

A Qualitative Analysis of Community Attitudes and Beliefs towards Youth Suicidal Ideation and Behaviour in the Colombo District

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Suicide is a leading cause of death in young people worldwide, and Sri Lanka still has one of the highest rates of suicide in the world. Many leading approaches to address this issue do not always take into consideration the community's views, attitudes, and beliefs about suicide. The objective of this research was to determine youth and adult attitudes and beliefs towards the impact on the suicidal ideation and behaviour of young people. The qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to elicit the thoughts of 12 participants, comprising youth who were undergraduates, parents of youth, and educators. The participants were Sri Lankan nationals, whose ages ranged from 18- 45 years of age. The transcripts of the audiotapes of the interviews were thematically analysed to identify the attitudes and beliefs regarding youth suicide. Several themes were identified, including three Superordinate themes as Social Behaviour, Sensitivity, and Beliefs, and nine subordinate themes under them. Many participants gave significance to the influence the community has on an individual's mental wellbeing at various social levels. The findings suggest that awareness is vital in addressing the prevention of youth suicide, and awareness programs should address the attitudes and beliefs of the community to promote community engagement in prevention programs. More attention needs to be given to community attributions towards suicide, shared responsibility as a community, and social stigma.

Keywords: *suicide, youth, mental health, awareness, stigma, social responsibility, suicide prevention*