

Comprehensive study on understanding, preventing and responding to suicide and self-injury among high-risk youth with delinquent behaviour

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Summary:

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is a significant public health concern, and is a common behavior exhibited particularly by adolescents. Previous research has suggested the presence of inaccurate beliefs about suicide and NSSI, and these myths can lead to negative consequences like stigmatization and a lack of support for those who engage in it. An accurate understanding of the prevalence of myths and misconceptions in relation to NSSI is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies for suicide prevention programs. The purpose of this study is to investigate the prevalence of myths and misconceptions about NSSI among the Japanese public, and the relationship between demographic factors, personal experiences, and beliefs in such myths. The survey was conducted in December 2023. A total of 2,000 Japanese adults, with equal numbers of men and women nationwide, were enrolled in the study through an online research company. The participants were asked to complete a self-reported web-based questionnaire that assessed their beliefs and opinions about self-injury myths. The percentage of endorsement for each myth was then calculated, followed by logistic regression analysis to determine the association between sociodemographic factors, personal experiences, and beliefs in these myths. Results showed that many participants held misconceptions about self-injury, such as the belief that it is a form of attempted suicide, and that it is more common among young women. Female participants were also more likely to endorse such misconceptions. People with experience as human-service professionals were more likely to view self-injury as an attention-seeking behavior. With a few exceptions, those who reported more confidence in their ability to appropriately cope with self-injury were significantly more likely to endorse these myths. These paradoxical results suggest that support based on a one-sided understanding may be counterproductive. Furthermore, the results also suggest that having experience as an interpersonal support worker does not necessarily lead to the elimination of misconceptions about self-injury. This study highlights the importance of debunking these myths and improving the public's understanding of NSSI to prevent suicide.