

## Prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students, Afghanistan

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### ABSTRACT

Suicidal ideation is a serious health problem all over the world. This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of suicidal ideation among two public universities in Kabul city. A cross-sectional design was used in this study and for data collection, the Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (ASIQ) is applied. A total of 531 undergraduate students participated in this study with the mean age of  $20.25 \pm 1.34$  years. To analyze the collected data, descriptive statistics and independent t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21. The current study indicated that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students was 24.7% in the past 30 days. This study also found that the students' sex, age, living place, year of education, and monthly income of their parents had a significant effect on suicidal ideation. However, statistically, significant mean differences were not observed on respondents' marital status, number of family members, field of study and university. Other studies need to be carried out on academic issues to identify specific factors associated with suicidal ideation.

**Keywords:** *Suicide, Suicidal Ideation, university Students, Afghanistan*

The best era of every human life is undoubtedly the university period. It is an important period of life that shapes the career and personality of students and the same time prepares them for working and social life strategies and performances which will be totally different than their before university life. Students, after entering the university face a wide range of changes and challenges that may affect their lives (Arslan, Ayranci, Unsal & Arslantas, 2009). Students who have better coping strategies would overcome the challenges and enjoy university life, but students who find it difficult to cope with the changes and challenges may experience psychological problems and even may develop suicidal behavior and commit suicide (Pereira & Cardoso, 2015).

Suicide is intentional self-inflicted death (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998). It is a serious health problem across the globe that results from the interaction of biological, genetic, psychological, environmental and sociological factors (WHO & Behavioural Disorders Team, 2000). According to WHO estimates, every year one million people worldwide

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commit suicide. In 2016 it was the single leading cause of death among 15- 25 years old. In the year 2000, suicide was completed every 40s and attempted every 3s worldwide (Moosa et al., 2005). Furthermore, based on WHO estimates, based on current worldwide trends, for the year 2020, ~1.53 million people will die from suicide (Bertolote & Fleishman, 2002). Suicide is a concurrent prevalent problem among university students (Coughlan, 2018; Ross, 1969), it is a significant cause of death (Ross, 1969). The second leading cause of death among college students is suicide (Clinciu, 2013).

Suicide has a process. It includes suicidal ideation, suicidal plan, suicidal attempt and complete suicide (Vilhjalmsson, Kristjansdottir & Sveinbjarnardottir 1998). Suicidal ideation defined as a continuum of thoughts ranging from mild to severe concerning death, which include thoughts and feelings about death, hurting one's self, or the "planning, conduct and outcome" of one's own suicide (Reynolds, 1991b). Suicidal ideation is a trigger for suicide attempt, and committing suicide (Pereira & Cardoso, 2015; Han, McKeon & Gfroerer, 2014) and it is also considered an indicator of mental health problems and a major precursor for suicide attempt and complete suicide (Mustaffa, Aziz, Mahmood & Shuib, 2014). Suicidal ideation is a major concern for the health services of universities (Mackenzie et al., 2011) because university and college students are among highly affected group (Dachew, Bifftu, Tiruneh, Anlay & Wassie, 2016). Mortier et al., (2018) from available probability samples found that worldwide one out of six students have experienced suicidal ideation. A report developed with 105,000 university students of the United States of America (USA) regarding suicidal behavior, showed that 3.7% had thought about suicide in the previous 12 months and 1.5% in the previous two weeks (Santos et al., 2017).

Jain et al., (2012) conducted a pilot study on medical students south India and found that among 305 students the 20% had suicidal ideation. A study conducted by Khokher & Khan (2005) on a medical college in Karachi showed, among 217 students aged between 18-24, the prevalence of suicidal ideation was 31.4%. Bakhtar & Rezaeian (2017) reviewed 26 articles to estimate the prevalence of suicidal ideation among Iranian university students. They found that suicidal thoughts ranged from 6.2% to 42.7% among students. Aboalshamat et al., (2018) studied the prevalence of suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts on 607 dental and medical students in the western region of Saudi Arabia and found that 37.7% of students had experienced suicidal ideation throughout and students and 33.4% had experienced suicidal ideation during the previous 12 months. Zhai et al., (2015) reported that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among Chinese university students was 9.2%. A study conducted by in Turkey confirmed 27.3% of 326 students had thoughts of suicide (Eskin, Voracek, Stieger & Altinyazar, 2011). Results from the University of Cambridge University revealed that the 12-month prevalence of suicidal ideation, plans, and attempts was 10.6%, 3.0%, and 1.2%, respectively (Mortier et al., 2018).

