



Mass Media And Suicide Amongst Nigerian Youths: An Evaluation

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Received: 14th Sep. 2023, Accepted: 27th Dec. 2023, Published: 1st Aug. 2024
<https://doi.org/10.35552/0247.38.8.2244>

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the extent to which Nigerian youths consider and commit suicide. The main objectives of this paper were to determine the extent young Nigerians consider or attempt suicide, ascertain how the mass media in Nigeria is used to accelerate or treat suicide and the evaluate whether interpersonal communication reduce suicidal inclinations in young people in Nigeria. A questionnaire was sent to different higher institutions, churches, and mosques in Edo State between 01 July and 31 December 2021 to elicit responses from adolescents aged 15 to 24, and 375 respondents completed the questionnaire, which was utilized for the study. According to the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS) and the Cultivation Theory, more female Nigerian youths contemplated and attempted suicide than their male counterparts, and the consumption of an overdose of unprescribed drugs was the most common method of committing suicide among Nigerian youths. Regarding the interpersonal communication feature of suicide bias, this study discovered that the percentage of Nigerian teenagers who spoke to someone about their suicidal thoughts is rather low, at 6%. The study also found that young people who use social media and online material had a 1 in 5 likelihood of trying suicide, but those who read newspapers, watch TV or listen to the radio have a 1 in 20 chance. The survey also concluded that girls are four times more likely than men to suffer from any of the reasons for suicide and that general life stress, academic stress, loneliness, and relationship issues were the most prevalent causes of suicide among teens. According to the study, Nigerian youngsters who consume Internet-generated material are four times more likely to consider suicide than those who use conventional media such as newspapers, television, and radio.

Keywords: Mass Media, Suicide, Youths, Nigeria.

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Introduction

There has been an upsurge in mental health problems, some resulting in suicide. According to World Health Organization (WHO) figures, suicide accounts for 7.4 percent of all yearly fatalities worldwide. According to WHO (2021), the following facts about suicide: Every year, over 700,000 people die by suicide; (ii) for every suicide, many more individuals try suicide. Suicide is the fourth largest cause of mortality among 15-19 year-olds; (iv) 77 percent of worldwide suicide occurs in poor and middle-income nations; and (v) pesticide ingestion, hanging, and weapons are among the most prevalent suicide methods internationally.

Nigeria has Africa's highest suicide rate (Akinremi, 2019). According to experts, the suicide rate in Nigeria is underreported and misclassified (Tale, 2021; Gbadegesin, 2021). According to Tade (2021), Nigeria lacks a properly designed, comprehensive, and integrated national suicide prevention strategy. Suicide and suicide attempts are becoming increasingly widespread in Nigeria. It has been a common sight, particularly in Lagos, where multiple incidences of persons plunging into the Lagos Lagoon from the third mainland bridge have been widely publicized (Udeh- Apeh & Igboeli, 2020). The researchers went on to say that the lack of statistics on suicide is most likely due to "religious, societal, and cultural factors, as well as the rigors (in some cases) created by bureaucratic delays" (Udeh-Apeh & Igboeli, 2020, p.101).

On media stories and suicide, there are two schools of thinking. While some experts perceive the media ecosystem as a source of suicides and suicide attempts (Stack, 2003; Gvion and Apter, 2012; Tingle, 2015), others consider media as therapeutic and a cure for suicidal thoughts and efforts. (Anavberokhai, 2021; Hashim, 2002).

According to Hashim (2020), the media has a role in distributing health information because it enhances health literacy. However, significant media coverage of suicide has long been regarded as potentially inciting public copycat suicides (Stack, 2003). Poor reporting

and sensationalized news are blamed for society's high suicide rate (This Day, 2021). Niederkrotenthaler et al. (2020) regret that publishing celebrity suicide deaths appears to have had a significant influence on overall suicides in the general community.

Research Problem

Scholars have investigated the problem of suicide and media from several perspectives. Westerlund (2013) explored conversation about Suicide in Sweden using SUIGUI CHAT in a research titled "Talking Suicide: Online Conversation on a Taboo Issue." Teenagers and young adults in their twenties took part. Participants in the discussion described the causes of suicide thoughts, intentions, and actions in terms of "inner agony, worry, sadness, suffering, self-loathing, depression, powerlessness, and, in especially, loneliness" (Westerlund 2013,p . 43). The study finds that diverse voices and perspectives on the troublesome taboo issue may be held on interactive online forums where talks about suicide take place. Westerlund (2013), p.44. The study suggests more research into the complicated and demanding topic.

