

SUICIDE, RELIGION AND HOLY WEEK

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Introduction: Although religion is one of the protective factors classically related to suicidal behavior, as far as we know, no study based on psychological autopsy has been published. Holy Week in Seville (Spain) may be the most important traditional event of the city. Besides socio-cultural and economic aspects, it is the celebration of the Passion and Death of Christ through the brotherhood processions to the Cathedral, and its religious feeling is present in a large majority of the population.

Objectives: In the present work we tried to study if, as well as other religious aspects, belonging to a brotherhood and participating actively in it are protective factors for suicide.

Methods: We compared the results of two samples (271 suicides and 142 sudden-death controls), which were studied using a psychological autopsy. We developed a questionnaire to study religious thoughts/feelings, specially those related with the Holy Week brotherhoods.

Results: In our sample, religious people committed less suicides than the atheist (80 %-68·1% between the males, 100%-92·4% between the females), being the differences statistically significant for the males (chi square test =0·002). Belonging to a brotherhood was also a protective factor (only 22·5% of the suicide victims belonged, compared with the 37·8% of the controls), and if they participated actively they had even less risk (RR=0·562).