Adolescent Suicidality: The Moderating Role of Faith on Harsh Parenting

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Suicide: A leading cause of teen death

• 11th in whole population
• 3rd for teens
• Of particular concern in the Intermountain West region.
2012-2014, United States
Death Rates per 100,000 Population
All Injury, Suicide, All Races, All Ethnicities, Both Sexes, Ages 13-18 Years
Annualized Crude Rate for United States: 6.26

Reports for All Ages include those of unknown age.
* Rates based on 20 or fewer deaths may be unstable. States with these rates are cross-hatched in the map (see legend above). Such rates have an asterisk.

Produced by: the Statistics, Programming & Economics Branch, National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, CDC
Data Sources: NCHS National Vital Statistics System for numbers of deaths; US Census Bureau for population estimates.
Predictors of Suicide

- Mental Health
- Gender (being male)
- Race (being white)
- Gun ownership (region of high gun ownership)
- Altitude
Predictor of Suicide: Parenting Style

• Authoritarian parenting: Risk factor for suicidality
  • Attacks on the self (feelings of worthlessness)
  • Insensitivity to child needs

• Authoritative parenting: Protective against suicidality
  • Builds positive attachment to parents providing a “safe base” for development.
Predictor of Suicide: Religion

• Research consistently finds a negative correlation between religiosity/spirituality and suicidality.
• Primarily conceptualized as a buffer against negative life events.
  • Provides meaning in suffering
  • Provides a network of caring
Buffering Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian Parenting → Religiosity → Teen Suicidality
Sample: Family Foundations of Youth Development

• 636 teens ages 12-15 (and a parent) in two populous counties in Utah.
• 585 with data on both parents.
• 86% members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS).
• 92% with married biological parents.
• 89% White
• 17% (n = 94) had “seriously considered suicide,” 7% (n = 39) had made a plan to kill themselves, 2% (n = 10) had attempted suicide.
Measures

• Authoritarian Parenting: Parent and child report of mother and father (unique and overlapping views)
  • Verbal hostility
  • Physical coercion

• Religiosity
  • Daily spiritual experiences
  • Strength of religious faith (general religiosity measure)
  • Positive religious coping (looking to God for help)
  • Abandonment by God
  • Church support (“I feel supported by adults at church.”)
  • Private religious practices
Mixture regression

Authoritarian Parenting → Class → Teen Ideation

Religiosity → Class
3 Classes

- Class 1: No relationship between authoritarian parenting and suicide ideation (41% of the sample).
  - 3% suicide ideation
- Class 2: Shared view of father verbal hostility related to more suicide ideation (34% of the sample).
  - 14% suicide ideation
  - Less likely to be LDS
- Class 3: Child unique view of father verbal hostility related to more suicide ideation (25% of the sample).
  - 57% suicide ideation
  - More likely to be female
Conclusion

• Positive religiosity is related to teens resilience to harsh parenting in the presence of low negative beliefs.

• Feeling abandoned by God and low church support is a double threat to teens.
  • Neither God nor my church cares.

• Need longitudinal work:
  • How does parenting relate to positive and negative religious beliefs and then, in turn, influence suicidality?