Abstract

This paper is a review of the literature on young gay men and their experiences with suicide in an attempt to identify possible relationships between suicidality in young men who have sex with men (YMSM) and external factors such as bullying, familial abuse, and substance use. This review poses the question, “what are the factors associated with suicidality in the young gay male population?” The stigma that still lingers for being homosexual predisposes this population to a sense of alienation. This, compounded with additional stressors such as low socioeconomic status, substance use and or physical abuse, may have associations with higher risk for suicide ideation and suicide attempts. While identifying contributing factors is a priority, this review will also observe any protective factors presented in the literature, such as school attendance and strong familial and social support. The databases CINAHL and PubMed were searched for articles that contained information on young gay males, their suicidality, and factors that were associated with their suicidality. A total of 14 articles were incorporated into this review. The factors associated with suicidality that were recurring among the studies included not being enrolled in school, a young age of sexual debut, drug and alcohol use/abuse, homelessness, bullying and victimization, fear of violence in the community, and parental abuse. Factors that protected one from suicidality included positive sexual minority LGBT stereotypes and representations, positive family acceptance, school and peer support, high self-esteem, and efficient coping mechanisms.

Keywords: YMSM, suicide