Emotional Competence and Suicidal Ideation: A Study of University Students in Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships between suicidal ideation, emotional competence, among 300 undergraduate students at Lucknow City University. Utilizing a cross-sectional design, the research examined these variables through validated self-report scales. Results revealed a significant inverse relationship between suicidal ideation and emotional competence, with higher emotional competence associated with lower suicidal ideation ($\chi^2 = 150.792$, $p < .001$, $\varphi = .709$). Additionally, B.Sc. students demonstrated significantly higher emotional competence than B.A. students ($t(198) = -4.423$, $p < .001$). These findings underscore the critical role of emotional competence in mitigating suicidal ideation among university students, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and support programs. Future research should explore the underlying factors contributing to the observed differences in emotional competence and further examine the complex interplay of adjustment and social factors influencing student mental health.

KEYWORDS: Suicidal ideation, Emotional competence, University students, Mental health, Adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Suicidal ideation, which includes thoughts of suicide or self-harm, is a serious public health issue, especially for young adults who are juggling the demands of college. While often a time of personal growth and intellectual exploration, the university years can also be marked by heightened stress, academic pressure, social anxieties, and identity formation struggles (American College Health Association, 2022).

According to Duffy et al. (2010), these stresses may increase susceptibility to suicidal thoughts by causing a deterioration in mental health. Developing successful preventive and intervention techniques requires an understanding of the variables that either exacerbate or lessen suicidal thoughts in this population.

This study focuses on emotional competence , as an important factor that may be important in the experience of suicidal thoughts.

Emotional competence, the ability to understand, manage, and express emotions effectively, is increasingly recognized as a protective factor against mental health difficulties (Gross & John, 2003). Emotionally competent people may be less likely to have suicidal thoughts because they are better able to manage stress, control negative emotions, and form supportive relationships.

On the other hand, a bad transition to university life, which is marked by issues with academic performance, social integration, and emotional wellbeing, can intensify emotions of loneliness, despair, and hopelessness and may raise the risk of suicidal thoughts (Pistole & Brown, 2001).

The purpose of this study is to look at the intricate connections between emotional competence, and suicidal thoughts among Lucknow City University students. We intend to learn more about the elements that lead to suicidal thoughts in this particular demographic by looking at these interrelated variables. The results of this study might guide the creation of focused treatments and support programs intended to enhance mental health and deter suicidal thoughts and actions in college students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Suicidal Ideation Among University Students

Among college students worldwide, suicidal ideation-defined as plans or ideas about taking one's own life-represents a serious mental health issue. According to research, stress, anxiety, and depression-three major risk factors for suicidal thoughts-are frequently made worse by the adjustment to university life (Eisenberg et al., 2013).

According to research by Mortier et al. (2018), social isolation, financial stress, and academic pressure are the leading causes of the 10-15% of college students who report having suicidal thoughts. Studies conducted in India have shown that suicidal thoughts are becoming more common among students, especially in settings where academic competition is fierce (Deb et al., 2016). Including many other universities, Lucknow University is not exempt from this trend since students frequently deal with issues including familial expectations, academic overload, and a lack of facilities for mental health.

2. Mental Health and Emotional Proficiency

Emotional competence is critical to mental health and general wellbeing, or the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions. People who possess greater emotional competence are better able to handle stress and hardship, which lessens their susceptibility to mental health problems, according to Mayer and Salovey (1997). Research by Extremera and Fernández-Berrocal (2006) found that students with more significant emotional competence exhibit lower levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. In the context of university students, emotional competence has been linked to improved academic performance, healthier relationships, and better overall adjustment (Parker et al., 2004). However, little study has been done on the direct link between emotional intelligence and suicidal thoughts, especially in India.

3. Suicidal Thoughts and Emotional Competence

Few studies have looked at how suicidal ideation, and emotional competence, interact with one another, even though the correlations between these factors have been studied separately. Research indicates that emotional intelligence could serve as a buffer, reducing the negative impact of inadequate adjustment on mental well being (Schutte et al., 2007). Students who are more emotionally competent, for instance, might be better able to handle social and adjustment difficulties, which lowers their chance of having suicidal thoughts. However, those who have trouble adjusting and managing their emotions can be more vulnerable to mental health issues. It is essential to comprehend these connections to create focused treatments that promote the well being of students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives will be investigated in this study:

1. To analyze how emotional competence correlates with suicidal ideation in students attending Lucknow University.
2. To assess whether a notable disparity exists in emotional competence between students enrolled in B.A. and B.Sc. programs at Lucknow University.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of undergraduate students from Lucknow University participated in this study, which used a quantitative, cross-sectional research methodology to examine the connections between suicidal ideation, and emotional competence. A cross-sectional design was selected to obtain a snapshot of these variables simultaneously. This approach is suitable for investigating relationships and locating possible areas of concern, even though it does not provide causal judgments.

