

# **Predictors of Suicide Ideation among the Filipino Youth: Findings from a Nationally Representative Survey of Filipinos Aged 15 to 27**

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## **Abstract**

The increasing threat of suicide as a cause of death, especially among the youth cohort, serves as the *raison d'être* of this study. Suicide as a cause of death among young people is increasingly becoming a problem in the Philippines. Suicide has been observed to be the 9th leading cause of death among those aged 20-24 since 2003, and responsible for approximately one out of every three deaths among Filipinos aged 10-24. This study attempted to identify the individual and community level predictors of suicide ideation among the Filipino youth using a nationally representative sample of 19,728 Filipino youth aged 15 to 27. A theoretical framework borne out of the combination of Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory and Travis Hirschi's Social Bonds Theory was tested in the study for its capability to explain the suicide phenomenon. Results showed that suicide ideation is a by-product of the interplay between poor family relationships, nature of peers the youth is affiliated with, engagement in other deviant behaviors, and availability of counselors. The findings of the study make salient the importance of five factors in suicide: (1) the value of strong family relationships especially between parents and child, (2) the importance of regulating the youth's involvement in peer groups, (3) the danger of deviant and risky lifestyles, (4) the importance of access to guidance counselors, and (5) the danger of having suicidal peers.

**Keywords:** behaviors, deviant, family, guidance, peer

## **Introduction**

The Philippines has had its share of high-profile cases of suicide. From the start of the new millennium to the current year, for example, there is at least one case of suicide covered by various forms of media such as newspapers, television reports, and articles on the World Wide Web every two years. Reported cases of suicide range from individual attempts like Alexander Robert Santiago's in 2003 (Esperas, 2003) to those which involve a whole household such as the case of a Filipino-Taiwanese family of five in 2015 (Alquitran, 2015). The demographics of suicide cases are also varied. Some cases involve the young such as Kristel Tejada's (Punay, 2013), elderly as in the case of Rod Strunk (MacMurchy, 2007), the wealthy and powerful like Angelo Reyes (McGeown, 2011), the poor and marginalized like Rosanna Sanfuego (Dullana, 2015). There are also noticeable variations in their methods of committing suicide, with some choosing a violent method such as Failon's wife (Trinidad Etong) use of a firearm (Meruenas, 2009) and non-violent means such as the case above of the mass-suicide in the Filipino-Taiwanese household (Hsieh family).

There are also differences in the reasons for suicide that include family problems such as the case of the former beauty queen and actress Maria Teresa Carlson (Lo, 2001), and economic collapse like in the case of Urban Bank President, Teodoro Borlongan (Alquitran & Torres, 2005). The reasons also include academic problems such as Liam Madamba's (Brizuela, 2015), and prejudice and discrimination such as Julia Buencamino's (Corrales, 2015). It is noteworthy that some of these reasons are attributions done by other people and are not provided by the suicide victims themselves. This situation is occurring because while there are those who leave behind what people often regard as "suicide notes" like Buencamino (Bonoan, 2015), there are also several cases of suicide which do not have any notes of such nature for finding out the cause of suicide.

The challenge to explain the causes of suicide and predict its occurrence has been taken on by scholars from different fields. Though the phenomenon is often a topic under the domain of Psychology,

there have been several efforts to theorize about suicide in the disciplines of Biology, Anthropology, Economics, and Sociology. Suicide is a phenomenon of great historical importance to Sociology. It was in a classical study of suicide that Emile Durkheim argued to the scientific community that what was perceived to be a social problem answerable only by Psychology can be explained by the proposed discipline of Sociology (Ritzer, 2014). In his discussion of the social facts that influence people into committing suicidal acts, Durkheim identified four types of suicide which differ in their degrees of (a) social integration, which binds people into society through the social norms and values of the group, and (b) social regulation, which restricts people's behavior by prescribing specific goals and the means to attain these goals (Pickering, 2001; Ritzer, 2014). These four types of suicide according to Durkheim are as follows: (a) Egoistic Suicide, which is brought about by insufficient social integration among the members of society; (b) Anomic Suicide, which is brought about by a lack of social regulation in society due to rapid changes to which people are hard-pressed to adapt to; (c) Fatalistic Suicide, which is brought about by high social regulation in society, leading to a person's perception of being trapped without any form of escape except through suicide; and (d) Altruistic Suicide, which is brought about by high social integration in society which convinces people that there is nothing wrong with dying if it means the betterment of society.

