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PSYCHOSOCIAL PREDICTORS OF SUICIDAL IDEATION AMONG YOUTH IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of suicidal ideation influenced by perceived sense of failure and hopelessness to manage psycho-social challenges among youth in Lagos State has become cause for concern. This study investigated the psycho-social predictors of suicidal ideation among youth in Lagos State. Survey design was employed with a 300 youth respondents drawn from the 5 administrative division of Lagos State. Data were collected using Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS). correlational analysis was utilised for hypotheses testing. Findings revealed that there was a significant joint contribution of anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty, and stigmatisation on suicidal ideation, $F(6.91414 = 3.820, p \text{ value } (p = .001) \text{ with a less than } 0.05 \text{ significance value. Results of the relative contribution of each of the psycho-social factors revealed that anxiety } (\beta = -.296, p = 0.07) \text{ is a major significant predictor of suicidal ideation, negative self perception } (p = .089), \text{ Stress } (p = .091) \text{ and poverty } (p = .379) \text{ show potential relationship but do not reach the } 0.05 \text{ level of significance while stigmatisation } (p = .187), \text{ did not show a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of suicidal ideation. The study concludes that psycho-social factors significantly predict suicidal ideation. It recommends reforms in the homes - acceptance and removal of unhealthy expectations; communities - external supports and guidance for youth, and society - creation of counselling centres to provide 24/7 talk therapy/psychotherapy; as well as restructuring the workforce to open up opportunities for the youth as against the ageing population that presently dominates it.}$

Key words: *psycho-social, predictors, suicidal ideation, youth*

INTRODUCTION

Suicidal ideation leading to suicide among youth has become a global concern worldwide. News reports and pictures on media reports on regular basis stories of drowning, overdosing, poisoning, hanging and different forms of self hurt with higher records being among the youth than others. Many times, suicidal ideation leading to the act suicide is influenced by perceived sense of failure and hopelessness to manage psycho-social challenges. Thus, suicidal ideation can be described as the thought, desire and belief that self murder or suicide is a better option to living in a life perceived as worthless and unproductive. It is also acting with the intention of killing oneself and thinking about doing so (Yöyen & Keleş, 2024). What this portends is that suicidal ideation stems from consistent thought patterns of hopelessness, entrapment and failure to excel, survive or achieve prior expectations.

Psycho-social factors predicting suicidal ideation

Different psychosocial factors influence suicidal ideation among youth, and some of these include anxiety (Anand et al, 2024; Enatescu et al, 2020), negative self-perception (Anand et al, 2024; Klonsky et al., 2018; Miaseo 2011), stress (Hye, 2025; Anand et al, 2024), poverty (Anand et al, 2024; Yöyen & Keleş, 2024)) and stigmatisation. Anxiety is a psychological challenge experience by many people at one phase of their lives or more. It has varying levels, some may prompt an individual to do better in life while another form of anxiety may promote the feeling of hopeless and motivation to end it all. In most cases, anxiety is usually influenced by social interactions and the perception an individual has regarding unfavourable situation they are experiencing or exposed to. For instance, poverty, terminal illness, stigmatisation, bereavement and

unemployment are factors that make a lot of people anxious about coping, adjusting and managing life challenges. As this state of anxiety increases and the individual is unable to find a survival balance, fear and hopelessness set in and this influence suicidal ideation. Anand et al (2024) discovered that anxiety significantly elevate the risk of contemplating and attempting suicide. Enatescu et al. (2020) found that anxiety had a predictive role for trait suicidal ideation among women in the prenatal period. In addition, Klonsky et al., (2018) belief that pain and hopelessness motivate suicidal desire more than other factors.

