

Teenage suicide

Science



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To what extent social factors especially academic pressure cause Korean teenagers to commit suicide? Submitted by: Song da hin Extended Essay

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Abstract 'Committing suicide' is now Korea's second leading cause of death for ages from 15 to 24 (NIMH, no date published). From my research, I hope this will alert parents, teachers, friends and even strangers to think about solutions before we get more people suffering from suicidal attempts. The reasons for teenagers committing suicide vary from bullying, depression, diseases and sickness, taking much drink and drugs, media, family problems including economy and the last and most important, society.

First, it can be about bullying. Teenagers usually tend to reject or isolate a classmate who is different from them; internally or externally. Second, depression which is very much related to the first cause but it does not always come from bullying but also from lots of circumstances.

This can be about family relationship, friendship, or any other problem that s/he is facing on. Third, diseases and sicknesses can be another reason. When a teenager is in adolescent period, s/he turns emotions quickly and easily gets stressed with a very minimal reason. Fourth, taking much drugs and alcohol can be another cause. These affect badly on humans' bodies especially teenagers' because their bodies are not fully developed. Drugs are the most dangerous thing for teenagers. Fifth, media especially the internet can be another cause.

Today's media especially the commercials on beauty products also has an enormous sociological and psychological affect on adolescent girls. Amongst all, the most important reason why Korean teenagers commit suicide is because of the society problems that Korean students are facing. Especially for Korean teenagers, they always have to remember the relationship with friends, respect adults, the pressure they get from parents to get better score, thinking about universities and relationship with teachers. The rate of teenagers trying to commit suicide is 60% for male students and 44% for female students and the reason why Korean reporters do not publish news on teenagers committing suicide is because it may cause teenagers to think about committing suicide in a more detailed way. (Ahn, S. B. 2010)

Introduction The reason why people commit suicide can be stated from a report.

The report says ' to be born is not our choice but to die can be decided. ' (MamasHealth, 2010) People especially teenagers are in adolescence, a stressful developmental period with lots of changes: changes in body, thoughts and feelings. Therefore their limitation of not coping well with pain and confusion they face, they feel stressed and pressured about it and they think committing suicide is a way to end their sufferings. Also, teenagers considering themselves as victims who cannot get help from others; parents, family and teachers, they tend to decide on their own without consulting with anyone who is even close to them. Through this, we can state that the characteristics of teenagers; limit in solving problems and making errors in their behaviors, people have to be aware of this fact that teenagers feel easy to commit suicide than adults. This means that they do not solve problems

logically but they try to solve the problems in a trouble-free and immediate ways that they think it is better. On a webpage offering statistics of cause on teenage death; South Korea's second leading cause of death for ages from 15 to 24 is from committing suicide.

(NIMH, no date published) The reason why I chose this topic is because my country, South Korea is suffering so much from teenagers committing suicide and the reasons are very broad. In addition to this, Korea is facing this problem of not even knowing much why teenagers commit suicide because some teenagers commit suicide without leaving any notes. However the usual reason would be 'pressure from getting low grades' that they get from exams and test papers. (Ahn, S. B. , 2010) Since I was once a student in Korean school and could understand the feeling they have towards the crazy situation forcing them to get good grades and force them to go better university than others. I decided to take this as my topic and since the rate of committing suicide increases every year, we now consider it as a sickness and to show this in a quick summary of last two years' results, it shows the increase on the number of teenagers committing suicide, increased from 137 to 202 teenagers; 47% increased.

(Ahn, S. B. , 2010) Why do Korean teenagers try to commit suicide? That has been a question for us not recently but has been great news since few years ago. After IMF (time stage when Korea could not import or export to other countries because of not accepting the unreasonable offer from America) has happened, lots of Korean workers lost their jobs and a lot of business came up with such unsuccessful outcome. Therefore when IMF ended, only developed and stable companies could survive which the entire 'job lost
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Koreans' wanted to get in. The problem has started from this time. Since lots of people were striving to get the jobs in those few survived companies; the companies (which are very famous now) had variety of choices to hire the employees.

They first looked at their profiles especially on highest education, the certifications they earned and other things that can prove their abilities and intelligence. Therefore even though the economy came back, 'job competition' has stayed between Koreans. Therefore Korean students have to study really hard to get into very successful and recognized universities in Korea so that they can prove how smart they are to companies when getting a job. The stress Korean teenagers have towards studying and getting better grades causes the most possible reason why Korean teenagers try to commit suicide. The causes of teenagers committing suicide vary from unsatisfied grades (34%) to divorce of parents (13%), and depression (11%), relationship with boyfriend / girlfriend (6%), sickness (3%) and bullying (2%). To conduct a deep study on the reasons why Korean teenagers commit suicide, I came up with the question; to what extent social factors especially academic pressure cause Korean teenagers to commit suicide? Causes contributing Korean teenagers commit suicide Suicidal attempt from ages 10-12 happens by accidents or shock from parents' punishments. From ages 12-14, they commit suicide but cannot succeed because they cannot plan the suicidal attempt clearly and carefully which may lead to success of suicidal attempt.