The relationship of suicidal ideation with several factors has been explored in different studies. Mustaffa et al., (2014) conducted a study on students of the university of technology in Malaysia and found that there is a significant association between gender and suicidal ideation. Based on their findings women had more suicidal ideation than men. Dachew et al., (2016) explored gender, age, and year of study relationship in terms of suicidal ideation among university students and found no significant relationship among the mentioned variables and suicidal ideation. Maria et al., (2015) determined the prevalence and associated factors of suicidal ideation among university students in Manila, Philippines. They found no significant difference between age, year of study, field of study place of living difference and suicidal ideation. Aboalshamat et al., (2018) conducted a study on

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dental and medical students in the western region of Saudi Arabia and found that there was a significant relationship between marital status, family income and suicidal ideation but there was no significant relationship between age and suicidal ideation. Furthermore, Wani, Sankar, Binshad, Nargees & Anicham (2016) studied suicidal tendencies among students of Annamalai University, India. They found that there was no significant relationship between field of study and suicidal ideation.

Suicidal ideation in university students has been extensively studied in other countries but comparatively no work has been done in Afghanistan. There is no exact statistic of the number of suicide in the country. According to WHO (2014) findings, 1205 Afghans committed suicide in 2002. Most of them were aged between 15 and 29 years. In the first half of 2014, Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health on the basis of Kabul public hospitals has reported, 4466 cases of drug poisonings and 707 cases of immolations which were registered mostly as suicide attempts and majority of the victims were women. This shows that a significant number of Afghans especially women are in risk of committing suicide. In view of the above the present study was conducted to estimate the prevalence of suicidal ideation and its associated factors among university students. Hopingly, the findings of this study will help the policy makers, mental health professionals, authorities of ministry of higher education and universities, taking further initiative and different action plans to deal in avoiding suicidal ideation.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Design*

A cross sectional study was conducted in 2019 to determine the prevalence of suicidal ideation among students at Kabul University and Shaheed Prof. Rabbani Education University, Kabul, Afghanistan.

### *Sampling method and sample size*

All regular undergraduate students who were studying in similar departments in both universities constitute the target population of this study. These students are from different batches (years) of an undergraduate regular program. The total number of students in similar departments of these universities was 9107. In order to determine the sample size of the participants, Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula was used. The formula showed that at least 368 individuals should be selected for the study. However to maximize confidence in generalizing the findings and to get a more accurate picture of the problem and reduce errors the researcher added 50% of the participants from the population to the already specified study sample by the mentioned formula and sample size became 552 participants (male = 208, female = 344). The multistage cluster sampling technique was employed to select representative universities, departments and students from different universities. However, among the 552 distributed questionnaires, the researcher could collect 531 properly filled questionnaires. The rest 21 questionnaires were discarded for incompleteness. Due to this, the study analysis was done based on the response of 531 study participants.

### *Tools*

Socio-demographic information of participants obtained by semi structured Performa designed for this study. It contains information about sex, age, year of education, field of study, name of university, marital status, place of living, and parents income. Suicidal ideation was assessed by Adult suicidal ideation questionnaire (ASIQ). This self – report instrument consist of 25 items and they are arranged according to severity level, though

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there some clustering of similar item subdomains. The items of this instrument are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (I never had this thought) to 6 (almost every day). ASIQ produces a score between 0-150 with higher scores indicating more numerous and/or more frequent suicidal thoughts. The total score in this scale can be obtained by summing up all responses from the items (Reynolds, 1991a). This widely used instrument possesses the satisfactory internal consistency reliability, test-retest reliability, good discriminant validity, and concurrent validity in clinical and nonclinical samples (Carris, Sheeber & Howe, 1998; Osman et al., 1999; Reynolds, 1991; Velting, 1999). Cronbach's coefficient alphas of this measure ranging from .60s to .80s. The reported correlations between ASIQ and commonly used measures of depression, hopelessness and anxiety ranging behavior ranging between .30 and .60 which indicates that this tool has adequate validity (Reynolds, 1991b). ASIQ was translated and adopted by the researcher. Face and content validity of the translated version of ASIQ was obtained by Lawshe (1975) quantitative approach to content validity. A pilot study was conducted to check the reliability of the translated version of ASIQ. The reliability of the ASIQ was investigated using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (0.91).