Another psychosocial factor that may determine suicidal ideation is negative self-perception. Negative self-perception can be defined as dissatisfaction with oneself and or the the state of affairs experienced by an individual. This may come in the form of low self worth, low self esteem or low self efficacy. The individual with a negative self-perception simply see themselves as not enough - physically, status, cognitively, competence and or performance. For such an individual, there is always a reason for comparison with others and coupled with this comparison comes a personal perception of failure and bad luck. Overtime, this perception of self may influence self-hate, hopelessness and a feeling of despair which increases suicidal ideation. Hye (2025) discovered that depression and self-esteem are significant predictors of suicidal ideation among nursing students in Korea. Also, Anand et al (2024) found that conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder significantly elevate the risk of contemplating and attempting suicide. In addition, Miaseo (2011) found that depression, individuality, relatedness, cognitive deconstruction, social desirability, and alexithymia increase the likelihood of suicidal ideation among adolescents.

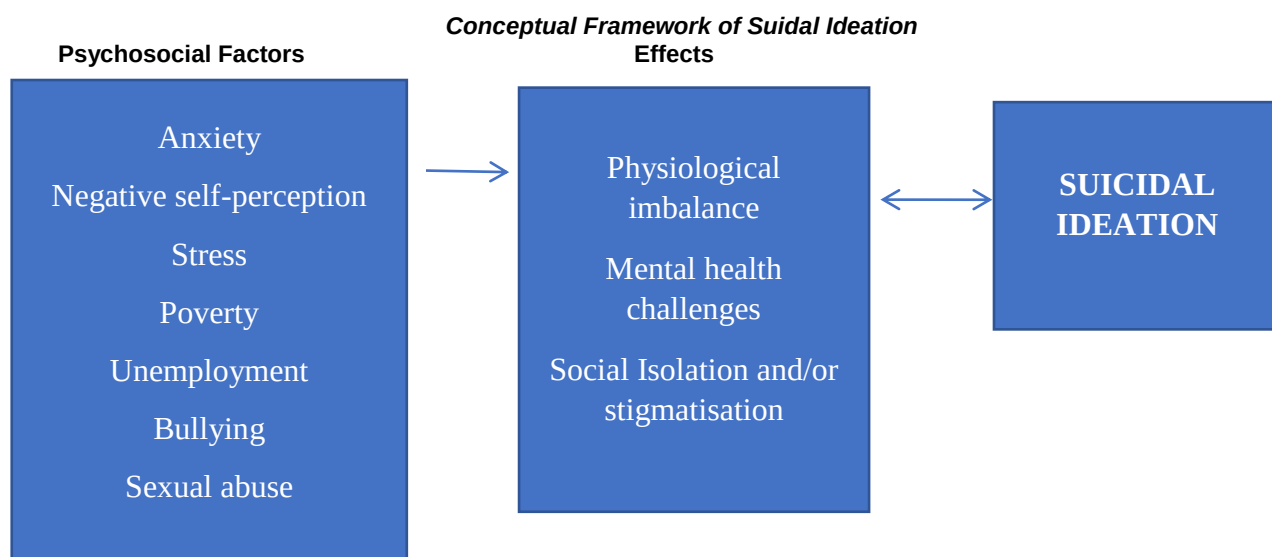
Stress is experienced among many youth as a result of worries that are personal (academic, career, interpersonal relationship) and family (siblings rivalry, relationship with parents, family expection/approval, lack of support, family socio-economic status). Many of these stressors tend to have no adequate resolution and the inability to cope, manage or adjust tend to make some of embrace antisocial behaviour, engage in substance use and as time goes on, suicide ideation. At this point, they see the thought of existing as too much of a burden and suicidal ideation sets in. Anand et al (2024) result revealed that psycho-social stressors and academic pressure can act as precipitating factors that intensify feelings of suicidal ideation. Likewise, Hye (2025) found that life stress is associated with increased suicidal ideation.

Poverty influences the lack of ability to afford life basic amenities. In many societies, it can be assumed that more than average of the population live within the poverty line. Thus, many cannot afford 3 or even 2 square meal per day, accommodation is a challenge and there is a huge financial limitation that cannot allow them send their children to school or afford the learning materials the children need in even the public school. In fact, many sick patients have died because of the inability to afford treatment. Many people in this kind of situation have falling into despair and a state of hopelessness especially as they see some people live in a state of luxury and success. Initially, many of these people believes they can get out of the poverty trend and many do but for those who are unlucky or unwilling to try, suicidal ideation is considered a suitable option. These one tell themselves that what is the essence of life when survival is difficult and loved ones die in poverty. Anand et al (2024) found that finanacial instability can act as precipitating factors intensifying feelings of hopelessness and despair and promoting suicidal ideation. Another study also carried out on 108 youth who attempted suicide and 197 youth with suicidal ideation, aged 18–25 years showed that perceived burden on others is a significant predictor of the transition from suicidal ideation to suicidal action (Yöyen & Keleş, 2024).

