

Family Environment as a Prognosticator of Suicidal Ideation Among Adolescents

Dr. Shipra Sharma^{1*}, Dr. Vandana Sharma²

ABSTRACT

A Family is the preeminent factor, in the life of an adolescent, which plays a distinctive role in his/her psychological and physiological development. It encompasses many elements which can affect behavior of an adolescent positively and vice versa. **Objective:** The study was intended to investigate and analyze the relationship between family environment and suicidal ideation among adolescent students. **Method:** The study was conducted on 300 adolescent students selected through stratified random sampling. The considered sample was between 14 to 17 years of age group from the schools, affiliated to C.B.S.E. board in Ghaziabad city. The tools of the study, Family Environment Scale by Harpreet Bhatia and N. K. Chadha and Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire by William Reynolds for Suicidal Ideation, were used. Statistical analysis used for the present study were correlation and multiple regression. **Results:** A significant negative correlation was found between family environment and suicidal ideation among adolescent students in terms of family cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization except Conflict which was positively correlated to suicidal ideation. Control was found to be non-significant in this study. Subsequently, two dimensions of family environment, i.e., independence and conflict, emerged as a significant predictor of Suicidal Ideation among adolescents in the present study.

Keywords: Family Environment, Suicidal Ideation, Adolescent Students

Adolescents pass through many ups and downs, right and wrong situations in which they have to face different challenges sometimes to adapt, adjust or sometimes to oppose. In such critical time they need others especially their closest to understand them as a friend to make them comfortable to share all the situations and conditions without any fear and hesitation. So that they could find possible ways to handle that situation and challenges of their life. So, if the closest one is analyzed, then the family comes in mind which is the first place to see, feel and learn. This learning place teaches first to see, to communicate, to handle, and to perform their role as a child, as a student and as an individual. There are different functions, to be performed by a family towards its members, which can keep them mentally, emotionally and physically well (Barnard, 2023). These functions can be related to the relationship, growth and system to be maintained at home.

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Mental Health, Gautam Budha University, Gr. Noida, U.P., India

²Professor, Department of Psychology, S.D.(P.G.) College, Ghaziabad, U.P., India

*Corresponding Author

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The influence of these functions could be positive and negative, depends on the situations because every time family members require to share their feeling with one another (Bhatia & Chadha, 2015). When these feelings are not considered or shared or understood as required then it can be subsided and emerge later in the form of frustration that can lead to different consequences like fatal behavior or thoughts. This negative thought if reach beyond extreme then can lead to suicidal ideation. Which is very much clear with the following studies.

One study was done on 520 Chinese adolescents to screen the adolescents with suicidal ideation to control and lessen this thought to save them from fatal attempts. This research explored family cohesion and self-compassion in terms of moderators to curb this suicidal ideation. This study comprised of 43.46% girls with 12.96 years of average age. This work considered two dimensions of self-compassion as positive and negative in which positive self-compassion and cohesion worked significantly to control suicidal attempt in students who had this negative thought (Sun et al., 2020).

A study was conducted through 283 Australian Adolescents to explore social support (family support, demographic and friends' support) role in relation to suicidal ideation. This study suggested that family support had negative relationship with suicidal ideation in comparison to rest two which turned up neither as a moderator nor mediator to affect suicidal ideation (Moller et al., 2021)

As per one Student Assessment Program conducted over 12760 students in Pennsylvania helped to understand the family profile, how they could be associated to suicidal risk among students. This study focused on four family profiles (high, moderate, low risk and minimal disclosure) which were related to suicide risk, in comparison to school and mental health issue like academic performance, bullying and depression, anxiety respectively. It was exposed that family risk profiles like having conflicts and problems are associated to suicidal risk among adolescents. As per latent class analysis this minimal disclosure group need to be assessed more to understand role of the family in suicidal risk (Weissinger et al., 2023).

As per one systematic review and meta-analysis in south-east Asia about the widespread presence of suicidal ideation, plan and attempts among students, through Medline, Embase, PsycINFO and already executed meta-analysis, was accomplished. This found the suicidal ideation was 17.4% prevailed for life time, 9.33% prevailed for past years and 4.8% prevailed in current time. On next segment of the search, it was noticed about suicidal plan that it was prevailed 9% for lifetime, 7.3% for past years and 2.3% for current time. Another relevant part of this analysis about the suicidal attempt noticed that was prevailed 5.2% for lifetime, 4.5% for experienced years. This review exposed about suicidal attempt that it was reported higher in Nepal (10%) and Bangladesh (9%) in comparison to India (4%) and Indonesia (5%) (Arafat et al., 2023).

