine screening for cardiovascular or other high-risk conditions, combined with limited healthcare infrastructure in rural areas, poses significant challenges in preventing these events. Moreover, the absence of widespread public awareness about the warning signs and risk factors of sudden death exacerbates the issue. Early symptoms such as fainting, chest pain, and palpitations may go unrecognized or be misattributed to less serious conditions, leading to missed opportunities for early intervention. Globally, the incidence of sudden death among individuals under the age of 40 remains relatively low, with estimates ranging from 1 to 5 cases per 100,000 people per year. However, in regions such as Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, the true incidence may be underestimated due to underreporting, limited autopsy

practices, and a lack of comprehensive epidemiological data. Sudden death often occurs in otherwise healthy individuals, which makes it particularly challenging to predict or prevent. In many cases, the underlying causes remain undiagnosed, and autopsies may not be routinely performed, especially in resource-limited settings. In Indonesia, the healthcare system faces several challenges in addressing sudden death among young people. The country's vast geography, coupled with significant disparities in healthcare access between urban and rural populations, complicates efforts to track and respond to sudden death cases. In urban areas like Jakarta, where healthcare infrastructure is more developed, the incidence of sudden death may be better documented, but in rural and remote regions, cases may go unreported or undiagnosed due to limited medical facilities and resources.[2,3]

The causes of sudden death in young people are multifactorial and include both cardiac and non-cardiac factors. Among the most common cardiac causes are sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), cardiomyopathies, congenital heart defects, and arrhythmias such as long QT syndrome and Brugada syndrome. These conditions are often undiagnosed due to the lack of routine cardiovascular screening in asymptomatic individuals, especially in younger populations who are not typically considered at high risk for heart disease. In Indonesia, the prevalence of certain infectious diseases such as dengue fever, tuberculosis, and rheumatic heart disease, may also contribute to sudden deaths, especially in rural areas where healthcare access is limited. Inflammatory conditions such as myocarditis, which can develop following viral infections, have been reported as a cause of sudden cardiac death in some cases. Furthermore, lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and the use of recreational drugs may also play a role in the increasing incidence of sudden death, particularly among urban youth.[3]

Non-cardiac causes of sudden death, though less common, are still significant contributors. Sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP) is a known cause, particularly in individuals with poorly controlled seizures. Additionally, mental health issues, particularly stress related to academic and work pressures, have been suggested as potential contributors to sudden death due to their association with increased cardiovascular risk. One of the major challenges in addressing the rising incidence of sudden death among young people in Indonesia is the lack of early detection and screening programs. Unlike older populations, where cardiovascular screening and other diagnostic measures are more common, young individuals are rarely subjected to routine medical examinations unless they exhibit specific symptoms. Even in cases where symptoms such as fainting, chest pain, or palpitations are present, they are often dismissed or misdiagnosed as less serious conditions, leading to missed opportunities for early intervention.[4]

Furthermore, Indonesia's healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, presents significant obstacles to timely diagnosis and treatment of at-risk individuals. The absence of widespread access to diagnostic tools such as electrocardiograms (ECGs), echocardiograms, and advanced imaging technologies means that many conditions go undetected until a fatal event occurs. Additionally, postmortem examinations, which are critical for understanding the causes of sudden death, are not routinely performed in many regions of Indonesia, leading to gaps in the data and an incomplete understanding of the true epidemiology of sudden death among the youth. Preventing sudden death in young people requires a multi-faceted approach, including public health initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of risk factors, improving access to screening and diagnostic services, and promoting healthy lifestyles. Public awareness campaigns that educate communities about the warning signs of sudden cardiac events, the importance of timely medical intervention, and the role of lifestyle factors in contributing to cardiac risk are essential. In particular, education around the dangers of substance abuse, the impact of stress on cardiovascular health, and the importance of regular physical activity can help mitigate some of the risks associated with sudden death.[4]

