Correlative Factors of Mental Health for Specific Populations

**General**
- Alcohol use to depression
- Of suicide attempts in past year
- 50% of males had experienced alcohol usage disorders
- 50% of females had experienced mood disorders (including depression)
- High alcohol consumption to suicide per capita
- Lack of treatment of mental health with suicide
- Mental illness with suicidal ideation
- Increased screen time (TV, computer games, etc.) to depression
- Deceased hours of sleep to depression
- Youth in counseling suffered from: Interpersonal relationships
- Education and career advancement
- Mental health problems
- Mobility rate and dropout rate correlated to depression
- Full Time Employees
- Long working hours with depressive symptoms
- Average 45.9 hours/week
- 49.5% of Korean workers work more than 48 hours/week
- Female correlates to depressive symptoms
- Precarious employment (non-permanent job) correlates with depressive symptoms
- Celebrities
- Sexism and standards on women with suicide
- Harassment (online) with suicide
- Celebrity suicides correlated to increased copycat suicides (Werther effect)
- High levels of scrutiny in public sphere
- Elderly
- Limited and restrictive social networks with depression and mental health
- Problem drinking with a lower quality of life

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent is South Korea experiencing a mental health crisis?
2. What factors contribute to a mental health crisis in South Korea?
3. What solution/policies have been proposed or implemented to address a mental health crisis?

### Extent

In Korea, suicide, denoted also as "intentional self-harm", was the number one cause of death for age groups 10-19, 20-29, and 30-39, the second highest cause of death for ages 40-49 and 50-59 and the fourth highest cause of death for ages 60-69. On the other hand, the death rate for these populations is lowest in age group 10-19 (4.7 people per capita) and progressively higher as the age group increases, the highest in 50-59 (10.8), followed by 60-69. For the whole population, suicide is the fourth highest cause of death for males and the sixth highest cause of death for females - the fifth leading cause of death overall. With this information in mind, suicide and suicidal ideation in Korea is a universal issue that severely affects a large portion of the population.

Apart from suicide, other mental disorders also affect the Korean population. To start, depression, according to one study, affects approximately 3.6% of the population. More problematically, only 2.2% of those with MDD visited a doctor for reasons relating to depression, although those with MDD were twice as likely to visit a doctor in the past 12 months (31.9%). In addition, around 23% of Korean men and 7% of Korean women have alcohol use disorders, about 14% of the total population with drinkers consuming an average of 16 liters a year per capita. As the second most complicated disease by the South Korean industrial Accident Compensation Insurance, mood disorders also have a high prevalence. All of these diseases have various degrees of positive correlation to mental health and suicidal ideation as a result, the prevalence of these disorders exacerbate the core issue of suicidal ideation.

This literature review evaluates the extent of these mental health issues in Korea, identifies correlative factors relating to mental health, and presents current policies and approaches addressing mental health in part or in whole. In addition, it focuses on the population in general but also through four specific lenses: students, full-time employees, the elderly, and celebrities. The significance of this research mainly focuses on improving the quality of life for people in South Korea by identifying factors associated with mental health and proposing solutions that reduce the frequency and severity of mental health disorders.

### Policy Proposals

South Korea periodically collects data on mental health as a result of the 1995 Mental Health Act, including the prevalence of various mental diseases. More recently, Korea has focused on improving access to mental health services at a community level. While these improvements are substantial, there is still relatively high antimicrobial resistance in institutions and citizens towards issues of mental health. According to one survey, in urban residents and lawmakers tend to agree that suicide was caused by personal beliefs (external factors), was usually done as a cry for help, and viewed it as a nonpreventable problem. Therefore, not addressing the social sphere. Collecting data and performing research on the issue of mental health and suicide identifies the issues, but public or governmental support has to lead the way towards creating public policy to address the problem's various correlative factors.

For each of the factors correlating to increased risk of mental illness and suicide, there are specific policy solutions that can help reduce the severity of those factors and by extension reduce the risk of suicide. A recent law implementing a shorter work week, from 68 hours maximum to 52, paved the way toward implementing this new law. Early intervention and workplace stress have a large overall impact on the mental health. According to one survey, urban residents and lawmakers tended to agree that suicide was related to economic factors (internal factors), was usually done as a cry for help, and viewed it as a nonpreventable problem. Therefore, not addressing the social sphere. Collecting data and performing research on the issue of mental health and suicide identifies the issues, but public or governmental support has to lead the way towards creating public policy to address the problem's various correlative factors.

A general review of policy options addressing suicide found that public education, providing accessible treatment (both pharmaceutical and therapeutic) and restricting access to the means (specifically firearms) continue to be the risk of suicide at a public level. Furthermore, the study also proposes the education of so-called 'gatekeepers' - individuals trusted and present within the community, including medical personnel, institutional personnel, and clergy - on mental health identification and intervention options. As an extension of this study, researchers have also proposed targeting specific high-risk populations with interventions, including elderly Koreans living in poverty and Korean students, as effective strategies for decreasing the risk of suicide or mental illness. Dealing the direction and priority of policy implementation is a challenging task, especially if politicians and citizens are reluctant to address the issue of suicide. Figure 2, a survey of Korean citizens asking them to rate the need for specific programs by priority, identifies the perceived necessity of specific social services. As a result, implementing programs banded off both public recognition and offers a more effective approach in simply implementing the most effective policy because it more immediately addresses the factors correlating to suicide and can help support a shift of attitudes on mental health in Korea.

### References


Jeong, C., Lee, W. (2019). Comparisons in the attitudes toward suicide among urban residents, lawmakers and community mental health work...


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