

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Adolescent Females as a Group Particularly Vulnerable to Suicide Risk and Traumatic Stressful Life Events

Ana González Fernández¹ | Elena Brenlla¹ | Irene Caro-Cañizares¹  | Amparo Cano Esteban¹ | Juan J. Carballo^{2,3,4}

¹Department of Psychology, School of Health and Educational Sciences, UDIMA (Universidad a Distancia de Madrid), Collado Villalba, Spain | ²CIBERSAM (Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red-Salud Mental), Madrid, Spain | ³Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry and Mental Health, Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, Madrid, Spain | ⁴Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria Gregorio Marañón (IISGM), Madrid, Spain

Correspondence: Irene Caro-Cañizares (irenecaro85@gmail.com; irene.caro@udima.es)

Received: 15 October 2024 | **Revised:** 24 January 2025 | **Accepted:** 12 February 2025

Funding: This work was supported by the Spanish Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Keywords: adolescence | gender perspective | risk factors | stressful life events | suicide

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Suicidal behaviour in adolescents has increased considerably, so much so that it is the leading cause of death in this population. Associated risk factors include age, gender, or stressful life events, so their in-depth study is essential for prevention.

Objective: The main objective of this study was to study how certain stressful life events of a victimising nature (such as being a victim of abuse or violence) are related to the risk of suicide in adolescents, taking into account gender and the perceived impact of these events by the victims.

Method: The sample consisted of 147 people with a mean age of 15.34 years (SD = 1.316), who were administered the Stressful Life Events Scale, the Self-Injurious Thoughts and Behaviours Scale and an *ad hoc* semi-structured interview.

Results: The results showed a positive relationship between experiencing these events, perceived impact and suicidal risk, as well as a positive relationship between being a woman, a higher likelihood of being a victim of these events and a higher suicidal risk.

Conclusion: It is concluded that being a victim of stressful life events and their impact, as well as being a woman, are related to an increased suicidal risk. Therefore, it is recommended that these aspects be addressed early to reduce this risk.

Suicidal behaviour is a serious social and health problem that accounts for more than 700,000 deaths per year worldwide (WHO 2024). Epidemiologically, suicide is the leading cause of non-natural death in Spain and the leading cause of external death in the young Spanish population (aged 15–29), according to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2023). Furthermore, what is known as the gender paradox is observed: suicide is mainly committed by men, in a ratio of 3:1 with respect to women, although it has been found that women are the ones who carry

out a greater number of self-harm and suicide attempts (Montés-Germán and Jiménez-González 2023).

The concept of suicidal behaviour encompasses a number of aspects, including suicidal ideation, suicidal planning, suicide attempts and death by suicide (American Psychiatry Association 2022). Suicide should be understood as a multi-causal, universal and timeless phenomenon (Al-Halabí and Fonseca-Prebrero 2021) although some risk factors have been clearly identified. First, a previous history of suicidal ideation