

Suicide Ideation and Life Satisfaction among Adolescents: A Correlational Study

*Dr. Davinder Singh Johal and **Ms. Meenakshi Sharma

*(Department of Psychology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, India)

** (Department of Psychology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, India)

Abstract: The study was planned to investigate the relationship between suicide ideation and life satisfaction among adolescents. Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS: Beck, Steer & Ranieri 1988) and Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 2001) was applied on a sample of 489 adolescents (Boys: N=239 & Girls: N=250) drawn from the schools of Amritsar city affiliated with CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education). The results of the study revealed that girls as compared to boys have scored higher on Suicide Ideation whereas boys have scored higher than girls on different components of life satisfaction such as family, friends and living environment. The study also explored a negative relationship between Suicide Ideation and different dimensions of life satisfaction such as family, friends, self, living environment as well as overall life satisfaction in both the genders.

Keywords: Suicide Ideation; Life Satisfaction; Adolescents

I. Introduction

Suicide has turned into a basic issue throughout the globe where more than 800,000 people die from suicide every year (WHO, 2014). On a serious note, there were many more suicide attempters who remain unreported while those with suicidal thoughts were countless. Asian countries have higher danger of suicide where they accounted approximately 60% of the world suicide cases (Chen, Wu, Yousof & Yip, 2012). India represented the most noteworthy number of suicide on the planet in 2012, where one person is committing suicide after every 40 seconds. The WHO, report (2014) titled "Preventing Suicide, A Global Imperative" also claims India to be the world's Suicide Capital. Another report by National Crime Record Bureau (NCR, 2013) published in Times of India say that the number of suicides have increased to 1, 34,799 in 2013 from 1, 10, 851 in 2003. In spite of the fact that females have higher rates of suicide ideation than males after puberty yet rate of completed suicide for young females are lower than those for males. (Fergusson, Woodward & Horwood, 2000; Beautrais, 2002; Wichstrom & Rossow, 2002; Grunbaum, Kann, Kinchen, Ross, Hawkins, Lowry et al., 2004; Nam, 2004).

Suicidal behaviour is a process and suicidal ideation forms part of that process. Suicidal Ideation means thinking about and engaging in it, writing or talking about it or planning it (Schlebusch, 2005; Wasserman & Wasserman, 2009). "Suicide ideation may be defined as a continuum of thoughts about death ranging from mild to severe, hurting oneself or planning, conduct and outcome of one's own suicide" (Reynolds, 1991, p. 290).

Studies propose that the peak prevalence of suicidal ideation occur amid mid adolescence and there is a heightened incidence of reporting suicidal thoughts in this period (Fergusson, Woodward & Horwood, 2000; Rueter & Kwon, 2005; Kerr, Owen, Pears & Capaldi, 2008). Adolescence is a distinct developmental stage, separable from both childhood and adulthood which prompts specific challenges and opportunities among the adolescents. Although adolescence can be a time of health and well-being, but special vulnerabilities associated with self-discovery and emerging independence pose significant threat to adolescents' health (Irwin, Burg, & Cart, 2002). In spite of the fact that adolescent problems are critical, some researchers have expanded their focus to include positive indicators of wellbeing, attempting to shift research towards the promotion of optimal level of adolescent health (Peterson, 2006). Their efforts recognise that health is not merely the absence of disease but the complete biological, psychological and social well being of the individual (World Health Organisation, 1948).

Life satisfaction, or perceived quality of life, is one broad construct which has received increasing consideration as an indicator of optimal functioning among adolescents (Suldo & Huebner, 2006). Life satisfaction is a vital and essential component that adds to one's overall life (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Ozdevecio, 2003). Therefore Life satisfaction has been defined as "A subjective appraisal of the overall quality of life or quality of life with specific domains" (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