As the above study shows the prevalence rate of suicide among students at some places. It's very striking to see that there could be many factors related to the students in this adolescents' age group. So, it's really needful to explore, understand the area and factors related to this problem which is creating such a big change to the thoughts of the adolescents to take such a decision. Family, schools, society and many more which are connected to this age group are needed to be studied. As recently lots of suicide cases from Kota Rajasthan also getting exposed. So conspicuously this study was conducted to gain insight and find

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some factors related to the family environment, to help new generation to face and cope with new challenges of life and creating awareness among parents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

This work had been conducted on 300 adolescents within the age group of 14 -17 years who were studying in different schools of C.B.S.E. board. This study focused on schools of Ghaziabad city, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Instruments

To measure the suicidal ideation of adolescents, scale developed by William M. Reynolds (1988), was used. This scale, has 30 items, which is known as SIQ form. This tool has reliability coefficient by grade. 971 and test-retest reliability .72, consistent with the SIQ. The validity of the test was estimated through the correlation with different established tests like RADS, BDI, CDI. Its range was from .55 to .63 on RADS across samples. On BDI and CDI it was ranging from .65 to .70 overall which was supporting to the validity of SIQ and SIQ-JR as well. Its content validity was measured by the expert systems of the classifications such as DSM-III-R (APA,1987) and RDC (Spitzer et al.,1978).

Another scale was Family Environment Scale by Dr. Harpreet Bhatia and Dr. N. K. Chadha (2015) which had measured different factors (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization, control) of family environment. It contains 69 items. The reliability of the scale was determined by split-half reliability which is 0.95 overall and the validity of the test is face and content validity which is 0.75.

Procedure

Rapport was formed and students were made familiar with the research and consents were noted and registered for participating in the present study. The tests were administered on students of class 9 to 12. They were given both questionnaire one by one with a 10 minutes break. First of all, family environment scale was administered. After break Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire was administered. Instructions were given and doubts of students were corrected.

RESULTS

A first place where people learn and have a feeling of love, care, respect and growth is the family. Each age group is under impact of this term family. Specifically, when there is a need of understanding to the young people like adolescents or our new generation, then its utmost thing to keep updating ourselves and society that how a family contribute to their development and mental health. So, in this current study it was planned to research that which factor of family environment is helpful to understand the detrimental behavior and thought process of the adolescents at this stage of storm and stress.

Under this work, it was hypothesized that family environment would significantly prognosticate the occurrence of suicidal ideation among adolescents in terms of cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization and control.

For this purpose, these above mentioned eight dimensions of family environment were considered as individual and independent variables to find and measure their correlation

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with suicidal ideation. These all variables were analyzed through correlation analysis first of all which is reported in the table as following-

Table 1- Relationship (Correlation Coefficient of Suicidal Ideation with Eight Factors of Family Environment) (N=300)

Variables	r- values	p-values
Cohesion	-.230	0.01
Expressiveness	-.268	0.01
Conflict	-.303*	0.01
Acceptance & caring	-.234	0.01
Independence	-.351	0.01
Active Recreational Orientation	-.181	0.01
Organization	-.205	0.01
Control	-.062	NS**

**Reverse scoring therefor positive correlation **NS= non-significant*

As per above table values, correlation coefficient of eight variables of family environment (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, acceptance & caring, independence, active recreational orientation, organization and control) with suicidal ideation were found significant at 0.01 level except for Control.

Here negative correlation reveals that if any adolescent is having high score on cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance & caring, independence, active recreational orientation, organization and control then he/she will score lower on suicidal ideation. Among these all factors, conflict is also showing negative correlation with suicidal ideation. Reason behind this relation is reverse scoring of conflict, which exhibits that high scores on conflict will be the indicator of low conflict.

Further to scrutinize the factors as a predictor of suicidal ideation, regression analysis was employed on the data collected through 300 adolescents of school population and presented in table 2.

Table 2- Determinants of Suicidal Ideation (Family Environment)

Independent Variables	Beta	Simple r	Tolerance
Independence	-0.248**	-0.351	0.570
Conflict	-0.183**	-0.303	0.656
Multiple Regression = 0.403 Std error of estimate (RMSE) = 25.942 Normalized RMSE =0.414 Adjusted R ² = 0.136			

*** significant at 0.01 level*

As reported in the above table 2, standardized regression coefficient which is presented as Beta value are -0.248 and -0.183 for independence and conflict respectively. This Beta value enables the researcher to analyze the effect of predictor variables on criterion variable. The values in the table-2 are clearly depicting that independence has greater impact on suicidal ideation (-0.248) in comparison to conflict (-0.183). Also, significant correlation of independence and conflict i.e., -0.351 and -0.303 indicate average relationship with criterion variable.

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Tolerance levels of both the variables are 0.570 and 0.656 which are indicating that there is less possibility of multicollinearity. So, the effect of independence and conflict is purely their own and individual in predicting suicidal ideation in current study.

As per table 2, multiple regression value is 0.403 which is supposed to have an average strength relationship. Here R^2 value is 0.136 which unveils that combined contribution of independence and conflict on suicidal ideation is 13 percent.

Results in the present study, partially supported to the hypothesis because out of eight dimensions of family environment, only two dimensions (Independent and conflict) were able to prognosticate suicidal ideation among adolescents.