Since Durkheim's pioneering work, there is already a wealth of sociological and socio-psychological theories that Suicidology has been utilizing. These theories are those of Halbwach (Travis, 1990), Pescosolido (1990), Masaryk (Lester, 1997), Stack (2000), Joiner (2007), and Gibbs and Martin (Fernquist, 2009). More recent, are the theories of Henry and Short (Wray et al., 2011), Tarde (Abrutyn & Mueller, 2014), Gold (Douglas, 2015), Gibbs and Porterfield (Douglas, 2015). While these theories were able to identify some potential predictors of suicide, they are often middle-range theories which focused on the connection between one or a handful of variables and suicide rather than a comprehensive listing of the potential predictors.

Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory starts out with the attempt to determine the external factors in the form of "strains" which can push people into committing acts of deviance (Link et al., 2016). Travis Hirschi's Social Bonds theory, on the other hand, starts out with the premise that people are naturally hedonistic and would seek maximum pleasure at the minimum amount of pain (Hirschi, 2002). In light of this hedonistic nature of individuals, Hirschi proposed that only societal bonds are capable of controlling people's behavior when they feel inclined to engage in criminal and deviant acts. These two theories are used mainly to understand crime and delinquency instead of the phenomenon of suicide, but several fundamental premises of these theories present an interesting combination which may be useful for identifying predictors of suicidal ideation.

This synthetic theoretical framework may help account for factors that increase people's chances of suicide and factors that decrease people's chances of suicide akin to a push-pull tug-of-war dynamic. There are two independent variables and one dependent variable in this theoretical framework. The first independent variable is called "Strains" that are expected to increase the likelihood of the dependent variable, suicide ideation or the experience of having thought of committing suicide. Three types of strain included in this framework which Agnew argued might predispose people into deviant behavior (Agnew, 1992) are the following: (1) failure to achieve positively valued goods, (2) removal of positively valued stimuli, and (3) confrontation with negative stimuli.

The first type of strain pertains to the traditional Merton concept of social strain wherein the person is unable to achieve the culturally-legitimate goals, resulting in a disparity between achievement and aspirations. This situation could become more strenuous when the person realizes that the goals are not only unreachable at present but are not even within one's capability to achieve. An example of strain under this typology is the failure to obtain high monetary rewards for one's life or inability to finish one's aspired level of education.

The second type of strain is brought about by dramatic experiences of loss in a person's life most pronounced during the earlier half of the individual's life particularly during the adolescent and young adult years. Included in this typology are strains brought about by the loss of loved ones and dissolution of valued relationships.

The third type of strain is also most pronounced during the earlier part of a person's life when an individual is exposed to negative experiences that have a powerful impact on the future of a person. Experiences of child abuse and interpersonal violence, whether verbal or physical in nature are examples of this type of strain.

In addition to the types of strain identified in Agnew's theory, the negative internal state is one of the factors that increase people's chances of suicide. Negative internal state here pertains primarily to two things: a negative or low evaluation of one's self-worth (self-esteem), and depression – both of which have been noted in previous studies to be associated with suicide but are not explicitly accounted for in Agnew's existing formulation of his theory.

The other independent variable of the framework, the "Social Bonds," is expected to reduce people's chances of suicide. These Social Bonds are borrowed from Hirschi's theory proposed in 1969 (Schroeder, 2016). For Hirschi, four factors that keep people living according to societal norms influence people's decision to commit criminal behavior. While criminal behavior may allow the person to achieve the desired benefit, they refrain from doing so because it might entail sacrificing or losing the four factors – all of which are assumed to be considered important by the person. The first factor is the attachment to other members of society. For Hirschi, the emotional closeness of people to the other members of society, particularly the family and, to a lesser degree, other agents in society such as peers and the school limit the tendency of people to commit crime because doing so would risk jeopardizing these interpersonal relationships. The greater the emotional closeness the person has to his or her family and friends, the lesser the likelihood that the person would be willing to sacrifice losing these attachments.

