

Gender Differences in Suicidal Ideation and Non-Suicidal Self Injury among Young Adults in COVID-19

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Empirical Evidence

Introduction

- In the contemporary times of the spread of COVID-19, there has been a growing interest in understanding emerging mental health related concepts such as thinking about suicide or self harm, among young adults, the students in particular
- Suicidal Ideation (SI) refers to "thinking about suicide, having ideas or intentions or urges to commit suicide" (Naseem & Munaf, 2017)
- SI and Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI) behaviors are usually an indicator of a serious mental health concern and a significant risk factor for suicide (Hamza et al., 2012; Pereira & Cardoso, 2015; Zetterqvist et al., 2013)
- NSSI is defined as "the deliberate, self-inflicted destruction of body tissue without suicidal intent and for purposes not socially sanctioned" and includes behaviors such as cutting, burning, biting or scratching skin (International Society for the Study of Self-Injury, 2007)
- NSSI behaviors have numerous psychosocial effects and are also a global public health issue (Bilsen, 2018; Turecki & Brent, 2016)

In the Context of COVID-19

- COVID-19 pandemic led to psychological stress for people throughout the world (Rehman et al., 2020; Xiao, 2020) and exerted a negative impact on the mental health of individuals (Violant-Holz et al., 2020; Solé et al., 2021)
- A significant number of individuals reported experiencing psychological distress, along with SI and NSSI related behaviors (Darin, 2019)
- During the pandemic, studies examined the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on suicide rates (Isumi et al., 2020; McIntyre & Lee, 2020) so that the percentage of suicidal plans was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 (SAMSHA, 2021)
- Research studies also showed that young individuals (specifically university students) reported of added pressure to deal with the academic challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aucejo et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020)
- Moreover, according to World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) 77% of the global suicides occurred in the lower and middle-income countries
- In Pakistan also the rate of SI during the COVID-19 was higher than that which was reported in the general population prior to the pandemic (Farooq et al., 2021)



Objectives

- To assess the levels of Suicidal Ideation and Non-Suicidal Self Injury among young adults in the COVID-19 pandemic
- To assess gender differences in the levels of Suicidal Ideation and Non-suicidal Self Injury urge among boys and girls, in the COVID-19 pandemic
- To explore the association between Suicidal Ideation and Non-Suicidal Self Injury among young adults, in the COVID-19 pandemic
- To investigate the relationship between socio-demographic, COVID-19 related, Suicidal Ideation and Non-Suicidal Self Injury related variables among young adults, in the pandemic

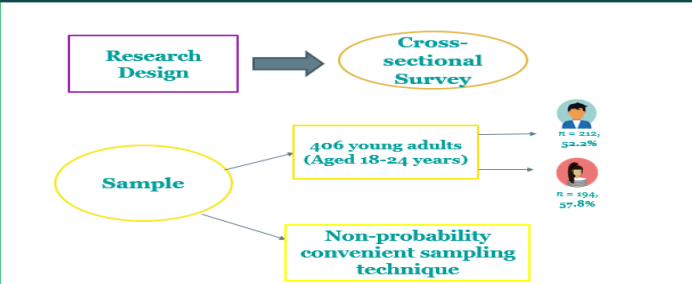


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Summary and Conclusion

- Significant levels of Suicidal Ideation and Non-suicidal Self Injury Urge were noted in young adults, in the COVID-19 pandemic, with females reporting higher levels in comparison to boys
- There is a need to enhance counseling and mental health services in educational institutions and develop policy programs, especially in the times of COVID-19 in order to mitigate the effects of the poor mental health consequences of the pandemic

Methods



Instruments

- Informed Consent Form
- Demographic Sheet
- COVID-19 Related Indicators Form
- SI/NSSI Related Variables Form
- Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS; Rudd, 1989)
- Alexian Brothers Urge to Self-Injure scale (ABUSI; Washburn et al., 2010)

Ethical Considerations

- Permissions from Research Committee and Ethical Review Board, FJWU
- Permissions from higher authorities of educational institutions
- Permissions from authors of the scales
- Confidentiality/anonymity
- Informed consent

Statistical Analysis

- Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version-20)
- Data entry/cleaning
- Descriptive statistics
- Inferential statistics

Setting:
Universities
Rawalpindi/
Islamabad

Results

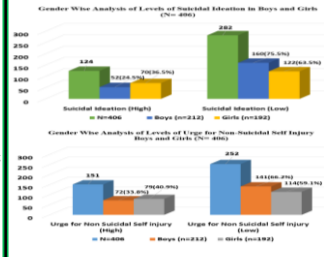
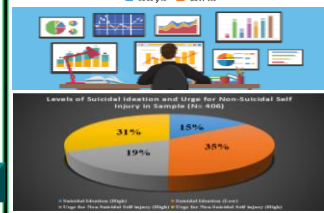
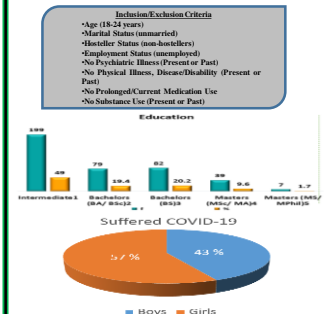
- The results revealed significantly high levels of Suicidal Ideation (SI) and Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI) in the respondents
- 27.1% (n=110) had a desire to end life within the last one year and
- 19.2% (n=78) respondents had an urge to hurt self without wanting to end life
- 43% boys and 57% girls (n=114 students) had suffered COVID-19 infection and also lost a close relative to the infection
- Descriptive Statistics:**
 - 30.5% (n=124) students had high SI
 - 37.2% (n=151) had high NSSI Urge
- Gender-Wise Descriptive analysis:**
 - Girls had high levels of SI (n=70, 36.5%) as well as urge for NSSI (n=79, 40.9%), as compared to boys
- Independent Sample t-test:**
 - Elicited significant gender differences between the two groups on the SI ($t=-2.16, p<0.05$) but not for the NSSI Urge ($t=-1.11, p>0.05$) variable
- Correlations Among Variables:**
 - Furthermore, significant associations were found among different SI, NSSI, socio-demographic and COVID-19 related variables, such as: age, being tested COVID-19 positive, having a history of traumatic experience, previous suicide attempt and attempt to hurt self (without wanting to end life)
 - SI also had a significant positive association with NSSI Urge ($r=.66, p<0.01$)

Independent Sample t-test Analysis Showing Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), t-values and p-values for Differences in Suicidal Ideation and Non-Suicidal Self Injury Urge between Boys and Girls

Variables	Boys		Girls		t (DF)	p	95% CI	Cohen's d	
	M	SD	M	SD					
Suicidal Ideation	14.24	18.82	15.88	8.28	-2.16	.032	-3.34	4.16	0.12
Non-Suicidal Self Injury (Urge)	3.74	5.80	4.30	6.29	-1.11	.266	-4.81	0.58	0.11

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; p = Significance Level; 95% CI = Lower Limit - Upper Limit

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