

The present study provides an overview of suicide among women in Kashmir by focusing on a number of key social factors. Its aim is to highlight its sociological aspects. Besides providing an introduction to the sociology of suicide, Special attention is paid to the role of economic, social and demographic factors which have elevated ideations of suicide among women in Kashmir. The empirical evidence presented in the chapter entitled ‘findings of the study’ shows that suicidal behaviour like other forms of social behaviour has important symbolic content and is shaped by the social forces which influence and regulate the other general patterns of social life in society.

Therefore the present study was carried with the objective to analyze the sociological factors which constrains women to commit or attempt suicide.

- The field survey and observation revealed that most of the suicide victims’ were in the age group of 14-20 while as the lowest suicide victims are in the over 51(3.5 percent) age range.
- It was also found that out of total number of 200 respondents, the overwhelming majority un-married, followed by married the second largest category, while as the small minority were divorced and widowed. The findings depicts that even married females’ proportion is higher among women in Kashmir. Thus, the study clearly revealed that marriage is not a defensive factor against suicide.
- In terms of type of marriage, the majority of the married respondents were in arranged marriages with least choices. While as less number of the respondents claimed to have entered into marriage of their own choice. The key features of these findings are that the most of respondents was in arranged marriages in which they had no freedom of choice. The same group of respondents frequently described their relationship with their husbands and in-laws as miserable. It clearly shows that there is direct link between suicide victims and marital status. On the basis of findings, it is clear that arranged and exchange marriages plays a major role in attempted suicide rates among females in the Kashmir because such

type of marriages leads to many problems for girls who consistently meet lifetime violence within these marriages.

- It is evident from findings that majority of the respondents who have attempted suicide belong to lowest and middle income group (10000-15000). Because of their low income status they do not meet the basic needs of their lives and have restricted social opportunities contributing to feelings of stigma, isolation. Their low income is often a significant source of confusion and stress.
- In terms of educational qualifications, the respondents with low level or no educational qualifications are more likely to attempt suicide than females with higher qualifications. Young female students who attempted or committed suicide for reasons connected with their education. Female suicide increases at the time announcement of final results in Kashmir. Failure to achieve can not only lead to personal disappointment but it may add to the pressure from family and relatives.
- The research findings are congruent with several others as a result attempted suicide is higher among females who have a low level of education than educated females.
- The results of the study clearly indicates that bulk of suicide victims are engaged in work as housewives covering the traditional occupation followed by respondents working in government sector however, they occupy many positions mostly as teachers, medical nurses, lawyers etc., make up a significant proportion of attempted suicide cases.
- The socio-cultural factors also contribute to suicidal behaviour and are more prominent in rural settings, and some suburban residents. Certainly, the rapid social changes in the Kashmir, and related cultural transformations, are introducing new ideas and values. They have spawned cultural conflict between the old and new generations. The result of this is that, there is always a tension between old values and new ones, which leads to attempts by the new generation to escape from the old values, and follow the new. This results in a cultural conflict between the new and old generations, particularly problematic for young people, as they are viewed by older people as deviant generations. Districts of Kashmir like Srinagar, Ganderbal, Budgam, Baramulla, Anantnag, the

transition from a traditional to modern way of life and coinciding changes in social obligations and structures bring about inter- generational conflict, stress and strain which appear to influence the propensity to commit suicide, especially among young females .The diversity of responses to social and economic changes is partly due to socio-cultural factors. Both pre-existing in traditional societies and developing in sub-urban areas. Among them are the influences of religions and its attitude towards self – inflicted death, the social stigma attached to suicide often affecting the whole family of the person who committed suicide and legal considerations which may made an attempted suicide.