Life satisfaction was found to act as a predictor of suicide ideation (Heisel & Flett, 2004). Theoretically, adolescents who were dissatisfied with life might have poor strategies to adapt with life and thus engage in delinquency, substance abuse and suicide attempts (Kim & Kim, 2008). Adult studies have

recommended a connection between low life satisfaction and suicide behaviour also, comparative results have also been found among adolescents. Life dissatisfaction had long term effect on the risk for suicide. It is noteworthy that global life satisfaction tends to decline slightly with the onset and progression of adolescence and that these discoveries are upheld by various researchers (Ullman & Tatar, 2001; Chang, McBride-Chang, Stewart & Au, 2003; Leung, McBride-Chang & Lai, 2004; Suldo & Huebner, 2004; Park, 2005). Lack of family and social support or a high level of family and social conflicts lowers the self concept which leads possibly to increase in suicide ideation (Au, Lau, & Lee, 2009; Arria, O'Grady, Calderia, Vincent, Wilcox, & Wish, 2009).

Endeavours to gauge life satisfaction have been consistent with the positive mental health orientation that characterizes psychological well-being as more than the absence of psychopathological symptoms (Frisch, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Individual can be dissatisfied with life as a consequence of encountering undesirable circumstances, yet not display symptoms of psychopathology. Moreover, a person might be relatively satisfied with her or his life, but at the same time may encounter symptoms of psychopathology. Perceived life satisfaction for adolescents have been observed to be connected with number of health risk behaviours, including alcohol and other drug uses (Newcomb, Bentler & Collins, 1986; Clark & Kirisci, 1996; Zullig, Valois & Drane, 2002) violent and aggressive behaviours (Valois, Zullig & Drane, 2001), dating violence (Coker, McKeown, Valois & Huebner, 2000) and quite a few risk taking behaviours (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, Kammerman & Drane, 2000).

The above stated brief review of literature signifies the importance of life satisfaction. Life satisfaction has been found to have a significant relationship with suicide ideation, so the present study was planned with the following objectives:

1. To find the relationship between suicide ideation and life satisfaction among adolescent boys and girls
2. To find gender differences on suicide ideation and life satisfaction.

Keeping in mind the above stated objectives the following hypotheses were made

1. There may be a significant negative relationship between suicide ideation and life satisfaction among boys and girls
2. There may be significant gender differences on suicide ideation and life satisfaction

II. Method

II.1 Sample

A sample of 489 adolescents (Girls: N=250 and Boys: N=239) was randomly selected from the different schools of Amritsar City affiliated with Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). All the subjects were in the age range of 15 to 17 years. The subjects were drawn from the same geographical area and belong to almost the same socioeconomic status.

II.2 Description of Tools

The brief description of the scales used for the assessment of suicide ideation and life satisfaction is given below:

II.2. (i) Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS: Beck, Steer & Ranieri 1988): The scale is a 21 item self-reported inventory that measures suicidal ideation. The first 19 items are used to assess for suicidal ideation on a 3-point scale. The final two items are used to differentiate attempters from non-attempters and are not included in the scores. Therefore, the total BSS score can range from 0 to 38 points. Endorsement of 1 or 2 on any BSS item may reflect presence of suicide intention.

II.2. (ii) The Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 2001): It is a 47 item self reported instrument that assesses satisfaction across 5 specific life domains (family, friends, school, living environment and self) as well as the scale can be used as a global subtest (i.e., questions not pertaining to a specific life domain). All the questions on the MSLSS are responded on a Likert 6 point scale format (Strongly disagree, moderately disagree, mildly disagree, mildly agree, moderately agree, and strongly agree). Negatively worded items are reverse keyed so that a higher score is indicative of higher level of satisfaction.

