



Factors influencing and the methods used to commit suicide among people less than 40 years autopsied at CNTH Ragama



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Introduction

Suicide is the second major cause of mortality among youth globally. The WHO estimates that approximately 800,000 people die due to suicide annually (2017). Various factors contribute to suicide broadly as personal factors including issues related to nuclear family background, substance abuse, educational stresses, mental illnesses & social factors including extra marital affairs, economic problems are some to name[1]. Suicide among young adversely affects the family, society & ultimately the productivity of the nation.

Objectives

To describe & evaluate the relationship between factors influencing & methods used to commit suicide among people less than 40 years which were autopsied at CNTH Ragama.

Method

A retrospective descriptive study was conducted on suicides of people less than 40 years which were autopsied at Colombo North Teaching Hospital over a period of 5 years (2014-2019). Records of Inquirer into Sudden Deaths (ISD), postmortem examination reports and hospital records were perused.

Results

Out of 70 suicide cases 53 (75.7%) were males, 17 (24.3%) were females. Majority of them were between 21-25 years (30%) (Chart 1). Among them 33 were unmarried. 37 were married or living together with a partner.

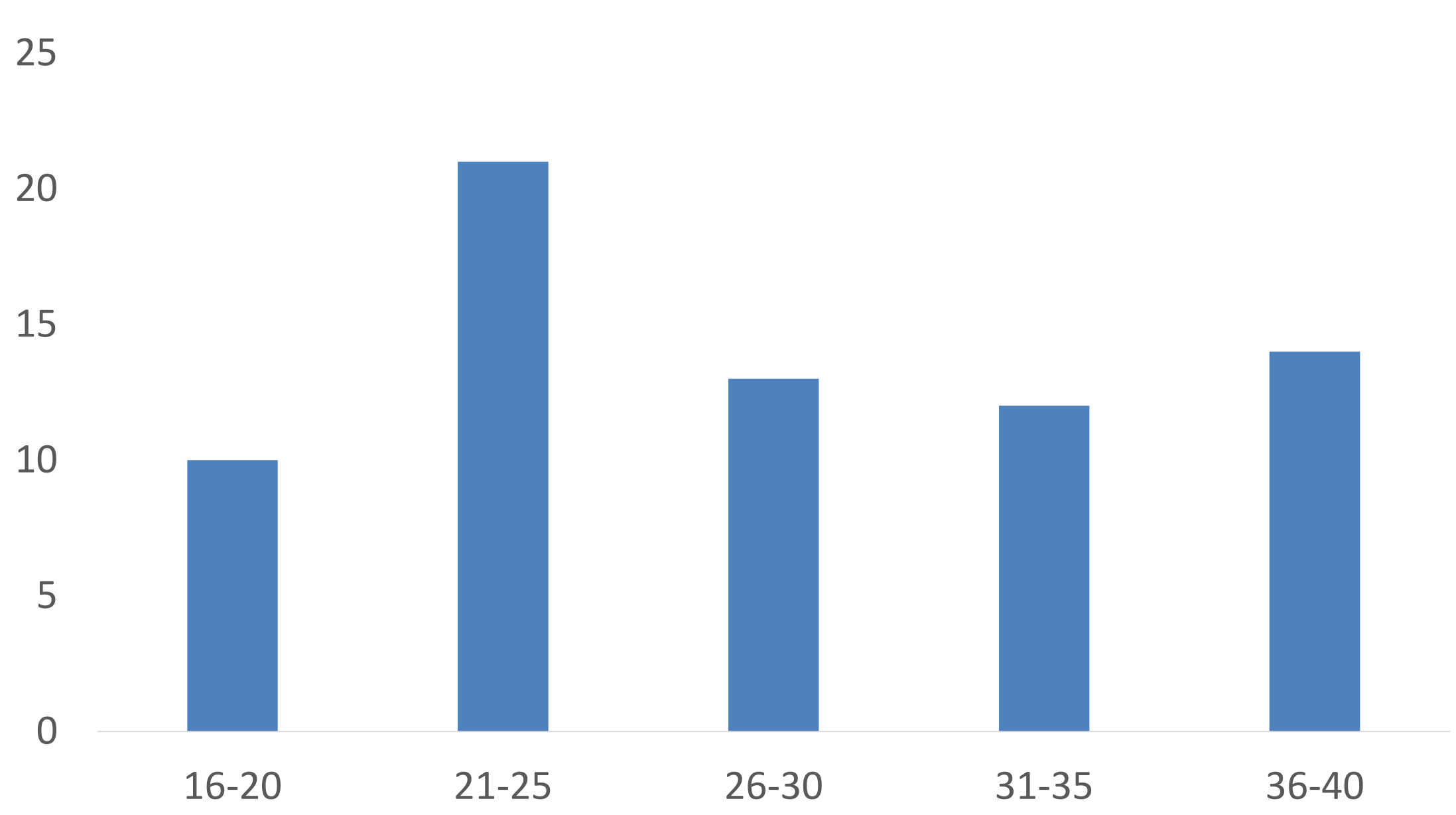


Chart 1-Age distribution

Analysis of cause of suicide as per relatives revealed that majority had committed suicide due to unknown causes (28.6%) & relationship problems (25.7%). However when it comes to women, majority committed suicide due to family problems and men due to relationship problems (Chart 2) There was a considerable difference between males & females.