### *Data collection Procedure*

A letter of permission was obtained from Department of Psychology and Parapsychology, Andhra University. After obtaining permission from related offices in Afghanistan for conducting the study, the students were informed about the objectives of the study and after obtaining students consent the researcher distributed the questionnaire during regular class hours. The researcher explained the instructions and also informed the students that participation was entirely voluntary and they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

### *Statistical analysis*

A descriptive analysis was done of the findings. SPSS 21 version was used to analyse the data. The findings were analysed through percentage and frequencies, to find out the prevalence of suicidal ideation. Independent sample t- test and One-Way ANOVA were applied to see whether there was significant mean difference between suicidal ideation in terms of demographic variables.

## **RESULTS**

### *Socio demographic characteristics of the participants*

The total number of participants was 531 of which 203 (38.2%) were males and 328 (61.8%) were females. The mean age of the participants was  $20.25 \pm 1.34$ . They were divided into three groups: The first age group (18-19) years with percentage of 32.4%, the second age group (20-21) years with a percentage of 41.8% and the last age group 22 year with percentage of 25.8%. The single students represented by 81.0% of students, where engaged and married students were represented by 9.4% and 9.6% of students respectively. Place of residents divided into four parts. Own house residents was represented by 66.1% of students, relatives house represented by 5.5% of students, government hostel residents represented by 12.6% of students and private hostel residents represented by 15.8% of students. The number of family members divided into four groups. The first group (3-6) family member with percentage of 30.3% , the second group (7-10) family members with percentage of 51.6%, the third group (11-14) family members with percentage of 12.8% and the last group (15 and above) with percentage of 5.3%. The percent of students with 6000-15000 AFN parents income represented 35.9% of students. More information on distribution of participants provided in Table 1.

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**Table 1. Socio demographic characteristics of the participants (N=531)**

Characteristic	Number (%)
Sex	
Male	203 (38.2)
Female	328 (61.8)
Age groups	
18-19 years	172 (32.4)
20-21 years	222 (41.8)
22 year	137 (25.8)
Mean age $\pm$ SD	20.25 $\pm$ 1.34
Marital status	
Single	430 (81.0)
Engaged	50 (9.4)
Married	51 (9.6)
University	
K. U.	277 (52.2)
P.S.R.E.U.	254 (47.8)
Field of study	
Social science	363 (68.4)
Natural science	168 (31.6)
Academic years	
First	162 (30.5)
Second	122 (23.0)
Third	121 (22.8)
Forth	126 (23.7)
Place of living	
Own house	351 (66.1)
Relatives house	29 (5.5)
Government hostel	67 (12.6)
Private hostel	84 (15.8)
Number of family members	
3-6	161 (30.3)
7-10	274 (51.6)
11-14	68 (12.8)
15-Above	28 (5.3)
Parents income	N= 512
6000-15000 AFN	184 (35.9)
16000-25000 AFN	187 (36.5)
26000-35000 AFN	86 (16.8)
36000 – above AFN	55 (10.7)

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### *Prevalence of suicidal ideation among participants of the present study*

Table 2, represents the prevalence of suicidal ideation among male and female students and overall. The results showed that 169 (31.8%) male and 231 (43.5%) female students have no suicidal ideation. Furthermore 34 (6.4%) of male and 97 (18.3%) of females students have suicidal ideation. In addition, this table indicated that out of 531 students 400 (75.3%) have no suicidal ideation and 131 (24.7%) of students have suicidal ideation. Based on these results we can say that more female students have suicidal ideation than males.

