The Mindsponge-based Rethinking of Suicidal Ideation and Behavior

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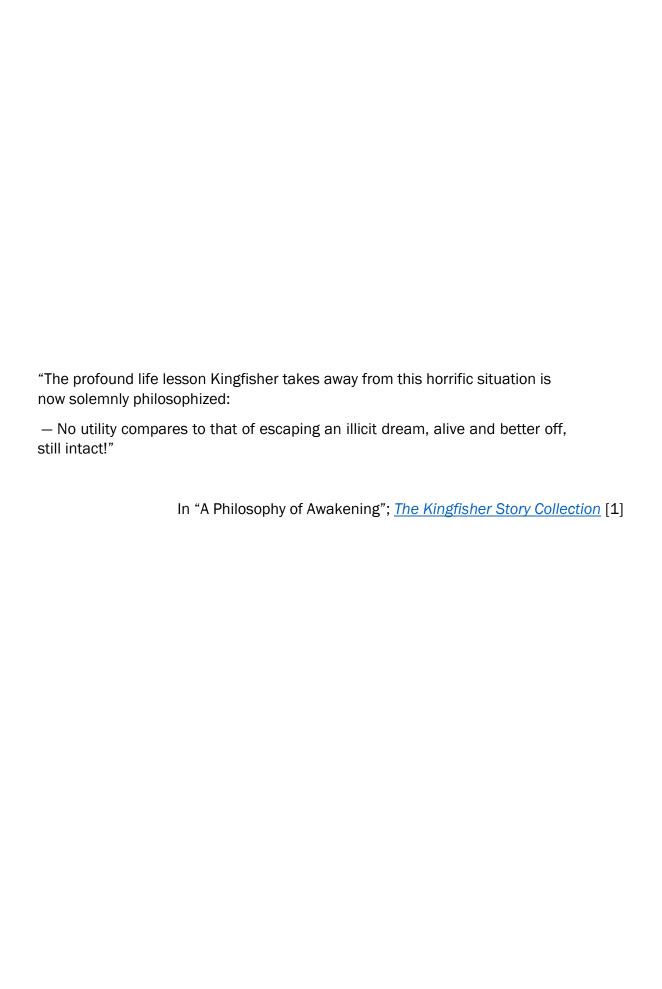
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"The profound life lesson Kingfisher takes away from this horrific situation is now solemnly philosophized:

 — No utility compares to that of escaping an illicit dream, alive and better off, still intact!"

In "A Philosophy of Awakening"; *The Kingfisher Story Collection* [1]

Within the literature related to suicidal ideation, several theories have been proposed. The Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (IPTS) is seemingly the most well-known theory [1-3]. It underlines the significance of belongingness and perceived burdensomeness in predicting suicidal ideation and behavior.

Even though many studies empirically support this assumption, there remain inconsistencies [4-8]. For example, Forkmann et al. advocate the predictability of perceived burdensomeness towards suicidal ideation and behaviors but suspect the importance of perceived social connectedness [8]. So, what factors lead to inconsistencies among empirical results?

Given the complexity and dynamics in the formation of suicidal ideation and behavior, thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness alone might not be sufficient to explain an individual's suicidal ideation and behaviors. Specifically, thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness are both subjectively driven. In other words, these two factors can only explain the subjective feeling of an individual, but not the external factors. A strong sense of belongingness enables an individual to seek help from the surrounding people.

However, what happens if an individual has a strong sense of social connectedness, but professional mental consultants are not available, or surrounding people also obtain negative feelings? It is highly likely that the problems that push an individual to think about suicide cannot be solved due to the contagion of suicide occurrences, in which case, the problem may even be worsening.

Therefore, I propose another way to understand suicidal ideation and behavior through a more dynamic and systematic approach employing the Mindsponge mechanism – an information processing mechanism [9,10]. The model assumes that an individual's mind is like a sponge with a set of core values (or mindset) located in the center. The individual's thinking and behaviors are significantly influenced by the mindset's costbenefit judgment based on perceived information. Simultaneously, the mindset also affects the information absorbing, filtering, and discharging processes. Thus, for coming up with any decision, an individual needs to satisfy three conditions [11,12]:

1) the decision-related information is accessible,
2) the decision-related information is accepted through the filtering process, and,
3) the decision is perceived as highly beneficial by the mindset based on existing information.

Suicidal ideation is a decision in which becoming non-existence provides "benefits" to the person who conducts suicide. Any person that has suicidal ideation might think death can be a better choice than being alive as he/she cannot find any other solutions (or help-related information). Thus, suicidal ideation might appear when any one of the following circumstances is met:

- help is not accessible or available,
- help-related information cannot get through the filtering process, and

- the help-related process is perceived as not useful to negate negative feelings.

By this way of thinking, the inconsistent findings regarding the importance of thwarted connectedness can be explained. Thwarted belongingness can be regarded as one of the factors leading to the second circumstance. Even though the individual's sense of belongingness is high so that he/she can find help, it would be no use if there is no help available or such support is perceived as not sufficient for negating the "benefits" of suicide.

As suicide remains one of the leading causes of death, a more complex, dynamic, and systematic understanding of suicide's nature is needed for a more effective suicide prevention strategy. As such, I propose a new approach that considers suicidal ideation and behaviors as a result of an individual's information processing. This approach is expected to make sense of previous literature's inconsistencies and help comprehend complex suicide-related phenomena, such as suicide contagion, etc. [12].

For justifying the effectiveness of the Mindsponge mechanism in explaining the formation of suicidal ideation and behavior, I call for further theoretical discussion and empirical results.

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