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Legal and Criminological Dimensions of Suicide with Emphasis on the Legal Systems of Iran and England and Its Relationship with Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of suicide, which is among the major adverse outcomes of the industrial world, is largely influenced by social disorganization, psychological disorders, and social inequalities. Suicide is recognized as a major social and mental-health problem in many countries, particularly in European states. This phenomenon has been increasing in many societies, including Iran. In Iranian law, although suicide and self-harm are considered impermissible from the perspective of religious and jurisprudential doctrines, they have not been directly criminalized. The Iranian legislature, by enacting the Computer Crimes Act in 2009, has criminalized assistance in suicide and, accordingly, has provided punishment for those who aid in the commission of this act. In English law as well, suicide itself is not regarded as a criminal offense; however, assistance in suicide is punishable. This study proposes that, in order to uphold the sanctity of human life, assistance in suicide should be explicitly criminalized, and its punishment should be aggravated where the victim is a minor. Moreover, the implementation of educational and preventive security measures for individuals who have attempted suicide but have not succeeded is deemed necessary. With regard to euthanasia, in both the Iranian and English legal systems, active and non-voluntary euthanasia are considered intentional homicide; however, with respect to other forms of euthanasia, different approaches are adopted depending on the circumstances.

Keywords: *Suicide; Self-harm; Euthanasia; Criminal Law; Iran; England.*

Introduction

Suicide, as one of the complex social and psychological phenomena, has long been among the most challenging issues faced by human societies. This phenomenon, which occurs due to various factors such as mental disorders, social inequalities, economic crises, and family problems, has had a particularly significant impact on individuals' mental health in industrialized and developed societies (1). According to international health reports, suicide is recognized as one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide and constitutes a major cause of death especially among adolescents and young adults, highlighting the critical importance of addressing suicide within social and

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health policymaking frameworks (2). These statistics clearly demonstrate the high priority that suicide prevention must be given in public health and social policy agendas.

In Iranian law, suicide has not been independently criminalized. According to the Islamic Penal Code, suicide and attempted suicide, insofar as they do not directly result in death, are not subject to criminal prosecution. However, assistance in and incitement to suicide are punishable under specific legal provisions, reflecting the legislator's indirect criminalization of involvement in suicidal acts (3, 4). In English law as well, suicide itself is not considered a criminal offense, yet assistance or encouragement may give rise to criminal liability, particularly under homicide-related doctrines. These legal differences across jurisdictions correspond to the ethical and social complexities of suicide, which require multidimensional legal analysis (5).

On the other hand, recent advances in artificial intelligence and neuroscience have created new opportunities for identifying and predicting suicidal behaviors. Emerging technologies can play a significant role in the early detection of psychological disorders and in the design of preventive strategies, particularly in the field of psychological and supportive interventions (1, 6). Accordingly, this article not only analyzes the legal and psychological dimensions of suicide but also examines the impact of emerging technologies on suicide prevention and treatment.

The interdisciplinary significance of suicide at the intersection of law, neuroscience, and technology is especially vital in the contemporary world, where social and psychological crises are rapidly intensifying. On the one hand, legal sciences analyze laws and criminal policies related to suicide, addressing the legal and ethical dimensions of this phenomenon and examining the role of legal norms in prevention and protection of individuals at risk. On the other hand, neuroscience contributes by providing predictive models and simulations of behavioral patterns associated with mental disorders and depression, thereby identifying factors that drive individuals toward suicidal behavior. Meanwhile, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics assist social and psychological sciences by analyzing personal, social, and even online data to model suicide risk patterns and help predict crises before they occur. The integration of these fields can lead to comprehensive and preventive approaches to addressing psychological crises and suicide.

Theoretical Foundations

Definition and Explanation of the Neuroscience of Suicide

The neuroscience of suicide focuses on the study of factors within the brain and nervous system that may lead to suicidal tendencies. These studies include the identification of biomarkers (such as specific proteins and molecular indicators), functional brain imaging, and genetic investigations that help reveal neurological and physiological changes associated with suicide. In addition, epigenetic studies—examining the effects of environmental factors on gene expression—can contribute to a deeper understanding of suicidal behavior.

Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Mental Health and Prediction of High-Risk Behavior

In the field of mental health, artificial intelligence involves the application of advanced algorithms to analyze large-scale datasets in order to identify behavioral patterns associated with suicide risk and other psychological disorders. These applications include the use of social media data, medical records, and text mining techniques to predict

high-risk behaviors. Early warning systems and conversational agents (chatbots) have also been developed to provide timely and effective interventions for suicide prevention (1, 2).

An Integrated Theoretical Framework

This integrated framework combines artificial intelligence, neuroscience, and public health. The aim of this integration is to develop a comprehensive approach to predicting and preventing suicide through complex data analysis (artificial intelligence) and a deeper understanding of biological and neurological factors (neuroscience). Such an approach can assist in identifying individuals at risk and delivering timely interventions.

