

Impact of Alienation on Suicidal Ideation during Competitive Exams

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ABSTRACT

This paper focus on the impact of alienation on suicidal ideation during competitive exams. This rising competition leads to alienation amongst students of competitive exams leading to suicidal ideation amongst them. The purpose of this research is to understand the relationship between alienation and suicidal ideation during competitive exams. A sample size of 131 participants was used for the study. The Suicidal Ideation Attribution Scale (SIDAS) (Van Spizker et al., 2014) and Alienation Scale (Dean, 1961) were used in research. Pearson's correlation and regression were used in the present study.

Keywords: *Alienation, Suicidal Ideation, Competitive Exam*

In the cauldron of contemporary education systems, competitive exams stand as crucial events, encouraging avenues of success yet often accompanied by the weight of immense pressure and expectations. Amidst the persistent pursuit of academic greatness, individuals often find themselves struggling with feelings of isolation and alienation. This feeling of distance from social support networks, connected with the great stress of competition, can precipitate disturbing repercussion, with suicidal ideation developing as a distressing phenomenon.

The experience of alienation, marked by an intense sense of estrangement from oneself, others, and society at large, holds important inference for mental health, specifically within the inference of academic accuracy. As students handle the deceitful territory of competitive exams, the sense of alienation can intensify active psychological vulnerabilities, nurturing a rearing ground for suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

This introduction provides as a predecessor to a extensive investigation into the complex interplay between alienation and suicidal ideation during competitive exams. By getting into the psychological support of both aspects and pumping the circumstantial determinants that intensify their effects, this study ventures to throw light on an often neglected yet overcritical aspect of academic stress.

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Suicidal Ideation

- According to the American psychiatric association suicidal ideation refers to “thoughts about or a preoccupation with killing oneself, often as a symptom of a major depressive episode. Most instances of suicidal ideation do not progress to attempted suicide.”
- The DSM-5 defines it as “thoughts about self-harm, with deliberate consideration or planning of possible techniques of causing one’s own death.”
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines suicidal ideation “as thinking about, considering, or planning suicide.
- According to psych central Suicidal ideation “thoughts or feelings about suicide or self-harm — can range from simply considering it to creating a plan.”

Types of suicidal ideation

1. **Active:** It is a type of suicidal ideation in which a person not only limited to intends to commit a suicide but also plans an action to do it in reality.
2. **Passive:** It is a type of suicidal ideation in which person has only intentions to commit suicide but doesnt plan to do it in a reality.

Causes

- History of any kind of violence
- Mental health issues
- Mental disorders
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling worthless
- Loss of loved ones, work or money
- LGBTQ without any support
- Health condition
- Bullying
- Break up
- Divorce

Stress

The causes of suicidal ideation vary from person to person and from situation to situation. The above causes are not only causes of suicidal ideation. However, some mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, substance use disorder, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic injury are directly linked to suicidal ideation.

Symptoms

- The symptoms of suicidal ideation:
- Making suicidal plans
- Talking about to die
- Anxious
- Feeling trapped
- Mood swings
- Anger issues
- Avoid social gatherings
- Substance use

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Alienation

According to the American psychiatric association Alienation refers to “Estrangement from others, resulting in the absence of close or friendly relationships with people in one’s social group (e. g., family, workplace, community). A deep-seated sense of dissatisfaction with one’s personal existence and a lack of trust in one’s personal existence and a lack of trust in one’s social or physical environment or in oneself.”

According to Britannica Alienation refers to “sciences, the state of feeling estranged or separated from one’s milieu, work, products of work, or self.”

Types of alienation

- Cultural estrangement: Feeling of dissociating from family values and beliefs.
- Isolation: Feeling of loneliness in a group such a feeling left out in a group.
- Meaningless: Feeling of no sense or purpose in any aspect of life.
- Normlessness: Removal of connection from norms and involvement in deviant behaviour.
- Powerlessness: Feeling of losing control over every aspect of life.
- Self-Estrangement: Being out of touch and losing one’s identity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Suicidal ideation and alienation are a critical issue affecting people in all over the world. Several studies reveal the adverse impacts of suicidal ideation and alienation on mental health of people all over the globe. **Wang et al. (2023)** found that the Dark Triad involves three aversive personality traits (i.e., Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism) that share a dark core. Some studies revealed the impact of dark triad on suicidal ideation. Results revealed that the dark core and Machiavellianism affected suicidal ideation through social alienation. **Kuan et al. (2020)** found that powerlessness and normlessness had a significant positive correlation to suicide ideation. Powerlessness, age and income level are the strongest cause of suicidal ideation. **Vishwanth and Kande (2019)** indicates the strong and positive correlations between feelings of powerlessness, isolation, self-estrangement, and suicidal ideation revealed that individuals with high scores in these measures may have difficulty dealing suicidal thoughts and may even have ideas to commit suicide. This suggests that alienation can be calculated as a significant risk factor for suicidal ideation or suicide itself.

