

## **Suicidal ideation among Meritorious secondary school students**

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### **Abstract**

Suicidal ideation refers to the occurrence of thoughts or preoccupations about suicide. It includes thoughts of self-harm or ending one's life, which can range from fleeting thoughts to detailed plans. These thoughts can range from fleeting, vague considerations to more serious, detailed plans. This study investigates suicidal ideation among meritorious secondary school students in Punjab, focusing on the role of gender differences. A sample of 132 students (66 males, 66 females) was surveyed using the Suicidal Ideation Scale by Sisodiya and Bhatnagar (2011). The findings revealed no significant difference in suicidal ideation between male and female students ( $t = 0.98, p > 0.05$ ), suggesting that both genders experience similar levels of suicidal thoughts. The study highlights the importance of addressing mental health issues in high-achieving students, particularly in relation to academic stress and performance pressures. The results emphasize the need for school-based interventions that support both male and female students equally, focusing on reducing psychological distress and promoting emotional well-being.

**Keywords:** Suicidal ideation, Secondary School Students.

### **Introduction**

Suicide remains a major public health challenge in the United States, with a significant rise in the suicide rate over recent decades. In 2021, the age-adjusted suicide rate was 14.1 per 100,000, marking a 36.7% increase from 2000. Suicide is especially concerning among younger populations, with individuals aged 10 to 24 having it as the second leading cause of death. Gender and age disparities in suicide rates are notable, with men having a rate four times higher than women, and the highest rates found among older adults, particularly those aged 85 and above. Racial disparities also exist, with American Indian and Alaska Native populations experiencing the highest rates, while Asian populations have the lowest. Mental health disorders, especially mood disorders, are significant contributors to suicide risk, as 90% of individuals who die by suicide have a psychiatric illness. Early identification of suicidal ideation is key in preventing suicide, and primary care clinicians play a crucial role in assessing

and addressing suicide risk, often encountering patients at higher rates than mental health professionals.

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts about suicide, ranging from fleeting desires to die to detailed plans for an attempt. It is a symptom rather than a diagnosis and can occur due to mental health conditions, substance use, or life stressors. Suicidal ideation is typically categorized into passive (desiring death or not wanting to live) and active (planning to take one's life) forms. While not all individuals with suicidal thoughts attempt suicide, these thoughts are a significant risk factor. In the U.S., millions of adults report experiencing suicidal thoughts annually, and many make plans or attempt suicide. In 2019, 12 million adults considered suicide, and more than 47,500 died by suicide. Teenagers also experience high rates of suicidal ideation.

Although commonly associated with depression, suicidal thoughts can be triggered by various mental health issues, family challenges, or life events. Treatment is crucial for individuals experiencing suicidal ideation, regardless of a formal diagnosis, to reduce the risk of suicidal behaviour. Several treatment options are available to address both the underlying causes and immediate risks. While most individuals with suicidal thoughts do not attempt suicide, these thoughts remain a significant risk factor. In 2008-09, an estimated 8.3 million U.S. adults (3.7% of the population) reported having suicidal thoughts in the past year, and in 2014, 2.2 million reported making suicide plans. Suicidal ideation is also common among teenagers. Although it is often linked to depression and other mood disorders, suicidal thoughts can be associated with a variety of mental health conditions, life events, and family issues, all of which can heighten the risk. Mental health experts stress the importance of providing treatment for individuals experiencing suicidal ideation, regardless of their diagnosis, due to the risk of actual suicide attempts and ongoing mental health challenges. A variety of treatment options are available for those struggling with these thoughts.

Suicidal ideation refers to the process of thinking about or contemplating suicide. It can range from vague thoughts, such as feeling that life isn't worth living, to more detailed and specific plans for how one might end their life. Some definitions describe it as involving deliberate thinking about self-harm, including considering methods for carrying out the act. Essentially, it encompasses any thoughts, considerations, or plans related to suicide, varying in intensity from fleeting thoughts to more organized intentions. Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts or plans about suicide, ranging from vague wishes to die to detailed plans with intent. It exists on a spectrum, with passive thoughts evolving into active ideation. Suicidal ideation

is a significant risk factor for suicide attempts and deaths, emphasizing the need for early identification and intervention. While not all individuals with suicidal thoughts act on them, those with intent and a plan require urgent attention. As 90% of suicide victims have a psychiatric disorder, recognizing suicidal ideation offers a critical opportunity for intervention. Primary care clinicians play a key role, as most suicide victims see them more frequently than mental health professionals. Effective assessment and timely intervention can help prevent suicide and address underlying mental health needs.

## **Review of literature**

Madjar et al. (2018) found that teacher support at the classroom level reduced suicidal ideation and behaviours among high school students in Israel, while parental and peer support provided individual protection. The study emphasizes the importance of both classroom and individual support in school-based suicide prevention.

