



SOUTH AFRICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS



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Profile of self-harming patients admitted in a South African Hospital

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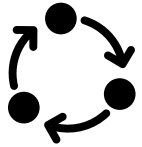
06 September 2025

Introduction

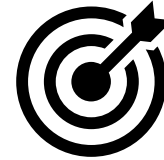
- Self-harm, as intentionally hurting oneself, has grown to be a major public health issue in recent years.
- Such act can be carried with or without the deliberate intent to kill oneself.
- With Intention : Attempted suicide.
- Without intention: Non-suicidal Self- injury (NSSI).

- This study aimed to profile self-harming patients admitted to a South African hospital.

Methods



Cross-sectional design based on a retrospective record review.



All eligible records during the study period (n = 223).



Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH), Gauteng, South Africa.



Review of patient files using a structured data extraction form.



June 2022 – May 2023.



- Descriptive analysis: (means, ranges, SDs, proportions) + diagrams + tables for socio-demographic variables.



Medical records of Patients admitted following deliberate self-harm.



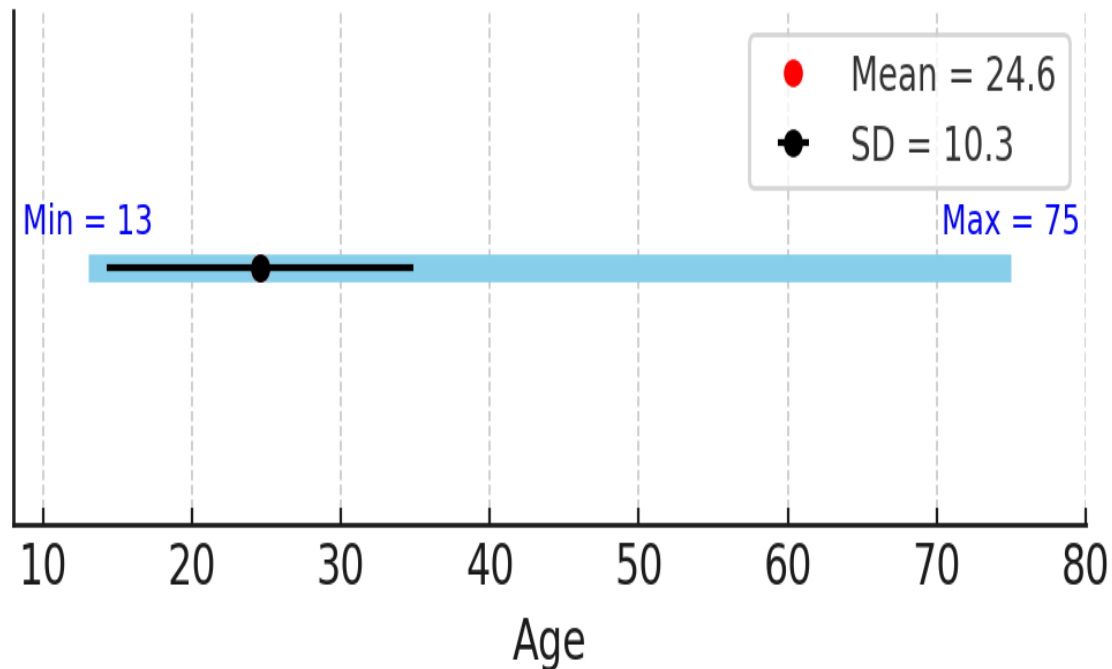
- Bivariate and multivariate

SMUREC/M/12/2024: PG

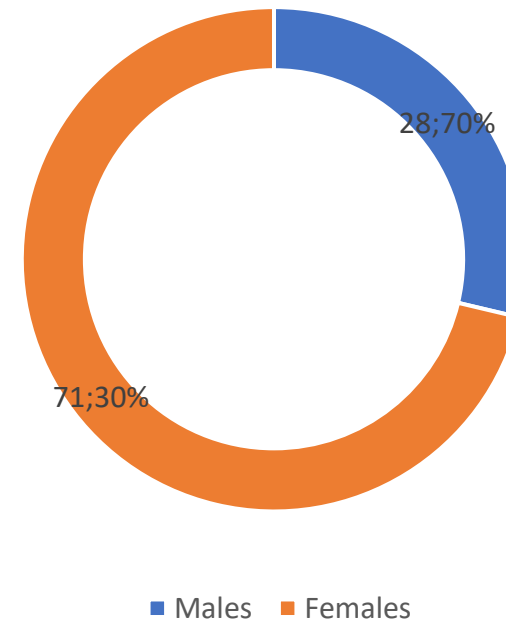
Results : Demographics & Methods

Sample Size: n=223

Age Range, Mean, and Standard Deviation



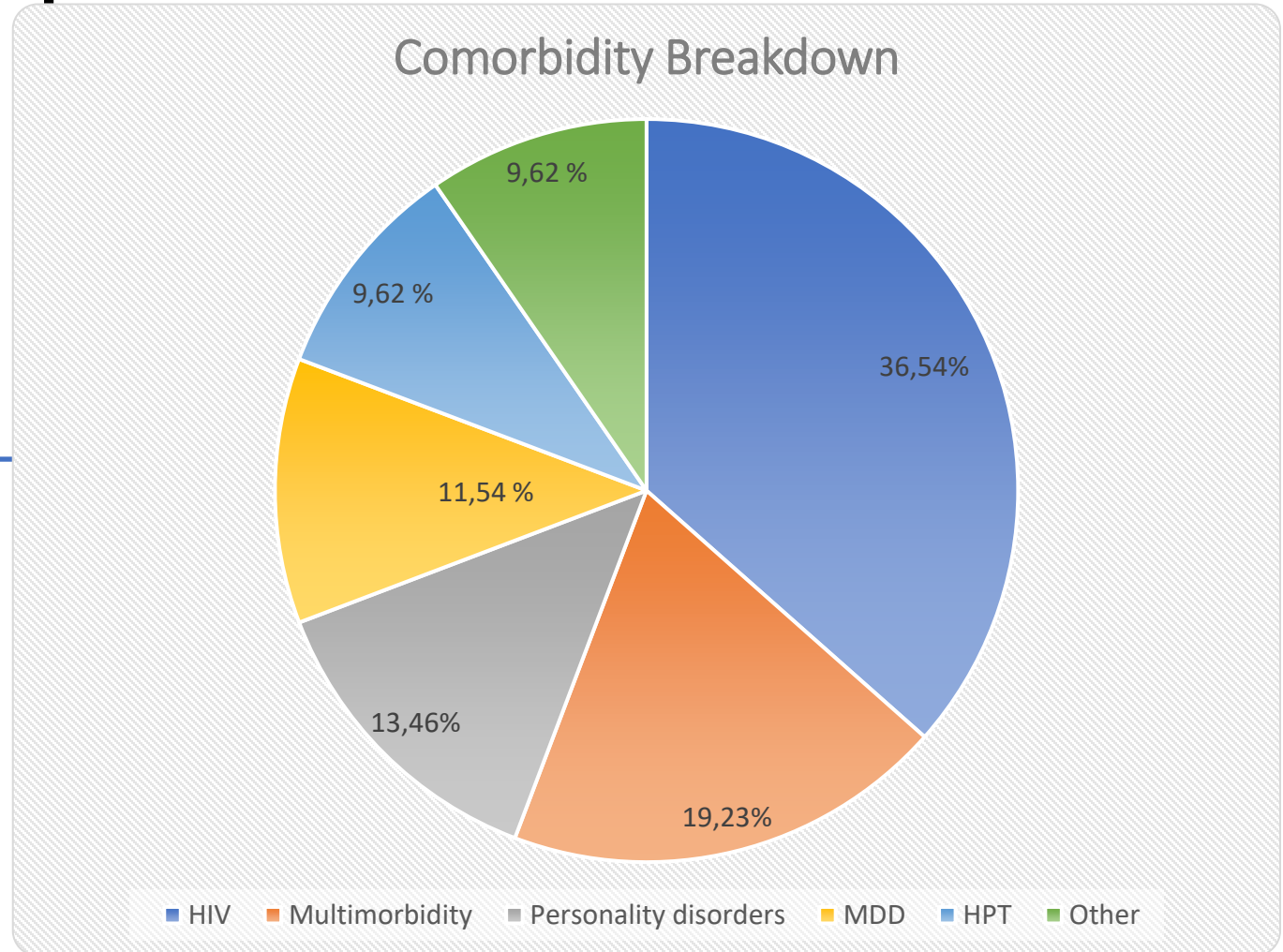
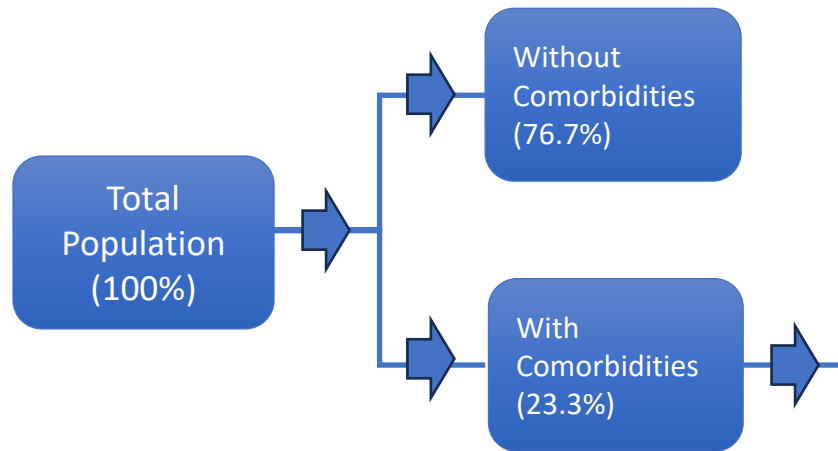
Gender