Artificial Intelligence and Suicide Prediction

Machine learning algorithms are employed to analyze big data sources such as social media information, medical histories, and textual data in order to model and predict high-risk behavioral patterns. Warning systems and conversational agents are designed to interact with individuals at risk and provide counseling at appropriate times. Major challenges in this domain include limited accuracy, prediction errors, and the risk of labeling or profiling vulnerable individuals (2, 6).

Neuroscience and Biological Diagnosis of Suicide

Neuroscience employs brain imaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and the study of neural markers to identify changes associated with suicidal tendencies. The role of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, in mental disorders and the genetic correlates of suicidal behavior are also examined. These biological insights can contribute to the development of more targeted treatments and preventive strategies for suicide (7, 8).

Integrated Models of Neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence

Integrated models of neuroscience and artificial intelligence, particularly within the framework of Psychiatry 5.0, represent innovative approaches to the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. By combining neural data analysis with machine learning algorithms, these models enable the simulation and prediction of complex behavioral patterns. The use of hybrid systems in diagnosis and treatment can enhance diagnostic accuracy and timely intervention. Nevertheless, these advancements present both opportunities and risks: while they may improve precision in diagnosis and treatment, they also raise concerns regarding privacy, algorithmic surveillance, and security threats that require careful legal and ethical scrutiny (9, 10).

Legal and Criminological Dimensions

From a legal perspective, human rights considerations and human dignity in the face of algorithmic surveillance raise challenges related to individual freedoms and privacy. The collection and analysis of mental health data, particularly in artificial intelligence applications, may give rise to concerns about privacy violations. Criminal and civil liability in cases of artificial intelligence error is another complex issue that must be addressed when failures occur in prediction or prevention mechanisms. Aligning these approaches with different legal systems, such as those of Iran and England, plays a crucial role in confronting the legal and ethical challenges associated with the monitoring and use of emerging technologies in suicide prevention (11, 12).

Policy and Social Implications

The policy and social implications of artificial intelligence and neuroscience technologies in suicide prevention relate to their role in preventive criminal policy. These technologies can function as effective tools for reducing suicide rates, provided that they are accompanied by adequate oversight and legal safeguards related to human rights and privacy. Public health institutions, alongside judicial authorities, must play a supportive role in protecting individuals at risk and preventing the misuse of technologies, such as excessive surveillance or social control. Potential risks associated with the use of these technologies should be evaluated in light of ethical and social standards.

Literature Review

With regard to the subject of the present study, no independent research has so far been conducted in Iran. However, a number of studies exist that are thematically related to the present research and are briefly reviewed below.

In this field, no specialized or independent books and articles have been published. The issue has only been briefly addressed in criminal law textbooks and related articles. In addition, several academic theses have been identified, which are concisely introduced below.

In his work on special criminal law, Iraj Goldoziyan argues that if the perpetrator and the victim of homicide are the same person, the act constitutes suicide. Under Iranian criminal law, suicide, attempt to commit suicide, and assistance therein are not considered crimes and are therefore not subject to punishment, because imposing criminal sanctions on a person who commits suicide lacks a preventive function, and any legal reaction would merely cause material and moral harm to the victim's family and relatives (3, 13).

According to this view, suicide is not a crime, and in the absence of an explicit legal provision, attempt and complicity in suicide are likewise not criminalized and carry no penal sanction. Nevertheless, other forms of bodily harm, where accompanied by specific legal responsibility, may in certain cases constitute criminal offenses and be punishable (4).

Hossein Mir Mohammad Sadeghi, in his book on special criminal law concerning crimes against persons, maintains that in crimes against persons, the victim must be someone other than the perpetrator. Inflicting injury upon oneself or committing suicide, although regarded as a grave sin from a religious perspective, is not considered a crime under Iranian criminal law except in specific cases. Given that suicide and self-harm are not criminalized in Iranian criminal law, assistance therein is likewise not regarded as a crime (14).

Reza Shokri and Ghader Sirus, in their annotated commentary on the Islamic Penal Code, state that suicide is not a crime, and due to the absence of a legal text and based on the principle of legality and presumption of innocence, assistance in suicide is likewise not criminalized, unless the assistant's role is considered stronger than that of the direct actor. Examples include cases in which a person deceives or incites another to touch a high-voltage exposed electric wire while the latter is unaware of the danger, or where a loaded firearm is handed to a child. In such cases, since the direct actor is merely an instrument, the instigator may be considered a principal offender and subject to severe criminal liability. At the same time, self-harm and intentional bodily injury inflicted upon oneself are not crimes except in exceptional cases expressly provided by law (15).

Mandana Rastgari, in her thesis on the phenomenon of suicide, argues that the enactment of the Computer Crimes Act may be regarded as a step toward enhancing respect for human life and preventing suicide. Although suicide itself has not been criminalized, the legislator has criminalized assistance in suicide. Consequently, in the absence of an explicit requirement of shared criminal intent between the assistant and the person committing suicide, assistance in suicide follows the theory of independent criminal liability (16).