**Table 2. Prevalence of suicidal ideation among participants of the present study**

Categories	Sex				Total	
	Male		Female		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Non suicidal	169	31.8	231	43.5	400	75.3
Suicidal ideation	34	6.4	97	18.3	131	24.7

N= 531

### *Effect of demographic variables on the students' experience of depression*

As can be confirmed from Table 3, there is a statistically significant mean difference in experiencing suicidal ideation among male and female students ( $t(529) = -2.655, P < 0.05$ ). Here, the mean score of suicidal ideation for female students ( $M = 21.89, SD = 22.64$ ) was higher than male students ( $M = 16.60, SD = 21.78$ ). This implies that females were highly vulnerable than male students for suicidal ideation. Moreover, the result of independent t-test indicates that there was no statistically significant mean difference in experiencing suicidal ideation among students who were studying at Kabul University and Prof Shaheed Rabbani Education University ( $t(529) = -0.027, p > 0.05$ ). Also, the mean score of suicidal ideation for students of Kabul University ( $M = 19.84, SD = 22.18$ ) was almost similar with the students of Prof. Shaheed Rabbani Education University ( $M = 19.89, SD = 22.77$ ). These results suggest that Kabul University students and Prof. Shaheed Rabbani Education University do not differ considerably on suicidal ideation. Furthermore, Moreover, the result of independent t-test indicate that there was no statistically significant mean difference in experiencing suicidal ideation among social- and natural science students ( $t(529) = 1.700, p > 0.05$ ). But, the mean score of suicidal ideation for students of social sciences ( $M = 20.99, SD = 22.81$ ) was found to be higher than students of natural sciences ( $M = 17.44, SD = 21.50$ ). This implies that social sciences students showed higher suicidal ideation compared to natural sciences students though they did not differ significantly.

**Table 3. t-test result of students based on sex, university and field of study**

Variable	Category	N	M	SD	t	P-value
Sex	Male	203	16.60	21.78	-2.655	0.008
	Female	328	21.89	22.64		
University	K.U.	277	19.84	22.18	-0.027	0.978
	P.R.E.U.	254	19.89	22.77		
Field of Study	Social Science	363	20.99	22.81	1.700	0.090
	Natural Science	168	17.44	21.50		

As it is displayed in table 4 the mean suicidal ideation score of 18-19 year students ( $M = 23.86, SD = 21.87$ ) was higher than the 22 year ( $M = 17.10, SD = 22.09$ ) and 19-20 year ( $M =$

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= 18.48, SD = 22.77). The difference was statistically significant [ $F(2, 528) = 4.229, p < 0.05$ ]. Furthermore, the Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons result shows that 18-19 years old students reported highly significant mean difference on suicidal ideation as compared to 22 years old students ( $p < 0.05$ ) and 20-21 years old students ( $p < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, 20-12 years old students had no mean difference suicidal ideation as compared to 22 years old students ( $p > 0.05$ ).

As it is disclosed in table 4, statistical significant mean differences were not observed in experiencing suicidal ideation across respondents' marital status [ $F(2, 528) = 1.045, p > 0.05$ ]. Furthermore, students' place of living had significant effect on students' suicidal ideation [ $F(3, 527) = 6.344, (p < 0.05)$ ].

**Table 4. ANOVA result of students' suicidal ideation based on age, marital status, place of living, number of family members, year of study and parents income**

Variable	Category	N	M	SD	F	P-value
Age	18-19	172	23.86	21.87	4.229	0.015
	20-21	222	18.48	22.77		
	22	137	17.10	22.09		
Marital Status	Single	51	15.54	20.56	1.045	0.352
	Engaged	430	20.32	22.88		
	Married	50	20.36	20.29		
	Own house	351	18.00	22.08		
Place of living	Relatives house	29	16.10	16.91	6.344	0.000
	Government hostel	67	19.29	21.11		
	Private hostel	29	16.10	16.91		
Number of family members	3-6	161	16.24	20.19	2.022	0.110
	7-10	274	21.43	23.78		
	11-14	68	21.29	19.33		
	15-above	28	21.96	26.71		
Year of study	First	162	23.20	24.37	2.022	0.110
	Second	122	20.70	21.33		
	Third	121	18.65	23.17		
	Forth	126	15.94	19.56		
Parents income	6000-15000 AFN	184	23.71	25.42	4.453	0.004
	16000-25000 AFN	187	20.28	21.82		
	26000-35000 AFN	86	18.17	20.08		
	36000- Above AFN	55	11.54	16.75		

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the private hostel condition ( $M = 29.41, SD = 24.43$ ) was significantly different than the relatives house condition ( $M = 16.10, SD = 16.91$ ), own house condition ( $M = 18.00, SD = 22.08$ ) and government hostel condition ( $M = 19.29, SD = 21.11$ ). However, the government hostel condition did not significantly differ from the own house and relatives house conditions. The

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findings of this study suggest that students who live in private hostels are at high risk of suicidal ideation.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of number of family member on suicidal ideation in 3- 6, 7- 10, 11- 14 and 15 above family member conditions. The results of ANOVA displayed in table () disclosed that there was no significant effect of number of family member on suicidal ideation at the  $p > .05$  level for four conditions [ $F(3, 527) = 2.022, p > 0.05$ ].

