

Media coverage of a celebrity suicide can cause a large-scale copycat effect

2 September 2014

Researchers who analyzed media coverage of the suicide of a national actress in South Korea and its impact on subsequent suicides found that the number of suicide-related articles surged around 80 times in the week after a suicide compared with the week prior.

Many articles (37.1%) violated several critical items on the World Health Organization suicide reporting guidelines, like containing a detailed suicide method. The investigators estimated that there were approximately 430 excess suicides during the 4 weeks after her death due to [media coverage](#).

"This figure is the largest record of cases relating to copycat suicides that has been reported to academic journals," said Weon-Young Lee, co-author of the *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* study. "Most gender and age subgroups were at significantly higher risk of suicide.

More information: Lee, J., Lee, W.-Y., Hwang, J.-S. and Stack, S. J. (2014), To What Extent Does the Reporting Behavior of the Media Regarding a Celebrity Suicide Influence Subsequent Suicides in South Korea?. *Suicide and Life-Threat Behavi*, 44: 457-472. [DOI: 10.1111/sltb.12109](https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12109)

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