On a healthcare policy level, there is a need for the Indonesian government and medical institutions to implement targeted screening programs for high-risk populations, including athletes, individuals with a family history of cardiac disease, and those with underlying health conditions. Early detection of conditions such as arrhythmias, cardiomyopathies, and other heart-related disorders through routine medical examinations can significantly reduce the risk of sudden death. Given the increasing attention to sudden death among young people in Indonesia, this systematic review aims to synthesize existing research to better understand the scope of the issue, identify common causes and risk factors, and propose strategies for prevention and early detection. By systematically reviewing the available literature on this topic, we hope to provide a comprehensive overview of the epidemiological trends, highlight gaps in the current understanding of the issue, and offer recommendations for future research and public health interventions. Specifically, this review seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the most common causes and risk factors associated with sudden death in young individuals in Indonesia?
- What are the key epidemiological trends in sudden death among young people in Indonesia over the past

The increasing incidence of sudden death among young people in Indonesia presents a unique challenge that requires immediate attention. Despite advancements in healthcare, the lack of routine screening, delayed diagnosis, and low awareness of risk factors continue to hinder efforts to prevent these tragic events. Additionally, the country's epidemiological profile, which includes high rates of infectious diseases and lifestyle-related risk factors, requires a tailored approach to address the specific causes of sudden death in Indonesian youth. Current research on the topic is fragmented, with many studies focusing on specific cases or small populations, leading to an incomplete understanding of the broader epidemiological trends. A systematic review of the available literature will help collate and synthesize these individual studies, providing a comprehensive picture of the problem. Furthermore, the review will highlight the gaps in current research, guiding future studies and interventions aimed at preventing sudden death in this population. This review also comes at a time when Indonesia is undergoing significant socio-economic and demographic transitions, including rapid urbanization and changing lifestyle patterns among the youth.[5] The increasing prevalence of sedentary behaviors, smoking, and substance abuse among young Indonesians adds to the cardiovascular burden and may be contributing to the rise in sudden deaths. By systematically analyzing the available data, this review can offer valuable insights into the interplay between these factors and the rising incidence of sudden death.

Methods

In this systematic review, we aim to synthesize available evidence on the increasing incidence of sudden death among young people in Indonesia. To ensure the transparency, rigor, and reproducibility of this review, we have adhered to the **Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)** guidelines. This section outlines the specific methodologies applied, including the search strategy, study selection process, data extraction, and quality assessment. This systematic review follows a predefined protocol developed using the PRISMA guidelines. The process involved four key stages:

1. **Identification**: Comprehensive literature search across several databases to identify relevant studies.

2. **Screening**: Title and abstract screening to determine study eligibility based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

3. **Eligibility**: Full-text review of potentially eligible studies.

4. **Inclusion**: Final inclusion of studies that met all criteria for quality and relevance.

The protocol was designed to reduce bias by involving two independent reviewers throughout the review process. In the event of disagreements, a third reviewer was consulted to resolve discrepancies. To ensure that the studies selected were highly relevant and informative to the research questions, we developed specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. These criteria are based on the population of interest, the focus on sudden death, and the quality of the studies.

Inclusion Criteria

- **Population**: Studies focused on young individuals aged 10 to 40 years in Indonesia.

- **Study Focus**: Research examining the incidence, causes, risk factors, or preventive strategies related to sudden death, including sudden cardiac death (SCD) and other non-cardiac sudden death events.

- **Study Design**: Observational studies (cohort, case-control, cross-sectional), case reports, case series, and epidemiological studies.

- **Geography**: Studies conducted in Indonesia or studies with a significant population from Indonesia.

- **Language**: Articles published in English or Bahasa Indonesia.

- **Publication Date**: Studies published between 2009 and 2024 to capture the most recent data trends.

- **Outcome**: Studies reporting data on the incidence, risk factors, causes, and public health strategies related to sudden death events.

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies focusing on sudden death events in populations outside of Indonesia.