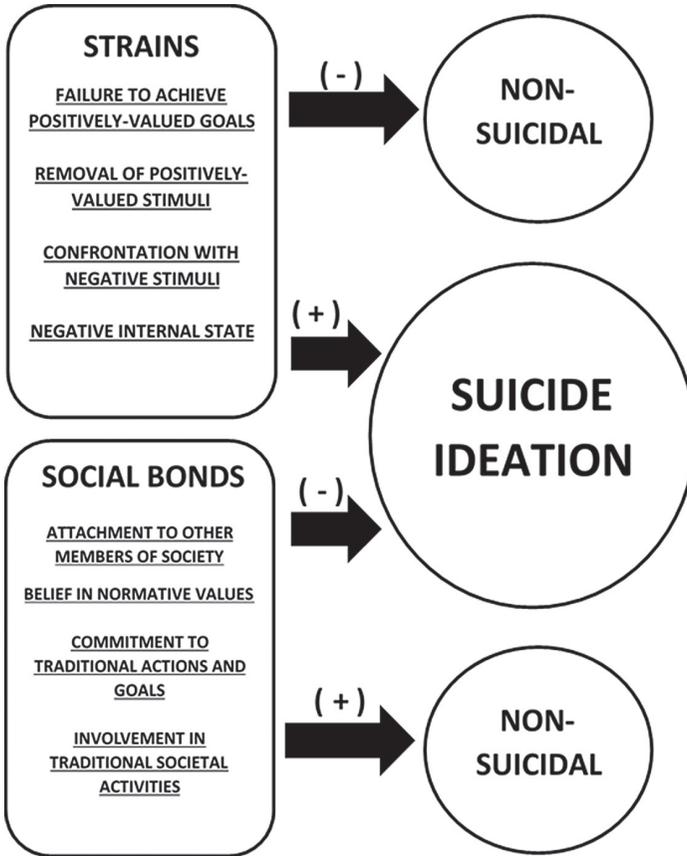
Commitment to traditional types of action and goals is the second factor considered by Hirschi. As a person continues to live as part of society, he or she becomes increasingly committed to the achievement of conventional goals of that society. Examples of these goals are the attainment of higher education, finding a job, getting married and having one's family of procreation. As the person achieves more of these conventional goals or becomes closer to making them, he or she will not risk losing or jeopardizing them all by becoming a criminal. Out of the four bonds, this is the element that serves as the most rational social bond. It operates under the social psychology of sunk cost (Arkes & Blumer, 1985).

The third factor is the involvement in traditional activities. As the person becomes more involved with socially-prescribed activities, they would have fewer chances to plan and execute criminal behavior due to sheer lack of time. It operates under the adage, "idle hands are the devil's playground." The fourth factor is the belief in the normative values of society. This element operates under the socio-psychological premise that people's attitudes are influential in people's behavior. Belief in the values prescribed by society makes one less likely to commit actions that contradict these normative values. When these normative beliefs are weakened, people's tendency for deviant behavior increases.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified suicide as a major social problem that claims a life every 40 seconds. All over the world, the 15th leading cause of death for 2012 is suicide, accounting for around 800,000 deaths worldwide yearly, with South East Asian regions comprising a third of the annual rate, and the 2nd, if the cohort in focus is the youth population aged 15 to 29 years old (Vila, 2014). Data from recent years also point to the increasing number of suicide cases in the Philippines. In a study analyzing the trends of deaths suspected to be caused by suicide in the Philippines from 1974 to 2005, Redaniel et al. (2011) reported that the incidence of suicide has increased for both gender from 1984 to 2005. The increase ranged from 0.23 to 3.59 suicides per 100,000 men and from 0.12 to 1.09 per 100,000 women in the population.

