

Psychosocial Factors as Predictors of Suicidal Ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan

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Abstract

This research was aimed at investigating the psychosocial factors predicting suicidal ideation among the undergraduate of University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Descriptive correlational design survey was adopted for this research. A sample size of 220 respondents was randomly selected for the purpose of this research. Valid and reliable instruments were used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using the Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that self-esteem ($r=0.337$, $p<.01$), family support ($r=0.366$, $p<.01$), hopelessness ($r=0.417$, $p<.01$) and religion ($r=0.402$, $p<.01$) had a positive significant relationship with suicidal ideation, while emotional intelligence ($r = -.414$, $p<.01$) had a negative relationship with suicidal ideation. Also, the joint contribution of the independent variables (Self-Esteem, Hopelessness, Emotional Intelligence, Family Support and Religion) on suicidal ideation was significant. Finally, it was revealed that the independent variables contributed to the dependent variable relatively as expressed below. Self-esteem ($\beta = .774$, $t = 16.350$ $P<.01$), emotional intelligence ($\beta = -.318$, $t = -7.938$ $P<.01$), family support ($\beta = .301$, $t = 5.760$, $P <.01$), hopelessness ($\beta = .498$, $t = 10.388$, $P <.01$), religion ($\beta = .309$, $t = 7.531$, $P <.01$) respectively. The study recommends that the school administrators should establish counselling units in each faculty to bring counselling psychologists closer to the student for any assistance where necessary. The religious bodies such as Churches and Mosques should do everything to preach hopeful messages to their congregation. This is to enliven the students attending such programmes thereby giving them hope irrespective of their situation. Families should also provide the needed support that would boost the students' self-esteem and worth. This may be in form of more affection, support for their aspirations and dreams etc. This is achievable through regular phone calls, visitations and other kinds of support where necessary by the family members and significant others.

Keywords: Hopelessness, Religion, Self-Esteem, Emotional Intelligence, Suicidal Ideation

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Introduction

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of suicides globally and this has been a concern for stakeholders. People commit suicide as a way of escape from their predicaments or situations and the causes for these predicaments differ from one person to another. When people commit suicide, it is a great loss to the individual, the family members, the society, and the nation. Suicidal ideation is viewed as a preoccupation with intensive thoughts of ending one's own life, while suicide is the completed act of taking one's life (Conner, Duberstein, Conwell, Seidlitz, and Caine, 2001). Suicide is an act of taking one's life either with a well thought out plan or not. It is a tragedy that affects people, families, organisation, communities, and the nation entirely. It affects the people left behind after the suicide. According to the World Health Organization (2016) suicide was the second leading cause of death among 15–29-year old worldwide.

Suicide is a multifarious self-destructing behaviour; a consequence of a complicated interaction of several factors on a personal and environmental level. The World Health Organization established suicide as a key global public health concern, due to the increase in the number of suicidal rates over the last five decades, with a worldwide mortality rate of 16 per 100,000. In other words, one death happens every 40 seconds' totaling the death of almost one million people every year (WHO, 2011) and as such constitute an important public health concern. According to WHO (2014), it was estimated that about 804,000 suicide deaths occurred worldwide in 2012. It was also reported that a yearly global age-standardised suicide rate of 11.4 per 100,000 populations (8.0 for females; 15.0 for males) has been documented.

The concept of suicidal ideation gives off thoughts that one's life is not worth living, it may range from an intensity of passing thoughts to actual well figured-out plans to kill oneself or a total fixation on self-annihilation. While some people have suicidal ideation because of hopelessness, other dabble into it because of loss of jobs, loved ones, terminal ailments, disappointments by partners or their loved ones. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the United States of America, in 2013 gave estimates in a research of about 17.0% of students vigorously considering suicide in the previous 12 months (22.4% of females and 11.6% of males); 13.6% of some students in the previous year made plans on how they would attempt suicide (16.9% of females and 10.3% of males).

These suicidal behaviours and thoughts are common among young people. However, there is a hardly a study on suicidal behavioral patterns in Africa and this may be due to cultural beliefs that perceive suicide to be an abomination and taboo. Omigbodun, Dogra, Esan and Adedokun, (2008) conducted a study in Nigeria which that indicates that suicidal behaviour is relatively common in Nigeria. The study reported that the 12 months prevalence of suicidal attempts among adolescents in southwest Nigeria is 12%. According to the WHO Mortality Database (2014), low- and middle-income countries carry about 75% of suicides globally, although National-level data are unavailable for most of these countries. These countries are mostly developing countries in Asia, Africa, and South America. According to Randall, Doku, Wilson and Peltzer (2014), the true scope of the issue in Nigeria and West Africa is hidden by incomplete surveillance and probable socio-cultural issues surrounding suicide and its related stigma. Recently in Nigeria, there has been an increase in the suicidal cases being reported in the dailies . A total of 66 suicide cases were recorded in 2018 while 34 cases have so far been recorded between January and August 2019. Mac-Leva, Ibrahim, Akor and Mutum (2020).