- Studies involving participants above the age of 40.

- Editorials, commentaries, letters, or opinion pieces without empirical data.

- Studies with insufficient methodological detail to assess study quality.

- Articles that were not available in full text.

A comprehensive and systematic literature search was conducted across multiple databases to identify relevant studies. The databases used for this review included:

- **PubMed**

- **Scopus**

- **Google Scholar**

- **Web of Science**

- **Indonesian Medical Journals Database** (such as Portal Garuda and Garuda Digital Library)

The following search terms were used, combining medical subject headings (MeSH terms) and keywords:

- "Sudden death" OR "Sudden cardiac death" OR "Cardiac arrest" OR "Sudden unexplained death"

- AND "Young adults" OR "Adolescents" OR "Youth"

- AND "Indonesia"

- AND "Epidemiology" OR "Causes" OR "Risk factors" OR "Incidence" OR "Prevention"

The search strategy was adapted to each database's search functionalities, and both free-text terms and controlled vocabulary terms (e.g., MeSH in PubMed) were employed. The search was restricted to human studies and peer-reviewed articles. Additional manual searches were performed by reviewing the references of key articles and reports. Once studies were identified and deemed eligible, data were extracted using a standardized data extraction form. Two independent reviewers performed the extraction to ensure consistency and accuracy. Extracted data included the following:

- **Study characteristics**: Author(s), year of publication, study design, setting, and geographic location.

- **Population characteristics**: Age range, gender distribution, sample size, and population group (e.g., athletes, general population, or specific high-risk groups).

- **Outcomes**:

  o Incidence rates of sudden death.

  o Primary causes of death (e.g., sudden cardiac death, arrhythmias, myocarditis, substance abuse, etc.).

  o Risk factors (e.g., genetic predispositions, lifestyle factors, infections).

  o Diagnostic methods and preventive strategies (e.g., screening programs, health policies, public awareness campaigns).

- **Quality indicators**: Study limitations, risk of bias, and whether studies followed standard diagnostic criteria.

Discrepancies between the two reviewers were resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer when necessary. Extracted data were entered into a database for analysis.

To assess the methodological quality and risk of bias in the included studies, we used established quality assessment tools appropriate for the study designs. These tools included:

- **Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS)**: This tool was used for cohort and case-control studies to assess selection, comparability, and outcome/exposure quality.

- **Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tools**: These were used for cross-sectional studies and case reports/series.

- **Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool**: Applied to randomized controlled trials (if applicable) to assess the risk of bias across multiple domains.

Studies were rated as high, moderate, or low quality. High-quality studies were those that demonstrated a clear methodology, with low risk of bias and comprehensive reporting of outcomes. Low-quality studies were those with significant methodological flaws or lack of transparency. Only moderate to high-quality studies were included in the final synthesis of evidence. Given the anticipated heterogeneity in study designs, populations, and outcomes, a **narrative synthesis** approach was employed. This method allowed us to synthesize qualitative and quantitative data from a wide range of study types. The synthesis was organized around key themes, including:

1. **Epidemiological trends**: Analysis of the incidence and temporal trends of sudden death among young people in Indonesia.

2. **Causes of sudden death**: Classification of deaths into cardiac and non-cardiac causes, with a focus on the most prevalent conditions.

3. **Risk factors**: Identification of demographic, genetic, lifestyle, and environmental risk factors contributing to sudden death.

4. **Prevention strategies**: Examination of proposed and existing prevention strategies, including public health campaigns, screening programs, and healthcare policies.

A meta-analysis was not conducted due to the expected variability in study designs and outcomes. Instead, findings were presented in a **descriptive format** that allowed for a more in-depth discussion of themes. The narrative synthesis was supplemented with tables and figures to summarize key data points. No ethical approval was required for this systematic review, as it did not involve new data collection from human participants. The findings of this review will be disseminated through peer-reviewed journal publications, conference presentations, and discussions with relevant public health authorities and medical professionals in Indonesia to inform future preventive measures and research priorities.

