

Research Paper

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

Dr. Jyoti¹, Jyoti Rathore^{2*}

ABSTRACT

Background: Suicidal ideation is a rising mental health problem in adults particularly in their early and middle adulthood. Studies indicate that hopelessness is an important factor that leads to suicidal ideation and that religiosity plays a protective role. The understanding of these variables as used in suicidal ideation can contribute to the prevention strategies. **Purpose:** The authors sought to find out how hopelessness and religiosity are related to suicidal ideation in adults aged 18 to 40 years. **Procedures:** It was a cross-sectional correlational study. The number of adults of the general population (N = 100) aged between 18 and 40 years was randomly sampled to recruit 100 adults. Suicidal ideation, hopelessness and religiosity were measured using standardized self-report questionnaires. The data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation to establish how the variables under study are correlated and the strength of the correlation. **Results:** The results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between hopelessness and suicidal ideation; in other words, the more hopelessness was the higher the suicidal ideation. On the other hand, religiosity had a strong negative correlation with suicidal ideation which suggests that suicidal ideation is a protective factor. These findings are in line with the previous evidence that hopelessness is a psychological vulnerability and religiosity is an enhancing resource of resilience. **Conclusion;** The study concludes that hopelessness and religiosity are risk and protective factors in suicidal ideation in adults. Mental health interventions aimed at reducing the risk of suicide among the adult population should target hopelessness cognitions and integrate spiritual or religious coping strategies to reduce the risk of suicide.

Keywords: *Suicidal ideation, hopelessness, religiosity, adults*

Suicide is still a significant health concern in the international sphere, which has been accompanied by immense psychological, social and economic difficulties in various nations. Most recent estimates indicate that more than 720,000 individuals commit suicide each year and in every suicide, approximately 20 others attempt suicide (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). Suicidal ideation does not necessarily result in an attempt but the presence of suicidal ideation is a strong predictor and a significant risk factor of suicidal behaviour.

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

²Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: April 10, 2026; Revision Received: August 09, 2026; Accepted: August 13, 2026

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

Suicide has been considered to be among the leading causes of mortality in the whole world because it is among the leading causes of death compared to malaria, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, war and homicide. About 727,000 individuals died by suicide in 2021, which is about 1.1% of the total number of deaths worldwide (WHO, 2021). The suicide rate per 100,000 population at that year was estimated to be age-standardized at 8.9, with a significant range among countries; between less than one death per 100,000 people and almost forty deaths per 100,000 (WHO, 2021).

These scary statistics underscore the need to conduct comprehensive research and intervention measures that would help in establishing the psychological, social and environmental antecedents that support suicidal thoughts and behaviour. Identification of such factors is pivotal in the creation of effective preventive efforts and support systems to aid in reduction of the rate of suicide and enhance mental health.

Suicidal ideation is a term used to refer to the thoughts, considerations or obsessions with self-murder, including transient thoughts of death to elaborate suicide plans (O'Connor & Kirtley, 2018). It is considered a vital warning sign of psychological distress and an important antecedent to suicidal behaviour, and its measurement is crucial to suicide prevention. According to American Psychological Association (APA, 2023), suicidal ideation refers to passive (e.g., wishing to be dead) and active (e.g., having an intention or a plan to kill oneself) thoughts.

Hopelessness has been found to be a strong psychological predictor of suicidal ideation. Hopelessness refers to despair and the belief that the future is not good and that their future is not bright and this can lead to an increase in suicidal/self-destruction thoughts (Beck et al., 1974). The cognitive theory of suicide is a theory that argues that individuals who think that their problems are too hard to conquer and cannot influence the situation are more likely to become suicidal (Beck, 1986). It has been demonstrated in numerous studies that hopelessness mediates between depression and suicidal ideation and that the loss of hope is frequently the affective attribute between psychological suffering and wish to die (Illiceto et al., 2015). Thus, hopelessness assessment and treatment play a pivotal role in understanding and averting suicidal ideations, particularly in groups of people at risk such as farmers, who are susceptible to continued social and economic strains.

Religiosity may be explained as the degree to which an individual is a believer in religion, undertakes and engages in practices that demonstrate faith and spiritual principles (Huber and Huber, 2012). It consists of internal elements such as belief in a higher power and morality and external elements such as prayer, worship and religious groupings. Religiosity has generally been known to be a defence mechanism against suicidal ideation and this is primarily due to the emotional, moral and social support that it provides. Higher religiosity in people can result in greater resilience, meaning, and connectedness, which have the potential to mitigate the impact of stress, hopelessness, and psychological distress (Koenig, 2018).

