

Risk factors in adolescents with suicidal behaviors Factores de riesgo en adolescentes con conductas suicidas

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Abstract:

This article aimed to present a theoretical approach to the risk factors associated with suicidal behavior in adolescents by searching for articles in Google Scholar, Scipedia, Pediatría Integral, Dialnet, and Scielo databases. Searches were filtered by date, considering publications from the last five years, both in English and Spanish, with keywords such as adolescents, risk factors, suicidal behavior, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempt. As a result, several risk factors were found to develop suicidal behavior in adolescents corresponding to each individual's biological, psychological, and social spheres, such as gender, emotional problems, affective disorders, interpersonal relationships, and bullying. Suicidal behavior is a multifactorial phenomenon that can be prevented through prevention and primary intervention programs from pertinent instances such as the Ministry of Health.

Keywords:

Adolescents, risk factors, suicidal behavior, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt suicide

Resumen:

El propósito de este artículo fue presentar una aproximación teórica a los factores de riesgo asociados a la conducta suicida en adolescentes mediante la búsqueda de artículos en las bases de datos de Google Scholar, Scipedia, Pediatría Integral, Dialnet y Scielo. Se filtraron las búsquedas por fechas considerando publicaciones de los últimos 5 años, tanto en inglés como en español con palabras claves como adolescentes, factores de riesgo, conducta suicida, ideación suicida e intento suicida. Como resultado, se encontraron varios factores de riesgo para el desarrollo de la conducta suicida en los adolescentes correspondientes a las esferas biológica, psicológica y social de cada individuo, como el género, los problemas emocionales y los trastornos afectivos, las relaciones interpersonales y el bullying. La conducta suicida es un fenómeno multifactorial que se puede prevenir mediante programas de prevención e intervención primaria desde las instancias pertinentes como la Secretaría de Salud.

Palabras Clave:

Adolescentes, factores de riesgo, conducta suicida, ideación suicida, intento suicida, suicidio

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is such a complex and transcendental stage in life since, during this stage, there are certain turbulences during the physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes of each individual. Therefore, the concept of adolescence derives from the Latin word *adolescere*, which comes from the verb to become an adolescent. The Spanish language has the meaning of growth and maturation. This stage covers from 10 to 19 years of age. It is considered necessary due to the period of evolution between childhood and adulthood. A series of changes occur at psychological, physical, emotional, and social levels. It arises through puberty, which is only a biological process. It concludes during the second decade of life with growth, physical development, and maturation (Güemes et al., 2017).

During puberty, the moment before adolescence, the somatic and biological changes that delimit the phase from childhood to adulthood are mainly developed. This maturity process begins with the appearance of secondary characters and ends when sexual maturation is achieved. Furthermore, the ability to reproduce is obtained upon reaching adulthood. Growth acceleration, sexual glands, genitalia, and body changes also occur (Pozo, 2020).

One of the most complex processes during adolescence is the development of identity since, for decades, its definition has varied from different approaches and contexts for; which the word identity refers to a set of characteristics that comprise a period of transformation so that the individual develops their psychosocial skills according to the environment in which they find themselves, therefore, behaviors begin to form that cause some complications internally and externally, which involves

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responsibilities in the family and social sphere (Escalona 2012, as cited in Acosta et al. 2019).

Currently, the construction of identity is in crisis because it is based on the influence spread by the media through social networks, television programs, advertising, and stereotyped lifestyles, to formulate a norm in this social conception of what being an adolescent entails, that is why the adolescent lives in this with function because he seems to have found a definitive way of living (López 2017, as cited González, 2020).

The increase in suicides in the adolescent population has caused a growing need to study and identify the risk factors that are associated with this social problem; according to studies carried out, the leading personal factors are age, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental illnesses and personality traits (Serrano-Ruiz & Olave-Chaves, 2017).

Suicide is all that self-inflicted action where death is caused intentionally; through this act, there are several stages; one of them is suicidal behavior characterized by suicidal ideation, planning, attempting, and consummating suicide. This fact has always been presented in the history of humanity; there is a particular singularity in its characteristics since these are dynamic and vary according to their contextual, geographical, temporal, personal, and cultural situation (Choque, 2019).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), suicide is considered a severe problem within public health since each year, around 800,000 thousand people take their own lives; these figures mean that every 40 seconds, a suicide. There is no stipulated age for this problem, but in 2015 globally, suicide was the second cause of death among the population aged 15 to 29. Consequently, 75% of suicides occurred in low- and middle-income countries. Suicide is a catastrophe that mainly impacts the family and social environment, and in turn, this produces persistent consequences in the people closest to the suicide (Cuesta-Revé, 2017).

