

## The Prediction of Suicidal Thoughts Based on Happiness, Self-esteem and Spiritual Health among Female Teenagers

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Although suicide is observed among all age groups, it can lead to the loss of more potential years of teenagers, which is of great importance. Thus, the present study aimed at investigating the prediction of suicidal thoughts based on happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health among female teenagers in Ardabil.

**Method:** The research method was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population included all female high school students in Ardabil during 2016-2017. Of the population, 350 subjects were selected by multi-stage random cluster sampling. In order to collect data, several instruments including Oxford's Happiness, Coppersmith's Self Esteem, Paloutzian and Ellison's Spiritual Health, and Beck's Suicidal Thoughts were used. Data analysis was conducted by Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression tests. All ethical issues were observed in this study and the authors declared to conflict of interests.

**Results:** The results showed a significant relationship between happiness ( $r=-0.64$ ), self-esteem ( $r=-0.62$ ) and spiritual health ( $r=-0.66$ ), and the suicidal thoughts of female teenagers ( $p<0.05$ ). In addition, the results of multiple regression showed that happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health predict 0.59 of the variance related to the suicidal thoughts of female teenagers ( $p<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Teenagers' suicidal thoughts is predictable by the happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health. Therefore, it is suggested that psychologists and counselors consider the role of happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health to decrease the level of teenagers' suicidal thoughts. Also, interested researchers should conduct further studies on the teenagers' suicidal thoughts.

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### Summary

**Background and Objective:** Since around one out of every five teenagers experience a mental disorder, adolescence is considered as a period of vulnerability to health problems (1-3). Suicidal thoughts among the adolescents refer to mental occupations ranging from passing thoughts about the worthlessness of life and desire for death to the action plan for self-destruction. Suicidal attempts always begin from thinking about self-destruction. The adolescents seem to be more vulnerable while encountering their personal problems. Such a vulnerability makes them feel they have no way

back to their normal lives. Unlike the opinion of most adults, most suicide attempts of the adolescents are pre-programmed actions, not the impulsive reactions to frustration (4-7). In most countries, the highest rate of suicide occurs among the adolescents and young people. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aging 15 to 29 years throughout the world. The results of comparing 49 developing countries reported the average overall prevalence of suicidal thoughts as 19.8%. Around one-third of the adolescents with suicidal thoughts plan for suicide at adolescence. About 60% of those with such plans commit suicide mostly one year after the onset of suicidal thoughts (8-9). On the other hand, the studies

conducted in different parts of Iran indicated that the highest rate of suicide is at the age group of 10 to 20 years (10).

Happiness is a kind of evaluation conducted by the person about himself and his life and includes life satisfaction, abundance intensity and positive emotion, lack of negative feelings such as depression and anxiety. Various aspects happiness are in form of cognition and emotions (11, 12). The adolescents with a high level of happiness have a longer life, greater sense of happiness in social activities, more health and higher ability of coping with problems (13). Based on the results of other studies, the high levels of happiness play a role in increasing the emotional and social support network, increasing resilience among the adolescents, reducing the depression and high-risk behaviors, improving the quality of life and mental health of female adolescents (14-20).

Self-esteem is a vital value and asset for the adolescents and is one of the major factors for flourishing their talent and creativity. In fact, high self-esteem creates a feeling of self-confidence among the adolescents enabling them to adapt to difficult conditions. The adolescents with high self-esteem can communicate, express the feelings and emotions in different situations and tolerate failure, disappointment and responsibility, and have internal control and positive feelings about themselves. On the contrary, the adolescents with low self-esteem are dependent, cannot tolerate frustration, and have difficulty in decision making (21-23). Based on the results of various studies, high self-esteem plays a significant role in improving the quality of life of the adolescents, decreasing anxiety and depression, improving psychological well-being and reducing the high-risk behaviors of the adolescents (24-27).

On the other hand, spiritual health is defined as the sense of communicating with others, having meaning and purpose in life, as well as having a belief and connection with a transcendental power. When spiritual health is exposed to a serious risk, the person may experience mental disorders such as anxiety, loneliness, and loss of meaning in life. Spiritual health plays a vital role in adjustment to stress and has a positive effect on promoting mental health and reducing mental disorders (28-30). Furthermore, spiritual health has a significant relationship with depression as well as increase in self-esteem and self-control and is considered as a common approach to coping with problems. Research results have indicated that high spiritual health is one of the effective factors in improving general health and reducing anxiety, improving psychological well-being, and decreasing depression and aggression (30-32).

Most studies conducted in Iran investigated the relationship between happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health with suicidal thoughts in samples other than the adolescents. Therefore, conducting a study which investigates the relationship between these variables and suicidal thoughts among the adolescents seems essential. Due to the significance of the subject,

the present study aimed at predicting the suicidal thoughts on happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health of the adolescents in Ardebil.

**Method:** The research method of this study was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population of the study included all female high school adolescents (1st, 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades) at District 1 of Ardabil in academic year 2016-2017 (N=4000). Of this population, 350 subjects were selected as sample by Krejcie and Morgan table and multistage random cluster sampling. First, four schools were randomly selected from all schools and three or four classes from each school were included in the study. After sampling, first the research objective was explained to the subjects. Then the research tests were given to the subjects and they were asked to express their opinion accurately. The information was collected in groups at the school where the adolescents were studying.

**Results:** Overall, 350 female adolescents participated in this study including 119 subjects (34%) at the first grade, 120 subjects (34.3%) at the second grade, and 111 subjects (31.7%) at the third grade of senior high school. The fathers of 71.4% of the subjects were self-employed, while the fathers of 28.6% of the subjects had a governmental job. The mothers of 85.4% of the subjects were housewives, whereas the mothers of 14.6% of the subjects had a governmental job. Among the subjects, 35.7% were the first child, 36.6% were the second child, and 27.7% were a third child onward. Based on the study results, there was a significant relationship between happiness ( $r=-0.64$ ), self-esteem ( $r=-0.62$ ), and spiritual health ( $r=-0.66$ ) with suicidal thoughts among the female adolescents. Based on the Beta coefficients, happiness (-0.27), self-esteem (-0.26), and spiritual health (-0.32) could predict suicidal thoughts among the adolescents ( $P<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Based on the results of the present study, the higher are the happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health among the adolescents, the less will be the suicidal thoughts among them. The adolescents with high levels of happiness, self-esteem and spiritual thoughts have positive emotions and more life satisfaction making them think less about suicide. Since the suicidal thoughts of adolescents can be predicted by their happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health, psychologists and counselors are suggested to consider the role of happiness, self-esteem and spiritual health in reducing suicidal thoughts among the adolescents. Finally, it is suggested that, by teaching adolescents how to be happier and enhance their self-esteem and spiritual health, their suicidal thoughts can be reduced.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

##### **Compliance with ethical guidelines**

The Ethics Committee in Biomedical Research of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences has confirmed this research.

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**Conflict of interest**

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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