Dunlop, More, and Romer (2011) investigated possible infectious effects on suicide behavior via the Internet and social media in a similar research. According to the survey, most respondents (79 percent) were exposed to suicide-related information via family, friends, and conventional media (such as newspapers), while the remainder were exposed via the Internet. A total of 719 people between the ages of 14 and 24 were interviewed.

Udeh-Apeh and Igboeli (2020) used a survey research design to investigate the causes of suicide and suicide tendencies, the most common types of suicides committed in Anambra State, measures to reduce the occurrences of suicides, and communication strategies that could be implemented in reducing the high rate of suicide in Anambra West LGA. Because of their extensive reach, social media platforms were shown to be the most approved communication channel against suicide in the study. The study also discovered, among other things, that restricting access to firearms and weapons will reduce suicide causes.

The study recommends that advocacy and public education programs be implemented to help prevent suicide and that the government keep its promises to the people because "disappointment breeds anger, frustration, despair, depression, and even self-destruction." 106 (Ude-Apeh & Igboeli, 2020).

In a research titled "Media Coverage as a Risk Factor in Suicide," Stack (2003) discovered that, according to Social Learning Theory, the more coverage of suicide in the media, the higher the suicide rate. In their publication "Suicide in Nigeria: Observations from Content Analysis of Newspapers," Oyetunji et al. (2021) examined data from 10 chosen online media platforms in Nigeria in a retrospective cross-sectional analysis. Between January 2010 and December 2019, 350 suicide complaints were identified, according to the research. The survey also discovered that most suicide complaints came from people in the middle class and that more males died than women throughout the study period. According to the survey, the most common recorded suicides were hanging (48.6 percent) and poisoning (48.6 percent) (32.2 percent). The report suggests that the government intervene and schools become involved in mental health to lower student suicide rates.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions to guide this work:

1. To what extent do Nigerian youths contemplate or attempt suicide?
2. Are the mass media accelerators or therapy for suicide in Nigeria?
3. To what extent does interpersonal communication mitigate suicide tendencies amongst youth?

Conceptual Clarification

This discussion will clarify two crucial topics. Suicide and mass media are two examples.

Suicide

Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus (2010, P.466) describes suicide as the act or occurrence of purposefully killing oneself.

According to Stedman's Medical Dictionary (2006), suicide is willfully causing one's death. Suicide is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as "death caused oneself or to die."

A suicide attempt, often known as a suicide attempt, is an effort to die that results in surviving. (2016) (Wasserman). According to Silverman and Maris, referenced in Odjoji (2021), suicide is not an illness but rather a death induced by self-inflicted purposeful action or behavior. Suicide is a taboo and stigmatized topic (Westlund, 2013). A variety of circumstances cause suicide or suicide attempts. This may be applied to diminishing economies and psychological issues (Oladimeji and Gureje, 2011), broken relationships or test failures (Fishman & Weimann 1997), and mental suffering and vulnerability (Fishman & Weimann 1997). (Westlund, 2013). Suicide attempts can also be sparked by shaming, cruel words, and cyberbullying (Independent 2020).

Because of its accessibility and scope, academics argue that the Internet presents good and cost-effective chances for mental health promotion and suicide prevention (Wang et al. 2005, Riper et al. 2010). Suicide or attempted suicide is criminal in Nigeria, as in many other African nations. Gbadegesin et al., 2021). Even though suicides and suicide attempts are prohibited in Nigeria, the World Health Organization reports that the country had the highest suicidal rate among Africans in 2016, with 17,000 lives lost (Akinremi, 2019). According to WHO data (2020), an estimated one million individuals worldwide die due to suicides each year (Udeh-Apeh and Igboeli, 2020).

Mass Media

The mass media is a social instrument and vehicle for disseminating information to many people. According to Ndolo (2005, pp.18-19), the principal mass media are print - books, magazines, and newspapers. (ii) Motion pictures - films; (iii) Recording – records and cassettes, VCDs, and DVDs; and (iv) Broadcasting – radio, television, and cable. Sambe (2008, p.35) defines mass media qualities as emphasis, (ii) fidelity, (iii) circulation, (iv) reproduction, (v) feedback, and (v) support.

The media aims to improve human life by giving accurate information and generally educating the public on subjects and methods that promote peace and progress. B.O., Tine, and Ate (2020). McQuail (1994) defines the media's relevance in four ways: (i) a source of power - a potential source of influence, control, and creativity in society. The primary means of transmission and source of information essential to the functioning of the majority of social institutions; (ii) the location (or arena) where many matters of public life are played out both nationally and internationally; (iii) a major source of definitions and images of social reality; the place where changing culture and the value of societies and groups are constructed, stored, and visibly expressed; the primary key to fame and celebrity status as we know it.