Another thesis conducted in this field by Davar Sardari holds that suicide is not a crime in the vast majority of legal systems, and it has likewise not been criminalized under the Islamic Penal Code. However, this does not imply that suicide is permissible. The absence of punishment for a person who has committed suicide is rationally and logically defensible, as a deceased person cannot be punished and, with death, ownership relations over property are terminated. The debate arises in cases where a person attempts suicide but survives. In such cases, although the individual may be considered morally blameworthy, there remains hope for mitigation and redemption through various forms of moral and social support. This perspective emphasizes the distinction between moral culpability and criminal liability (13).

Rahimi-Nejad, in his book *Introduction to Criminal Law and Criminology*, argues that assistance in suicide is not a crime, because the criminal liability of an accomplice is derivative in nature, and when the principal act is not criminal, criminal liability cannot be attributed to the assistant (4).

Research Methodology

The methodology employed in this research is descriptive–analytical and survey-based. For this purpose, various tools have been used, including library resources and legal and academic databases. After collecting the relevant sources and conducting systematic note-taking, the materials were analyzed and interpreted, key challenges were identified, and possible solutions were examined. This research is fundamentally based on the most recent academic articles, books, legal documents, and reliable electronic sources. Data analysis has been carried out using an inferential analytical method.

Findings

Legal Dimensions of Suicide in Iran

Under Iranian law, suicide and attempted suicide are not defined as crimes and are not subject to punishment. This reflects Iran's criminal policy of limiting the scope of criminalization. In general, the legislator has refrained from criminalizing suicide, as punishment in such cases is deemed ineffective in terms of prevention and may cause material and moral harm to the relatives of the person who commits suicide (3, 13). Currently, neither suicide nor attempt to commit suicide is recognized as a crime under the Islamic Penal Code, and no specific punishment has been prescribed in the legislation enacted in 2013. This approach is based on the view that suicide is typically the result of psychological distress and that legal punishment cannot exert a meaningful preventive effect.

Nevertheless, although suicide itself is not criminalized, certain related acts—such as assistance in suicide or intentional bodily injury inflicted with the aim of suicide—may be subject to punishment. For instance, if an individual deliberately inflicts bodily harm upon themselves resulting in the loss of a limb, or engages in self-harm to evade compulsory military service, such conduct may be deemed criminal and punishable. This legal stance reflects a combination of jurisprudential principles and social considerations, while simultaneously underscoring the need to

examine the psychological and social consequences of suicide. In conclusion, while suicide itself is not directly punishable in Iran, related acts such as assistance in suicide or intentional self-inflicted bodily harm may give rise to criminal liability (15).

Legal Dimensions of Suicide in England

Providing a comprehensive definition of crime in English law is difficult, if not impossible. Crimes are commonly understood as acts that threaten public safety, security, or morality. Accordingly, crime may be described as any act or omission that is contrary to criminal law. Unlike Iranian law, English criminal law does not offer a statutory definition of crime, and it is generally accepted that such a definition is neither feasible nor necessary for practical purposes. Instead, crime is often regarded as a public wrong whose commission triggers criminal procedure and ultimately leads to punishment of the offender (5).

In contrast, Iranian law explicitly defines crime as any act or omission for which punishment is prescribed by law. From this perspective, behavior qualifies as criminal only if a legal sanction has been established by statute. English criminal law, however, relies more heavily on judicial interpretation and common law principles, viewing crime as conduct that disrupts social order and warrants penal response. This divergence illustrates the structural and conceptual differences between the Iranian and English legal systems in addressing criminal behavior, including suicide and related acts.

Types of Homicide and Suicide in English Law

In English law, homicide is classified into murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, and infanticide. However, during the twentieth century the approach of English law changed to some extent. Under the Suicide Act 1961, suicide is no longer regarded as an offense for the principal actor. Accordingly, the legal rule that treated suicide as a felony was repealed, and as a result, attempted suicide—which had also been considered an offense—was abolished. Nevertheless, where at least two persons are involved in the matter, criminal responsibility may arise.

This responsibility may arise either under the Suicide Act or under the Homicide Act 1957. Under Section 2 of the Suicide Act, a person who (whether present or not at the scene) aids, abets, counsels, or procures the suicide of another, or an attempt by another to commit suicide, is criminally liable (5).

Accordingly, motive is not of central importance. Thus, providing poison in order to hasten the death of a suffering person, just as encouraging an elderly relative to “end it all” in the hope of inheriting, may constitute an offense (5).

Under this statute, any form of assistance, encouragement, or provision of the means of suicide for another person is independently recognized as a criminal act. Therefore, by enacting the Suicide Act in England, not only was a legal mechanism established to criminalize assistance in suicide, but the concern of those who believed that decriminalizing suicide itself would lead to an increase in this reprehensible act was also alleviated (5).