The Department of Health (DOH) has also reported that in 2003, intentional self-harm, which is often associated with suicide as a form of euphemism (Department of Health, 2011a), was the 9th leading cause of death among Filipinos aged 20-24 years old. Suicide also was the cause of death of 34% of all deaths among Filipinos aged 10-24 during the year above (Department of Health, 2011b). A recent report further stated that approximately seven Filipinos try to commit suicide every day (Butuyan, 2016). In a nationally representative survey of Filipino youth aged 15-24 years old last 2013, five regions of the Philippines (NCR, CARAGA, Regions VII, X, and XI) have at least 10% of their respective 15-24-year-old population experiencing suicide ideation. These regions also experienced an increase of suicide attempts in the past ten years among those who have thought of committing suicide (YAFS 4 - Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study 4).

In an attempt to understand suicide ideation among the youth in the Philippine context, this study aimed to identify the significant predictors of suicide ideation among the Filipino youth using the findings from a nationally representative survey of Filipinos aged 15 to 27 years old. This study provides an opportunity to check the predictive capabilities of societal and individual factors identified in the wealth of literature on empirical studies on the phenomenon. This study deviates from the practice of focusing only on individual-level data in the study of predictors of suicide (Voss, 2007). Instead, it combines both individual- as well as community-level data in the hope of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of suicide predictors in the context of the Filipino youth. In this study, the influence of societal and individual factors on suicide was fitted under a theoretical framework derived from the synthesis of two theories of deviance: Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory (1992) and Travis Hirschi's Social Bonds Theory (1969). Hence, this study proposes an addition to the wealth of theories on Suicidology by using a synthetic theoretical framework not often utilized or specifically-designed for Suicidology. Figure 1 is an illustration of this theoretical framework.



**Figure 1. The theoretical framework of the study (combination of elements from Agnew's General Strain Theory and Hirschi's Social Bonds Theory).**

It is possible that in the presence of both strains and social bonds in a person's life, these two elements will interact: the strains will increase the people's chances of suicide while the social bonds will keep them from suicide. When the strains are strong and when the social bonds are weak, the chances of suicide ideation increase in the individual. This study made use of several variables which may act either as sources of strain or forms of social bonds in a person's life.

The fusion of two different theories into one framework cannot avoid the overlapping of some variables that may serve both as sources of strain and indicative of weakened social bonds. There are other variables in this study such as socio-demographic characteristics and community-level variables which are not covered by the theoretical framework of the study. The goal of this study would be to attempt the construction of an integrated model of suicide that is based on evidence from the Philippines.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study used the descriptive research design. Statistical analyses were conducted on secondary data obtained from two datasets. The first dataset is the individual-level data of YAFS 3 of the Demographic Research and Development Foundation (DRDF). The dataset has a nationally representative sample of 19,728 Filipino respondents aged 15 to 27 years old coming from all 16 regions of the country. The second dataset is the community-level data obtained from 894 randomly selected barangays in the country.

Suicide ideation is obtained from a question on whether or not the youth has thought of committing suicide. Several other questions included in the survey such as information on family and peer characteristics and relationships, experiences and attitudes toward education and work, engagement in deviant lifestyles, depression symptoms, and self-esteem were the independent variables in the study.

All independent variables were first tested for a significant bivariate relationship with suicide ideation. The bivariate correlational tests were done to filter the high quantity of independent variables in the study and retain only those that are flagged significant at 95% level of confidence for the multivariate analysis. All variables which were flagged significant at  $\alpha=5\%$  at the bivariate analysis for suicide ideation were then included in the list of variables tested in a binary logistic regression with suicide ideation as the dependent variable. Binary logistic regression was repeatedly run. In each series of binary logistic regression, variables which are found to have no significant relationship

with suicide ideation at  $\alpha=5\%$  were removed. Binary logistic regressions were run until a final model where all variables retained their significance at  $\alpha=5\%$  was obtained.