The mass media serves several purposes for the benefit of society. They educate, inform, and amuse the public. Daramola, 2001; Ate, 2008; Sambe, 2008). Socialization, economic growth, role modeling, habit formation, politics, and nationalism are all aided by the media. (Sambe, 2008). According to Harold Lasswell, the mass media's duties include environmental surveillance, cultural legacy transmission from generation to generation, and news interpretation and prescription. Another purpose of the media is to bestow status or reputation on those who try to stay informed about events in their society. (Ate, 2008) However, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1971) pinpoint the mass media's narcotizing malfunctioning role in keeping the addict from understanding their sickness. As negative functions of the mass media, Sambe (2008) identified the spread of pornographic films in society, cultural imperialism, interference in people's public and private lives, and the bad side of advertising.

Regarding suicide, the media appears to be playing beneficial and harmful roles, but to what extent? This is the primary question that this research aims to address. This research is based on the interpersonal theory of suicide and the cultivation theory.

Mass Media Features in Nigeria

The following are dominant features of the Nigerian media industry.

1. **Dominance of Print and Broadcast Media:** The print media, such as newspapers and magazines, and the broadcast media, comprising television and radio, dominate the media landscape in Nigeria (Asemah, 2015). These traditional media platforms play a crucial role in disseminating news and information to the
2. Nigerian population.
3. **Flourishing Online Media:** The rise of the internet and digital technology has led to the emergence of numerous online media platforms in Nigeria. These include news websites, blogs, and social media platforms, which have gained traction among the tech-savvy Nigerian population (Lixinski & Alons, 2019).
4. **Lack of Media Pluralism:** One of the significant challenges facing the media in Nigeria is the lack of pluralism and diversity in ownership and content. A few powerful media conglomerates dominate the industry, limiting the diversity of views and perspectives available to the public (Okorie, 2013).
5. **Threats to Press Freedom:** Nigeria has faced several challenges to press freedom, including cases of harassment, intimidation, and violence against journalists and media organizations. These threats often come from political, religious, or business interests seeking to control or manipulate media narratives (Ayobami, 2017).
6. **Fake News and Misinformation:** Nigeria, like many other countries, grapples with the spread of fake news and misinformation through social media platforms. This phenomenon poses a significant challenge to media credibility and the public's ability to access accurate information (Odigbo, 2020).
7. **Government Regulation and Censorship:** The Nigerian government maintains a level of control over the media through legislation and regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC). This sometimes results in censorship and restrictions on media freedom (Ganiyu, 2019).

Media and Social Media

Mass media refers to various forms of communication that reach a large audience, such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines (McQuail, 2010). It involves the dissemination of information, news, entertainment, and advertising to a wide range of people. Mass media has a significant impact on shaping public opinion, influencing cultural norms, and providing a platform for individuals and organizations to communicate their messages to a broad audience.

Social media, on the other hand, refers to online platforms that enable users to create and share content, interact with others, and participate in virtual communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It includes websites and applications like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn, among others. Social media has revolutionized communication by providing an avenue for individuals and businesses to connect, share information, and engage with others on a global scale.

The emergence of social media has significantly changed the landscape of mass media. While traditional mass media remains important, social media platforms have become increasingly influential and have the potential to amplify messages and reach a wider audience in real-time. Social media has empowered individuals to become producers of content, allowing for greater interactivity and user-generated participation (Papacharissi, 2009). This democratization of media has also led to challenges in terms of verifying information and managing online interactions, as social media platforms are often susceptible to the spread of misinformation and the rise of online harassment and hate speech.

Overall, both mass media and social media play significant roles in shaping public discourse, disseminating information, and connecting individuals and communities on a global scale. While mass media continues to provide a centralized platform for professional journalism and broadcasting, social media has expanded the possibilities for user-generated content and interactivity.

Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS)

This hypothesis is based on the idea that the desire to commit suicide is inextricably linked to the ability to commit suicide. This suggests that to die by suicide, an individual must first desire and be capable of engaging in such a terrifying and terrible act. Udeh-Apeh and Igboeli (2020). This has brought to light four possibilities on the components of suicidal desire. The first two are defined as a lack of belonging and a sense of burdensomeness. The desire for ITS develops when individuals concurrently suffer thwarted belongingness or emotions of loneliness and not belonging, as well as perceived burdensomeness, believing that death is more valuable than life. The final two criteria for capacity are fearlessness in the face of death and physical pain tolerance. Suicide capacity is created through less fear of death and higher pain tolerance. 2020 (Udeh-Apeh & Igboeli).

