

The Role of Perceived Burdensomeness and Thwarted Belongingness in Suicidal Ideation among University Undergraduates

Moses Adeleke Adeoye^{1*}, Adekola Kami Lasisi² 

^{1,2} Educational Management & Counselling, Faculty of Education, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria

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ABSTRAK

Ide bunuh diri merupakan kekhawatiran yang signifikan di kalangan mahasiswa dan memahami faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap fenomena menyedihkan ini sangat penting untuk upaya pencegahan dan intervensi. Mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor spesifik yang berkontribusi terhadap pemikiran dan perilaku bunuh diri dapat menyesuaikan intervensi untuk memenuhi kebutuhan unik populasi ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara persepsi beban, rasa memiliki yang digagalkan, dan keinginan bunuh diri di kalangan mahasiswa Universitas. Penelitian ini bersifat cross-sectional dan menggunakan ukuran gabungan dari perilaku bunuh diri. Tiga pertanyaan penelitian dan empat hipotesis diajukan untuk memandu penelitian. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif untuk mengumpulkan data dari mahasiswa tingkat sarjana. Sampel yang terdiri dari 177 siswa berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini, menyelesaikan langkah-langkah laporan diri yang menilai perasaan yang membebani, menggagalkan rasa memiliki, dan keinginan untuk bunuh diri. Para peserta menyelesaikan kuesioner untuk menilai tingkat beban yang mereka rasakan, rasa memiliki yang digagalkan, dan keinginan untuk bunuh diri. Studi tersebut menunjukkan bahwa prevalensi ide bunuh diri di antara para partisipan ditemukan dalam jumlah sedang. Temuan ini penting karena menyoroti pentingnya mengatasi perasaan terbebani untuk mencegah keinginan bunuh diri di kalangan mahasiswa.

ABSTRACT

Suicidal ideation is a significant concern among university students and understanding the factors that contribute to this distressing phenomenon is crucial for prevention and intervention efforts. Identifying the specific factors that contribute to suicidal thoughts and behaviors can tailor their interventions to address the unique needs of this population. This study aims to analyze relationship between perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation among University undergraduates. The study is cross-sectional and uses a composite measure of suicidal behaviors. Three research questions and four hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The study used a quantitative research design to collect data from University undergraduates. A sample of 177 students participated in the study, completing self-report measures assessing perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation. The participants completed questionnaires assessing their levels of perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation. The study indicated that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among the participants was found to be moderate. This finding is significant as it highlights the importance of addressing feelings of burdensomeness to prevent suicidal ideation among university students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Suicide is a major public health concern worldwide and is the second leading cause of death among young adults including university students. It is therefore imperative to build and examine models that can inform our understanding of the full continuum of suicidal thoughts and behavior (Gao et al., 2018; Gureje et al., 2007). It is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple factors, including psychological, social and cultural variables. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in

*Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: princeadelekm@gmail.com (Moses Adeleke Adeoye)

understanding the underlying mechanisms and risk factors associated with suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation is the contemplation of ending one's own life and complex phenomenon that affects individuals across various demographics (Granieri et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2019). University students are particularly vulnerable to experiencing suicidal ideation due to the unique stressors they face during this transitional period in their lives. Understanding the underlying factors that contribute to suicidal ideation among university students is critical for effective prevention and intervention strategies (Mamun et al., 2022; Ploskonka & Servaty-Seib, 2015).

One prominent model is the interpersonal theory of suicide, which posits that hopelessness about states of thwarted belongingness (e.g., "I feel disconnected from others") and perceived burdensomeness (e.g., "I am a burden on society") together contribute to suicidal desire (suicidal ideation) (Orden et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2020). The Interpersonal theory of suicide provides valuable insights into the psychological processes that lead to suicidal ideation and behaviors. This theory posits that individuals are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts and engage in self-harm when they feel like a burden to others and lack a sense of belongingness (Chu et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2017). Additionally, the theory highlights the acquired capability for self-harm as a significant factor. Perceived burdensomeness refers to an individual's belief that they are a burden to others and that their existence causes inconvenience or distress to those around them. Thwarted belongingness is the feeling of not belonging or lacking meaningful connections with others. Both of these factors have been identified as key contributors to suicidal ideation.

