

THE INTERPERSONAL THEORY OF SUICIDE AND ADOLESCENT SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

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Studies of suicidal behaviour have provided valuable information about the risk factors associated with these behaviors, yet there is not much information about predictors of transitions from suicidal thoughts to actual suicide behavior. The current study aims to elucidate the mechanisms in which suicidal ideation emerges over time and how suicidal ideation can lead to suicidal actions. We attempt to determine the effects of psychopathology, non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) and risk behaviors on suicidal behavior. This is examined through our model of youth suicidal behavior based on the theoretical framework of Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide.

Methods: The prospective study design included baseline two follow-up assessments within a year. Follow-up sample included a total of 708 adolescents from schools throughout Israel. The students completed self-report questionnaires regarding suicide ideation and attempts, psychopathology, life style, socio-demographic background, non-suicidal self-injury, life events and social support.

Results: Results indicate that interpersonal distress and internalizing disorders at baseline predicted later levels of suicidal ideation. The effects of interpersonal factors on ideation were partly or fully mediated by internalizing symptoms. We also found that increases in suicidal ideation and in engagement in risk behaviors and NSSI over time were associated with the occurrence of a suicide attempt within the follow up period.

Conclusions: The model identifies the different phases along the path to suicidal behavior, and risk factors associated with each phase. Hopefully this model will improve our understanding of the short-term course of suicidal behavior among adolescents, which may lead to potential improvements for intervention and prevention.