Marital Status: 89.6% were **single**

Employment Status: 46.2% were **unemployed**

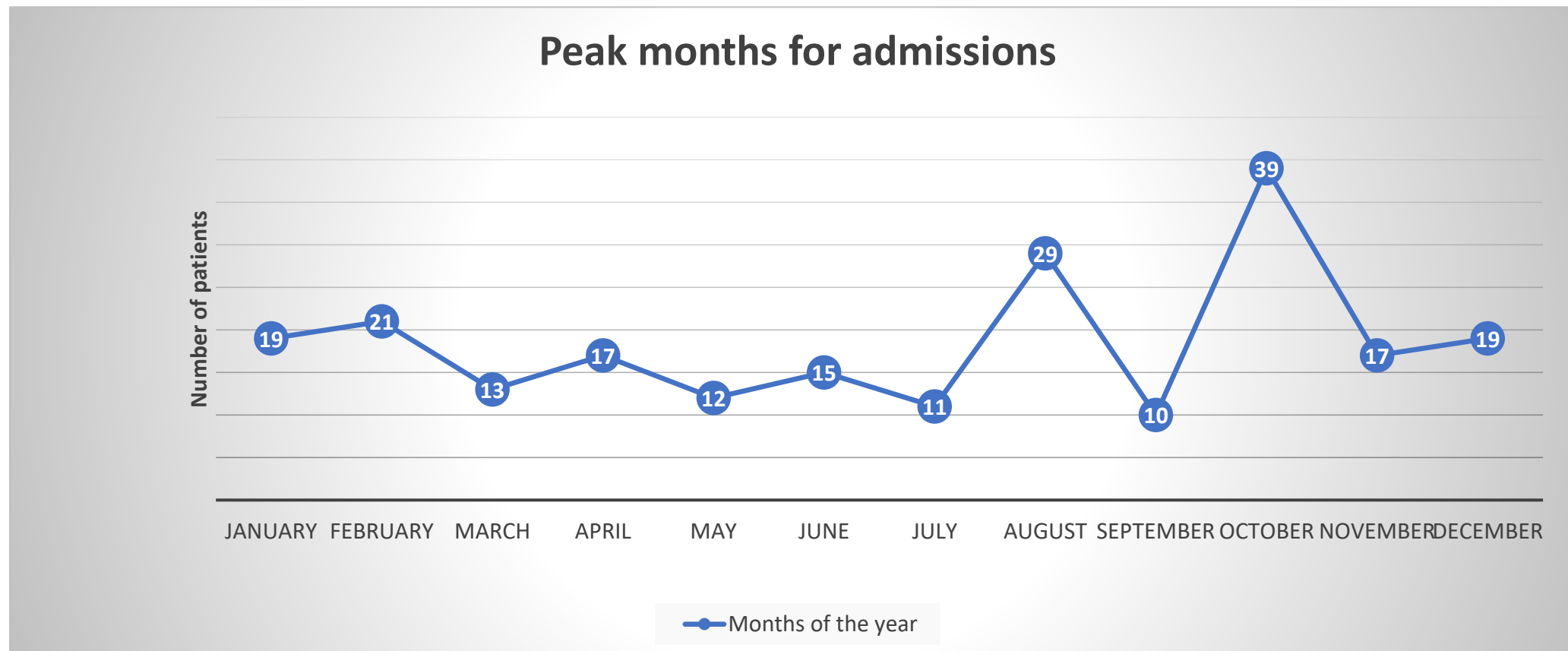
Results : Demographics & Methods



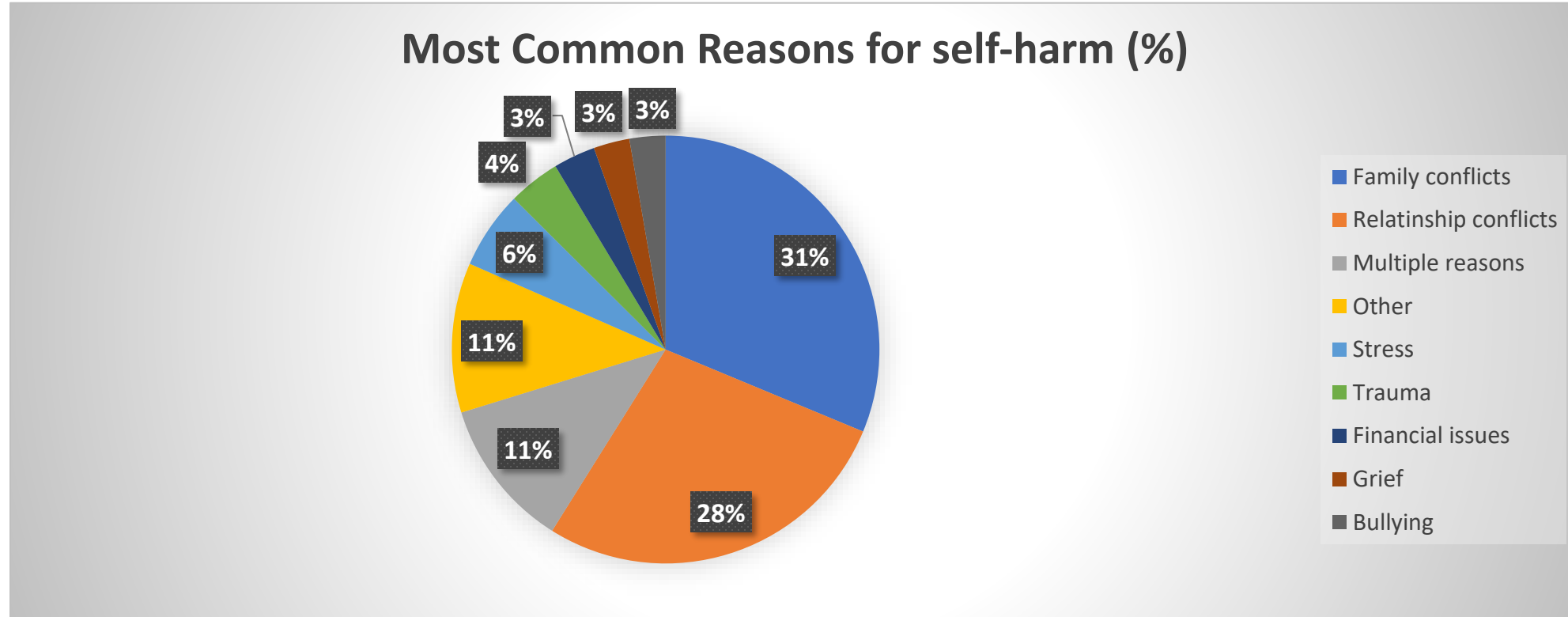
Method of Self-Harm:

98.7% used **overdose or poisoning** (e.g., medication, toxic substances)

Results: Timing for Self-Harm



Results: Reasons for Self-Harm



Gender Differences in Reported Reasons:

- ♀ : More likely to report **family conflict**
- ♂ : More likely to report **relationship issues**



Statistical significance: $p = 0.008$

Discussion

- Self-harm was strongly linked to being single ($P = 0.008$) and unemployed ($p = 0.000$) with single female students and single unemployed males having a higher likelihood of self-harming behavioural acts.
- Unlike high-income countries where psychiatric illness and alcohol abuse are more prominent, in this setting, social and economic stressors dominate.
- Prescription medication use ($p = 0.000$) and family conflict ($p = 0.008$) were significantly associated with females, while pesticide use ($p = 0.000$) and relationship problems ($p = 0.008$) were significantly associated with males, highlighting the need for tailored psychosocial interventions.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- The seasonal peaks in October and February periods represent times of heightened vulnerability.
- The predominance of poisoning highlights the need for medication regulation and poison control awareness.
- There is a critical need to improve mental health screening.
- Further research, particularly studies exploring preventative strategies may be beneficial, especially in light of the patient profiles identified in this study.

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THANK YOU

for your attention.

Questions welcome...



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