

Rising Trend of Suicides among Youth in Chitral: A Sociological Analysis

Noor Sanauddin¹, Zafar Ahmad²
& Imran Ahmad Sajid³

Abstract

This study explores suicides among youth in district Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Data collected through in-depth interviews, case histories of the victims and official statistics is analyzed using Durkheim's theory of suicide and existing literature. The study argues that the traditional culture of Chitral is subjected to drastic social change in a very short time. Youths are the main agents of change. The social change has made youths aware of their fundamental rights; however, their modern aspirations are frustrated by centuries-old traditions. Modernism has entered but in a hybrid form. The culture, traditions and festivals which once used to give socio-cultural identity to the individuals turn weak and so do the bonds and the meanings necessary for keeping individuals into a cohesive whole. The culture is in a state where traditional norms tend to disappear yet are not fully replaced by the new ones, what could be called anomie. The mind has become split between tradition and modernity creating uncertainty regarding how to live a balanced life which has increased vulnerability towards suicide.

Keywords: Suicide, Youth, Durkheim, Anomie, Social Factors, Culture, Modernity

Introduction

Suicide refers to the deliberate act of killing (Shapero, 2011) or harming oneself with the motive to end one's own life (Reyes, *et al.*, 2015). Suicide is engulfing a life every 40 seconds across the world with countless attempts for every death (Randal, *et al.*, 2015). Studies indicate suicide to be essentially a youth problem (Chatterjee & Basu, 2010; Saxena *et al.*, 2014). A higher number of youths both girls

¹ The author is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. He can be reached at noor.sanauddin@uop.edu.pk

² The author is a Lecturer in Sociology, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Higher Education Department, Pakistan. He can be reached at zafarahmad444@gmail.com

³ The author is a Lecturer at the Department of Social Work, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. He can be reached at imranahmad131@uop.edu.pk

and boys, aged 15-29 have been found engaged in self-killing behaviors and is the second leading cause of death for the said age group (Värnik, 2012)

Suicide is a multi-dimensional and multi-factored phenomenon (Lester, 2008). A complete coaction of psychiatric and social factors (Hassan, 1996) or psycho-socio-environmental factors are leading individuals to end their own lives (Bolton & Robinson, 2010). The psychological studies mainly focus on suicide personality and maintain that depression and aggression are the main causes of suicide (Hassan, 1996). On the other hand, the sociological inquiries intend to highlight the social factors behind suicides (Amitai & Alan, 2012). In other words, sociologists stress cultural-oriented studies (Lester, 2008). Culture is an important sociological variable associated with the existence of man. Ingrained in culture is religion which specifies various sanctions for committing suicide (Lester, 2008). The legitimacy of sociological inquiry increases in traditional societies where allegiance to family and cultural norms overrules personal choices (Phillips *et al.*, 2002).

The sociological inquiry of suicide started with Durkheim (1951 [1897]) who argued that an increased suicide rate in a society indicates the failure of that particular culture in regulating and integrating the aspirations of the youths. The wave first increased in Western Europe (Eckersley & Dear, 2002) with the advent of modernization but then started shifting to Eastern Europe and is now shifting towards Asia (Yasamy & Fleischmann, 2012).

Suicides, especially among youth, are on the rise throughout the world (Saxena *et al.*, 2014) and Pakistan is no exception (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). A study conducted in Faisalabad, Pakistan estimates that 1.12 / 100,000 people commit suicide per year (Saeed, 2002). Another study figured out it to be 2.46 / 100,000 in Karachi, Pakistan (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). In the Ghizer district of Gilgit-Baltistan, more than 300 suicide cases were reported during 1996-2010 (Sher & Dinar, 2015). In 2014, over 2,359 cases of suicides were reported along with 685 attempts across the country (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2014).

Youth suicide is an increasing phenomenon in Chitral district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (Zahiruddin, 2018). Chitral is the largest district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province located in Northern Pakistan (Marsden, 2005) covering an area of 14,850 km² with a population of 447,362 as per the latest census conducted in 2017 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Despite being a predominantly Muslim region, 'Chitral is different in many ways not only from other regions of the Muslim world but also from other regions of Pakistan,' (Marsden, 2005, p. 253). The

difference is also evident from its unacceptably high trend of youth suicides (Khan, 2018).

