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Rethinking Suicide Research & Prevention

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All members of the Organizing Committee are from the Suicide Research Centre at Vilnius University. More details: <https://www.fsf.vu.lt/en/institute-of-psychology/centre-for-suicidology>

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Suicidal Ideation and Attempts Among Lithuanian Children: Associations with Psychoemotional Well-Being

Šambaras, Rokas; Lesinskienė, Sigita

Clinic of Psychiatry, Institute of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University

Introduction: Adolescent suicidality remains a pressing global concern, ranking high among causes of death for older youth and affecting many through mental disorders like depression and anxiety.

Methods: The study was conducted from October to December 2023 in 12 secondary and 14 high schools across Lithuania. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire assessing demographics, suicidal ideation and attempts, and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for psycho-emotional functioning. The aim was to estimate the prevalence of suicidal thoughts and attempts among Lithuanian students and their associations with psycho-emotional difficulties.

Results: The study included 4,124 adolescents (51.0% male), with a mean age of 14.48 ± 1.15 years. 16.1% of adolescents had thought about suicide more than once, and 3.9% had attempted suicide more than once. Among boys, 9.2% had thought about suicide more than once, whereas among girls this rate was 22.1% ($p < 0.001$, $\phi = 0.245$). More than one suicide attempt was reported by 2.2% of boys and 4.8% of girls ($p < 0.001$, $\phi = 0.108$). Regression analysis indicated that self-harm and internalizing difficulties were the most important factors associated with suicidal ideation in boys ($\beta = 0.457$; $\beta = 0.204$), while in girls, the most important factors were self-harm and externalizing difficulties ($\beta = 0.485$; $\beta = 0.188$). Self-harm and internalizing difficulties were also the most important factors associated with suicide attempts in boys ($\beta = 0.493$; $\beta = 0.065$), whereas in girls, the main factors were self-harm and externalizing difficulties ($\beta = 0.413$; $\beta = 0.108$).

Conclusions: These findings highlight notable gender differences in suicidal ideation and behavior among adolescents, with girls reporting significantly higher rates than boys. Self-harm emerged as the strongest factor associated with both suicidal thoughts and attempts, alongside internalizing difficulties in boys and externalizing difficulties in girls.