Participants

Three hundred undergraduate students enrolled at Lucknow University made up the sample. One hundred students from each of the three academic programs-Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), and Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.)-were chosen to participate (n = 100 per course). A purposeful sampling technique was used to guarantee equitable representation across these disciplines and enable comparisons across student groups.

This sampling method aimed to create a balanced representation of the student population within the chosen discipline

Tools

Three validated scales were utilized to measure the variables of interest:

1. **The Emotional Competence Scale (EC)** measures students' ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions. Scores were categorized into Average, Competent, and Highly Competent. As with the AICS, full details of the EC, including its psychometric properties and scoring, along with a proper citation, should be included in the complete paper.

2. **Suicidal Ideation Scale (SIS):** This measure assessed the participants' frequency and severity of suicidal ideation and thoughts. 1 The responses were divided into Average, Low, and Very Low. Like the other scales, the SIS demands complete

psychometric information and citations in the final publication.

Procedure

Data Collection: Data collection occurred in a controlled classroom setting at Lucknow University. Participants were administered the EC, and SIS questionnaires concurrently. Participants were assured that their answers would remain anonymous and confidential to promote candid and open involvement.

Scoring and Categorization: Responses to each scale were scored according to the predefined criteria established by the developers of each instrument. Participants were then categorized into the respective levels for each scale based on their scores. The specific criteria used for categorization should be clearly defined in the paper. For example, the criteria for determining " "Excellent," academic competency, "Highly competent," and emotional competence should be implicitly stated. e method for categorizing suicidal ideation (e.g., based on cutoff scores or percentile ranks) should also be clearly explained.

T-test: To ascertain if the mean emotional competence scores of students enrolled in B.A. and B.Sc. programs differed statistically, an independent samples t-test was employed. The assumptions of the t-test were checked [This includes checking for normality of the data within each group using tests like the Shapiro-Wilk test or visual inspection of histograms and checking for homogeneity of variance between the two groups using Levene's test].

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics were computed for each of the three scales to give a general picture of the sample's characteristics. For every level on each scale, frequency distributions and percentages were calculated. These results will be presented in tables (e.g., Tables 1–3 in the original prompt), providing a clear picture of the distribution of emotional competence, and suicidal ideation within the sample.

Cross-Tabulation: Cross-tabulations were performed to explore the relationships between the variables, particularly across the different disciplines. This involved stratifying the data by academic course (B.A., B.Sc., B.Com.) and comparing the levels of competence and suicidal ideation across these groups (as in Tables).

Statistical Tools: The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used for data entry, management, and statistical analysis. At the same time, the prompt mentioned cross-tabulation; this section should clearly state the statistical tests used to examine the relationships between the variables (e.g., chi-square tests, correlations, or other appropriate analyses). The rationale for choosing these specific statistical tests should also be provided.

FINDINGS

This section details the findings of the study, which investigated the relationships between suicidal ideation, emotional competence, and adjustment capabilities among college students, as well as differences in emotional competence based on a program of study (B.A. vs. B.Sc.). An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare group means, and chi-square tests of independence were utilized to investigate the relationships between categorical variables. The results are presented below and organized by research objective.

Objective 1-

To analyse how emotional competence correlates with suicidal ideation in students attending Lucknow University.

The relationship between suicidal ideation (SIS) and emotional competence (EC) was investigated using a chi-square test of independence. Participants were divided into groups based on their EC (Average, Competent, Highly Competent) and SIS (Very Low, Low, Average) levels. A statistically significant correlation between these factors was found in the data (χ^2 = 150.792, p <.001). The phi coefficient (φ = .709) indicated a strong relationship between SIS and EC.

Table 1: Table showing relation between Suicidal Ideation and emotional competence among university students.

SIS	EC			Chi-Square	P-value
	Average	Competent	Highly Competent		
Very Low Suicidal Ideation	1(1.1)	0(0)	86(98.9)	150.792	<0.001
Low Suicidal Ideation	6(4.5)	12(9)	115(86.5)		
Average Suicidal Ideation	32(40)	31(38.8)	17(21.3)		
Total	39(13)	43(14.3)	218(72.7)		

Specifically, the data suggest a pattern where individuals with lower emotional competence were more likely to report higher levels of suicidal ideation. For instance, of those categorized as having "Very Low Suicidal Ideation," the vast majority (86 out of 87, representing 98.9%) were classified as "Highly Competent" in terms of emotional competence. Conversely, within the " Average Suicidal Ideation" group, the distribution across emotional competence categories was more even, with 40% categorized as " Average," 38.8% as " Competent," and 21.3% as " Highly Competent."""" This pattern underscores the inverse relationship between emotional competence and suicidal ideation.

