

## **YOUTH SUICIDE IN ALGERIA: A FORM OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION?**

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### **Abstract**

The suicide phenomenon is assuming alarming proportions worldwide; an average of 1,200 cases of suicide per day recorded by the World Health organization.

In Algeria, the phenomenon has long remained taboo subject, despite its scientific importance, and its profound consequences, which continue to touch the brunt of the population in general and youth in particular.

Suicide has experienced in recent years, a wide media coverage which tends to regard it as the result of several factors .This transition to the act is often associated with problems of the population and the difficulties of everyday life.

This communication proposes therefore a sociological reading of deferent observed suicidal tendencies, and analyzed, from, of an empirical survey conducted in the last two years in the region of Kabylia. The aim through this proposal; is to try to explain the specificity of cultural and sociological factors that characterize the phenomenon of suicide in this region.

**Keywords:** Suicide, Kabylie, sociologie, social exclusion.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The suicide existed since the existence of human history and in all societies. For centuries, the moral debate was dominant philosophical and religious approaches sought and posed moral and meaning of questions, to understand: do voluntary death itself is legal or illegal thing? Give it was death an act of lucidity, freedom and courage, cowardice or worse? But from the nineteenth century, the scientific approach has made a revolution in the evolution of the study of suicide; this approach has gradually overcome the moral debate, to ask more relevant and profound questions. The act of suicide in our society is becoming less condemned the suicide went from a "criminal" who aroused pity, a "victim" that we should not judge. It is no longer considered an act of cowardice or courage, as the preachers say, but rather a struggle between two fears. "There is suicide when fear of living outweighs the fear of dying" (Victor Hugo). Although the debate on suicide has changed

over time, but the drama, trauma that causes this violence does not change behaviour that has devastating effects on the cohesive fabric of society, with much pain, breaks in the lives of individuals, families and communities. The phenomenon of suicide is considered a major problem of public health. According to WHO (Health Report worldwide 2001), one million people commit suicide every year, and are 10 to 20 million attempt suicide, there are more deaths by suicide every year in the world, of deaths from other causes, such as armed conflict or disease. But for a long time the issue of suicide has received little attention by health authorities. It was not until the rapid rise of suicidal mortality, observed in many countries over the years 1970-1985, so that we become aware of the seriousness of this problem, especially young people touched. In France for example, the suicide mortality since 1970 to 1985 rose with an increase of 38%. Currently the death by suicide is a major cause of mortality; it is considered the second cause of death, after traffic accidents. In France for example, it was recognized as a public health priority from the late 1990. From there, suicide prevention has become a major public health priority in all countries.

The objective of this research is the understanding of the suicidal process, and identification of all the factors involved in the drama; the aim is to present a summary epidemiological analysis of suicide, based on the most recent data available. To obtain a complete picture of the Algerian situation and be able to assess the extent of the problem that our society faces, we need to examine the variations of suicide over time, depending e.g. age, gender and region of residence. Breaking the taboo maintained by the whole society about suicide seems necessary to us, we will accept that these suicidal people are close to us, and we can listen and hear without judgment. We can say that his knowledge and recognition is essential. Speaking of prevention and as importantly, trying to give a summary list of all the actions at regional and global level and most often considered universal and effective.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Since the pioneering work of Emile Durkheim, thinking about suicide as much as self-destructive behaviour, has continued to fuel the most diverse research fields (sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, literature, medicine and today we could even add media). Against theories that see in suicide manifestation of an individual mental disorder, or which depends on extra social factors, especially among psychiatrists and psychopaths. Durkheim sees that suicide is a social fact, and a "collective trend," dependent "of the state company". A social fact, sociologically normal at some level, but the rise of suicide can be a social pathology. Suicide is one of the most sensitive and the most complex human behaviour, sociology should address and seek its causes in society, as Durkheim says "explain the social by the social." That is to say, we must investigate the causes of social facts in society. The evolution of the phenomenon of suicide began to increase from 1950 in France, the latter is considered the countries of the West, the suicide rate is highest followed by Belgium and Finland as in all developed countries, more and less in Italy, Britain and the United States. France, according to WHO statistics (World Health Organization) dating from 2008, is the industrialized country where one more suicide, according to the same source, the suicide rate is 16.2 per 100 000 inhabitants, one suicide every 40 minutes, on average 12 000 suicides / year and 200 000/220 000 attempts with 90 000 hospitalizations. Worldwide, there is a suicide every 30 seconds, and a suicide attempt every three seconds. One million people died by suicide in 2001, from 10 million to 20 million make a suicide attempt, 1.4% of the global disease. The frequency of suicidal behaviour has become a problem of alarming society, both by suicide made by the continuous rise in suicide attempts, particularly by young people 15 to 24 years. With a risk of recurrence in 25% to 30% of cases, knowing that people who have attempted suicide in the emergency order, have a high risk of recurrence, and each has an increased relapse and higher gravity than Previous. As Durkheim said in his book on suicide "Each society is predisposed to provide a certain contingent of voluntary deaths." If we adhere to this thesis of Durkheim, there are obviously suicides in Algeria. And they should be numerous. Algeria is no exception to this phenomenon that would take alarming proportions, to end of life, is not really want to die, but rather flee a reality too hard to bear. And the extreme violence, which often leaves the individual Member (families, friends, neighbours) in shock and dismay.