III. Results And Discussion

III.1 Comparison of Means

Univariate t- test was applied to find out the significant differences between adolescent boys and girls on suicide ideation and different components of life satisfaction (Family, friends, school, living environment and self) as well as overall Life Satisfaction. Table1 shows the values of Means, Standard Deviations, t- ratios and Level of Significance of girls and boys (Girls: N=250 and Boys

N=239). The values in the Table 1 revealed that girls (M=7.64) scored significantly higher ($t=2.17$, $p<.05$) on the measures of Suicide Ideation as compared to boys (M=6.44). Similarly, in comparison to girls, boys have scored significantly higher on the component of Family (MB =34.64, MG =33.66, $t= 1.98$, $p<0.5$), Friends (MB=40.16, MG=38.29, $t= 3.38$, $p<0.001$), Living Environment (MB=36.60, MG=35.11, $t=2.72$, $p<0.01$) and Overall Life Satisfaction (MB=180.54, MG=175.69, $t=2.93$, $p<0.05$)

The application of ‘t’-test revealed that male and female adolescents differ on the measure of suicide ideation where females have scored significantly higher than males which means females have more suicide thoughts than males. This may be due to less power and fewer resources of females as compared to males. It has been observed that males enjoy more freedom and status in India and other Asian countries. Gender seems to be an important factor in suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour for adolescents. Therefore, explaining the differences for risk factors by gender may improve our understanding of suicidal ideation and behaviour of adolescents in general. The results of the present study are in congruent with the results of many other studies (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1995; Allison, Roeger, Martin & Keeves, 2001; Upadhaya & Singh, 2006; Dervic, Akkaya-Kalayci, Kapusta, Kaya, Merl, Vogel, Pellegrini & Friedrich, 2007; Cash & Bridge, 2009; Canetto, 2008; Bakken & Gunter, 2012; Park, 2013; Yao, Chang, Jin, Chen, He & Zhang, 2014).

Studies in adolescent satisfaction research indicate that an adolescent’s satisfaction with their family is the largest contributor of their overall life satisfaction (Gilman, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000).The results of the present study clearly indicate that females as compared to males experience lower family satisfaction and living environment. This may be because of greater social control of parents over girls in comparison to boys (Lopez, 2003). Leung & Leung (1992) argued that parent adolescent relationship is primary determinant of life satisfaction. Nickerson & Nagle (2004) also reported inverse relationship between parent and peer alienation and living environment. Similar findings have been reported by Diener & Diener, (1994); Goldbeck, Schmitz, Besier, Herschach & Henrich, (2007); Feliciano (2012); Yao, Chang, Jin, Chen, He & Zhang, (2014); Moksnes & Espnes, (2013). However the results of the present study are in contradiction with some other studies which concluded that gender differences in life satisfaction are non-existent (Huebner, 2004; Casas, Figuer, Gonzalez, Malo, Alsinet & Subarroca, 2007; Froh, Yurkewicz & Kashdan, 2009).

Table1. Means, Standard Deviations, ‘t’-ratios along with Level of Significance on Suicide Ideation and Life Satisfaction (Girls: N=250 and Boys N=239)

Sr no.	Variables	Girls		Boys		t- ratio	Level of Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1.	Suicide Ideation	7.64	6.03	6.44	6.24	2.17	0.05*
2.	Family	33.66	5.52	34.64	5.37	1.98	0.05*
3.	Friends	38.29	5.73	40.16	6.45	3.38	.001**
4.	School	35.02	5.65	35.17	5.80	0.285	NS
5.	Living environment	35.11	6.17	36.60	5.93	2.72	.01**
6.	Self	33.61	5.05	33.97	5.20	.783	NS
7.	LS Total	175.69	16.94	180.54	19.55	2.93	.001**

** Significant at P<0.01 level, * Significant at P<0.05 level

III.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation has been used to find out relationship between suicide Ideation and life satisfaction. A 7x7 correlation matrices were computed separately for girls and boys.