A study by the Suicide Research and Prevention Initiative (SURPIN), conducted at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), revealed that "out of every 66 suicide victims cumulatively recorded in 2018, only about 37.9 percent committed or attempted it through conventional means, while nearly 62.1 percent bade life farewell through the consumption of poison, especially the deadly chemical- Sniper." Also, on March 25, 2019, the picture of an SUV on Third Mainland Bridge, Lagos graced the pages of many Nigerian newspapers. As it turned out to be, that car belonged to a physician, who had parked and jumped into the lagoon. Similarly, on May 13, 2019, the body of Chukwuemeka Akachi, an undergraduate of the Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka was discovered by a passer-by after he had successfully executed his suicide mission in the solitude of an uncompleted building.

In another case, Christabel, a 21- year- old 300-level student of the Department of Medical Laboratory Science, University of Benin (UNIBEN), reportedly killed herself after she was allegedly jilted by her boyfriend. When people commit suicide, it is a great loss to the individual, family members, the society, and the nation. In view of the recent rise in suicidal thoughts and actions, this study seeks to investigate the influence of the hopelessness, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, family support and religiosity on suicidal ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan.

Hopelessness has a place in this study as one of its variables. It has been seriously considered as one of the predictors or indicators of the risk of suicidal behaviour. Results from different scholars (Kashani, Reid; Morano, Cisler, and Lemerond, 1993) seem to indicate a clear link between hopelessness and suicidal behaviour. In addition, hopelessness is seen to correlate more consistently with attempted suicide than does depression (Kazdin, French, Unis, Esveldt-Dawson, and Sherick, 1983).

One of the most often cited risk factors for suicidal behaviour is hopelessness. First formulated by Beck (1967), the hopelessness theory of suicide states that hopelessness a negative attributional style about prospects for the future leads depressed individuals to view suicide as the only way out of insoluble problems. Hopelessness is thus conceptualized as an important cognitive vulnerability for suicide. Consistent with this perspective, several studies have shown that individuals at elevated risks for suicide tend to experience greater levels of hopelessness. In a large-scale community sample, for example, hopelessness predicted suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and suicide death over a 13-year interval (Kuo, Gallo, and Eaton, 2004). Similarly, in patients with psychosis, hopelessness reliably predicted attempted suicide up to 4 to 6 years later (Klonsky, Kotov, Bakst, Rabinowitz, and Bromet, 2012).

Apter, Horesh, Gothelf, Graffi, and Lepkifker (2001) found that hopelessness was elevated in depressed patients with histories of any form of suicidality compared to depressed patients without suicidality; however, Apter et al. also found that hopelessness was no higher in attempts than ideations, and this pattern held even when analyses compared patients with severe attempts to patients with only Ideation. Similarly, in a sample of 102 bipolar outpatients, Acosta et al. (2012) found that hopelessness was independently associated with suicidal thoughts but

not suicide attempts. When people have little or no hope, it could lead to suicidal thoughts. Many situations in the country are pushing people to a state of hopelessness. People are faced with issues of security imbroglio, people cannot sleep with eyes closed as cases of kidnapping and terrorism are increasing daily, students are being kidnapped for ransom, banditry is on the rise, economic meltdown is another challenge, inflation rate is making life unbearable for the citizenry, unemployment and job loss is another issue, strike actions by both academic and supporting staff as a result of poor remunerations. All these and others could push a student to a state of hopelessness and thereby causing a student to think suicide is the way out. This study therefore seeks to investigate the influence of hopelessness on suicidal ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan

Another variable in this study is self-esteem. Self-esteem is a psychosocial factor that gives a sense of self-worth to an individual and shows how much an individual values his or her life in the present circumstance. The results for self-esteem are not so clear, although individuals who manifest or act out suicidal behaviour are frequently seen to possess low self-esteem (De Man, Leduc, and Labrèche-Gauthier, 1993; Marciano and Kazdin, 1994). Self-esteem, the evaluations individuals make about themselves (Harter et al., 1992), is shaped by individuals' appraisals of how they are perceived by significant others. Therefore, the quality of feedback received from the environment significantly affects one's functioning. As such, negative feedback about the self is detrimental to the self-esteem (Sullivan, 1953). Thus, it would be logical to assume that self-esteem is a powerful resource for combatting the effects of suicidal ideation. Research findings have indicated an inverse correlation between life stressors and self-esteem (Garber, Robinson, and Valentiner, 1997; Kliewer and Sandier, 1992). Specifically, a negative self-esteem predisposes adolescents to depression and other psychiatric difficulties (Garber, Robinson, and Valentiner, 1997).

