

Impact of the “Suicidological Library” Series on the Advancement of Polish Suicidology

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Abstract

Since 2021, researchers affiliated with the Polish Association of Suicidology have initiated the publication of multi-author monographs as part of the “Suicidological Library” series. To date, three volumes have been released. This article aims to explore how these monographs have contributed to the field of suicidology. Each volume was produced under the scientific editorship of Prof. Brunon Hołyst and involved a diverse editorial board comprising leading Polish suicidologists as well as experts from the USA, Sweden, Germany, Austria, and Canada. While the “Suicidology” yearbook helped unify the suicidology research community and disseminate knowledge between 2005 and 2018, the “Suicidological Library” series has further strengthened this trend. It not only presents the findings of esteemed Polish suicidologists, but it also showcases the research of emerging scholars in this challenging field.

Keywords: suicide, suicide attempt, suicidal behavior, suicidology

Introduction

The Polish Association of Suicidology, established to promote knowledge on suicidology and to reduce suicide and suicide attempts, has been dedicated to research from its inception. Between 2005 and 2018, their efforts resulted in numerous publications that brought the scientific community together and spread valuable information on suicidology.

In 2020, the Association’s scientific community launched the “Suicidological Library,” a series of multi-author monographs. This initiative aligns with the Association’s Statute, which calls for “initiating and conducting research in the field of suicidology.”

Prof. Brunon Hołyst, PhD, the president of the Association, became the series' scientific editor. An editorial board of leading Polish suicidologists was established, including Agnieszka Gmitrowicz, Daria Biechowska, Andrzej Bałandynowicz, Adam Czabański, Antoni Florkowski, Brunon Hołyst, Józef Kocur, Marta Makara-Studzińska, Norbert Malec, Halszka Witkowska, and others. Additionally, renowned international suicidologists such as Nestor Kapusta (Austria), David Lester (USA), Armin Schmidtke (Germany), and Danuta Wasserman (Sweden) joined the editorial board.

The Polish Association of Suicidology funded all monographs in the “Suicidology Library” series. Between 2021 and 2023, three volumes were published, featuring dozens of scholarly works by both prominent Polish suicidologists and emerging researchers in the field.

Publications in the “Suicidological Library” Series, 2021–2023

In 2021, the first volume of the “Suicidological Library” series was published, titled “Suicide Prevention: Motivation of Suicidal Behavior.” In the foreword, scientific editor Prof. Brunon Hołyst writes, “[t]his new series aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on preventing suicidal intentions. Its purpose is to analyze motivation and promote new methods to prevent cases of voluntary death.” Hołyst also encouraged readers to share comments to further expand on the topics covered.

The first chapter, written by Maria Szyszkowska (2021), explores suicide from a philosophical perspective. In the second chapter, Brunon Hołyst (2021) presents a model for understanding the motivation behind suicidal behavior. Andrzej Bałandynowicz (2021), who authored the third chapter, discusses the phenomenon of pacifism. In the fourth chapter, Włodzimierz Adam Brodny (2021) examines the erosion of social ties as a risk factor for suicide, and identifies causes such as divorce, family violence, the rise in single-person households, emigration issues, and the impact of new media.

The second part of the volume features eight chapters, each addressing different aspects of suicidology. Norbert Malec (2021) discusses the conditions of imprisonment and the personal safety issues of convicts, highlighting the high incidence of suicide among prisoners. Adam Czabański (2021) explores the motivation and mechanisms behind spontaneous altruistic suicides on the battlefield, with examples from World War II, the Iraq War, and the war in Afghanistan. Chapter seven, authored by Maciej Kijowski (2021), provides detailed data on suicides among sailors on Polish naval vessels. Marta Dora (2021) examines the factors influencing suicide risk in non-heterosexual and transgender individuals, with a focus on risk factors and prevention strategies. In the ninth chapter, Marlena Stradowska (2021) analyzes the use of firearms in suicides. Next, Halszka Witkowska (2021) delves into suicide notes, treating them as a genre of expression and a cultural phenomenon. The penultimate chapter, written by Maria Grzegorzewska (2021), discusses the support that

teachers can provide to students at risk of suicide. Finally, Alexander Ferens (2021) outlines the concept of the position of a suicidologist within a local government institution and describes the role and responsibilities of such a position.

The second volume of the "Suicidological Library," titled "Suicide Prevention: Suicidal Behavior of the Elderly," was published in 2022. It comprises 11 chapters authored by researchers from various scientific centers across Poland. Professor Brunon Hołyst writes, "[o]ld age does not have to mean a voluntary relinquishment of life. While the circumstances of existence at this age often impede daily joy, the belief that life is sacred should deter us from making a tragic choice."

Adam A. Zych (2022) opens the volume with an exploration of attempted suicide, suicide in old age, and parasuicide. Next, Agnieszka Gmitrowicz (2022) examines silent suicide among people over 65. Norbert Malec (2022) follows with a discussion on police statistics regarding suicide attempts by the elderly in Poland. Daria Biechowska's contribution (2022) focuses on the prevalence and risk factors of suicide among the elderly between 2012 and 2021. In the fifth chapter, psychological hygiene and suicidal behavior among seniors are addressed by Andrzej Balandynowicz (2022).