Under Section 1 of the Suicide Act 1961, suicide is no longer a criminal offense; however, pursuant to Section 2 of the same Act, any assistance in suicide is punishable by up to fourteen years’ imprisonment. This offense may be committed through any form of helping, assisting, counseling, or facilitating another’s suicide, since the same broad terms used to describe participation in crime (as aiding or abetting) are employed in Section 2 as well. Nonetheless, because this conduct is framed as a distinct substantive offense rather than being treated merely as secondary participation, an attempt to commit this offense is conceptually possible. A typical example is where the

assistance ultimately does not result in death despite the person's attempt to commit suicide, whereas "attempted aiding and abetting" in English law, as confirmed by the courts, is not generally recognized (5). In this legal scheme, any assistance, encouragement, or provision of the means of suicide for another person is treated as an independent criminal act (5).

Accordingly, by adopting the Suicide Act in England, a legal solution was created for criminalizing assistance in suicide, and the concern of those who assumed that abolishing punishment for suicide would increase its prevalence was addressed (5).

In English criminal law, a "suicide pact" may operate to reduce certain murders to voluntary manslaughter. By way of explanation, English law has historically divided manslaughter into involuntary and voluntary forms. Voluntary manslaughter occurs where the accused possesses the malice aforethought required for murder, but due to the existence of a partial defense—such as provocation or diminished responsibility—or because the killing occurred pursuant to a suicide pact, the conduct is considered less blameworthy (5).

In any event, under Section 4(1) of the Homicide Act, a person who kills another, or is a party to the killing of another by a third person, pursuant to a suicide pact, is guilty of manslaughter rather than murder (5).

Although suicide was formerly a criminal offense, it no longer is; yet when that offense was abolished, the offense of aiding and abetting suicide remained, on the rationale that assisting a person to take their own life may be carried out for concealed motives—such as benefiting under the deceased's will—and in any case where a person dies due to the act of another and that other person intends to cause death, liability for murder may arise (5).

Moreover, under Section 4(3) of the Homicide Act, a suicide pact is defined as an agreement between two or more persons with the common object that all of them shall die, whether or not each of them is to take their own life.

Nevertheless, a person's conduct cannot be treated as having been done in pursuance of a suicide pact unless it was carried out while the person had a settled intention of dying pursuant to that pact. In other words, a suicide pact means that two or more persons agree to die together (whether each kills themselves or one kills another). In such circumstances, if the defendant kills another party to the pact at a time when the defendant's settled intention is that they too will die in the course of carrying out the pact (whether by their own hand or by another), but later changes their mind and survives, the killing will be reduced from murder to manslaughter under the Homicide Act 1957. This form of killing constitutes one of the recognized categories of voluntary manslaughter—namely, a killing that is intentional in fact but treated by law as manslaughter rather than murder (5).

Under Section 1 of the Suicide Act 1961, suicide is no longer a criminal offense; however, any assistance in suicide, under Section 2, is punishable by up to fourteen years' imprisonment. This offense may be committed through any form of help, assistance, counseling, or facilitation of another's suicide, since the same general terms used for participation in crime are employed in Section 2. Yet because it is defined as a specific substantive offense rather than as mere secondary participation, an attempt to commit this offense is conceptually possible—for instance where the assistance does not ultimately lead to death despite an attempted suicide—whereas attempt to aid and abet, as the English courts have confirmed, is not ordinarily recognized (5).

One rationale for introducing such a rule may be to encourage those participating in a suicide pact to withdraw from full execution of the pact, even after killing other participants, by assuring them that they will be treated more leniently than murderers. Another rationale may relate to the psychological instability of such persons, which may justify a more mitigated response compared to ordinary homicide offenders. In cases where an individual has not

themselves killed another person, they may nonetheless be convicted under the Suicide Act 1961 for the offense of assisting another's suicide (5).

Where a person can establish that the death was a suicide and formed part of a suicide pact in which the person intended to die, liability will be reduced to manslaughter. This must be proved as a defense on the balance of probabilities. The legality of this reverse burden of proof was affirmed by the Court of Appeal in R v H (2003), where the defendant was prosecuted for allegedly injecting his wife with a high dose of insulin and thereby killing her. He had also taken a low dose of insulin which would not have caused death. He claimed to be the survivor of a suicide pact. The Court of Appeal held that the defendant bore the burden of proving the existence of the suicide pact on the balance of probabilities. This reverse burden was regarded as necessary to protect vulnerable members of society from murder and from offenders who might disguise their conduct as a suicide pact (5).

The Impact of Social and Psychological Factors on Suicide Attempts and Legal Responses

Suicide is one of the issues that has attracted considerable attention in many human societies, particularly in industrialized and modern communities. Research indicates that psychological and social factors significantly affect individuals' decisions to attempt suicide. In fact, one of the most important factors that drives individuals toward suicide is a sense of incapacity in confronting psychological and social difficulties. Especially under conditions such as economic crises, family problems, divorce, and social pressures, the rate of suicide attempts increases in certain groups. Studies show that women and adolescents are particularly more vulnerable under such conditions and are at higher risk of attempting suicide (7).

