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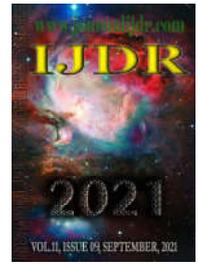
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PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY – AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF THAT INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

Suicide is one of the most traumatic ways of death, because it ceases extemporaneously an individual's life and touchingly shakes relatives, friends and the community. It is a complex and multi-causal phenomenon and stands for a serious problem of public health. Psychological autopsy is a retrospective investigation that helps in the suicide understanding, configuring itself as a primordial research tool. This study has aimed to identify elements for suicide understanding obtained through the usage of psychological autopsy. An integrative review of articles published in scientific literature took place through the databases SCIELO, LILACS and PubMed. The eligibility criteria were full and free of charge articles, published from 2010 to 2020, in Portuguese, Spanish and English idioms, on the subject of which we selected the best fifteen ones. As a result, we were able to identify several important risk factors: depression, suicidal ideations, previous attempts, family conflicts and alcohol abuse. There was prevalence of suicides in the male sex and hanging was the most used means. Psychological autopsy is not common in most countries, including Brazil, reason why it is urgent to spread it to understand suicide more deeply and mitigate its dire consequences.

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INTRODUCTION

Suicide consists in a kind of traumatic death, with an extremely negative impact. By being so complex, it dramatically affects the life of the victim's relatives, friends and community, becoming, this way, a serious problem of public health in the whole world (WHO, 2014).

According to report data of the World Health Organization – WHO, each year, approximately, more than seven hundred thousand people suicide in the world. Suicide is among the main death causes all over the world, being the fourth one among youngsters from 15 to 29 years old. In 2019, more than one in each 100 deaths (1, 3%) were the result of this kind of death (WHO, 2021). Suicide needs to be studied, by including the story of the person's life, circumstantial, family and

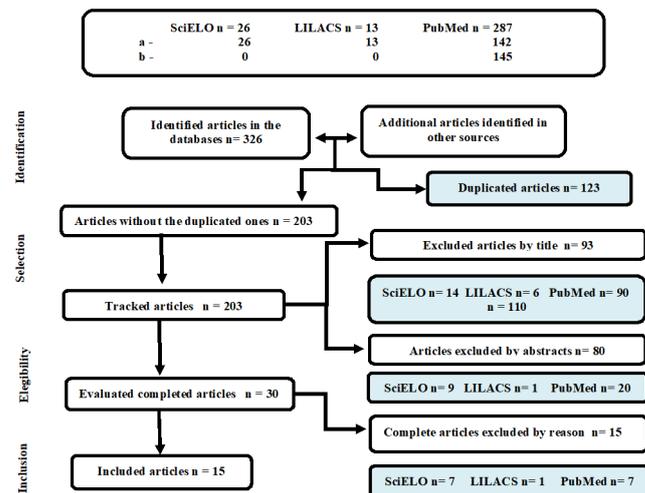
environmental events, psychological aspects trace by subjective questions, cultural references, and the socioeconomic context the individual was inserted in (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012). Psychological Autopsy arises as an auxiliary tool for searching knowledge about suicide. Data about the individual who took his or her own life comes from interviews along with his or her relatives, or close people like friends, service delivery professionals, etc (LEENAARS, 2010). Known as an introspective investigation, psychological autopsy provides the identification of factors associated to suicide, making it easier its comprehension. The idea is that the assimilation of these factors can collaborate or the finding new possibilities of action to build more efficient measures to avoid the exponential growth of suicides (SÉRVIO; CAVALCANTE, 2013). Besides contributing to research about suicide, Psychological Autopsy provides detailed information, too hard to obtain by other means; it also demonstrates its efficacy in clinical and forensic evaluation (MIRANDA, 2014). Given the above exposition of facts, this study had like its main goal, to identify elements for the understanding of suicide, by the utilization of psychological autopsy.

