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SELF-ESTEEM AND SUICIDE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated the relationship between self-esteem and suicide among college students. A convenient sampling method was used to collect the data. The sample included 515 college students in the age group of 18-21. Tools used were the Self-Esteem Scale by Rosenberg (1960) and Suicide Behaviours Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R) by Osman et al. (2001). Findings included a highly negative significant correlation was found between suicide and self-esteem ($r = -.487, p < 0.01$); a highly significant difference between ($t = 4.68, p < 0.01$) was found between male and female adolescents with regard to self-esteem; a highly significant difference ($t = 4.96, p < 0.01$) was reported between male and female adolescents with regard to suicide, and demographic factors like educational qualifications ($t = 6.740, p < 0.01$) and gender ($t = 2.113, p < 0.05$) had significantly contributed to the overall suicide scores of adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are in the process of discovering new identities, building self-confidence, self-worth and also trying to establish new relationships. Adolescents had the tendency in them to show a reduction in emotional well-being thereby forcing them to engage in various reckless behaviours like smoking, drug abuse, excessive speeding, and most importantly juvenile suicide which has become a major public health issue (Hinduja and Patchin, 2018).

The concept of suicide encompasses a wide range of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are linked to mortality, ranging from suicidal ideation to suicide. Suicide is defined as the act of deliberately killing oneself (WHO, 2020). It is not just a state or national problem but a major concern in the world.

Suicides among college students are the outcome of complex factors such as psychological environment, family issues, socio-economic conditions, and the cultural milieu which are compelling them to take the extreme step of ending one's life. Suicide is a major threat to adolescents hence it is extremely important to identify the various behavioural, psychological and social factors which have been productive in reducing the rate of suicide in teenagers of any degree (Smith et al, 2020). Studies revealed that female adolescents were vulnerable to suicide ideation and suicide attempts (Sharma et al, 2015) and girls also reported more suicidal ideation than boys (Campisi et al, 2020).

In the quest to discover who they are, adolescents are confronted with many new challenges in life; the most significant of them is self-esteem. Studies indicated that mental disorders were the outcome of low self-esteem, where low self-esteem played an important role in suicidal ideation (Jang et al, 2019). Research studies have found that women who reported significant suicidal ideation had low self-esteem, as well as more suicidal ideation than men (Nguyen et al, 2019). All these research studies confirmed a close and significant association between self-esteem and suicide.

HYPOTHESES

1. There will be a negative correlation between self-esteem and suicide among college students
2. There will be a significant difference between males and females with regard to self-esteem
3. There will be a significant difference between females and males with regard to suicide.
4. Educational qualification and gender will contribute significantly to suicide among college students

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SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 515 adolescents in the age group of 18-21 years which included males and females from various colleges. There were 240 females and 275 males respectively. A convenient sampling method was used to gather the data. Demographic data was also collected. The consent was taken and the participants were informed that the information provided by them will be used purely for research purpose and complete confidentiality will be maintained.

MEASURES

- Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg (1965)
- Suicide Behaviours Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R) (Osman et al. 2001)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study found a negative significant correlation between self-esteem and suicide. The correlation value ($r = -.487^{**}$) was highly significant at 0.01 level of significance, indicating that the lower the self-esteem; the higher is the tendency of adolescents to commit suicide. The present study was supported by previous studies which reported that youth having lower self-esteem were more likely to have depression resulting in suicide (Choo et al, 2017).

The present study also showed a significant difference between male and female adolescents ($t = 4.69$; $p < 0.05$) on self-esteem, indicating male adolescents had significantly higher self-esteem than female adolescents. The study also revealed a highly significant difference ($t = 4.96$, $p < 0.01$) between males females with regard to suicide. The current is supported by the results of the previous studies indicating female adolescents were more prone to committing suicide than males, (Nguyen et al. 2019); Campisi et al, 2020).

Demographic factors such as educational qualification ($t = 6.740$; $p < 0.01$) and gender ($t = 2.113$; $p < 0.05$) had significantly contributed to the overall suicidal ideation among adolescents. It can be inferred that adolescents who had lower educational qualifications as well as female adolescents have higher suicidal ideation, (Jang et al, 2019). He further revealed that a significant proportion of female adolescents compared to men had experienced previous self-injury and previous suicide attempts and had problems with school attendance. He found that adolescents who do not achieve their educational goals end up leaving school and colleges, school absenteeism as well as academic stress ending up in frustration, leading to suicide ideation or suicide attempt. Luby et al, 2019 found that male and female adolescents differed from each other on suicide ideations where female adolescents were more prone to suicide than male adolescents.

CONCLUSION

The study arrived at certain important implications such as adolescents who were having low self-esteem had shown suicidal ideation. Adolescents are the vulnerable section of our society and failure to meet the demands placed on them, they feel ashamed of themselves leading to experiencing negative emotions, resulting in depression and suicide. Hence, parents and adolescents need to maintain a two-way communication process. Female adolescents not only have low self-esteem, they also have displayed higher inclinations towards suicide. It is extremely important to assist adolescents to raise their self-esteem to fight against suicidal ideation, suicidal thoughts or any attempt of committing suicide.

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