Older than 14 years old, they feel they are quite independent from parents and start to look back on what they have done and grieve over what they have done wrong. This can be related to the research conducted by <https://assignbuster.com/teenage-suicide/>

Baumeister. He concluded suicide as 'escape of oneself.' Baumeister discussed this into detailed process; first, the gap between the reality and expectation. When a person expects more than the reality can hold it, there occurs a crack between them. Second, people usually blame this kind of gap to themselves. Third, people then think any problem that occurs is from them and this makes them to evaluate themselves negative.

Fourth, emotional problem occurs and the fifth think about ways to solve this kind of emotional problem which leads to 'cognitive deconstruction.'

Cognitive deconstruction happens when emotional function lessen, people denies putting any meaning onto anything and understanding the world as meaningless creature. This state of mind limits a person's control of emotion which finally leads a person to commit suicide. (Baumeister, R. F. 1990) The most common reasons occur when it comes to teenage suicidal attempts can be categorized into parts; first, it can be about bullying. Teenagers usually tend to reject or isolate a classmate who is different from them; internally and externally.

They usually show 'dislike' by showing actions and calling bad names to show how much they dislike this person. What usually happens in Korea is when this group of people start to hate one person then if this group is powerful in controlling friends, the classmates would follow the group and whoever gets close to this person will get bullied as well. Therefore even though some students want to help this person, they do not want to because they are afraid to get bullied by this group as well. This person then will feel totally alone and friendless. Relating to this, having high self-esteem means a person trusts himself and thinks he is important in the world. This means <https://assignbuster.com/teenage-suicide/>

this person has pride, courage and is very flexible in adapting sudden situation which cannot be shown from teenagers who have low self-esteem. Teenagers who have low self-esteem always think negative about the results of their effort.

They do not expect much from the society and cannot adapt with danger. Self esteem affects 15. 7% of teenagers committing suicide. (Kim, E. J. 2002). Second, depression can be another reason.

This is very much related to the first cause but it does not always come from bullying but also from lots of circumstances. This can be about family relationship, friendship, or any other problem that s/he is facing on. For example, Esaki Reona who earned Nobel physics prize wrote an essay about difference between Japan and America. When a student achieves 80% of the goal then in America the parents tell them " Very good! " but in Japan they say " Okay. " When a student achieves 60% then in America they say " Good! " where Japanese say " Needs improvement. " This simple example clearly shows that Japanese have negative thoughts. Even though this example talks about Japan and America, it is quite similar with Korean situation.

When teenagers feel that they cannot solve the problem in any ways or think they do not have any abilities to solve the problems then these are the paths that they usually take when committing suicide. The first one is to escape from difficult situation that they are facing: When they get pressure by their parents or teachers, they feel insecure that they do not have much choice to solve the problem, gets into dilemma. This can be happened through

external factors but can also be from internal conflict that they are facing.

(Baumeister, R. F. 1990), (Shin, M. S.

1993). Third, diseases and sicknesses can be another reason. When a teenager is in adolescent period, s/he turns emotions quickly and easily gets stressed with a very minimal reason. That's why when a teenager gets sick or has hard time from suffering some disease then s/he would feel like he does not have to strive hard to live because s/he may think it is useless to live since s/he is sick and may feel like he is suffering so much. On the other hands, they would feel heartbreaking that s/he cannot play with friends like others at his age do. Since serious sickness drags patients to not to go out from the hospital area for years, s/he would feel despondent, may think they cannot take it anymore. Fourth, taking much drugs and alcohol can be another cause.

These affect badly on humans' bodies especially teenagers' because their bodies are not fully developed. When teenagers drink much alcohol then they may remember about the bad memories that they had kept for long and may lead to some attempts to commit suicide from uncontrollable emotions. Drugs are the most dangerous thing for teenagers. For example, when a person does marijuana and cocaine, they feel really depressed. There was one incidence when two 14 years old girls jumped off from the roof top of the school. They did not leave any note about why they jumped off or anything and the police men have reported that they just committed suicide from being really miserable by sniffing bond (glue which is toxic) 2 hours ago from that attempt. The overtaking of sniffing bond made them to lose control.