DISCUSSION

In this current work two predictors elucidate suicidal ideation in this age group of adolescents. First predictor is independence which express about the freedom of the teen within the family. This is the feeling of freedom to express openly in front of the family without any hesitation. This independence refers to the extent till the adolescents can be assertive to express themselves in case of any problem or issue they are facing and want to let others know about. This shows that how open they are within the family to discuss their any kind of matters and how freely they can take their decision. According to the current study this is a crucial factor of the family environment which comes under personal growth dimension and having negative relationship with suicidal ideation. This portray that if independence surges in a family, then suicidal ideation will be either lessen or wouldn't grow and vice versa. Another prognosticator for suicidal ideation in this study is conflict which expresses belligerence and aggression among adolescents expressed within family and in front of family members. Family is a setting where feeling and emotions are learned and expressed as well. But sporadically when it is being said "instead of being a readymade source of friends, the family is too often a readymade source of victims and enemies, the place where the cruelest words are spoken" (Bhatia and Chadha, 2015). When adolescents are not understood and considered that much important as they are then it rolls toward negativity.

Literature also supports the findings of this present study for both the factors reflecting their role in suicidal ideation among adolescents.

To study the suicidal behavior of 13 to 18 age group, one study was done on 805 adolescents. This study enquires the effect of depression, self-esteem, problem-solving, assertiveness, social support and few socioeconomic factors on suicidal behavior. Among all studied factors under this study, depression and low self-esteem were significantly predicted suicidal thoughts and behavior while on another hand rest of these studied factors worked as protective factors against suicidal thoughts and attempts, behavior (Eskin et al., 2007).

A research tried to explore the mediator which can play a role between parenting style and suicidal ideation as a social skills (assertiveness, empathy, self-control and cooperation). It was done on 15 to 18 age group, 604 adolescents in which 54.6% were females. This research noticed physical enforcement as a factor which appeared as a factor contributing to suicidal ideation. Here assertiveness was noticed to be associated inimically with suicidal ideation and weaken the relationship between mother's authoritarian way of handling and suicidal ideation. Empathy worked as protective factor between parenting styles (authoritative and authoritarian) and suicidal ideation (Nunes & Mota, 2023).

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One more study which focused on internalizing and externalizing problems of adolescents, considered 6233 students who already experienced suicidal behavior. This study tried to understand the relation between family conflict and suicidal behavior. It was probed that internal and external way of looking at the problem, played a significant role as a mediator between family conflict and suicidal behavior (Zhang et al., 2023).

Another Research was done on rural adolescents of sub-Saharan African countries to explore factors which are correlated to suicidal ideation. This considered 12 months of passage to understand suicidal ideation in a cross-sectional survey with gender specificity. This work was done of 1101 adolescents with 10-19 years of age. It was reported that female who had adverse experience in her close relation, outside of her family context, was probable to report suicidal ideation whereas males who had experience of parental conflict, were having probability to have suicidal ideation. Apart from this if adolescents had any friend's suicidal behavior news into notice then these adolescents will have double chances to follow the same behavior (Quarshie & Odame, 2023)

One more study was conducted to recognize the role of conflict in the presence of assertive interpersonal schema to predict suicidal ideation. It was noticed that the conflict significantly affected suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts. This work was completed through 229 adolescents of secondary schools who already had a suicidal thought in life (Eslava et al., 2023).

So, this current work uncovered positively two factors of family environment (Independence and conflict) as predictors of suicidal ideation among adolescents. This is the core finding of this current work which help to understand a family environment in relation to suicidal ideation. Through this study its very clear that this passage (14 to 17 age groups) is a time, of mental turbulences, which use to be affected easily with surrounded factors, especially family environment. So, this needs to be proactive to understand all facets of family environment specially these two independence and conflict which helps to control this suicidal ideation and behavior as a protective and risk factor respectively. If adolescents do have freedom to be assertive to express themselves in front of their family, then they could save themselves from overburdened predisposition with the pressure of unexpressed feelings and thoughts that might lead them to fatal ideation. On another hand if they have less contradictory behavior and communication at home with their family members then they may think over the suggestions given by them, that could lead to the healthy discussion to understand any worst situation as well. As per this research less conflict results into less suicidal ideation and behavior in adolescents.

This research can help to work proactively to control and provide better suggestion to parents, mentors, teachers, coaches, tutors and any professional who is associated to this segment of age group and their problems which are hampering their mental health and well-being.

To conclude this can be stated that independence and conflict are important predictors of suicidal ideation among adolescents which can help in prognosis to understand suicidal behavior in adolescents' age group. Less than optimum level of independence and high conflicts are prognosticator of suicidal ideation within a family environment. So, it's really considerable to keep adolescents assured about their rights to speak up within a family when they are in need and with less or no conflicts in their critical time of life. In the surge of

better health and well-being of our youth and new generation, this current work can be used effectively and proactively.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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