Furthermore, stigmatisation is a factor that can promote suicidal ideation. Mental health issues, congenital illness, rape, family history, sexually transmitted diseases are some conditions that have been stigmatised and have led many people at one point or the other to consider suicide.

People have been denied opportunities simply because the society they live in have stigmatised them. It has become so bad that some of these stigmatised people choose to live in isolation. They have few friends and a times the family are even not interested in providing the appropriate form of support they need. For example, many people will not want to marry off their child into a family with history of early death, mental health challenges or congenital illness, to some, poverty is even a reason for stigmatisation. Anand et al (2024) identified that lack of social support and meaningful connections, cultural attitudes and societal perceptions surrounding mental health issues as potent contributors to suicidal ideation. It was also found that presence of diagnosed psychiatric illness in the family is a significant predictor of the transition from suicidal ideation to suicidal action (Yöyen & Keleş, 2024). Juri et al (2022) found that less frequent conversations increased the risk of suicidal ideation. Likewise, Odedokun (2022) revealed that self esteem, family support, hopelessness, religion and emotional intelligence contributed significantly to suicidal ideation. In all key risk factors indicated by most of the models for suicidal ideation are traumatic events, childhood abuse, feelings of defeat and entrapment, emotional dysregulation, and social exclusion (Diaz-Olivan et al., 2021).

Beyond researches and studies, different theories have emanated over the years to understand the concept of suicidal ideation. This study however, will focus on the Three-step theory (3ST) and The integrated motivational-volitional model of suicidal behaviour (IMV). Three-step theory (3ST) of suicide developed by Klonsky & May (2015) categorised the phases ideation to suicide into three. Phase 1 suggests that the combination of pain (usually psychological) and hopelessness cause suicidal ideation. Phase 2 suggests that ideation escalates when pain exceeds or overwhelms connectedness. Phase 3 suggests that strong suicidal ideation progresses to action when one has the capacity to attempt suicide. The 3ST identified disposition, acquisition and practice as the three contributors to the capacity to attempt suicide. On the other hand, the integrated motivational-volitional model of suicidal behaviour (IMV) of O'Connor and Kirtley (2018) synthesises a large number of variables previously described in other models. posits that defeat and entrapment drive the emergence of suicidal ideation, and volitional moderators guide the transition from suicidal ideation to suicidal behavior. IMV divided the process of suicide into three phases with different mediating factors. The pre-motivational phase: biology, genetics and early traumatic events, play a role in predisposing the individual towards suicidal behaviour. The motivational phase: development of suicidal ideations as a result of negative feelings like defeat, humiliation, and entrapment. The volitional phase: precipitating factors such as access to means or impulsivity lead to a suicide attempt.



Suicidal ideation is a study with limited focus or research in Nigeria. However, there are undocumented high number of youth with suicidal ideation as evident on the social media in Nigeria and especially in a state like Lagos. This study therefore intend to contribute to the body of knowledge in investigating the psycho-social predictors of suicidal ideation among youth in Lagos State.

Purpose of the Study

This study will specifically examine:

1. the joint contribution of each of the independent variables (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) and the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among youth in Lagos State.
2. the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) to the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among youth in Lagos State.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no joint contribution of each of the independent variables (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) and the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among youth in Lagos State.
2. There is no relative contribution of each of the independent variables (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) to the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among youth in Lagos State.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The study is a descriptive survey and adopts the ex-post design in analyzing the psychosocial predictors (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) of suicidal ideation among youth in Lagos State.

