

Sociodemographic Study of Iraqi Suicide (2022–2023): Methods and Causes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the causes and methods of suicide that were reported in Iraq in 2022 and 2023. In 2022, 511 cases were reported, and in 2023, 352 cases. In both years, hanging was the most popular method, followed by burning and using a firearm; drug overdose and drowning were less frequent. In terms of the causes, psychological issues were the most common in 2022, while family issues took the lead in 2023, with social and economic issues being mentioned less frequently. The results demonstrate that suicide is still a significant public health issue that is impacted by both social and personal factors. The most popular techniques are hanging and burning, and the primary causes are psychological and familial problems. These findings highlight the critical need for all-encompassing preventative measures, such as family counseling, mental health services, public awareness campaigns, and restrictions on access to deadly weapons.

1. INTRODUCTION

Suicide is a complicated problem with many facets. Numerous researchers have examined suicide risk factors (1).

One significant public health issue that has not significantly decreased in recent decades is suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STBs) (2).

Numerous risk factors for suicide and suicidal behavior have been found in studies. Psychiatric conditions like depression have been shown to increase suicidal behavior. In addition to mental health issues, the risk of suicide and suicide attempts has been linked to a number of other factors, including gender, low educational attainment, childhood adversities, disadvantaged socio-religious affiliations, poverty and financial hardship, and unemployment. (3) Suicide claims the lives of many more men than women. The male-to-female ratio is highest in wealthier nations and ranges from 4 to 1 in Europe and the Americas to 1.5 to 1 in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Pacific region. Suicide deaths might go unnoticed or be incorrectly categorized as an accident or another cause of death. Because suicide is sensitive and still taboo, it is occasionally not recognized or reported. (4)

1.1. List of suicide Methods

1. Suffocation: Suffocation is a suicide technique in which breathing or oxygen intake is restricted, leading to asphyxia and ultimately hypoxia.

2. One popular suicide technique is hanging: A ligature, such as a rope or cord fastened to an anchor point, is used for hanging. The other end of the ligature is used to create a noose that is wrapped around the neck (5).

3. Drowning: The act of purposefully immersing oneself in water or another liquid to stop breathing is known as suicide by drowning (6).

4. Poisoning: When drugs like painkillers or recreational drugs are used, suicide by poisoning, also known as self-poisoning, is typically categorized as a drug overdose. Self-poisoning with pesticides is the most popular technique in some counters (7).

5. Pesticide: Suicide attempts involving pesticide have an overall fatality rate of roughly 10–20%; the likelihood of death rises if the perpetrator is also intoxicated at the time (8).

6. Drug overdose: This occurs when a person takes more medication than is safe (9).

7. Carbon monoxide: Inhaling excessive amounts of carbon monoxide (CO) can cause a specific kind of poisoning⁽¹⁰⁾.

8. Other means of killing people include shooting, jumping, slitting and stabbing, starvation and dehydration, fire, and other means⁽¹¹⁾.

1.2. The study's objective

The primary goal of this research is to examine the prevalent practices and root causes of suicide in 2022–2023, in order to identify trends and contributing elements that could aid in the creation of preventative measures.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this descriptive cross-sectional study was to look into the methods and causes of suicide cases in 2022–2023. Information was gathered from the Ministry of Health's National Advisor's office. Suicide methods and underlying causes were the variables examined in this study, which included recorded suicide cases from 2022–2023. Suicide techniques were divided into a number of categories, such as hanging, poisoning, shooting, drug overdose, and other techniques. Psychological issues, family issues, social issues, economic issues, and health-related conditions were the main categories into which the causes of suicide were also divided. The frequency of each category was determined after the data were entered into statistical tables. To determine the most prevalent causes and methods of suicide in the population under study, the results were displayed as absolute numbers.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Causes and methods of suicide in 2022

A) In 2022, 511 suicide cases were reported. The most popular method of suicide was hanging (268 cases, 52.4%), which was followed by burning (115 cases, 22.5%). Both drug overdose and firearm use were deemed to be high (85 cases, 16.6%), with drug overdose accounting for 4 cases (0.7%) and drowning accounting for 9 cases (1.79%).

B) In terms of suicide causes, family issues accounted for 101 cases (19.77%) and psychological issues for 120 cases (23%). Ten cases (1.96%) reported social problems, six cases (1.7%) reported economic problems, and twenty cases (3.9%) reported health-related conditions. Overall, the results show that the most common means of suicide are hanging and burning, whereas psychological and familial the main reason.