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions, beliefs and behaviours, including attitudes towards suicide. In Nigeria, cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social support systems may influence the manifestation and expression of suicidal ideation. Therefore, it is essential to explore how the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide operates in the Nigerian cultural context and whether its underlying mechanisms are similar to those found in Western contexts (Baloran, 2020; Black Thomas, 2022; Smith et al., 2020). Suicidal ideation is a critical issue that affects many individuals worldwide, including university students. The mental health of students is of particular concern, as it can significantly impact their academic performance, well-being and overall quality of life (Joiner et al., 2009; Nguyen et al., 2019).

Al-Hikmah University, located in Nigeria, is no exception to these challenges. However, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the specific relationship between perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation. Studies conducted in other settings have provided valuable insights, it is essential to understand the unique dynamics and challenges faced by students in this particular context. One possible reason for this knowledge gap is the lack of comprehensive research conducted on mental health issues among University undergraduates. Although mental health is gaining recognition as a crucial aspect of overall well-being, there is still a stigma associated with seeking help and discussing mental health concerns openly. This stigma can prevent students from seeking support and hinder the collection of accurate data.

Furthermore, cultural factors may play a role in shaping the experiences and perspectives of Al-Hikmah University undergraduates regarding perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation. Nigeria has a rich cultural heritage and societal norms and expectations may influence how students perceive themselves about others and their sense of belonging (Baker et al., 2020; Cooper & Sánchez, 2016; Samerkhanova & Imzharova, 2018). Exploring these cultural nuances is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems tailored to the needs of Al-Hikmah University students. Another knowledge gap is the lack of longitudinal studies examining the trajectory of suicidal ideation among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates. Understanding how perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness evolve and how they contribute to the development and persistence of suicidal ideation is vital for developing targeted prevention strategies. Longitudinal studies would allow researchers to identify potential risk factors, protective factors and critical periods where interventions may be most effective (Beames et al., 2022; Gureje et al., 2007; Salsabila et al., 2021).

Understanding the factors that mediate or moderate these relationships can help identify potential intervention points and inform the development of evidence-based strategies to support students' mental health. Addressing this knowledge gap will gain a deeper understanding of these factors and their unique manifestation within the Al-Hikmah University context. The aim of this study is to analyze relationship between perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation among University undergraduates. The findings will not only contribute to the existing literature on suicide prevention but also provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions within the university community.

2. METHOD

The study is cross-sectional and uses a composite measure of suicidal behaviours (Baloran, 2020). A sample of 177 undergraduate students was recruited using a convenience sampling method. Participants were selected from the faculty of education at the various departments and academic levels to ensure a representative sample. The researcher instrument titled the Interpersonal Need Questionnaire (INQ) was used to measure the perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness while the Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SIQ) was used to measure the severity of suicidal ideation among participants to assess the frequency and intensity of thoughts related to suicide. The measures used were validated scales specifically designed to assess these constructs. The questionnaires were administered through the Google Form platform. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire independently on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 4 Strongly Agree- allowing individuals to express their level of endorsement or disagreement with the statements or items being assessed. These scales play a crucial role in gathering data that can aid in understanding and addressing these complex psychological phenomena.

The data collected were analyzed using both quantitative analysis techniques. Descriptive statistics will be calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants including age and gender. The collected data will be analyzed using the statistical software SPSS. Descriptive statistics will be used to examine the prevalence rates of perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness and suicidal ideation among the participants. Inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analyses, will be conducted to explore the relationships between these variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of the Participants

| Variables | Types | Number | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 102 | 57.6 |
| | Female | 75 | 42.4 |
| | Total | 177 | 100 |
| Age | 16 to 20 | 2 | 1.1 |
| | 21 to 25 | 38 | 21.5 |
| | 26 to 30 | 64 | 36.2 |
| | 31 and above | 73 | 41.2 |
| | Total | 177 | 100 |

Base on Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the participants. The gender distribution indicated that 102 respondents are male which is 57.6% while 75 are female and represent 42.4. The age distribution of the participants showed that two participants have they're aged within the age bracket of 16 and 20 years which is 1.1%, 38 participants have they're aged in the age bracket of 21 to 25 years and represented 21.5, 64 participants aged between 26 to 30 years and this represents 36.2, and 73 participants have their ages more than 30 years and this represents 41.2. The level of perceived burdensomeness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates is show in Table 2.

Table 2. Level of Perceived Burdensomeness of the Participants

| Level | Range of Score | Frequency | Percentage | Ranks |
|----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| High | 16-20 | 1 | 0.6 | 3 rd |
| Moderate | 11-15 | 58 | 32.8 | 2 nd |
| Low | 5-10 | 118 | 66.7 | 1 st |

Table 2 shows that the majority of the participants (118, 66.7%) have scores ranging from 5 to 10 which indicates a low level of burdensomeness, 58 participants (32.820%) have scores ranging from 11 to 15 which indicates a moderate level of burdensomeness and high 1 participant (0.6%) as a score ranging from 16 to 20 which indicates high burdensomeness. From the foregoing, it is concluded that the level of burdensomeness of the participants of this study is low.