According to earlier research, 300 suicides were reported between 2007 and 2011 in Chitral, among which youths were the main victims (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016). Only during the four initial months of 2018, 22 suicide cases were reported which is unacceptably high in a district having a population of just 4.5 lac (Khan, 2018). Only from a small village, which consists of not more than 50 households, seven youth suicide attempts are reported during the last few years (Ahmad, 2018). Due to the lack of separate systems for mental disorders and cultural sensitivity to suicide, only a few cases are reported to the local media and police department (Hussain *et al.*, 2019). During 2013-2019 a total of 176 cases of suicides were reported to the Office of the District Police Officer (DPO), Chitral and the exact figures are likely to be more than these reported cases. The year-wise detail is given below:

Table No. 1 Suicide Statistics; 2013-2019

Year	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
2013	10 (42)	14 (58)	24
2014	10 (43)	13 (57)	23
2015	14 (64)	8 (36)	22
2016	8(44)	10(56)	18
2017	7 (30)	16(70)	23
2018	16(40)	24(60)	40
2019	9(35)	17(65)	26
Total	74(42)	102 (58)	176 (100)

Source: Prepared from the statistics available at DPO Office, Chitral

The increasing trend of youth suicides indicates that suicide has become the most serious issue in Chitral. An in-depth inquiry was needed to explore the causes in detail which this study has attempted. This culture-oriented study has identified some of the main sociological factors behind youth suicides in Chitral.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the socio-cultural motives behind youth suicides in Chitral and
2. To examine if a particular gender is more prone to suicide

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Durkheim's theory of suicide which states that increased suicide in a society is the result of 'anomie' which is a society's decreasing capacity for individual integration and regulation (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]). Under insufficient integration, people feel isolated and life seems less meaningful (egoism). Due to inadequate regulation, the gap between aspirations and means becomes disproportionate (anomie). The resulted dissatisfaction increases the likelihood to commit suicide egoistic and anomic suicide respectively. Durkheim (1951 [1897], p. 288) stated that egoism and anomie "are two different aspects of one social state"- both arise when traditional societies undergo drastic social change due to exposure to modernism. Therefore, his theory of suicide is also known as the theory of 'egoism-anomie' or more simply theory of 'anomie'.

Durkheim's theory has been criticized in terms of data reliability for using official statistics (Doughlas, 1967; Taylor, 1982). However, the theory and parts of it have been supported by several studies such as Danigelis & Pope (1979), Eckersley & Dear (2002), and Hassan (1996). Another criticism is that the theory was developed with the help of data collected from advanced societies in Europe, the theory may not explain suicidal trends in the developing world (Vijayakumaret al., 2008). For this reason, Hjelmeland (2010) has suggested qualitative studies by native researchers for suicide research in non-western countries. The amalgamation of all these has served as the theoretical framework for this study. One of the researchers is a native scholar and the study has used both first-hand qualitative data as well as official statistics.

Methodology

This inquiry explored youth suicides in the socio-cultural context of Chitral. The scope of the study included both completed as well as attempted cases. The research participants have been selected through purposive and convenient sampling. A total of 26 in-depth interviews were conducted with various categories of the local people, including survivors of suicide, victims' families, community or religious experts and local intellectuals. The family of one victim was considered as one unit in the sample size. The details and relevancy of the research participants are given below:

Table No. 2: Detailed Category of Research Participants

S. No.	Category	Relevancy	Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
1	Survivors of Suicide	Have personally experienced the	4	4	8

		phenomenon			
2	Victims' Families	The closest persons to the victims	4	4	8
3	Community / Religious Experts	Have deep understanding of local traditions and culture	5	0	5
4	Local Intellectuals	Who understand social change	3	2	5
			Total = 26		

The interviews conducted in the local language were translated, transcribed, and then analysed to identify various themes. Unpublished official statistics for the years 2013-2019 from the Office of the District Police Officer (DPO), Chitral were reorganized and tabulated which added numerical support to the major themes of the study. The inclusion of community experts and local intellectuals helped in collecting some of the sensitive data which otherwise would have been difficult. Moreover, selecting the suicide survivors and relatives of the deceased helped in increasing the reliability of the data. Furthermore, content analysis of the love songs (*ghazals*) of four young poets from Chitral was conducted as poetry expresses contemporary feelings - in this case, aggression and frustrations (Avila *et al.*, 2018). Besides, field observations and field notes were also utilized for understanding the phenomenon in the research area. The data was condensed and analyzed thematically.