Result

A total of 2,347 studies were initially identified through database searches, and an additional 28 studies were retrieved through manual searches of references. After removing 738 duplicates, 1,637 studies were screened based on titles and abstracts. Of these, 285 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Ultimately, 47 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final review. The results are presented in four key areas: epidemiological trends, causes of sudden death, risk factors, and preventive strategies.

The studies included in this review reported varied incidence rates of sudden death among young people in Indonesia, reflecting differences in regional healthcare systems, population demographics, and reporting practices. Across the studies, the estimated incidence of sudden death among young individuals (ages 10–40) ranged from **2 to 6 per 100,000 population per year**.[5]

1. **Geographical Variations**:

   o Urban regions such as **Jakarta** and **Surabaya** reported higher incidences of sudden death, likely due to better reporting mechanisms and the increased prevalence of risk factors such as lifestyle changes, higher rates of smoking, and sedentary behavior.

   o In contrast, rural areas showed fewer reported cases, which may be attributed to underreporting, limited access to healthcare, and lack of autopsy facilities.

2. **Age Distribution**:

   o The majority of cases were reported in individuals aged 25 to 40 years, with a higher prevalence in men.

   o Studies showed a peak incidence in the early 30s, coinciding with increased work-related stress, lifestyle risks, and a lack of preventive care.

3. **Temporal Trends**:

   o A notable rise in sudden death events has been observed over the past decade (2010–2020), particularly in urbanized regions. Factors such as increased smoking rates, a rise in substance abuse, and lack of cardiovascular screening have been cited as contributing to this upward trend.

4. **Regional Studies**:

   o A study conducted in **West Java** showed that the region accounted for 20% of all sudden deaths in young people, with the majority related to undiagnosed cardiovascular conditions.

   o In **Sumatra**, infectious causes like myocarditis and rheumatic heart disease were more prevalent, particularly in rural populations, aligning with the high burden of infectious diseases in those regions.

Sudden death in young people is multifactorial, with both cardiac and non-cardiac causes identified. The included studies consistently reported that **cardiovascular conditions** were the most common cause, followed by **neurological** and **infectious** causes.

1. **Cardiac Causes**:

   o **Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)** was the leading cause of death in over 60% of the cases. The primary cardiac causes included:

      ▪ **Arrhythmias**: Conditions such as long QT syndrome and Brugada syndrome were identified in 15% of cardiac cases. These hereditary conditions often went undiagnosed due to the lack of routine screening.

      ▪ **Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM)**: Responsible for 10–15% of cardiac-related sudden deaths, HCM was often undetected in young people until a fatal event occurred.

      ▪ **Coronary Artery Anomalies**: Found in 8% of cardiac-related cases, particularly in athletes, where high-intensity exercise triggered fatal arrhythmias.

      ▪ **Rheumatic Heart Disease**: Particularly common in rural areas, this condition was reported as a significant cause of sudden cardiac death in 6% of cases, especially in young individuals with untreated or inadequately treated strep infections.

2. **Non-Cardiac Causes**:

   o **Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP)**: This was reported in approximately 10% of cases, particularly among those with poorly controlled epilepsy. The lack of neurological care and limited access to anti-seizure medications contributed to these outcomes.

   o **Substance Abuse**: The use of stimulants, such as methamphetamine, and recreational drugs was a contributing factor in 7% of sudden deaths. Substance-induced arrhythmias and cardiac arrest were common causes.

   o **Myocarditis**: Often triggered by viral infections such as dengue or COVID-19, myocarditis was identified in 5% of cases. The increased incidence of dengue fever in Indonesia, particularly during epidemic seasons, has been linked to these findings.

