

## Suicidal Ideation Among Nursing Students and Their Socio Demographic Correlates: a Cross Sectional Survey



### Medical Science

**KEYWORDS :** suicidal ideation, nursing students, cross sectional survey

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### ABSTRACT

*Suicide is a major public health problem in many developing countries. A cross sectional survey was conducted at Sree Gokulam Nursing college, Trivandrum among nursing students to assess suicidal ideation and its association with socio demographic variables. Quantitative approach using a descriptive research design was adopted for the study. 231 nursing students were recruited using convenient sampling technique. A socio demographic Performa and a suicidal ideation scale was used to collect data after obtaining ethical clearance and participants informed consent. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS trial V19.0. Results revealed that 80% of samples had moderate suicidal ideation and 20% of samples have severe suicidal ideation and suicidal ideation had significant association with demographic variable like type of family. The present study emphasized the presence of suicidal ideation among student population, which can be fruitful to prove useful in the assessment of suicide intent and risk, factors creating continuity between suicidal ideation and action.*

### Introduction

Suicide is "the conscious act of self-induced annihilation best understood as a multidimensional malaise, in a needful individual who defines an issue for which the act is perceived as the best solution". Suicide is the tragic and untimely loss of human life, all the more devastating and perplexing because it is a conscious volitional act. Death is a tragedy and suicide is the ultimate tragedy<sup>1</sup>.

Suicide is a major public health problem in many developing countries. Suicide is an important contributor to premature mortality accounting for over 8,00,000 deaths worldwide every year. Suicide is not only a medical issue but it also has economic, social, moral and political dimension. Suicidal ideation concerns thoughts about or an unusual preoccupation with suicide. The range of suicidal ideation varies greatly from fleeting thoughts, extensive thought, to detailed planning, role playing (e.g. standing on a chair with on a noose), and incomplete attempts, which may be deliberately constructed to not complete or to be discovered, or may be fully intended to result in death, but the individual survives (e.g., in the case of a hanging in which the cord breaks)<sup>2</sup>.

Suicidal ideation is the most common of all suicidal behavior, but only a minority of ideators ever engages in overt self-harm. Ideation is to prove useful in the assessment of suicide intent and risk, factors creating continuity between suicidal ideation and action need to be carefully examined.<sup>3</sup>

According to World Health Organization (WHO), suicide is among the top 10 causes of death in most countries and one of the three leading causes of death in the 15 to 35 year age group. The WHO estimates that in 2020, 1.5 million people are likely to commit suicide. The suicide rate in many western countries is between 8-30 per 1,00,000 populations with a recent increase in suicide among young men. Several investigators have studied suicide in different parts of India, using police records, and have reported that suicide rates vary from 6.8 to 58.3 per 1,00,000 population. The annual suicide rate in Kaniyambadi block, Vellore District, Tamilnadu was 95.2 per 1, 00,000 during the year 1994 - 99. This is 8 to 10 times higher than the reported national rate and 2 to 3 times higher than the findings in recent studies<sup>4</sup>.

Out of every three cases of suicide reported every 15 minutes in India, one is committed by a youth in the age group of 15 to 29 years. In the Union Territory of Pondicherry, every month at least 15 youths between the ages of 15 and 25 commit suicide. In 2002, there were 10,982 suicides in Tamil Nadu, 11,300 in Kerala, 10,934 in Karnataka, and 9,433 in Andhra Pradesh. Kerala, the country's first fully literate state, has the highest number of suicides. Some 32 people commit suicide in Kerala every day. This statistic becomes even more alarming when you consider that the total number of suicide cases recorded in the whole of India in 2002 was 154, 000<sup>5</sup>.

A systematic review of international literature using six electronic databases to identify all population-based studies of self-reported suicidal phenomena and 128 studies were included, comprising 513,188 adolescents. The mean proportion of adolescents reporting they had attempted suicide at some point in their lives was 9.7% (95% CI, 8.5-10.9), and 29.9% (95% CI, 26.1-33.8) of adolescents said that they had thought about suicide at some point. Females were significantly more likely than males to report most suicidal phenomena<sup>6</sup>.

The investigators, on their extensive review of literature have come across many studies globally, but unfortunately there is a paucity of study done among Indian nursing students with regard to suicidal ideation. This paucity of research within this field has spear headed the need for the study.