III.2. (i) Girls

Results of Table 2 clearly indicate that suicide ideation has a significant negative correlation with Family ($r= -0.188$, $p<0.1$), Living environment ($r= -0.142$, $p<0.5$), Self ($r= -0.209$, $p< 0.1$) and Overall Life Satisfaction ($r= -0.223$, $p<0.1$). The significant inter-correlations among the different components of life satisfaction indicate that all the components are measuring the same thing.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix (Girls: N=250)

	SI	Family	Friend	School	Living environment	Self	LS Total
SI	-						
Family	-.188**	-					
Friend	-0.077	0.046					
School	-0.06	.281**	0.121	-			
Living environment	-.142*	.264**	.196**	.162*	-		
Self	-.209**	.318**	.264**	.219**	.179**	-	
LS Total	-.223**	.626**	.544**	.590**	.624**	.629**	-

** Significant at p<0.01 level, * Significant at p<0.05 level

III.2. (ii) Boys

The results of Table 3 revealed that suicide ideation has a significant negative correlation with Family ($r = -0.131, p < 0.5$), Friends ($r = -0.132, p < 0.5$), Self ($r = -0.150, p < 0.1$) and Overall Life Satisfaction ($r = -0.165, p < 0.1$).

Table 3: Correlation Matrix (Boys: N=239)

** Significant at p<0.01 level, * Significant at p<0.05 level

	SI	Family	Friend	School	Living environment	Self	LS Total
SI	-						
Family	-0.131*	-					
Friends	-0.132*	.266**					
School	-0.059	.422**	.225**	-			
Living environment	-0.09	.259**	.408**	.304**	-		
Self	-.150**	.418**	.291**	.426**	.272**	-	
LS Total	-.165**	.678**	.671	.693**	.672**	.686**	-

The results of correlation analysis clearly revealed that Suicide Ideation have significant negative correlation with family, living environment and overall life satisfaction in both male and female adolescents. It means adolescents who are satisfied with their life and family environment suffer less from suicide ideation. Many researchers identified family cohesion, spending time together with family, and parental supervision as a protective factor for suicidal behaviour (McKeown, Garrison, Cuffe et al., 1998; Borowsky, Resnick, Irelans et al., 1999; Wong, Sun, Tse, & Wong, 2002; Lee, Wong, Chow, & McBride-Chang, 2006). Harris & Molock (2000) also considered parent child relationship an important correlate of suicide ideation. In other words poor communication between parents and children (Gould, Fisher, Parides et al., 1996), low perceived support (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1995), lower family cohesion (Yama, Tovey, Fogas et al., 1995) and higher conflicts in the family are positively related to suicide ideation.

Self-satisfaction has been found to be negatively related with suicide ideation among boys and girls. A positive feeling about oneself is directly linked with happiness and life satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi & hunter, 2003) and thus negatively related with suicide ideation. Hence it can be reasoned that beside family and friends, well-being naturally depends a great deal on one's self perception.

Friends are more vital component of life satisfaction and have been observed to be adversely related with suicide ideation among boys. It implies that suicide ideation among those boys is lower who have number of friends. Prinstein & Colleagues (2000) also found that low level of peer closeness is associated with suicidal ideation. Infrequent peer support is also related to suicide ideation (Groholt, Ekeberg, Wichstrom, 2000). Some evidence recommends that boys probably stress their independence from others, whereas girls are more likely to accentuate their relatedness with others (Cross & Madson, 1997).

India is a sex-segregated collectivist society whereby people perceive their own well-being to be a part of the well-being of the community. In other words the socio-psychological orientation of the individuals is more inclined to align with group goals at the expense of individual interest for well-being of a group. In contrast, in individualistic societies, personal goals are emphasised over the group's goal (Triandis, 1989). Thus, diverse social conditions may lead to different attributions for one's evaluation of life satisfaction. So the meaning of life satisfaction in East may contrast essentially from the West (Diener, Lucas & Oishi, 2002). The theory of life satisfaction as embedded in the realist philosophy also suggested that the society can shape orientation of the individual and group behaviours.

IV. Conclusion

Adolescence is a time of heightened sensitivity to contextual conditions and to one's own emotional states. As such, an argument could be made that adolescent life satisfaction would be more reflective of both what adolescents experience and how adolescents feel (Kasser, 2000). Thus these results show that the effects of gender in global life satisfaction and other life satisfaction dimensions could vary among different societies. Suicide Ideation can be reduced by enhancing Life Satisfaction.

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