## **Results and Discussion**

Several of the significant covariates of suicide ideation were identified as sources of strain (Table 1). The frequent occurrence of natural calamities in the youth's community of residence is an important source of strain. This strain is not only an aversive or negative stimulus against the person due to its threat of pain, fear, and discomfort, but also threatens the loss of positively valued stimuli such as loss of property, loved ones or of one's life. The finding is in agreement with the results of Krug et al. (1998).

Similar to natural calamities, the experience of rehabilitation due to problems of prohibited drug use is also a source of strain on two grounds. First, it removes the once highly valued stimulus of being "high" or euphoric due to the effect of the illegal drugs. Furthermore, the rehabilitation process introduces to the youth the pain and discomfort often associated with the detoxification process, as well as the challenges to daily life experienced under the rigid control and surveillance with which the youth is put under while in the rehabilitation center. It is even possible that the other drug-related covariate, the perception that illegal drugs are harmful to one's health, is nothing more than a byproduct of the youth's difficult experiences inside the rehabilitation center which he or she does not wish to relive again. The fact that the experience of being in a rehabilitation center recorded the highest odds ratio in the model lends greater credence to this assumption.

**Table 1. Results of binary logistic regression for suicide ideation.**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Occurrence of natural calamities	.167	.053	9.890	.002**	1.182
Permissiveness of parents	.186	.070	7.020	.008**	1.205
Subscription to normative beliefs about the value of life	-.295	.067	19.443	.000**	.745
Length of time in the community	-.003	.001	21.697	.000**	.997
Access to a counselor	-.350	.157	4.941	.026**	.705
Membership in dance, singing, or theater organization	.221	.051	18.555	.000**	1.247
Parental support: experience of having enough school allowance as a student	-.300	.049	37.159	.000**	.741
Ever tried smoking cigarettes	.528	.053	99.664	.000**	1.695
Perception that drug/substance use is harmful to one's health	.388	.125	9.585	.002**	1.474
Experience of being in a rehab center in connection with drug problems	1.004	.318	9.929	.002**	2.728
Presence of friends or acquaintance who attempted to commit suicide	.617	.052	141.720	.000**	1.853
Ever experienced being threatened by someone	.537	.055	95.247	.000**	1.710
Lack of symptoms of depression	-.600	.049	152.483	.000**	.549
Number of GF/BF ever had	.022	.004	30.123	.000**	1.022
Sex of respondent: Male	-1.239	.058	457.178	.000**	.290
Drinks because of problems	.787	.164	23.123	.000**	2.196
Primary economic activity: Trade	-.252	.104	5.813	.016**	.777

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level of confidence

Five other sources of strain may increase the youth's likelihood of suicide ideation. First is the experience of being threatened by someone often associated with victims of bullying among the youth. The fear of being the victim of an assault creates undue strain for the youth. The finding that this situation increases the chances of suicide ideation is in agreement with the studies of Kim et al. (2009), Hinduja and Patchin (2010), Manalastas (2013), and Yen et al. (2014). Second is the experience of having a friend or an acquaintance who has attempted suicide before. There is no way of determining from the model if there is a difference if the friend's success in the suicide attempt is relevant. What is clear, however, is that the knowledge of such an event is a negative stimulus for the youth. This study stresses the belief that this variable could be instrumental in giving the youth the idea that taking one's life is an option they can decide to pursue should they feel the need for it. Furthermore, the event may provide a venue for the youth to know why his or her friend has committed suicide and may reevaluate his or her life in the process. This situation could be a manifestation of Durkheim's concept of social currents or those high waves of emotion which people may get swept by (Ritzer, 2014). In this context, the young people are exposed to the emotion of the situation, and they too get swept into considering suicide. Also, the event may provide the youth with an idea of how at least one of his or her peers respond to the strains they experience. The significance of this finding is in agreement with those of Spiwak et al.'s (2011) and Lopez-Castroman et al.'s (2015) but opposite to Mercy et al.'s (2001).