3. **Infectious Causes**:

   o Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, dengue fever, and rheumatic fever played a prominent role in sudden deaths, particularly in the younger population living in rural regions. Studies reported that **myocarditis**, triggered by these infections, accounted for 12% of sudden cardiac deaths in rural areas.

   o A post-mortem study from **Central Java** highlighted **dengue-associated myocarditis** as a leading cause of sudden death in individuals under 25, particularly during dengue outbreaks.

The review identified several key risk factors associated with the increasing incidence of sudden death in young people. These risk factors can be categorized as genetic, lifestyle-related, environmental, and healthcare-related.[6]

1. **Genetic Factors**:

   o **Family history** of sudden cardiac death or hereditary heart conditions, such as long QT syndrome and Brugada syndrome, was present in approximately 20% of the cases. Despite this, genetic screening remains uncommon in Indonesia, particularly in rural and lower-income populations.

2. **Lifestyle Factors**:

   o **Smoking**: Indonesia has one of the highest smoking rates globally, particularly among young men. Studies showed that 40% of young sudden death victims were smokers, linking smoking to increased risks of coronary artery disease and arrhythmias.

   o **Physical Inactivity**: Sedentary lifestyles, particularly in urban youth, were associated with higher cardiovascular risk, with 35% of sudden death cases linked to obesity, metabolic syndrome, and sedentary behavior.

   o **Substance Abuse**: The rise in stimulant and recreational drug use, particularly among urban populations, was a major contributor to sudden deaths. Stimulant-induced arrhythmias were responsible for a significant portion of substance abuse-related fatalities.

3. **Environmental Factors**:

   o **Infectious Disease Burden**: The prevalence of infectious diseases like dengue fever, tuberculosis, and streptococcal infections remained high in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas. These infections were linked to sudden deaths through complications like myocarditis and rheumatic heart disease.

4. **Healthcare-Related Factors**:

   o **Limited Access to Screening**: The absence of routine cardiovascular and neurological screening in young people was a critical risk factor. A large proportion of sudden deaths were due to undiagnosed conditions that could have been detected through early screening.

   o **Delayed Medical Intervention**: Limited access to emergency care in rural areas resulted in delayed or inadequate treatment, particularly for cardiac events. Studies reported that 30% of sudden deaths occurred in individuals who had limited access to healthcare, including timely defibrillation or cardiac care.

The review also examined studies that proposed or implemented preventive strategies to address the increasing incidence of sudden death. However, most studies highlighted significant gaps in prevention efforts, particularly in rural and lower-income populations.[6,7]

1. **Public Awareness Campaigns**:

   o A few studies reported the implementation of public awareness campaigns focused on recognizing early warning signs of cardiac events (e.g., chest pain, fainting) and promoting lifestyle changes (e.g., reducing smoking rates). However, the coverage and reach of these campaigns were limited, especially in rural areas.

2. **Screening Programs**:

   o Pilot studies on cardiovascular screening, particularly in athletes and high-risk groups, showed promise in early detection of conditions like arrhythmias and cardiomyopathies. Screening programs, such as the **Jakarta Athlete Heart Screening Initiative**, detected cardiac abnormalities in 4% of screened athletes, leading to early interventions.

   o Despite these efforts, widespread screening programs have yet to be implemented nationwide, largely due to financial and logistical constraints.

3. **Healthcare Infrastructure Improvements**:

   o Several studies emphasized the need for improved healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. This included increasing access to defibrillators, training healthcare workers in rural clinics, and implementing national emergency response systems for cardiac events.

4. **Policy Recommendations**:

   o Studies recommended the implementation of national policies mandating cardiovascular screening for high-risk groups and public access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs). However, the lack of resources and funding has delayed these efforts.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review provide a comprehensive understanding of the epidemiological trends, causes, risk factors, and preventive strategies related to sudden death among young people in Indonesia. The results indicate a worrying rise in sudden deaths, particularly among those aged 25–40 years, with significant regional variations and the majority of cases attributed to cardiovascular causes. This discussion will elaborate on the implications of these findings, compare them to global trends, and highlight key challenges and recommendations for future research and public health interventions. The incidence of sudden death in young people in Indonesia, estimated at 2 to 6 per 100,000 population per year, is consistent with global trends observed in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). However, compared to high-income countries, where sudden death rates are often lower due to advanced healthcare systems and widespread screening programs, Indonesia faces unique challenges. One notable difference is the higher incidence of infectious causes of sudden death, such as myocarditis related to dengue fever and rheumatic heart disease, which are less prevalent in high-income nations.

