

Gender differences in suicidal ideation and deliberate self-harm among adolescents in Sri Lanka

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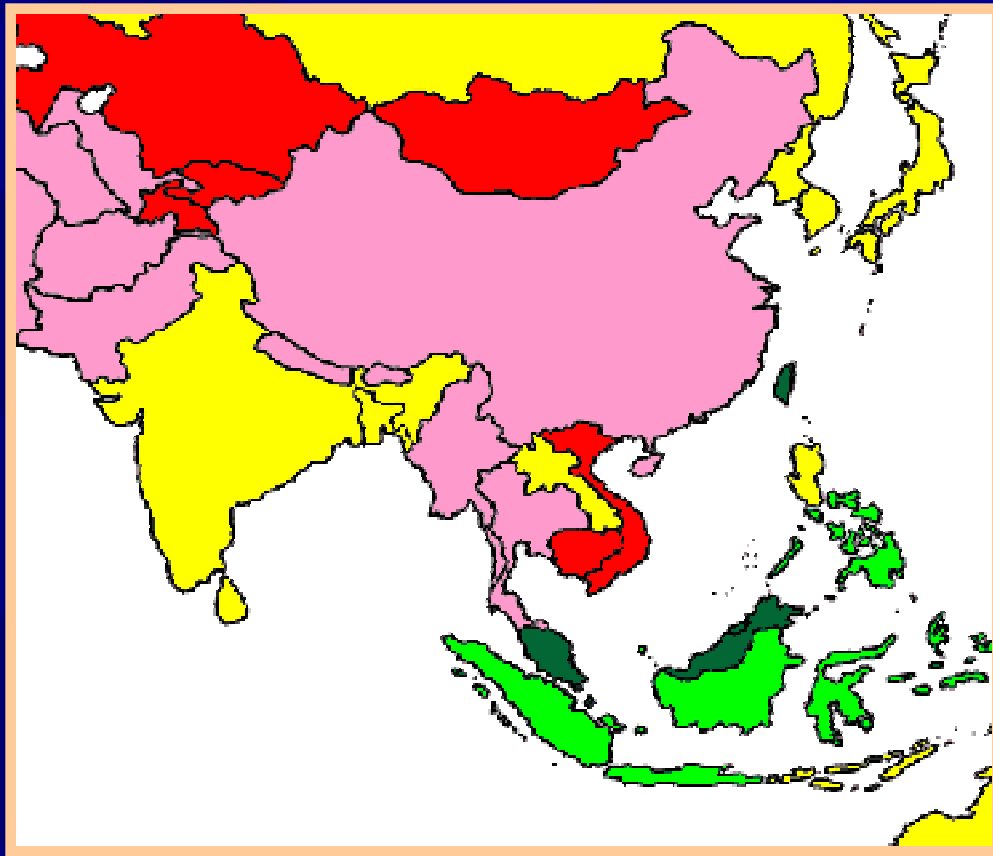


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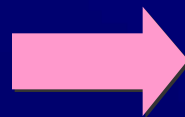


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Chronic, as well as, acute health conditions are increasingly prevalent and recognized in adolescents.

However, mental health problems **among** adolescents are often neglected or not given adequate attention



because adolescents are generally considered less likely to develop psychological problems.



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Suicidal ideation and deliberate self-harm have become major psychological problems in adolescents worldwide.