The three other sources of strain are interesting because, in some aspects, they are also indicative of weak social bonds or potentially possible effects of some social bonds. For instance, being in a romantic relationship should be a form of the social bond from Hirschi's element of attachment that should deter people from suicide ideation. However, the context here is that the higher the number of romantic relationships that the youth has had, the greater his or her propensity for suicide ideation will be. This situation is possible because a high number of romantic relationships the person has ever had would mean that the youth, despite being young, already had experienced a string of failed

relationships. This element is not only an aversive stimulus that would be a source of strain but also an indicative of weak social bonds in the youth's life.

Another noteworthy covariate is the youth's membership in dance, theater, or singing group which was found to increase the youth's odds of suicide ideation. It was the assumption of this study that membership in this group would be a form of social bond on two grounds: first, following the involvement element of Hirschi's theory, membership in this kind of group would keep the youth too busy to think about suicide; second, the youth would inadvertently form attachments with the other members of the group thereby further strengthening the hold of the social bonds on the individual. However, it is possible that the demands and rigor usually present in dance, theater, and singing groups become an unanticipated source of strain. In a typical dance, theater, or singing group, rehearsals often demand not only much of a person's free time but also time which is supposed to be allotted for other pursuits. Furthermore, there is always a need for these kinds of activities to constantly better one's self lest the whole group shall fail in their performance. This lack of time to pursue other endeavors and the stress and pressure from the constant need for better performances might serve instead as a source of strain in the youth's life. This finding is supported by the study of Eynde et al. (2015) where factors such as passion for work and a "negative culture" characterized by irregular sleep patterns, lack of sleep, gossiping, bullying, and a "culture of criticism" were identified as contributors to higher predispositions for suicide.

Finally, the fifth source of strain in the youth's life is the permissiveness of the parents. Out of all the covariates which proved significant for suicide ideation, the fact that this variable contributes to an increase in the odds of suicide ideation is one of the most surprising. Initially, this study assumed that the permissiveness of parents would be a positive factor in the lives of the youth, especially given Agnew's identification of autonomy as a valued goal for people. However, it appears that parental permissiveness here is a negative factor. Could it be that parental permissiveness is indicative of weak attachment

between the parents and the youth? If so, then this is in agreement with Peter et al.'s (2008) study which revealed that youth with negative attachment to parents/guardians, especially when combined with experiences of being bullied/abused and associated with deviant peers are significant predictors of suicide ideation.

Nine other variables were identified as significant in the regression model for suicide ideation. The experience of having ever smoked was found to increase the odds of suicide ideation among the youth. Engagement in this deviant and risky lifestyle could be indicative of a weak hold of normative values in the youth's life. Similar to smoking, it was found that those who drink because they have problems are more prone to suicide ideation. Drinking because of problems may be indicative of weak social bonds and the presence of one or more sources of strain in the youth's life which he or she tries to cope with by drinking to forget. The results are in agreement with the findings of other studies (Roy & Janal, 2007; Schaffer et al., 2008; Chapman & Ford, 2008; Shoostary et al., 2008; Schneider, 2009; Jayasinghe & Foster, 2011; Manzo et al., 2015).

Conversely, it was also found that subscription to normative beliefs about the value of life decreases the odds of suicide ideation among the youth. This subscription to the belief on the value or - in the case of a predominantly Christian nation such as the Philippines – “sanctity” of life could make the person averse to the idea of ending their life.

Another significant variable is the experience of having enough school allowance as a student. As per Agnew's theory, the lack of funds, and its resulting feeling of either relative or absolute deprivation could be a source of strain for the youth. Furthermore, it is possible that the youth regards the school allowance as a material indicator of their parent's support and therefore, a sufficient allowance can be indicative of stronger attachment between parents and the youth. Another school-related variable which was found to be significant is the availability of a guidance counselor in school, especially for problems about the youth's family. These guidance counselors will not only be a source of advice for the youth but could also serve as substitute parental figures for the

youth during the days when they are beset with problems at home. The model also identified the length of time that the youth has lived in the community as a significant factor against suicide ideation. This study assumes that the relevance of this variable lies in its capability to provide the youth with more opportunity to form new relationships with other members of the community thereby increasing their strength and quantity of sources of social bonds.

