

Relationship between Suicidal Ideation, Automatic Thoughts and Stress among Post Graduate Students

Vivek Bhuchar¹

ABSTRACT

Suicidal ideation is concerned mainly with the obsessed thoughts to commit suicide. The range of the suicide depends upon the thought process including fleeting to extensive thoughts and role playing. The term automatic thought is defined as a thought that also comes in as an image in the mind seemingly automatically in response to an event, for example an event can be “a car is coming towards you”, an automatic thought can be “I am in danger!” and feeling associated is “fear, anxiety”. The thoughts that are immediate, quick that goes in the mind as a response to a situation. They are the thinking reactions that affect emotions and behaviors. Stress can be defined as a situation when one feels overloaded with pressures and if in reality that pressure can be handled or not. The aim of the current investigation is to study the relationship between suicidal ideation, automatic thoughts and stress among college going students. For this study, Suicidal Ideation scale (Devendera Singh et al., 2005), Automatic thought questionnaire (Kendall and Hollon., 1980) and Perceived stress scale (Woerner and Gardell, 1990) to be administered to the sample of 100 students in the age range of 20-24 years. The sample is to be taken from different Post Graduate colleges of Chandigarh. An inter-correlation matrix will be calculated to see the relationship between the variables. The result has shown positive and significant correlation between suicidal ideation and automatic thoughts ($r = 0.52$), significant at 0.01 level. The result has also shown positive and significant correlation between suicidal ideation and stress ($r = 0.21$), significant at 0.05 level.

Keywords: *Relationship, Suicidal Ideation, Stress, Post Graduate students*

Suicidal ideation concerns thoughts about or an unusual preoccupation with suicide. The range of suicidal ideation varies greatly from fleeting thoughts, to extensive thoughts, to detailed planning, role playing (e.g., standing on a chair with 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), (Valley Behavioral Health System); (from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role_playing)

Most people who undergo suicidal ideation do not go on to make suicide attempts, but it is considered a risk factor. During 2008-09, an estimated 8.3 million adults aged 18 and over in the United States, or 3.7% of the adult U.S. population, reported having suicidal thoughts in the past

¹ Resource Person, Post Graduate Government College, Chandigarh

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year. An estimated 2.2 million in the U.S. reported having made suicide plans in the past year (Gliatto, 1999).

The online source called Valley Behavioral Health System (2015) defines suicide, or the act of taking one's own life, is an all-too-common and tragic public health crisis, often done in response to overwhelming, unbearable emotional pain. Suicide is especially tragic as it is a preventable death and leaves behind many loved ones and family members, also called "suicide survivors," who must grieve this terrible loss. Suicidal ideation or suicidal thoughts are a lot more common than most people let on – in fact, most people have thought about suicide at one point or another. These thoughts are quite troubling, especially as they're usually accompanied by a mental illness such as depression or bipolar disorder. Suicidal ideation is broken down into two forms: active and passive. Active suicidal ideation involves an existing wish to die accompanied by a plan for how to carry out the death. Passive suicidal ideation involves a desire to die, but without a specific plan for carrying out the death.

The world's comprehensive online Psychology Dictionary (2012), defines automatic thoughts as: 1. instantaneous, habitual, and unconscious thoughts that may affect a person's mood and actions. Helping clients evaluate the utility and objectivity of these thoughts is a central task in cognitive therapy. Once clients have learned to do this as indicated, they then attempt to generate other thoughts that are more reasonable and less incapacitating. 2. thoughts that have been habitually repeated so that they occur without conscious cognitive effort. For example, a tennis player will choose a stroke with minimal cognitive effort. Also known as routinized thoughts. "Automatic thoughts occur prior to changes of emotion, and may represent verbal thoughts and images."

Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. When you sense danger—whether it's real or imagined—the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the "fight-or-flight-or-freeze" reaction, or the stress response.

The stress response is the body's way of protecting you. When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, stress can save your life—giving you extra strength to defend yourself, for example, or spurring you to slam on the brakes to avoid an accident.

The stress response also helps you rise to meet challenges. Stress is what keeps you on your toes during a presentation at work, sharpens your concentration when you're attempting the game-winning free throw, or drives you to study for an exam when you'd rather be watching TV.

The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you or forces you to adjust can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion.

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Of course, not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated, for example, when you worry excessively about something that may or may not happen, or have irrational, pessimistic thoughts about life.