Murtagh (2008) revealed that personal perceptions of care, the work place culture, organisational and professional expectations and their personal concepts about suicide all influenced the experiences of the suicidal ideation. Mental exhaustion, tension and feelings of isolation and alienation from family and society were universal experiences.

There are certain studies which focused on Parental alienation and its impact on suicidal ideation. **Verhaar et al. (2022)** found that susceptibility to parental alienating behaviours during early years of life can have a adverse effect on the psyche of those people during late years of life including experiencing anxiety disorders, mental health difficulties, emotional pain, addiction, substance abuse, coping, resilience and trauma reactions. This study indicates the subtle nature of parental alienation and parental alienating instances and given further proof of these instances as a form of emotional abuse. **Sher (2015)** found that parental alienation adversely impacts mental health of male children and adolescents who are sufferers of parental alienation. They show regret, melancholy, depressive mood, low

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self-worth, lack of confidence, stress, anger, lack of instinct control, substance addiction, criminal behavior, separation anxiety, fears, phobias, hypochondria, and increased frequency to develop psychosomatic illness such as suicidal ideation and suicide attempt, sleep and eating disorders, educational problems, enuresis and encopresis. **Yang et al. (2021)** revealed a significant negative relation between parental attachment and youth. The existence of a safe relationship with parental figures, as thought by the youth, provides forth feelings of recognition, believed, security, and trust, that makes the individual to take help in a more persistent way and to combat maladjusted behaviour when met with hardships. Although, a low level of attachment induces thinking involved with recognised onerous and unpromising affection, which raises a youth's vulnerability to suicidal ideation.

Helm et al. (2020) found that existential isolation and loneliness both separately cause depression and suicide ideation and involve to cause greater depression that is who are both existentially isolated and lonely showed the greatest depression. Apart from this those with increased loneliness and existential isolation showed an average depression that involved mild clinical depression according to well established clinical researches.

Several studies focus on the role of lifestyle, disorders and substance use on suicidal ideation and alienation. **Lee and Ham (2018)** revealed sleep problems, Internet gaming addiction, criminal behavior, depressive symptoms and family relationship conflicts and peer victimization were involved with suicidal ideation. **Rachel et al. (2022)** revealed that alienation appraisals are salient in trauma-related distress. Studies show that alienation appraisals fully involve the connection between exposure to trauma and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in trauma-exposed adults. **Kinkel et al. (1989)** revealed that young women, farm residents, and in general drug users are more prone to subject a suicide attempt. Women who are persistent alcohol users and repeated users of marijuana are more likely to involve in a suicide attempt compared to their male counterparts.

Some studies focus on the family dynamics on suicidal ideation and alienation. **Cho and Lee (2010)** revealed that family's mistreatment had a implicit and an explicit effect through alienation and depression on adolescent's suicidal ideation in stressful home, family relationship support and socioeconomic status had an explicit effect through school maladjustment, alienation and depression on suicidal ideation. School mistreatment had a implicit effect on adolescent's suicidal ideation. School mistreatment in terms with teacher and peers and in memorising acts had explicit effects through alienation and depression on adolescent's suicidal ideation. Adolescent's depression had a great implicit effect on suicidal ideation. Adolescent's alienation had a implicit and an explicit effect through depression on adolescent's suicidal ideation and was the very critical predictive variable of adolescent's suicidal ideation. **Narain et al. (2021)** revealed that those young children irrespective of familiarity to nuclear or joint families, who combined strong bonds with their family members were revealed to be decreased on both loneliness and suicidal ideation. However, loneliness was prevailing among most young children with or without the prevalence of suicidal thoughts but there was not a single case where suicidal ideation was subjected without feelings of loneliness.

Several studies also throws a light on suicidal ideation and alienation during covid lockdown. **Chen et al. (2023)** concluded that more than half of the older adults who faced lockdown experienced alienation and a sense of alienation was separately correlated with depressive symptoms. **Chatoor et al. (2023)** revealed that during lockdown many students

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faced alienation from school and faced difficulties in online mode of learning as a result caused adverse impact on their mental health. This study revealed that children face emotional and psychological difficulties during online learning and felt suicidal ideation at a very young age.

