

## Suicidality treatment by applying Cognitive Behavior Therapy: A Case Report

Zaqla Bano<sup>1</sup>, Hajrah Aslam<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

We are presenting a case study of 19 years old male, who came with the complains of sadness, helplessness, poor concentration, suicidal thoughts, intention and attempt. Patient was assessed through Coping Competence Questionnaire and Suicidality Scale for Adolescents and treated with cognitive behavior therapy. Result supported the efficacy of cognitive behavior therapy as an effective psychological approach for the treatment of learned helplessness, suicidal ideation, intention and suicidal attempt. The cognitive behavior therapy is found to be an effective tool in management patients having suicide tendency.

**Key words:** Suicidal Ideation, Suicide Intention, Suicidal Attempt, suicidality scale, Cognitive Behavior Therapy

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### INTRODUCTION

The process of suicide includes development and progression of suicidality which occurs within the individual due to interaction of surroundings. Thoughts of taking one's own life may grow toward suicide attempts with increased lethality, intention and finish with death by suicide.<sup>1</sup> Suicide has different components as elevated amounts of pain resistance, point by point suicide plans, confident approach towards suicide, difficult and stimulating encounters and other extreme depressive side effects were decidedly connected with improved probability of the commitment in both suicide ideation and suicide attempt.<sup>2</sup> A case study showed the psychosocial stressors in all probability formed a mind-boggling impact and rendered the understanding related to helplessness of patient<sup>3</sup> which leads to suicide. Further, family problems and social conditions were mediating factors of suicide attempt.<sup>4</sup> Joiner et al<sup>5</sup> has identified that the depressive side effects and hopelessness can just upgrade the

threat for having suicide ideation. In particular, few examinations have specifically investigated the connection of suicide planning, suicide design, and determination with suicidality.

Cognitive behavior therapy is an integrative treatment approach that is helpful in treating the cognitive, behavioral and physiological issues.<sup>6</sup> According to Beck<sup>7</sup> a particular response to disquieting thinking may cause various problems and the role of therapist is to identify the disorganized thoughts and convert them into new ways of positive thinking patterns. There are three negative forms of cognitive thinking such as helplessness and depression in various individuals with dejection. The individuals have self-destructive views related to world and future outcome, negative self-outlines and negative thought pattern that individual learns from different beliefs, experience and social values. These patterns utilized during analysis of new events that rise problem which called thought distortion.<sup>8</sup>

In cognitive behavior therapy various procedures used such as history, incorporate molding, displaying, psychological rebuilding, critical thinking, the improvement of individual adapting methodologies, dominance and feelings of restraint were comprising in CBT. The work expected to comprehend indicators of useful treatment result of CBT approaches.<sup>9</sup> We are presenting a case study of 19 years old male, who came with the complains of sadness, helplessness, poor concentration, suicidal thoughts, intention and attempt and managed successfully with behavior therapy.

### CASE REPORT

A 19 years old male brought by his family for assessment of suicide ideation, intentions and previous suicide attempts. According to the patient he belongs to disputed family. His family members' severely involved in arguments, conflicts, and continuously skirmishes to each other. His father lived abroad and his father absence is a real cause of disturbance to him

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because he felt alone. His family members involved in disputes. He was irritated and disappointed because of family environment. He was also less interested in education but felt disturbance about his education. He also reported that two years ago he faced five deaths of close family members, especially his grandmother, within 2 to 3 months. After these terrified incidents he felt sadness, poor concentration and helplessness and he started thinking about suicide. The reason behind first attempt he reported was clashes with family and he want to escape from the environment. Then he committed suicide and jumped in front of train and people save him. Second time he swallows phenyl tablets. His family admitted him in hospital. After his second attempt of suicide his family consulted to psychologist for treatment.

**Table – I: Pre and Post test scores of the patient on Learned helplessness and Suicidality**

Pre Test LH	Post Test LH	Pre Suicidality	Post Suicidality
62	13	26	3

Table I indicates that patient has high level of learned helplessness and suicidality in pre assessment. After treatment learned helplessness and suicidality reduced significantly.

Two scales were administered. For learned helplessness “Coping Competence Questionnaire” was utilized in Urdu. Coping Competence Questionnaire<sup>10</sup> and adolescent’s Suicidal scale for Adolescent<sup>11</sup> was implied. Suicide Scale is 25 items scale with 5 point Likert scale.

Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) was applied for suicidality<sup>12</sup> After assessment goals of treatment were determined and step-by-step instructions were provided to patient. Intervention plan was divided into three phases.

**a) Phase-I “HOW THOUGHTS AFFECT MOOD?”.** Cognitive behavior therapy, a system developed by Aaron Beck, stresses the importance of belief system and thinking in determine the behavior and feelings. By using this method<sup>7</sup> this phase is composed of four sessions. Introduction and rapport was established and worked on catharsis with adolescent by explaining the therapy sessions. Confidentiality was assured and rules were decided for sessions such as regularity in session per week, arrive at a time and try to be honest while sharing personal feelings and experience. In this session explanation about therapy was given and how they affect us, how they make us depressed and helpless what are impacts on others when you emotionally disturbed? During session it was concluded that when we feel tired a cycle began such as: think, feel and act with the help of work sheet.