Population of the Study

The population for the study are youth in Lagos State. The state has 20 constitutionally recognised Local Government Areas (LGA) and operates an additional 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDA). The Administrative Divisions of Lagos State are five (5) - Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos Island and Epe.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Three hundred (300) youth age 17 - 35 were selected as respondents through a stratified and simple random sampling technique across the five Administrative Divisions in Lagos State.

Table 1: Breakdown of Participants' Selection across Administrative Division in Lagos State*Administrative Division (Admin. Div.) and Number of Participants*

S/N	Admin. Div.	LGA	No. of Participants
1.	Ikeja	- Ikeja, Agege, Ifako-Ijaye, Kosofe, Mushin, Oshodi-Isolo & Mushin	60
2.	Badagry	- Badagry, Ajeromi-Ifeelodun, Amuwo-Odofin, Ojo & Alimosho	60
3.	Ikorodu	- Ikorodu	60
4.	Lagos Island	- Lagos Island, Apapa, Eti-Osa, Lagos Mainland & Surulere	60
5.	Epe	- Epe & Ibeju-Lekki	60
Total			300

Instrumentation

A self designed questionnaire labelled Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS) was used in collecting data for the study. The questionnaire has two sections, A and B. Biodata of participants are gathered in Section A while section B consists of 35 items. The items are answered on a five (5) points Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. After pilot testing through test re-test, the SIS has a reliability score of 0.92.

Administration of the instrument

Researcher engaged the assistants of youth leaders in the 5 administrative division of the state in sharing the survey form on community online platforms to ensure that the target numbers of samples were met. At the point that 300 questionnaires were filled, the link was disabled.

Method of data analysis

Data was analysed using Multiple Regression Analysis.

RESULTS**Hypothesis 1:**

There is no joint contribution of the independent variables (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) and the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among youth in Lagos State.

Table 1: Joint Contribution of the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable

Multiple R= .350

Multiple R² = .122Multiple R²(adjusted)=.090

Standard error of estimate= 6.91414

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1278.243	7	182.606	3.820	.001 ^b
Residual	9178.632	192	47.805		
Total	10456.875	199			

Hypothesis 2:

There is no relative contribution of each of the independent variables (anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) on youth in Lagos State.

Table 2: Relative Contribution of Each of the Independent Psycho-social Predictors of Suicidal Ideation Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	36.228	3.741		9.683	.000
Anxiety	-.296	.108	-.280	-2.731	.007
Negative self perception	.275	.161	.386	2.707	.089
Stress	-.582	.342	.896	1.901	.091
Poverty	.166	.188	.216	2.882	.079
Stigmatisation	.219	.166	.223	2.325	.187

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examine psycho-social predictors of suicidal ideation among youth in Lagos State. The findings provide important theoretical and practical insights, particularly when interpreted through the lens of Three-Step Theory of Suicide (3ST) and the Integrated Motivational-Volitional Model (IMV).

The 3ST explains that suicidal ideation is shaped by experiencing both pain (usually psychological pain) and hopelessness. This may then escalates to stronger suicidal ideation when pain exceeds one's sense of connectedness. On the other hand, the Integrated Motivational-Volitional (IMV) model posits that defeat and entrapment drive the emergence of suicidal ideation, and volitional moderators guide the transition from suicidal ideation to suicidal behavior. Consistent with these two theories, **Hypothesis 1** shows a significant joint contribution of anxiety, negative self-perception, stress, poverty, and stigmatisation on suicidal ideation, $F(6.91414 = 3.820, p \text{ value } (p = .001)$ with a less than 0.05 significance value. Thus, the study found that anxiety, negative self perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation do have significant effect on suicidal ideation. This suggests that when youth experience these psycho-social challenges, they start living in a state of confusion, fear and sadness which later graduates to a sense of hopelessness and entrapment. Once the sense of hopelessness and entrapment set in, they may start experiencing suicidal ideation. At this point, the effects of such action on significant others in their lives or the possibility of the challenge being a phase that will end is not considered.