The three other variables which were found to reduce the odds of suicide ideation among the Filipino youth are the absence of symptoms of depression among young people, living in a community where the principal economic activity is the trade, and being male. The finding that having no signs of depression among the youth is related to lower chances to suicide ideation supports the result of previous studies that caution against the positive impact of depression on suicide (Arria et al., 2009; Hur et al., 2011). The finding that being male is related to lower chances of suicide ideation is supported by the data utilized in the regression where it was found that there are substantially more women suicide ideators than men (18.6% of female respondents, 8.3% of male respondents). The higher tendency of women population to contemplate suicide may be a byproduct of structural inequalities that disadvantage them. The situation could also be a result of the finding that relationship problems (18.8% of female suicide ideators, second most prevalent reason for suicide) such as family problems (58.8% of female suicide ideators, the most frequent reason for suicide), are significant contributors to suicide among women. Given that the subject of interest are people who are in that stage of their lives when they are starting to build new relationships that are romantic in nature, this may be the reason for the inclusion of this variable in the final regression model for suicide ideation. The final variable, living in a community where the primary economic activity is the trade, is harder to explain. It is possible that community that thrives on trade as its major business allows for a high degree of lively interaction among the people. The livelihood has a positive impact on the youth by the potential attachments formed between stakeholders. However, this element is still

unclear and must be looked into in further studies on Filipino suicide that involve community-level variables.

The theoretical framework utilized in this study may benefit from further revisions. Following the framework, it was found that suicide ideation is a byproduct of the interplay between the strength of the stressors or strains that beset the youth and the strength of the social bonds that protect the youth. However, there are also some patterns which were salient in the results of the study that the proposed framework was unable to account. First is the element of involvement in traditional societal activities of the social bond. In the framework, it was assumed that the relationship between participation and suicide would follow a negative linear direction: as involvement in traditional societal activities increases, the chances of suicide decrease. However, the results of this study suggest otherwise. An increase in the people's involvement in traditional societal activities may lead to the decline in the chances of suicide, but too much involvement in these activities such as dancing, theater, or singing groups also tends to lead to an increase in the likelihood of suicide. This situation is possible due to the amount of stress and lack of autonomy in time that accompanies a high degree of involvement in societal activities.

Second is the element of attachment to other members of the society of social bond. In the framework, it was assumed that people would try to conform to the norms of society because failure to do so would risk the disapproval and disappointment of other people who are significant to the person. However, the original framework failed to account for the possibility that the significant others are also deviants. Taking an idea from the sociologist Edwin Sutherland in his Differential Association Theory (Scarpitti et al., 2008), the effect of the social bonds based on attachment on people's chances of suicide is dependent on the nature of the attachments. Those individuals whose attachments are with other norm-conforming members of society may have a lower chance of suicide as compared to those whose attachments are with family and peers who, by society's standards, are also deviants. Examples of these are attachments formed with other people who have committed suicide before.

In light of these new findings, a revised theoretical framework which may be tested in future studies is proposed to account for the nuances in the two elements of the social bond. This revised framework is provided in Figure 2.

