

A New Journal in Suicidology: “Southeast Asian Journal of Suicide Prevention”

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It is a great excitement to write the opening editorial of a suicidology journal from a suicide-dense region with low and middle-income country (LMIC) background. Suicide is a global public health problem with regional variations (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). Every year, more than 700 000 people died by suicide in the world (WHO, 2021). Among them, 77% were died in LMICs. Although 77% of suicides are happening in LMICs, one bibliometric analysis found that about 15% of research output was noted in LMICs between 1991 and 2022. The suicide research output in South East Asia Region (SEAR) was only 3.4% (Arafat et al., 2024a). Another study assessed the editors of the top three journals in suicidology and found only 3.5% of editors are from LMICs where only one editor (female editor from India) was in SEAR (Arafat et al., 2024b). In other words, there is a significant gap in research output and representation in suicidology, particularly evident in the SEAR. The disparity in research focus and underrepresentation of LMIC editors underscore the urgent need for a more inclusive and regionally targeted approach to address the complex challenges posed by suicide in these regions.

The WHO SEAR has eleven LMICs namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. The region has about 2 billion populations (WHO, 2024; Vijayakumar et al., 2020). Among the countries, Buddhism is the major religion in four countries (Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand), Christianity in one country (Timor-Leste), Hinduism in two countries (India and Nepal), Islam in three countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Maldives), and the rest one is atheist (Democratic People's Republic of Korea). The age-standardized suicide rate was 10.2 per 100 000 populations in 2019 in SEAR which was 9 per 100 000 populations in the world. This region caters about 26% of the global population and 201,654 suicides recorded from this region in 2019 (comprising about 29% of global suicides) (WHO, 2021; Vijayakumar et al., 2020; Arafat et al., 2020). Additionally, the male-female ratio of suicide is lower in this region (WHO, 2021) and the prevalence of the psychiatric disorder is lower than the Western countries (Arafat, Menon et al., 2022; Arafat, Saleem et al., 2022).

The region is facing multiple challenges in research due to inadequate resources, inadequate research capacity in psychiatry and due to huge burden of mental illnesses with limited human resources, the priority goes to delivery of mental healthcare than investment in mental health research. There are only three PubMed-indexed journals in Psychiatry in the region; all of the journals are published from India (Arafat, Ali et al., 2022). There are additional challenges in suicide research like lack of quality data, lack of comprehensive registry of suicide data, under reporting of suicidal behavior, and high stigma related to suicide (Vijayakumar et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 had a significant impact on academic publications that increased the number of research submissions. It also changed the impact factor of journals drastically. The turnover was quick during the pandemic and gradually it became slower due to the exhaustion of the system (high submissions, inadequate number of reviewers, long waiting list of ahead of publications). Most journals are looking for high quality papers, leaving the papers with a low budget and small sample size study. Some journals even do not consider single-setting study anymore due to the shifting of priority to multicentric research.

As suicidal behavior is influenced by multiple factors, articles on suicidology have been published in journals of various fields. Several journals publish papers specifically on suicidal behavior like *Archives of Suicide Research*, *Crisis*, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *Journal of Suicide Prevention*, and *Suicidology Online*. There are some other journals with a major scope of papers on suicidal behavior like *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying*,

Death Studies, and *Mortality*. No journal from South East Asia specifically focuses on suicide-related research. Having a focused regional journal often encourages the regional researchers to publish for regional readers. It also helps the regional readers to understand the regional dynamics and research developments. Additionally, it may give inputs to the regional policymakers to address regional health issues.

Based on this background, the "South East Asian Journal of Suicide Prevention" is founded, which aimed to include emerging/ early career researchers focusing but not limited to the SEAR and committed to addressing the critical issue of suicide, self-harm, suicidal behaviour, and suicide prevention. It has been published with Queeva publishing (qvjournal.com). This journal serves as a valuable platform for researchers, mental health professionals, and advocates to share their knowledge, insights, and innovative strategies aimed at reducing suicide rates in this specific geographic area. It provides a dedicated space for studies, and may facilitate in exploring various facets of suicide prevention, including risk factors, intervention methods, and the impact of cultural and regional factors on suicidal behavior. It will promote an interdisciplinary approach to suicide prevention, recognizing that effective solutions require collaboration between mental health experts, social scientists, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Given the unique cultural and social dynamics in Southeast Asia, the journal emphasizes culturally sensitive approaches to suicide prevention, acknowledging that interventions must be tailored to the specific needs of this region. The journal will not only disseminate research findings but also advocate for greater awareness of mental health issues and the importance of suicide prevention in South East Asia. It will include articles on public awareness campaigns and community initiatives. While its primary focus is on South East Asia, the journal recognizes the global relevance of suicide prevention efforts and will too feature comparative studies and discussions on how lessons learned in the region can be applied elsewhere and vice versa.

The journal will be an invaluable resource for anyone interested in suicide prevention, mental health, or the unique challenges faced in the South East Asian context. It is expected to play a vital role in advancing knowledge, fostering collaboration, and ultimately working toward a future with reduced suicide rates in the region.

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