Our hypothesis is appropriate for this study because, for suicide to occur, the individual must be fed up with life and have the capacity and courage to commit suicide. Some news articles in the media may raise an individual's irritation or load, and a media report of a suicide act may embolden a stressed person to consider suicide as an alternative. According to experts, the influence of media suicidal behavior is most probable when there is a specific method of suicide, especially when revealed in detail, when the narrative is published or shown vividly and publicly, and when celebrity suicides are covered. (Stack, 1987; Phillips, 1974).

Gvion and Apter (2012), on the other hand, contend that suicide is more than just an individual phenomenon that social and environmental circumstances may impact. Such circumstances can increase the number of imitative, copycat, or mass cluster suicides.

Cultivation Theory

This notion is based on the media's ability to instruct. The hypothesis, developed by George Gerbner, argued that television's power stems from the symbolic richness of real-life drama shown hour after hour, week after week. Television is an institutional storyteller at its core,

and society is a tale that provides a consistent image of what exists, what is essential, what is linked to what, and what is correct. Griffin (2000, p. Cultivation theory holds that mass media messages are cultivated into the audience's mind and subconsciousness, causing the public to experience reality as depicted in media. According to Cohen and Weimann, as cited in Akpan (2021), the cultivation media theory is a sociological and communication framework that suggests that people who are regularly exposed to the media for a long period are more likely to perceive the world as a social reality as presented in the media they consume, which affects their attitude and behavior.

Although Gerbner focuses on television violence, "critics have openly cautioned against the chaotic consequences of cosmic novels, rock music, video games, and video games, in addition to television." 351 (Griffin, 2000). This hypothesis is pertinent to this theory because suicide occurrences and acts often broadcast in the media may trigger the audience, compelling them to join the bandwagon victims.

Causes of Suicide Thoughts/ Events

Atilola and Akinola (2019), as referenced by Anaberokhai (2019, p.2), highlight the many causes of suicide. These include mental health and psychosocial issues such as anxiety, despair, aggression, and hopelessness. Failed relationships, sexual and psychological assault, financial difficulties, and toxic settings are some of the other factors (homes, schools, workplaces, and even religious centers). Cyberbullying and body dissatisfaction trauma are two more factors. WHO (2012) classified suicide causes or risk factors into personal, socio-cultural, and situational dimensions. Personal/individual factors include mental disorder, depression, alcohol/drug abuse, mood disorder, hopelessness, previous suicide attempt, isolation and lack of support, aggressive tendencies, impulsivity, history of trauma or abuse, acute emotional distress, major physical/chronic illness, suicide family history, and certain medications.

Stigmatization of health-seeking behavior, lack of access to care services, including mental health, cultural and religious beliefs glorifying

suicide as a noble outlet in the face of personal difficulties, media exposure to suicidal behavior, and the influence of others who died by suicide are all socio-cultural factors.

Financial difficulties, social losses, the dissolution of a significant relationship, convenient access to fatal weapons, stressful life events, and conflict/war are examples of situational variables (Udeh-Apeh & Igboeli, 2020). Another reason for suicide in Nigerian society is when young people's hopes are dashed after they had hoped for so much. (2021, Anavberokhai).

Almost all forms of mass media have the capability and aptitude to incite or diminish suicidal inclinations. In the case of newspapers, Griffin (2000) cites Phillips, who produced an essay that revealed intriguing findings:

Phillips took note of the dates on which stories appeared in newspapers. Then, he went to the statistical archives for the area served by the newspapers and discovered that automobile fatalities increased a few days following these stories. Phillips also noticed that the more publicity the suicide stories received (front page versus succeeding pages), the greater the increase in automobile fatalities. Could it be that the publication of suicide stories in the newspaper served as a trigger for other people to commit suicide themselves? As incredible as it seems, the more data Phillips examined, the more convincing the case became. Phillips reasoned that if people were using their cars to commit suicide, there should be more of an increase in single-car accidents than other types of accidents after the stories appeared. This is what he found. (Griffin 2000, p.152).

Robert Cialdini, a social psychologist who testified that Phillips discovered a substantial media impact, offers a summary of his results in his popular book on the subject of influence:

The influence of suicide stories on car and plane crashes is extremely specific. Stories of pure suicides, in which one person dies; stories of suicide-murder combinations, in which there are multiple deaths generate wrecks in which there are multiple deaths... I am left wholly convinced

and simultaneously wholly amazed by it - Phillips' findings illustrate a distressing tendency for suicide publicity to motivate certain people who are similar to the victim to kill themselves – because they now find an idea of suicide more legitimate. (Griffins 2000, p.152)

Stack (2003) agrees with the preceding results that broad media coverage of suicide has long been regarded as capable of causing copycat suicides in the general population.