- The unhappy status of women in Kashmiri society which impel them for committing or attempting suicide. The loss of love object is an impartment aspect of the process, but it must be viewed as part of a process, with a particular attention paid to when it occurred and or reoccurred, and not only to its presence or absence. Furthermore, it seems that it is not the loss of a love object per see that so distressing but the loss of love, reciprocal intimacy, spontaneously and closeness a primary relationship.
- Kashmir is facing a transition from a traditional society to a modern one, which underlines the conflict between old and new concepts in terms of marriage and family: the old concept and ethics are being abandoned while the new ones have not been established yet. In this era of strife, there are many factors which trigger suicide, varying from social changes to victims' psychology, education background, living environment, and life attitude. Primarily, suicide has very close relationship with social background. After all, factors associated with suicidal behaviour cannot be divorced from one's life context.
- The striking result of the present study is that majority of the suicide victims performed religious duties before the incident; while a small minority indicated that they managed to perform religious duties before the incident during the Ramadan period. On the other hand, less number of the suicide victims did not perform religious duties before the incident, while as very few t managed to perform religious duties some times before the incident it was also observed that

people who attempt suicide in the Kashmir are committed to their religious duties before the act.

- In terms of time, day and seasons, it was found that the suicide occurrence varied substantially by time, day and seasons. Majority of the suicides occurred either in afternoon or in evening mostly during bed timing while as the fewest suicides occurred during the morning. In terms of days Suicide occurred most frequently on Monday and Friday for females. The findings revealed that suicide among women is most frequently on Mondays and Fridays followed by Tuesdays.
- The major causes most commonly found among suicide victims in Kashmir were family problems, alienation, divorce, failure in academic achievements, love affairs, domestic violence conflict with parent's in-law. The study found that a female decides to commit suicide when there is a constant conflict in her striving to reach a high goal and the further to achieve that goal.
- It was also found that poisoning was most common method used by suicide victims. Other methods used were jumping and self-burning hanging cutting themselves with knife and hanging. Some of the famous structures constructed by state government such as Imra Kadal, holds a strong fascination for people prone to suicide. For example, people residing in Srinagar and other sub-urban areas dominated by such structures (Bridges) commit or attempt suicide by jumping. After analyzing the linking between structures and suicide, it is clear that the choice of method in fact is related to socio-cultural and social structural factors as well.
- From the findings, the conclusion is that in Kashmir the pattern of suicide varies from one sub-region to another (Central-North-South. In central Kashmir, particularly Srinagar females have a higher rate of suicide both (married & single). It is found that low social status/prestige has a underlying effect on suicide among females belong to central Kashmir, particularly those involved in abusive family relationships. Even though economic hardship impact females, it was also found that some female suicides are from middle or low classes. But in Srinagar district this is quite the opposite because some of the female suicide cases suicides are from among professional people. Furthermore

in central Kashmir region, women face more acute life stresses, such as marital and family conflicts, domestic violence, low social-economic status and lack of freedom. All these factors have an impact upon females' attempted and committed suicide. Interestingly, these findings, to some extent, appear to be the same in all districts of central Kashmir.

- North Kashmir region (Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara) the majority of suicides are housewives, illiterate or with a low level of education. In other words, suicide acts are mainly carried out without notice and are carried out in reaction to social problems. In addition, it has been analyzed that female suicides in north Kashmir are associated with social-cultural factors. Early and forced marriage.
- South Kashmir region (Anantnag, Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian). The findings indicate that Social factors such as traditional marriage, forced marriage, marital and family conflict, and conflict with in-laws, domestic violence, love affairs, social isolation, gender discrimination, women's freedom, continuing education, taking revenge, culture and traditions, are the main drivers for female suicide attempters and committers in the Kashmir.
- The findings and conclusions of the study are different from the results of western studies of suicide whose patterns are not applicable to Kashmir society.
- The outcomes indicate that suicide victims were influenced by various socio-economic factors such as income unemployment, family bonds and relationships, religion, location of residence, The loss of a spouse either through divorce or widowhood appears to be associated with an increase in suicide rates in south Kashmir districts of Kashmir .In south Kashmir region of Kashmir, a large number of suicide deaths occur by hanging, while pesticide poisoning is a major cause of death. Domestic violence is an increasing problem in South Kashmir. Most of the respondents described in this study. A second finding is the frequency of domestic violence, mainly from husbands or family members, in the background to suicide attempts. Most suicide victims decided to end their life just to escape an unbearable situation in their homes. The findings of the present study found that Wife abuse is one of the important precipitants of female suicide and

suicide attempts. In Kashmiri society suicide among women is mostly linked with marital violence, love affairs, family issues, harassment dominance of male structures. Domestic violence is a fairly common occurrence in most of the parts of Kashmir region.

