

Research Paper

Stress and Suicidal Ideation Among Indian Students in UAE and India

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to compare the prevalence of stress and suicidal ideation between two countries. And also finding out the relationship between stress and suicidal ideation. It also helps us identify coping strategies alongside making better policies and treatment efforts to prevent suicide. Stress and suicidal ideation among Indian students in UAE and India are objectively measured using depression, anxiety and stress scale (DASS) and suicidal ideation scale with an estimated sample size of 150 participants. Statistical tools such as correlation, regression and independent t-test are used to analyse the data. The study is conducted amongst students falling under the age 15-22. Descriptive statistical analysis is used to summarise the findings.

Keywords: *Stress, Suicidal Ideation, Young Adults*

Students presently are suffering from stress which is a leading factor in negatively impacting their mental and physical health. It also has a great impact on their academic performance. Excessive stress makes students lose concentration, and motivation and have a negative impact on their performance. Excessive stress in students can lead to negative emotions which can cause intrusive thoughts and eventually leads to the increase in suicidal thoughts and ideations. Stress can be defined as a state of mental tension or worry caused by difficult situations. It is a natural human response that prompts one to address the challenges and threats in their life. Each and every person experiences stress to some degree. The way one responds to stress, plays an important role in one's overall well-being. This study aims to explore the relationship between stress and suicidal ideation and compare the levels of stress and suicidal ideation in Indian students of India and UAE. Stress affects both the mind and body. Too much stress can cause physical and mental health

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problems. Stress has various positive aspects as well. Eustress leads to a positive response. Eustress is the positive cognitive response to stress that is healthy or gives one a feeling of fulfilment or other positive feelings. This kind of stress has a beneficial effect on the body, mind and motivation and enhances performance. Whereas distress, is a negative kind of stress that cause excessive anxiety and harm to the physical as well as psychological health. Excessive distress is a leading cause of suicidal ideation among students. General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is a popular theory of stress. This theory was proposed by Hans Selye and it describes how body responds to stress. The stages of this model are as follows-

1. **Alarm reaction stage-** the presence of a noxious stimulus or stressor leads to the activation of the adrenal-pituitary-cortex system. This triggers the release of hormones producing the stress response which makes the individual ready for a fight or flight response
2. **Resistance stage-** if stress is prolonged, the resistance stage begins, and the parasympathetic nervous system calls for more cautious use of the body's resources. The individual makes efforts to cope with the threat.
3. **Exhaustion-** prolonged exposure to the same stressor drains the body of its resources and leads to the stage of exhaustion. The physiological system involved in alarm reaction and resistance stage becomes ineffective and susceptibility to stress-related diseases such as high blood pressure becomes more likely.

Suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts) are thoughts or concepts that revolve around death or suicide. These thoughts may be fleeting or exceedingly distracting. One may get obsessed with suicidal ideas and devise a plot to end their own life. There are numerous potential causes of suicidal ideation. Sometimes there is no single obvious cause, or there may be multiple factors that lead to suicide ideation such as biological factors such as genetics and brain development, Interpersonal relationships, Negative life events Demographics such as employment, socioeconomic status and Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and stress. Two types of suicidal ideations are Passive suicidal ideation which is Suicidal thoughts that occur without the intention of harming oneself and Active suicidal ideation which is Suicidal thoughts that drive one to devise a strategy of self-harm. When a strategy is in place, one may feel more at ease or withdrawn. Warning symptoms of suicide, such as giving away valuable possessions and writing a note, may occur. This typically necessitates emergency treatment.

There are a few studies related to the research we are going to explore. Student Stress and Suicidal Ideation in College Students. Das, S. & Mathew, A.M. (2024). Student Stress and Suicidal Ideation in College Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(3), 360- 369. DIP:18.01.032.20241203, DOI:10.25215/1203.032. This study conducted among 100 students of ages 17 and 18, found a strong positive correlation between stress and suicidal ideation, with a correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) of 0.599. Regression analysis demonstrates that stress levels can effectively predict suicidal ideation. These findings underscore the need to address stress as a risk factor for suicidal ideation, highlight the necessity of interventions targeted towards stress reduction, as well as promotion of mental wellbeing. Correlational study of academic stress and suicidal ideation among students. Yadav, Sheetal & Srivastava, S. (2020). Correlational Study of Academic Stress and Suicidal Ideation among Students. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research and Development*. 11. 56 to 61. It is found positive significant correlation between academic stress and suicidal ideation. Experts says that most of the suicides are due to fear

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of failure and the burden of expectations from family, Sudden change in surrounding, test results, batch reshuffle issues.

