

SELF ESTEEM AND SUICIDAL IDEATION: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

Preeti Manani and Shraddha Sharma

The present research study focuses on the relationship between self-esteem and suicidal ideation among the students of senior secondary level. It was hypothesized that there will be no relation between Self-esteem and suicidal ideation. The sample for the study consisted of 120 students of different boards of Senior Secondary examination. The age of the students ranged between 16 and 18 years. Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire developed by Reynolds (1988) and Self-esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) were used to measure the level of Suicidal Ideation and Self Esteem respectively. Results revealed that there was negative correlation between Self Esteem and Suicidal Ideation among students. Regression analysis indicated that Low self esteem leads to higher levels of suicidal ideation.

KEYWORDS: Self Esteem, Suicidal Ideation, Secondary Students

INTRODUCTION

Not everyone can win a contest. If one child wins, another cannot. This means that each child comes to regard others as obstacles to his or her own success. Competition gives rise to more competition. One who wins the competition moves in the next step of the ladder but what about the one who fails in the competition. The first view holds that more the parents and teachers immerse the children in rivalry, the better the result would be. Competition builds

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character and produces excellence. The second stance admits that our society has gotten carried away with the need to be number one, that we push our kids too hard and too fast to become winners. Some things that are done to excess are inherently destructive.

Competition, which simply means that one person can succeed only if others fail, is one of those things. It's always unnecessary and inappropriate at school, at play, and at home. One should think for a moment about the goals one has for their children. One wants them to develop healthy self-esteem, to accept themselves as basically good people. Parents want them to become successful, to achieve the excellence of which they're capable. They want them to have loving and supportive relationships and to enjoy themselves. These are fine goals. But competition isn't necessary for reaching these goals but it actually undermines them. Most people lose in most competitive encounters, and it's obvious why that causes self-doubt. But even winning doesn't build character; it just lets a child gloat temporarily. In a competitive culture, a child is told that it isn't enough to be good -- he must triumph over others. Success comes to be defined as victory, even though these are really two very different things. Even when the child manages to win, the whole affair, psychologically speaking, becomes a vicious circle: the more he competes, the more he needs to compete to feel good about himself. Thus Competition is destructive to children's self-esteem.

Today health professionals see these competitions as a serious condition affecting children, adolescents and adults, usually involves more social and interpersonal difficulties, which directly leads to self-esteem problems. Self-esteem is a major key to success in life. The development of positive self-concept or healthy self-esteem is extremely important for good adjustment in society. Self-esteem indicates the extent to which a person believes himself/herself capable. Self-esteem is a set of beliefs that a person brings with him or herself.

Some people aren't able to cope with problems and issues in their lives as well as other people. Their self-esteem drops and they take it out on themselves. They punish themselves for what they are feeling inside. They just want their pain to be gone. One self-mutilator was quoted saying, "I take the blade and run it gently against my skin, it cuts in deeper and deeper, the blood bursts out and slowly runs down my arm then it stops and the pain goes away". The most serious outcome of having dangerously low self-esteem is suicide. Luckily for some, they are able to get help when they start to have suicidal thoughts, but for the rest, it is too much for them to handle. When a person gets into the state of depression, and their self-esteem is so low, they feel they aren't worthy of living anymore and they plan to end their precious life that is the sign

of suicidal ideation. Suicidal Ideation is a thought about how to kill oneself, which can range from a detailed plan to a fleeting consideration and does not include the final act of killing oneself. The majority of people who experience suicidal ideation do not carry it through. Some may, however, make suicide attempts. Some suicidal ideations can be deliberately planned to fail or be discovered, while others might be carefully planned to succeed.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Self-esteem deficits appear to play an important role in understanding suicidal behaviour among adolescents. Both suicidal ideation and suicide attempts may be related to persistent negative views of the self. A negative view of the self may involve seeing the self as worthless and the future as hopeless. The adolescent with low self-esteem may see life as not worth living and may perceive everyday stressors as overwhelming. Low self-esteem has been found to be important in the prediction of suicidal ideation among high school students (Dukes and Lorch, 1989). The presence and severity of suicidal ideation in adolescents with affective disorders has been related to low self-esteem (Brent et al., 1986). Low self-esteem is also implicated in suicide attempts made by adolescents (Kienhorst et al., 1990). Furthermore, negative self-evaluations were associated with increased suicidal tendencies, number of suicidal gestures, seriousness of suicidal intent, and medical lethality of the attempt in a study of 64 adolescent psychiatric inpatients (Robbins and Alessi, 1985). Thus, self-esteem deficits appear to be directly related to suicidal tendencies, including both suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in adolescents.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Present research focuses on the relationship between self-esteem and suicidal ideation. In this modern era, the adolescents are always finding themselves under the pressure performing to the best of their abilities. Sometimes parents and sometimes adolescents themselves set such goals which seem beyond their own capabilities and in such conditions cause frequent failure to them. Frequent failures direct adolescents towards depression and in severe conditions towards suicidal ideations too. There are several researches that examine the relationship between suicidal ideation and self-esteem. In the present research focus has been given on the most crucial age of the individuals. It is the age of transition in which an adolescent is at the threshold of adulthood. He/she faces many physical as well as psychological changes and sometime is not able to deal with these changes. Present research implies that for preventing the threat of suicide, it is necessary to maintain a balanced level of self-esteem among individual.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this research is to study the relationship between self-esteem and suicidal ideation among the students of senior secondary level.