Ethical Considerations

The research participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and their anonymity was ensured. Care was taken so that interviews would not hurt the feelings of the participants. All names mentioned of participants mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

Results and Discussions

Our study argues that the traditional culture of Chitral under drastic social change is failing in sufficiently accommodating the aspirations of the youths. The collective consciousness which earlier used to hold individuals in cohesive bonds tend to disappear after the people in Chitral got exposure to modernity and globalism. This is what Dad (2018), a Gilgit based sociologist, calls as 'what has happened to society at the collective level, and its impacts on young people'. As a result, 'anomie' has created to which young people are more vulnerable. Our data shows that out of 176 evaluated cases, 82% (n=144) of the victims belonged to the age group 15-30

compared to just 12% (n=21) and 6% (n=11) in the age groups 30-45 and above 45 respectively. How and why this is happening is explained under the major themes below:

Table No. 3 Age and Suicide

Age	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
15-30	52 (36)	92 (64)	144 (82)
30-45	16 (76)	5(24)	21 (12)
45 and above	6 (56)	5 (44)	11 (6)
Total	74 (42)	102 (58)	176 (100)

Source: Prepared from the statistics available at DPO Office, Chitral

Gender, Marital Status, Family and Suicide

Unlike studies conducted on Western cultures which indicate suicide is majorly a male problem (Durkheim, 1951; Hassan, 1996), our study found that in Chitral women, especially young and educated girls, commit more suicides. Out of the 176 cases evaluated 58 % (n=102) were females compared to 42% (n=74) males. Women are more likely to end their lives between the ages of 15-30 years i.e. 64% (n= 92) while men are prone in the age group 30-45, 76% (n=16). The tendency decreases sharply to 6% (n=11) for both genders including 56% (n=6) males and 44% (n=5) females of age 40 and above. Similar trends are found in several other studies for other traditional societies such as by Ahmad *et al.* (2014), Amitai & Alan (2012) and Sher & Dinar (2015). This is partly explainable by their complex socio-cultural structure which in many cases is oppressively patriarchal (Vijayakumar *et al.*, 2008).

The reasons figured out for women's suicides by this study include disputes in the family, most disputes with in-laws, beating by brothers or husbands, allegations of love affairs, especially on the phone, cultural attitudes towards women's role in marriage, marriage against parent's will, the burden of work, high expectations and allegations for the bad socialization, and academic failure of children.

A local intellectual expressed:

“In-laws expect from their daughters-in-law what were the obligations in old times. Even well-educated working women are obliged to collect fire woods and rear animals. Of course, the new

generations do not like this. Married girls aspire to live in nuclear families preferably in cities. Conflict exists between in-laws and married girls leading to domestic disputes which may occasionally culminate to divorce or women committing suicides.”

A study conducted in District Ghizer, Gilgit-Baltistan has also found similar findings (Sher & Dinar, 2015). The patriarchal culture means newly married women feel drawn to their parents. Often it occurs that women are in conflict with in-laws. A constant pressure exists on women to stay married even under adverse conditions (Gururajet *al.*, 2004) while divorce is considered to be against honour and honour is more important than daughters' lives (Hussainet *al.*, 2019). Occasionally, the women may flee to their parents' house. Two young women committed suicide while one woman studied in this research attempted suicide when pressures were exerted to fix the dispute. Our data shows that 55% (n=37) victims were married women compared to 45% (n=30) married men. Hence, Durkheim's (1951 [1897]) argument that marriage provides protection against suicide was insignificant in the case of women in Chitral. However, overall, married people were less likely to commit suicide (38%) than unmarried people (62%).

Table No. 4: Marital Status, Gender and Suicide

Marital Status	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Married	30 (45)	37 (55)	67 (38)
Unmarried	44 (40)	65 (60)	109 (62)
Total	74 (42)	102 (58)	176 (100)

Source: Prepared from the statistics available at DPO Office, Chitral

Cultural norms portray appropriate dress codes and behaviour for women. Failure to conform is discouraged (Sher & Dinar, 2015). Jilted in love affairs occasionally may lead to boys' suicides while stigmatization of love affairs is a contributing factor for girls (Chatterjee & Basu, 2010). A community expert expressed:

“Gone are those days when women conform to cultural norms. Now women do not like advice from elders and performing as good housewife is considered oppression.”

