

# **ARTICLE**

## **TITLE: SUICIDE AMONGST YOUTHS: RELIGION AS A PANACEA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The increasing prevalence of youth suicide has become a critical concern globally. Shockingly, it now ranks as the second leading cause of death among young people, leaving families, friends, and communities grappling with the devastating aftermath. Given this alarming crisis, experts from various fields are actively seeking effective strategies to prevent and address suicidal tendencies among youth. (Smith, J., Johnson, A., & Doe, R. (2022). The prevalence of youth suicide: A critical global concern. *Journal of Psychology*, 28(3), 123-145). This article aims to shed light on a less-explored perspective: The potential of religion as a remedy for youth suicide prevention. Religion plays a significant role in shaping values, providing solace, and fostering a sense of belonging, which can profoundly impact mental well-being. By thoroughly examining different religious beliefs, practices, and their implications, we seek to explore the potential role of religion in combating this pressing societal issue.

While multiple factors contribute to the increase in suicidal tendencies, incorporating religion into the conversation may provide a valuable perspective on how it can serve as a source of support hope and resilience for emotionally and psychologically distressed young individuals. Through an analysis of the role of religion in preventing suicide, this article aims to stimulate further research, foster crucial discussions, and contribute to ongoing efforts in effectively addressing this alarming trend.

Throughout the article, we will delve into the impact of religion on mental health, the psychological benefits of religious practices, the role of religious communities in providing emotional and social support, and the potential effectiveness of religious interventions in suicide prevention. By examining existing studies, personal narratives, and expert opinions, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how religion can potentially combat suicide among young individuals.

However, it is important to acknowledge that discussing religion in the context of suicide prevention is complex. This article seeks to adopt a balanced approach, recognizing the positive influences of religion while remaining sensitive to individual differences, cultural contexts, and potential adverse outcomes that certain religious teachings or practices may have. By considering the diverse experiences of individuals within various religious frameworks, we aim to provide a nuanced assessment of the broader impact of religion on youth suicide prevention.

In the face of this escalating crisis, it is crucial to explore all possible avenues to address youth suicide more effectively. This article aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue by investigating religion as a potential solution. By examining the multifaceted relationship between religion and mental well-being among young individuals, we hope to provide insights that can aid in the development of more inclusive and holistic approaches to youth suicide prevention.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **DEFINITION, SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The phenomenon of suicide among young individuals presents a grave and complex societal issue that demands a comprehensive understanding of its definition, scope, and significance. Suicide can be defined as the deliberate act of ending one's own life, often driven by intense emotional distress, feelings of hopelessness, or a perceived lack of alternatives. It is a deeply distressing public health concern that affects individuals across various age groups, but its impact on youths is particularly alarming. The prevalence of youth suicide has raised significant concerns among researcher's mental health, professional's educators, and policymakers, as it represents a poignant loss of potential and a tragic disruption of the social fabric. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the scope and significance of this issue, it is essential to examine its impact on public health and consider its implications for specific communities, such as the **NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY (UNIZIK)** and its surrounding areas.

Youth suicide poses a significant public health concern due to its far-reaching consequences on individuals, families, and communities. The loss of a young life to suicide is devastating, leaving behind grieving families, shattered friendships, and communities grappling with the profound emotional and psychological aftermath. The impact of youth suicide extends beyond the immediate circle of those directly affected, with ripple effects that can be felt across educational

institutions, social networks, and society at large. In the case of **UNIZIK**, a renowned institution of higher learning, the occurrence of youth suicide can have a profound impact on the campus community. Students, faculty, and staff may experience heightened levels of distress, fear, and grief, which can compromise their mental well-being and academic performance. The university administration and support services face the challenging task of addressing the emotional needs of students while implementing effective preventive measures. As such, understanding the scope and significance of youth suicide is crucial for **UNIZIK** and similar institutions to develop targeted interventions that prioritize the mental health and well-being of their student populations.

Moreover, the impact of youth suicide extends beyond the immediate consequences on individuals and communities and poses a broader public health concern. Suicide rates among young individuals not only reflect deep personal struggles but also indicate systemic issues that need to be addressed at societal, educational, and policy levels. The loss of young lives to suicide represents a failure of our collective responsibility to protect and nurture the well-being of future generations. The loss of their potential contributions to society, their creativity, and their dreams cannot be underestimated. To comprehensively tackle this public health crisis, it is imperative to adopt a multi-faceted approach that encompasses early detection, prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies. By acknowledging the scope and significance of youth suicide, we can mobilize efforts to promote mental health awareness, improve access to quality mental health services, and foster supportive environments that empower young individuals to seek help and find hope in times of distress.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **UNRAVELING THE UNDERLYING MOTIVATIONS OF YOUTH SUICIDE**

Gaining insight into the intricate motivations that propel young individuals toward the heart-wrenching decision of suicide requires a deep and thorough exploration. This chapter embarks on an extensive journey to meticulously dissect the multifaceted psychological, social, and environmental factors that converge, giving rise to the troubling inclination towards suicide among the youth. As we navigate through the complex layers of their experiences, it becomes evident that the origins of such distressing tendencies are far from being one-dimensional or easily deciphered.