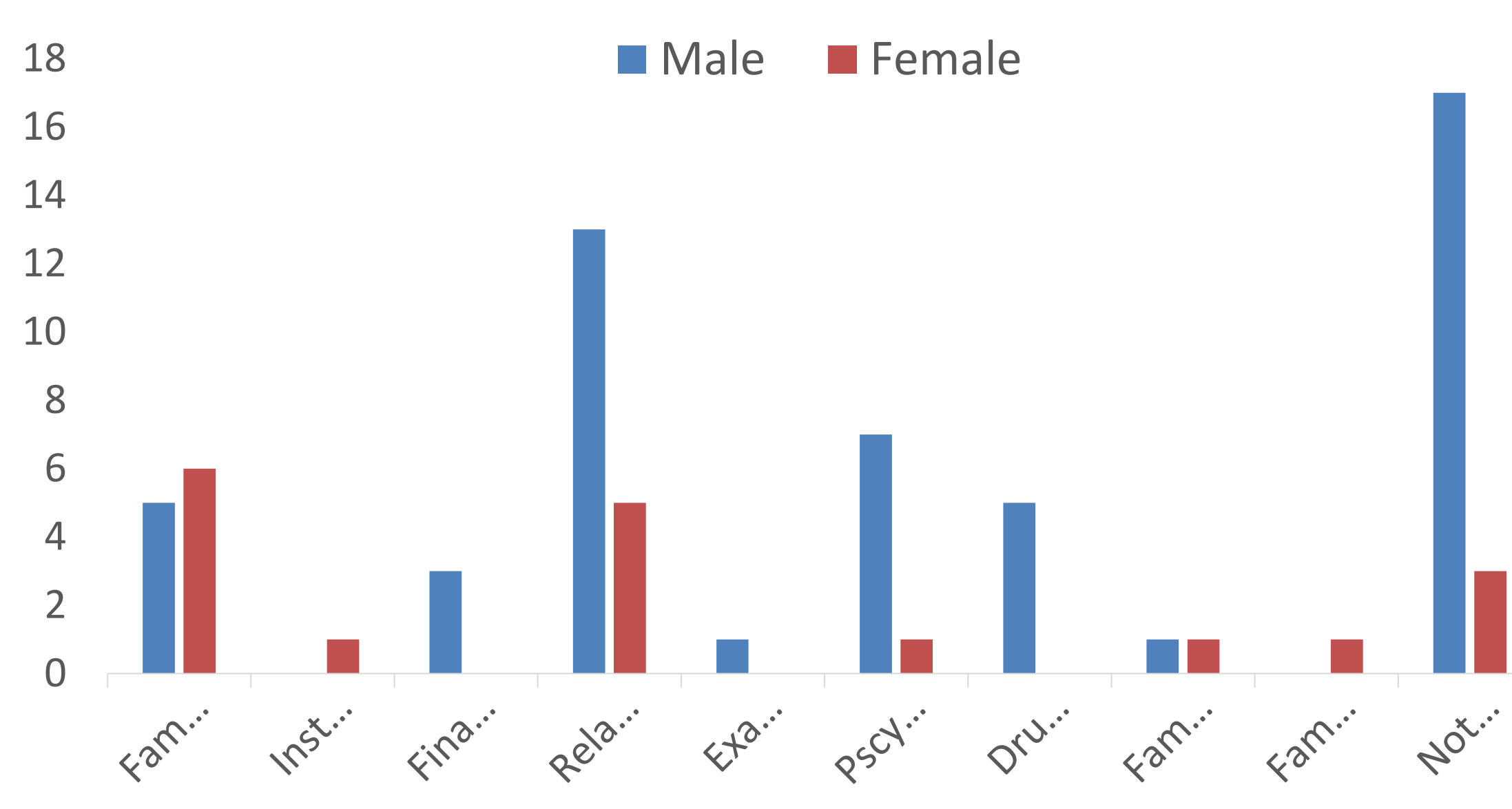


Chart 2-Reasons of suicide Vs gender

Labourers were the commonest of all professions(31.4%) & had a wide variety of causes.

Common reason of suicide among married and living together were family problems, relationship issues and financial problems. Family problems, relationship issues and psychological issues were common in unmarried. Relationship issues were