Self-esteem is considered the backbone of a person's wellbeing. The quality of an individual's life is highly influenced by their self-esteem. Self-esteem of an individual is highly associated with the behaviours of the individual. Low self-esteem is seen as the cause of a wide range of personal and social ills, from crime and drug addiction, educational under achievement and a feeling of general wellbeing (Baumeister et al., 2003). The family plays an integral part in the development of effective relationships and when these family relationships are ineffective they may affect the self-esteem of an individual as well as lead to suicidal ideation. Therefore, it is conceivable that positive self-esteem enhances one's ability to cope effectively with stress because individuals with poor coping mechanisms are more vulnerable to environmental stressors (Simonds, McMahon, and Armstrong, 1991) and therefore have the tendency to exhibit suicidal ideations.

Recent researches indicated that there is a strong relationship between academic pressure and stress, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation among students in secondary or high school and in young adults (Ghato, 2017; Nguyen et al 2013). Also, Ajayi (2020) examined the influence of self-esteem and depression on suicidal ideation among university students. The research was carried out among university students to measure the influence of self-esteem and depression on suicidal ideation. The result implied that self-esteem influenced suicidal ideation among the students. Low self-esteem was also associated with depression, hopelessness, and high perceived stigma, but not with degree of psychotic symptoms. Thus, low self-esteem was related to higher levels of depression, hopelessness, suicidal ideation, and an increased likelihood of having previously attempted suicide. In view of the assertion above this study seeks to investigate the influence of self-esteem on suicidal ideation among the undergraduate of university of Ibadan.

Family support is another important variable when discussing the possible mechanisms that could lead to the manifestation of suicidal behaviour. Tension and family conflicts are identified as risk factors for suicidal behaviour in children. When perception of family environment has also been studied, family disorganisation, conflict, lack of control, cohesion, and expressiveness have been observed as common factors in the family backgrounds of children who develop suicidal behaviour. Campbell, Milling, Laughlin, and Bush, 1993).

According to Baumrind (1978) an authoritarian parenting style tends to produce children who are quite and unhappy. They fear than love their parents due to little emotions of comfort and affection displayed by the parents and this is more likely to produce a child with deviant tendencies. The child portrays lower social competence and self-esteem. The uninvolved parents are both uncaring and indifferent to meeting the needs of the children. Authoritative parents, balance clear, high parental demands with emotional responsiveness and recognition of child autonomy producing happy, capable, and successful children. Hence, authoritative parenting style produces children who have better psychosocial skills and display better emotional well-being than do the offspring of parents who are not Authoritative (Parker and Gladstone, 1996). The negative parental behaviour grossly inflicts emotional damage on their children. These effects will eventually interfere with the development of the child's self-esteem and his social competencies and when this happens it could lead to frustrations and unresolved conflicts within the individual students which if not well managed could lead to suicidal thoughts or suicide. Therefore, the

need to investigate the influence of family support on suicidal ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan in this study.

Another variable in this study is religiosity. Religion refers to a belief binding the supernatural nature of man to a supernatural being, and it is a sub-system of culture that determines customs and norms of the society. This has a huge influence on the believers' conducts which shows their reverence or faith. As much as religion affects the values and beliefs of people, it also has high influence on one's actions and thoughts. Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. In general, it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than oneself, and it typically involves a search for meaning in life. As such, it is a universal human experience, a concept that touches majority of people. People may describe a spiritual experience as sacred or transcendent or simply a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness. Some may find that their spiritual life is intricately linked to their association with a church, temple, mosque, shrine or synagogue. Others may pray or find comfort in a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Spirituality has been consistently linked to positive mental (Nooney & Woodrum, 2002) and physical (Powell, Shajhabi, & Thoresen, 2003) health functioning, as well as increased longevity (Oxman, Freeman, & Manheimer, 1995). Higher levels of religiosity across these major denominations have historically been associated with decreased suicide risks (Dervic et al. 2004; Martin 1984; Stack and Kposowa 2011). Further, research suggests that religious attendance may be an independent protective factor against suicide attempts (Rasic et al. 2011), and this is consistent with earlier research that identified that individuals who attend church more frequently were four times less likely to commit suicide than those who never attend religious services (Martin 1984). Stack & Kposowa (2011) further found that individuals residing in nations with relatively high levels of religiosity, who are affiliated with one of four major faiths, are religiously committed, and are engaged with a religious network have lower rates of suicide acceptability. In a sample of British university students, Salmons and Harrington (1984) found that those who were members of a religion differed significantly from nonmembers as 50 percent of religious respondents had suicidal ideas compared to 57 percent of those with no religious affiliation. It can then be hypothesized that if religious involvement increases social integration and social integration reduces the chances of suicide ideation it can then be deduced that religious involvement will decrease suicidal ideation. Religiosity is believed to reduce the occurrence of suicidal ideation and this may be due to the fact that suicide is a taboo to most religion. Nigeria is a religious nation; in fact the world's second largest according to Gallup International with a notable rise in the number of evangelical churches. (The Vanguard newspaper 11 Dec., 2016). It is expected that suicidal ideation or actions should not be heard in the nation but this is not true as suicidal issues are on a rise profile. This study therefore seeks to investigate the influence of religiosity on suicidal ideation among the undergraduates of University of Ibadan.