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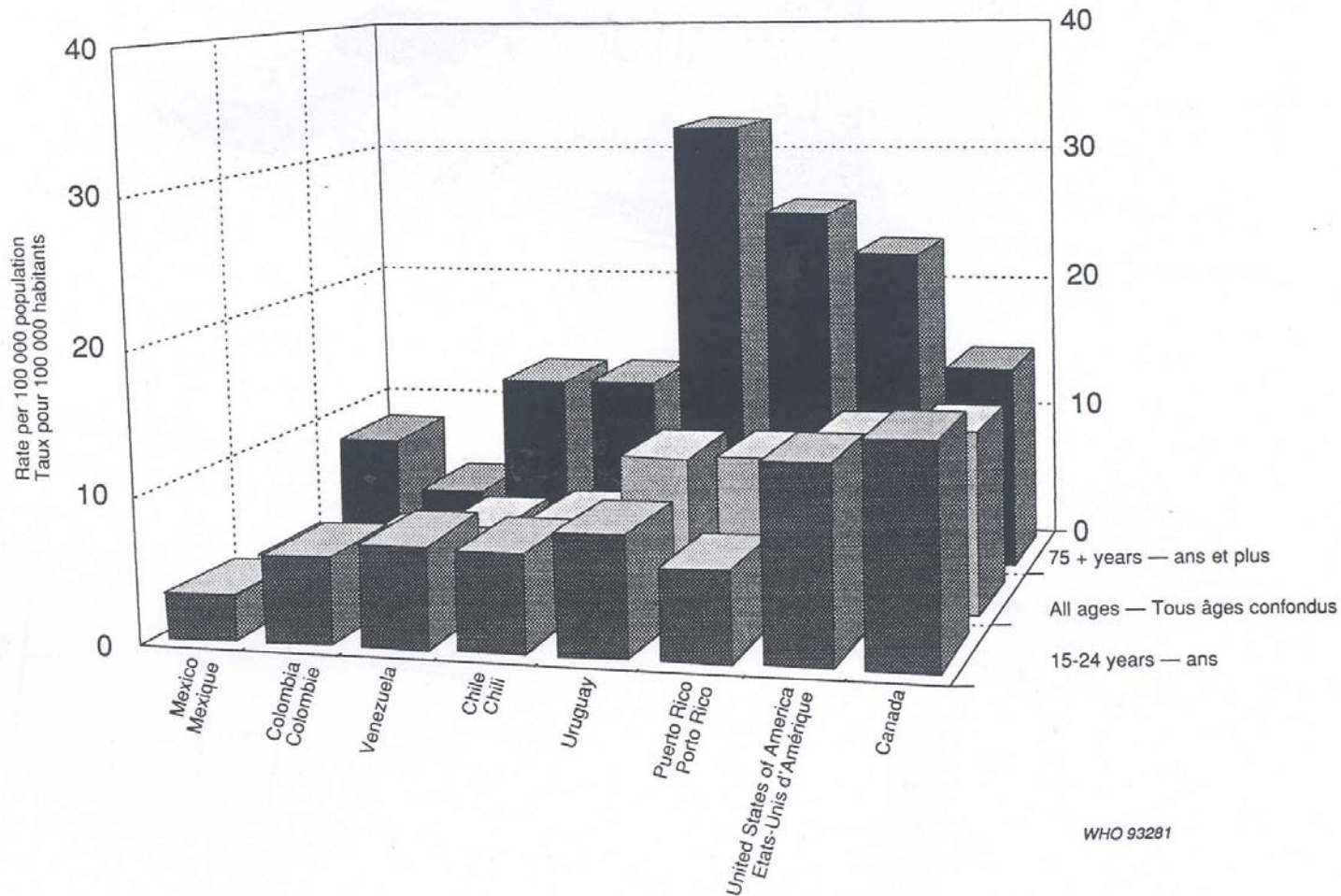
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Fig. 4

Suicide rate per 100 000 population, by age group, selected countries/areas in the Americas, latest available year

Taux de suicide pour 100 000 habitants par sexe et selon l'âge, dans certains pays d'Amérique, dernière année disponible



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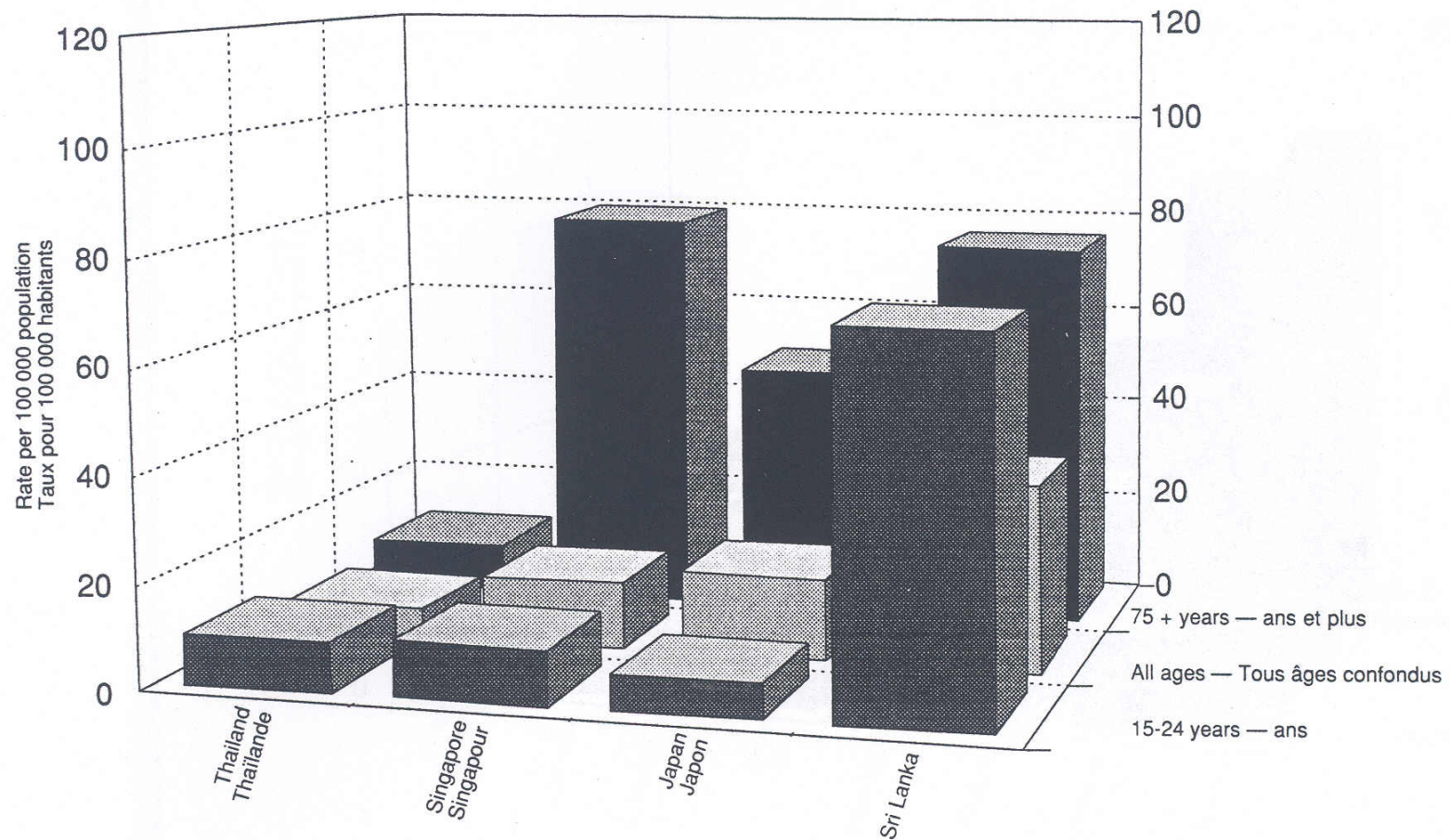
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Fig. 5