the commonest among 21 to 25 year age group while financial problems were the main reason among older age groups (Chart 3)

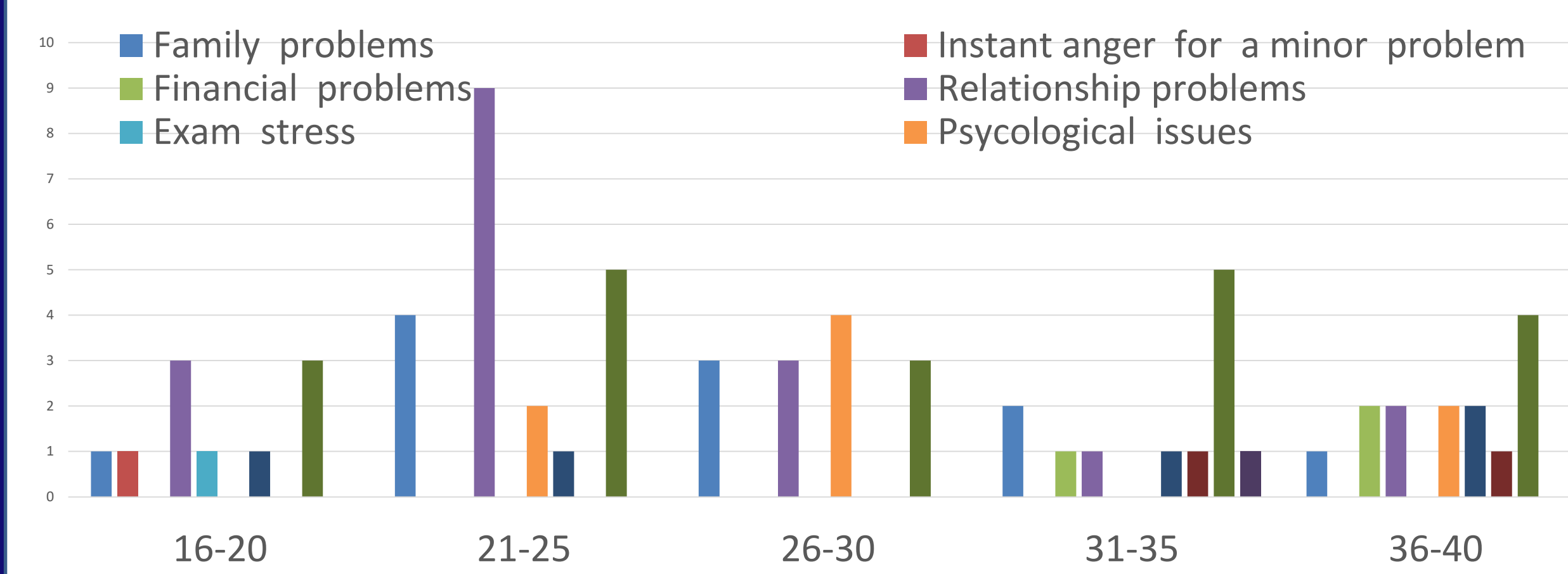


Chart 3: Reasons for suicide among different age groups

Analysis of method of suicide revealed that irrespective of age majority had chosen hanging (72.9%) as the method of suicide, which had mostly occurred at home (86.3%) (Chart 4).

