

DEPRESSION, EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT AND SUICIDAL IDEATION AMONG STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS, KWARA STATE NIGERIA

BY

Adedayo Adesokan, Rahmat Arinola Nasamu & Asmau Bolanle Qudus

Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria

Email: adedayo.adesokan@kwasu.edu.ng

Abstract

Depression, Emotional adjustment and suicidal ideation has become common phenomenon among students in higher institutions in kwara state. The study examined depression, Emotional adjustment and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State, descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of all the final year students of faculty of Education in three (3) universities in kwara State i.e. university of Ilorin, Kwara state university and Al hikmah university. The sample size was 357 students randomly selected from the three universities. Three instruments were used for this study, namely questionnaire items on depression, (QIOD) Questionnaire items on Emotional adjustment (QIOEA) and questionnaire items on suicidal ideation. Face and content validity was done by experts in the field of special education. Test retest method of reliability was adopted to determine the reliability index which were: ($r=.081$) and ($r=.80$) respectively. The hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of pearson product moment correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there was significant relationship between depression and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State, there exists significant relationship between emotional Adjustment and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that Students should be adequately and academically prepared for the institution tasks in order to avoid any form of depression that may lead them to suicidal ideation, Students should develop Adjustment strategies to cope Academically, emotionally and socially to avoid depression and prevent suicidal ideation.

Keywords: Depression, Emotional Adjustment, Suicidal Ideation

Introduction

In the bustling corridors and serene campuses of higher education institutions, students grapple with a myriad of challenges that extend beyond academic rigors. The behavior of students in these settings often reflects an intricate dance of hope, stress, ambition, and despair. Many students exhibit signs of psychological distress through behaviors such as social withdrawal, erratic attendance, sudden declines in academic performance, and increased substance use. These behaviors can sometimes mask deeper issues, including suicidal ideation. The intensity of academic pressure, coupled with the struggle for social integration and personal identity formation, can lead to overwhelming stress and feelings of hopelessness.

Suicidal ideation (S.I.) refers to the experience of thinking about, considering, or planning suicide which encompasses a range of thoughts, from fleeting considerations of suicide to detailed planning, but without necessarily leading to a suicide attempt. Previous studies indicate that suicidal ideation is alarmingly common among higher education students. According to American College Health Association (2019), approximately 14% of

college students have been reported to seriously considering suicide in the past year. In Nigeria, Omigbodun et al., (2018) reported that approximately 20.8% of students had experienced suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives; another study in 2020 among university students in Nigeria found a prevalence rate of 25.6% for suicidal ideation (Bamgboye et al., 2020). Similar patterns are observed globally, underscoring the universal nature of this issue. Suicidal ideation (S.I.) is a critical mental issue that indicate severe emotional distress and the presence of underlying psychiatric conditions because of the transition to higher institution life, academic pressure, social isolation, and other stressors can exacerbate pre-existing mental health challenges, making students vulnerable to suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation (S.I.) can severely impact a student's academic performance, social relationships, and overall quality of life. It can lead to absenteeism, dropout, and long-term mental health issues. The broader institutional environment may also be affected, as high rates of suicidal ideation can create a climate of fear and concern (Mortier et al., 2018). Some students with suicidal ideation experience intense academic demands and fear of failure which later contribute to feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness (Auerbach et al., 2018), many have difficulty in forming or maintaining social connections can exacerbate feelings of depression and loneliness (Eisenberg et al., 2007). Researches has shown that there are several factors associated with suicidal ideation (S.I.) which can be broadly categorized into psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors. The psychological factors are depression. Bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder and emotional adjustment, social factors include social isolation, family dynamic, bullying and peer victimization among others while environmental and biological factors are living condition and genetic disposition respectively. This study is considering psychological factors (depression and emotional adjustment).

Depression, referred to as Major Depressive Disorder (M.D.D), it is a mental health condition characterized by constant feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed. Depression is a mood disorder that significantly impacts an individual's daily functioning. It is marked by a range of emotional and physical signs that is continuous for at least two weeks and interferes with one's ability to engage in normal activities; it is a major risk factor for suicidal ideation. Depression is a pervasive issue among students in higher education, with prevalence rates varying between 10% and 30% across different studies (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Symptoms of depression include persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities, changes in appetite and sleep patterns, and difficulty concentrating. Factors contributing to depression among students include academic pressure, financial stress, lack of social support, and major life transitions (Eisenberg et al., 2007).

Students experiencing depression often feel overwhelmed by persistent negative emotions, leading to feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. These feelings can intensify to a certain point where the individual considers suicide as the best way to escape their pain. Studies have shown that students with higher levels of depressive symptoms are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts. The cognitive distortions associated with depression, such as black-and-white thinking and catastrophizing, can further exacerbate suicidal ideation.

Emotional adjustment (E.A) on the other hand can be seen as the ability of an individual to deal successfully with other people. Our reactions to lives situations will greatly be deepened on our emotional adjustment. Emotional adjustment involves thinking, feeling, understanding of the emotion of others and oneself. Every individual from the time they steps out of their home and goes to school makes series of adjustments between the environment and whole unique personality. The desire of each boy and girl to become a person having a healthy physique, a growing intellectual ability, a greater degree of emotional poise and increased participation in social groups, such characteristics enhance one's personality. Even teachers, parents, and other important members of the society to which person belong will encourage this desire. Richard & Sumathi [2015] showed that there is a significant difference in the emotional adjustment with respect to gender and locality, and Rajeswari & Eljo [2013] revealed that emotional adjustment ability among the adolescent school students is low. Emotional Adjustment of an individual helps in Maintaining emotional balance and stability in the face of stress (Richard & Sumathi, 2015). This ability of an individual to manage their emotion is crucial for the efficient control and regulation of emotions is

essential for living a balanced life. Since emotions have a significant impact on behavior, mental, and decision-making, the capacity to regulate and control emotions is especially important in the academic spheres. Positive outcomes are more likely to occur in various aspects of individual lives for those who are skilled at managing their emotions (Engles et al., 2019). It is against this background that this study examined depression, Emotional Adjustment and suicidal Ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State Nigeria

