

Socio-cultural Identity Issues in Suicide Prevention: A Critical Review

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Abstract—Socio-cultural Identity Issues shows the inferiority of understanding the existence of cultural biases and stigma which derives to pertain the difficulty to accommodate the awareness which is necessary for the existential of suicide prevention. This critical review suggests the barriers of spreading awareness of suicide prevention due to socio-cultural Identity Issues which hampers the process of making aware of avoiding suicides. There are 12 research articles which suggest the inferiority of suicide attempts taking place due to conflict with cultural background biases, it derails to indulge a barrier to spread awareness on suicide prevention resulting to manifest the risk of suicide. There are very limited researches based on the brief understanding of Socio-cultural Identify Issues which could suggest some outcomes to prevent the barriers of social and cultural stigma that take place within the community/society which could avoid to sustain its understanding on consideration of suicide prevention as a green flag and remove inferiority and biases where every social and cultural Identity background would work on awareness of suicide prevention together for the betterment of society symbolising the core ideology of togetherness.

Index Terms—Socio-cultural Identity, Suicide Prevention, Cultural background biases, Social and Cultural Stigma

I. INTRODUCTION

Suicide is a global public health issue influenced by psychological vulnerabilities, environmental stressors, and cultural identity factors. A Multidimensional phenomenon which is an integration of sociological, psychological, and cultural theories. Durkheim's theory of social integration provides a foundational perspective, suggesting that weakened social bonds and diminished social cohesion increase vulnerability to self-harm. Contemporary researchers expand this view by emphasizing socio-cultural identity

formation, highlighting how cultural scripts, norms, and expectations shape individual meanings attributed to suicide. For instance, gender heteronormativity, collectivist versus individualist social pressures, and culturally embedded expectations of emotional expression influence not only suicidal ideation but also pathways to suicide attempts. Socio-cultural identity—which includes gender roles, community belonging, cultural beliefs, and societal norms—plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' experiences of distress and help-seeking behaviour (Kim et al., 2022). Yet, identity issues often receive secondary attention in suicide research (Fakhari et al., 2021). This review critically evaluates twelve recent studies to determine how socio-cultural identity issues are addressed and to identify gaps for future work.

II. METHODOLOGY

A critical narrative synthesis approach was used. Studies were evaluated based on objectives, methodology, variables, sample characteristics, key results, and limitations (Blosnich et al., 2020). Selected articles included qualitative, cross-sectional, longitudinal, and case-based studies conducted across Asia, Africa, and Europe.

III. FINDINGS AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. Social Support and Academic Identity

Hussein and Yousef (2024) found significant disparities in suicidal ideation and perceived social support between medical and non-medical students. Although academic identity influenced support systems, deeper cultural drivers such as prestige and family expectations were not explicitly examined.

2. Gender Norms and Heteronormativity

Martinez (2024) explored how gender heteronormativity influences suicidal behaviour. The study directly addressed socio-cultural identity but its small sample size limited generalisability.

3. Nursing Students and Cultural Influence

Yunitasari et al. (2023) examined the transition from suicidal ideation to action among rural nursing students and identified socio-cultural influences on decision-making. However, cultural identity was addressed broadly without engaging with specific norms or tensions.

4. Cultural and Religious Context in Kenya

Ongeri et al. (2023) highlighted how religious beliefs, cultural norms, and spirituality shape suicidal behaviour and prevention strategies in Kenya. Despite rich cultural insight, group-level validation remained limited.

5. Media Representation and Cultural Narratives

Ayub et al. (2023) found that Pakistani newspaper reporting failed to follow international suicide reporting guidelines, reinforcing harmful cultural narratives and stigma surrounding suicide.

6. Cultural Attitudes in South Korea

Kim et al. (2022) demonstrated that permissive cultural attitudes toward suicide increased suicidal ideation and attempts. The cross-sectional nature of the study restricted causal interpretation.

7. Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Status in Iran

Fakhari et al. (2021) assessed the interplay of socioeconomic status and sociocultural factors on suicidal behaviour. While culturally informative, the study did not explore specific cultural identities or roles in-depth.

8. Cultural Scripts and Suicide Clusters

Abrutyn et al. (2020) found that suicide exposure creates new cultural scripts among youth, facilitating the diffusion of suicide-related behaviours. Their reliance on retrospective accounts creates potential recall bias.

9. Social Determinants and Veterans' Identity

Blosnich et al. (2020) connected social determinants to suicidal ideation and attempts among veterans. Despite opportunities to address military identity, this dimension remained unexplored.

10. Emotional Identity and Adolescents

Testoni et al. (2020) associated emotional awareness with resilience among adolescents. Socio-cultural identity was not the focus but remains relevant for understanding youth vulnerability.

11. Masculinity and Suicide in Bangladesh

Khan et al. (2022) identified masculine social norms, honour culture, and provider roles as core determinants of male suicide in rural Bangladesh. This study strongly integrated cultural identity analysis.

12. Social media, Youth Identity, and Co-design

Thorn et al. (2020) found that youth-centred, culturally relevant co-design approaches lead to safer online suicide-prevention communication. Digital cultural identity emerged as a crucial factor.

Synthesis of Major Themes

1. Socio-Cultural Norms as Indirect Influences

Across studies, cultural values, community norms, and gender expectations appear as contextual influences but rarely as the primary focus of analysis (Kim et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022).

2. Identity as a Missing Theoretical Lens

Most studies do not employ identity-focused theories such as social identity theory or intersectionality (Martinez, 2024).

3. Cultural Narratives Shape Perceptions of Suicide

Media representations, religious beliefs, and learned cultural scripts significantly shape how individuals understand and relate to suicide (Ayub et al., 2023; Abrutyn et al., 2020).

4. Methodological Limitations

Many studies rely on qualitative or cross-sectional methods, limiting generalisability (Fakhari et al., 2021).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the critical synthesis of the literature, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop culturally informed intervention models that consider socio-cultural identity, gender norms, and social stigma as central components of suicide risk.
2. Expand longitudinal and mixed-methods research, enabling stronger causal inference and deeper understanding of socio-cultural processes over time.
3. Improve media reporting practices by enforcing adherence to international guidelines and promoting responsible, educational coverage of suicide cases.
4. Strengthen social support structures in educational institutions, workplaces, and communities through peer-led programs, support groups, and accessible counselling services.
5. Promote community engagement approaches that incorporate local cultural beliefs, spiritual practices, and traditional support systems.
6. Enhance training for mental health professionals to increase cultural competence and sensitivity to identity-based stressors.
7. Implement policy reforms addressing socioeconomic inequities, access to mental healthcare, and decriminalization where applicable.

V. IMPLICATIONS

The reviewed literature presents several implications for suicide prevention research, practice, and policy. First, the central role of socio-cultural identity suggests the need for culturally attuned interventions rather than generalized mental health programs. Suicide prevention efforts must address stigma, gender expectations, social exclusion, and media misrepresentation—factors repeatedly highlighted across studies. Second, the dominance of qualitative and cross-sectional methodologies reveals a gap in longitudinal and mixed-methods research capable of establishing causal pathways. Third, interventions must integrate community-based awareness campaigns, social support enhancement, and culturally grounded coping strategies. Finally, policy frameworks should incorporate structural determinants of suicide, including socioeconomic barriers, limited mental health access, and cultural silence around emotional distress.

VI. CONCLUSION

Research increasingly recognises the role of socio-cultural systems in suicide, yet few studies explicitly interrogate socio-cultural identity. Existing literature prioritises psychological and socio-economic determinants while under-theorising cultural identity, gender norms, and community expectations (Ongeri et al., 2023). Future research should integrate culturally grounded and identity-sensitive frameworks to strengthen suicide-prevention strategies.

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