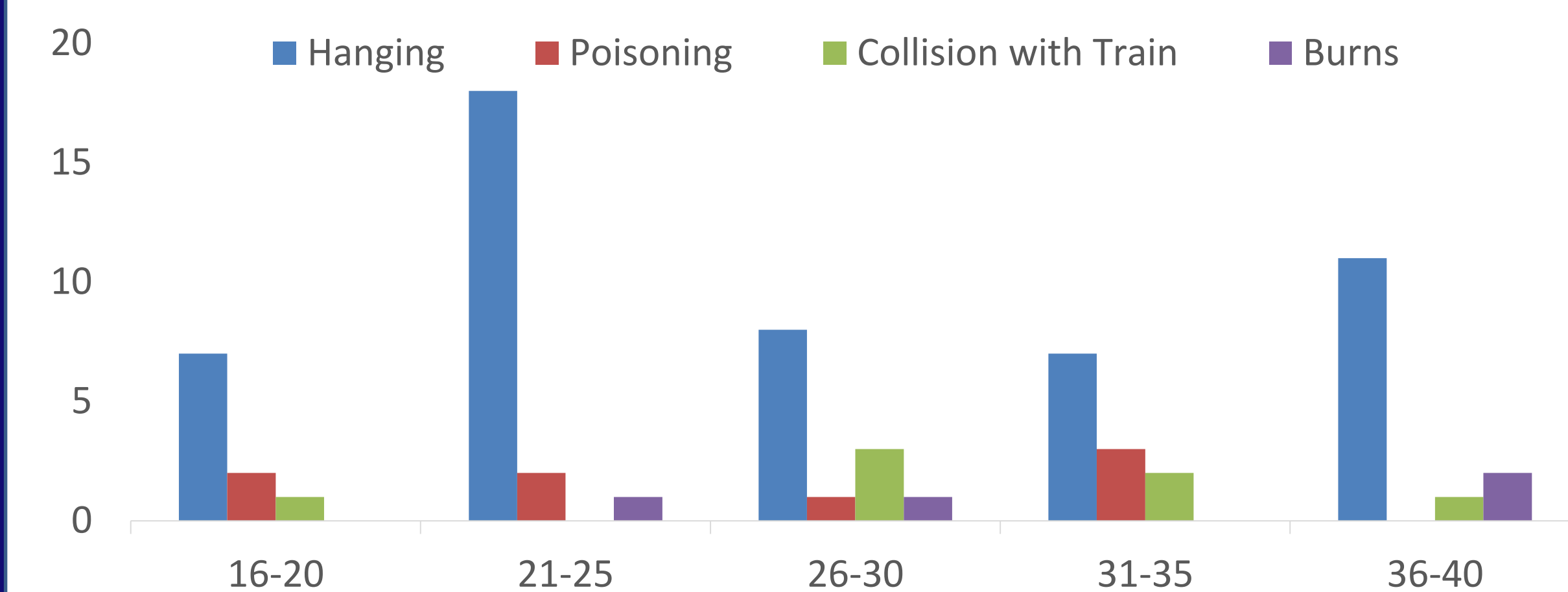


Chart 4: Age of the victim Vs. Method used to commit suicide

When it comes to the gender Vs method used to commit suicide burns were commonly observed among women (Chart 5).