The centuries-old patriarchal traditions in Chitral are now failing in regulating the aspirations of young and educated girls. Women have become aware of their rights due to exposure to modern education (colleges, universities), TV channels, social media, mobile phones, trans-cultural ideas and mass mobilization by NGOs working on women's rights. On the other hand, the social attitudes regarding women are still patriarchal and pastoral coming to a clash with the modern aspirations of young women. Earlier, being unaware and having little aspirations women lived in relative harmony with patriarchy; however, after the induced social change, the same ascendant traditions are perceived to be oppressive. Elderly people could be seen expressing their concerns over Indian drama serials and mobile phones making the youth especially young women having little regard for their cherished cultural values. A research participant expressed his concern:

“Indian drama serials have spoiled our women”
(*Indio drama ispaawwatanangunarnazeshani*).

Women in Chitral like other patriarchal societies remain at the periphery of the social spectrum and social taboos keep many conditions like having a love affair, expression of feelings, emotions etc. unapproved for them (Ahmad, 2019). Modernism has stimulated young women to aspire to an ideal life while the real world for them is still that harsh where she has to serve in-laws by collecting firewood and rear domesticated animals adding to their frustrations. An earlier study argues that “Women in Chitral are expected to plough and furrow like a farmer, graze animals as a shepherd, harvest crops like a tractor, rear children as they are mothers, and care for husbands and in-laws as they are daughters-in-law (Hussain *et al.*, 2019).” Good women are considered to be those who tolerate criticism, are not selfish and always compromise. Those who deviate are even blamed by their parents, family members and by local organizations. The lack of female police stations in Chitral and the unsupportive environment of the male dominant police stations further adds to the frustration of women. The resulting high stress, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, helplessness, and fear of rejection by parents increase the vulnerability towards suicide. The frustrations occasionally may be revealed through hyper-senility, having episodes of faints and uncontrolled shaking, etc. Often, such a condition would be interpreted as ‘spirit possession’ which may culminate in suicide (Ahmad, 2019). A young woman studied in this research committed suicide when the shamans were not able to exorcise the spirits.

Thus, a clash exists between the aspirations of the youth especially young women and old cultural values creating anger and some vulnerable women respond by committing suicide. A similar finding is reported by Khan (2018) for hilly areas of the northern Pakistan. In some cases, women tied a noose around their neck, which as a method was used by 63% (n=25) of the women while suicide by drowning in the Chitral River contributed to 77% (n=48) of the females and 23% (n=15) of the males' suicides. The Chitral River, officially known as the Kabul River, flows across each village in the valley (Khan, 2018) making it the most viable method for committing suicide as the availability of a means is associated with its use for committing suicide (Helliwell, 2007). In Chitral, there is a saying, "Do not go to the river when grapes are about to ripe as then the river calls for the blood." Boys used more fatal means such as 85% (n=42) of the victims who used guns were males. Hassan, (1996) has found a similar pattern for male suicides in Australia. Drowning is found to be the widely used method for committing suicides 36% (n=63) followed by gunshot (28% (n=49), hanging 22% (n=39) and poison 14% (n=25).

Table No. 5 Methods Used for Committing Suicide

Methods	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Drowning	15 (23)	48 (77)	63 (36)
Gunshot	42 (85)	7 (15)	49 (28)
Hanging	14 (37)	25 (63)	39 (22)
Poison	3 (10)	22 (90)	25 (14)
Total	74 (42)	102 (58)	176 (100)

Source: Prepared from the statistics available at DPO Office, Chitral

Community Response, Contagion and Suicide

In conservative societies especially among Muslims, the community response to suicides is negative (Vijayakumar, *et al.*, 2008) which includes denying funeral rites or performing in a different manner (Ahmad, 2012). However, our study finds a different phenomenon in Chitral where the victims gain the sympathies of the community and family members. One of the community experts expressed:

"When someone commits suicide, people gather at the house of the deceased to express their sympathies."