Currently, scientific studies have been carried out. It is mentioned that other risk factors in suicide attempts are at the psychosocial level income people who do have support in the family or social sphere or come from relatives with suicide attempts. Due to suicide, symptoms such as depression, hopelessness, and guilt are presented, generating a hostile environment (Aguilera, 2018).

METHOD

In the elaboration of this article, the search was carried out using the academic Google database, Dialnet, Scipedia, comprehensive paediatrics, and Scielo; the search terms used were adolescents, risk factors, suicidal behavior, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempt.

After the search, dissertations, theses, and articles in Spanish and English were selected, with the titles of risk factors in the adolescent population, suicidal behavior in adolescents, suicide attempt in adolescents, suicide in adolescents. Non-experimental theoretical articles were included.

The bibliographic search considered articles, these and books not older than 5 five years. During these investigations types of material were excluded, where mention was made of suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior and suicide in children and adults, as it was not of interest to the investigation.

RESULTS

In the theoretical investigation of suicidal behavior, various risk factors have been identified, which are part of multiple spheres of the individual, including personal and social aspects. Among them are gender, bullying, substance use, interpersonal relationships, and depression, among other factors that influence committing suicidal behavior in each individual.

According to data provided by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), it is established that in the most developed countries such as the United States, the prevalence of suicidal ideation in adolescent's ranges from 17% to 36.1%, in Canada it is 9.5%. , while in Latin America the percentage is 13.8%. In Mexico, various investigations have been carried out regarding suicidal ideation in adolescents between 12 to 17 years. The Mexican Survey of Adolescent Mental Health estimates that the prevalence of suicidal ideation in this population is 13.3%. In other investigations carried out by a et al., they found that 47% of students who attend the upper secondary level have manifested at least one symptom of suicidal ideation in their life (Franco et al. 2020).

In Mexico there are, some studies regarding suicide attempts, where Borges and his collaborators report that the prevalence of suicide attempts is 1.3%. On the other hand, the National Health and Nutrition Surveys showed that in 2006 the percentage of suicide attempts was 1.1%, while in 2012 it was 2.7%, which is equivalent to an increase of 1.6%, other studies report that the prevalence of suicide attempts in the adolescent population is 4.26%, however, in other investigations, they found that the highest figures for suicide attempts occur more in students aged 14 to 19 years old, with a percentage of 9% (Rivera-Rivera et al. 2020).

Most of the suicides occur in countries that are in full development, since these are limited in terms of their resources and services, therefore, this means that support and treatment are not insufficient to solve this problem.

In Latin America and the Caribbean it is reported that suicide mortality rates are low, since they occur at 6.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, later in the last 20 years in these regions, the number of cases has been increasing. For 40 years, suicides in Mexico have increased constantly, one of the cities with the highest prevalence of suicides, in the adolescent population, is Mexico City, since it presents mortality rates, which have tripled nationally . In the year 1990, 1.56 suicides were registered for every 100,000 adolescents, and in 2015 approximately 5 were registered. Reflect that suicide is considered the third cause of death in men and the first in women (Dávila & Luna, 2019).

Generally, the procedures to carry out a suicide vary depending on each country, and according to its sociocultural context, some characteristics are related to the geographical areas, both in rural and urban areas, where there is access to different methods such as bridges, buildings, high-speed roads, railways, the sea and pesticides in agricultural areas. Various studies carried out in Cuba have shown that most of the methods used to commit suicide are drug intoxication, suffocation with a plastic bag over the head, hanging, poisoning with plants, metals, fungi, provoked accidents, gunshots. Of fire, throwing oneself in the path of vehicles, stabbing, swallowing sharp or pointed objects, gas poisoning and poisoning with cleaning products and pesticides (Cortés et al. 2019).

Personal factors

In Brazil, studies were carried out on the adolescent population where it is shown that there is a higher prevalence of suicide attempts in the male gender than in the female gender, due to the methods they use, the first of which is the consumption of cocaine and the use of solvents organic, as well as the intake of medications, such as: sedatives, antidepressants and antipsychotics, the second method they use is self-injury with sharp objects. While in the female gender, the most used method is the chumbinho chemical substance, which is a rodenticide for use in the agricultural sector (Palma & Da Silva 2017).