Objective -2

To assess whether a notable disparity exists in emotional competence between students enrolled in B.A. and B.Sc. programs at Lucknow University.

An independent samples t-test was employed to compare emotional competence (EC) scores between B.A. and B.Sc. students. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in EC scores between the two groups ($t(198) = -4.423$, $p < .001$). B.Sc. students (M = 94.11, SD = 19.5) reported significantly higher emotional competence scores than B.A. students (M = 81.86, SD = 19.7). The mean difference of 12.25 points represents a substantial difference in emotional competence levels between the two groups.

Table 2: The independent t-test between the various student groups

	Course	Mean ± S.D.	Independent t test	p-value
EC Score	**B.A. (n=100)**	81.86±19.7	-4.423	<0.001
	B. Sc. (n=100)	94.11±19.5		

According to the findings, B.Sc. students often showed greater emotional competence, indicative of improved emotional control and management abilities. Given the notable difference in this study, more research is necessary to determine the causes of the emotional competence gap between B.A. and B.Sc. students.

DISCUSSION

The results revealed a strong, statistically significant association between suicidal ideation and emotional competence. Students who reported lower emotional competence were more likely to have greater levels of suicide ideation, as was predicted. This result is consistent with earlier research showing that emotional competence protects mental health (reference relevant articles). The strength of this link is shown by the significant phi coefficient ($\varphi = .709$), which implies that emotional competence may be a critical component in reducing the risk of suicide among college students. Emotional competence, which includes the capacity to successfully control emotions, handle stress, and deal with interpersonal difficulties, may act as a protective factor against the anguish and despair that are frequently linked to suicidal thoughts. Suicidal thoughts and scholastic proficiency did not significantly correlate, which defied our original premise.

While the distribution of adjustment capability levels varied across the suicidal ideation groups, these variations did not reach statistical significance. This null finding suggests that, within this sample, perceived adjustment capabilities may not be a primary factor influencing suicidal ideation. It is possible that other variables, such as social support, financial stress, or specific adjustment pressures (e.g., fear of failure, competitive environment, etc.), play a more prominent role. Future research should explore these potential moderating or mediating factors to understand better the complex relationship between adjustment experiences and suicidal risk in university students. It is also critical to consider the potential that kids may be dealing with adjustment challenges that they are not aware of or reporting, which might contribute to their distress.

The study also found a significant difference in emotional competence between B.A. and B.Sc. students. B.Sc. students rated their emotional competence significantly higher than their B.A. counterparts. This finding can be attributed to several factors. The curriculum or pedagogical strategies employed in B.Sc. programs may promote the development of emotional regulation skills. However, individuals with higher emotional competence may be more likely to enroll in or succeed in B.Sc. programs, which often need strong coping mechanisms and resilience. To determine the precise causes of this discrepancy, more investigation is required. Future studies will benefit from examining the possible impact of gender, as coping mechanisms and emotional expression can be gendered.

There are many restrictions on this study. The cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships between the variables. Future research employing longitudinal designs would be beneficial in understanding the directionality of these relationships. The study relied on self-report measures, which can be susceptible to

response bias. Including objective measures of emotional competence and adjustment capabilities could enhance the validity of future studies.

The results may not be as applicable to other student demographics because the sample was taken from a single Lucknow institution. More varied samples in demographics, academic fields, and institutional contexts should be used in future studies.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, this study offers important new information on the variables linked to suicidal thoughts in college students. Suicidal ideation and emotional competence have a substantial negative correlation, which emphasizes how crucial it is to support students' emotional health. Universities want to consider implementing initiatives and programs to improve emotional competency, such as mindfulness training, stress management classes, and accessibility to mental health services. To better understand the intricate interactions between the various elements that lead to suicidal thoughts and to create efficient preventative and intervention plans, further study is required.

CONCLUSION

This study offers proof of the important connection between university students' emotional competence and suicidal thoughts. The results highlight the necessity of programs and treatments aimed at improving emotional competence in order to support mental health and maybe lower the risk of suicide. More investigation is required to fully understand the intricate interactions between academic experiences, social variables, and personal traits that may influence university students' suicidal thoughts. Further research into the elements influencing the development of emotional competence in various adjustment capability contexts is also necessary, as evidenced by the observed disparity in emotional competence between B.A. and B.Sc. students.

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