

Abstract

Suicide behaviors are urgent public health issues that bring about detrimental consequences and tremendous social expenses. When considering the high costs of suicide, it is important to identify various risk and protective factors to devise effective prevention strategies. Child maltreatment is a well-known risk factor for suicidal thoughts and behavior in adolescence and adulthood. However, most studies investigating the association between child maltreatment and suicidality do not utilize a clear theoretical framework. Little is understood about why and how child maltreatment leads to suicidal behavior. Theorizing and testing specific trajectories between child maltreatment and suicide behavior is crucial for designing suicide prevention strategies.

This dissertation seeks to develop and analyze a theoretical pathway model connecting child maltreatment history and later suicide behaviors. In order to specify the pathway, an array of suicide theories under the ideation-to-action framework are reviewed, along with empirical evidence of the effects of child maltreatment on suicidal ideation and suicide behavior, and the effects of relevant covariates on suicidality. Using these theoretical frameworks and empirical research, this dissertation examines (1) the associations between four child maltreatment subtypes (sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, and neglect) and suicidal thoughts and behaviors in later life, (2) the role of social connectedness between child maltreatment and suicidal ideation/suicide attempts, (3) the role of hopelessness between child maltreatment and suicidal ideation/suicide attempts, and (4) the trajectory from child maltreatment via hopelessness to suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.