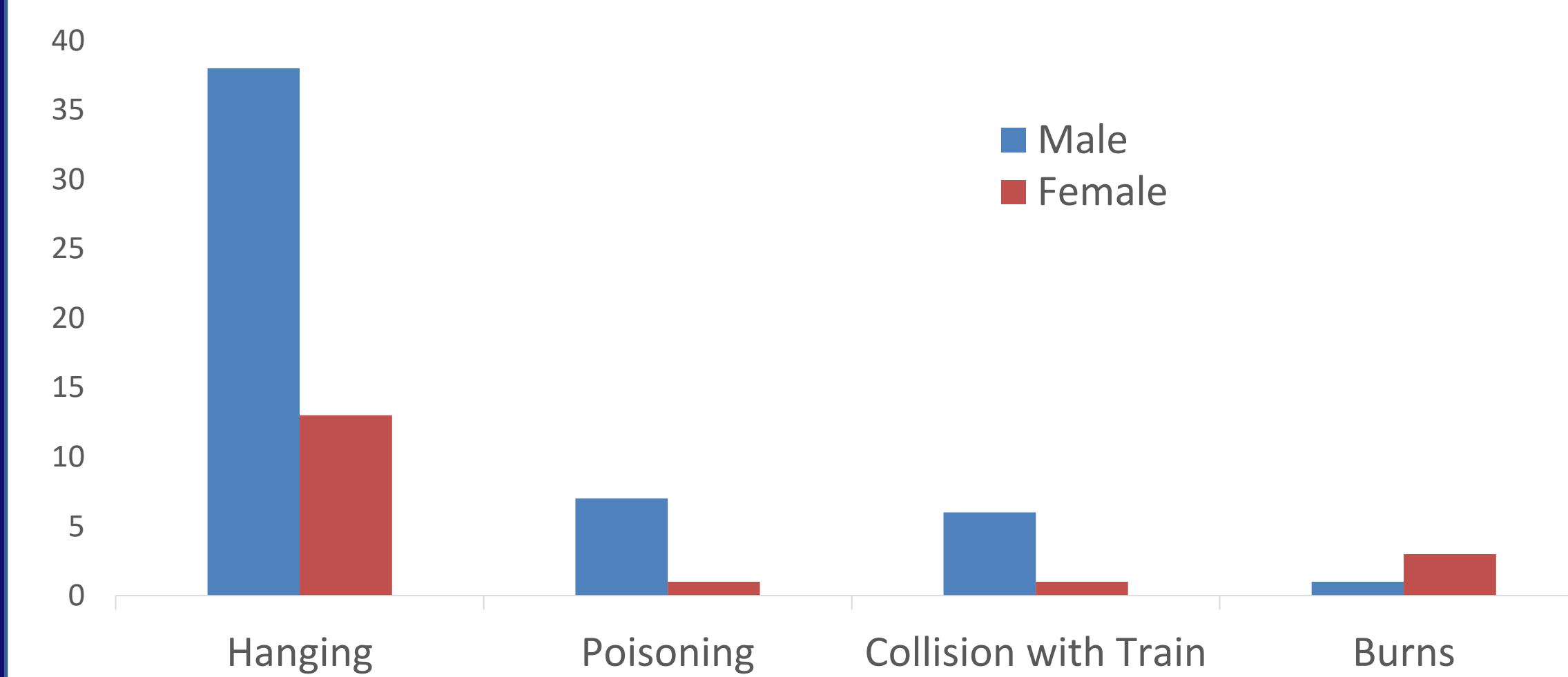


Chart 5: Gender Vs. method used to commit suicide

When underlying reason for suicides is considered against the method used to commit suicide jumping to the moving train was observed among people with psychological issues and drug abuse while there was an association of self-burning with psychological issues (Chart 6).