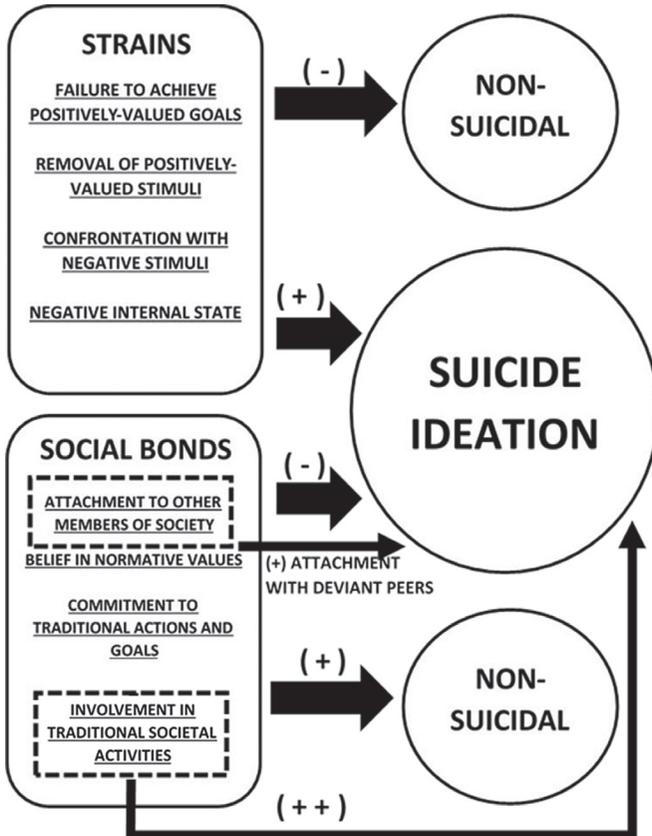


Figure 2. Revised theoretical framework accounting for the findings of the study.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Several factors contribute to the Filipino youth's predisposition for suicide ideation. Five elements were made salient in the regression results of the study and attention should be directed to these aspects to understand the phenomenon of suicide better and attempt to curb its prevalence before it becomes an even greater social problem. These elements include the value of a strong family relationship, the importance of regulating the youth's involvement in peer groups, the danger of deviant lifestyles, the importance of guidance counselors, and the danger of having suicidal peers.

Efforts must be exerted to provide opportunities for the youth to strengthen their bonds with their family members. Involvement of youth in theater, dancing, or singing groups should be regulated since extreme demands on time, and personal perseverance for perfection can increase the youth's odds of suicide ideation. Youth should be kept from regular smoking, alcoholism, use of prohibited drugs, and engagement in violent behavior. Efforts should also be made to look into the reasons for the youth to engage in these deviant lifestyles. The youth's decision to engage in these behaviors may, in itself, be a desperate attempt to find a way to cope with other stressors in their life. It is important to increase the presence of guidance counselors in schools and, if possible, in the general community. They could serve as authority figures and source of sound advice for youth who are faced with problems at home. The guidance counselors can also debrief the young people who are exposed to the suicidal behavior of their peers. In light of these new findings, a revised theoretical framework which may be tested in future studies is proposed to account for the nuances in the two elements of the social bond.

The findings of the study also make salient the necessity to look into social inequality as a predisposing set of factors to suicide. In the study, three oftentimes disadvantaged groups were found to be more predisposed to suicide: female youth, the bullied, and those who are engaged in the arts. While it is beyond this study to confirm if this is the case, a discussion point in light of these findings can be made:

is the greater predisposition of these groups to suicide a possible byproduct of the patriarchal-capitalist system that dominates Philippine culture? Could the patriarchal system of the country cause a relative deprivation in the opportunities for females which can result in a greater strain that leads to suicide? Could the emphasis on this macho culture increase and normalize the prevalence of bullying that leads to threats of, and actual, physical harm? Can the patriarchal-capitalist system also serve as an aversive climate to those who are inclined towards the arts because artistry is neither often seen as masculine nor as an instrumental pursuit in a society that emphasizes economic success? This emphasis on economic assets has also made counselling a privilege only of those with enough economic resources to avail them. Future studies would do well to ponder on these discussion points.

### **Acknowledgment**

The author extends his sincerest gratitude to Prof. Augustus T. Anonuevo, Prof. Girlie Nora A. Abrigo, Prof. Dwight David A. Diestro, Dr. Gloria Luz M. Nelson, and Dr. Merlyne M. Paunlagui of the University of the Philippines Los Baños for their scholarly inputs both as mentors and colleagues during the conduct of the study. Sincerest thanks are also offered to the Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (DRDF) and the University of the Philippines Population Institution for their assistance in the data utilized in the study.

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