A statistically significant mean difference was observed on perceived year of study in experiencing suicidal ideation [ $F(3, 527) = 2.675, p < 0.05$ ]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that first year students reported significant mean difference on suicidal ideation as compared to fourth year students ( $p < 0.05$ ). On the other hand second year students had no statistically mean difference on suicidal ideation with first years ( $p > 0.05$ ), third year ( $p > 0.05$ ) and fourth year students ( $p > 0.05$ ). The mean suicidal ideation score of first years students ( $M = 23.20, SD = 24.37$ ) was higher than the fourth year students ( $M = 15.94, SD = 19.56$ ). According to this results first year students are more at risk of suicidal ideation than 4<sup>th</sup> year students.

The results of ANOVA displayed in table 4 disclosed that there was a significant effect of parent's monthly income on suicidal ideation at the  $p < .05$  level for four conditions [ $F(3, 508) = 4.453, p < 0.05$ ]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 6000- 15000 Afghani ( $M = 23.71, SD = 25.42$ ) was significantly different than the 36000- above Afghani condition ( $M = 11.45, SD = 16.75$ ). However, the 16000- 25000 Afghani condition ( $M = 20.28, SD = 21.82$ ) did not significantly differ from the 6000- 15000 Afghani, 26000- 35000 Afghani and 36000 - above. Results of current study suggest that when students parents have low income, they are at risk of suicidal ideation

## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to estimating the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students, Afghanistan. The samples were collected from two public universities at Kabul city, capital of Afghanistan. 531 students aged 18-22 years old returned the questionnaires and filled properly. These students were from different batches (years), and different socioeconomic levels of undergraduate regular program (Table 2).

The current study indicated that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students was 24.7% in the previous 30 days. This is a warning to the authorities of universities, mental health professionals and families to consider suicidal ideation as a great serious threatening issue to students' health and performance and to start working against it to reduce it through psychological services in order to enabling them to fight against such a thought and misleading behaviour. According to these findings, the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students in Afghanistan is higher than some other countries as reported in previous studies. Santos et al. (2017) found that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students in Brazil was 9.9% in the previous 30 days. Ran et al., (2015) findings showed that 10.2% of students in Guam University, United State, had suicidal ideation. Alice, Seter, Adamson & Emmanuel (2008) showed that 11.1% of sample among Emory university students had suicidal ideation. The findings of current study showed that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students is lesser than few Islamic counties. Janqurbani & bakhsh (2015) found that prevalence of suicidal thoughts

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among students of Isfahan University was 29.7%. Khokher & Khan (2005) found that the rate of suicidal ideation among Pakistani students 31.4%. Aboalshamat et al., (2018) that 37.7% of students had experienced suicidal ideation throughout and 33.4% had experienced suicidal ideation during the previous twelve months in the western region of Saudi Arabia. The differences in rate of suicidal ideation could be due to cultural differences, differences in population, life style across the places where the studies were carried out, difference in time of study and in the instruments used in the study.

The present study looked to gender difference, in terms of suicidal ideation. The results of t-test indicated that there was a significant gender difference on stress among male and female students with significantly higher suicidal ideation among females than males. This was consistent with findings of Teresa & Robert (2000) conducted on university students in Australia. They found that female students had more suicidal ideation than males. Similarly Pereira & Cardoso (2015) conducted a study on suicidal ideation in university students and found that females' students had more suicidal ideation than males. The higher level of suicidal ideation in female students could be due to societal rules and the situation of the society. Generally, in Afghan society, females are perceived as weaker than males and males are not expected to admit their weakness and especially they are not expected to express their emotions and seek help. In addition, since Afghanistan is patriarchal society, females are expected to do all house chores. So beside the academic tasks the burdens of work at home puts more pressure on them and make them vulnerable.