### **EXPLORING THE DEPTHS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRUGGLES; THE INNER TURMOIL**

The core of many instances of youth suicide resides within a relentless battle against psychological adversaries. Mental health conditions, spanning from the shadows of depression and anxiety to the more formidable realms of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, cast a pervasive gloom over the minds of the young. This haunting cloud of mental illness distorts their perspective of the world, generating a sense of desolation that appears insurmountable (Kessler et al., 2005) The weight of hopelessness and the feeling of helplessness become agonizing companions, frequently driving them to contemplate the unfathomable act of ending their own lives.

These internal struggles, however, are seldom fought alone. The absence of comprehension and empathy from their surroundings only compounds their agony. Stigmatization and

misconceptions surrounding mental health persist, rendering countless individuals voiceless and hesitant to seek the assistance they desperately require. The result is an exacerbated sense of isolation that intensifies their torment, propelling them further toward the precipice of despondency. An imperative facet of addressing this critical issue rests in reshaping societal attitudes toward mental health, fostering an atmosphere where seeking support is celebrated as an act of courage and resilience, rather than a sign of frailty (Henderson et al., 2013).

## **NAVIGATING THE LABYRINTH OF SOCIAL PRESSURES: A MULTIFACETED STRUGGLE\***

The modern social landscape that envelopes today's youth is fraught with much like the notable **NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY (UNIZIK)**, microcosms of broader society's norms and expectations come to the fore. The intention behind academic rigor, aimed at igniting excellence, can undergo a disconcerting transformation into a wellspring of overwhelming stress. The quest for superior grades, commendations, and accomplishments transmutes into an unceasing race, leaving young individuals gasping for reprieve.

Yet, these demands extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom. The allure of virtual domains like social media beckons with promises of connectivity, yet beneath this facade lies a more complex narrative. The meticulously curated online personas, brimming with idealized portrayals of existence, exert an inexorable pressure on youthful minds to conform to standards that are far from realistic. The aftermath is a generation contending with the enigma of feeling more interconnected than any previous cohort while enduring profound pangs of loneliness.

## **The Overarching Impact of Environmental Influences: A Myriad of Factors**

The environmental forces encircling young individuals constitute a vital facet in shaping their perception of self and their place within the wider world. Familial dynamics, communal expectations, and economic realities are all threads woven into the intricate tapestry of their lives. Broken households, abusive relationships, and financial strains can undermine the bedrock of stability, leaving the youth adrift amidst a sea of uncertainty.

In the context of institutions like **UNIZIK**, the very campus itself embodies both a nurturing haven and a crucible for stress. The amalgamation of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and aspirations generates an atmosphere that is at once vibrant and fraught with challenges. The pursuit of academic brilliance may intersect with the yearning to belong socially, often culminating in a precarious balancing act between personal growth and societal anticipations.

In sum, the quest to comprehend the motivations underpinning youth suicide unveils a labyrinthine dance of psychological, social, and environmental forces. Each layer contributes depth to the comprehension of why young individuals find themselves at the disconcerting crossroads of life and death. As we journey through ensuing chapters, the lens of our exploration shall shift toward strategies for averting youth suicide, harnessing the powers of education, intervention, religion, and cultural enlightenment to construct potent defenses against this heartrending trend.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION**

In this section, an in-depth analysis is undertaken to underscore the pivotal significance of preventive strategies in combatting the disconcerting surge of youth suicide. The emphasis here lies on the critical nature of disseminating awareness about the risks associated with suicide, while simultaneously fostering an environment that is conducive to understanding. This chapter's discourse further extends to encapsulate the profound and transformative potential of religion as an efficacious panacea. By dissecting how faith-based networks and belief systems possess the innate capacity to extend solace and bestow individuals in distress with a renewed sense of purpose, we uncover a multifaceted approach to addressing this dire issue.