There were studies that focused on gender and urban and rural dynamics on suicidal ideation and alienation. **Rani (2015)** found the existence of a major difference between the alienation of rural and urban adolescents. The alienation level of rural adolescents is larger than urban adolescents. Hence, rural adolescents are much alienated than urban adolescents. The observable difference between the alienation level of urban males and rural females. Rural females have an increased alienation level than urban males. So, the rural females are much more alienated than urban males. It was also found an observable difference between the alienation level of urban females and rural females. The rural females have higher levels than the urban females. Hence, the rural females are more alienated. There is no observable difference between the alienation levels of urban females and rural males. There is no observable difference between the alienation levels of urban and rural males. **Rathee and Sharma (2018)** revealed that alienation has a remarkable effect on academic stress of high school students. Gender has a notable effect on academic stress of high school students. Alienation and gender two have a notable interaction effect on academic stress of high school students.

There were studies focusing on factors affecting suicidal ideation and alienation. **Lee (2017)** revealed that alienation plays a major role in depression, and depression was somehow affected through alienation by school belongingness, fellow schoolmates, and education performance. Suicidal thoughts play a great role in depression, and were directly and indirectly influenced by alienation. It was assured that alienation rolled out to be a significant mediating variable, while it had a significant effect on depression and suicidal thoughts. Also, there were notably differences in affecting factors among male and female students. **Kwon et al. (2021)** suggested that psychological determinants including depression, school adjustment, upbringing attitude, academic stress, and self-esteem plays a major role in suicidal ideation of female adolescents. **Josef (2015)** suggested that sexual harassment and bullying plays a very important role in depression and alienation. **Zhang et al. (2019)** suggested that suicidal ideation is much more significantly prevalent in girls rather than boys. The factors associated with suicidal ideation includes increased academic pressure, eloping from home, fighting, bullying, feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, and binge drinking in both boys and girls.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To study the impact of alienation on suicidal ideation during competitive exams.

Variables

- Independent variable: Alienation
- Dependent variable: Suicidal ideation

Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between the suicidal ideation and alienation during competitive exams.
2. To investigate the predictive relationship between alienation and suicidal ideation during competitive exams.

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3. To understand the impact of demographic details in determining the impact of alienation on suicidal ideation.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between alienation and suicidal ideation.
2. Suicidal ideation will be a predictor of alienation.

Participants

For the present study data from 131 candidates of competitive exams were collected and analysed. The participants are encouraged to participate through snowball sampling. The study focuses on candidates of competitive exams as sample population due to a notable gap in existing literature regarding a few type of research in impact of alienation on suicidal ideation during competitive exam.

Description of tools employed

For the purpose of conducting this study, the following tools were used to assess the alienation and suicidal ideation.

Suicidal ideation

Suicidal ideation attribution scale (SIDAS) (Van Spizker et al., 2014)

Five items-Targeting attributes of suicidal thoughts: Frequency, controllability, closeness to attempt, level of distress, impact of daily function.

Scoring: Responses are measured on a 10 point scale.

Alienation scale: Dean, D. G. (1961)

- It involves 24 items. It measures three aspects: Powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation.
- This scale is based on five meanings: Powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Total Reliability: 0.78.
- Normlessness: 0.73; Powerlessness: 0.79; Social isolation: 0.84; VALIDITY: 0.26 to 0.37. It includes three subscales: Powerlessness: 9 items 2, 6, 9, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21 and 23. Normlessness: 6 items 4, 7, 10, 12, 16, 19. Social isolation: 9 items 1, 3, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 22, and 24.
- Scoring: Strongly agree: 4; Agree: 3; Uncertain: 2; Disagree: 1; Strongly disagree: 0. Scoring is reversed for items: 5, 8, 11, 14, and 22. Scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 96.

Procedure

The snowball sampling method was utilized to collect the data from candidates of competitive exams. 25 percent of data was collected through physical form and 75 percent was collected through google form. The proportion of men and women were roughly equal in order to ensure that data was accurately represented.