The negative relationship between religiosity and suicidal thoughts is supported by empirical studies. Wu et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature on the topic globally and found that a more active religious practice was associated with lower rates of suicidal ideation and attempts, with a greater effect identified among individuals who were depressed. Similarly, Lawrence et al. (2016) discovered that religious beliefs that reduce

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

suicidal ideation and promote hope are useful in limiting suicidal behaviour. In a more recent study, Kim and Yoo (2022) found out that religiosity mediated the relationship between hopelessness and suicidal ideation among young adults, which suggests that the more religious an individual was the more likely they had a sense of purpose and optimism, despite having a sense of despair.

Religiosity in this situation can be considered as a psychosocial resource that could alleviate the adverse impact of hopelessness and emotional pain. Religious affiliation, moral support, and existential sense are all good preservation variables in the context of religiosity in terms of warding suicidal ideation, particularly in adults with life stressors.

Objectives

- 1) To examine the relationship between hopelessness and suicidal ideation among adults among adults aged 18-40 years.
- 2) To assess the relationship between religiosity and suicidal ideation among adults among aged 18-40 years.

Hypotheses

- **H1-** There would be a significant relationship between hopelessness and suicidal ideation among adults.
- **H2-** There would be a significant relationship between religiosity and suicidal ideation among adults.

Research Design

The research was quantitative in nature and descriptive and correlational in nature to examine the association between hopelessness, religiosity and suicidal ideation among adults. The design was considered to be the most suitable in the present study as it enables us to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the study variables without any control over them. The correlational methodology aids in the comprehension of the relationship between changes in hopelessness and religiosity with the intensity of suicidal ideation, thus, highlighting the risk and protective factors related to suicidal ideation in adults.

Participants

The participants were considered eligible based on predetermined inclusion criteria, and the whole of India was considered participants because they had varying socio-economic and educational backgrounds. This study employed a random sampling technique whereby a sample of 100 adults (18-40 years) was chosen. Informed consent was signed by all the participants and they volunteered to participate in the study.

Measures

- **Demographic Questionnaire:** This questionnaire contains demographic questions like age, gender, health status, emotional status.
- **Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ)** The Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ) was a questionnaire created by Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodiya and Vibhuti Bhatnagar (2011) to measure the degree of suicidal thoughts in the participants. The scale is used to assess how often and severe suicidal thoughts occur in the people. It is a set of 30 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert-scale, between never and always. A higher score will show a greater degree of suicidal ideation. The instrument has

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

demonstrated high internal consistency and reliability (a reported Cronbachs alpha of.86) and it has been tested with Indian populations.

- Negative expectations about the future were measured using Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) which was created by Beck, Weissman, Lester and Trexler (1974). It is a 20-item self-report measure (true-false statements) designed to measure the degree of pessimism and hopelessness. The higher the scores, the more hopelessness. The scale has shown great reliability (cronbach alpha=.93), high test-retest reliability, and good construct and predictive validity particularly with suicidal risk and depression.
- The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) created by Huber and Huber (2012) was used to determine the role of religious belief and practice in one life. The CRS has five dimensions of religiosity; intellectual, ideological, public practice, private practice, and religious experience. The scale consists of 15 questions rated using a 5-point Likert scale with high scores representing high levels of religiosity. CRS has proven to be good in terms of internal consistency (Cronbach α of between 0.80 and 0.92) and the cross-cultural validity, thus it can be used with different populations.

Procedure

Pilot test was done on a small number of participants to check the clarity, understandability, and relevance of the questionnaire. Depending on the response, some minor changes were made so that everything was culturally and contextually relevant to the population of Indian adults. Upon the completion of the tools, the target group of adults aged 18-40 years of age was then given the main survey using online survey tools like Google Forms. The survey method was used to collect the data, in which the target population participated on a voluntary basis, completing customized questionnaires, such as Suicidal Ideation Scale (Sisodiya & Bhatnagar), Beck Hopelessness Scale and Centrality of Religiosity Scale.

Statistical techniques

Pearson Correlation of products.

RESULTS

H1- Hopelessness would significantly relate to suicidal ideation amongst adults.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and pearson correlation between hopelessness and suicidal ideation among adults

Variables	Values
Mean (Hopelessness)	37.24
SD (Hopelessness)	12.68
Mean (Suicidal Ideation)	29.41
SD (Suicidal Ideation)	11.32
Pearson Correlation (r)	0.71 **

***Significant at 0.01 level*

Hopelessness and suicidal ideation are strongly correlated with a statistically significant positive correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.71$ shows that those who have a greater level of hopelessness tend to self-report greater suicidal ideation. This conclusion shows that the more hopeless, the higher the suicidal ideation. This discussion has indicated that signs of pessimism, lack of motivation, and negative expectations of the future are an important contributor to suicidal ideation in adults. The participants who were very hopeless tended to perceive their life conditions as incurable and meaningless and they

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

conceptualized regarding the suicidal thoughts. The hypothesis that the hopelessness and suicidal ideation would have a strong relationship among adults is accepted on this.