According to some experts, this phenomenon is beginning to gain momentum from the 1990s, when Algeria has experienced a social crisis, economic and even in security terms. Unemployment reached worrying proportions, particularly among young people, social injustice is flagrant, the growing impoverishment, lack of prospects for youth called lost its future. This has left indelible marks. After Haraga, which is an indirect collective suicide to cross the Mediterranean and addiction and drugs, time of suicide and self-immolation has come. Then there are all the ingredients together for the decline of this kind of phenomenon, which is designed as a model of social disorganization or as Durkheim calls "anomie".

Suicide has increased steadily over the past three years, in a context of strong protests and popular revolts

that have shaken Algeria and all Maghreb. This period is characterized by a very new way to commit suicide, what suicide by immolation. Within months after the suicide of a young Tunisian, a hundred people reiterated the act of immolation in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Egypt; until today, the number of people who ended their lives in Algeria, and by all means, is increasing. The list of victims is long, the ways are many and the result is the same. The region of Kabylia seems to know the highest rate of suicides in Algeria. The city of Tizi-Ouzou for example and during the period from January 1, 2007 to January 15, 2012, 889 suicide attempts was recorded at the wilaya. 217 cases were recorded for the single year of 2011. The reality of 2007 with 201 cases and 2008 with 199 recorded cases. Suicides they are among 349 cases recorded in the period from 1 January 2007 to 26 April 2013. The situation has become dramatic. The attempted collective suicide of three families in Bouira by asphyxiation by gas, three students from the same region, in the space of 24 hours at Tizi-Ouzou suicide for unknown causes, a family man with six children immolate themselves in Boumerdes, and thousands of other cases that are destroyed every day, for several reasons and with different ways to commit suicide.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The sociological study of this phenomenon must requires to question the "Who? "The" How? "And" Why? "These people want to die. Is it that there are most affected groups than others? Do the methods are multiple? Which is causing disorder in our society, this uneasiness and this social vacuum that kills our daily lives? Is it family, social deprivation, social injustice, fear of the future, the psychological fragility, failure related to studies or feelings...? Having been around the problem by historical, religious, social, epidemiological, one wonders: What is, indeed, the nature of the factors capable of breaking the attachment that binds all these victims to life?

### **4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The sociological purpose of this study aims to test two principals suggestions ; Hypothesis no 1: A double exclusion, inside family and one extra-familial, due to mutations experienced by contemporary Algerian society may be the cause of the increase in suicide in Algeria.

Hypothesis no 2:

Kabyle region appears to have the highest rate of suicide in our society. Suicide trend is explained by social violence mixed with the living conditions that characterize this region.

### **5. RESEARCH METHODS**

Our research objectives is based on empirical investigation ,so we want to analyze the nature of our problem, which is to determine the causes capable of destroying the individual to the point of killing himself; we performed the data collection according to a double methodology choices, qualitative and quantitative. Our research includes a literature and a practical part. The first phase of our study is a documentary and bibliographical study, which based on the collection of various works, studies, surveys, reviewed, contributions, communications and submissions that address the topic at national and international level, to make a synthesis of the most important works.

According to the complexity of this topic, it seems necessary to use deferent investigative techniques, those of the questionnaire and life story, in order, to ensure a good understanding of the phenomenon. The questionnaires were intended for suicide through relatives, and life story was intended for suicidal by meeting them face to face.