Brunon Hołyst (2022) delves into the etiology of suicide among the elderly, highlighting the negative effects of loneliness and suggesting preventive measures to reduce the incidence of suicide among seniors. Joanna Kufel-Orłowska (2022) contributes insights into the prevention of suicide among the elderly in the seventh chapter. The eighth chapter, co-authored by Adam Czabański and Halszka Witkowska (Czabański & Witkowska, 2022), examines the characteristics of suicidal behavior in the elderly.

Julia Ciołek (2022) provides a review of the literature on the interplay of risk and protective factors in suicide prevention among older adults. Marlena Stradomska (2022) presents a case study on volunteer work with seniors from a suicidological perspective in the tenth chapter. Finally, Natalia Wojak (2022) discusses support and social activation for seniors in the context of suicide prevention.

The third volume of the "Suicidological Library," titled "Suicide Prevention: Suicidal Behavior in Children and Adolescents," is the most extensive in the series to date, featuring 22 chapters. It begins with a thought-provoking statement from Brunon Hołyst:

Our attitudes toward children and adolescents should be guided by both empathy and reason. We must place the world of their perceptions, views, problems, addictions, sufferings, and daily concerns at the forefront of our attention. A tolerant and understanding approach, particularly from parents, helps to strengthen the mental well-being of children and young people and protects them from making tragic decisions. When a child loses the meaning of life, it is crucial to offer them the hope of a positive future.

The first chapter of this volume focuses on the suicidal behavior of young children aged 7–12. Although this is not a widespread issue, the number of suicides among

children in this age group has been increasing each year, with a rising proportion of these tragedies involving girls (Czabański, 2022). In the second chapter, Norbert Malec (2023) examines suicidal behavior among children and adolescents from 2012 to 2022, drawing on police statistics. The third chapter, authored by Szmajda and Gmitrowicz (2023), presents research on risk factors for suicide attempts among adolescents receiving psychiatric treatment. Following this, Anna Gil (2023) discusses the impact of recent reforms in child and adolescent psychiatry on the rising number of suicide attempts among Polish adolescents. Marta Makara-Studzińska and Daria Biechowska (2023) explore the psychosocial determinants of suicidal behavior in their chapter. Next, Halszka Witkowska (2023) offers a comprehensive look at the etiology of suicidal behavior among children and adolescents from various perspectives.

The seventh chapter by Brunon Hołyst (2023) addresses the motivations behind suicidal behavior, stressing the influence of family dynamics, school environment, and peer interactions. In the eighth chapter, Sowińska, Kamińska, Kołodziej, and Szulczak (Sowińska et al., 2023) examine the youth suicide crisis in Poland in detail.

Andrzej Bałandynowicz (2023) explores the connections between negative parenting and suicidal behavior among children and adolescents in his chapter. Agnieszka Kalwa (2023) describes research on temperament and attachment styles in families of adolescents who have attempted suicide. Finally, Joanna Kufel-Orłowska (2023) discusses juvenile suicide prevention systems in Poland and compares them with those in selected countries worldwide.

The twelfth chapter explores the risk factors associated with self-harming behavior in adolescents (Araucz-Boruc, 2023). Joanna Podemska (2023) then examines preventive measures for children and adolescents in suicidal crises from the perspective of an educator and therapist. The following chapter, focused on suicide risk prevention among minors in postvention, is authored by Rudnik (2023). The fifteenth chapter addresses the significant issue of social media and its connection to self-harming behavior among adolescents (Zalewska, 2023).

The sixteenth chapter outlines the school support system for students following a suicide attempt, contributed by Kicińska and Palma (2023). The role of school psychologists in preventing suicide among children and adolescents is discussed in the seventeenth chapter by Kozłowski and Kozłowska (2023). Kazimiera Pierzchała (2023) describes the Catholic Church's role in preventing juvenile suicide in the eighteenth chapter. Chapter nineteen, by Kazimierz Kopczyński (2023), deals with the precautions needed when using pharmacotherapy to treat depression and somatic diseases. Marlena Stradowska (2023) discusses suicide prevention within the activities of a sociotherapy center for children and adolescents in chapter twenty. The twenty-first chapter presents a case study of child and adolescent suicide by Jabłoński (2023). Finally, the twenty-second chapter, by Sygit-Kowalkowska (2023), describes the role of a forensic psychologist in working with minor witnesses exhibiting suicidal behavior.

Among the 45 publications in these multi-author monographs, there is a blend of theoretical and practical work, contributed by both scholars and practitioners dedicated to reducing suicides and suicide attempts in Poland.

Impact of the “Suicidological Library” Series on the Advancement of Polish Suicidology

The three volumes of the “Suicidological Library” series encompass a total of 45 research papers authored by suicidologists from various generations. These works expose readers from diverse professions related to suicide and suicide prevention to a broad range of important topics. The research comes from scholars across different scientific communities who collaborate with The Polish Association of Suicidology. The contributors include psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, educators, lawyers, cultural scholars, and philosophers. Many of these authors have not only engaged in scholarly research, but have also made significant practical contributions to advancing suicide prevention efforts in Poland. Creating monographs on suicidology involves collaboration among suicidologists from across Poland. By bringing together both theoretical and practical experts, this effort facilitates a nationwide exchange of experience. Such academic collaboration enriches the field and significantly advances the field of suicidology.

Looking ahead, the Polish Association of Suicidology plans to develop more multi-author scientific monographs in the “Suicidological Library” series, including contributions from international scholars. These future publications aim to foster a deeper scientific understanding of suicidal behavior and support the development of programs designed to reduce suicides and suicide attempts.

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