METHODS

This is an integrative review, the method of which allows the synthesis of multiple published studies and makes possible general conclusions about a specified theme. This way it is possible to obtain an understanding of a definite subject based on previous studies (MENDES; SILVEIRA; GALVÃO, 2008). This research has followed the steps of elaboration, of the guiding question, sample composition, analysis of the included studies, interpretation of the results and building of the review (MENDES; SILVEIRA; GALVÃO, 2008). To carry out the study's guiding question, the strategy PICO was the chosen one, from the English acronym "Problem/Population", "Intervention", "Comparison", "Outcomes" (CONSIDINE *et al.*, 2017). It is being useful from the initial phase to identify the descriptors, in order to locate the most important studies in selected databases. In this study, P stands for SUICIDE, I: PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY, C: not applied to this proposal and O: UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE. The guiding question consisted then in which elements one can obtain by using the Psychological Autopsy for understanding SUICIDE. The eligibility criteria to guide the search were full, free, published articles from 2010 to 2020, written in Portuguese, Spanish and English, that dealt with the study themes. Review articles, monographies, dissertations and theses were not included. The research central theme was the utilization of PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY for the understanding of SUICIDE. The search for the articles happened from July to November 2020, on the databases: SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online), LILACS (Latin-American and Caribbean Literature Health Sciences) and PubMed (National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health). The selected research strategies started from the structured vocabulary Health Science Descriptors in English: Suicide, Suicidal Ideation, Psychological Autopsy, Psychosocial Autopsy, by using the Boolean operators AND, OR that make it possible the following crossings: a) Suicide AND Psychological Autopsy OR Psychosocial Autopsy; b) Suicide OR Suicidal Ideation and Psychological Autopsy OR Psychosocial Autopsy. The search and selection steps have followed the flowchart PRISMA (GALVÃO; PANSANI, 2015) (Figure 1). In the first search the first strategy was the chosen one, followed by the second one, that only presented studies at PubMed base. The reading of the identified articles showed all the titles, less the duplicated ones, thus totalizing the tracked ones and remaining only those related to the title of the work. The studies included in this review are present in Table 1, organized by title, author, country, year and sample.

RESULTS

This article counts on a total of fifteen studies: seven (46,67%) published in English, five (33,33%) in Portuguese and three (20%) in Spanish. 33,33% of this production has Brazil as their country of origin.



Source: Galvão; Pansani, 2015.

Figure 1. Adaptation of the Flowchart PRISMA of the steps of searching and selection of the analyzed articles

The population of the analyzed researches correspond to 1.071 cases of suicide, of which 732 (68,35%) of male sex, and 339 (31,65%) of female sex, occurred in Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Spain, Greece, Netherlands, India, Japan, Nepal and Pakista Table 1. A third of the studies (33,33%) investigated suicide exclusively in elderly people, aged 60 years old or over. Three of these used the same sample– 51 elderly people: (TEIXEIRA, 2018), (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012), (CAVALCANTE *et al.*, 2012). Two studies investigated the phenomenon in minors, one in the Netherlands, aged 14 to 19 (MÉRELLE *et al.*, 2020) and another in Pakistan, aged 12 to 26 (MUDASSAR *et al.*, 2018) (Table 1). As for the aims, eleven (73,33%) established identify, examine or understand the contributing factors for the suicide; two (13,33%) analyze the method of psychological autopsy/psychosocial autopsy as investigation tool about the suicide, one (6,67%) analyze the different depression faces in elderly people who committed suicide and one (6,67%) trace the epidemiological profile of suicide in elderly people. As for the methodological approach of these researches, 7 (46,6%) used the qualitative one, 4 (26,67%) the quantitative one, and 4 (26,67%) the qualitative/quantitative one. There was not a unique method, because each country utilized a different interview script, although it was possible to find similar units of analyses like sociodemographic and clinical characteristics with an emphasis on mental and behavioral disorders. In studies performed in Brazil the used instrument was the one that includes personal and social identification sheet of the person who died by suicide, genogram and semi-structured interview. Depression, suicidal ideations and previous attempts of suicide appear as risk factors, associated to suicide in 8 articles (53,33%) family conflicts in 6 (40%); alcohol abuse in 5 (33,33%) and family story of deaths by suicide in 4 (26,67%). Hanging was the most used method for suicide consummation in seven studies 7 (46,67%) and intoxication in 2 (13,33%).

DISCUSSION

Of all the selected articles on this thematic, it is possible to verify that the largest number happened in Brazil, not only the production of the articles, but the care and study of them, possibly because our country is among the countries that produce in great quantities scientific articles and promote publications in open access. (GUIMARÃES, 2018). As for the age of people who committed suicide, the number has been immensely variable, being the minimum one 12 years old (GOMEZ, *et al.*, 2014) and the maximum one 97 years old (PARASCHAKIS, *et al.*, 2015). However, a third part of the studies investigated suicide exclusively in the elderly, and the majority of these cases in Brazil. Everybody knows that the highest suicide rates belong to male individuals 60 years old and over, in comparison with other age groups, and although suicide rates in Brazil are not so high as in other developed countries, the elderly population is on the rise.