The results for **Hypothesis 2** which revealed the relative contribution of each of the psycho-social factors revealed that anxiety ($\beta = -.296, p = 0.07$) is a major significant predictor of suicidal ideation, negative self perception ($p = .089$), Stress ($p = .091$) and poverty ($p = .379$) show potential relationship but do not reach the 0.05 level of significance while stigmatisation ($p = .187$), did not show a statistically significant contribution to the prediction of suicidal ideation in the study. Many youth in Lagos State are anxious, and this anxiety is influenced by thoughts of excelling academically, getting a good job (vocational or career stability), having a stable financial base, being accepted among friends and family, enjoying good health as well as getting the right partner. However, many of these things may not go as envisaged and the more they strive and attempt to build it, the more stressed they become with little evidence of success. From there on,

many of them start asking the “why me/” However, as time goes on and the situation persists, resignation, influencing hopelessness and entrapment sets in and suicidal ideation increases. This result supports Klonsky et al., (2018) belief that pain and hopelessness motivate suicidal desire more than other factors. It is also in line with Anand et al (2024) study that anxiety significantly elevates the risk of contemplating and attempting suicide. Yöyen and Keleş (2024) result which shows that perceived burden on others is a significant predictor of suicidal ideation and suicidal action. Odedokun (2022) study that revealed that self esteem, family support, hopelessness, religion and emotional intelligence contributed significantly to suicidal ideation. Also Enatescu et al. (2020) result which revealed that anxiety had a predictive role for trait suicidal ideation among women in the prenatal period. In addition, As well as Miaseo (2011) result that depression, individuality, relatedness, cognitive deconstruction, social desirability, and alexithymia increase the likelihood of suicidal ideation among adolescents.

Stigmatisation is the only psycho-social factor that was not found significant in the prediction of suicidal behaviour. Africans are normally traditional and conventional people but the advent of the internet and the term “GenZ” have eroded so many culturally sanctioned behaviours exhibited among the youth today. Social media has made some behaviours that would have been sanctioned and stigmatised in early years considered influencing and trending. In view of this, many people find outlets and supports online that allows the “internet friends and families” support and even bully those they believe are stigmatising them.. Moreover, it is so easy to leave family and friends behind if an individual senses any form of stigmatisation unlike before where people believed there was nowhere to go.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings extend existing literature by identifying psycho-social predictors (anxiety, negative self perception, stress, poverty and stigmatisation) of suicidal ideation among youth in Lagos State. The study contributes to theory by integrating African youth (Lagos State, Nigeria) perspectives to existing psychological models to explain psycho-social predictors of suicidal ideation.

Recommendation

The results highlight the critical need for reforms in the homes, communities and society at large. The family unit should provide the right emotional and psychological support for children from the early years. Once this is instilled in children, it becomes a part of them. In addition, families should endeavour to be real with each other and provide necessary awareness to all that challenges will come but it is not enough reason to give up. This simply means that families should be supportive, available and provide a sense of belonging for each other.

In addition, communities should not create an underlying measure for youth. Individuals are different and growth will commence at different pace. However, when there exist a baseline measure of success and acceptance; it may put so many youth under pressure and make them perceive self as incompetent, unlucky and failed individuals which could lead to suicidal ideation. Instead, what should be in place is counselling, a supportive community, adults who are willing to assist and build youth who are not necessarily their children.

Furthermore, the government should provide free counselling centres in every communities where professionals are recruited to provide talk therapy and psychotherapy to assist people manage everyday challenges, confusion, sense of entrapment and hopelessness. This would provide many youth opportunities to learn how to adjust, cope and manage their life and situations they may find themselves. In the same vein, vocational training and jobs should be created to give

youth financial stability. The situation we have in Lagos State is more youth on the streets while the older population are still in public service. Many youth claim to be self employed because they have tried several times to secure a job and have been turned down. Thus, we have youth who are stressed, discouraged and who feel entrapped in poverty because the ageing population have refused to leave the workforce.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has immense contribution to the body of knowledge on suicidal ideation and psycho-social factors that predicts it. However, the number of respondents and locality (Lagos State) raises the possibility of social desirability bias. In so doing, there is need for expanding the research to other cultural contexts to enhance generalisability. Future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to better capture causal dynamics. Also, further studies could explore moderating variables such as bullying, sexual abuse and individual differences in shaping the observed relationships.

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