Therapist get the patient worked on thoughts errors, and types of negative and positive thoughts. Explained how negative thoughts made depressed and was these negative thoughts were thought distortions? He identified some negative thoughts during session. For motivation and insight of positive a list of positive thoughts was provided and asked him to choose. This activity was given to complete at the end of day during whole

week until next session along mood thermometer. In third session weekly feedback was taken and mood thermometer was discussed. Progressive muscle relaxation training was given to release their mental stress and pressure with yogic deep breathing exercise. After identifying distorted thoughts, ABC methods like activating event, belief system consequence were discussed and ABC work sheet about thought distortions was utilized.

#### **b) Phase-II: “HOW ACTIVITIES AFFECT MOOD?” (5-7 sessions)**

Next sessions were about how our activities effect mood. There are two types of activities; pleasant activities and explained that pleasurable activities were not any special activity. Exercise was given about organizing and planning the time to overcome the hurdles while enjoying the agreeable activities. Utilizing pleasant activity list for explaining pleasure can gain from simple activities like favorite music, food, visit etc.

During session signed contract was taken and work agenda, objectives of the session and homework assignment for the week was made. Further He was given reward to himself such as: Go outside, call the friends and shopping.

In next session patient reported during readings books, watching favorite movies and saying prayer he expects 100% and have enjoyed it feel comfortable during performing these activities. Further he reported that he enjoyed study 70 % but he felt boring.

Further worked out on goal settings for short term (6 months) Long term goals and lifetime goals, more emphases were given on simple yet acquirable goals. Homework assignment for these sessions included mood thermometer, weekly activity schedule and working sheet for personal goals development.

#### **Phase-III: HOW RELATIONSHIPS AFFECT MOOD? (Session-8-10)**

Further sessions were taken on relationships that effect mood. Patient were given briefing about healthy relationships and explained objective (external) mood, behavior, action and subjective (internal) world such as anger, liking etc. and its importance.

Patient were briefed about importance of social support by using a diagram and also explained how to create and maintain good and healthy relationships. Detailed work was done on expression of feeling and thoughts, also discussion about better communication skill with active listening exercise. At the end of sessions feedback was taken verbally about the journey of intervention with adolescents. After treatment recommendations were given and possible effect of relapse was discussed.

#### **Post Treatment Phase**

At this phase all the patient was reassessed with same instruments Coping Competence Questionnaire (Schroder & Ollis, 2012) and Indigenous suicidality scale.<sup>13</sup>

### **DISCUSSION**

In current case study, the cognitive behavior therapy was used to treat for learned helplessness and suicidality among

adolescents. Result showed significant difference in learned helplessness. Previous indication also supported our result that learned helplessness is a significant predictor of depression and emotional distress.<sup>14</sup> Further Cognitive behavior therapy is very helpful to unlearn the learned helplessness while altering the distorted thoughts. CBT is used to improve the healthy lifestyle with balanced thinking patterns around you.<sup>15</sup> A study in Karachi explained the underlying fact of suicide is 30% to 70% sorrow, depression and emotional disturbance. Individual who commit suicide generally find the way for releasing emotional pain.<sup>16</sup>

A research<sup>17</sup> provides evidence of the efficacy of cognitive behavior therapy on suicide, depression and self-destructive thoughts in population age 18 years. The study examined that CBT reduce the biased thoughts and conducts with the help of relaxation and exposure technique. Main focus of the intervention was to measure and treat the self-harm or self-destructive thoughts because suicidal thoughts ultimately lead to successful attempt of suicide. One study supported current study result who examined fifteen different studies and reports that cognitive behavior therapy can be effective to alter the thoughts and distorted behavior related to suicide attempt.<sup>18,19</sup> Regarding effectiveness of cognitive behavior therapy to reducing learned helplessness and suicidality. The goal of CBT is to determine and change thinking pattern that is root cause of individual problems and it works with different domains such as cognition, emotions and activities. An experimental study analyzed the cognitive behavior therapy reduces the symptoms of depression and learned helplessness and claimed that learned helplessness is a significant predictor of depression and emotional distress.<sup>20</sup>

Cognitive behavior therapy is considered helpful to unlearn the learned helplessness while altering the distorted thoughts. This therapy gives the new way to receive the world and reconsidered the problematic thoughts. Further, CBT is used to improve the healthy lifestyle with balanced thinking patterns around of individuals.<sup>21</sup>

A reconsidered study<sup>16</sup> also provides evidence of the efficacy of cognitive behavior therapy on suicide, depression and self-destructive thoughts in population age 18 years. The study examined that CBT reduce the biased thoughts and conducts with the help of relaxation and exposure technique. Study's main focused was self-harm and self-destructive thoughts for therapeutic intervention because suicidal thoughts with severity can lead to completion of suicide.

In summary, this study provides additional evidence in decreasing suicide thinking by using Aaron Beck model of CBT that includes cognitive, behavioral and physiological reactions of individuals and it is the best method to eliminate the symptoms of helplessness, emotional disturbance and also eliminate the danger of increased suicide thoughts and attempts. Study explored that feeling of helplessness was a rudimentary reason of suicide and through CBT worked on the helplessness and suicidal thoughts and related feelings and behavior. Current evidence based study provide the confirmation of the significance and utilization of therapy for reducing suicidality thoughts, feelings and behavior in the patient.

## CONCLUSION

The cognitive behavior therapy is found to be an effective tool in management patients having suicide tendency.

## AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

**Zaqia Bano:** Conceived idea, Literature Search, Manuscript Writing, Manuscript final reading and approval

**Hajrah Aslam:** Literature Search, Manuscript Writing, Data collection

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