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Opinion

Protest Suicidality

Mohsen Rezaeian[1], Silvia Sara Canetto[2]

1- (Corresponding author) Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Health, Occupational Environment Research Center, Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences, Rafsanjan, Iran, E-mail: moeygmr2@yahoo.co.uk
2- Silvia Sara Canetto, Department of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA

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Self-burning is a highly-fatal method of suicide that is mostly used within the countries located across South East Asian and in Muslim-majority countries [1-4]. In these countries, it is young illiterate or minimally-educated, married women who typically carry out the act, most often using a flammable liquid such as kerosene. The case fatality rate of self-burning reaches up to seventy percent [5-7]. Women's self-burning is a way to protest against the systemic economic and social discrimination and abuse that women are subjected to, in these countries [8-11].

Most recently, including in a case-series study from Iraq, a new method of self-harming using intra-dermal injection of kerosene, has been reported [12]. Intra-dermal injection of kerosene produces inflammation, ulcer, necrosis, and fasciitis. Evidence suggests that this way of self-harming has been taken up mostly by young women [12-13].

As in the case of self-burning [8-11], intra-dermal injection of kerosene by women is a protest against the systemic economic and social discrimination and abuse that they suffer, as women, in their community. Not surprisingly most of the women who engaged in intra-dermal injection of kerosene had no history of anti-social behavior, alcohol, or other substance abuse or dependence [12].

For these reasons, we recommend calling women's self-burning and women's intra-dermal injection of kerosene behavior "protest suicidality." The protest nomenclature avoids psychologizing the act. It also facilitates recognizing the violations of human rights underlying the behavior, with implications for intervention and prevention [8-11].

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