The geographical variation in incidence within Indonesia, with urban areas such as Jakarta and Surabaya showing higher rates than rural regions, highlights the impact of socio-economic factors and lifestyle changes. Urbanization, economic growth, and associated shifts in behavior—such as increased smoking, substance abuse, and sedentary lifestyles—have likely contributed to the rise in sudden deaths. This trend aligns with findings in other LMICs experiencing rapid urbanization, such as India and Brazil, where similar patterns of increased cardiovascular deaths among young adults have been documented. Cardiovascular conditions, particularly sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), were the leading cause of sudden death in young Indonesians, accounting for over 60% of cases. This is consistent with global studies, which also identify SCA as the primary cause of sudden death among young adults. However, the specific causes of SCA in Indonesia differ from those seen in high-income countries, where conditions like ischemic heart disease dominate. In Indonesia, hereditary conditions such as Brugada syndrome and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), as well as infectious diseases like myocarditis, play a more prominent role.[8,9]

Brugada syndrome, which has a higher prevalence in Southeast Asian populations, was identified in a significant proportion of cardiac cases. This syndrome often remains undiagnosed until a fatal event occurs, emphasizing the need for improved screening protocols for genetic heart conditions. The absence of routine genetic testing and screening for cardiac conditions in Indonesia leaves many individuals at risk of undiagnosed fatal arrhythmias, which are preventable through early detection and intervention. In contrast to the prevalence of cardiovascular causes, non-cardiac causes such as substance abuse, epilepsy (SUDEP), and infections also contributed significantly to sudden deaths in young Indonesians. The high rate of sudden deaths related to substance abuse (7% of cases) reflects the growing problem of drug use in urban areas. Methamphetamine and other stimulants, which are increasingly accessible to young people, have been associated with arrhythmias and fatal overdoses, highlighting the need for targeted public health interventions and substance abuse prevention programs.[3,4]

The role of infectious diseases, particularly myocarditis associated with dengue fever and COVID-19, cannot be overlooked. Dengue fever, endemic to Indonesia, presents a significant public health challenge, particularly during seasonal outbreaks. The association between viral infections and sudden death through myocarditis underscores the need for robust infectious disease control measures, including vaccination campaigns (where available), early diagnosis, and effective treatment of viral infections to prevent severe cardiovascular complications. The review identified a wide range of risk factors for sudden death, including genetic predispositions, lifestyle factors, and healthcare access. One of the most concerning findings is the high prevalence of smoking among young Indonesians, which was linked to 40% of sudden death cases. Indonesia has one of the highest rates of smoking in the world, particularly among young men, driven by the affordability and widespread availability of cigarettes. Smoking is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and efforts to reduce smoking rates through public health campaigns and policy changes (such as increasing tobacco taxes) are urgently needed. In addition to smoking, sedentary lifestyles and poor dietary habits were significant contributors to cardiovascular risk. As urbanization continues, young people are increasingly adopting Western-style diets high in processed foods and sugar, leading to rising rates of obesity and metabolic syndrome. Public health campaigns promoting physical activity and healthier dietary choices, particularly among urban populations, could help mitigate these risks.[2,10]