Because of its audio-visual advantage, broadcast media, particularly television, is a powerful medium for people to acquire and put into practice suicidal tendencies. This topic was addressed previously in the study by the cultivation media hypothesis. The new media (Internet) is also a powerful suicide medium. Dying together appears to be more soothing than dying alone for people attempting to form suicide sections over the Internet (Westlund, 2013).

Social media is also viewed as a significant instrument for increasing suicide behavior, particularly among teens and young people. (2021, Anavberokhai) However, because of its huge and diverse readership, social media is regarded as the most effective communication approach for preventing suicide (Ude-Apeh & Igboeli, 2020).

Journalism may be utilized in newspapers and magazines to address various societal challenges. Folayan (2025) defines journalistic genres as letters to the editor/opinion, editorial, news, features, ads, pictures & graphics, and sports. Interviews, discussion programs, debate programs, and documentaries, among other forms of broadcast journalism, can be utilized to reach out to an audience. Onabajo (2000a). These programs or media genres can be utilized to reduce suicide. Farouk (2007, p.69) cites Agbese, who emphasizes the importance of the media in influencing society's mental disposition as follows:

For good or ill, the press, through the medium (the print or electronic media), imposes its decisions, views, and opinions on society. It dictates public tastes; it decides what the public should know and how and when it should know. It decides what is fit for public consumption.

According to Abdulmalik, as stated by Hashim (2020), the media can cover knowledge gaps in suicide prevention. According to Singh (2019), there are occasions where suicide may have been avoided because individuals replied to Facebook messages, neighboring people and police were notified, and possible victims were linked with suicide helplines.

Methods

The survey research approach was quantitative, and the data-gathering tool was a questionnaire. The study's population comprised Nigerian youngsters from around the country. Although there are no commonly accepted definitions of youth, the United Nations, in its 1981 General Assembly resolution 36/28, defined youth as people aged 15 to 24. (UN, n.d). Statista.com (2021) states Nigeria's population will be 217 million in April 2022. (Sasu, 2022a). Nigeria's youth population between the ages of 15 and 24 accounts for 19.9 percent of the country's total population of 42 098 000 million (Sasu, 2022b). As a result, the study's population is 42.1 million people.

A semi-structured questionnaire was sent to teenagers aged 15 to 24 in numerous Edo State locales in the south-south area. Higher education institutions in the state, as well as churches and mosques, are among them.

According to Krejcie and Morgan's sample size chart (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), a sample size of 384 is enough for a population of 42.1 million individuals. Thus, 384 copies of the questionnaire were delivered to respondents in the selected locations between 01 July and 31 December 2021, and 375 copies of questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 98 percent, which is sufficient for a study of this sort.

Results

The data collected for this study is presented under the five research topics it addresses and is analyzed using SPSS software.

According to the data, 75 (27%) responders were males, while 200 (73%) were females. In addition, Christians made up 88 percent (n=241)

of the respondents, while Muslims made up 7 percent (n=18) and others made up 5 percent (n=12). Similarly, Figure 1 reveals that the majority of respondents (43.34 percent) used social media, while newspapers (5.84 percent) and radio (7.14 percent) were the least consumed medium.

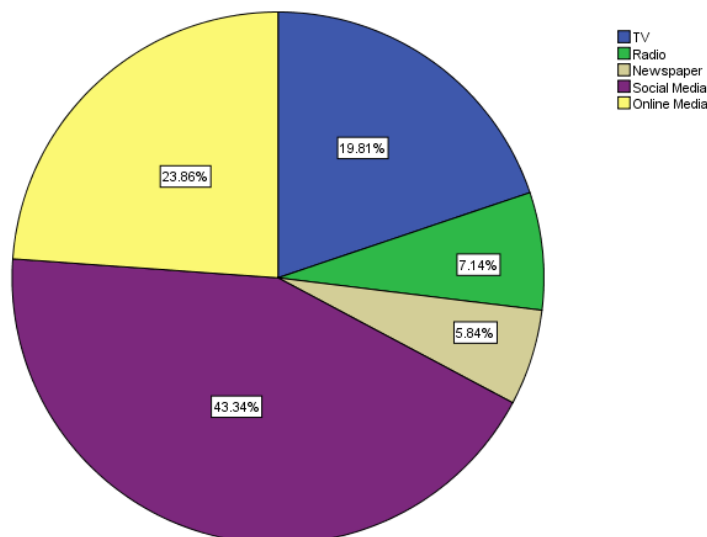


Figure (1): Percentage of the types of media consumed by Nigerian youths in the study.

