



# An Introduction to the Factors Influencing Suicidal Behaviour Among Chinese Adolescents and Countermeasures for Intervention

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**Abstract.** Suicide, a psychosocial problem, has attracted worldwide attention. According to the survey data, China has become one of the countries with high suicide rate in the world. Among them, it is the first cause of death among people aged 15–34 in China. What is more noteworthy is that the suicide rate of teenagers is increasing. In this regard, this paper explores the influencing factors of Chinese teenagers' suicide behavior, and summarizes the countermeasures of Chinese teenagers' suicide psychological crisis intervention. It aims to appeal to the society, schools and families to pay attention to the mental health of teenagers, improve the psychological quality of Chinese teenagers and keep them away from death.

**Keywords:** *suicidal behaviour · Chinese youth · influencing factors · crisis intervention*

## 1 Introduction

The tendency and behavior of suicide were very rare before childhood, and showed a straight-line upward trend from adolescence to young adulthood. The researchers calculated that the total suicide rate in China from 1995 to 1999 was 23 per 100,000 and the number of suicide deaths was 287,000. Based on this, the researchers concluded that suicide is the fifth most important cause of death in China, with those aged 15–34 accounting for nearly 20% of all deaths, which means that one in five deaths in this age group is due to suicide [1]. Therefore, the problem of youth suicide has received extensive attention from all walks of life. The youth in this article refers to the group at the secondary school stage (the group aged 11, 12 -15, 16).

Psychology explains suicide at the individual level, focusing on the relationship between psychological developmental processes and suicide. The study of suicide can be traced back to Freud. He believed that there was a dynamic balance of two major forces in human life: sexuality and death. Sex is the instinct of life, and its purpose is individual survival and ethnic reproduction. Death is the instinct to die, and the psychological experience that leads one to the power of death. Death universally exists in human nature, and the ultimate goal of all life is to return to death - a kind of inanimate and stable state.

The contradiction and struggle between sex and death run through one's life. When the individual is growing and developing in a positive way, sex is the dominant factor in his personality. When an individual feels stagnant, depressed and desperate, death controls his life. Obviously, suicides think and act under the influence of death. In short, he believes that suicide is a failed response, which may originate from over developed superego, long-term psychological conflict, degradation to a certain stage of sexual psychological development or consolidation in a certain stage of sexual psychological development [2].

Suicide is not only a medical problem, but also one of the public health and social issues that are widely concerned all over the world. Significant changes have taken place in the physiological, psychological and social development of children in adolescence. Its main feature is that the physical and mental development is rapid and unbalanced. It is a period of complex development and full of contradictions. If it is not found in time or handled properly, it is easy to lead to psychological diseases and even suicide. Therefore, it is also a difficult and crisis period for teenagers.

## **2 Factors of Suicidal Behaviour Among Chinese Adolescents**

### **2.1 Individual Factors**

#### **2.1.1 Psychological Disorders**

The adolescent period is characterised by immature psychological development, unstable emotional development and more pronounced psychological conflicts. For a variety of reasons, some adolescents also experience psychological symptoms such as depression and schizophrenia.

According to research, 90% of Chinese teenagers who commit suicide have psychological disorders or suffer from certain mental diseases. Among the teenagers who commit suicide, depression is particularly common, with 49%-64% of them suffer from depression. These adolescents are at high risk of suicidal ideation and behavior.

#### **2.1.2 Personality Traits**

The effect of OCEAN on individual suicidal ideation has been confirmed by a large number of studies. A study found that neuroticism, openness, agreeableness and extraversion can explain 20.4% of the variation of suicidal ideation [3]. Neuroticism is an important risk factor of adolescent suicidal ideation, which can positively predict the level of suicidal ideation. Individuals with neurotic personality traits have a higher susceptibility, a lower threshold for negative emotional experiences, and are prone to depression, anxiety, despair, impulse, etc. These negative emotion experiences will reduce the physical and mental health level of individuals and increase the risk of suicidal ideation [4].

