

Cultures of suicide

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A UQ researcher has surveyed and interviewed students across three continents to understand the social representations, values, beliefs, attitudes and meanings associated with youth suicide.

PhD graduate Dr Erminia Colucci surveyed almost 700 students aged 18-24 in Italy, India and Australia, revealing several differences and similarities across cultures in regards to meanings and social representations of suicide.

“First, there were differences in prevalence with more Italian and Australian youths indicating they think about suicide, compared to Indians,” she said.

“In contrast, Indians reported more suicide attempts, followed by Australians and then Italians.

For Indians, financial problems were among the most important reasons for attempting suicide while mental illness, [depression](#) or anxiety were more important for Australians and [loneliness](#) or interpersonal problems were so for Italians.

“Australia generally sees suicide as a result of depression or some other [mental health issues](#), but I don't believe that [mental illness](#) is all there is to it - what at the end leads to suicide may be depression, but the depression might come out of another issue,” she said.

“My interest is for those ‘other’ issues that have generated the feelings

that life is not worth living and suicide is the only way out.

“It's also about what makes life worth living, what makes people hold on in difficult times, and spirituality above all.”

Already Dr Colucci's research has gained interest from social groups both locally and abroad, which understand that suicide prevention needs to be addressed within a specific socio-cultural setting.

Working with the University of Melbourne, she recently developed a set of suicide first-aid guidelines for community groups in Japan, India and the Philippines, and is currently looking for sponsors to prepare a unique art exhibition showcasing Australian artist's experiences with suicide.

Dr Colucci said that the exhibition is about using art as a medium to “understand” suicide, give voice to the community and finding reasons to live.

“My approach is about listening, to understand [suicide](#) from their point of view by using art for research and for advocacy and prevention.”

Provided by University of Queensland

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