What causes stress depends, at least in part, on your perception of it. Something that's stressful to you may not faze someone else; they may even enjoy it. For example, your morning commute may make you anxious and tense because you worry that traffic will make you late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more than enough time and enjoy listening to music while they drive.

OBJECTIVE

On the basis of aforementioned literature, following objectives have been proposed for the present investigation:

1. To study the relationship between suicidal ideation and automatic thoughts among college going adolescents.
2. To investigate the correlation between suicidal ideation and stress among college going adolescents.
3. To study the relationship between automatic thoughts and stress among college going adolescents.

HYPOTHESES

The purpose of the study was to investigate relationship of social connectedness with social competencies and self esteem. Based on the research, following hypotheses were proposed:

1. It is hypothesized that suicidal ideation was expected to be positively related with automatic thoughts.
2. It was expected that suicidal ideation was positively related with stress.
3. It was expected that there will be positive correlation between automatic thoughts and stress.
4. It was expected that there will be positive relationship among all the variables under the study.

METHOD

The sample consisted of 100 students. The data was collected from the different post graduate colleges of Chandigarh. The age range was 20-24 years and the students comprised of post graduation. The students in the sample were selected on random basis.

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Tests and Tools

1. Suicidal Ideation Scale (Devendera Singh et al., 2005). This scale consist of 25 items. Each item can be rated from 1-5 where, “1” denotes “Strongly Disagree”, “2” denotes “Disagree”, “3” denotes “Uncertain”, “4” denotes “Agree” and “5” denotes “Strongly Agree”. The 4 items in the scale are reserved scored.
2. Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (Kendall and Hollon., 1980). The scale consist of 30 items. The each item in the questionnaire is rated from 1-5 where “1” denotes “not at all”, “2” denotes “sometimes”, “3” denotes “moderately often”, “4” denotes “often” and “5” denotes “all the time”. All the items are positively scored.
3. Perceived Stress Scale (Woerner and Gardell, 1990). The scale consists of 10 items. The each item in the questionnaire is rated from 0-4 where “0” denotes “never”, “1” denotes “almost never”, “2” denotes “sometimes”, “3” denotes “fairly often” and “4” denotes “very often”. The 4 items in the scale are negatively scored.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Variables	Suicidal Ideation	Automatic Thoughts	Stress
Suicidal Ideation		0.52**	0.21*
Automatic Thoughts			0.03
Stress			

*value of correlation sign at 0.05 level

**value of correlation sign at 0.01 level

The first hypothesis that suicidal ideation was expected to be positively related with automatic thoughts is proved as the relationship is positive with correlation accounted ($r=0.52$) which is significant at 0.01 level as the critical table value at 0.01 level is 0.254, hence the value far exceeds the critical value at 0.01 level. A study was done in Malaysia among adolescents. The study was done by Choon et al., (2014) on negative automatic thoughts and its relationship with the suicidal behavior and depression. The result concluded that there was a positive relationship among the variables under study and negative automatic thoughts was found to be positively associated with the suicidal behavior. The study concluded that adolescents who are depressed and stressed have a high risk to develop automatic thought processes and then it lead to the suicidal ideas and thoughts.

The second hypothesis that suicidal ideation was expected to be positively related with stress is proved as the correlation between suicidal ideation and stress has come out to be $r = 0.21$ which is positive and significant at 0.05 level as the critical table value at 0.05 level is 0.19. Cheng and Lee (2000) concluded that adolescents in countries like Hong Kong and Singapore have more rate of suicidal thoughts as a means to cope up from the stress. The study by Joshi and Singh (2008) concluded that there was a positive correlation of suicidal ideation and stress ($r = 0.15$).

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The third hypothesis that there will be positive correlation between automatic thoughts and stress is proved but the correlation value ($r = 0.03$) is insignificant.

The fourth hypothesis that there will be positive relationship among all the variables under the study. As discussed that all the variables under study are positive where the correlation of suicidal ideation with automatic thoughts and stress is insignificant whereas the correlation of automatic thoughts and stress is insignificant but the values are positive. Hence the hypothesis is proved.

CONCLUSION

The suicidal tendencies are highest at the school and college going students. The students sometimes go for such behavior without knowing the drawbacks of this step as how much the sufferings their families, friends will have. So the stress level should not be raised to that level among adolescents or post graduate students that the negative automatic thoughts comes up in the mind and which leads to the suicidal attempts. If the stress level will be lower down and if positivity would be raised among the students at all times it will lead to the positive results and the adolescents can enjoy their full to the fullest.

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