Psychological factors also play a major role in the occurrence of suicide. Mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders may lead individuals toward suicidal ideation. Many people who attempt suicide have experienced psychological problems prior to the act, and the comprehension and management of such problems have been difficult for them. Therefore, in examining psychological factors behind suicide attempts, attention should be paid to individuals' mental health history and treatment background. Research suggests that lack of treatment or inappropriate treatment of mental disorders can further push individuals toward high-risk decisions such as suicide (6).

In response to this phenomenon, the criminal laws of many countries—especially Iran and England—adopt different approaches toward suicide. In Iranian law, suicide has not been directly criminalized, but certain acts such as assisting suicide and inciting it have been subjected to punishment. While in English law, suicide is not considered a criminal offense, any form of assistance or encouragement may result in criminal sanctions. These differences stem from varying cultural, social, and legal approaches to suicide across societies, and in many jurisdictions emphasis is placed on preventive and therapeutic measures rather than punitive criminal sanctions.

Discussion

Key Features Relating to Suicide in English Law

In light of the foregoing, the key features relating to suicide in English law include the following:

1. If the accused is charged with murder, the burden of proving that a suicide pact existed will likely rest on the accused, generally on the balance of probabilities.

2. A killing committed in the course of a suicide pact is treated as an offense under the “Homicide Act,” not under the “Suicide Act.” Accordingly, causing death in this manner is categorized as manslaughter rather than murder (5).
3. Under Section 2 of the “Suicide Act,” liability for assisting another’s suicide arises only if the victim in fact takes their own life. Therefore, if it is established that the accused killed the victim, the accused will not be guilty under Section 2 but will instead be treated as a killer (5).

Suicide Pacts in the Criminal Law of Iran and England

In Iranian law, a suicide pact has not been specifically criminalized. Where suicide involves two persons, it may be described as a suicide pact. By contrast, under the English Homicide Act 1957, this concept has been regulated, and it is treated as relevant only where it is proven that the person concerned had a settled intention to die; in that case, the offender is punished for manslaughter rather than murder (5).

If two people enter into a suicide pact via the internet and one of them (A), for any reason, does not commit suicide, the question arises whether A’s conduct is punishable and, if punishable, what sanction applies. It appears that a suicide pact may differ from an invitation to suicide. As previously noted, in an invitation to suicide, one person invites another to commit suicide; but in a suicide pact, beyond mutual invitation, there is also an element of mutual commitment to execute the pact, which distinguishes it from mere invitation.

A suicide pact cannot be treated as assistance in suicide, because the individuals involved have already decided to commit suicide and have themselves facilitated its occurrence. In such a case, none of the persons participating in the pact can be accused of assisting suicide. Therefore, in Iranian law, given that a suicide pact has not been specifically criminalized, a person who breaches a suicide pact is not subject to criminal prosecution (3, 4).

An invitation to suicide may be oral or written, but in both cases it must be explicit; implicit suggestion is insufficient. For example, if A sends a video of another person’s suicide to B’s electronic address and says, “I hope this video will be useful to you,” the offense of inviting suicide is not realized, because A has not explicitly invited B to commit suicide, whether orally or in writing. Likewise, if the invitation is merely framed as a suggestion without any explicit request, it is not treated as an invitation to suicide (5).

In the Iranian legal system, where defenses such as duress, necessity, or insanity are raised, the accused must present supporting evidence and the evidential burden then shifts back to the prosecutor to evaluate the evidence and reach a conclusion. This defensive mechanism is determined in suicide-related cases based on the evidence and arguments presented. By contrast, in English law, if the accused is charged with murder, the burden of proving the existence of a suicide pact rests on the accused on the balance of probabilities (5).

Self-Harm and Suicide by Omission in Iranian and English Law

In criminal law, human behavior may, under different conditions, lead to penal sanctions. Legislators sometimes prohibit individuals from performing a specific act; in such cases, the commission of that act constitutes a breach of the legislator’s order and is treated as a crime. In other cases, the legislator obliges individuals to perform a specific act, and omission of that act constitutes a breach of legal duties and is regarded as a crime. In yet other situations, the combination of omission and commission results in a specific offense, sometimes described as an “act offense arising from omission.”

Omission means refraining from fulfilling a duty imposed by law. For example, in offenses such as refusal to render justice, failure to provide maintenance, refusal to assist injured persons, or failure to prevent life-threatening dangers, the material element of the offense consists of an omission to perform a legally required act. Such crimes may occur due to a person's failure to carry out a legal duty (5).

In this regard, in the English legal system, there is no general duty imposed on individuals to assist others or rescue them from harm. In other words, if a person witnesses a child falling into a lake, the witness is not legally obliged to rescue the child and cannot be criminally prosecuted for the child's death. However, where suicide occurs through omission—such as refusing to drink water or refusing to eat—an individual who has encouraged or incited another to carry out such conduct may, under English law, be convicted of assisting suicide. Thus, the role of encouragement and incitement becomes particularly significant in such scenarios (5).

