Suicide attempts in Tunisia: before and after the revolution

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Introduction:

In Tunisia, after the 2011 revolution, there has been an increase in psychiatric consultations and hospitalizations. Suicidal attempt is one of the most frequent reasons of consultation. Considering the seriousness of this act, understanding the change is necessary.

Aim:

To compare the sociodemographic and clinical characteristics of patients hospitalized for attempting suicide, before and after the revolution in Tunisia.

Method:

We conducted a retrospective study at the department B of Razi hospital, the reference center in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. We included the patients hospitalized for a suicidal attempt during two distinct periods: from 2007 to 2010 and from 2012 to 2015. The sociodemographic and clinical data were collected using a pre-set sheet.

Results:

We included 50 patients among whom 43% were followed for bipolar disorder and 23% for adjustment disorder. Only 4% of the patients had a family history of attempting suicide. The average number of suicide attempts was 2. Between the two periods, the prevalence of suicide attempts was higher in the later period with 66% of the suicidal attempt occurring after the revolution. Patients hospitalized for suicide attempt were significantly younger after the revolution (31 years old versus 44 years old, $p=0.036$).

Suicidal attempt by medication was the most commonly used method before the revolution (40%), while it was hanging after it (60%). Male patient used significantly more often the hanging than the female ($p=0.034$). These attempts were reactionary in 75% of cases.

Discussion:

-A significant increase in the number of suicides from an average of 1.8/100,000 inhabitants before the revolution to 3.15/100,000 inhabitants after the revolution was found with a male predominance in suicide cases (70.2 % before 2011 and 73 % after 2011), adding that the rate of young suicides (aged 20 to 39) was 36 % before the revolution and now stands at 38 %.[1]

-Drug ingestion was the most common means, with psychotropic drugs being the most common. A significant difference between gender was found in the use of suicidal means, with boys using more physical means ($p=0.04$) and girls using intoxication ($p=0.001$). Suicidal intent was high in 44%. A major depressive episode and adjustment disorder were the most common disorders found in 58% and 24% of cases, respectively.[2]

-The prevalence of at least one psychiatric disorder was 52%. Compared to 2005, a slight decrease was observed for depressive disorders (35% versus 31%) and anxiety disorders (37% to 33%). The increase in prevalence was discrete for addictive conduct and more significant for psychotic syndromes and suicidal risk. [1]

Conclusion:

Since the revolution, the Tunisian people have been living in conditions of economic and social instability leading to an outbreak of psychiatric symptoms including suicidal ideation and consequently the increase in the prevalence of suicide attempts.

Bibliography:

1 [Ellouze Faten, Ateb Sarah, Damak Rahma, Ellini Sana , Cheour Majda , Evolution after the Jasmine revolution of mental disorders in Tunisia, PSN 2017/2 \(Volume 15\), pages 7 to 17](#)

2Charfi F, Harbaoui A, Skhiri A, et al. Profil épidémiologique et clinique des tentatives de suicide chez l'enfant et l'adolescent en Tunisie en post révolution [Epidemiological and clinical profile of suicide attempts in Tunisian children and adolescents after the revolution]. *Pan Afr Med J.* 2019;32:204. Published 2019 Apr 26. doi:10.11604/pamj.2019.32.204.15477