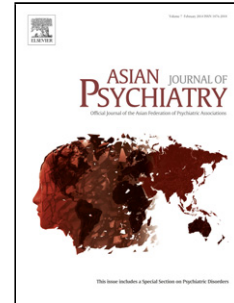


Accepted Manuscript

Title: Is suicide reporting in Indian newspapers responsible? A study from Rajasthan

Author: Nikhil Jain Dr Sunil Kumar

PII: S1876-2018(16)30123-X
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.ajp.2016.09.012>
Reference: AJP 960



To appear in:

Received date: 17-3-2016
Revised date: 28-8-2016
Accepted date: 1-9-2016

Please cite this article as: Jain, Nikhil, Kumar, Sunil, Is suicide reporting in Indian newspapers responsible? A study from Rajasthan. Asian Journal of Psychiatry <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2016.09.012>

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“Is suicide reporting in Indian newspapers responsible? A study from Rajasthan”

1. Dr Nikhil Jain, Department of Psychiatry, Pt. B.D.S. Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Rohtak, Haryana, India.

2. Sunil Kumar, Department of Psychiatry, SMS Medical College, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

First author is the corresponding author.

Highlights

- Irresponsible reporting by the media can lead to imitative suicidal behaviour.
- The study aims to examine whether Indian newspapers adhere to the WHO guidelines for suicide reporting.
- Suicide reporting in Indian newspapers has a strong inclination towards sensationalism.
- No effort was made to include any educative material was included in the reports published.
- Suicide reporting in India is largely irresponsible and efforts should be made to sensitise media personnel in this regard.

1. Introduction

Suicide is a public health problem of increasing magnitude. WHO reported that over one million deaths worldwide are due to suicide and each death impacts at least six other people (WHO, 2008). The factors related to suicide are complex and some of them poorly understood, but one factor that has consistently been shown to influence suicidal behaviour is media reporting (Pikris & Blood, 2010). Irresponsible reporting by the media can lead to imitative suicidal behaviour (Frey, Michel, & Valach, 1995). The imitative suicidal behaviour varies with time (Bollen & Phillips, 1982), amount and prominence of coverage, sensational coverage with description of method used (Etzersdorfer, Voracek, & Sonneck, 2004), celebrity suicide reporting (Cheng, Hawton, Lee, & Chen, 2007). On the other hand there is evidence that educative and responsible reporting can be a preventive measure (Niederkröthaler et al., 2010). Keeping in mind the scientific data available in this regard, the

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