RQ 1 To what extent do Nigerian youths contemplate or attempt suicide?

Table (1): Frequency of Nigerian youths who have contemplated suicide in Nigeria.

Gender	Have you ever contemplated suicide?						Total
	All the time	Sometime	I don't know	Rarely	Never	6,00	
Male	0	12	8	4	47	4	75
Female	12	16	8	48	104	8	196
Total	12	28	16	52	151	12	271

Table (2): Frequency of Nigerian youths who have attempted a suicide act in Nigeria.

Gender	If yes, have you ever taken any action that would lead to suicide?					Total
	All the time	Sometime	I don't know	Rarely	Never	
Male	0	16	8	4	47	75
Female	16	20	12	16	120	184
Total	16	36	20	20	167	259

Table (3): Types of means Nigerian youths use to commit suicide.

Suicide Actions by Nigerian Youths		
Suicide Actions	Responses	
	N	Percent
If yes, which of these specific actions did you take that would lead to suicide? (Drinking poisonous substance)	16	28,6%
If yes, which of these specific actions did you take that would lead to suicide? (Taking an overdose of self-medication (drugs))	24	42,9%
If yes, which of these specific actions did you take that would lead to suicide? (Knife)	16	28,6%
Total	56	100,0%

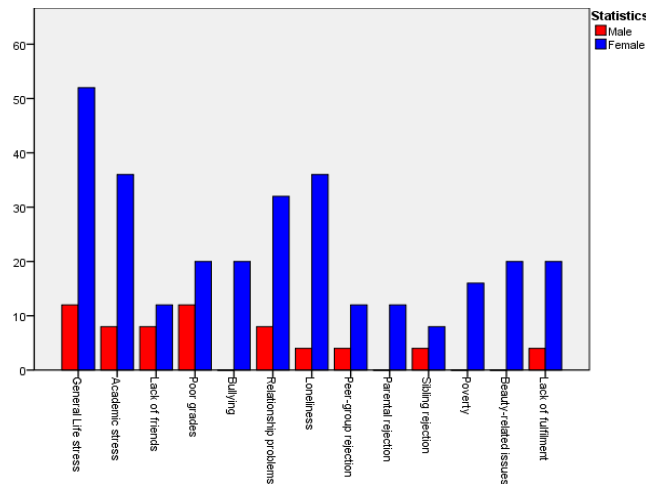


Figure (2): Causes of suicide amongst male and female Nigerian youths in the study.

According to Table 1, more female Nigerian teenagers (n=28) than male Nigerian youths (n=12) considered suicide. In other words, two out of every three young people considered suicide are likely to be girls (70 percent) and one a man (30 percent). Table 2 above, like Table 1, demonstrates that more female Nigerian adolescents (n=36) had tried suicide than their male counterparts (n=16). In other words, two out of every three youngsters who attempt suicide are likely to be girls (69 percent) and one male (31 percent). Table 2 also shows that general life stress, academic stress, loneliness, and relationship problems (n=188/76%) were the most common causes of suicide among youths, while parental rejection, sibling rejection, peer group rejection, and lack of friends (n=60/24%) were the least common causes of suicide.

Table 3 shows that of the 56 Nigerian youths (15%) who have carried out a specific action to commit suicide, 24(42 percent) have taken an overdose of unprescribed drugs, while those who have taken poisonous substances, 16(29 percent) and those who have used knives on themselves 16(29 percent) were the same. This demonstrates that unprescribed drug overdoses were the most prevalent method of suicide among Nigerian youngsters. In Figure 2, statistics demonstrate that more girls (n=68, 80 percent) than men (n=16, 20 percent) suffered from all thirteen reasons for suicide among Nigerian teenagers. In other words, girls are four times more likely than males to suffer from any of the reasons for suicide.

RQ 2 Are the mass media accelerators or therapy for suicide in Nigeria?

Table (4): Relationship between the different types of consumed media and contemplation of suicide amongst Nigerian youths.