HYPOTHESIS

There will be no relation between self-esteem and suicidal ideation.

SAMPLE

The sample for the study consisted of 120 students of different boards of senior secondary examination. Equal number of girls and boys were taken in the sample. The age of the students ranged from 16-18 years. Subjects were matched in terms of age, sex and educational qualifications. Subjects having any psychological and physiological disorder were excluded from the sample. Selection of the sample was done using 'Simple Random Sampling Method'.

TOOLS USED

The tools used in the present study are:

1. Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ)

The SIQ was used to measure the level of Suicidal ideation. It was developed by Reynolds in 1987. The SIQ consists of 15 items on which the respondent rates on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (I never had this thought) to 6 (almost every day) which assesses the frequency with which the cognition occurs. The SIQ is scored in a pathological direction, with higher scores indicating greater severity of suicidal ideation. Each item addresses a specific suicidal cognition (e.g., "I thought about how others would feel if I killed myself." "I thought about how I would kill myself." "I thought that killing myself would solve my problems."), and evaluates the frequency of the cognitions during the past month. Reliability coefficients by grade were uniformly high and ranged from 0.932 to 0.938. Validation data for the SIQ are presented primarily in the form of content validity and construct validity.

2. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale was developed by Rosenberg (1965). The scale is an attempt to achieve a unidimensional measure of global self-esteem. It was designed, to be a Guttman Scale, which means that the RSE items were to represent a continuum of self-worth statements ranging from statements that are endorsed even by individuals with low self-esteem that are endorsed only by persons with high self-esteem. In this scale, there was list of statements dealing with general feeling of

individuals such as I wish I could have more respect for myself & At times I think I am no good at all. Rosenberg (1965) scored his 10 questions scale that was presented with four response choice. Subject had to place a tick in the appropriate box to say whether he/she strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. Rosenberg (1965) reported internal consistency reliability ranging from .85 to .88. The criterion related validity was found as 0.67.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to see the Self Esteem among Senior Secondary students, mean and standard deviation of Self Esteem Scores were calculated that are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Self Esteem Scores.

Sample	N	Mean	S.D
Senior Secondary Students	120	9.05	4.54

The mean value of Self Esteem scores was found as 9.05. This shows that the sample have low level of Self Esteem. The value for standard deviation was found 4.548. The following curve is showing the distribution of the Self Esteem Scores.

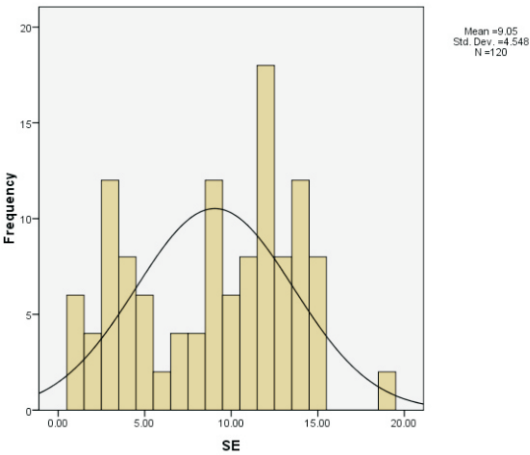


Figure 1 Distribution of Self Esteem Scores

Figure 1 shows that distribution of the scores appears to be normal as in the middle there are maximum scores and fewer score in the extremes. But the mean score 9.05 suggests that students are having low self-esteem.

To investigate the level of suicidal ideation, mean and standard deviation of Suicidal ideation Scores were calculated which is exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of Suicidal Ideation Scores.

Sample	N	Mean	S.D
Senior Secondary Students	120	71.33	15.34

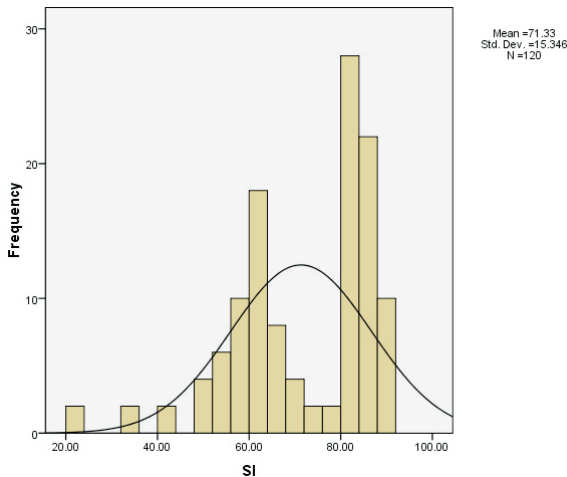


Figure 2 Distribution of Suicidal Ideation Scores

Figure 2 shows that distribution of the scores does not appear to be normal as in the negative side of the curve there are maximum scores and less scores in the middle and the mean score 71.33 suggests that students are having suffering from high suicidal ideation.