Kwon et al. (2018) identified depression, peer victimization, internet-related delinquency, and family issues as key risk factors for suicidal ideation and attempts among South Korean middle and high school students. The study highlights the need for interventions addressing mental health and family dynamics to prevent suicide.

Veloso et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study on suicidal ideation among university students in health-related fields, finding a 22% prevalence. Factors such as substance use, bullying, previous suicide attempts, dissatisfaction with course selection, and low academic performance were strongly associated with suicidal thoughts, particularly among psychology students. These findings highlight the need for targeted mental health interventions and support within university settings, focusing on prevention and awareness for students in health professions.

Tasnim et al. (2020) conducted online survey of university students in Bangladesh during the early COVID-19 pandemic found 12.8% had suicidal ideation. Risk factors included mental health issues and a history of suicidality, while protective factors included being male, rural residency, and good academic performance.

Gratz et al. (2021) examined suicidal ideation (SI) among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic, finding no significant overall increase in SI rates in Fall 2020. However, a notable rise was observed among sexual minority students, highlighting their heightened vulnerability. The study emphasized the need for targeted mental health interventions for diverse student populations to reduce suicide risk on college campuses.

Desai et al. (2021) studied undergraduate medical students in Western India, finding a 2-week prevalence of 14% for depression and 9% for suicidal ideation. Key predictors included female gender, alcohol use, history of abuse, academic stress, and family or relationship-related stress. The study underscores the need for targeted mental health interventions to support medical students and reduce suicide risk.

Windarwati et al. (2022) studied the relationship between stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among 869 Indonesian high school students. The study found that 23.7% of participants had suicidal ideation, with 12.4% expressing high intent. Significant associations were observed between suicidal ideation and stress, anxiety, and depression, emphasizing the need for mental health interventions to reduce suicide risk in adolescents.

Tao et al. (2023) used network analysis to examine the relationship between depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among 622 Chinese college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found a 7.8% prevalence of depression and 17.8% of anxiety, with "guilt" being the most influential symptom associated with suicidal ideation. The research highlighted a shift from depression-related to anxiety-focused symptoms over time, suggesting that targeting these central symptoms could help reduce suicide risk in students facing pandemic-related mental health challenges.

Ladi et al. (2023) conducted a study among 750 undergraduates in Lagos, Nigeria, finding a 22.5% prevalence of depression and 21.6% reporting suicidal ideation. A strong link was identified between depression and suicidal thoughts, with key risk factors including low self-esteem, substance use, and a history of bullying. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive mental health interventions and awareness programs to support vulnerable students and reduce suicide risk.

Altavini et al. (2023) found a 5.9% point-prevalence of suicidal ideation among Brazilian college students in a nationwide survey of 12,245 students. Risk factors included psychopathology, a history of sexual abuse, dissatisfaction with academic choices, and low academic performance, while protective factors included having children and religious affiliation. The study highlights the need for targeted mental health interventions in academic settings to address socio-academic challenges and reduce suicide risk.

Adebowale and Omotehinse (2024) explored suicidal ideation patterns among undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, highlighting the prevalence and associated factors. Their findings underscore the need for campus-based mental health interventions, emphasizing regional variability in suicidal ideation rates and the importance of context-specific research for effective prevention strategies.

Hussein and Yousef (2024) conducted a cross-sectional study at Ain Shams University and found higher levels of suicidal ideation (SI) among non-medical students. Key predictors of SI severity included smoking, dissatisfaction with family relationships, and lower perceived social support. The study emphasizes the need to strengthen social support systems and address family dynamics in suicide prevention, advocating for targeted mental health interventions for university students.

Adebowale and Omotehinse (2024) explored suicidal ideation among undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. Their study highlighted the prevalence and risk factors associated with suicidal ideation, stressing the need for targeted mental health interventions and campus support systems. They also pointed out regional differences in suicidal ideation rates, calling for context-specific research to develop effective prevention strategies.

Baiden et al. (2025) examined the association between perceived weight, actual weight, and suicidal ideation among adolescents. A study of 61,298 adolescents found that those who perceived themselves as overweight had higher odds of suicidal ideation among adolescents.