- Majority of the respondents who had attempted suicide were from rural areas or rural backgrounds. Almost all the respondents attempted suicide within their homes. The reason is the strong link between traditions, gender roles and suicide. Social factors are influential in the motives of the respondents. During their stay in urban areas, they were exposed to new things, and became familiar with, and started to adopt or develop, new social behaviours and customs which deviate from tradition. In rural Kashmir the arrangements of families are mainly based on extended type as well as a patriarchal, which means that kinship networks have ample ways of checking and maintaining their cultural traditions and habits. But a new generation particularly the age (15-25) is exposed to new lifestyle opportunities different from parental and community norms. The new generation may aspire to choose a future life according to their own choice and free selection of a partner.
- In Kashmir region, those females who commit or attempt suicide do not have any kind of mental illness but they have negative life experiences such as stressful relationships, marital discord, and family troubles, forced marriage domestic violence, economic crisis and lack of personal choices which contribute to suicide attempts.
- One of the most pertinent findings of this study perhaps lies in the inadequacies in parenting which, parental pressure, conflicts with parents are the main cause of suicidal tendency or ideation among teenagers.
- In some cases, participants have also evoked lack of normal motherly or fatherly love, care and affection as well as feelings of neglect and burdensomeness, Conflicts over poor academic performance which have culminated into the desire to self-harm.
- Majority of the respondents agreed that they felt isolated from the society. They were living with their family whether they were single or married and have

experienced the sense of isolation from the family, because no one is listening to them or helping, and family members may even be using verbal or physical violence against them. Some experience deep isolation from the wider society because they have no independent life even, for example, for going out shopping, walking, visiting friends or relatives.

- Most of the respondents from south Kashmir explained that they have been vulnerable to traumatic and dangerous life experiences associated with political fragility of Kashmir, including loss of family members.
- The field study which was conducted through interview scheduled about the public opinion on suicide in Kashmir revealed that most of the people are much concerned with problem of suicide.
- While interviewing and profiling the demographic perception of suicide in Kashmir procedure of interview was adopted in eliciting the response. The observations and the information gathered vividly puts the condition of women at very distressing position. Majority of responses from the women cautioned about the psycho-social effects triggered from the suicide as most of them are being singled out and sometimes alienated from the mainstream and ‘normal’ patterns of socialising. The responses evinced a sense of urgency and at the same time circuitous course of suicide patterns affecting womenfolk in Kashmir.
- The ‘western’ sociological interpretation of suicide has its origins in the work of Durkheim, who wrote ‘Man is the more vulnerable to self-destruction the more he is detached from any collectively, that is to say, the more he lives as an egoist’. Therefore the research on suicide among women in Kashmir has examined theoretical discourses suicide. The evidence, from findings the present research, from Kashmir society clearly shows that the collectively itself can provoke its young and female members powerless, voiceless and vulnerable to self- destruction for quite the opposite reasons. The findings are consistent with this and contrast significantly with the evidence from research in developed countries.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations outline the parameters of the study and include some potential areas where the thesis may fall short. Limitations section is a traditional nod to humility and recognition that though the work is comprehensive, but not complete. Limitations keep alive the scope for further research in the field. The present study too felt short in various areas some of them are mentioned below. The main limitation of the study is that the target population was sensitive that had effect on objectivity of study.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research is an unending chain process because every study leaves behind its shortcomings and makes room for future researchers to dwell in diverse ways and contexts. Thus in consequence of the above limitations of the present study, following suggestions have been put forth for further research in this domain.

- 1) In order to gain the accurate and relevant information from the respondents, culture sensitive tools should be developed.
- 2) Alternative research techniques should be used by future researchers to authenticate the results.
- 3) Different variables should be introduced in the future studies on such specific population in order to gain diverse information.
- 4) Short versions of scales and questionnaires should be preferred by future researchers.

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