The result of this study revealed that statistical significant mean differences were not observed in experiencing suicidal ideation connecting to the field of study. These findings were similar to the findings of Wani, Sankar, Binshad, Nargees & Anicham (2016) and Maria et al., (2015). They also found that there is no connection between suicidal ideation and field of study.

In the present study, the mean stress score of 18-19 years old students was higher than 20-21 years old, and 22 years old students. The difference was statistically significant. The highest prevalence of suicidal ideation was observed among 18-19 years old students. It is because in the Afghan context, mostly the transition from high school to university happens between 18 to 19 years old and during this period they not only face changes as result of transition from adolescence to young adulthood but, they also face many challenges due to shifting to a new environment, getting to know about new teaching methodologies and getting huge syllabi to study and at one in the same time facing to different instructors having different levels of education, approaches and behaviors. These findings contradicts to the results of (Dachew et al., 2016; Aboalshamat et al., 2018). They found no significant difference that there was no significant association between age and suicidal ideation.

The finding shows that statistical significant mean differences were not observed in experiencing suicidal ideation across respondents' marital status. This result was contradicted with a study of Aboalshamat et al., (2018) who found that there are significant associations between marital status and suicidal ideation or suicide attempts. Married students expressed higher suicidal ideation than unmarried students. The insignificant difference in findings of current study could be due to two reasons; firstly, having less number of married and engaged participants in the sample. Secondly, since Afghan society is a collectivist society most of people live in extended families therefore married students may receive more support from entire family so that they can continue their education with less challenges.

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Moreover, the result of this study depicted that the mean score of suicidal ideation for students whose residential area was private hostel was higher than the students whose residential area was, own house, relatives house and government hostel. The mean difference is also statistically significant. This result was contradicted with a study conducted by Maria et al., (2015) who found no significant relation between living arrangement (with both biological parents, with others) and suicidal ideation. This contradiction could be due difference in facilities and economic situation of students in different places. In Afghanistan students who live in private hostels have very limited facilities and almost all of them belong to very far villages and province with low socio-economic status.

Furthermore, the finding of the present study revealed that students' number of family members had a no effect on suicidal ideation. It is because having more family members helping and supporting individuals to share their concerns and have hope that more people can do better than less number.

In the current study, the mean suicidal ideation score of first year students was higher than fourth year, third year and second year students. The difference was statistically significant. The highest prevalence of suicidal ideation was observed for first year and the lowest suicidal ideation was observed for fourth year students. This finding contradicts the findings of Dachew et al., (2018) among university students in Ethiopia. They found no evidence of associations between suicidal ideation and year of study. This difference could be due to the use of different tools, cultural, and environmental factors.

Moreover, the result of present study depicted that the mean score of suicidal ideation for students whose parents' monthly income was between 6000-15000 Afghani was higher than students whose parents' monthly income was 36000- Above, 26000-35000 Afghani and 16000- 25000 Afghani. The mean difference is also statistically significant. This means that students whose parents have low income are more at risk of suicidal ideation than students whose parents have high income. This result was consistent with a study conducted by Aboalshamat et al., (2018) who found that there is a significant difference between monthly family income and suicidal ideation or suicide attempts. Kim et al., (2016) similar findings.

## CONCLUSION

The main finding in the study is that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among students is high in Kabul University and Prof. Shaheed Rabbani Education University. The level of suicidal ideation was more among females, students aged between 18-19 years old, students living in private hostels, first year students, students with less parental income and they are at high risk suicidal ideation compare to other groups of students. The results of this study show that sex, age, year of study, place of living, monthly income of parents had significant effect on suicidal ideation level of students. But, statistical significant mean differences were not observed on respondents' marital status, number of family members, field of study and university. Based on these results it is suggested that administrative bodies of the ministry of higher education, authorities of the universities, relevant educational leaders, mental health experts and stakeholders in the area would discuss the issue and work cooperatively to take immediate measures addressing the issue of suicidal ideation among university students. In addition, mental health professionals in collaboration with leaders of the universities must provide awareness training programs about the concept suicidal ideation and developing effective ways and strategies avoiding or decreasing such ideas among the students,

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specifically female students, first year students and students who live in private hostels because they were more vulnerable to the problems.

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The author declared no conflict of interest.

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