Emotional intelligence, a variable in this study is defined as an individual's skill to manage and control their own emotions as well as interacting with others (Mayer & Salovey (1995). The study of emotional intelligence has been carried out by Thorndike (1920) in his popular theory called Social Intelligence. Social Intelligence theory brings forward the ability of an individual to manage wise relation between others. Social intelligence theory as gradually developed by Gardener (1983) divided the concept into interpersonal and intrapersonal elements in his multiple intelligence concepts. Before Goleman (1995) explained the idea of Emotional Intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (1989), discovered the utmost importance of managing and control one's own emotion. They have developed a theoretical framework that emphasised four elements such as perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions internally and externally. There is a vast amount of literature which has identified the protective factor Emotional Intelligence against the emergence of suicidal thoughts (Paradiso, Beadle, Raymont and Grafman, 2016; Cha and Nock, 2009). The school of thought believes that when an individual is able to control his/her emotions and impulse; the thought of suicide should be conquered irrespective of the challenges. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of Emotional Intelligence on the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan.

Research question

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What is the relationship between self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support, religion, and suicidal ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan?
2. What is the relative contribution self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support and religion on suicidal ideation among undergraduates of University of Ibadan?
3. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables on the dependent variable among undergraduates of University of Ibadan?

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support, religiosity, and suicidal ideation?

Table 1: Zero Order Correlation Matrix Showing Relationship between the Dependent Variables and Independent Variables of the Study

S/N	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	\bar{X}	SD
1	Suicidal Ideation	-						4..473	4.94
2	Self-Esteem	.337**	-					26.23	4.06
3	Emotional Intell.	-.414**	.179*	-				31.38	4.70
4	Family Support	.366**	-.547**	-.380**	-			29.19	9.43
5	Hopelessness	.417**	.482**	-.167*	.568**	-		17.09	4.89
6	Religion	.402**	-.176*	-.112	.219**	.208**	-.393**	1.40	.66

**Correlation is significant (P<0.01) *Correlation is significant (P<0.05)

Result from table 1 shows that self-esteem ($r=0.337$, $p<.01$), family support ($r=0.366$, $p<.01$), hopelessness ($r=0.417$, $p<.01$), religion ($r=0.402$, $p<.01$) and family support ($r = .366$, $p<.01$) had positive significant relationship with suicidal ideation, emotional intelligence ($r = -.414$, $p<.01$) had negative significant relationship with suicidal ideation.

had negative relationship with suicidal ideation and

Research Question Two: What is the significant joint contribution of the independent variables (self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support, religion) on suicidal ideation?

Table 2: Summary of regression analysis showing the Joint Influence of Self-Esteem, Hopelessness, Emotional Intelligence, Family Support and Religion on Suicidal Ideation

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
.871	.759	.751	2.46			
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	3425.221	4	570.870	93.995	.000	Sig.
Residual	1087.145	179	6.073			
Total	4512.366	185				

Table 2 shows the composite significant joint contribution of the independent variables (self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support, religion) on suicidal ideation. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation ($R = .871$ and $R^2 = .759$ and adjusted $R^2 = .751$). This implies that 75.9% of the variance was accounted for by predictor variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at $\alpha = 0.05$. The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded (F-ratio = 93.995; $P < 0.01$). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent factors Self-Esteem, Hopelessness, Emotional Intelligence, Family Support and Religion) on suicidal ideation was significant.

Research Question Three: What is the significant relative contribution of the independent variables (Self-Esteem, Hopelessness, Emotional Intelligence, Family Support and Religion) on and Suicidal Ideation?