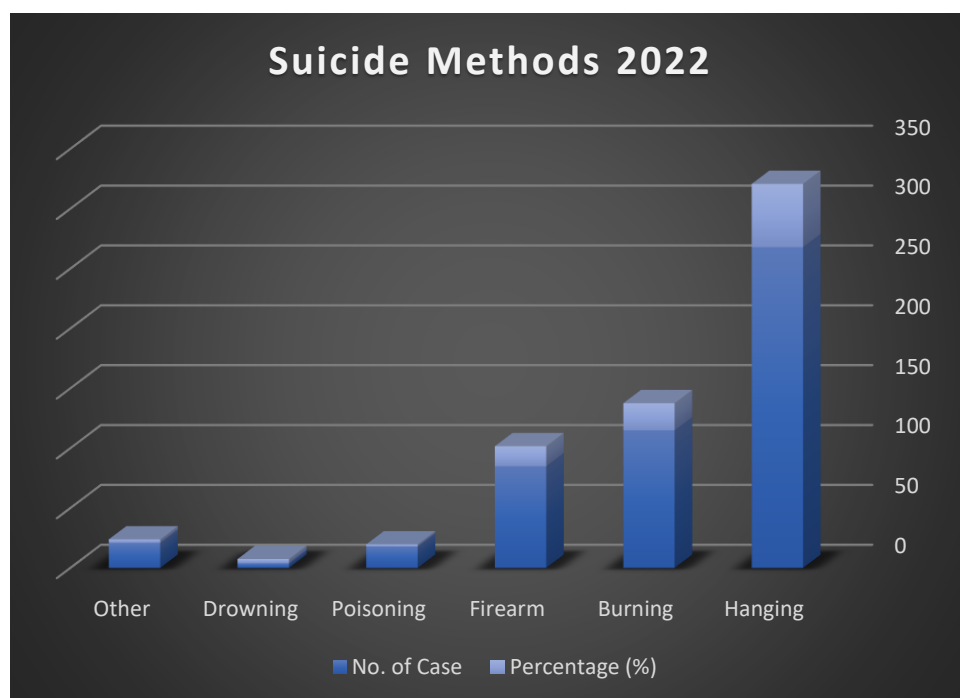


Figure (1): Suicide methods 2022

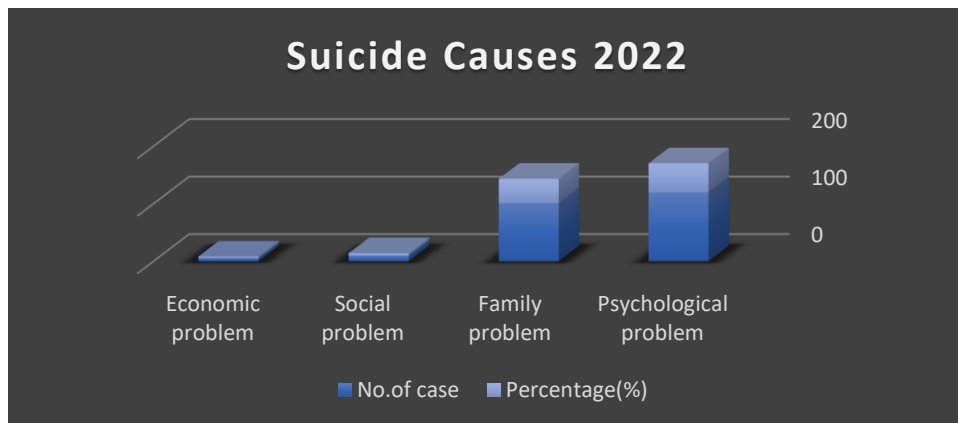


Figure (2): Suicide Causes 2022

3.2. Causes and methods of suicide in 2023

A) A total of 352 cases of suicide were examined. Suicide by hanging was the most common method (158 cases, 44.89%), followed by drug burning (80 cases, 22.73%), firearm use (61 cases, 17.33%), and other routes (53 cases, 15.06%).

B) Family issues were the most frequently reported reason for suicide (160 cases, 45.45%). Then came social issues (40 cases, 11.36%), psychological issues (150 cases, 42.61%), and economic issues (2 cases, 0.57%).