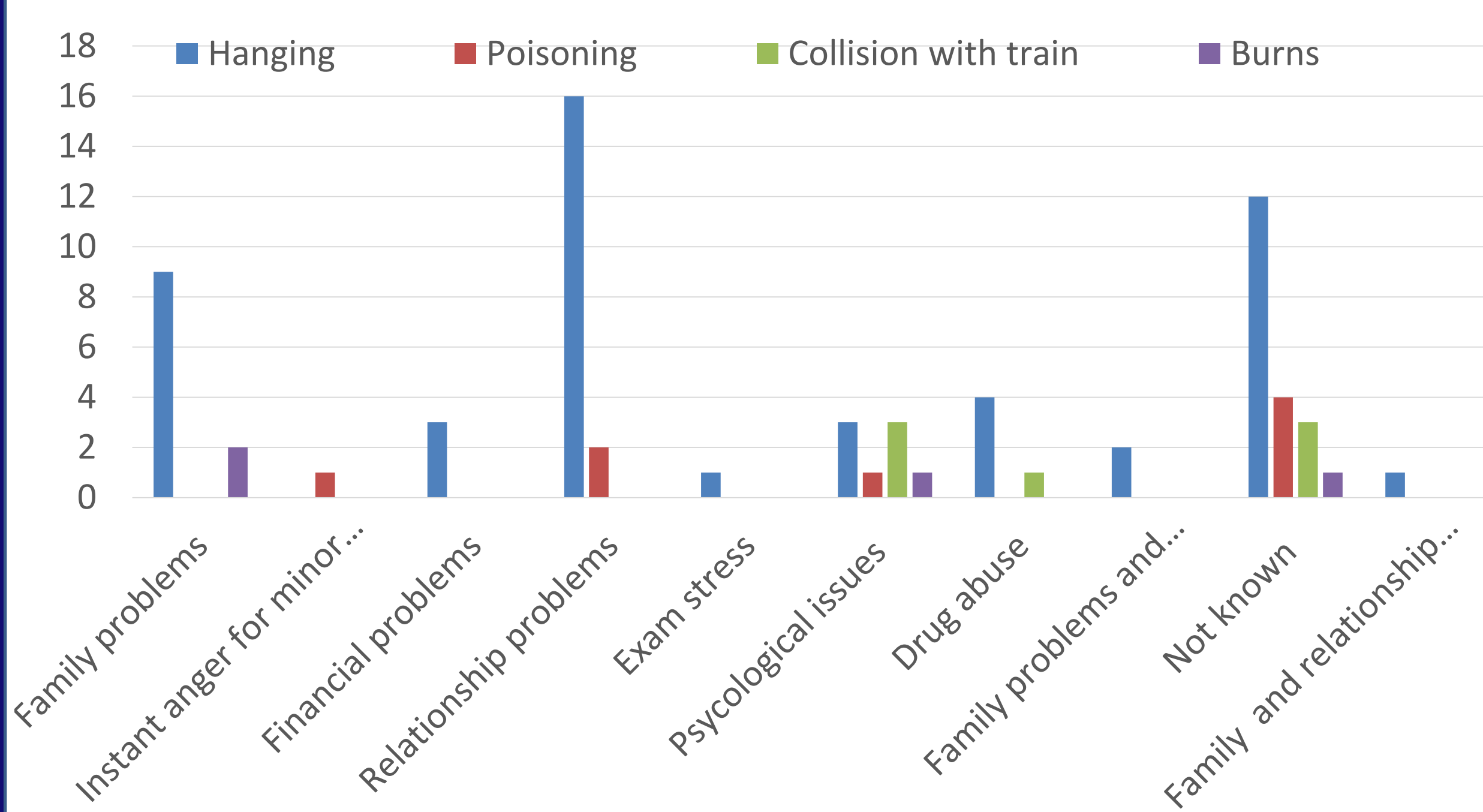


Chart 6: Reason for suicide Vs. method used

Conclusions & recommendations

Male gender is more susceptible to commit suicide worldwide[2, 3] Findings of our study was in agreement irrespective of age & the civil status. However, research suggests that suicidal thoughts and attempts are more common among females than males [4]. The reason for more deaths may be associated with more aggressive and immediately lethal methods selected by men [5,6].

This was evident in our study as well, where even though hanging was the commonest method of suicide among both genders there was a tendency to use other methods like self burns among females, where there is a chance of saving the life if immediately detected. Most of the males has chosen collision with train & poisoning. There are variations among methods of suicide worldwide. Hanging is the predominant method in most of the countries whereas firearm suicide in US, poisoning in Latin America,Canada,UK,Asia[6]. This is mainly due to the availabilities. According to previous studies during British rule, methods used has gradually transformed from hanging to drowning & self poisoning in Sri Lanka due to wide availability of toxic pesticides[7]. With the strong restriction of toxic pesticides in Sri Lanka, pesticide poisoning has reduced[8].

Study showed majority of the victims were between 21-25 years. In a research on suicide by age and gender in Turkey it was revealed that 15 to 24-year age group accounted for 40% of suicides [9].

In our study, relationship issues accounted for highest number of suicide irrespective of gender & civil status specially among most vulnerable age group highlighting the need for strengthening of counselling services. Financial issues were the main reason among older age group. Psychological issues & drug abuse seems to be the emerging causes of suicide at present which is predominant in males than females less than 40 years. However, reasons for suicide were unknown to relatives in high number of cases among males. Mental health related issues, relationship issues, substance abuse are the main underlying reasons of suicide at present according to published literature [10]. Identifying the vulnerable groups and need for limiting the accessibility towards commonly used methods specially hanging by making the family members aware will be of use to reduce these unfortunate deaths of young.

Limitations

The main source of information was the records of ISD based on the histories given by the relatives, where only the immediate cause of suicide has been recorded. But ideally multiple factors contribute to suicide which are interconnected with each other which need to go for a psychological autopsy

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