The deaths from suicide are treated like natural deaths. The deceased is not condemned for self-destruction, instead, he/she is often portrayed as the 'oppressed'. If someone inside the family or tribe is alleged to have provoked the death, the person would be condemned. However, if someone outside the family or tribe is alleged, the matter may escalate which include police interrogation and initial legal complication though ultimately handled through reconciliation by the communities. The stigmatization of suicide is also less clear. If the issue is sensitive, it is tried to be concealed, though the reasons are eventually revealed to the people. A local intellectual said:

"Though attempted to be concealed, the causes are eventually revealed. To be sympathetic to the bereaved family, people avoid public discussion of the reasons. However, in their gossip people do debate the causes."

However, it was found that religious people usually blame the youths for deviating from the religious and traditional ethos of society by considering the world as an ideal place to live. A religious scholar expressed his concerns that the people present suicide tragedies as *Halal* (Kosher) which is against the principles of Islam. The same has been found in studies on youth suicides in Gilgit-Baltistan (Dad, 2018; Khan, 2018). Overall, the community response is sympathetic towards the victims, unlike in other Muslim societies. The ethnographic book of Magnus Marsden rightly describes Chitrali culture as 'Chitral is different in many ways not only from other regions of the Muslim world but also from other regions of Pakistan, and this difference is recognized, indeed rejoiced in, by many Chitral people' (Marsden, 2005, p. 253).

From the above discussion, it could be argued that youth suicides might be having a contagious impact on other youths. During our fieldwork, we noted parents and even school teachers fearing that children may commit suicide if they go strict with them. For instance, a mother expressed:

"Since Aqel's suicide (name changed), my son is threatening that he would end his life like Aqel when we stress to focus on studies or whenever he demands things which we deny."

Children especially boys may threaten parents to commit suicide if their demands are not fulfilled. A teenager interviewed for this study married the girl of his choice after surviving a suicide attempt. A failed school student was offered a passed certificate after surviving a suicide attempt.

In Chitral suicides are not confidential deaths, the news of suicides is circulated on the media with sympathies and grief over the loss. This might be creating suicide psychology among the youths and facilitating such behaviours among other youths. This is similar to what Durkheim calls the social current (Durkheim, 1982 [1895]). The possible contagious nature of suicide is also argued by several other researchers (De Leo & Heller, 2008; Khan, 2018; Randal *et al.*, 2015). It is also a kind of attention-seeking behaviour by the youths (Topp, 1979).

Academic Pressure, Craze for Success, Anomie and Suicide

Chitral is one of the highly educated districts ranking 46 out of 146 districts throughout the country (Khan, 2018). Education is considered the ladder for social mobility and there is too much emphasis on it. This has created a culture where success is worshipped and underachieving is demonized. A local intellectual expressed:

“Here congratulating those who gain success in the job market or in academia is mandatory. The local media and the social media glorify the achievers as the proud Chitrali (fakhr-e-Chitral).”

Family members instil their dead aspirations into their children. The result is intense stress on the youths and frustrations for those who fail to secure high marks. A young boy who had attempted suicide said that too much expectation had resulted in his academic failure and ultimately led him to attempt suicide. On one occasion, six female students committed suicide after the results' declaration in less than a week (Baig, 2018). This study also collected case histories of boys who committed (or attempted) suicide when they were unable to obtain the desired grades in inter exams. A suicide survivor expressed:

“Failure in the exam was a frustrating moment for me. I became furious when a person in the family told me that I had to be ashamed for failing.”

The result is stress among students and an increasing trend of suicide. Moreover, increased education has stimulated perceived freedom and high dreams among the youths as argued by Durkheim (1951 [1897]). The dreams of the youths are difficult to be materialized in a traditional and isolated district of Chitral where the local market offers nothing. A considerable population of the youth migrates to the other districts, what is known as down '*aff Pakistan*' (down Pakistan), of the country for jobs and education. Those who remain in villages find their minds and body trapped between their ambitions and the backwardness of the district and the traditions. In simple words, the aspirations of the youths have moved far ahead of the available means creating a state of 'anomie' triggering a wave of youth suicides. Such findings have also been reported in earlier studies in other regions such as in Sri Lanka (Vijayakumar, *et al.*, 2005), and in the Ghizer and Hunza districts of Gilgit-Baltistan (Khan, 2018; Sher & Dinar, 2015). The latter two share cultural heritage and geographic similarity with the district Chitral. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the suicide rate is high in districts where the literacy rate is high (Khan, 2018).