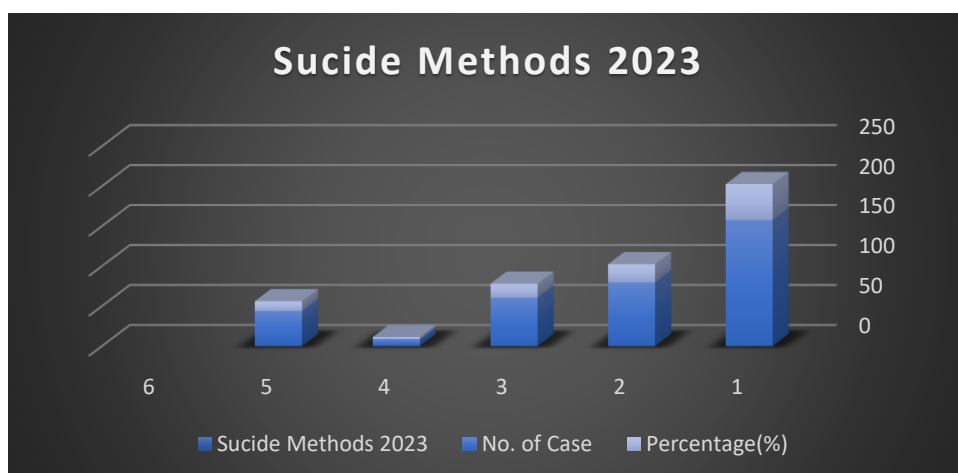


Figure (3): Suicide methods 2023

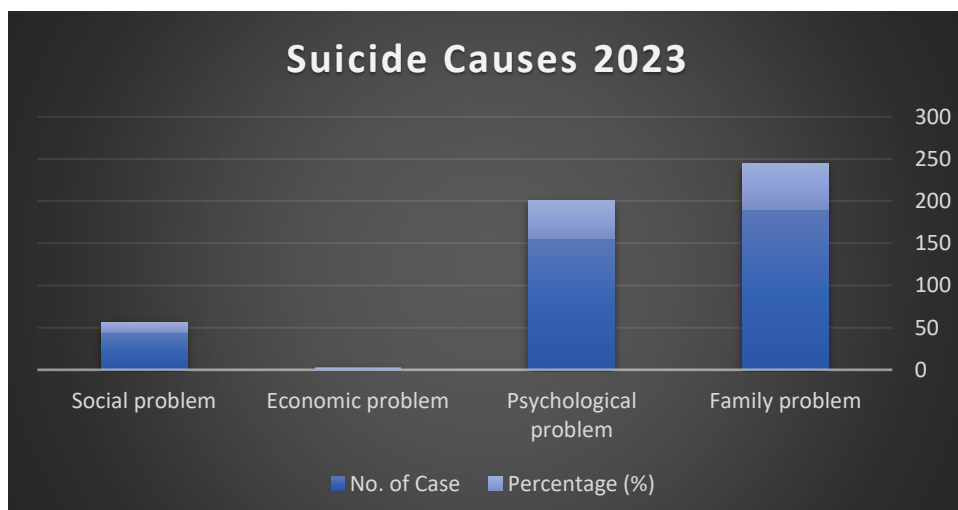


Figure (4): Suicide Causes 2023

4. DISCUSSION

Talk about an overview of suicide causes and methods in 2022 and 2023 is given in this study. The findings show notable differences in the underlying causes and preferred suicide methods between the two years. Although the percentage dropped from 78.1% in 2022 to 44.9% in 2023, hanging continued to be the most popular technique in both years. This decrease could indicate a growing trend towards alternative approaches or better awareness and prevention tactics aimed at this approach. Due to its violent and painful nature, burning was evident in both years (33.5% in 2022 and 22.7% in 2023), suggesting that it continues to be a serious public health concern. Suicides involving firearms were comparatively high in both years (16.6% in 2022 and 17.3% in 2023), which might be a result of more weapons being accessible or available. Furthermore, the variety of suicide behaviors is highlighted by methods like drug overdose and drowning in 2022 (3.8% combined) and other routes in 2023 (15.1%), indicating that preventive measures shouldn't be restricted to just one method. There is a noticeable change when the causes are taken into account. The most common cause in 2022 was psychological issues (35%), which were followed by family issues (29%). But in 2023, family issues took the lead (45.5%), marginally overtaking psychological problems (42.6%).

This shift emphasizes how interpersonal and familial conflicts are becoming more significant in suicide risk, which may be a reflection of larger social and cultural dynamics. Despite being less frequent, social and economic factors were consistently significant contributors, suggesting that prevention strategies should not ignore them. All things considered, these results highlight how suicide methods and causes change over time, most likely due to social, cultural, and economic factors ⁽¹²⁾. Multifaceted prevention programs are desperately needed, as evidenced by the prevalence of hanging and burning as methods and the significant role that family and psychological issues play as causes. Better mental health services, family counselling, community support networks, more stringent gun control laws, and awareness-raising initiatives are a few examples of such interventions.

5. CONCLUSION

The current study shows that suicide is still a major public health concern, with notable differences in causes and methods between 2022 and 2023. The most common methods were hanging and burning, but firearms also played a significant role in many cases. In terms of causes, family and psychological issues were the most prevalent, with a notable rise in family-related problems in 2023. These results imply that preventing suicide necessitates a thorough and interdisciplinary strategy that covers family support, social awareness, mental health treatment, and limiting access to deadly weapons. The burden of suicide may be lessened in the future by bolstering psychological services, encouraging family counselling, and putting community-based interventions into practice.

6. Recommendations

A comprehensive strategy is needed to prevent suicide by:

- Enhancing early identification of psychological disorders and mental health services.
- To lessen interpersonal conflicts, family and community support should be strengthened.
- Educating the public on the warning signs and risk factors for suicide.
- Limiting the availability of deadly tools like guns and combustible materials.
- Promoting ongoing data collection and additional research to inform preventative measures.

7. Acknowledgment

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