

Gender Differences in Suicidal Ideation in Rural Youths

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the gender-based differences in suicidal ideation among rural youth. A total of 200 participants were selected in the sample, comprising 100 males and 100 females from rural areas. To assess their level of suicidal ideation, the Suicidal Ideation Scale developed by Sisodia and Bhatnagar (2011) was used. SPSS version 20.0 was used to analyse the data. A t-test was performed to determine the difference in the amount of suicidal ideation between the groups. The findings revealed a significant gender difference, with female participants showing a higher level of suicidal ideation compared to their male counterparts.

Keywords: Suicidal ideation, Gender difference, Youth, Rural

Suicide is the act of intentionally taking one's own life. A specific view (likely from the text) is that suicide can be seen as a response to certain psychological or social triggers and it is framed within broader discussions of mental health and existential issues. Suicide rates have been increasing overall in the United States for over a decade and the rates of suicide are increasing over time most rapidly in rural counties (Rossen et al., 2018; Steelesmith et al., 2019). Different Psychologists have defined suicide in different ways such as - Shneidman (1971a) defined suicide as an extreme response to psychological pain, stating that "suicide is an intentional, self-inflicted death that arises from unbearable emotional pain, and it is seen as the only solution to that pain." He further elaborated that emotional distress, when it becomes intolerable, can lead individuals to perceive suicide as the only escape.

Carson et al. (2000) emphasized that suicide is often linked to the experience of significant emotional or psychological distress. They argued that suicidal thoughts can arise when a person feels trapped or overwhelmed by their situation, and the belief that there is no way out can lead them to consider suicide. Coon (2003) discussed how various emotional disturbances, particularly unresolved psychological issues, can push an individual toward suicidal thoughts or actions. He suggested that emotional pain and mental health struggles can impair judgment, leading to a sense of helplessness or hopelessness, which in turn can result in suicide. According to Ahmad et al. (2014), Abasse et al. (2009), and Singh & Pathak (2017), suicidal thoughts can be understood as a continuum of ideation, thought, and desire related to committing suicide. This is a deeply complex behavior, which can be specifically identified as a demand for identity formation or a search for meaning.

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In many cases, individuals who experience suicidal ideation do not necessarily act on it, but it is considered a risk factor. According to **Pedersen (2018)**, suicidal thoughts arise from personal reflections that, due to various reasons, are associated with a desire to end one's life.

Suicidal ideation is often closely linked to depression. It can also be associated with many other psychological disorders, life events, and family-related incidents. All of these factors can increase the intensity and frequency of suicidal thoughts. Suicidal ideation is influenced by several factors, both directly and indirectly, among which some are major determinants. Many previous research studies have been conducted in this regard, which establish the validity of these factors such as **Mao et al (2025)** in their research found that ethnicity, age, primary mental health, employment status, poor well-being and anxiety to be significantly associated with suicidal ideation.

Gender differences have been found to be a significant factor in suicide risk in various studies, such as - according to **De Leo et al. (2002)**, in their study found that suicidal thoughts are more commonly observed in girls, whereas the actual attempts of suicide are more frequently found among boys. **Andrea (2019)** studied the role of gender differences in suicidal behavior among adolescents and youth. The results showed that the intensity of suicide attempts was higher among females, whereas males had a greater fear of death related to suicide. **Choo (2017)** and **Ho et al. (2016)**, in their studies, found that gender plays an important role in suicidal behavior. Boys tend to use more violent methods, while girls tend to use non-violent (passive) means, often involving greater use of medication or drugs in their suicide attempts.

The present investigation is an attempt to answer the question: Is suicidal ideation among rural youth determined by gender?

Objective of the Study

The objective of the present research effort is to find out the significant difference in Suicidal ideation among rural male and female youths.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 200 rural youths participated in the study, comprising 100 male students and 100 female students. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique from the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh. The age range of the respondents was between 18 and 20 years.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentally and physically healthy students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentally and physically ill students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undergraduate students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students from any classes other than graduate classes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arts faculty students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students from any faculty other than the art faculty

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Instrument

The Hindi adaptation of Suicidal Ideation Scale, developed by **Sisodia and Bhatnagar (2011)** was used to measure the suicidal ideation of the participants. This scale has 25 items including both positive and negative statements. It is a standardized, highly valid, and reliable instrument designed to assess suicidal ideation comprehensively. The reliability of the scale was established through both the test–retest method and measures of internal consistency. The test–retest reliability coefficient of 0.78 indicates a satisfactory level of temporal stability, while the internal consistency coefficient of 0.81 reflects a strong degree of reliability among the items. Overall, the scale demonstrates sound psychometric properties, making it a robust tool for evaluating suicidal ideation.

Procedure

In this study, both male and female rural youth were informed about the objective of the research and were asked to participate voluntarily after providing their consent. The Suicidal Ideation Scale was administered to the participants following a detailed reading and explanation of the instructions. Their responses were recorded on the scale, which was administered in small groups consisting of 5 to 10 participants at a time.

Statistical Analyses

In the present study descriptive and inferential statistics, including the mean and t-test, were employed to evaluate the data. The SPSS (Version 20.0) was used for data analysis.

RESULTS

The objective of the present research was to examine the effect of gender on suicidal ideation. The results were obtained by statistically comparing the mean scores of the different groups included in the study. The interpretation of the research findings is described below.

