Reviewer’s report

Title: High School Suicide in South Africa: Teachers’ knowledge, views and training needs

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Reviewer: Noh Amit

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There are a few aspects to be improved and clarified in this manuscript before it could be accepted for publication. These are the improvement of the background section, the clarification on the methodology section (e.g., the procedure and the analysis process etc.), and the improvement of results writing and to strengthen the conclusion section. All of these aspects are important in conducting and reporting a qualitative study. Therefore, in my view the manuscript requires Major Compulsory Revisions.

The comments in this review are addressed according to sections, paragraph and line numbers in the manuscript. Please refer to the given line numbers for the respective comment. The following are the areas where the manuscript could be improved:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Title
1. The term ‘high school suicide’ does not reflect to the study (as the study is about the teachers’ knowledge about suicide among high school students etc.). The use of this term ‘high school suicide’ may reflect to study of suicide behavior at school setting.

Abstract
2. 48-50 (line number) — Results (in the abstract): Some of the results reported in abstract do not clearly reflect to the second and third objectives of the current study.

Manuscript Sections

Background
Paragraph 1
3. 70-71 (line number) — It will be meaningful to highlight the prevalence of suicide among school students in the background section.

Paragraph 3
4. The attention given to studies of personal and environmental factors related to suicide ideation and attempt does not give a strong background for this study. In fact there is a lack of discussion on study of suicide related knowledge among teachers or skills related to suicide prevention needed for teachers. This information could be set as the strong background information of the current study (instead of studies of personal and environmental factors related to suicide).

5. The prevalence is not clearly stated. It is important to state directly the prevalence of suicide ideation as reported by the cited study.

Paragraph 4

6. This is a good paragraph.

Paragraph 5

7. At this stage it is important also to highlight what type of knowledge about suicide and skills related to suicide prevention which is important for teachers as proposed by literature in the background/review.

8. Besides that, there is a lack of methodological remark on the importance of qualitative study of suicide ideation and attempts compared to utilization of quantitative study. Addressing the methodological remark could highlight the importance of adopting qualitative method in this study.

Methods

Paragraph 1

9. The distribution of demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender and locality) of the each focus group is not discussed. This is potential to give a view about the study population and guide the generalization of the research findings.

Paragraph 2

10. Guideline questions or interview guide are not attached in the submitted manuscript for review.

Paragraph 3

11. Guideline to reach the appropriate sample size in qualitative study should be mentioned in the method section.

12. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the school selection are not discussed. This has the potential to inform readers that the sampling bias can be minimized or eradicated.

13. Does the explanatory statement and any relevant information sheet were given to the focus group participants during the recruitment?

Paragraph 4

14. The place where the focus groups were conducted was not clearly explained. This does not give readers the context of the interview setting and how the venues may affect the interaction and participants’ responses during the focus group.
Paragraph 5
15. 174—Was there any short note taken during the focus groups? This is not clearly mention in the procedure.
16. 178—The decision of reaching saturation is not referenced to literature. Readers would like to know does the saturation merely depend on the number of the focus groups conducted or the saturation is reached when no new themes emerged during the focus group and data analysis.

Paragraph 6
17. 189—Giving information sheet on suicide and its treatment to participants might be helpful, however, this was not stated in this study. Despite the use of counseling for crisis management, giving information sheet to the participants can be beneficial too.

Paragraph 7
18. 200—Discuss clearly how audit trial was done in the present study.
19. 203—There is no evidence of cross validation during transcription process (as it was not stated). For instance, the focus group verbatim should be given back to the participants to ensure the accuracy of the verbatim. This may facilitate validity of the transcription process.

Paragraph 8
20. 206—There is no evidence of cross validation of coding and recoding process (as it was not stated). For instance, reading and rereading process (including coding and recoding process) were not highlighted. In addition, the transcript and coded themes should be examined by other relevant individuals during the coding process.
21. There was also no clear practice of how data which might be different from the emerged themes was treated during the analysis and in reporting the results.
22. 211—Inductive approach should be sufficiently explained in the methodology.
23. 215—The abbreviation RATS was first time mentioned in the manuscript and should be written in full terminology. It is also important to reference RATS to the literature.

Results
Paragraph 1
24. 217 (line number) —No clear roadmap was provided for the result section.
25. Themes and any subthemes could be presented in form of table. This will give a clear idea about the themes and subthemes derived from the focus group.
26. 219—The use of “all the teachers” may imply that 100% of the teachers reported this or agree on this. This is also a very strong claim and this claim should be clearly supported by more quotations from the focus groups. One potential fact is that there could be a divergent of data where other participants may have different view or opinion about the same issue. Therefore, the use of “majority of the teachers” could be appropriate.
27. Demographic characteristics (e.g., participant no X, gender, and focus group number) of the participants could be provided for each quotation as they are the sources of the quotations.

28. Throughout the result section, any different evidence from quotation should be presented to readers in order for readers to evaluate the claim.

Paragraph 3
29. Where is the qualitative evidence or quotation given to support the claim in this paragraph?

Paragraph 4
30. Only one single quotation given, therefore no comparison can be made toward the claim and evidence.

Paragraph 6
31. The quotation(s) should be presented in a specific format i.e., not to be included in the paragraph but after the paragraph. This is important for readers to differentiate the description of the themes and the evidence where the themes are derived. It is also important to examine the divergence of the qualitative data. This is applicable throughout the result section.

Discussion
Paragraph 1
32. Which research the authors are referring to? This statement is not referenced.

Paragraph 2
33. Asking teachers/participants whether they would “blame” themselves for suicide related incidence among their students may involve self-serving bias and the way the teachers/participants respond to it may also involve social desirability. Therefore, how this question was worded or framed is important.

34. Discuss on how the relationship between teachers and students could be enhanced here.

Paragraph 3
35. The relationship between drug and suicide was only mentioned once in the result section and there was no further exploration on the relationship between drug and suicide in the present study. However, it was highlighted in the discussion section.

36. Who perceive this?

Paragraph 4
37. Discuss what form of training needed for the teachers here.

38. Do the difficult clinical problems in the cited references cover suicide?

Paragraph 5
39. Write full stop.
40. No clear limitations highlighted for this study. Please do discuss the limitations.

Conclusion

Paragraph 1

41. Authors may suggest that the future research may apply mixed method design in examining teachers’ knowledge about suicide etc. Discuss how the utilization of mixed method design could enhance the study on teachers’ knowledge about suicide.

Paragraph 2

42. Although authors highlighted group behavior/dynamic during focus group in discussion section, however, readers may find out that the group dynamic during the focus group discussion was not highlighted in the result section.

43. This is an overgeneralized statement about the behavior during the focus group and the authors linked it to the effectiveness of suicide prevention program focusing on teachers without a strong basis. This statement should be removed from the manuscript.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.