In order to achieve the main objective of the study, Pearson product moment correlation and Regression equation were calculated. The correlation and regression equation are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3
Coefficient of Correlation of Self-Esteem and Suicidal Ideation Scores.

Variables	Coefficient of Correlation	Regression Equation
Self-Esteem & Suicidal Ideation	-0.71	$Y = -2.383x + 92.902$

The coefficient of Correlation between Self-Esteem (SE) and Suicidal Ideation (SI) was found -0.71, which shows high negative Coefficient of Correlation. The regression equation indicates that if we make a unit change in Self-Esteem score of students then Suicidal Ideation score would decrease by 2.838 on an average i.e. there is found an inverse relationship between both the variables. Low self esteem leads to a high level of suicidal ideation and vice versa. Figure 3 itself represents the fact that there is a negative correlation

between self esteem and suicidal ideation.

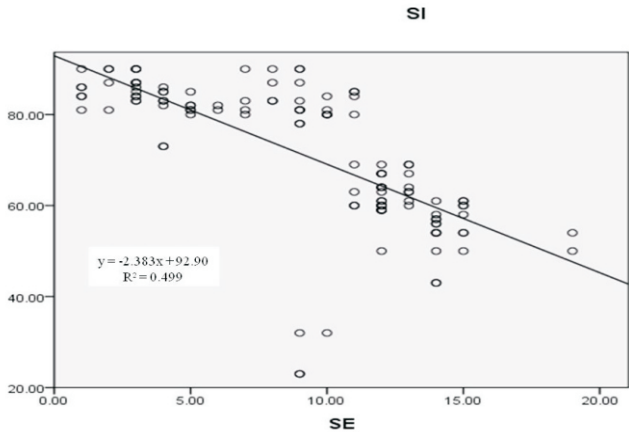


Figure 3 Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Suicidal Ideation

The result of the present research leads to the rejection of the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between suicidal ideation and self-esteem. Present research reveals that there is significant negative relationship between suicidal ideation and self-esteem. If suicidal ideation increases self-esteem would decrease and vice versa. Low self-esteem serves as one of the risk factors for depression. People become vulnerable to depression and suicidal ideation when they set unrealistic goals and blame themselves for failure in achieving these goals. Failure develops negative self-concept among people and if failure remains consistent it causes suicidal ideation among people. People with high self-esteem tend to be low in depression, whereas people with low self-esteem tend to be high in depression that is the main cause of suicide. People with high self-esteem set more difficult goals; are less troubled by anxiety, experience less stress and fewer psychosomatic symptoms. They are less sensitive to failure and criticism; experience greater feelings of control and fewer feelings of helplessness; tend to be more enterprising in approaching problems; and tend to explore more curiosity toward themselves and their environment. They are intrinsically motivated people who tend not only to be competent but also have a positive attitude toward themselves.

Harter (1999) proposed that negative beliefs about self cannot be separated from the broader context of depressed mood and hopelessness when predicting suicidal ideation. Wilburn and Smith (2005) concluded in their research that there is a significant negative relationship between low self-esteem and suicidal ideation. Swann et al. (2007) also opined in their research that uncertainty about self-worth predisposes negative mood states. Bhar and Ghahramanlou-Holloway (2008) examined the association of self-esteem with

suicide ideation after controlling for depressed mood and hopelessness. Study was conducted on 338 individuals. Self-esteem was operationalized as beliefs about oneself (self-based self-esteem) and beliefs about how other people regard oneself (other-based self-esteem). Each dimension of self-esteem was negatively associated with suicide ideation after controlling for depression and hopelessness. Uncertainty about self-worth and negative self-concept shake individual's confidence and ability to prove himself/herself. When this uncertainty and shaken beliefs remain consistent it causes depression and other negative moods and emotions. Creemers, Scholte, Engels, Prinstein and Wiers (2012) examined whether explicit and implicit self-esteem, the interaction between these two constructs, and their discrepancy are associated with depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and loneliness. Results showed that the interaction of implicit and explicit self-esteem was associated with suicidal ideation, indicating that participants with high implicit self-esteem combined with a low explicit self-esteem showed more suicidal ideation. Furthermore, the size of the discrepancy between implicit and explicit self-esteem was positively associated with depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and loneliness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study suggest that enhancing the self esteem of students of different boards of Senior Secondary examination could help them reduce the possibilities of occurrence of suicidal ideation. Therefore it is essential that individual should be physically as well as mentally healthy. Future of any country depends upon how well it nurtures and protects the young generation. Adolescent age is a very crucial period of any individual's life. During this phase adolescents are neither mature enough to deal with the difficulties of life nor do they like to be directed at every step of life. Hence, it is important to support them emotionally so that they may have confidence and may develop positive concept about themselves. If they have positive beliefs about themselves it would help them in developing positive attitude towards life. Thought of ending life is not a solution of any problem. Problems are temporary and they usually get fixed with time. Present research implies that parents should make efforts to help their children in developing positive attitude towards self and it would give them confidence to perform better and would keep them away from any thought of ending their precious life.

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