RESULTS**Correlations**

		Suicidal Ideation	Alienation
Suicidal Ideation	Pearson Correlation	1	.331**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	130	130
Alienation	Pearson Correlation	.331**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression**Variables Entered/Removed^a**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Alienation ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: suicidal ideation

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.331 ^a	.109	.102	13.03329

a. Predictors: (Constant), alienation

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2666.470	1	2666.470	15.697	.000 ^b
	Residual	21742.922	128	169.867		
	Total	24409.392	129			

a. Dependent Variable: suicidal ideation

b. Predictors: (Constant), alienation

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	-2.935	6.842		-.429	.669
	Alienation	.462	.117	.331	3.962	.000

a. Dependent Variable: suicidal ideation

Interpretation

HYPOTHESIS 1: There will be a significant relationship between suicidal ideation and alienation.

The hypothesis 1 was accepted in the study. The correlation between suicidal ideation and alienation is .331 which states low correlation between suicidal ideation and alienation. This is shown statistically significant in the results.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Suicidal ideation will be a predictor of alienation.

The hypothesis 2 was accepted in the study as this study suggests that suicidal ideation is a predictor of alienation. The value of R square is .109, which states 10.9% variation in alienation can be explained through suicidal ideation which means suicidal ideation is not a strong predictor of alienation as there is a very less variation showing in the result.

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis 1 was accepted in the study. The correlation between suicidal ideation and alienation is .331 which states low correlation between suicidal ideation and alienation. This is shown statistically significant in the results. The possible reasons for low correlation could be the small size of the population which is very general in nature showing the generalised results of the study. There were also some unaccounted confounding variables such as coping mechanisms, socio economic status and social support that influence relationship between suicidal ideation and alienation. The complexity of constructs including individual factors, interpersonal factors, cultural factors and contextual factors also plays a great role in establishing high correlation between suicidal ideation and alienation. The characteristics of study sample may influence the relationship between alienation and suicidal alienation. There were also some theories like dual factor theory which suggests that suicidal ideation is more associated with the psychopathology than the feelings of alienation. The social support theory also states that if there is a social support present then feeling of alienation doesn't play a great role in suicidal ideation. The cognitive theory of suicidal behavior shows that cognitive factor plays a great role in the development of suicidal ideation. It emphasis on the fact that feelings of alienation followed by the cognitive factor is crucial for the development of suicidal ideation.

The hypothesis 2 was accepted in the study as this study suggests that suicidal ideation is a predictor of alienation. The value of R square is .109 which states 10.9% variation in alienation can be explained through suicidal ideation which means suicidal ideation is not a strong predictor of alienation as there is a very less variation showing in the result. The thought of taking one's own life, or suicidal ideation, is a complicated and multidimensional phenomena with important ramifications for mental health and wellbeing. A crucial component of psychological discomfort is alienation, which is defined as emotions of estrangement, isolation, and disconnection from others and society.

There are some theories that support the above hypothesis that suicidal ideation is a predictor of alienation. The social integration theory suggests that social connection and belongingness is the fundamental need of human beings. Suicidal thoughts might cause a person to withdraw from social situations, which exacerbates feelings of alienation and loneliness of alienation. The cognitive theory of depression also suggests that suicidal ideation leads to the feeling of alienation.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide insight into the intricate relationship between suicidal thoughts and alienation experienced by applicants taking competitive tests. In contrast to the original hypotheses, the study found no evidence of a substantial association, suggesting that alienation and suicidal ideation are not highly correlated. It did, however, show that although suicidal ideation may not be a strong predictor of alienation, it is a predictor, although one that explains just a small percentage of the variation in alienation. On the other hand, alienation was found to be a more reliable predictor of suicidal ideation, accounting for a significant amount of the variation in suicidal ideation. These findings highlight how crucial it is to take alienation into account while analyzing and treating suicidal thoughts, especially in demanding academic settings.

Limitation

It is more difficult to prove a link between alienation and suicidal ideation because the data were only gathered once. In order to determine plausible causal pathways and gain a deeper understanding of the temporal relationship between these variables, longitudinal studies are required. Furthermore, the content and size of the sample may have an impact on how broadly the results can be applied. The ramifications of these findings for comprehending and treating suicidal ideation are significant. The importance of treating emotions of isolation and detachment in mental health interventions aimed at suicide prevention is shown by the noteworthy positive correlation found between alienation and suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation may be prevented by psychosocial therapy that aim to improve social connectedness and lessen alienation.

Future research

To stop suicide and advance mental health, research on the fundamental mechanisms causing this association should not stop. It should also assess the efficacy of interventions that target alienation as well as suicidal ideation.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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