#### **2.1.3 Inability to Face Personal Encounters**

Being lovelorn, having emotional disputes and conflicts with heterosexual friends, being afraid of breaking the law and committing crimes, as well as rejection by their peers and

social ostracism, all make them feel miserable, isolated and helpless, thus reinforcing their suicide tendencies.

In any case, whatever the circumstances, the underlying cause is that young people have to deal with a variety of developmental difficulties and problems, which suddenly increase their worries. If these problems are not addressed in a timely manner, they can build up and lead to psychological breakdowns, eventually “forcing” them to seek relief through suicide.

#### **2.1.4 Academic Pressure**

In China, where grades represent everything, teenagers are very concerned about grades. The pressure of learning, academic failure, teachers’ high pressure and punishment, and serious damage to young people’s self-esteem make it difficult for vulnerable teenagers to “adapt” to the collective and seek relief.

### **2.2 Family Characteristics**

#### **2.2.1 Parents’ Lack of Attention to Mental Health Education**

In China, many parents neglect their children’s mental health. They pay more attention to their children’s academic performance, and default that their children are mentally healthy and problem-free. They rarely communicate or talk to their children, and most of their conversations are related to their studies. Adolescent children are at a critical stage of their psychological development and lack of parental understanding is likely to be a trigger for suicide.

#### **2.2.2 Family Financial Situation**

The economic strength of the family will affect the suicide psychology of teenagers. Compared with primary school, teenagers pay more attention to their own and others’ economic situation. On campus, the children of wealthy families live a rich and carefree life, while the children of poor families not only have the pressure of learning, but also bear the economic pressure. They are afraid of the discrimination of their classmates, which strengthens their sense of inferiority. There are many trivial things in life theory, and over time, they believe that death is a good way to end their suffering.

#### **2.2.3 Family Relationships and Structure**

Good family relationship is the foundation of teenagers’ psychological healthy growth. The disharmonious relationship between parents and persistent contradictions will make children experience depression, fear, inferiority complex, timidity and other emotions. In families with poor family relations, adolescents do not feel the warmth and security they should have, while parents’ energy is focused on family quarrels. With the deterioration of parent-child relations, teenagers’ risk of suicide increases.

As one of the important growth environments for teenagers, family not only provides material guarantee for individual development, but also provides important psychological and emotional support [5]. Parents’ divorce or single-parent families are also one of the risk factors of adolescent suicide.

To sum up, poor parental relationships, parental divorce, poor parenting styles, lack of understanding and appreciation of adolescents' growing troubles, a negative and rejective attitude towards them, a lack of emotional and spiritual support to children, and domestic violence lead to serious parent-child conflict, etc. These family pressures make vulnerable teenagers unable to support the courage and confidence to continue to bear the pressure, thus losing the hope of a good life and future.

## **2.3 School and Social Factors**

### **2.3.1 Lack of Curriculum and Policy Management for Mental Health Education**

In order to get good grades, Chinese schools mainly focus on important subjects. Some schools rarely offer mental health courses in order to reduce school expenditure. Such schools hinder students' understanding of mental health knowledge and have a negative effect on stopping students' suicidal behavior.

### **2.3.2 School Stress**

In school life, one of the corresponding pressures that young suicides bear is the pressure of study and examination. Under the overall environmental trend of exam oriented education, the standard for evaluating students is the examination results, which leads to the phenomenon of students' academic involution.

Academic involution not only brings physical fatigue to the youth group, but also brings mental torture to them. The involution mentality has brought about the disappearance of personality freedom, the distortion of values, and the burial of the meaning of life. The behavior of students' academic examination is essentially a competitive behavior. The more intense the competition is, the greater the pressure will be. In the long run, the cycle of learning pressure increases, and then teenagers commit suicide [6].

