SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF SUICIDE IN JAKARTA

H. Rustamadji

The act of suicide is influenced by various factors. These factors may be grouped into the epidemiologic triad, namely: agent, host and environment. The inter-actions of these triad are already operating in the period of pre-pathogenesis. Suicide therefore, may be considered as a bio-socio-psychological process which terminates after the successful accomplishment of the act, resulting in death. Various authors classify suicide in many ways. Dur-kheim (1951) differentiate suicide into egos-tic, anomic & altruistic. Chesser (1968) differentiate suicide into partial and total suicide; each of which is further subdivided into normal and pathologic. However, official records use the terminology: suicide and tenta-mina suicide only. This study deals with suicide, meaning successful suicide in Jakarta. The objective of this study is to get an idea of the characteristics of suicide. And it is hoped that this report will result in the compilation and maintenance of more pertinent data about suicide, both attempted and successful suicide in Indonesia, by those government services concerned with this subject.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

All deaths in Jakarta due to accidents, homicides and suicide as well as deaths suspected of being in this category are sent by the police to the Department of Forensic Medicine of the University of Indonesia for a visum et repertum. This Department, upon the request of the police, will perform either an external examination only — namely to study the injuries inflicted superficially — or an autopsy to investigate the cause of death. The data of this report was obtained from the Department of Forensic Medicine of the University of Indonesia, extracted from its journal with suicide as the suspected cause of death. Data on the population of Jakarta was calculated based on the sensus of 1961 (Almanak Indonesia, 1968).

RESULTS

Age and sex. The number of suicide during the five-year period 1964-1968 in Jakarta was 183. The rate per 100,000 inhabitants over 10 years of age was 1.26. The rate is increasing progressively with age. The rate for males was 1.82, whilst that for females was 0.74.
It can be seen that more than twice the number of males were committing successful suicides than females. In both sexes the highest frequency occurred in the 65 years and over group.

Methods of suicide. The most frequently used method of suicide were hanging 55.10 per cent and poisoning 7.60 per cent.

In Jakarta, females chose hanging as their method in 72.72 per cent of their suicides while males chose this method only in 48.90 per cent. The contrary is true for poisoning as the method of suicides, 8.75 per cent was committed by males as against 4.55 per cent by females.

Methods by age. Under the age of 25, poisoning was used most often, namely 10.26 per cent. The next method used by those under 25 years was shooting 5.13 per cent. No females in Jakarta committed suicide using fire-arms in the 1964 – 1968 period.

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DISCUSSION

The striking fact disclosed in this report is that Jakarta with a population of over 4 million people has such a low suicide rate of 1.26 per 100,000. Santiago on the other hand, with a population of almost 2 million (1961) has a rate of 15.89 per 100,000.

It is interesting to study further whether there is a correlation between the philosophy of the state and the way of life of the people and suicide. Pancasila or the five pillars making up the foundation of the Indonesian Republic includes Belief in the Omnipotence of the Almighty as the first principle. Tolerance and mutual aid are the outward manifestations of the Indonesian people's dealing with one another and with foreign people alike.

Neighbouring countries of Indonesia like Australia and the Philippines have suicide rates of 14.5 and 0.7 respectively in 1964. In Asia Japan has the highest suicide rate of 15.2 in the same year. The highest rate in the world in 1964 was 28.6 in Hungaria which rose to 29.8 the following year.

The choice of methods of suicide showed the converse situation as happened in Santiago. Fire-arms as a method of suicide in Jakarta is exclusively used by males. Fire-arms are licensed in Indonesia and only the armed forces are entrusted with carrying it to perform their duties.

Further data on socio-cultural and socio-economic factors were not as yet available, hence no comments can be given on those aspects.

SUMMARY

A study of successful suicides in Jakarta during the 1964 – 1968 period revealed a higher suicide rate for men, particularly those of the 65 years and over. Also in women, the highest rate was in the 65 years and older age group.

Women used hanging as the method of suicide more frequently than men, while men used poisons more frequently than women as the method of suicide.

Data on socio-economic and socio-cultural factors should also be included in the formal records of those committing suicide, so as to facilitate the epidemiological study of suicide in Indonesia.

Disclosures of pertinent facts on this act would lead to the organization of preventive measures in this field of mental health.

REFERENCES

Constantino Chaqui; Paul V Lemkau; Adela Legarreta and Angelica Contreras (1966), Suicide in Santiago, Chile. Pub. Hlth. Rep. 81 : 1109