

ABSTRACT

The number of suicides globally has sparked much interest over the years, with many countries investing heavily in mental health education to reduce the risk of suicides. A considerable amount of research has been conducted into this phenomenon with researchers asking questions such as: why are some individuals more at risk of completing suicide, and what psychological functions, various mental disorders may serve those who are mostly affected by these psychopathologies, and what preventative measures could be put in place to reduce the risk of suicides. This study conducted a retrospective review of suspected suicides between 2012-2016, to determine the demographic profile (Sex, Race, Age) of all suspected suicide victims at the Johannesburg Forensic Pathology Service. The demographics were further analysed with respect to seasonal and temporal patterns. Body recovery location in terms of 'indoor' and 'outdoor' and with respect to the demographics were analysed. Demographical information and their relation to the methods of suicide (overdose, hanging, jump/fall from height, poisoning) was investigated in terms of 'more' and 'less' violent methods and were analysed. This retrospective study examined a total of 1019 suspected victims of suicide, and found that suicide was most prevalent within the male population across all race groups with hanging being the preferred method. Age affected the nature of suicides because deceased's who chose a more violent method of suicide (Hanging, Shooting) were within the age group of 31-40 years of age. The less violent method of suicide shared the same age group. Alcohol however did not play a significant role in suicides, however research remains to highlight that alcohol could be considered a suicidal risk. Seasonal and Temporal factors and trends in relation to the months of year and Race/Sex showed no real significant association in terms of consistency as the general trends showed inconsistency with increases and decreases throughout the study. It was suggested that perhaps the contributing factors could be related to Seasonal Affective Disorder and perhaps the missing link as to why individuals had completed suicide during certain months and seasons of the year. Two main peaks were reported, with March and June for all years combined. August was depended on the Year, which showed a peak in cases for the years 2012, 2014 and 2015 but not in 2013. Irrespective of Race, Sex and Age, findings from this research found that individuals preferred to commit suicide 'indoors' rather than 'outdoors', and suggested that the preference would be due to the delayed discovery of the body. Therefore, recommendations and future areas of research were identified, propose, that more information was needed to investigate the phenomenon of suicides and its risks on a global and national level.