### **2.3.3 Campus Bullying**

Interpersonal relationship is an important factor that affects teenagers' mental health. At the same time, school is also an important social environment for adolescents. Bullying exists in many schools. Verbal abuse, malicious teasing, being discriminated against and various other undesirable external environments, which have seriously damaged the mental health of teenagers. The distance and isolation of other students has become a secondary injury, aggravating the sense of despair and helplessness of the bullied. They have no place to release their inner pain, and finally choose suicide to extricate themselves from the plight [7].

### **2.3.4 Influence of Bad Culture in Society and Bad Instigation of Social Networking**

In today's society, the media plays an important role in spreading all kinds of information. It affects people's beliefs, behaviors and social attitudes. The publicity of suicide on social media has a great impact on teenagers [8]. In May 2017, a game called "blue whale" spread from Russia to other countries in the world like a virus through the online social platform, and a total of more than 130 teenagers committed suicide one after another.

### **3 Intervention Strategies for Suicidal Psychological Crisis in Chinese Adolescents**

#### **3.1 Parents Should Communicate with Their Children in Time and Provide a Comfortable Environment**

While parents should give their children a harmonious and comfortable living and learning environment, they should not spoil them or be overly accommodating. This can improve the family education and parent-child relationship. When children encounter certain negative events at home, school or in society, parents should talk and communicate with their children in a timely manner, steer things in a positive direction, explain patiently, and face the reality of their predicament together with their children to prevent adverse consequences from occurring. At the same time, it is important to develop the psychological qualities of young people to rise above adversity.

#### **3.2 Curriculum and Psychological Counseling Center for Mental Health Education in Schools**

Schools should provide mental health education, strengthen education on students' outlook on life and reinforce the values of life and social responsibility, so that young students understand the meaning of life, treat themselves well and love life.

For students with suicidal tendencies, the school should contact the parents quickly and provide individual guidance. A teacher or psychologist whom the student trusts most can be chosen to talk to, thus alleviating and resolving the student's psychological problems. Preventing suicidal behaviour in students begins with understanding the causes and motivations for suicide so that intervention can be more accurate.

#### **3.3 Helping Young People Develop a Social Support System and Focusing on Their Mental Health**

It should be noted that it is necessary to regularly keep in touch with teenagers with suicidal ideation, confirm their psychological state, or let teenagers actively contact members of the social support system when they have suicidal ideation. It is devastating to take blind actions to avoid irreparable consequences.

Adolescents who commit suicide generally have imperfect thinking and beliefs, possess fewer coping strategies, lack consideration for the future, and often do not seek help [9]. Most parents are limited in their ability to manage their adolescents' psychological problems and therefore need to use schools or professional counselling services to address the adolescent's psychological problems in a professional manner. Teachers and parents should act as "monitors" of adolescents' emotions, detecting negative emotions in a timely manner, raising awareness of youth suicide prevention, and taking appropriate and proactive measures to intervene.

## 4 Conclusion

The study pressure of adolescents is closely related to suicidal ideation. Excessive learning pressure will make teenagers have anxiety, sleep disorders and other problems, which will be accompanied by dangerous behaviors [10]. Studies analyzing suicidal ideation in academic performance have also generally found the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation. Many students with poor academic performance have a strong sense of guilt or frustration due to their parents' harsh criticism or their failure to meet their own expectations, which has stimulated suicidal ideation. Academic stress is affected by academic involution.

The phenomenon of students' academic involution refers to a kind of tired and helpless learning psychology and the resulting low-level wandering learning state, which is specifically manifested in the low output of excellence, passive learning and high input of formal learning behavior. Academic papers not only bring physical fatigue to students, but also mental torture to them. The involution mentality has brought a negative impact on the college students.

In combination with the current popular social phenomenon of "Involution", the fundamental purpose of "Involution" is to maximize its own interests. Whether it is to seek the best quality resources for their own best development, or to maintain or improve their sense of self-worth, they will compete at any cost. The appearance of involution, to some extent, encourages the society to develop in a positive direction, but its excessive development brings more and more pressure to individual growth, thus affecting the mental health level of teenagers.

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