One of the main risk factors is alcohol consumption, since it causes inhibition and increased arousal, so that the sexual encounter is easier, this in turn, encourages more risky sexual practices, therefore, this It causes adolescents to engage in sexual relations without consent or protection, and this generates an increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies (Alfonso & Figueroa, 2017).

The adolescent population is exposed to various traumatic events, one of them is sexual abuse, which is considered a great generator of psychological trauma, given that on multiple occasions, this is done repeatedly and for a long time, which generates various consequences which are: fear, isolation, demand for affection, poor school performance and alterations in daily habits and sleep, therefore sexual abuse is considered a risk factor for committing suicide since this act directly affects physical health and of the victims (Reyes 2017).

Feeling alone and experiencing lonely situations during adolescence can be favourable for the development of their personality, but on many occasions this loneliness becomes social isolation, because during this stage feelings of loneliness present a high frequency in affective deficiencies. And poor significant links with the people around them, consequently the adolescent population does not develop the necessary skills to interact socially, and face changing situations, which is why social isolation is a powerful, but little known risk factor which is associated with suicidal ideation. Low self-esteem,

hopelessness, and sadness are other risk factors associated with loneliness (Böttcher & Garay, 2021).

It is worth mentioning that people with low self-esteem develop triggers to commit suicide because these people are characterized by being pessimistic, presenting thoughts that they cannot and do not know how to do anything well, they are indecisive because they show difficulties in making decisions, do not recognize or value their talents, lack self-confidence, and have an exaggerated fear of being wrong, which is why adolescents commit this act, because they intend to find a definitive solution to their temporary problems (González et al 2020).

Mental disorders are also associated with suicide, one of them is depression, according to studies carried out at a General Hospital in the Irapuato Zone, in Mexico depression disorder has been considered an important predictor for suicide, because people who suffer from this disorder have low self-esteem, feelings of sadness, low tolerance for frustration and consequently all these symptoms generate a distorted cognitive processing of the world, which causes a greater vulnerability to develop suicidal thoughts (Vázquez & De Haro, 2018).

In today's society, the media have created more stereotypes in terms of female body image, it is for this reason that when you reach adolescence, you have a negative perception of body image, since during the period of puberty, in women there are various changes, one of them is the increase in body fat and by not having the beauty standards implemented by society, a distorted body image is generated which leads to manifest eating disorders, these are characterized by excessive concern with body image and harmful and impulsive behaviors to reduce their weight, so that these disorders are more common in women than in men.

One of the pathologies of eating behavior is bulimia, which is defined by presenting regular episodes of excessive food consumption, followed by a period of regret and as a consequence leads the individual to expel excess food through vomiting, another One of the pathologies is anorexia, this disease is identified by excessively restricting the amount of food consumed and trying to maintain a weight below normal, through excessive exercise, which is why numerous studies have indicated that there are high prevalence of suicide in the adolescent population with these diseases (Zea, 2019).

Family factors

It is of great relevance to consider that the family plays an important role in the adolescent, because it is considered a determining factor for their psychological and social development, since, within it, their first feelings, and their experiences are recorded and consequently create your behavior. Within the family system there are various factors that influence suicidal behaviors, such as: the educational level of the parents, low economic status, poor quality of life, psychopathology of the parents, stressful events, poor communication with parents, families single parents, frequent

moves, family history of suicidal behavior and two of the most characteristic risk factors are: insecure attachment and family dysfunction (Ortiz et al. 2019).

In various investigations, around parenting styles, they reveal that being part of a family structure, with an authoritarian parenting style is the most harmful, since it does not contribute anything to personal development, creating as consequences, the poor management of rules of conduct, lack of emotional skills, and the ability to solve problems, which is why there is evidence that family problems increase suicidal ideation, due to lack of affection, lack of communication, and the constant discussions with the children, all these situations lead to a lack of interest in some activities, loneliness and sadness, therefore these symptoms are associated with depression (Broncano & Díaz, 2020).

It is essential to mention domestic violence, since this is a social problem that affects families of any community, of all economic and cultural levels, as well as its members. That is why several studies were carried out in Colombia showing that domestic violence is a trigger for suicidal ideation in adolescents, so that people who live in a home where violence is encouraged are more likely to generate feelings of anger, confusion, sadness, mistrust, guilt and shame, for which these experiences produce psychological effects, even decades later, and are triggered when people are exposed to violence in their homes again, presenting symptoms of anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and depressive disorders (Suárez et al. 2018).