Enforcement of the Prohibition of Suicide in the Islamic Legal System and Its Relation to New Scientific Concepts

The enforcement of the prohibition of suicide in the Islamic legal system is grounded in doctrinal and ethical principles. In the Islamic view, human beings, as creatures of God, cannot claim full autonomy over their life and death, because that right belongs exclusively to God. These teachings are emphasized in the Qur'an, including in verse 3 of Surah al-Talaq: "Whoever relies upon God—then He is sufficient for him" (Qur'an, al-Talaq, 65:3). Islam calls upon individuals to rely on God in the face of hardship and not to despair of divine mercy. Accordingly, suicide is recognized as a prohibited and impermissible act in the Islamic legal tradition and is condemned from religious, ethical, and social perspectives (3, 14).

With recent advances in neuroscience and psychology, new concepts have entered legal and religious debates concerning suicide—particularly in relation to mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, which are closely linked to suicidal tendencies. Neuroscience has achieved substantial progress in identifying brain and neural mechanisms associated with these tendencies. Some researchers believe that many suicidal behaviors arise from chemical and functional changes in the human brain (6). In this context, attention has been directed toward neurotherapy-based interventions and even the use of artificial intelligence technologies in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. These developments have encouraged reconsideration of individual responsibility and the legal response to suicide from a new perspective (9, 17).

Therefore, taking neuroscience and modern therapeutic approaches seriously in suicide-related issues creates a need to reassess religious and legal responses to this phenomenon. In particular, where neurological and chemical disorders play a causal role in suicidal behavior, modern therapeutic and preventive policies should be deployed alongside religious teachings and legal systems, so that individuals at risk receive scientific and psychological support and such incidents are prevented (2, 11).

Intentional Crime Against the Self

Where a person intentionally kills themselves—i.e., commits suicide—no diyah (blood money) is payable to them, and no expiation (kaffarah) applies; this is a matter of consensus among Shi'a jurists. Among Sunni jurists, however, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i is reported to have held that expiation applies and should be paid out of the estate of the person who committed suicide (13, 15).

The Shi'a reasoning in this regard rests on the principle of non-liability (bara'at al-dhimmah), because establishing a financial or ritual obligation requires proof. If it is argued that the basis for such liability is verse 92 of

Surah al-Nisa—which provides that whoever kills a believer by mistake must free a slave, and that the generality of the verse includes killing oneself—the response is that the apparent generality is contextually directed to the killing of another person and does not extend to suicide (4, 16).

Unintentional Self-Inflicted Injury (Non-Intentional Offense Against the Self)

An unintentional offense against the self occurs when a person, in involuntary circumstances and without intent, causes harm to themselves. For example, if a person falls from a height or an explosive detonates in their hand and they are injured as a result of such incidents, then under the Islamic legal system their blood is deemed to be without compensation (i.e., no diyah is payable), and there is no liability on the part of the *'aqilah* (agnatic relatives) to pay diyah. Sunni jurists such as Abu Hanifa and al-Shafi'i have likewise held that in such cases the *'aqilah* bears no diyah liability. However, some other jurists, such as al-Awza'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, have maintained that in such circumstances diyah does fall upon the *'aqilah* (13, 15).

In this connection, some sources cite Islamic narrations as jurisprudential evidence emphasizing that, in specific conditions, diyah liability may be assigned to the *'aqilah*. By contrast, Shi'a jurists, relying on the principle of discharge of liability (*bara'at al-dhimmah*), reject *'aqilah* liability and stress that legal responsibility in this domain cannot be established without valid proof (14, 16). This approach is reinforced particularly where Prophetic narrations and scholarly consensus in matters of suicide clearly indicate that suicide, as a self-directed act, should not trigger punishment or legal liability in the same manner as offenses against others.

In English law, the legal status of suicide and attempted suicide has differed clearly from Islamic approaches. In the nineteenth century, if suicide resulted in death, the person who took their own life was deprived of religious burial rites; and if suicide was attempted but did not result in death, the person could be treated as a felon under the then-prevailing legal doctrine. This situation reflects the more traditional and stringent view of English law toward suicide—an approach that, in light of social and medical transformations, requires reconsideration in modern legal and scientific debates, especially in the domains of neuroscience and psychology (5). Taking scientific advances into account in understanding neurological and psychological disorders—particularly depression and anxiety disorders that may lead to suicidal tendencies—has contributed to more contemporary shifts in legal attitudes toward these phenomena.

Strategies for Preventing Suicide

The impact of social and psychological factors on suicide: Suicide is often the result of a combination of social and psychological factors that lead individuals, during crises and difficult circumstances, to decide to end their lives. This phenomenon is observed more frequently in certain groups—such as women and adolescents—especially when they perceive no alternative solution to their problems (7).

Detection and intervention in suicidal crises: Based on research findings—particularly in suicide prevention centers—identifying and diagnosing individuals at risk of suicide through emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and decision-support systems, can improve diagnostic processes. Available evidence indicates that psychological and social interventions, especially at the early stages of a crisis, can be effective in reducing suicide. In particular, closer engagement with individuals at risk can help reduce anxiety and misinformation in this area (8).