### Materials & Methods

A quantitative non experimental research approach with a descriptive design was used to conduct the study. The study was conducted in Sree Gokulam Nursing College situated at Venjaramoodu, Trivandrum district. The purpose of the study was explained, confidentiality was assured and maintained and written informed consent was obtained from each subject. The sample of the present study constituted of all undergraduate nursing students of Sree Gokulam Nursing College, Venjaramoodu, who were recruited by total enumeration sampling. Based on a prevalence of 33%<sup>6</sup> and applying 4PQ/D<sup>2</sup> 209 samples are needed and samples selected for the present study is 231.

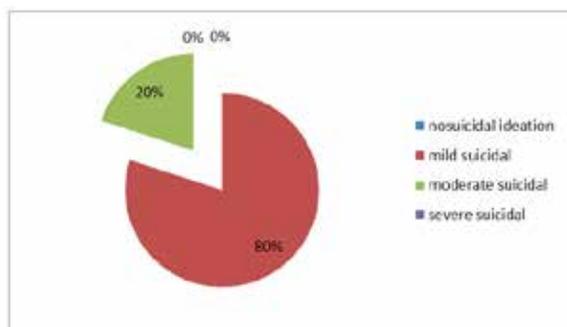
The tools used for the study has 2 parts. Part A includes demographic Performa which assess the age, gender, religion, educa-

tion, medium of institution of previous school, marital status, place of residence, place of stay, education of father and mother, occupation of father and mother, economic status, broken family, birth order, family history of suicide, family history of psychiatric illness and history of suicidal attempt of samples. Part B is Suicidal ideation scale developed by the investigator. Tool consists of 15 items that measures no suicidal ideation, mild, moderate and severe suicidal ideation and score ranges from 0-45. A score ranging from 0-14 as no suicidal ideation, 1-15 is considered as mild, 16-30 is considered as moderate and 31-45 considered as severe suicidal ideation. Reliability of the tool was assessed using test re test method and the reliability coefficient,  $r=0.87$  and the content validity were done by experts in the field.

Data collection was done during a single session lasting for 20-30 minutes. Socio demographic variables were presented with appropriate descriptive statistics. Chi-square test was used to find out the association between selected variables and suicidal ideation. The Statistical Software SPSS for windows (version 16.0) was employed for the analysis of data.

### Results:

Majority of the subjects were females (90.9%), single (97.0%) and are hailing from rural area (63.6%). The religion being practiced by most subjects was found to be Hinduism which accounted for (68.0%) and majority (89.6%) belonged to nuclear family. 93.5% of subjects have no family history of suicidal ideation. 97.4% of subjects are having no family history of psychiatric illness.



**Figure 1: suicidal ideation among nursing students**

Figure 1 reveals that the majority of subjects (80%) are having mild suicidal ideation and none are having severe suicidal ideation.

There was no significant association between suicidal ideation and socio demographic variables except for type of family, which

shows a highly significant association ( $p<0.01$ )

### Discussion

The present study revealed that the majority of subjects (80%) are having mild suicidal ideation which is in correlation with a study done among adolescence students in America that showed 9.7% of the students had attempted suicide<sup>7</sup>.

The present study reported a highly significant association between type of family and suicidal ideation. A study conducted in India showed that there may be relationship between family background and suicidal ideation and females have more suicidal ideation than males (Maria Thomas, 2004<sup>8</sup>). In the present study majority of the subjects are females.

### Implication for nursing education

Training to develop counseling skills of nursing students to prevent suicidal ideation, should be encouraged

### Implication for nursing research

The investigators from the study have identified that there is a great deal of lacuna in research with regard to suicidal ideation among the Indian population particularly among nurses. Hence more studies can be done to identify the, problems, and other related aspects regarding of suicide.

### Limitations:

The study was conducted in a single setting; hence the generalizability of the study is limited to that setting.

The subjects utilized the time after class hours to complete the questionnaire, at times it was found that the subjects were hasty to complete the questionnaire and leave college. This could translate into a false positive as nursing students may not have read the questions and answered patiently.

Suicidal ideation is the most common of all suicidal behavior, but only a minority of ideators ever engages in overt self-harm. Ideation is to prove useful in the assessment of suicide intent and risk, factors creating continuity between suicidal ideation and action need to be carefully examined. Suicidal ideation refers to a myriad of cognition specific to death, self-destructive behavior, related actions and activities. Adolescents today face tremendous life pressures that put them at risk for myriad self-destructive behaviors, and suicide is the most devastating consequence of their inability to cope.

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