The presented survey is divided into three main sections, the first is to measure the relationship that existed between the suicide and other family members, identify the family climate that where the victim lived. The second seeks to understand the relationships outside the family of the suicide, economic, financial and even psychological. The third section deals with the suicide crisis, the psychological state of the victim, and the course of the drama. At the end of the questionnaire, a space is reserved for socio-demographic profile of the victim.

The technique of life story encourages the caller and invited him to tell his own experience (the suicide), or that of a relative (parents, brothers, friends, cousins ...), in case they could not reach directly the suicide. So we had discussions with the victims of attempted suicide at the same trying to apply another method which quickly revealed to America in the study of suicide, psychiatric disorders or even somatic, said the autopsy psychological.

these two methods allows us to have more data and details on the life trajectory of the victims and all the

important events that have accumulated during the development of the individual, as the collection of information on family history economic, personal, human psychology, his lifestyle, relationships and events that preceded the attempt. The interviews were conducted in Kabyle language. Each interview was registered, recorded and then transcribed while the translating of the Kabyle language in French.

### 5.1. The Method Used

The methods are different. The difference in the subjects, the problematic issues, as well as the objectives to be reached require from a researcher to follow a very specific method and techniques that are adequate with the problem of the study. Sid Ahmed Ahmed defines the method "as a set of steps and clear techniques that the researcher follows in the treatment of various subjects so as to reach or achieve the expected goals ... " (translation mine)

Several factors influence the choice of the method to be used by the researcher since it is intimately bound to the question raised at the early stages of the research. This method requires some methodological stages which have to correspond with the nature of the object of research; "there is no single scientific method to follow in order to discover the truth because the research methods are as different as the studied themes, the functions and the features of each used by the researcher."

So the method used throughout our study is the quantitative one. It has been chosen so as to gather information and data related to the causes of school failure. The quantitative method according to Maurice Angers "is the entire procedure describing the phenomena under study. Most of the human science researchers use the measure. It is related to the use of indices, the average rate, and all the tools that statistics provides"

### 5.2. Techniques Used

The technique is "a means by which the researcher collects the data in reality"

- The survey:

This step allows us to better understand the field, as well as getting an impression about the pupils. The first phase of our investigation allowed us to meet a small sample of failing pupils in the province of Bejaia and discuss with them about school failure and its effects. Then, test our questionnaire which allowed us to edit and add any matter deemed necessary to better understand our problematic at issue.

- Observation:

We used "the observation" to collect information related to the wanted sample, since this technique provided us with accuracy about our subject of study, and also the effectiveness of our assumptions. We have been able to observe several scenes related to teachers and their pupils in the classroom so as to depict the different teaching methods mostly used by the teachers, and also to identify the barriers that hinder pupils in their studies.

During the observation, we used a second tactic which is to go and visit some nearby pupils' home with the aim of determining whether the conditions they live in guarantee a successful academic course or not. The importance of our observation appeared during our pre-investigation phase.

- Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is an important tool for data collection. It may be distributed or administered in different ways. It also requires special qualities from the investigator.

\* The questionnaire administered in group:

This type of questionnaire is given to groups of people gathered in one place. In our case, the questionnaire

\* The construction of the questionnaire:

Our questionnaire was formulated on the basis of theoretical studies related to our theme and based on the techniques used.

Our questionnaire consists of 31 questions, closed and open, which includes three parts:

Axis 1: it contains personal data such as sex, age, marital status

Axis 2: it concerns information on the socioeconomic and cultural capital of parents of the sample to be studied.

Axis3: it contains information about the relationships of pupils in schools.

## 6. FINDINGS

### 6.1. The study sample

The selected schools are those of “20 Août 1956” which is located at Ighzar Amoukrane (55 km from the county seat of Bejaia), the Secondary school Chouhada Chikhounne located at the center of Bejaia, and “Frères Mahrez” another secondary school situated at Sidi Aich. Our study was conducted upon 155 pupils out of a total of 451. They are all third-year pupils from the various streams, including both sexes aged from 17 to 23 years. The aim is to depict the factors that lead to the pupils’ academic failure.

### 6.2- The presentation of the characteristics of the study sample

Table 1: Distribution of the pupils by gender:

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	110	70, 96%
Male	45	29.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100%</b>

From this table, we find that the feminine sex represents 70.96% while that of the males is only 29.03%. The percentages show a difference of 41.13% between both sexes. This is due to the number of girls which is higher than that of boys in the schools chosen for our study.

