



Feelings of Connectedness Across Aborted and Actual Suicide Attempters

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Introduction

- Previous research suggests that connectedness, such as life purpose, relationships, religion, and employment, is a protective factor against suicide and suicidal ideation (Zareian & Klonsky, 2020). This study explores these connectedness factors in relation to two different types of suicide attempts: aborted and actual.
- Attempts were defined using the SITBI 2.0 definitions:
Aborted suicide attempt: individual had been very close to killing themselves, they decided not to before they took any action.
Actual suicide attempt: individual tried to kill themselves, or purposely hurt themselves with some intent to die.
- There has been little research about the role of connectedness in specifically aborted vs. actual attempts. Thus, this project sought to explore whether people with different types of suicide attempts report different levels of connectedness.

Methods

Participants were drawn from a sample of 91 mainly active duty service members who were psychiatrically hospitalized. 65 qualified based on their history of aborted and/or actual suicide attempts, while those with neither were excluded. 22 participants reported a history of only aborted attempts, 16 reported a history of only actual attempts, and 27 reported a history of both.

Connectedness was assessed using the **Universal Connectedness Scale**, which consisted of self reported responses to nine questions.

For our exploratory thematic analysis, we utilized an *a priori* approach to categorize self reported descriptions of aborted and actual suicide attempts. Descriptions were coded for themes of connectedness and disconnectedness, with no double coding.

Universal Connectedness scores (UCS sum) across and between groups with aborted attempts, actual attempts, and both were assessed using an analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the level of UCS sum across groups with a history of aborted attempts, actual attempts, and both. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in UCS sum between at least two groups ($F(2, 62) = 1.725, p = .187$).

Exploratory Analysis

Aborted Suicide Attempts

Themes Across Self Reported Description of Aborted Attempts		
Mentions of Connectedness	# of Participants (n)	Percentage
Thought of partner	11	22.45
Thought of family	10	20.41
Thought of child	12	24.49
Religion	4	8.16
Mentions of Disconnectedness	# of Participants (n)	Percentage
Divorce/breakup	5	10.20
Loss/death of a friend or family	6	12.24
Family difficulties	6	12.24
Poor work environment	2	4.08

27 out of 49 participants (55.10%) with a history of aborted attempts mentioned connectedness in relation to their aborted attempt.
16 participants (32.65%) mentioned disconnectedness.

Actual Suicide Attempts

Themes Across Self Reported Description of Actual Attempts		
Mentions of Disconnectedness	# of Participants (n)	Percentage
Divorce/breakup	4	9.3
Loss/death of a friend or family	3	6.98
Family difficulties	7	16.28
Poor work environment	4	9.3

18 out of 43 participants (41.86%) with a history of actual attempts mentioned disconnectivity in relation to their attempt, there were no mentions of connectivity.

Discussion

- No significant relationship was found between type of suicide attempt and UCS sum.
- Limitations include retrospective bias as well as the limited nature of the questionnaire regarding connectivity.
- The exploratory analysis revealed that participants who recounted actual suicide attempts did not mention connectedness at all, whereas over 50% of aborted attempt descriptions discussed connectedness. These results suggest implications for the role of perceived connectedness as a protective factor.
- Future research should explore connectedness and disconnectedness in more depth, for example, further investigating the difference between interpersonal and spiritual connectedness in relation to suicide. Additionally, more research is needed regarding what other factors play a role in determining whether an attempt is aborted.

References

Zareian, B., & Klonsky, E. D. (2020). Connectedness and suicide. *Alternatives to Suicide*, 135–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-814297-4.00007-8>