Suicide prevention and contemporary scientific approaches: By using artificial intelligence technologies, behavioral and psychological patterns can be modeled and risk predictions can be generated—especially for

individuals vulnerable to mental disorders and depression. These predictions can help treatment systems implement faster and more effective interventions. In particular, neuroscience-based analytical models can facilitate rapid detection of brain and neural difficulties associated with suicidal tendencies. Given that factors such as neurochemical dysregulation and neuroendocrine disturbances may play significant roles in the emergence and intensification of depression, such approaches may contribute to further progress in science and emerging technologies (1, 6).

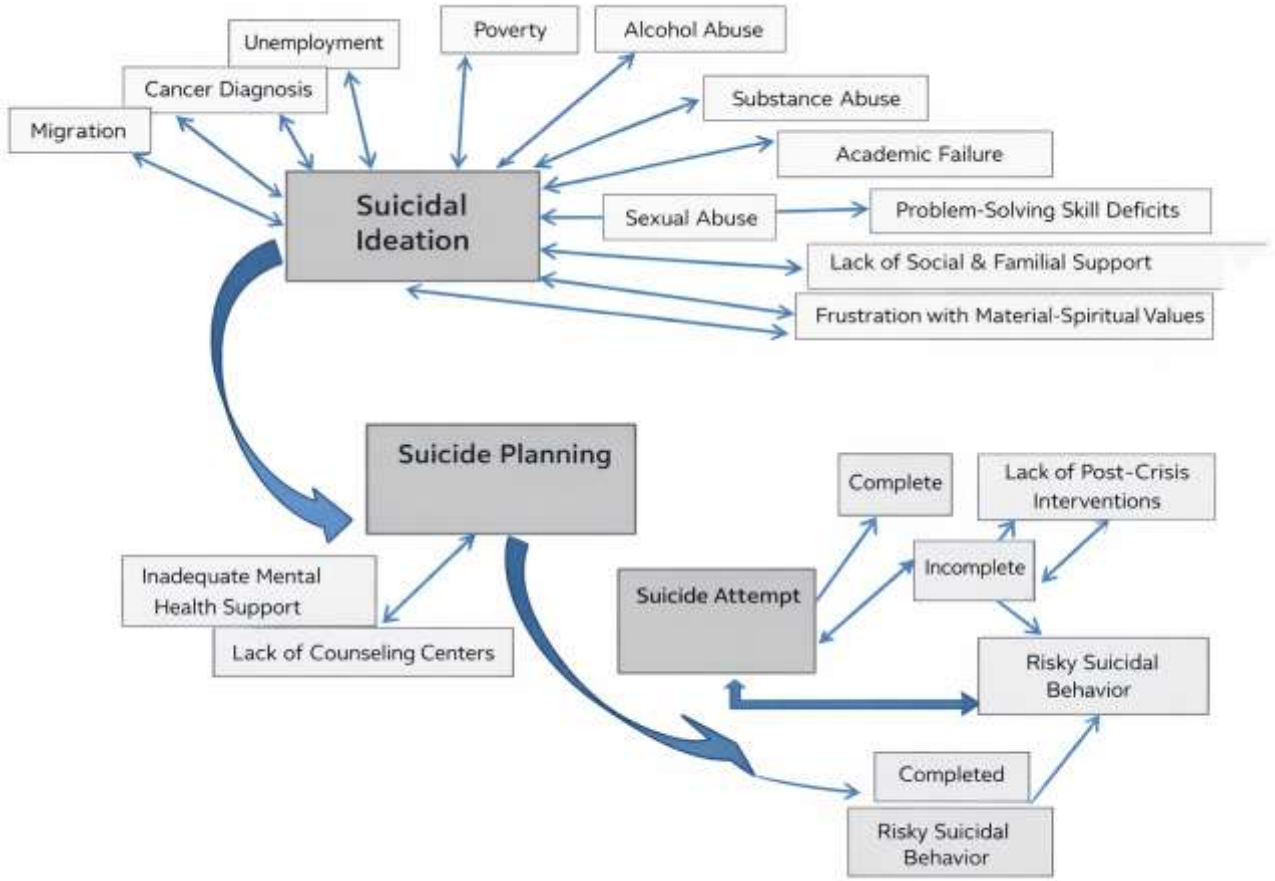


Figure 1: Strategies for Preventing Suicide

From the foregoing, it follows that suicide is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon with multiple risk factors. Therefore, formulating a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy requires complete identification of all risk factors, as well as a clear understanding of the precise definitions of different levels of suicide prevention. For this reason, the following section addresses the general concept of prevention and then the specific concept of suicide prevention.

Linking Artificial Intelligence, Neuroscience, and Law: Predicting and Preventing Suicide Within Ethical and Legal Frameworks

The integration of these scientific domains can help identify individuals at risk and generate predictions based on big data (such as social media activity, medical records, and internet searches). Models that use posts from platforms such as Twitter or Instagram to detect signs of depression and suicidal inclination are examples of such applications. This can contribute to preventing self-inflicted deaths; however, significant legal and ethical critiques

arise, including questions concerning the boundary between privacy and death prevention, and whether governments are permitted to use personal data for suicide prevention (11, 12).

