

Review-2

The manuscript addresses an important and underexamined area by foregrounding young adults' first-person experiences with suicidal thoughts and attempting to situate these experiences within a Just Practice framework and Critical Suicidology. Centering youth voices and moving beyond purely clinical or individually oriented models toward relational, institutional, and structural contexts is timely and relevant for the field. However, while the topic and analytical orientation have clear potential significance, the manuscript currently does not fully realize this contribution due to conceptual, methodological, and analytic gaps. With substantial revision, the study could offer a meaningful addition to justice-oriented suicide research and inform researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking alternatives to risk-factor-focused paradigms.

The title is clear, however it is not "search engine-friendly". I would recommend something akin to: "Young Adult Perspectives on Suicide Ambivalence: A Just Practice and Critical Suicidology Analysis Using Participatory Methods"

The abstract is generally clear, but it lacks specificity about methodology; it does not explicitly state sample size and number of focus groups, as well as the analytic approach (content analysis). Also, there should be clear articulation of the three major themes to offer readers a concise preview of findings (context, ambivalence, and factors connecting to life). Lastly, they should incorporate a stronger concluding sentence that links the findings back to the need for structural, justice-oriented suicide prevention strategies.

The references are somewhat current and relevant, and they reflect some engagement with established suicidology alongside critical and social justice-oriented scholarship. However, the literature base is not sufficiently robust or well aligned with the manuscript's stated aims and analytic orientation. In particular, the manuscript would benefit from stronger engagement with foundational and contemporary youth suicide literature to more clearly situate the study within existing theoretical and methodological debates and to clarify what, specifically, this study adds to the field. In addition, the

reference list should be expanded to include scholarship on resilience, power dynamics and ethical considerations in focus group research with participants who have histories of trauma or suicidality. Greater engagement with literature on institutional betrayal, psychiatric coercion, and harms associated with involuntary or carceral suicide interventions would substantially strengthen the manuscript's structural analysis. Finally, references on participatory action research with suicidal or otherwise marginalized youth populations, including ethical, methodological, and analytic applications of PAR, are needed to justify the study's methodological choices and to support the claims made about participatory contributions and implications.

The manuscript is meaningful. However, revisions should justify and problematize the theoretical and conceptual framework, the use of focus groups and PAR; strengthen the abstract; analyze results instead of report; clarify methodological safeguards and limitations; and enhance theoretical integration and implications in the discussion

Specific Comments:

The manuscript has several notable strengths. It centers young adults' lived experiences with suicidality, engages justice-oriented frameworks such as Just Practice and Critical Suicidology, and addresses an important gap in suicide research that often privileges clinical or risk-factor-driven approaches. The topic is timely and relevant, and the authors demonstrate a clear commitment to centering youth voices and social context.

That said, the Introduction would benefit from greater conceptual clarity and focus. Key constructs, including the Just Practice framework, need to be clearly defined rather than assumed. The introduction currently provides a broad overview of suicide-related topics but does not sufficiently specify the study's research question, nor does it clearly articulate why this particular framing is necessary or what is missing from existing literature. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is referenced but not defined, and no concrete examples are given of how PAR has been used in prior suicide research. The section would be strengthened by more targeted citation of youth suicide literature and clearer articulation of which theories and methods the authors are drawing on and why.

Similarly, the Background section lacks sufficient and focused citation and does not consistently link the reviewed material back to the study's specific research question. The manuscript needs to more clearly identify the gap it aims to fill and explain why that gap is important for the field. While the content is generally relevant, several paragraphs are dense and could be streamlined to better foreground the central claims and their relevance to the study's purpose.

The Methods section provides a clear description of recruitment, prescreening, and data collection procedures, which is a strength. However, the manuscript needs to more explicitly state and justify inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample is heavily LGBTQ, yet this is neither discussed nor made analytically relevant in relation to suicide research or the study's methodological choices. PAR is named but not meaningfully discussed; the author should explain how PAR informed the design, data collection, analysis, and implications of the study, including concrete examples of how the advisory board was involved.