School factors

The beginning of university education is like a small vital crisis, due to the greater conditions and demands that arise during this stage, where the student needs to dedicate more time to the school environment, which is why there is an overload of activities and various stressors are created such as: lack of time to perform individual and group tasks, the delivery of mandatory work, excessive academic responsibilities, changes in eating habits, overload of work and tasks, exposure within the school classroom, exams and evaluations to conserve a favourable average, all these factors influence to violate mental health and trigger anxiety, frustration, anger, lack of adaptation in students, learning disorders, poor academic performance and antisocial behavior, for this reason it is that various studies show that stress academic is related to suicidal ideation (Sánchez, 2018).

One of the risk factors at this stage is bullying, which is frequently caused by the students themselves in the school environment, using harassment, marginalization through the use of social networks, rejection of the social group, and violence. Verbal, psychological and physical, consequently this produces negative consequences in the individual, and behavioral problems are originated, such as lack of self-esteem, abuse of illicit substances, depression, and even lead to suicidal behavior (Paredes et al. 2018).

Social and socioeconomic factor

The LGBT population goes through various situations, in which they are not allowed to exercise their rights adequately, due to prejudice, stereotypes and stigma around their sexual orientation and gender identity, thus becoming a population exposed to insults, discrimination, and rejection for not corresponding to socially accepted gender roles, therefore, all these aspects generate an impact on the mood of these people, and they are more likely to suffer from affective disorders. In multiple investigations carried out in a population of 13 to 18 years old, they confirmed that people from the LGBT community show more behaviors of ideation, plans and suicide attempts than heterosexual young people, likewise a higher prevalence of ideations and suicide attempts was found in the same-sex couples (González-Rivera et al. 2019).

DISCUSSION

Suicidal behavior is a multifactorial phenomenon that occurs successively and in most cases, begins with suicidal ideation, then continues with suicide attempts until suicide is completed. Suicide is currently considered a global social problem, since it is one of the main causes of death, particularly affecting the adolescent population, given that suicide rates in this population have been increasing in recent years, thus becoming one of the greatest concerns of the health system, for this reason the issue is gaining importance, since it generates a great impact not only at the individual level, but also at the family and social level.

The age range that is most affected by suicidal behavior in the adolescent population is 15-19 years, since during this stage they are exposed to various crucial changes in their life cycle, in which each individual takes a new direction in its development. The female gender has a higher risk and prevalence in suicidal behaviors, however, the male gender has a higher rate of completed suicide, since the methods to commit suicide are more lethal than those of the female gender.

Among the risk factors that affect suicidal behavior in adolescents, the presence of mental disorders, such as depression, and eating behavior disorders stand out, the risk of suicide increases when symptoms such as: low self-esteem, hopelessness, low tolerance for frustration and sadness.

Family dysfunction, authoritarian parenting style and domestic violence are considered predictors for developing suicidal ideation, due to lack of affection, lack of communication, and constant discussions with children, thus creating an emotional maladjustment, which increases the vulnerability for self-destructive behavior to emerge among its members, and all this has repercussions above all on the behavior of adolescents. School difficulties are predictors of suicidal ideations and behaviors since in the school environment it was found that bullying is the most frequent risk factor, which is triggered by vulnerability to peers, due to this situation it is of the utmost importance to implement strategies that promote respect and

tolerance for differences in growth, tastes or ways of appreciating life.

The stigma, discrimination and rejection of the LGBT population produces an impact on an emotional level, creating vulnerability to develop affective disorders, for which this population is at risk of manifesting more suicidal ideation behaviors, plans and attempts.

Unemployment is a factor that contributes to committing suicide, because there is a change in the way of living, it limits and hinders the adolescent's social and active participation, and prevents the satisfaction of the most basic needs, and consequently mental health is affected, causing various disorders such as depression and anxiety.

The prevention of suicidal behavior is not only exclusive to the health system, there are other systems such as educational, family and social levels, therefore, there must be co-responsibility with suicide prevention, generating psychoeducation strategies for overcome a series of barriers, such as lack of awareness, taboo and stigma, as well as improve prevention programs, and carry out more effective interventions for suicidal ideation, in order to reduce the mortality rate of this social problem.

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