In addition, recent advances in neuroscience—especially in brain scanning (fMRI and PET) and the study of genetics and neurotransmitters (such as serotonin and dopamine)—have sought to identify distinct brain patterns associated with suicidal tendencies. These developments raise legal and ethical questions, including whether brain-based or genetic testing can be used to predict suicide risk and, if so, whether such prediction could justify mandatory treatment interventions (6).

Combining artificial intelligence and neuroscience in the creation of a “suicide warning system” may enable early interventions before suicide attempts occur. Yet it also generates substantial challenges, particularly regarding the scientific certainty of predictions, stigmatizing labeling, and potential violations of individual liberty. Accordingly, the use of artificial intelligence and neuroscience in predicting suicide must be examined legally—especially in comparison with concepts such as “preventive criminal surveillance” and “public health prevention.” Moreover, the risk of labeling and social stigma that individuals might bear due to their brain-based or genetic characteristics must be addressed within robust legal and ethical frameworks (9, 17).

Finally, by comparatively examining suicide prevention laws and policies across different countries, including England and the United States, this article seeks to connect these concepts to Iran’s legal system and to highlight the legal challenges within this field (5, 10).

Conclusion

In Islam, suicide and self-harm are regarded as prohibited and unlawful acts. Based on religious sources such as the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition, these acts are strictly forbidden and considered grave sins for which punishment in the hereafter is envisaged. In light of these teachings, there is no religious authorization for suicide, and even in the face of personal and social hardships, Islam advises individuals to exercise patience and to seek alternative solutions, such as reliance upon God. In Iranian criminal law, suicide has not been recognized as an independent crime, because an attempt at suicide is generally understood to arise from psychological distress and cannot be definitively characterized as a criminal act founded on culpable intent. Moreover, in many instances, legal responses to suicide have been designed not around criminalization, but rather around prevention and support for the individual who attempts suicide.

In Iranian law, pursuant to the General Penal Code enacted in 1955 and its amendments in 1973, suicide was not independently criminalized and no punishment was prescribed for it. This approach was adopted because no definitive sanction could be meaningfully imposed upon a person who commits suicide, and the act itself is primarily rooted in the individual’s psychological and crisis-related conditions. Likewise, under the current Islamic Penal Code enacted in 2013, suicide or attempted suicide is not independently classified as a criminal offense. Nevertheless, certain acts related to suicide—such as assistance in or incitement to suicide—are punishable under Iranian law. For example, under Iran’s Computer Crimes Act, assistance in suicide through computer or telecommunication systems has been criminalized, and specific penalties have been prescribed for those who aid in the commission of such acts.

In English law, suicide is no longer regarded as a criminal offense; however, assistance in or incitement to suicide may result in criminal liability where a person directly participates in, or cooperates with, another’s suicide. Under the Suicide Act 1961, suicide itself is no longer treated as a crime. Nevertheless, if a person assists another in

committing suicide or aids an attempt at suicide, legal responsibility may arise. This means that in English law, even where suicide occurs through the encouragement or assistance of another, the resulting liability may be less severe than that for murder and may be classified as voluntary manslaughter. Accordingly, legal responses in English law to suicide and assistance therein are carefully calibrated in light of statutory frameworks and the individual circumstances of each case.

Recommendations

A. Practical Recommendations:

1. Establishment of health houses and family counseling centers.
2. Inclusion of an academic course entitled “Law and Family Studies” within the educational system.
3. Enhancement of societal cultural awareness regarding the personal and social status of women.
4. Promotion of sexual awareness and improvement of general public education.
5. Creation and development of monitoring systems for the detection and supervision of psychological disorders.

B. Research Recommendations:

1. Support for research focusing on the personality traits of offenders and patterns of offending behavior.
2. Training of healthcare personnel, counselors, teachers, and parents.
3. Examination of the factors contributing to the occurrence and spread of suicide.
4. Analysis of criminal-law-based preventive approaches to the phenomenon of suicide.

C. Proposals for Innovation in the Article:

1. **Identification:** Utilizing machine learning algorithms and big data analysis (such as social media activity and medical records) for the early identification of individuals at risk of suicide. Integrating these data with neuroscience-related information—such as analysis of online behavior and biometric changes—can generate rapid alerts for timely intervention.
2. **Intervention:** Designing advanced conversational agents to reduce loneliness and anxiety among individuals at risk. In addition, deploying digital therapeutic tools based on psychological techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to provide immediate and personalized interventions for those in need.
3. **Legal and Ethical Responsibility:** Defining legal responsibilities in cases of error by artificial intelligence systems, particularly with regard to incorrect interventions. Developing regulatory frameworks to protect privacy, human dignity, and to prevent misuse of data, especially in the fields of psychology and mental health.

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Authors’ Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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