Their parents of these two girls said that their kids were absolutely ordinary in the house; they even had pleasing friend relationships. This explained that there are no other possible reasons for these girls wanted to commit suicide so over-sniffing bond would be the most suitable reason why girls wanted to commit suicide. (Ryu, S. N. 2009) Fifth, media especially the internet can be another cause. Today's media especially the commercials on beauty products also has an enormous sociological and psychological affect on adolescent girls. Superficialities in commercials affect teenage girls to feel like they are not beautiful unless they use this commercialized beauty products that they are selling.

The problem happens when they wear the make-up in school. These girls would make other girls (who do not put make-up) to feel like a loser because they do not have that product with them. (Kim, H. W. , 2010) Another problem with media is anonymous users' attack. Nowadays there are many people who have laptops or desktops. As the number of teenagers buying laptops increase, there are many websites that are targeted for teenagers.

What they usually do on the web is either they communicate with friends or read some articles. However since people cannot recognize who the actual users are with very limited information online. For instance, there was this case when the girl, Eunji Lee revealed herself in a Korean TV program show to show that she lost 40kg and as part of the program, she took a picture with a guy from a very famous Korean band called super junior. However after that day, many people accused her for showing off to the guy. The fans of the guy even called her ' slut' and cursed her to commit suicide as unreasonable comments did not stop, in May 5, 2010, she committed suicide <https://assignbuster.com/teenage-suicide/>

and the reasons was clear; the anonymous netizens (a word that is combined between 'citizen' and 'network' representing internet users). (Yoon, H. J.

2010) On the other hand, there is a news (Lee, S. B. 010) which is about Korean network 'clubs on-line' and teenagers who want to commit suicide can share their ideas about how to die easily, when to die, who to tell and all those helping notes for people who want to commit suicide. For instance the website talks about easy way to commit suicide are through taking potassium cyanide, pesticide, and gasoline. There is also a schedule to meet so that they can commit suicide all together at the same time. The teenagers who are emotionally unstable may look for this kind of websites for fun and may take this easily and think they want to join the group. Amongst all, the most important reason why Korean teenagers commit suicide is because of the society problems that Korean students are facing.

Last year, I was given an assignment from my English teacher to write an essay about why do Korean students go abroad to study English. From a lot of research that I have conducted, I have realized that the companies that are in Korea are selling its products abroad nowadays and this illustrates the importance of English that should be learned so that they can communicate well with the buyers. Some brand names such as Samsung, Posco, Kia motors, Hyundai and LG are from Korea and even medium sized companies desire to hire some Koreans who are able to speak English and also some other languages if they can. Therefore before they concern about the candidates' personalities or abilities, they first judge them with their certifications (qualifications) they have earned or some documents to support their intelligence, make easier for Korean companies to hire the

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workers faster and more efficient. The companies therefore tend to fire the long-stayed employees who seem dull in understanding when doing work. Instead of them, the companies prefer to hire some young Korean university graduates who seem more intelligent than those senior workers and the companies think that the younger people can work a lot better than those old workers in terms of; coming up with new ideas, fast in working, having more knowledge. The senior workers; who are parents of the Korean teenagers right now, tend to push their kids to study really hard so that they won't face the same problems that the parents are facing.

However, this gives teenagers more stress. When they get low score not as what parents have expected them to get, teenagers get more pressure about studying and getting good grades to satisfy parents' want. This is a great problem in Korea nowadays because teenagers do not have any dreams about future and tend to follow the future that parents have chosen for them; doctor, judge, university professor, civil servants or diplomat. This then would lead teenagers to feel like they don't have any choice; they would just feel like 'parents' satisfaction machine' towards parents because what they want is getting better scores. Especially for Korean teenagers, they always have to remember the relationship with friends, respect adults, the pressure they get from parents to get better score, thinking about universities and relationship with teachers. The schools suppose to give each student a way to know themselves better and make them realize what they are good at and help them understand the problems that they face. However with the characteristics of Korean society, students

get stress from school until they graduate high school and always have to be aware of their own friends who may beat their scores.

They also get stress from parents and teachers from stopping them doing anything they desire to. (Yang, S. Y. 2004). When teenagers get stress, they want to solve the problems by themselves and do not tell this kind of problems to parents or any people around them. This makes them to perceive 'easy to solve problems' as problems that are really difficult to solve. (Kim, S.

C. 2002). Also these problems cause them to not adapt the relationship with friends and may lead them to go out of the set of rules that parents have set (for example, not missing schools, not going out in the middle of class and etc. This leads teenagers to face family problems which may lead them to have problems when they grow as adults. (Kim H. S. , Kim, H.