Suicide rate per 100 000 population, by age group, selected countries in Asia, latest available year

Taux de suicide pour 100 000 habitants par sexe et selon l'âge dans certains pays d'Asie, dernière année disponible



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The coastal areas of the Southern Province of Sri Lanka were **severely affected** by the 2004 tsunami.



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The health of people living in the Southern Province **was** severely affected by this natural disaster.

There is a need to identify and monitor trends in disease and other health related problems among people living in these affected areas.



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A cross-sectional survey was conducted by the Duke-Ruhuna Collaborative Research Center at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna, Galle, Sri Lanka to explore health and health behavior patterns in advanced level students in Southern Sri Lanka.



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Objectives

To identify prevalence of suicidal ideation in adolescents in Sri Lanka

To identify prevalence of deliberate self-harm in adolescents in Sri Lanka

To examine whether gender plays a role in suicidal ideation and deliberate self-harm in adolescents in Sri Lanka



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Methods

Target population: school children aged between 18–19 in the three districts in the Southern Province

Cluster sampling method was used to select the participants

All students in the selected classes were invited to take part in the survey



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A questionnaire, consisting of 138 items, was developed using common questions from other similar surveys or validated scales.



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Results (N=971)

Gender

Male	376 (38.7%)
Female	595 (61.3%)

Age

18 years	947 (97.5%)
19 years	23 (2.4%)
20 years	1 (0.1%)

Ethnicity 951 (97.9%) were Sinhalese



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During your lifetime, have you ever considered committing suicide?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Male</u>	24 (6.5%)	348 (93.5%)
<u>Female</u>	71 (12.1%)	518 (87.9%)

$X^2=8.034, P<0.005$



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During the last year, did you do anything to deliberately harm yourself?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Male</u>	13 (3.5%)	359 (96.5%)
<u>Female</u>	22 (3.7%)	568 (96.3%)

$X^2=0.036, P<0.850$



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Female adolescents are at higher risk.

What are possible causative factors?

- **Breaking love affairs?**
- **Mental disorders?**
- **Poverty?**
- **Physical abuse?**
- **Verbal abuse?**



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Physical Abuse & Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal Ideation

		<u><i>Yes</i></u>	<u><i>No</i></u>
<u><i>Physical abuse</i></u>	<u><i>Yes</i></u>	24 (17.8%)	111 (82.2%)
	<u><i>No</i></u>	64 (8.2%)	720 (91.8%)

$X^2=12.29, P<0.001$



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Verbal Abuse & Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal Ideation

		<u>Suicidal Ideation</u>	
		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Verbal abuse</u>	<u>Yes</u>	51 (15.9%)	269 (84.1%)
	<u>No</u>	30 (5.5%)	517 (94.5%)

$X^2=26.04, P<0.001$



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Discussion

Suicide in adolescents in Sri Lanka is a serious public health problem.

Gender seems to play a significant role in suicidal ideations and suicidal attempts in adolescents in Sri Lanka.

There are limited data on the subject.

Further research is needed to identify gender-specific, cultural, and country-specific causative factors.



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