

An Exploratory Study in the Portuguese Population on Writing a Suicide Note: Correlates in the Suicide Spectrum and Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

Suicide notes are an important warning sign for suicidal behaviors. The aim of this exploratory research is (a) to contribute to understanding the place of suicide notes in the spectrum of suicidal behaviors in Portugal, and (b) to analyze the content remembered by individuals regarding a suicide note. Two complementary studies were carried out. In the first, a quantitative investigation, the statistical relationship of writing a suicide note: To the occurrence of lifetime suicide attempts, to lifetime self-harming behaviors, and to suicidal ideation in the two weeks prior to the assessment was evaluated. In the second study, a qualitative investigation, the content recalled by individuals regarding a suicide note was analyzed.

In the quantitative study, 841 adults aged between 18 and 65 years, and 1,012 young adults participated. In the qualitative study, 18 young adults participated. Findings of the quantitative study reveal that writing a suicide note significantly related to the lifetime presence of a suicide attempt and to self-harming behaviors and to suicidal ideation in the two weeks prior to the assessment. Findings of the qualitative study suggest that individuals who have written suicide notes exhibit a significant self-oriented focus, yet they also demonstrate a strong sense of concern for the survivors.

Keywords: consensus qualitative analysis; content analysis; suicidal behaviors; writing a suicide note

(Received: 30 June 2023; revised: 30 October 2023; accepted: 09 January 2024)