Table 1. Characterization of included studies, according to title, author, country, year and sample

N° Art	Title	Author	Country / Year	Sample
1	Psychosocial method as a resource of investigation about the suicide	TEIXEIRA, S.M. O.	Brazil 2018	51 elderly people (aged between 60 and over 80 years old) Male Sex: 40 Female Sex: 11
2	Psychological autopsies of thirty suicides in the IV Region in Chile	GOMEZ CH, A. <i>et al.</i>	Chile 2014	30 people (aged between 12 and 79 years old) Male sex: 24 Female sex: 6
3	Different depression faces in suicide of the elderly	CAVALCANTE, F. G.; MINAYO, M. C. S.; MANGAS, R. M. N.	Brazil 2013	8 elderly (aged between 60 and 80) Male sex: 2 Female sex: 6
4	Risk and protection factors in suicide: a case control study by using psychological autopsy	ANTÓN-SAN-MARTÍN, J. M. <i>et al.</i>	Spain 2013	40 suicide cases (aged between 19 and 90 years old) Male sex : 27 Female sex: 13 80 control cases
5	Psychological and psychosocial autopsies about the elderly who died by suicide in Brazil	CAVALCANTE, F. G.; MINAYO, M. C. S.	Brazil 2012	51 elderly people (aged between 60 and over 80 years old) Male sex: 40 Female sex: 11
6	Psychological and psychosocial autopsies about suicides in the elderly: methodological approach	CAVALCANTE, F. G. <i>et al.</i>	Brazil 2012	51 elderly people (aged between 60 and over 80 years old) Male sex: 40 Female sex: 11
7	Risk factors associated to suicide in Nariño, Colombia. Control Case Studies	MUÑOZ MORALES, E. J; GUTIÉRREZ MARTÍNEZ, M. I.	Colombia 2010	101 suicide cases (Age average: 27,97 years old) Male sex: 70 Female Sex: 31 112 control cases
8	Risk factors related to suicides in Palmas- Tocantins - Brazil (2006-2009) Investigated through Psychosocial autopsy	SENA, F. N. <i>et al.</i>	Brazil 2014	24 people (aged between 16 and 62 years old) Male sex: 19 Female sex: 5
9	A study of multi-method psychological autopsy about suicide of young people in Netherlands, in 2017: Feasibility, main results and recommendations	MÉRELLE, <i>et al.</i>	Netherlands 2020	35 people (aged between 14 and 19 years old) Male sex: 17 Female sex: 18
10	Suicide in Nepal: a modified psychological autopsy investigation from police cases, selected randomly, between 2013 and 2015	HAGAMAN, A. K. <i>et al.</i>	Nepal 2017	39 people (age average 32,9 years old) Male sex: 21 Female Sex: 18
11	A psychological autopsy study of two years of consummated suicides in the metropolitan area of Athens, Greece	PARASCHAKIS, A. <i>et al.</i>	Greece 2015	335 people had registers of suicide victims. There were contacts with relatives of 256 and interviews with 248 of them (96, 9%) (age average of the 335 victims - 53,3 years) The youngest one was 18 and the oldest one was 97 years old
12	Female suicides: Psychosocial and Psychological Characteristics identified by a study of psychological autopsy in Japan	MANAMI, K. <i>et al.</i>	Japan 2017	92 people Male sex: 64 Female sex: 28
13	Risk factors of suicide for farmers in central rural area of India. A study of Psychological autopsy of matched control cases	BHISE, M. C.; BEHERE, P. B.	India 2016	98 cases Male sex: 88 Female sex: 10 98 control cases
14	Psychological autopsy review about crises of mental health and suicide among young people in Pakistan	MUDASSAR, A. <i>et al.</i>	Pakistan 2018	63 people (aged from 12 to 26 years old) Male sex: 38 Female sex: 25
15	Loneliness, hopelessness and suicide in the old age: A study of psychological autopsy control case in rural China	NIU, Lu <i>et al.</i>	China 2020	242 cases – elderly people (age average: 74,4 years) Male sex: 135 Female sex: 107 242 control cases

Source: Almeida, A. C. (2020)