Table 2: The distribution of pupils by age categories:

Age categories	Frequency	Percentage
[17-18]	62	40%
[19-20]	66	42.58%
[21-22]	14	9.03%
[23-24]	13	8.38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that the higher category is that of [19-20] with a percentage of 42.58%. It is from this category that the majority of pupils have failed at least once in the Baccalauréat (BAC) Exam.

Table 3: Distribution of students according to the parents’ level of education:

Parents’ level of education	Frequency	Percentage
<b><u>father</u></b>		
Illiterate .....	7.....	4.51%
Primary.....	20.....	12.90%
Middle .....	31.....	20%
Secondary.....	38.....	24.51%
Higher.....	53.....	34.19%
without answer....	6.....	3.87%
Total.....	155.....	100%
<b><u>mother</u></b>		
Illiterate.....	25 .....	16.12%
Primary.....	34.....	21.93%
Middle.....	29% .....	18.70

Secondary .....	38 .....	24.51%
Higher .....	25.....	16.12%
without answer .....	4 .....	2.58%
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>155.....</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Following the general trend of the table, we note that the highest rate related to the parents' level of education is that of "Higher" among the fathers with 34.19%, and that of "Secondary" among the mothers reaching 24.51%.

According to our research and the results obtained, almost all of the respondents' mothers are jobless with a percentage of 76.77% and only 5.80% for the fathers.

Unlike the fathers whom 52.90% are paid employees, only 15.48% of the mothers are in the same function. The 3<sup>rd</sup> type is that of the retired parents with a rate of 25.80% for the fathers and 0.64% for the mothers. The sociological explanation of the factor "jobless / not employed" is given by the nature of our society which favors more men than women in the jobs issue. Even the 52.90% of employed parents do not reflect those social miseries affecting the Algerian households and therefore directly affect the pupils. Indeed, one income is not enough for a household to cover all of the family expenses.

**Table 5: Distribution of pupils by housing type:**

Type of housing	Frequency	Percent
Apartment ....	50..	32.25%
Traditional house ...	67 .....	43.22%
Villa .....	35 .....	22.58%
No answer .....	3.....	1.93%
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>155 .....</b>	<b>100%</b>

It can be seen from this table that most of the pupils live in traditional houses that have a percentage of 43.22% followed by a percentage of 32.25% for pupils living in apartments and 22.58% of pupils who live in villas.

**Table 6: Distribution of pupils according to their relations with the teachers:**

Student relationship, teacher	Frequency	Percentage
Good relationship .....	61 .....	39.35%
Normal relationship .....	89 .....	57.41%
Bad relationship .....	5 .....	3.22%
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>155 ..</b>	<b>100%</b>

From this table we observe that the majority of the pupils have normal relationships with their teacher, which is represented by a percentage of 57.41%. Besides, 39.35% of the pupils show a good relationship with their teacher.

Finally, only 3.22% of the pupils have a relationship with their teacher that is described as bad.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The assessment of academic failure among third-year secondary-school pupils has enabled us to check our knowledge and assess them on the ground. Practically, we have been able to evidence some factors that are the cause behind most of the pupils' failure in their education. These factors are:

- An unfavorable familial environment which does not assist or help the pupils during their revision; pupils living in an altered climate cannot concentrate on their studies. These disturbances mainly concern the father-mother relationship, without disregarding the relation between the pupils and their parents.
- The stability of the relationship between the components of the family triangle (father / mother / child) is very important since it is from there that the pupils' future might be determined together with the success in their study.
- The parents' socioeconomic level: a low income does not allow parents to provide educational resources for the schooling of their children, 58.33% of students do not have access to these resources.
- The parents' educational level: according to the results of the survey, 53.33% of the fathers have an average level of education, and 60% of the mothers with the same level. Thus, parents can barely provide educational support at home. Those with a high level of education, however, do not have enough time for their children.

-The lack of good relations between the pupils and their teacher: The pupil generally spends most of his time with his teacher. The latter is supposed to be close to his apprentice and know his weaknesses and educational requirements.

Therefore, the relationship between master and apprentice must ensure a good communication in both directions, so as to have a good grasp and understanding of the educational messages.

-Being in a comfortable environment and coming from a wealthy family is not necessarily synonymous with success in school. We can therefore say that school failure may result from other factors outside the parents' socioeconomic level, and which can directly influence the pupils' academic achievements. These factors concern the pupils' intellectual abilities which are different from one person to another together with the lack of will since an unmotivated pupil can never move forward.

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