The level of thwarted belongingness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates is show in Table 3.

Table 3. Level of Perceived Thwarted Belongingness of the Participants

| Level | Range of Score | Frequency | Percentage | Ranks |
|----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| High | 16-20 | 5 | 2.8 | 3 rd |
| Moderate | 11-15 | 101 | 57.1 | 1 st |
| Low | 5-10 | 71 | 40.1 | 2 nd |

Table 3 shows that the majority of the participants (101, 57.1%) have scores ranging from 11 to 15 which indicates a moderate level of thwarted belongingness, 71 participants (40.1%) have scores ranging from 5 to 10 which indicates a low level of thwarted belongingness and 5 participants (2.8%) as a score ranging from 16 to 20 which indicates high thwarted belongingness. From the foregoing, it is concluded that the level of thwarted belongingness of the participants of this study is moderate. The prevalence of suicidal ideation among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates is show in Table 4.

Table 4. Prevalence of Suicidal Ideation of the Participants

| Level | Range of Score | Frequency | Percentage | Ranks |
|----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| High | 16-20 | 34 | 19.2 | 3 rd |
| Moderate | 11-15 | 67 | 37.9 | 1 st |
| Low | 5-10 | 42 | 23.7 | 2 nd |

Table 4 shows that the majority of the participants (67, 37.9%) have scores ranging from 11 to 15 which indicates a moderate prevalence of suicide ideation, 42 participants (23.7%) have scores ranging from 5 to 10 which indicates a low prevalence of suicidal ideation and 34 participants (19.2%) as a score ranging from 16 to 20 which indicates a high prevalence of suicidal ideation. From the foregoing, it is concluded that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among the participants of this study is moderate. In order to find out relationship between suicidal ideation and the burdensomeness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates is show in Table 5.

Table 5. Relationship between Burdensomeness and Suicidal Ideation

| Variables | No | Mean | S.D | Df. | r. calculated | Sig. | p |
|-------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|---------------|------|----|
| Suicidal ideation | 171 | 15.34 | 5.38 | | | | |
| Burdensomeness | 171 | 9.16 | 2.84 | 169 | 0.53 | 0.00 | ** |

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 5 shows the results obtained from testing hypothesis 1. The table shows that r. calculated = 0.53, degree of freedom = 169 and significance = 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between suicidal ideation and burdensomeness among the respondents of this study. The relationship between suicidal ideation and thwarted belongingness of the participants of this study is show in Table 6.

Table 6. The Relationship between Thwarted Belongingness and Suicidal Ideation

| Variables | No | Mean | S.D | Df. | r. calculated | Sig. | p |
|-------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|---------------|------|----|
| Suicidal ideation | 171 | 15.34 | 5.38 | | | | |
| Burdensomeness | 171 | 10.79 | 2.78 | 169 | 0.48 | 0.00 | ** |

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 6 shows that r. calculated = 0.48, degree of freedom = 169 and significance = 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between suicidal ideation and thwarted belongingness among the respondents of this study. The significant joint contribution of burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness to the prediction of suicidal ideation of the participants of this study is show in Table 7. Table 7 shows the results obtained from testing hypothesis 3. The table shows an Adjusted Regression Square (AR2) is 0.31 and the Standard Error of Estimate is 4.48. This implied that burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness jointly contributed 31% to the prediction of suicidal ideation in the respondents. F. ratio value of 40.17 which is significant at

0.05 critical region. Thus, there is a significant joint contribution of the burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness to the prediction of suicidal ideation among undergraduates of Al-Hikmah University Ilorin.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Test

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square F | F | AR2 | S.E.E. | Sig. | p |
|------------|----------------|-----|---------------|-------|------|--------|------|----|
| Regression | 1611.55 | 2 | 805.77 | | | | | |
| Residual | 3490.12 | 174 | 20.06 | 40.17 | 0.31 | 4.48 | 0.00 | ** |

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

The significant relative contributions of the burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness to the prediction of suicidal ideation among Undergraduates in Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Nigeria is show in Table 8.