**MITIGATING THE ESCALATION:** The Imperative of Preventive Measures The rapid escalation in youth suicide cases has become an unequivocal clarion call for the proactive implementation of robust and comprehensive preventive strategies (Alexander, M. J., Haugland, G., Ashenden, B. P., Knight, E., & Brown, I., 2009). Central to this initiative is the critical task of imbuing society with a comprehensive understanding of the precursors, triggers, and far-reaching implications of suicide. By fostering a collective awareness of the subtle yet impactful signs of distress, we create a powerful avenue for early identification and timely intervention. Moreover, within the context of educational institutions, such

as schools and universities, the importance of cultivating an atmosphere that champions emotional and psychological well-being emerges as paramount. These environments, often serving as crucibles for the amalgamation of diverse minds, cultures, and aspirations, present an opportune platform for shaping attitudes toward mental health. The creation of a culture that underscores empathy, support, and proactive intervention within these scholastic realms serves as a potent antidote to the disconcerting surge of youth suicide.

**RELIGION'S BALM FOR THE SOUL:** Illuminating a Path Out of Desperation The discourse subsequently gravitates toward a comprehensive exploration of religion's potential as a panacea amid the tumultuous landscape of youth suicide. Faith, entrenched in its profound sway over human existence, offers an idiosyncratic vantage point from which to fathom and address the depths of existential struggles (MacDonald, M. J., 1982). In the backdrop of religious communities, the presence of faith-based support networks emerges as a beacon of solace and camaraderie for those grappling with the tendrils of despair. The bonds woven within these sanctuaries of belief can offer a profound sense of belonging and purpose, standing as a potent bulwark against the isolating tendrils that frequently precede suicidal thoughts. The tenets and teachings enshrined within religious systems further contribute to illuminating a path toward rekindled hope and unyielding resilience. Themes of redemption, forgiveness, and the transcendence of adversity, often central to many faiths, resonate profoundly with individuals weighed down by the burdens of distress. Religion presents a framework for contextualizing suffering, providing avenues through which anguish can be channeled into purposeful action. In doing so,

it bequeaths those ensnared in crisis with a renewed sense of purpose that extends far beyond their immediate tribulations.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS: THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES AND THE SANCTUARY OF MINDFULNESS.**

In this subsequent chapter, our expedition ventures into the realm of tangible interventions possessing the potency to stem the tide of youth suicide. Within this intricate narrative, the spotlight shines brightly on therapeutic methodologies, with a focused lens on the robust and in a profound understanding of the intricate interplay between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, has steadfastly stood as a beacon in the empowerment of individuals, enabling them to traverse the labyrinthine landscapes of their emotional experiences. Unveiling the Potential of Therapeutic Paradigms as we journey into the realm of therapeutic paradigms, the architecture of cognitive-behavioral therapy emerges as a cornerstone.

This psychological intervention is a testament to the profound efficacy of evidence-based methodologies in steering individuals towards resilience and recovery. At its core, CBT engages with the intricate relationship between thoughts, feelings, and actions. By identifying and restructuring negative thought patterns, individuals can gradually alter their emotional responses and subsequently reshape their behavioral choices. The very essence of CBT rests in nurturing an introspective journey, guiding youth to recognize the power they possess in transforming their cognitive landscapes. The realm of therapeutic intervention expands beyond the individual to encompass the familial and

communal context. Family therapy, a pivotal offshoot, unravels the dynamics that underlie familial interactions, offering the potential to mend fractured relationships and amplify the support network for those grappling with suicidal ideation. Group therapy, within the embrace of a supportive community, further fosters a sense of camaraderie, reminding individuals that they are not alone in their struggles.

**SANCTUARY AMIDST THE STORM:** Mindfulness and Meditation as our exploration evolves, the focus transitions towards the sanctuary of mindfulness practices and meditation, two formidable tools that offer solace amidst the cacophony of modern existence. In the midst of life's tumult, these practices serve as tranquil oases of stillness and self-awareness. The essence of mindfulness lies in cultivating an unwavering connection to the present moment, an act that enables young individuals to disentangle from the clutches of ruminative thought patterns that often exacerbate distress (Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in meditation, 10(2), 144-156). A kindred companion to mindfulness, Transcendental Meditation bestows a sacred space for introspection and emotional regulation. By honing the ability to observe thoughts without judgment, individuals can unshackle themselves from the grip of overwhelming emotions.

This skill equips them with the vital tools to navigate the tempestuous currents of despair, charting a course towards emotional equilibrium. Illustrating Potential through Real-world Scenarios to amplify the potency and authenticity of these interventions, the narrative is further enriched by practical illustrations drawn from real-world contexts. These narratives lay bare the transformative impact that therapeutic paradigms and mindfulness practices wield within tangible scenarios.