### **Significance of the study**

The significance of this study extends beyond identifying the prevalence of suicidal ideation among secondary school students; it also contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that exacerbate mental health challenges within the secondary school environment. Adolescents face various pressures during this critical developmental stage, including academic performance, peer relationships, family dynamics, and the struggle for identity and independence. This research highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to mental health care that addresses both academic and emotional well-being. By identifying specific risk factors such as academic stress, bullying, family issues, and lack of social support, the study provides valuable insights for schools to implement targeted interventions. The findings stress the importance of creating a supportive and stigma-free environment where students feel safe to seek help and access mental health resources. This research also emphasizes the role of secondary schools in not only promoting academic achievement but also fostering a culture of emotional and psychological well-being. It calls for collaboration among teachers, counsellors, parents, and policymakers to create effective prevention and intervention strategies, thereby reducing the risk of suicidal ideation and supporting students' mental health during this vulnerable stage of their lives.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To study suicidal ideation among Meritorious secondary school students.
2. To study gender differences in suicidal ideation among Meritorious secondary school students.

### **Hypothesis of the study**

1. There will be no significant difference in suicidal ideation among Meritorious secondary school students.

### **Research methodology**

The purpose of the present study is to investigate Suicidal Ideation among secondary school students studying in 10+1 classes in meritorious school students of Punjab. A descriptive method of research will be employed to meet the objectives of the study.

### **Sample of the study**

A representative sample of the study was 132 meritorious school students (M-46, F-54, Mean Age 15.89, SD- 4.56) of Patiala in Punjab.

### **Operational definition**

Following are the operational definitions of the terms used in the study:

1. **Suicidal Ideation:** Suicidal ideation refers to the occurrence of thoughts or preoccupations about suicide. It includes thoughts of self-harm or ending one's life, which can range from fleeting thoughts to detailed plans. These thoughts can range from fleeting, vague considerations to more serious, detailed plans. They may be accompanied by feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, or severe distress. Suicidal ideation is a significant mental health concern as it can be an indicator of severe emotional distress or a precursor to suicidal behaviour.
2. **Secondary School Students:** Secondary school students are individuals enrolled in the educational stages following elementary or primary school, usually covering middle school and high school. This phase of education typically includes students aged approximately 11 to 18 years old, spanning grades 6 through 12. It focuses on more advanced academic subjects, personal development, and preparation for higher education or vocational training, marking a critical period of transition from childhood to adulthood.

## Research tool

Suicidal ideation scale by Sisodiya and Bhatnagar (2011). It contains 30 and score 0-6. The reliability of the coefficient of 0.97.

## Statistical technique

Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, and SD will be utilized to examine the distribution of data related to suicidal ideation. To investigate differences in suicidal ideation based on gender analysis a t-test will be used.

## Result

1. **Hypothesis:** There will be no significant difference in suicidal ideation among Meritorious secondary school students.

**Table I**

Sr. No	N (132)	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	t-test
Suicidal ideation	Male (66)	35.71	35.77	35	16.71	0.98 N/S
	Female (66)	36.12	35.89	35	15.42	

The analysis revealed that the mean suicidal ideation score for male students was 35.71, while for female students, it was 36.12. The median values were 35.77 for males and 35.89 for females, showing close central tendencies. The mode for both groups was found to be 35, indicating that this score was the most frequently occurring value in both male and female groups. The standard deviation (SD) was slightly higher for males (16.71) than for females (15.42), suggesting that suicidal ideation scores among males were more dispersed compared to females.

The obtained t-value was 0.98, which is not significant at the conventional levels of significance ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that the observed difference in means is likely due to chance rather than a true gender-based distinction in suicidal ideation levels among meritorious secondary school students.

## Discussion of the study

The results suggest that there is no significant difference in suicidal ideation between male and female meritorious students. This finding supports the null hypothesis that gender does not play

a significant role in determining suicidal ideation levels among academically high-achieving students. The nearly identical mean and median values indicate that both male and female students experience suicidal ideation at comparable levels.

The absence of a significant gender difference in suicidal ideation may be attributed to various factors. Meritorious students, regardless of gender, often face high academic pressure, parental expectations, and performance-related stress. These factors could contribute to similar psychological distress levels across both groups. Additionally, societal and cultural influences may shape coping mechanisms and emotional resilience, minimizing gender differences in suicidal ideation.

### **Conclusion of the study**

The study concludes that suicidal ideation is a concern among meritorious secondary school students, but there is no significant gender difference in its prevalence. Future research could explore additional variables, such as personality traits, family environment, and coping strategies, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing suicidal ideation among high-achieving students. Educational institutions should take proactive measures to address students' mental health needs and provide a supportive environment to reduce stress-related psychological distress. The findings of this study have important implications for educational institutions, mental health professionals, and policymakers. Since both male and female meritorious students experience suicidal ideation at comparable levels, school-based mental health programs should be designed to cater to the needs of all students rather than focusing on gender-specific interventions. Counseling services, peer support groups, and stress management workshops can be implemented to help students cope with academic pressure effectively.

### **Delimitation of the study**

1. The present study will be restricted to 10 Meritorious schools located in Punjab state.
2. The present research will be restricted to secondary school students studying in 10+1 class only.

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