Table 3: Summary of Regression analysis showing the Influence of Self-Esteem, Hopelessness, Emotional Intelligence, Family Support, Religion and Suicidal Ideation

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-25.106	2.663		-9.426	.000
	Self-esteem	.942	.058	.774	16.350	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	-.334	.042	-.318	-7.938	.000
	Family Support	.158	.027	.301	5.760	.000
	Hopelessness	.503	.048	.498	10.388	.000
	Religion	2.307	.306	.309	7.531	.000

Table 3 reveals the relative influence of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as self-esteem ($\beta = .774$, $t = 16.350$ $P < .01$), emotional intelligence ($\beta = -.318$, $t = -7.938$ $P < .01$), family support ($\beta = .301$, $t = 5.760$, $P < .01$), hopelessness ($\beta = .498$, $t = 10.388$, $P < .01$), religion ($\beta = .309$, $t = 7.531$, $P < .01$), in that order. Hence, it could be deduced that self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support and religion had significant independent influences on suicidal ideation

Discussion

Research question one asks “what is the relationship between self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support, religion, and suicidal ideation?.” It was found on the one hand that self-esteem, family support, hopelessness and religion had a positive significant relationship with suicidal ideation; emotional intelligence, on the other hand, had a negative relationship with suicidal ideation, this may be due to student’s lack of proper skills of emotional intelligence. VanderWeele et al. (2016) found that ladies who attend spiritual gatherings had lower propensity for committing suicide. In essence, religious inclination would reduce the tendency of perpetration of suicide. Kaur & Rani (2012), identified that Self-defeating thoughts and poor self-esteem may lead to suicidal ideation. Bhar et al (2008) found that depression, hopelessness, and low self-esteem are all associated with suicidal ideation. In essence, low self-esteem was negatively associated with suicidal ideation and is considered a good predictor of suicidal ideation independent of depression and a feeling of hopelessness.

In another study, Paradiso et al. (2015) found out that emotional intelligence plays a critical role as protective component towards suicidal ideation among college Indian students. Ciarrochi et al. (2002) found that stress is related to greater depression, despair, and suicidal ideation in individuals with high emotional perception. Morano, Cisler, and Lemerond (1993) further found that loss and low family aid are the pleasant predictors of an adolescent’s suicide attempt.

Research question two further asks “what is the significant joint contribution of the independent variables (self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support, religion) on suicidal ideation? ” It was found that there was significant joint contribution of the religion) on suicidal ideation. This was consistent with the previous studies. According to Kralovec et al. (2017), religion with the application of prayer has an impact on the level of suicidal ideation of the people. However, the findings of this study have been refuted by Kaur & Rani (2012) who submitted that self-esteem had negative correlation with suicidal ideation. This may be due to the respondents having good family support which had improved their self-esteem.

Research question three asks again “what is the significant relative contribution of the independent variables (self-esteem, hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support and religion) on suicidal ideation?” It was found that self-esteem; hopelessness, emotional intelligence, family support and religion had significant independent influences on suicidal ideation. This is consistent with previous studies. According to Rosato & O’Reilly (2015) religion has a significant impact on suicidal ideation among Catholic Priests compared to the Protestants. In essence, religion must be taken into consideration in the examination of the University students for suicidal ideation. Furthermore, Rutter et al. (2004) found that hopelessness is a major predictor of suicidal ideation among students and adolescents. In essence, the higher the level of hopelessness among the University students, the higher the likelihood of suicidal ideation.

Recommendation

- The family should provide the support needed to boost the students’ self-esteem and emotional intelligence, which includes constant show of affection, supports of all their choices as long as it would not harm them. This is achievable through regular phone calls from parents and other necessary supports from the family.
- The religious bodies- Churches and Mosques should do everything possible to preach hopeful messages to their congregations in their various gatherings. This is to enliven the students attending such programmes who have been hopeless and have been contemplating suicide. Such programmes would raise the hopes, self-esteem and emotional intelligence of such students and give them life again. The University management should encourage students to attend religious teachings that would orient them positively. This is to make sure that students are given the required skills that would help them to reduce the tendency to entertain suicidal thoughts.
- The university management through the University Health and Career Development and Counseling centers should launch a sensitisation campaign to the public on the dangers of suicidal ideation. This campaign will incorporate the importance of support from family and religious bodies, self-esteem, and the dangers of hopelessness. The sensitization should be an annual event and educational programme should be a yearly event that would be introduced to all newly admitted students in the University both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- Also, the service of an Emotional Intelligence coach can be employed by parents, schools and even the students, to learn assertion skills, setting boundaries and act of maintaining harmony. Students should also be encouraged to use the right emotional intelligence skills at different situation they encounter.

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