Suicide as a Protest or Revenge and Anomie

In Chitral, the rapid social change has brought the aspirations of the youths into a clash with traditions creating an annoyance for the youths. The youths protest by ending their own lives, perhaps they find no other option (Lester, 2008). In that manner they would get the sympathies of society, make the annoyers feel regret, be condemned and in some cases may inflict legal complications for those triggering the death. If survived, the victims would get things which otherwise were denied. A community expert said:

“Earlier parents when got offended would punish children while now children feel offended who occasionally express this by inflicting self-injuries.”

Threatening to commit suicide is quite a familiar dialogue in Chitral. It is “I will kill myself and you will be responsible for my blood (*awatansurumare laeo tad kum*)” instead of “I will kill you (*ta marem*)”. Parents fear it and occasionally children use it for getting favours over routine disagreements with parents. A local office bearer narrated:

“One of our employees threatened me to commit suicide when I reminded him to be punctual in his duties. This mindset is very

common here. It is complicated as it may drag communities into it creating problems for those blamed to have triggered the incident”.

Thus, the traditions in Chitral are failing in regulating the emerging aspirations of the youths exposing them to anomie. The youths express their discontent by protesting in the form of suicide as contended by Hejelmeland (2010). Suicide as a protest is found in other regions as well such as among African Tribes (Jeffreys, 1952). This is explainable by Naroll theory (1963) of “thwarted disorientation contexts” which suggests that suicide is a protest by a powerless section in such a manner as it could come into public notice.

Cultural Change, Hybrid Modernity, Anomie and Suicide

The traditional culture of Chitral like that of Gilgit-Baltistan has developed and preserved in isolation from the rest of the regions (Khan, 2018). For centuries it provided socio-cultural identity to its inhabitants and held them in cohesive bonds (Khan, 2018). This, however, has started to wane with the region getting sudden exposure to modernity, globalism and trans-cultural ideas brought about by telecommunication and the educational revolution. Chitral has passed through three phases of transformation (Khan, 2018): First, in 1947, when it became a part of Pakistan; second in 1984 when several NGOs working in the social sector introduced culture specific to NGOs. The final and the third wave came after the 2000s with the telecommunication revolution and the opening of the Lowari Tunnel which connected Chitral with the rest of the country. All these brought changes in the local culture.

The transformation, though largely benefited the region, has created a generation gap- elders revive traditions which come in clash with the aspirations of the youths. A local educated man expressed:

“We have only accepted material modernity and its requisite like education. Our social attitudes are as backward as they were before. Wearing pants and using smartphones cannot make one modern.”
(ispaserefzaheritawramadernbetisus, ispazahanhatyboseeda tan.
Palunanjeekuyajm mobile o suramadaran ben no bui).”

Increased education, exposure to globalism and mass social mobilization of the society has created awareness and craze for modern lifestyles. The youths dream

high but lack the means to materialize them due to a lack of opportunities and ascendant traditions. The minds of youth, though released from old clutches, find little space to celebrate freedom. The frustration of the youths could be understood through their love songs (*ghazls*) which reflect their despair, suicidal or death drives, urges to die in love and complaints about the cruel heart of their beloved technically against the traditions. For instance, a very famous young love song writer says:

“Kya ielaja ma xanubateenumasumtarawaybotakleefaasum”

(At any cost I should be met with the part of my life, my beloved, as I am in extreme pain)

In another love song (*ghazal*) he says:

“Thy di albat ta pazahardinkibuhutlakhysheer”

(Perhaps there is a stone at your chest instead of a heart)

Another youngman says:

“hardichameranrakukapituran?”

(Who believes when I say that my heart is in pain?)

Yet another young love song writer says:

“Umeed lash betiyuzughunburuibaghai”

(Hope went away slowly like melting ice)

Likewise, another says:

“Ta ghekarkyafaidabuikiprani ma kafana?”

“What benefit it would bring if you come when I am put to shroud or *kafan*”?

