

The Role of Peer Counselors as First Aid in The Decline Of Suicide In Central Java

Intan Hayyinul Ilma *, Anggun Karomah

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Intan Hayyinul Ilma

Abstract. Suicide is an act of destroying or hurting oneself with the indication of ending life. In Indonesia, Central Java province reported 350 suicide cases in 2023, with an increasing trend over the past 5 years. Suicide incidents should be a cause for concern and can be treated more seriously. Factors in which suicide occurs are largely dominated by the individual's unhealthy mental health condition. This research aims to describe the role of peer counselors in the process of psychological assistance for individuals who have suicidal thoughts. The method used in this research involves a literature study, beginning with the collection of relevant data, followed by an analysis of this data to identify patterns and draw conclusions regarding the role of peer counselors. The research results show that the role of peer counselors is very necessary as a form of first aid, especially with the ability to listen actively to individuals who are having suicidal thoughts. The presence of a peer counselor becomes a bridge to improve or reduce someone's suicidal behavior based on the comfort and convenience provided. This is also a supporting factor in the success of peer counselors in providing first aid to individuals who are suspected of committing suicide. A platform where everyone can become a peer counselor is one solution to help individuals who need help. Future researchers are encouraged to develop training programs for peer counselors and explore the long-term impact of peer counseling on reducing suicide rates.

Key words: peer counselors, suicide, platform

INTRODUCTION

The issue of suicide in Indonesia has become a significant concern over the past five years. In a country that values collectivism, the suicide rate was alarmingly high at around 3.4% in 2020. According to Databoks.co.id, Central Java has the highest number of suicide cases, with 356 incidents reported since 2023. This phenomenon is not fully representative, considering that suicide cases are often an iceberg phenomenon, with much remaining unknown. Approximately 79% of suicide cases involve young adults aged 15-29 years (Kesuma et al., 2021).

According to Saadah, et. al (2023) the occurrence of suicide in individuals is predominantly due to mental disorders and other risky behaviors. Painful experiences faced by individuals are the most significant factors leading to mental disorders. Many processes experienced by young adults cannot be easily avoided. Acceptance and strength are essential in an individual's life, serving as the primary means of coping with life's pressures. According to Amiroh, et. Al (2024) suicidal behavior is based on ideas that emerge as images, thoughts, and voices encouraging individuals to take such actions. According to Syarifah & Rahamah (2021) the causes of suicidal tendencies are mild to severe depression experienced by individuals. Several factors contributing to suicidal intentions or behaviors include a lack of concern for mental health issues faced by the individuals or those around them.

Sensitivity and awareness in addressing suicidal behavior are imperative, both for oneself and those around. First aid measures for suicidal intentions and actions include caring for minor mental conditions, listening to stories, and consulting professional helpers. This aligns with Yuliasari's (2020) opinion that training provided to peer counselors can help resolve issues faced by individuals at risk for mental health problems. The concern and ability of peer counselors to approach individuals with a therapeutic relationship are expected to be solutions for mental health management and reducing suicide rates in Central Java. Mental health conditions leading to suicide, such as depression, can be addressed through first aid measures aimed at raising awareness.

Introducing peer counselors to the general public can be achieved through social media platforms or electronic media promotions. According to Wawanguam et al. (2022), social media is the quickest way to disseminate information to the public. Despite the challenges and negative aspects, regular and structured use of social media can be leveraged to spread informative content, including education and information on lowering suicide rates.

First aid for individuals with suicidal tendencies through social media platforms can begin with promoting mental health and related issues and providing contact information for helpers, including peer counselors and professional counselors from a specific organization. The involved organization plays a primary role in spreading information to the public and introducing peer counselors, thereby disseminating information through social media. Research by Sibyan et al. (2022) indicates that peer counselors influence self-control to reduce suicidal behavior, especially among teenagers. Another study by Saputra et al. (2020) on the function of peer counselors found that they respond to individuals with certain mental disorders, including those with suicidal tendencies, who lack a place to share their feelings. Additionally, Sumendap et al. (2023) revealed that pastoral counseling by peer counselors effectively reduces suicidal tendencies. Utilizing information dissemination about peer counselors is seen as beneficial for providing first aid in situations of mental health uncertainty. Establishing therapeutic communication is expected to reduce individuals' difficulties in handling negative emotions.

Based on the issues mentioned above, improving the quality of peer counselors and spreading information on first aid for suicidal behavior is necessary to reduce the suicide rate in Central Java. Literature reviews from previous studies suggest forming peer counselor communities and developing information dissemination on first aid for individuals with suicidal tendencies. Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct further research on the process of spreading information about peer counselor first aid for suicidal behavior.

This literature study is necessary to comprehensively understand the existing research and identify gaps in the current knowledge. By synthesizing findings from various studies, we can develop more effective strategies for training and utilizing peer counselors in suicide prevention efforts. Moreover, this study aims to highlight the importance of a structured approach in disseminating information through social media, ensuring that the outreach is both impactful and far-reaching. The findings will provide a solid foundation for future empirical research and practical applications in mental health interventions.