Types of Consumed Media	Have you ever contemplated suicide?					Total
	All the time	Sometime	I don't know	Rarely	Never	
TV	0	8	16	28	58	110
Radio	0	8	8	4	24	44
Newspaper	0	4	8	8	12	32

Types of Consumed Media	Have you ever contemplated suicide?					Total
	All the time	Sometime	I don't know	Rarely	Never	
Social Media	12	20	16	52	151	251
Online Media	12	4	12	28	75	131
Total	24	44	60	120	320	568

According to Table 4, Nigerian adolescents who use social media (n=32/13 percent) and online material (n=16/6 percent) are more likely to consider suicide than youths who use newspapers (n=4/2 percent) and TV/Radio (n=8/3 percent). In other words, Nigerian adolescents who read Internet-generated material are four times more likely to consider suicide than those who use conventional media such as newspapers, television, and radio.

RQ 3 To what extent does interpersonal communication mitigate suicide tendencies amongst youth?

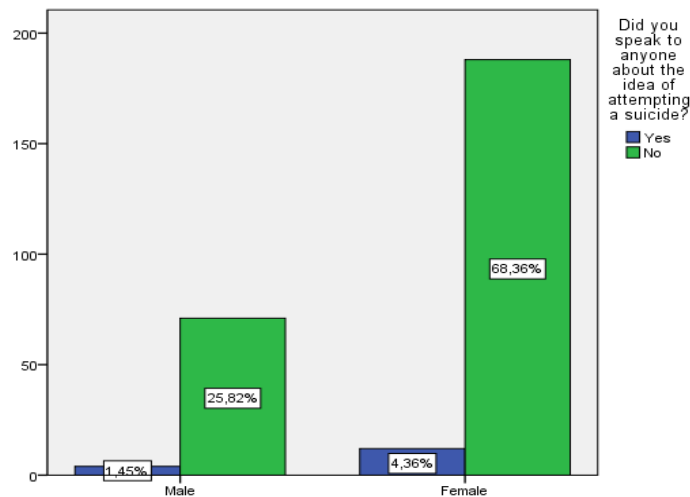


Figure (3): Percentage of the readiness of Nigerian youths to communicate with someone while contemplating suicide.

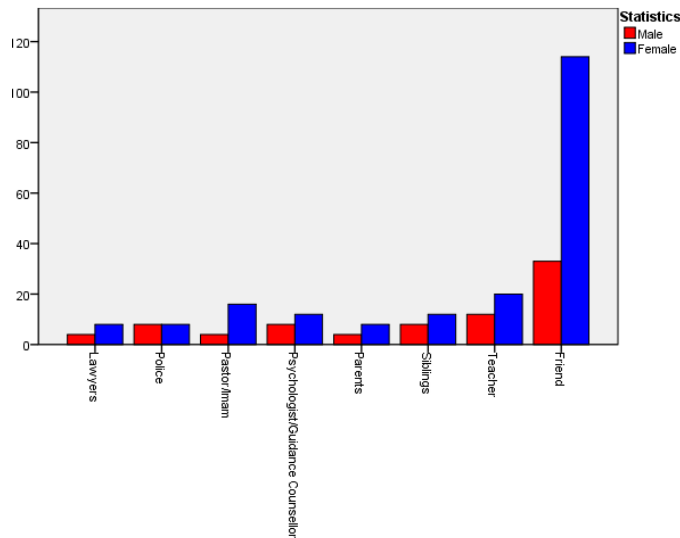


Figure (4): Persons that Nigerian youths are likely to communicate with while contemplating suicide.

According to the data in Figure 3, the percentage of Nigerian teenagers who spoke to someone about their suicidal thoughts is rather low, at 6%. 94% of students did not tell anybody about their suicidal thoughts. Conversely, females are more likely (4%) than men to talk to someone (2%). Similar to Figure 3, data from Figure 4 demonstrate that females are more likely than men to speak to a friend, a teacher, or a pastor/imam (n=150/75 percent) than males (n=49/25 percent). In other words, three females out of every four young people contemplating suicide who want to talk to a friend, teacher, or pastor/imam are likely to be female, but just one male out of every four is likely to be male. In any stage of suicidal thought, males and girls place their greatest faith in their friends (n=147/93 percent) rather than their parents (n=12/7 percent).

Discussion

This study discovered that more female Nigerian teenagers pondered and tried suicide than their male counterparts, with two out of every three youths contemplating and attempting suicide being females and one being male. This conclusion is challenged by research by Oyetunji et al.

(2021), which discovered that males died from suicide at a higher rate than girls.

The survey also discovered that, of all the acts that might be performed while trying suicide, 2 out of every 5 adolescents overdosed on unprescribed medicines, 1 out of every 3 teenagers used dangerous chemicals on themselves, and another 1 out of 3 youths used blades on themselves. This demonstrates that unprescribed drug overdose was the most prevalent method of suicide among Nigerian adolescents, as corroborated by World Health Organization (2012) surveys, which state that pesticides, hanging, and weapons were among the most common forms of suicide internationally.

