PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT WHO ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN TUNISIA

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Introduction:

Suicide is a major public health problem, especially in youngsters. In Tunisia, there is a growing interest in suicidal behaviors following an increase in their incidence. Little data is available about the epidemiology and the characteristics of suicide.

Objectives:

The aim of the present study was to describe the profile of suicidal patients followed at child psychiatry units.

Results:

- 137 patients were identified.
- sex ratio of 0.4.
- The average age was 12 years and 9 months .
- The majority of the suicides were among children aged 13 years and younger.
- We found a suicidal recurrence rate of 26% with a time delay varying between 15 days and 6 months.
- 54% of the participants were of a low socioeconomic level. Suicide premeditation was found in 50% of cases.
- A family conflict was found in 80% of the cases.
- Parents were divorced in 18% of the cases.
- A family history of psychiatric disorder was found in 41% of the cases.

Discussion:

- ✓ According to literature, suicide attempts (SA) involve more often teenagers (>13 years) **(2)**.
- ✓ Consistent with other studies, we noted female predominance. This is explained by the fact that girls have more severe suicidal ideation during adolescence **(3)**. The increased onus in our society put on females more than males and the restriction of social freedom affect them negatively and incite them to express their suffering by attempting suicide.
- ✓ A history of SA was found in 26% of cases. In the literature, it is considered to be an important risk factor in an individual's suicidal behavior and seems to increase by 25% the risk of recurrence **(4)**.

Conclusion :

Suicide attempt is a complex phenomenon that may be determined by the combination of various factors. Specific preventive programs are needed to identify children and adolescent at risk to commit a suicide attempt.

Materials and Methods:

We conducted a study on children and adolescent followed at the unit of child psychiatry of Monastir (Tunisia) from 2003 to October 2015 and at the unit of child psychiatry of Mahdia (Tunisia) from 2009 to October 2015. We collected from medical records, socio-demographic data and informations about suicide attempts.

- ✓ Consistent with previous researchs, family conflicts were found to be the most common precipitating factor for SA **(5)**. In this case, suicide is frequently considered the only option to resume dialogue in the family and it may express a call for help. Thus, interpersonal problem-solving skill development and encouraging healthy family relationships may be two crucial suicide prevention approaches with solid potential to reduce suicide rates.
- ✓ Poverty is also largely found in the literature as a factor of vulnerability of the occurrence of a SA **(6)**.
- ✓ Our finding showed that drug overdose is the most frequent method used. According to previous studies, males are more likely to employ more violent methods while the methods favoured by females tend to be less violent **(7)**.

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