

LETTER TO EDITOR

Impact of Celebrity Suicides on mental health of vulnerable populationSantosh Kumar¹, Sapna Negi²¹Associate Professor, Department of Community & Family Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand; ²Research Associate, Department of Community & Family Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand**Corresponding Author**Santosh Kumar, Associate Professor, Department of community and family medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand 249204
E Mail ID: santosh.cfm@aiimsrishikesh.edu.in**Citation**Kumar S, Negi S. Impact of Celebrity Suicides on mental health of vulnerable population. Indian J Comm Health. 2022;34(3):451. <https://doi.org/10.47203/IJCH.2022.v34i03.026>**Source of Funding:** Nil **Conflict of Interest:** None declared**Article Cycle****Received:** 21/05/2022; **Revision:** 12/07/2022; **Accepted:** 28/08/2022; **Published:** 30/09/2022This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). ©The Author(s). 2022 Open Access

Suicide is culminating into a grave public health concern. Approximately 800,000 people worldwide commit suicide annually, with 3/4th owing to low- middle-income countries.(1) In 2016, the suicide rate in India was 16.5, exceeding the global average of 10.5/1,00,000.(1) Suicide is the deliberate ending of one's own life(2) and primarily done due to persistent sense of despair, depression, drug misuse, and various personal and financial stress factors. One such trigger is suicide by an eminent figure, also known as werthering effect, modelling effect, or copycat suicide. This phenomenon commonly affects the adolescent and younger adults. In India, the 15-29 age group were found most vulnerable.(1) Nearly 5% of consecutive suicides occur after a celebrity death primarily among young, female, and unemployed without being prompted by adverse life circumstances.(3) Given the global gravity of suicide and India's contribution to it, it is critical to identify the psychopathology and risk factors behind it.

People, primarily the adolescent cohort, idolise their favourite celebrity and emulate their behaviour, habits, and lifestyle. (4). While having positive role models is beneficial, there may be downsides too; For instance, many celebrities freely admit alcohol or drug use, giving young minds the notion that such behaviour is acceptable. When youth are presented this information regularly, it informs their lifestyle choices and may have detrimental implications.(5) The Social Media disseminates same news in different ways via different medium. The rapid outrage of celebrity suicide news aggravate major toll on the psyche of youth as they use such platforms widely. It becomes more prominent when reporting is extensively displayed, use sensationalised language, explicitly describes the suicide method or scene of death, and includes photographs of the deceased.(6) It accelerate the suicidal tendencies by triggering users' instincts of melancholy. Approximately 85.5 percent of media reports in India breach at least one of the recommended guidelines of PCI (Press Council of India). Furthermore, very few (13%) recommend possible avenues for seeking treatment for suicidal impulses.(6) Given the recent suicides of several celebrities in India, including Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, TV actor Manmeet Grewal, and Kannada actress Susheel Gowda, to name a few, early intervention involving all stakeholders in prevention efforts is imperative. (7)

Suicide prevention is generally concentrated on anti-suicide strategies and overlooks the risk factors. Hence, a policy

intervention is required for population and iconic personalities. Media checks need to be conducted to halt negative news pouring over broadcasting platforms. Provision of mental health service and increasing its accessibility for general population, iconic figures, superstars, entertainment industry, sports industry etc. may help to prevent suicidal behaviours. Capacity building workshops among media professionals and journalists should be conducted to enhance awareness towards ethical media reporting guidelines. (8) The key personnel such as family members, colleagues, and supervisors should be trained to recognise risk factors of suicide and connect them to mental health support services. The government, schools, families, and significant others should organise post vention activities that profitably engage the thoughts of youths and divert their attention away from dangerous pursuits. Beside these, media and newspapers reporting of stories of individual crisis management can have a positive impact by broadening the perspective of individuals with suicidal ideation. (9)

We conclude that the celebrity suicide have effect on general population and considering the current mental state of people in India, there is a need that government should take actions across the health and social domains that could facilitate suicide prevention.

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