INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that the suicide rates for college students are about 7.5 per 100,000 per year but older students and males are at a greater risk to commit suicide. The prevalence rate for Non-suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) ranges from 3% to 15.3%. Male suicide is the highest, yet 95.7% of college students reported low suicide ideation since they do not want others to know that they are suicidal. Men are less likely to seek professional help for emotional and psychological concerns because of the stigma that can cause others to judge them. They also have a strong belief in the masculine gender role, which is related to an increased risk in suicide. (1-3,5,6)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying risk factors of suicide in college males was easy in the studies. Age was a large factor. Men below the age of 25 had a higher risk than men over 25. (2,5) But common factors among both ages were, loneliness, hopelessness, relationship issues, money issues, academic struggles, anger, and aggression. (3,8) In one study alone, more than 90% of students who attempted suicide had a failure at school or work. Followed by 46% who had romantic relationship issues. (3) The culture factor also plays a part of the risk factor as the White or Latino populations have higher risk rates than non-white. (1,9)

Furthermore, prior experiences with suicide related behaviors (SRB), or non-suicidal self injury (NSSI) increase the rates of suicide risk by about 8% and 17% respectively. But exposure to both of these factors increases the risk by 22-26% depending on your ethnicity. (11) Being an undergrad student seems to also be a risk factor, but reduces each year of college is completed. (3,5) But the most prevalent factors in most research seems to be involvement with drugs or alcohol, a physical assault in the year prior, and depression or depressive symptoms in the previous school year. (3,8,10)

In most of the studies involved, there was more discussion on risk factors than protective factors. However, the majority of the studies claimed that an individual involved in college mental health services was a protective factor against suicidal ideation and suicide. (1,3,4,8,9) Another protective factor, which was present in more than one study, is reason for living. (7,10)

In one study, this included “Survival and Coping Beliefs, Responsibility to Family, Child-Related Concerns, Fear of Suicide, Fear of Social Disapproval, and Moral Objections” (Hirsch & Ellis, 1996). Other protective factors included African American culture, male aged 20-24, graduate student, and finally, feelings of guilt which caused the individual(s) to never have gathered materials for a suicide attempt. (3,8,10)

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Research has shown that college student suicide is the second leading cause of college student deaths. (4) Extensive studies have been done on college student suicide ideation and suicide completion but the research lacks gender specific information. One study that was gender-specific revealed that for both men and women separately, helplessness and hopelessness significantly predicted suicidal ideation. (4)

One risk factor that was identified in the research for male college student only was “having been physically assaulted”. (4) In the prior school year, not to be confused with being sexually assaulted or being involved in altercations. Identifying protective factors is as important as identifying risk factors in preventing male college suicide.

REFERENCES


CONCLUSIONS

The research presented has shown that male college students are underrepresented in the studies. In striving to prevent suicide ideation and completion in males, further research is needed. Being able to identify risk and protective factors will help family, friends and college staff aid in preventing male college student suicide. Multiple studies point out that colleges have mental health services for the prevention and treatment of suicide ideation. (1,3,4,8,9) “Finding that low social support predicted suicide ideation, independent of depressive symptoms and other factors, suggests that health promotion activities on college campuses should strive to promote social support as a key factor” (6, p.13)