In addition, the manuscript should explicitly address the limitations inherent in using focus groups for highly sensitive topics such as suicidality. Focus groups can reproduce harmful power dynamics, inhibit disclosure, and privilege dominant voices, particularly given participants' trauma histories, experiences of suicidality, and marginalized identities. The author should explain why focus groups were selected over individual interviews, how facilitators monitored and mitigated power dynamics, whether any participants demonstrated distress and how it was addressed, and whether the virtual format altered power relations, safety, or group hierarchies. The manuscript also needs greater detail regarding how mental health diagnoses were measured, how questions were used, and how participant protection was ensured. Further, the rationale for using content analysis is not clearly articulated or cited. The analytic process, specifically how themes were generated (how many team members involved?), refined, and interpreted including

how youth were involved. Authors mention using content analysis but also themes? More clarity about form of qualitative analysis used is needed.

In the Results, a central conceptual issue is the unclear separation between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and broader systemic or structural levels of context. Although the manuscript states an intention to avoid individualizing

suicidality, several subsections unintentionally fold structural or relational phenomena into the “intrapersonal” domain. For example, experiences such as social media exposure, institutional betrayal, police responses, family religious norms, and cultural stigma are characterized as intrapersonal despite being interpersonal, institutional, or sociocultural forces. Trauma histories involving abuse, domestic violence, or abandonment are treated as interpersonal, yet they are also shaped by family systems, service system failures, and structural inequalities. At the same time, some genuinely intrapersonal factors (such as self-concept or mood states) are not consistently distinguished from relational dynamics. This blending of levels blurs analytic precision and risks re-individualizing what the manuscript seeks to frame as contextual and structural. Reorganizing themes/categories to more clearly distinguish intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and sociocultural or structural levels would strengthen theoretical alignment with Critical Suicidology and the Just Practice framework, prevent unintended individualization, and improve coherence.

The Discussion demonstrates some engagement with theory, particularly Just Practice, but it would benefit from deeper analytic development. Specifically, the authors could more critically interrogate the role of institutional betrayal and examine how prior harmful help-seeking experiences shape both suicidality and participation in research. Greater engagement with contemporary debates in Critical Suicidology, particularly regarding the ethics and limitations of focus groups with suicidal populations, would strengthen the discussion. Additionally, the manuscript gives limited attention to resilience or youth strengths despite rich data that could contribute meaningfully to that literature; with reorganization, the study has the potential to make a more substantial contribution in this area.

Across the Results and Discussion, the analysis tends to describe rather than interpret. While the manuscript identifies intrapersonal and interpersonal contributors to suicidality, it does not fully interrogate how these levels interact or why certain patterns matter for theory-building within Critical Suicidology and Just Practice. For example, participants’ accounts of institutional betrayal, police responses, involuntary hospitalization, dismissive therapists, are presented largely as individual experiences, yet they point to a broader pattern in which “care” operates through surveillance, coercion, and trauma. The discussion also does not fully engage the tension in Theme 3: participants describe wanting to live when embedded in community, but the manuscript stops short of linking this to

broader scholarship on belonging, racialized vulnerability, or the ways systems fracture community ties.

More broadly, while the Just Practice framework is invoked, it is largely applied after the fact rather than used to drive a deeper critique. The findings suggest that young adults' suicidality is shaped not only by context, but by structural abandonment, family systems that suppress emotion, cultures and religions that stigmatize identity, institutions that punish distress, and digital environments that algorithmically target trauma. Yet the discussion does not fully articulate these as patterned forms of power, nor does it examine how they produce the ambivalence participants describe. Questions such as what it means that young adults feel safer with peers than institutions, how institutional harm reshapes help-seeking, and where power and history operate in the emotional calculus of "wanting to die but also wanting care" remain underexplored. Addressing these questions would significantly enhance the manuscript's analytic depth and theoretical contribution.

Finally, the Conclusion is concise and appropriate but could more explicitly reiterate how the findings challenge dominant clinical or risk-factor-focused paradigms and underscore the implications for justice-oriented suicide prevention and intervention.