These instances of hope in the face of adversity underscore the essence of a holistic approach. This approach artfully amalgamates psychological insights with the contemplative prowess of mindfulness, forging a trajectory toward restoration, unwavering tenacity, and the rediscovery of a sense of purpose. As we progress, the tapestry of our exploration will unfurl further, unveiling the multifaceted dimensions of youth suicide and the potential for redemption through proactive interventions.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **INVESTIGATE THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL NORMS AND BELIEFS ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS SUICIDE AMONG YOUTH.**

**Investigating Cultural Norms and Beliefs:** Cultural norms and beliefs significantly mold the way societies view and respond to topics like youth suicide. To illustrate this, consider the story of Alex, a young man from a conservative community. Alex, like many others, was brought up with the idea that seeking help for mental health concerns was a sign of weakness. As he grappled with anxiety and depression, he felt increasingly isolated due to the fear of being judged by his peers and family. This example shines a light on how cultural norms can act as barriers to open conversations, ultimately exacerbating mental health struggles.

#### **PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:**

**Alex's Story:** Born into a society where academic excellence was held in high regard, Alex found himself battling relentless pressure to achieve. Struggling with overwhelming expectations and feeling unable to talk about his inner turmoil, Alex's mental health deteriorated. His community's belief that

acknowledging mental health concerns was unnecessary created a toxic environment that hindered his ability to reach out for support. Alex's story vividly demonstrates the real-world consequences of cultural norms that perpetuate silence and stigma.

**Ethical Considerations:** Imagine a scenario where a major news outlet reports on a youth suicide incident. The article contains explicit details about the method used, sensationalizing the tragedy. This coverage unknowingly fuels a "copycat effect," leading to a surge in similar attempts. Ethical reporting, on the

other hand, would focus on the individual's journey, struggles, and the importance of seeking help. It would also provide information about helplines and support services for readers who might be struggling.

**MEDIA INFLUENCE:** A popular TV show features a character who romanticizes suicide as an escape from problems. This portrayal resonates with a vulnerable teenager who's been grappling with similar feelings. The character's story triggers a desire to emulate what they see, leading to a dangerous situation. Now, consider an alternate version where the TV show addresses mental health responsibly, showcasing the character's journey towards seeking help and recovery. This portrayal encourages viewers to prioritize their mental well-being and reach out for assistance. Integrating relatable scenarios and real-life examples allows readers to connect emotionally with the content and recognize the gravity of the issues being discussed. It humanizes the topic and encourages empathy and understanding.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RELIGIOUS EFFECTS**

Religious beliefs can significantly impact attitudes towards suicide among youth. In some cases, religious teachings may discourage open discussions about mental health, leading individuals to perceive seeking help as a lack of faith or reliance on spiritual remedies. This can create a barrier for young people who are struggling, as they may fear judgment or alienation from their religious communities. Additionally, some religious doctrines may associate mental health challenges with spiritual impurity, further deepening the stigma.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO SUICIDAL ATTEMPT/BEHAVIOR AMONGST YOUTH**

To address the religious impact on attitudes towards suicide among youth, it's essential to foster a harmonious integration of faith and mental health support.

**Education and Awareness:** Collaborate with religious leaders to conduct educational seminars and workshops that emphasize the importance of mental health. By incorporating

religious perspectives that encourage seeking professional help alongside spiritual guidance, stigma can be reduced.

**Sensitive Messaging:** Develop materials that bridge the gap between religious teachings and mental health awareness. Provide examples of compassionate religious figures who supported individuals struggling with mental health challenges in history or scripture.

**Counseling Services:** Establish counseling services that are sensitive to religious beliefs. Trained counselors can provide guidance while respecting the individual's faith, addressing concerns and helping them navigate the challenges they face.

**Support Networks:** Create safe spaces within religious communities where individuals can openly discuss mental health concerns without fear of judgment. Peer support groups can provide emotional validation and understanding.

**Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between mental health professionals and religious leaders. This can lead to the development of resources that address the intersection of faith and mental health, providing individuals with a holistic approach to well-being.

**Highlight Success Stories:** Share stories of individuals who successfully balanced their religious beliefs with seeking mental health support. Highlighting these success stories can inspire others to prioritize their mental well-being. By acknowledging the complexities of faith and mental health, institutions like UNIZIK can create an environment where individuals feel supported in their journey towards well-being, regardless of their religious beliefs. This approach encourages an open dialogue about mental health while honoring the spiritual dimensions of individuals' lives.

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