H2: There would be a significant relationship between religiosity and suicidal ideation among adults.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and pearson correlation between religiosity and suicidal ideation among adults

Variables	Values
Mean (Religiosity)	42.18
SD (Religiosity)	10.54
Mean (Suicidal Ideation)	29.41
SD (Suicidal Ideation)	11.32
Pearson Correlation (r)	-0.63 **

***Significant at 0.01 level*

A significant negative correlation was found between religiosity and suicidal ideation ($r = -0.63$, $p < 0.01$). This means that more religious people displayed less suicidal ideation. The correlation value is negative which implies that religious beliefs, spiritual engagement, and moral values could act as protective factors against suicidal ideations. This finding is consistent with earlier research which has demonstrated that religiosity increases psychological resilience, inculcates a sense of meaning and belonging, and deters self-destructive behaviour, by providing moral or community frameworks to support the latter. Therefore, the null hypothesis that would have it that there would be a strong correlation between religiosity and suicidal ideation in adults is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The current paper analysed the correlation between hopelessness and religiosity and suicidal ideation in adults. Findings showed a positive and strong correlation between hopelessness and suicidal ideation and a negative and significant association between religiosity and suicidal ideation. These results highlight the two-sidedness of psychological and spiritual influences in shaping suicidal thoughts.

In line with the cognitive theory of depression, proposed by Beck, hopelessness was found to be a key risk factor of suicidal ideation. Their cognitive inflexibility and hopelessness make them more susceptible to suicidal ideation when people think that the future is grim and they cannot do anything to change their situation. A number of recent works (e.g., Klonsky et al., 2016; Ribeiro et al., 2018) also designate hopelessness as a proximal predictor of suicide attempts and ideation. The state of hopelessness tends to mediate the effects of depression and life stress on suicidal behaviour.

In contrast, religiosity showed a protective effect, which aligns with other studies of the world and India (Koenig, 2012; Sisodiya and Bhatnagar, 2019; Kumar and George, 2021). Religious devotion, spiritual faith and religious activities also offer coping strategies, social support and purpose that when combined proves to have a buffering effect against suicidal ideation. Religiosity can also deter suicidal behaviour by providing moral beliefs that appreciate life as sacred and the need to endure and develop spiritually in adversity.

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

The combination of these findings indicates that hopelessness and religiosity are psychological vulnerability and resilience variables, respectively, which determine the vulnerability of people to suicidal ideation. Mental health interventions in combination with spiritual or faith-based approaches to coping can thus be used to augment suicide prevention, particularly in collectivist cultures, such as India, where identity and coping revolve around religion and community.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that hopelessness is a major risk factor, but religiosity is a protective factor when it comes to suicidal ideation in adults. The hopelessness and suicidal ideation have a strong positive correlation indicating the necessity of considering negative cognitive patterns and promoting optimism within the psychological intervention. In the meantime, the correlation between religiosity and suicidal ideation is negative which highlights the importance of spiritual connectedness and moral beliefs to strengthen resilience and meaningfulness of life.

Altogether, the results underline the necessity of a multifaceted suicide prevention intervention, including both cognitive-behavioural and spiritual and community-based interventions, to decrease hopelessness and enhance positive coping resources in the adult population.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (2023). *APA dictionary of psychology* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. <https://dictionary.apa.org/suicidal-ideation>
- Beck, A. T. (1986). Hopelessness as a predictor of eventual suicide. In J. J. Mann & M. Stanley (Eds.), *Psychobiology of suicidal behavior* (pp. 91–101). New York Academy of Sciences.
- Beck, A. T., Weissman, A., Lester, D., & Trexler, L. (1974). The measurement of pessimism: The Hopelessness Scale. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42(6), 861–865. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0037562>
- Huber, S., & Huber, O. W. (2012). The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS). *Religions*, 3(3), 710–724. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel3030710>
- Illiceto, P., Fino, E., Galligioni, F., Candilera, G., & Mazzocco, K. (2015). Hopelessness, depression, and suicidal ideation: A moderated mediation model. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 75, 152–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.11.036>
- O'Connor, R. C., & Kirtley, O. J. (2018). The integrated motivational–volitional model of suicidal behavior. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 373(1754), 20170268. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2017.0268>
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Suicide worldwide in 2021: Global health estimates*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240026643>

Acknowledgment

The researcher kindly thanks all participants who participated in the study and volunteered in the research and gave their precious experiences. The Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, gave the research an excellent direction and academic support; hence, special thanks. The writer also acknowledges the efforts made by the professionals and colleagues who gave constructive feedback during the pilot testing and data collection processes and this study would not have been possible without them.

Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Jyoti, & Rathore, J. (2026). Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Suicidal Ideation: The Influence of Hopelessness and Religiosity. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(3), 1029-1035. DIP:18.01.087.20261403, DOI:10.25215/1403.087