Students are always over-burdened with academics, major decision makings in life, relationships, family pressure, change in lifestyle etc. excessive stress has high potential to lead to suicidal ideation which is one of the leading causes of death among students. Our research tries to contribute to the broader understanding of how stress and suicidal ideation are directly proportional and leads to various mental health issues and how people from different region experience stress and suicidal ideation and deal with them. Our research will also tend to help various public health policies aimed at preventing or reducing suicide rates across the world.

Aim

This research paper aims to draw a comparison in the levels of stress and suicidal ideation (SI) among Indian students in two different demographic regions that is UAE and India and also find the correlation between stress and suicidal ideation. In this process, we are also trying to identify the possible intervention strategies for mental health support.

Objective

- To compare the stress and Suicidal Ideation levels, identifying any significant differences between geographical regions.
- To examine the relationship between stress and suicidal ideation in the target population.

Hypotheses

- There will be no significant difference in the suicidal ideation of the Indian students in UAE and India.
- There will be a positive relationship between stress and Suicidal Ideation.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample Size

The sample size consists of n=129. Out of those, 89 were from the universities in India and 40 from the universities in the UAE. Participants were sampled through purposive sampling, which enables a researcher to narrow down on a particular population that will be able to provide relevant data for a particular study. The respondents were aged 15-22 years.

Sampling Method

The recruited participants were easily obtained through purposive sampling from the different academic centres located in India and the United Arab Emirates. This was made possible by the fact that the purposeful sampling strategy made it possible for the researchers to identify and target only a particular group of the population that may yield relevant data on the research aim and objectives.

Tools Used

- 1. Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale:** This scale was applied during the study to assess the level of depression, anxiety and stress of the subjects of the study.
- 2. Suicidal Ideation Scale:** This facilitator scale was applied to assess the potential attitudes of participants on self-death.

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Procedure

Personal Data Sheet: A personal data sheet is used to collect information regarding the socio-demographic factors of the respondents such as their country of residence which in this case is either India or UAE.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No 1 shows the geographical differences on stress between Indian students in India and UAE

GEOGRAPHICAL REGION	MEAN STRESS	INTERPRETATION	[t- VALUE]
Indian students in India	19.4	Moderate	0.266
Indian students in UAE	17.2	Moderate	

The data shows that there is no significant difference in the levels of stress between Indian students in UAE and India.

The test was conducted in order to prove whether the Indian students in the United Arab Emirates and India have any difference in their stress levels due to the influence of their Environment and other Amenities. It shows the stress level of Indian students in India and UAE as 19.4 and 17.2 respectively, which shows a t-test value of 0.266, Which implies a moderate level of stress experienced by the Indian students in both the countries.

Table no 2 shows the correlation between stress and suicidal ideation

VARIABLES	MEAN	S.D	r - VALUE
Stress	18.3	10.3	0.04
Suicidal ideation	44.6	23	

From the above table it's been observed that, when it comes to analyzing whether there is an influence in the level of suicidal ideation by the increase or decrease in stress. The test shows a correlation between Stress and Suicidal ideation with a mean of 18.3 and 44.6 and a standard deviation of 10.3 and 23 respectively. The regression analysis of 0.04 suggests that the correlation between stress and suicidal Ideation has a weak positive correlation. This led us to the conclusion that it is not just stress being a factor in suicidal ideation rather it led us to the necessity of leading a new study with other variables causing suicidal ideation.

Overall, the study has suggested the need to find whether other variables cause any suicidal Ideation among Indian students in the United Arab Emirates and India. Which will be our future study on the same research.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, we can understand that there are no significant differences in stress levels between students in the UAE and India, with both groups generally experiencing moderate levels of stress. Additionally, we can also observe a weak positive correlation between stress and suicidal ideation; however, the impact of this correlation is minimal which means that while stress is a factor there are other variables that are contributing to suicidal ideation. These findings suggest the need for strategies to manage moderate stress levels and further explore factors influencing suicidal ideation among students.

Limitations

Our study only had a sample size of 129 which is too small and hence we cannot generalize the results. The sample chosen from UAE were all of Indian origin and students followed the CBSE curriculum the same as Indian students so there would not be much difference in the academic pressure they are facing. Only selective educational institutions had been taken which may result in reduced statistical power, making it harder to detect significant relationships or trends between stress and suicidal ideation.

Future Research

In the future we would like to expand our area of research, increasing the sample size and taking up more variables like depression and anxiety. We also want to study about the students from government schools.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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