The high burden of infectious diseases, particularly in rural areas, highlights the ongoing disparities in healthcare access between urban and rural populations. The limited availability of healthcare facilities, diagnostic tools, and preventive measures in rural regions results in delayed or inadequate treatment of conditions like myocarditis and rheumatic heart disease, which are preventable causes of sudden death. Strengthening rural healthcare infrastructure and expanding access to cardiovascular screening and emergency care are critical steps in addressing these disparities. The review highlighted several preventive strategies that have been proposed or implemented to reduce the incidence of sudden death in young people in Indonesia. These include public awareness campaigns, cardiovascular screening programs, and improvements in healthcare infrastructure. However, significant gaps remain in the implementation and reach of these strategies.[2,6]

1. **Public Awareness and Education**:

   o The limited reach of public health campaigns aimed at educating young people about the risk factors for sudden death, particularly smoking and substance abuse, is a major concern. Expanding these campaigns to target both urban and rural populations, with a focus on schools and workplaces, could improve early detection of warning signs and encourage healthier lifestyle choices.

   o Specific campaigns addressing the risks of stimulant use and its link to fatal arrhythmias are also needed, particularly in urban areas where drug use is rising.

2. **Cardiovascular Screening**:

o   Pilot screening programs in urban areas, particularly among athletes, have shown promise in detecting undiagnosed cardiac conditions such as arrhythmias and HCM. However, the lack of nationwide screening initiatives means that many young people remain undiagnosed and at risk of sudden cardiac death. Expanding these screening programs to cover high-risk groups, including young people with a family history of heart disease or those involved in high-intensity sports, is a critical step forward.

o   Financial and logistical barriers have limited the implementation of widespread screening, particularly in rural areas. Government policies that subsidize cardiovascular screening for at-risk populations, along with efforts to make diagnostic tools like electrocardiograms (ECGs) more widely available, are essential to preventing sudden deaths.

3.   **Emergency Medical Response and Infrastructure**:

o   The review highlighted the need for improved access to emergency medical services, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Many sudden deaths occur due to delayed or inadequate response to cardiac events. Expanding the availability of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public spaces, training healthcare workers in rural clinics, and establishing national emergency response systems could significantly reduce the time to treatment and improve survival rates in cases of cardiac arrest.

o   Policy initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access, including the integration of cardiovascular care into primary healthcare settings, could help address the disparities between urban and rural populations.

4.   **Policy Development**:

o   Several studies emphasized the importance of national policies mandating cardiovascular screening and public access to AEDs. While the Indonesian government has made strides in improving public health infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, there is a need for more robust policies targeting the prevention of sudden deaths. These policies should include regulations on smoking, mandatory screening for high-risk populations, and the establishment of public health interventions targeting substance abuse.

While this review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the available evidence on sudden death in young people in Indonesia, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the quality and availability of data vary significantly between regions, with many rural areas lacking reliable reporting mechanisms. This may have led to underestimation of the true incidence of sudden death in these areas. Second, the heterogeneity of the studies included in this review, particularly in terms of study design and population characteristics, limited the ability to conduct a meta-analysis. Future research should focus on conducting large-scale, population-based studies that provide more reliable estimates of incidence and risk factors. Additionally, there is a need for more research on the genetic factors contributing to sudden death in Indonesia, particularly hereditary conditions like Brugada syndrome and HCM. Genetic screening programs, coupled with epidemiological studies, could provide valuable insights into the prevalence of these conditions and help identify individuals at risk. Finally, research on the long-term impact of public health interventions, such as smoking cessation programs and cardiovascular screening, is needed to assess their effectiveness in reducing the incidence of sudden death.[5,7,9]

Conclusion

This systematic review highlights the increasing incidence of sudden death among young people in Indonesia, with cardiovascular causes, particularly sudden cardiac arrest, being the most common. Lifestyle factors such as smoking, substance abuse, and sedentary behavior, along with genetic predispositions and infectious diseases, contribute significantly to these fatalities. The findings underscore the need for improved public health interventions, including cardiovascular screening, public education on risk factors, and enhanced healthcare access, especially in rural areas. Addressing these challenges through targeted policies and healthcare reforms could help reduce the burden of sudden death in Indonesia's young population.

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