Social factors of suicides in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Suicide is becoming an immense social problem from end of 19th century. Both quantitative and qualitative researches are important to understand the issue. Research findings help to select suicide preventing programs. Eight hundred thousand suicides were reported in 2019 worldwide. Statistics reported that it is nearly about three thousand suicides per year in Sri Lanka. The unexpected/miserable loss of a family member affects directly or indirectly not only to the family but also to the society. The research problem is 'how does lack of social morals affect to suicides in Sri Lanka? There are four objectives of this research as to reveal social life of person who attempted to suicide, to examine social interrelationships of them, to realize their personal traits, challenges, and barriers, and to recognize preventing techniques. The ontological approach of this research is subjectivism and epistemological approach is interpretivism. The research type is descriptive, cross sectional and qualitative. Underpinning theory is Collective Consciences and Moral Poverty Index which was introduced by Durkheim. Research method is case study method and data collecting techniques are in-depth interviews. Sample consists of persons who have attempted to commit suicide. Theoretical and conceptual review was done. The study looks at the main socio-demographic factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, civil status, educational level and causes about suicides from 2016-2019 based on police crime statistics as first part of the study. Literature revealed the background identification on socio-

demographic information such as; maximum number of suicides was from Sinhalese Buddhists, minimum number of suicides was reported from Muslims and Islamic people; Age between 21-25 and age over 70 can be considered as the age ranges with the highest number of people who committed suicides; Suicide rate of married persons was higher than unmarried; The female students' suicides were higher than male but in all other occupations male suicides were higher than female; Most of the persons who had committed suicide had educated up to secondary education; Most common reasons for suicides were harassments in family, disappointments and harassment, economic issues, psychological disorders and chronic diseases; Unemployed persons had committed suicide more than the employed people; Second highest category who had committed suicide was the agricultural sector and the category with the lowest number of people who had committed suicide was politicians. The main finding of this demographic data is that 90% of the factors that affect suicide are social factors. The integration between the individual and society has diminished, and society has become indifferent to the needs of the individual.

Keywords: suicide, socio-demographic trends, anomic, moral system