This is a result of economic, educational changes, and especially of health determiners, so the elderly are the most vulnerable group in the face of this fateful event. (SILVA; SANTOS JÚNIOR; OLIVEIRA, 2020). It was of the male sex the prevalence of suicides, similar conclusion to other national and international studies. In Brazil the men's suicide rate is, on average, four times as large as the women's (WAISELFISZ, 2014). In all the countries in the world, the number of male deaths is larger than it is in the female sex, except in China. (DEBÓN; MONTES; SANCHEZ-BARRICARTE, 2018). Padronization lack of data collection instruments (interviews and questionnaires) makes it difficult to compare studies among countries. Nevertheless, the fact of being in the interviews schedule, units of similar analyzes as sociodemographic and clinical characteristics, gives the possibility of obtaining a variety of similar elements joined to suicides. This study selected articles from eleven different countries, and included one study of each one, besides five Brazilian studies and, all of them used the same instrument. Depression appears as a risk factor of extreme influence for the suicide outcome. (GOMEZ *et al.*, 2014), (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO; MANGAS, 2013), (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012), (MUÑOZ MORALES; GUTIÉRREZ MARTÍNEZ, 2010), (MANAMI *et al.*, 2017), (BHISE; BEHERE, 2016), (MUDASSAR *et al.*, 2018), (NIU *et al.*, 2020). For Gomez *et al.* (2014), Cavalcante; Minayo; Mangas (2013), Cavalcante; Minayo (2012), Mérelle *et al.* (2020), Hagaman *et al.* (2017), Paraschakis *et al.* (2017), Manami *et al.* (2017), Bhise; Behere (2016) suicides ideations are also important risk factors for the practice of suicide. As for previous attempts of suicide the following authors Gomez *et al.* (2014), Antón-San-Martín *et al.* (2013), Cavalcante; Minayo (2012), Muñoz Morales; Gutiérrez Martínez (2010), Sena *et al.* (2017), Mérelle *et al.* (2020), Paraschakis *et al.* (2017), Manami *et al.* (2017) point them as magnifying factor for the risk of suicide. Other risk factors, no less expressive, are family conflicts. (ANTÓN-SAN-MARTÍN *et al.*, 2013), (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012), (SENA *et al.*, 2017), (HAGAMAN *et al.*, 2017), (MANAMI *et al.*, 2017), (MUDASSAR *et al.*, 2018); o uso abusivo de álcool (GOMEZ CH *et al.*, 2014), (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012), (SENA *et al.*, 2017), (MANAMI *et al.*, 2017), (MUDASSAR *et al.*, 2018) and family history of death from suicide (ANTÓN-SAN-MARTÍN *et al.*, 2013), (MUÑOZ MORALES; GUTIÉRREZ MARTÍNEZ, 2010), (SENA *et al.*, 2017), (HAGAMAN *et al.*, 2017). This way, given the risk factors listed, the aforementioned authors show that suicide is a phenomenon of multiple causes, result of a complex interaction among such factors. Depression appears very often, according to other studies that identify it as the most relevant risk factor (RAMÔA *et al.*, 2017), (TEIXEIRA; MARTINS, 2018). Furthermore, other reasons are associated with it, such as hopelessness, loneliness (NIU *et al.*, 2020), financial difficulties and unemployment (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012), (BHISE; BEHERE, 2016). One should add that easy access to methods possible of provoking suicide seems to be a risk factor, and hanging appears as the most used one for the consummation of this act (GOMEZ *et al.*, 2014), (ANTÓN-SAN-MARTÍN *et al.*, 2013), (CAVALCANTE; MINAYO, 2012), (SENA *et al.*, 2017) (HAGAMAN *et al.*, 2017), (PARASCHAKIS *et al.*, 2017), (MANAMI *et al.*, 2017). Even in Colombia and in India where intoxication prevails, hanging is the second choice to take one's own life to an end. (MUÑOZ MORALES; GUTIÉRREZ MARTÍNEZ, 2010); (BHISE; BEHERE, 2016). The studies of Bando *et al.* (2012) e de Park *et al.* (2014) corroborate the obtained results. Teixeira (2018) points that the narrative reconstruction made possible by psychological and psychosocial autopsies gives conditions to obtain data from several sources, what provides quality and deepening of this tool. The commented investigation method is also relevant when the interviewer, besides collecting significant data for public health, acts by using understanding and goodwill, making it easier speaking about suicide, a theme still considered a taboo. On the other hand, this attitude breaks silences and makes available conditions for hearing about situations, where blames, fears and shames are mixed. Opportunity in which it can reveal new ways to deal with self-aggression and contribute to relieving relatives' suffering. (CAVALCANTE *et al.*, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study has identified several important risk factors: depression, suicide ideations, previous attempts of suicide, alcohol abuse and family conflicts; in addition to suicide prevalence in male sex and hanging as the most used means. Psychological autopsy is an extremely important method for the understanding of suicide, although the diversity of ways how the instruments are used for data collection, it brings some difficult to study comparison and its respective usage as scientific method of investigation. Furthermore, the utilization of PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY is sparse in most countries, including Brazil. This way, it is urgent to spread it all over the world, to deepen the studies of this regrettable phenomenon and mitigate its dire consequences.

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