

Introduction

Suicidal Behaviour among Immigrants and their Descendants in Europe

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Why this workshop?

- Western Europe: becoming multicultural
- Immigrants and their children: substantial percentage of the population (5-10%, in cities up to 40%)
- Many are from non western descent
- Need to view suicide and causes of suicide from a cross cultural perspective

Suicidality from a cross cultural perspective

- Suicide is one of the main causes of death worldwide
- Men generally higher rates (more severe methods)
- Only rural China & Sri Lanka: women higher rates
- However: Women generally show more suicidal behaviour

McKenzie et al., 2003; Nock et al., 2008a; 2008b; Pritchard, 1996; Vijayakumar et al, 2005a

Completed suicides worldwide

- Northern and Eastern Europe and US: highest rates
- Central and South America: lowest rates
- But: China, India, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, and the Ukraine: high rates, and Southern Europe: low rates
- Variations of rates of completed suicide and suicide attempts:
→ Impact of cultural context

Lester & Young, 2005; Vijayakumar et al, 2005b

Trying to find explanations

- Suicidality can be influenced by many factors
- Suicidality in the West is normally perceived as a personal tragedy
 - Explanations have thus focused on the personal situation and the psychopathology of the person
 - And not on the broader social or cultural context
- Variations in the rates worldwide:
 - Indicate a strong influence of society and cultural context on individual suicidal behaviour

Lester & Young, 2005; Vijayakumar et al, 2005b

Suicidality and mental illness

- Suicidal behaviour is not a mental illness
- But: Most studies describe a strong association between suicide and psychiatric illness
- Nevertheless: strength of association varies between the countries
→ Association cannot be generalized
- I.E.: China and Sri Lanka: suicide rates high, but low rates of psychiatric disorders

Nock et al., 2008b, Bernal et al., 2006; Poulit & De Leo, 2006; Lui et al. year,

Influencing factors: Research trends

- The different rates across the countries show that biological factors alone cannot explain cross cultural differences
- Social factors (education, employment, and poverty), and stressful life events can play a crucial role
- Most studies about suicidality were conducted in western countries
- Socio-cultural factors are understudied in the West, since suicide is viewed from an individual and ‘abnormal’ perspective

Nock et al., 2008b, Bernal et al., 2006; Poulit & De Leo, 2006

Specific risk groups (High Prevalence)

- Refugees and asylum seekers
- South Asian Women and Men (UK, Netherlands)
- Women of Turkish descent (Germany, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Sweden)
- Women of Moroccan descent (The Netherlands)
- Caribbean and black women and men (UK, Netherlands)

Outline of Workshop

Suicidal Behaviour among Immigrants and their Descendants in Europe

- Rates and Risk Factors
- Genetics
- Religion and Spirituality
- Gender and Ethnicity
- Acculturation
- Human rights
- Communication and Meaning
- Prevention

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