Table – 1 Mean, SD, and T Value of Suicidal Ideation among Male and Female Students

Group	N	Mean	SD	t
Male	100	46.58	32.79	3.825**
Female	100	65.19	35.94	

**Significant at 0.01 level

The table reveals that there is a significant difference in the level of suicidal ideation between male and female students. In the current study, the mean of male students was 46.58 and SD was 32.79. the mean of female students was 65.19 and SD was 35.94. The t-value was 3.825 (significant at 0.01 level). The mean scores available in the table clearly shows that the mean score of suicidal ideation among males is lower than that of females. The results indicate that, in this study, the level of suicidal ideation was found to be higher among female students compared to male students. A clear comparison of the means of both groups is also presented in the column chart below-

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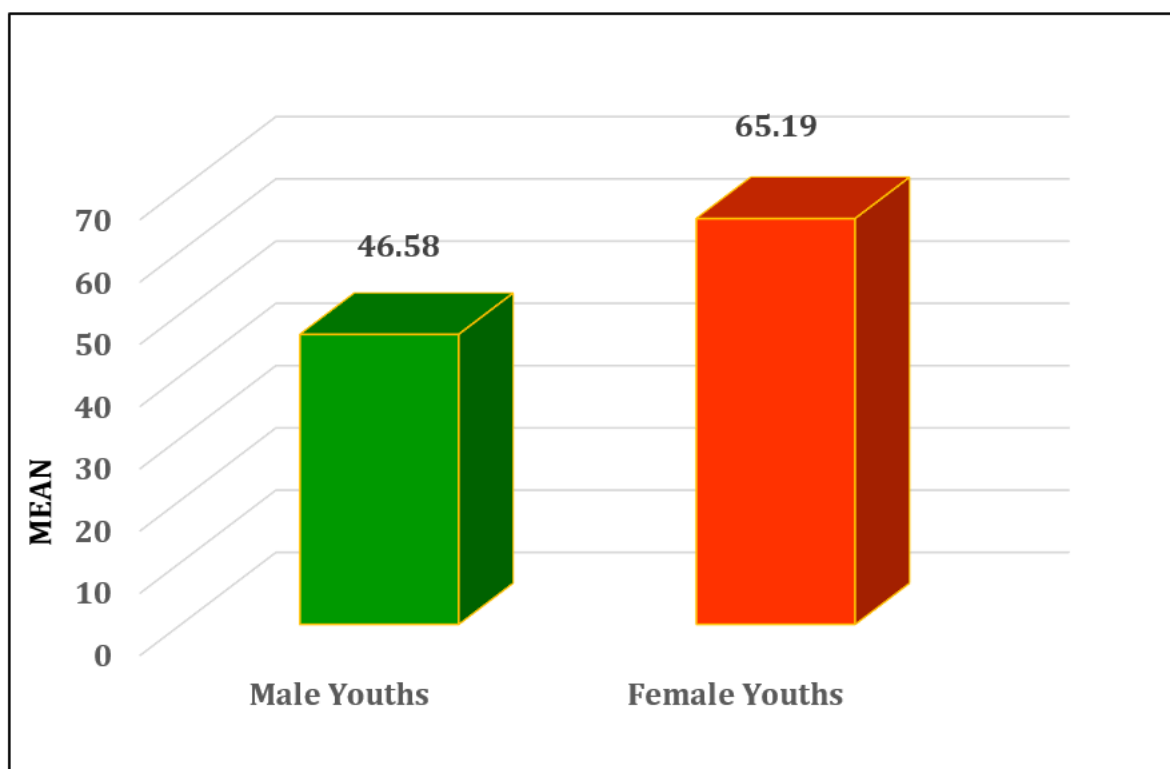


Figure: 1 – The column diagram showing the Mean Performance of male and female youths on the Suicidal Ideation Scale.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the level of suicidal ideation was found to be higher among female students compared to male students. The results indicate that gender has an impact on suicidal ideation. These findings align with the study by **Andrea M.M. (2019)**, which identified posttraumatic stress disorder, depressive symptoms, and interpersonal difficulties as key risk factors contributing to suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among females. Similarly, **Wunderlich (2001)** reported that female individuals exhibited significantly higher rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts compared to their male counterparts. **Cantor & Slater (1997)**, **Fraser et al. (2005)**, **Miller & Burns (2008)**, **Page et al. (2007)**, **Page & Frager (2002)**, and **Phillips (2009)** found in their studies that the rate of suicide has increased in rural areas as compared to urban areas in Australia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the present study, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the level of suicidal ideation between male and female rural youths. Female youths obtained higher rate of suicidal ideation than male youths.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

No research is without limitations, and the present study is no exception. While efforts were made to ensure methodological rigor, certain constraints may have affected the generalizability and scope of the findings. To enhance the quality of future research, the following limitations and corresponding recommendations are outlined:

1. The sample size in the present study was relatively small and restricted to a specific geographical area. Future research may benefit from a larger and more diverse

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sample, covering a broader region. It is also recommended that additional variables related to suicidal ideation be explored to gain deeper insights.

2. The age of the participants in the study was between 18 and 20 years; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the population of all age groups. For this, future research should include a broader age range of participants.
3. Since the present study was conducted only on undergraduate students, generalizing the results to students of other classes may be questionable. To overcome this limitation, students from other classes should also be included in future studies.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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