QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY OF 70 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: TRAGIC VS. REGRESSIVE NARRATIVES

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Aim: To analyze lifetime narratives, risk factors, family profiles, internal and external signs of distress and environmental reaction to it, using the method of psychological autopsy and narratives typology analysis in order to better understand and predict suicide in high schools.

Method: The psychological autopsy of 70 high school students suicide victims (54 Jewish, 50 males, 43 born in Israel) were analyzed post mortem using quantitative, qualitative and narrative approach.

Results: We traced two leading narratives: tragic and regressive. Specific risk factors were found including gender, school mal-behavior and truancy, low school grades and learning disorders. Fight with parents and teachers especially with humiliation aspects were a major facilitating factor. Despite the fact that most of the victims gave sings of distress, the adults in their life did not notice it while the peers noticed but refused to believe they are true. Methods of suicide did not differ significantly between genders in this sample. Yet, 20% of the suicide victims were excellent students and fitted the tragic life narratives. They had lower rate of mental disorders (p=0.03), shorter crisis (p=0.006), and less life events (p=0.03) when compared with those with regressive narratives.

Conclusions: We identify two major life narratives in high school students suicides: tragic and regressive. School truancy for the regressive narratives and fight with authority figures and humiliation for the tragic narratives are major risk factors at high school and should be a focus of prevention programs.