Psycho-religious mechanism of suicide

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Definition

The psycho-religious mechanism of suicide is an information processing mechanism of how the mind perceives the idea of self-killing, with a focus on the factor of trust as well as mortality-related information from religious sources. It can be considered an expansion of the new Mindsponge-based suicidal ideation mechanism.

Background

Regarding the understanding of the psychology of suicide attackers, although many scholars agree that religiosity can significantly influence their thoughts and behaviors [1][2][3][4], past theories and approaches have still not been able to reach a major consensus due to the lack of a foundational dynamic framework. Meanwhile, major religions in the world are known to promote peace and generally condemn suicide. Studies on the relationship between religions and suicide found many unexplained inconsistencies [5][6][7], for there has been a lack of deep exploration into its psychological mechanism in terms of information processing. It is worth noting that past studies have shown religions have protective effects against suicidal attempts but not suicidal ideation.

Psycho-religious mechanism

The psycho-religious mechanism of suicide is developed based on the foundation of the suicidal ideation mechanism [8] using the Mindsponge information-processing framework [9][10]. The two basic conditions include information accessibility (sources for reception) and information filtering (through subjective cost-benefit judgments). In the psycho-religious mechanism, the factor of trust in religiosity is particularly focused. The main rationale and principles of the mechanism are briefly presented as follows.

Religious teachings are a major source of information on death and death's spiritual meanings in society. Reception of such information increases the probability of considerations about those aspects. In people with low social connectedness, the ratio of information reception from religious sources is higher; this is due to the differences in properties between generalized social trust and religious faith/belief. Religious people also have a higher level of reliance on religious leaders as a source for help-related information in situations of personal difficulties (which follows the same pattern of trusting as above). Thus, under the condition of low social connectedness, religiosity and reception from religious information sources can increase the probability of suicidal ideation. It is crucial to note that suicidal ideation is only the consideration on the option of suicide. As religious people highly trust religious leaders (and their interpretations of religious teachings), the leading figures have an important and effective role in preventing suicidal ideation from progressing into attempts.

In a hostile context, extremist groups can exploit the trusting pattern and death's value judgment in the psycho-religious mechanism to recruit suicide-bombers. Dangerously, these extremists may deliberately misinterpret religious teaching for effectively attaching values of violence to the action of suicide with a high level of acceptance, which not only increases the subjective benefit of suicide but also links it with violent actions (suicide attack). Applying the same principles in the psycho-religious mechanism, countermeasures should be mutual trust-building in a sustainably open multicultural living environment with careful management based on proper understanding and collaboration.

The psycho-religious mechanism of suicide first appeared and was discussed in the book titled "A Mindsponge-Based Investigation into the Psycho-Religious Mechanism Behind Suicide Attacks" [11]. Based

on the mechanism, the book's authors suggest practical collaborations between religious leaders and governments as well as international trust-building coordinated by an improved United Nations.

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Keywords

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