METHODS

The method used is a literature review, where previous studies are collected and analyzed to draw conclusions. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), literature research can be defined as writing that combines articles, books, journals, or other documents to explain a research topic from a theoretical perspective. Previous research examining online counseling services as a first aid measure to reduce suicidal behavior is reviewed in journals from the last five years, using sources such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest. The selection of previous studies takes into account the volume of research over the past ten years on counseling services provided by peer counselors in handling suicide cases.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Peer Counselor

Peer counselors have been shown to significantly influence self-control and reduce suicidal intentions among teenagers. Research by Sibyan et al. (2022) indicates that peer counseling is effective in helping adolescents manage their emotions and decrease the likelihood of suicidal behavior. Peer counselors play a crucial role in providing support and intervention for individuals at risk of suicidal behavior. Their involvement is vital across various aspects, contributing significantly to mental health and suicide prevention efforts. According to Fitria (2023) Peer counselors offer a safe space for individuals to express their feelings and thoughts without judgment. Their ability to listen empathetically helps individuals feel understood and less isolated in their struggles. By acknowledging and validating the emotions of people in distress, peer counselors help reduce feelings of isolation and increase feelings of belonging and acceptance.

Building trust is very important in peer counseling. A therapeutic relationship built on trust and mutual respect allows individuals to be more open and honest about their problems. Peer counselors often maintain ongoing relationships with the people they support, providing ongoing encouragement and assistance, which is essential for long-term mental health improvement.

Peer Counselor First Aid for Suicidal Behavior

Peer counselors are often the first point of contact in crisis situations. They can provide

immediate support and stabilization, helping to defuse situations that might lead to self-harm or suicide. According Padad & Jhanuar (2023) peer counselor trained to identify warning signs of suicidal behavior, peer counselors can intervene early, potentially preventing an escalation of the crisis. Peer counselors act as intermediaries, helping individuals overcome barriers to seeking professional help, such as fear of stigma or lack of awareness about where to get help. Empowering individuals with the knowledge and confidence to seek help, peer counselors facilitate access to more specialized and intensive support when needed.

Peer counselors help create supportive communities where individuals feel connected and cared for. This sense of community can reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are significant risk factors for suicidal behavior. They facilitate the formation of peer support groups where individuals can share experiences, provide support to each other, and learn coping strategies from each other. According to Angelina, et. al (2022) They facilitate the formation of peer support groups where individuals can share experiences, provide support to each other, and learn coping strategies from each other. Peer counselors serve as role models, demonstrating healthy coping mechanisms and positive behaviors, inspiring their peers to adopt similar practices.

Social Media as a Medium for Reducing Suicide Rates Through Peer Counselor Promotion

Social media has become an integral part of many people's daily lives, offering a powerful platform for communication, information dissemination and community building. Given its broad reach and ability to connect individuals, social media presents a unique opportunity to increase mental health awareness and peer counseling services, thereby potentially reducing suicide rates.

Suicidal behavior, mental health resources, and the importance of seeking help. Educational content, such as infographics, videos and articles, can be distributed widely to increase awareness. Campaigns aimed at reducing the stigma around mental health problems and seeking help can be carried out effectively on social media platforms, thereby encouraging more people to seek support. Social media can be used to introduce and promote peer counselors, so that their services are known to a wider audience. Peer counselor profiles, success stories, and testimonials can be shared to build trust and credibility. Peer counselors can engage with communities through social media by holding live Q&A sessions, webinars, and interactive discussions about mental health, creating an approachable and supportive presence.

Social media platforms can offer direct support by providing contact information for crisis helplines, online counseling services, and peer counselors who can offer first aid in a mental health crisis. Links to mental health resources, such as websites, articles and helplines, can be easily shared, giving individuals access to the help they need. Social media can facilitate the formation of peer support groups where individuals can share experiences, provide support to each other, and learn coping strategies from each other. These groups can serve as safe spaces for individuals to discuss their struggles openly, reducing feelings of isolation and building a sense of community (Wiyono, 2023)

Organized campaigns focusing on mental health awareness, suicide prevention and promotion of peer counseling can be launched on social media platforms. These campaigns can include hashtags, challenges, and collaborative efforts with influencers to maximize reach. Observing mental health awareness over days and weeks on social media can highlight the importance of mental health and provide targeted information and support during this period. According to Tampubolon (2022) Social media analytics can be used to track engagement with mental health content, identify which posts audiences resonate with most, and adjust strategies to maximize impact. Monitoring trends and discussions on social media can help identify emerging mental health issues and areas that may require additional support.

This research introduces a novel approach by integrating the roles of peer counselors with the extensive reach of social media, offering a comprehensive strategy to address mental health issues and suicidal behavior. Unlike previous studies that have focused on traditional methods, this study highlights the effective combination of peer counseling and digital platforms to create a supportive network, provide immediate intervention, and enhance mental health awareness. This innovative approach not only helps in early identification and management of suicidal behaviors but also leverages social media to reduce stigma and increase accessibility to support. Based on these findings, it is recommended that mental health organizations develop and implement training programs for peer counselors that include strategies for using social media effectively. Social media platforms should collaborate with mental

health organizations to promote peer counselors and mental health awareness. Policymakers are encouraged to support the integration of peer counseling services within community health programs and utilize social media for mental health outreach. Researchers should further investigate the impact of combining peer counseling with social media interventions to optimize mental health support. These recommendations target mental health organizations, social media platforms, policymakers, and researchers, aiming to enhance suicide prevention efforts and support systems.

CONCLUSION

Peer counselors are invaluable in the fields of mental health and suicide prevention. Their role includes providing immediate psychological support, building therapeutic relationships based on trust, increasing mental health awareness, encouraging seeking professional help, and leveraging online platforms for wider reach. By cultivating supportive communities and empowering individuals with the tools and confidence to seek help, peer counselors contribute significantly to reducing suicidal behavior and improving overall mental health. Their presence and actions not only assist those in crisis but also contribute to creating a more supportive and understanding society. Their presence and actions not only assist those in crisis but also contribute to creating a more supportive and understanding society.

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