Furthermore, studies suggest that girls suffer from all the reasons more than males. Indeed, four out of every five youths who have suffered from any of the thirteen suicide causes (general life stress, academic stress, lack of friends, poor grades, bullying, relationship problems, loneliness, peer-group rejection, parental rejection, sibling rejection, poverty, beauty-related issues, and lack of fulfillment) are likely to be females. In other words, females are four times more likely than their male counterparts to suffer from any of the reasons for suicide. General life stress, academic stress, loneliness, and relationship issues accounted for three out of every four reasons for suicide among teenagers, whereas parental rejections, sibling rejections, peer group rejection, and lack of friends accounted for just one out of every four occurrences. These findings support previous research that identified psychological issues (Oladimeji & Gureje, 2011), broken relationships or test failures (Fishman & Weimann, 1997), and loneliness (Westlund, 2013) to be the leading reasons for suicide.

The survey also found that young people who use social media and online material had a 1 in 5 likelihood of trying suicide, but those who read newspapers, watch TV or listen to the radio have a 1 in 20 chance. In other words, Nigerian adolescents who read Internet-generated material are four times more likely to consider suicide than those who use conventional media such as newspapers, television, and radio. This supports Stack's (2003) findings that the media can contribute to

increased suicides. According to Dunlop, More, and Romer (2011), users of internet material appear to wish to commit suicide more than those who read other forms of media. The above conclusion is consistent with what Niederkrotenthaler et al. (2020) discovered in their investigations, which revealed that regular reporting of celebrity suicides (particularly on social media) drives more young people to try and commit suicide. As a result, the findings of this study contrasted those of Wang et al. (2005), Ripper et al. (2010), and Udeh-Apeh and Igboeli (2020), who discovered that the Internet can reduce suicidal thoughts.

Regarding the interpersonal communication feature of suicide bias, this study discovered that the percentage of Nigerian teenagers who spoke to someone about their suicidal thoughts is rather low, at 6%. In other words, just one in every twenty young people is willing to talk to anybody about suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, girls outnumber males in the likelihood of speaking to someone by a factor of two. Regarding who suicidal people would like to talk to, this study discovered that females are likelier than men to talk to a friend, a teacher, or a pastor/imam. In other words, three out of every four young people contemplating suicide prefer to talk to a friend, a teacher, or a pastor/imam, whereas just one is a man. In any stage of suicidal thought, males and girls place their greatest faith in their friends rather than their parents. In other words, in 19 out of 20 situations, kids are more likely than their parents to seek help from a friend if they have suicidal ideation. These findings support the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS), which holds that loneliness (lack of interpersonal contact) is a primary motivator for suicide. According to the research, most young people who commit suicide do not have contact with anybody and consequently suffer from loneliness, which is the core tenet of the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS). The findings further support the application of the Cultivation Theory in this study, which states that lengthy exposure to media material may change people's attitudes and behaviors, including suicidal tendencies.

Recommendations

According to the findings of this study, more female Nigerian teenagers pondered and tried suicide than their male counterparts, and the

intake of an overdose of unprescribed medicines was the most prevalent method of committing suicide among Nigerian youths. The study also concludes that females are four times more likely than males to suffer from any of the causes of suicide and that general life stress, academic stress, loneliness, and relationship problems were the most common causes of suicide among youths, while parental rejections, sibling rejections, peer group rejection, and lack of friends were the least common causes, and that Nigerian youths who consumed Internet-generated content had a higher risk of suicide.

The survey also reveals that just one in every twenty-teens is ready to talk to anybody about suicidal thoughts, and girls are two times more likely than boys to speak to someone. Because loneliness (lack of interpersonal communication) was a major motivator for suicide attempts, and long exposure to media content (including social media) can lead to behavioral change, including the contemplation of suicidal thoughts, the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS) and the Cultivation Theory, the theoretical foundations for this study, are supported.

The study, therefore, recommends as follows:

1. When young people acquire suicidal thoughts, they should learn to talk to someone.
2. Nigerians should be cautious about what they consume on social media and online to avoid being exposed to suicidal ideas as a result of the stuff they consume.
3. Nigerian youngsters must discover good strategies to cope with the consequences of general life stress, academic stress, loneliness, and relationship issues, all of which can lead to suicide ideation.
4. While the willingness to talk to someone about their suicide is so low, and guys, in particular, do not prefer to speak to anybody when contemplating suicide, more research should be done.

Acknowledgments

No funding was received for the study by any research instruction.

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