Table 8. Relative Contributions of Burdensomeness and Thwarted Belongingness to the Prediction of Suicidal Ideation

| Model | Coefficients | Coeff. T | Sig. B | Std. Error | Beta |
|------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|------------|------|
| Unstandardized | Standardizes | | | | |
| Constant | 3.62 | 1.4 | | 2.58 | 0.01 |
| Burdensomeness | 0.71 | 0.15 | 0.37 | 4.7 | 0.00 |
| Thwarted Belongingness | 0.490.15 | 0.25 | | 3.2 | 0.00 |

Table 8 shows that unstandardized B ranges from 3.62 to 0.49, standard error ranges from 1.4 to 0.15, Standardized Beta ranges from 0.37 to 0.25, t-values range from 4.7 to 2.58. It is indicated that both burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness made a significant relative contribution to the prediction of suicidal ideation and the burdensomeness has a higher relative contribution than the thwarted belongingness of the undergraduates of Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the level of perceived burdensomeness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates is low. This suggests that the participants do not perceive themselves as burdensome in their relationships with others. These findings have important implications for promoting the well-being and mental health of undergraduates and emphasize the importance of creating a supportive environment within educational institutions (Lai et al., 2021; Musumari et al., 2018; Ni & Jia, 2023). The research question two results of this study revealed the level of thwarted belongingness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates. The findings indicate that the participants in this study reported a moderate level of thwarted belongingness. Understanding the level of thwarted belongingness among university students is important as it can have a significant impact on their overall well-being and academic performance. To further improve the sense of belongingness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates, the institution needs to provide opportunities for students to engage in social activities and foster a sense of community. This can involve joining clubs or organizations that align with their interests, participating in campus events, or reaching out to classmates and forming study groups (Khizer et al., 2021; Willis, 2022). By creating a supportive and inclusive environment, providing opportunities for social engagement, and encouraging students to take initiative, universities can contribute to the well-being and academic success of their students.

The research question three results of the study indicated that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among the participants was found to be moderate. The prevalence of suicidal ideation can vary across different populations and settings. In this study, the prevalence was found to be moderate, suggesting a significant number of students experiencing such thoughts. Suicidal ideation can be a symptom of underlying mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, or stress (Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015; Iseselo et al., 2016; Vastyanov et al., 2021). Therefore, universities must provide accessible and effective mental health services to students. These findings underscore the need for increased attention to mental health issues and the implementation of effective support systems within the university setting. By prioritizing mental health, universities can better support their students' overall well-being and create a conducive environment for academic success (Jensen-Doss et al., 2018; Ravindran et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020). The hypothesis statement, which suggests no significant relationship between suicidal ideation and burdensomeness, does not align with the study's results. The results demonstrate that there is a

significant relationship between these two variables. This finding emphasizes the need to address feelings of burdensomeness to prevent suicidal ideation among university students. This suggests that individuals who experience feelings of burdensomeness are more likely to have thoughts of suicide. This finding is significant as it highlights the importance of addressing feelings of burdensomeness to prevent suicidal ideation among university students (Gao et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2020).

The hypothesis statement suggests that there is no significant relationship between suicidal ideation and thwarted belongingness among Al-Hikmah University undergraduates. However, the findings of the study contradict this hypothesis, revealing a significant relationship between these two variables. It is important to note that the results of this study are specific to the respondents who participated in the research. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings to the wider population of Al-Hikmah University undergraduates or other universities. This suggests that individuals who experience a sense of not belonging or not being accepted by others are more likely to have thoughts or desires to end their own lives. The hypothesis statement discusses the significance of the joint contribution between burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness in predicting suicidal ideation among undergraduates at Al-Hikmah University. The results indicate that there is indeed a significant joint contribution between the two factors in predicting suicidal ideation among undergraduates at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin (Hidayat et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2021). The results of the study support this hypothesis, highlighting the importance of addressing these factors when identifying and preventing suicidal ideation among students. By understanding the role of burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, effective interventions and support systems can be developed to mitigate the risk of suicide among undergraduates at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin.

The hypothesis statement regarding the relative contributions of burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness to the prediction of suicidal ideation among undergraduates at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin, Nigeria. The results indicate that both burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness significantly contribute to the prediction of suicidal ideation. Additionally, the findings reveal that burdensomeness has a greater relative contribution than thwarted belongingness among the undergraduates at Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin, Nigeria.

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the need for proactive measures to address the mental well-being of students, focusing on reducing feelings of burden and fostering a sense of belongingness. These findings also highlight the significance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment within educational institutions. By fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness among students, universities can help reduce feelings of burdensomeness and promote positive mental health outcomes.

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