ABSTRACT

Suicide has reached alarming levels in Namibia at a rate of 22 per 100,000 since 2007 (WHO 2008). The same WHO (2008) report states that the global average rate of suicide is 16 per 100,000 people per year. Suicide in Namibia is thus far above the global average rate. As this disturbing trend is gaining ground, natural phenomena in the form of disasters are equally gaining momentum in Namibia due to climatic change experienced globally. The most common disastrous hazards in the study area are drought, floods and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic. The coincidence of the two phenomena (suicide and disasters) happening simultaneously, posits a casual-effect relationship between the two. This study was meant to ascertain this hypothesis. In particular, the study focused on investigating the influence of disaster effects on suicide in the Okakarara community in Namibia.

Two models, namely the Integrated Stress and Coping model and the Disaster Continuum were employed to conceptualise the psychological factors of disasters that influence suicide ideation. Convenience and snowball sampling were the methods used to sample the target group which was the para-suicide cases. The questionnaire method of data collection was also used to obtain data from the seventy-eight participants that were interviewed. In this study, data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

The finding of this study revealed a casual-effect relation between suicide and disasters in Okakarara. Most of the predisposing factors to suicide ideation emanated from the people’s vulnerability to the three disasters of drought, floods and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Therefore any sustainable strategy to address suicide in Okakarara should not be divorced from reducing people’s vulnerability to these disasters.