Introduction

• Suicide is a serious, preventable public health problem that can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities.
• Hopelessness is rising among youth.
• However, perception and realization of hope is an important protective factor in emotional well-being among youth.

Objectives

• Suicide prevention efforts seek to reduce risk for suicidality and increase factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.
• The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship among suicide attempts, anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, hope and help-seeking across time in Native Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian adolescents.

Methods

Participants were adolescents from the National Center on Indigenous Hawaiian Behavioral Health’s high school health survey who were part of a five-year longitudinal cohort study (N = 7,317). Contemporary longitudinal dynamic structural equation models were used to analyze the multiple dynamical relationships among anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, help seeking, hope, and suicide attempts for non-Hawaiian and Native Hawaiian groups.

Results

We found mainly similarities in dynamical systems between Native Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian youth regarding how change scores were influenced by the past behavioral patterns for the four domains. The greatest differences were in help, followed by suicide, and hope.

Conclusions

• The vast majority of youth in our study not report suicidality, even when they experienced symptoms of anxiety and/or depression. Yet Native Hawaiian youth remain at higher risk. They seek help and restore hope less often.
• There has been a strong calling for more culturally relevant tools and trainings related to youth suicide prevention.
• Culture frames what all people bring to the setting including: help-seeking patterns, coping styles, support systems, role of stigma, and engagement in prevention.
• By building cultural strengths, such as kinship ties, community assets, spirituality, and creating positive meaning, we can prevent suicide among our youth.
• We need more thoughtful and purposive inclusion of mental health infrastructure in suicide prevention and intervention strategies to decrease disparities. More collaborative and youth-centered approaches to suicide prevention in the cultural context of the community are essential in enhancing well-being in indigenous communities.

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