Statement of the problem

Depression, Emotional adjustment and suicidal ideation are psychosocial variables mostly suffered by in school adolescent as a result of school demand and academic challenges. Many students exhibit signs of psychological distress through behaviors such as social withdrawal, erratic attendance, sudden declines in academic performance, and increased substance use. These behaviors can sometimes mask deeper issues, including suicidal ideation. The intensity of academic pressure, coupled with the struggle for social integration and personal identity formation, can lead to overwhelming stress and feelings of hopelessness. These psychological problems are mostly noticeable and observable among 100 level and final year student. The reason for the 100 level students is because they are new to the academic environment of higher institution also they are coming from different home background and secondary schools. As a result of these, the ability to adjust to the new academic environment require among others emotional adjustment if such student fail to have high level of emotional adjustment, they may develop depression which may likely lead to suicidal ideation. By and large several studies have been empirically conducted on causes and prevalence of suicide among student of tertiary institution in Nigeria but none of those studies combined these psychosocial variables to determine the level of depression, emotional adjustment and suicide ideation as well as to determine the relationship among independent variables and dependent variable, thus created part of the gap that this study intends to fill by investigating depression, emotional adjustment and suicidal ideation among student of higher institution

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between depression and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State.
2. There is no significant relationship between emotional adjustment and suicidal Ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State.

Methodology

A descriptive Survey research design was adopted for the study; The population of the study comprised of all the final year students of Faculty of Education in three (3) Universities in Kwara State i.e Kwara State University Malete, University of Ilorin and Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin Kwara State. The number of 357 pupils was selected using simple random sampling technique. Three instruments were used for this study, namely questionnaire items on depression, (QIOD) Questionnaire items on Emotional adjustment (QIOEA) and questionnaire items on suicidal ideation (QIOSI). The instrument was constructed by the researcher and it contains 10 items each with a response choice of 0-4. The reliability coefficient was 0.81, 0.80 and 0.82 was obtained using test retest method, indicating the instruments reliability. The researcher administers the questionnaire online and retrieved all the responses. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Results

H₀1: there is no significant relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation shows the significant relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions

Variables	N	MEAN	SD	r-cal	Df	p-value	DECISION
Depression	357	30.07	5.22	0.110	355	-.85	Sig
Suicidal ideation	357	30.92	5.18				

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 1 showed the correlation depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions. It was revealed that the mean and standard deviation of depression were 30.07 and 5.22 respectively, while the mean and standard deviation of Suicidal ideation were 30.92 and 5.18 respectively. The calculated value of r_{cal} was 0.110 and degree of freedom was 355, the observed p-value was -.85 and the fixed p-value 0.05. The observed p-value was less than the fixed p-value ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions was not accepted. This implies that there is positive relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions. Therefore, there was significant relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions.

H₀2: there is no significant relationship between emotional adjustment and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation shows the significant relationship between emotional adjustment and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions

Variables	N	MEAN	SD	r-cal	Df	p-value	DECISION
Emotional adjustment	357	29.03	4.43	0.130	355	0.014	Sig
Suicidal ideation	357	30.93	5.18				

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 2 showed the correlation Emotional adjustment and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions. It was revealed that the mean and standard deviation of Emotional adjustment were 29.03 and 4.43 respectively, while the mean and standard deviation of Suicidal ideation were 30.93 and 5.18 respectively. The calculated value of r_{cal} was 0.130 and degree of freedom was 355, the observed p-value was 0.014 and the fixed p-value 0.05. The observed p-value was less than the fixed p-value ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between Emotional adjustment and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions was not accepted. This implies that there is positive relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions. Therefore, there was significant relationship between Emotional adjustment and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined Depression, Emotional Adjustment and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in kwara state, the study revealed that there was significant relationship between depression and Suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in kwara state. The findings of this study corroborates with Temitope Wumi, Ladi Akinyemi, Adaeze Precious, Oluseyi Adetola Onigbinde, Ifeoma Peace Okafor and Kofoworola Odeyemi (2023). Who found out in their studies that there was positive relationship between depression and suicidal ideation among Students. This further confirms that student who experience depression are likely to commit suicide.

It was further revealed that there was significant relationship between emotional adjustment and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in kwara state. The findings of this study agrees with R.N. Singh and Neeha Pathak (2020), who found out that the greater the competence of emotional regulation, the higher the skill of managing suicidality and other negative emotions. It further implies that students who do not adjust emotionally are at risk of suicidal ideation.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was significant relationship between depression and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State. This implies that students who experience depression are prone to suicidal ideation. Also, the study found that there exists significant relationship between emotional Adjustment and suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in Kwara State, this connotes that students who are unable to adjust emotionally are also prone to suicidal ideation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations among others were made;

1. Students should be adequately and academically prepared for the institution tasks in order to avoid any form of depression that may lead them to suicidal ideation.
2. Students should develop Adjustment strategies to cope Academically, emotionally and socially to avoid depression and prevent suicidal ideation
3. The higher institution managements should create a guidance and counseling units to be able to attend, cater and proffer possible solution for any student that found themselves in the situation of depression, that may lead to suicidal ideation.
4. Government and nongovernmental organizations, parents and school administrators need to work on the need to create awareness on the symptoms and the danger of depression to help reduce suicidal ideation among students in higher institutions in kwara state.

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