R. , Park, S. K. 2006). Also teenagers who think they have really low grade make them to worry about their future and lead them to cut the connection between present and future. They feel depression and loneliness. This may lead them to think about committing suicide.

Therefore low grades make them to have low self-esteem and give them negative thoughts about the future. (Lee, K. J. 2003). When it comes to study, Korean parents are very strict and make their child to feel really exasperated and gloomy. If we would follow what American parents show positive comments to children then it will make children to feel more victorious. Currently, Korean teenagers may feel like they cannot do anything because it is hard for them to satisfy their parents.

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This will make them lose their confidence, feel like they are losers. This usually happens to families like parents expecting a lot from their kids and think it is the best way to encourage their kids by comparing them to other students who are better than them by saying “ My friend’s son always get over 90% of grade but what is wrong with you? which can dissatisfy the teenagers and make them feel depressed and helpless. To show that they have tried hard enough to reach the goal or revenge their parents through committing suicide, they choose to make suicidal attempts. They have this thought ‘ Get hurt from me dying. ’ This usually happens to teenagers having family or school problems. Punish himself about what they have done wrong; someone who has high set of goalsto accomplish or high aims, when they feel that they have not achieved it or have not tried hard enough to achieve it, they get depressed by self-destruction and low self-confidence. Just to punish them, they leave notes such as “ Please forgive me such a daughter like me” or “ Please blame me for everything.

” Since the teenagers in our country face a big problems dealing with universities exams, someone who especially have strict parents, someone who has low self-esteem, has been suffered from depression or any sickness can cause them to think about committing suicide. Our country’s teenagers have serious stress from the schools plus the external pressures on their grades. A society which is ‘ university centered’ like Korea make teenagers especially who have low grade to feel they are losers and may think that they cannot be successful in the future, they may just give up everything and lead them to have alcohol, drugs and leaving house without informing parents. If this gets worse then they may be confused with their self identity

which would lead them to commit suicide (Hwang, Y. S. 2003). The reason why the rate of teenage suicide increases is because the society expects a lot from teenagers to do better.

Someone who tries but cannot reach the goal that people have set for him/her then this teenager may feel that they cannot do anything and this may lead them to feel they are insecure and unstable. (Nam J. Y. 1998). Another reason why teenagers commit suicide is about family troubles; a serious problem that Korea is facing nowadays; the rate of divorce. Recently, it has been reported (Seoul news) that the rate of divorce is up to approximately 50%. Unlike some open-culture countries such as America or some European countries, Korea is a quite conservative country.

Accepting the fact that their family is broken would give some ideas that their parents do not love each other and would lead teenagers to think carefully where to move in the house which supposed to be the safest and protected area in the world. Another reason would be the relationship between the teenagers and their parents; this may cause the thought of committing suicide from parents pushing teenagers too much on something- not communicating each other would give some ideas to teenagers that they do not have anyone to lean on. Another reason would be economy in the family. Relate to the issue about Korean companies tend to hire more intelligent and highly educated people; it is also very common that parents are getting divorced. This would make teenagers to show a silent disobedience which would be leaving the house and look for job and live independently. When they leave the house, looking for the job, they are called as 'endangered teenager'; means to say that they have no place to

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go, no money to buy some food and clothes. The society does offer some centers such as 'restart center' and 'do dream zone' to teach them further education; more on practical stuff such as hairdressing and cooking.

However when the education is over, they have to leave the center. The reason why it is important to know this is that when they graduate the center with the title of 'endangered teenager,' not many companies accept these students as workers. Therefore teenagers who need money to support their family have to find easier and more attractive ways of earning money, offering their bodies. About 40,000 teenagers are in these centers recently and 40% of them do go their ways on this dangerous path. (Seoul Newspaper, 2010) This situation makes teenagers to be fuming and mad and become depressed, make them to consider about ending painful and dirty life; committing suicide. The stereotype that people have towards these teenagers makes teenagers harder to think about society in positive ways.

Conclusion Back to the research question stated; to what extent social factors especially academic pressure cause Korean teenagers to commit suicide? I think they affect on teenage suicidal attempts much especially the academic pressure they get from parents and schools.

Committing suicide comes from the unstable mind state and therefore many factors can lead teenagers to commit suicide. However any of these can cause teenagers to feel depressed and melancholy and lead them to commit suicide. From researching I found lots of information why teenagers want to commit suicide. These information were about; information about how students feel depressed and how they express it, how drugs and alcohol affects on teenagers to make them feel like they want to commit suicide, the <https://assignbuster.com/teenage-suicide/>

effect of bullying and how serious it is to make someone to commit suicide, how teachers, parents, friends and other people can help with these teenagers and how media effect on suicidal attempts.