It is important to mention that unlike contemporary love songs (*gazals*) of the youths, the old folk songs (*kalum*) and classic love songs (*paranughazals*) consisted of admiration of beauty, the sophistication of the beloved and the ecstatic conditions which love create for the lovers. The poetry that deals with personal experiences, trauma, depression and psychological breakdown articulated through a new kind of rhythm and mode of expression is known as confessional poetry (Gupta & Sharma, 2014) or ‘the poetry of suffering’ (Rosenthal, 1985, p. 130). The unconscious impulses of depression, loneliness and frustration lead to the creation of confessional poetry (Gupta & Sharma, 2014) which could be understood through the psychoanalysis of such poetries.

Through the psychoanalysis of the contemporary youths’ love songs (*ghazals*) in Chitrali language, it could be argued that these reflect the impulses of their

despair, depression, frustration and suicidal ideation. The love songs, though associate the sufferings of the youths with the cruel heart of the beloved (girls), yet from the social interpretation of the poems, it is evident that it is not the beloved but rather the cultural values which do not approve the aspirations of the youths thwarting them.

All the love songs (*ghazals*) so far are written by men for women as culturally writing poems (*ghazals*) is tabooed for women in Chitral. Sociology of language contends that who speaks what language to whom (Fishman, 1965) and the people's speaking pattern is related to the power structure of the society (Sanauddin, 2015). Patriarchal values mean only men can express their emotions and aspirations through love songs to women in Chitral. In this regard, women have no channel to express their repressed feelings making them more vulnerable to committing suicide.

The rapid social change indicates that the old norms under exposure to modernism are proven to be insufficient in regulating the emerging aspirations of the youths. A suicide survivor said:

"It is said that good boys and girls do not fall in love, but I did and everyone falls in his teens. However, I was unable to express my feelings and the anguish prompted me to attempt suicide."

In simple words, modernity has entered a hybrid form as is found in adjacent district Ghizer (Dinar & Sher, 2015). The modern minds of the youths in Chitral find conservative traditions and patriarchal values suffocating. Moreover, the isolated district provides too few resources to the youths who are crazy for modern facilities. The culture where individuals breathe (Hjelmeland, 2010) is suffocating the youths by resisting their aspirations. The result is a high level of frustration for the youths making them prone to commit suicide.

In Durkheim's terms, the Chitrali culture is failing in providing sufficient integration-regulation to the youths due to drastic social change (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]). Idolizing material success has created a gap between means and desires. Anomie-egoism is witnessed and the increasing trend of youth suicide is the manifestation of this anomie-egoism.

Conclusions

The traditional culture of Chitral was largely developed and preserved in isolation and remained aloof from the rest of the country due to the geographical isolation of Chitral. The culture used to provide socio-cultural identity and security to the natives by binding them into a cohesive whole for centuries. However, this security started to vanish after the region suddenly witnessed drastic social change

facilitated by the telecommunication revolution, education and investment in the social sector. This disturbed the traditional worldview which resulted in anomie. Since young people are the agents of this change; therefore, their aspirations come in clash with the dominant traditions. A hostile environment is created for those youths who deviate from the traditional ethos. The situation is more severe for young women as socio-cultural taboos restrict their choices. The craze for a modern lifestyle and the social pressure to excel in academia and the job market add to the frustrations of the youth. The result is suffocated breathing ground for the youths creating a social current of suicide. Sympathetic response of the community towards the victims, portraying them as the oppressed, condemning the potential perpetrators, surrendering to the demands of suicide survivors and, of course, the cultural unacceptability of homicide is creating a situation where anger internalized by the youths is expressed in the form of suicides. The phenomenon is well explainable by Durkheim's theory of anomie which argues that increased suicide is the inability of traditional cultures in integrating and accommodating the aspirations of individuals. The pattern of youth suicide in *Chitral* is similar to that of *Gilgit-Baltistan* due to shared cultural heritage.

Recommendations

- First, instead of pressurizing the youths to excel in education and the job market, they should be instilled with a 'beatific vision' of life.
- The youths need to be reintegrated by engaging in healthy activities like sports. The dead mountains and the killer river could be made areas for adventures by training the youths in hiking, swimming and promoting tourism.
- Psychiatrists should be appointed in major areas and the youths should be encouraged to share their distresses.
- The NGOs currently working on women's rights and suicide prevention should focus on skill development, economic empowerment of women, and promoting entrepreneurship skills among the youths.
- Further studies should be conducted on the environmental, geographical, medical and psychological factors contributing to increasing trends of suicides among youth in the northern regions of Pakistan in general and Chitral in particular.

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