



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**SUICIDAL THOUGHT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ONE
OF THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN EAST MALAYSIA**

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**Bachelor of Science with Honours
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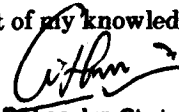
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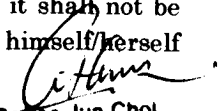
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PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN EAST MALAYSIA**

NUR AIN WAHIDATUL AKMA BINTI ARIF

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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The project entitled 'Suicidal Thought among University Students in One of the Public Universities in East Malaysia' was prepared by Nur Ain Wahidatul Akma Binti Arif and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science).

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the association between gender and suicidal ideation as well as to identify the correlation between age and suicidal ideation among university students. Other than that, this study also aimed to investigate the relationship between psychological factors such as depression, anxiety, and stress with suicidal thought. Research had been conducted includes all the faculty located in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). This study adopted a quantitative method and a total of 377 undergraduate students were selected as the participants of this research. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics based on this study. There were three types of analysis that were used in analyzing the collection of data which was known as the Chi-Square test, Pearson's correlation test, and multiple regression test. Findings showed that gender did not affect the occurrence of suicidal ideation. In addition, suicidal ideation was not found to be significant among young adults in UNIMAS. The findings also revealed that only depression and anxiety were significantly related to the suicidal ideation and can be used as the predictors for suicidal ideation to occur. However, stress was not significantly related to the suicidal ideation and it cannot be one of the predictors.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara jantina dan idea bunuh diri serta mengenal pasti hubungan antara umur dan idea bunuh diri di kalangan pelajar universiti. Selain itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara faktor psikologi seperti kemurungan, keresahan, dan tekanan dengan pemikiran membunuh diri. Penyelidikan telah dijalankan termasuk semua fakulti yang terletak di Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Kajian ini mengamalkan kaedah kuantitatif dan sejumlah 377 pelajar siswazah dipilih sebagai peserta kajian ini. Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) digunakan untuk menganalisis statistik deskriptif dan statistik inferensi berdasarkan kajian ini. Terdapat tiga jenis analisis yang digunakan dalam menganalisis pengumpulan data yang dikenali sebagai ujian Chi-Square, ujian korelasi Pearson, dan ujian regresi berganda. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa jantina tidak mempengaruhi berlakunya idea bunuh diri. Di samping itu, idea bunuh diri tidak dapat dijumpai di kalangan orang dewasa muda di UNIMAS. Penemuan juga mendedahkan bahawa hanya kemurungan dan kebimbangan yang berkaitan dengan idea bunuh diri dan boleh digunakan sebagai prediktor untuk idea bunuh diri. Walau bagaimanapun, tekanan tidak berkaitan dengan idea bunuh diri dan ia tidak boleh menjadi salah satu prediktor.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presented the background of study regarding the prevalence of current suicidal ideation among undergraduate students specifically in one of the public universities in east Malaysia. next sub-topic explains the problem statement, the research objectives and research questions to give an overview of the purpose this research is conducted. The next sub-topic represents the hypotheses, conceptual framework, the significance of the study, and key definition in terms of a conceptual and operational definition. Last sub-topic later concluded the chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

Juhnke et al. (2011) suggested that the most vulnerable and easily affected by the suicidal ideation and prone to suicide actions were the children and teenagers. In Malaysia, specifically there were 7% of teenagers prone to had the thought of suicide and one of two equal parts of the percentage were those who turned the ideation of suicide into action by committing suicide (Goh & Kok, 2011). Even worse, the prevalence of suicide ideation rises to 7.9% as reported by the Malaysia global school-based student health surveyed in 2012. Professor Dr. Maniam Thambu, psychiatrists and cognitive therapists from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) stated that the rate of Malaysian attempting suicide was ten times higher than those who commit suicide (Maniam, 2010). In 2009, 16.2% of all suicide cases in Malaysia were committed by those aged between 15 to 24 years old (NRSM Report, 2008).

Suicide, in fact, was the second most prominent caused of death in Malaysia committed by young generation aged between 15 to 29 years old, as reported by the New Straits Times in 2017. By having that kind of thought, it became the most powerful predictors to the suicidal behavior in the future (Harris & Lennings, 1993). Previous studies had been done to investigate various determinant that contributes to suicidal behaviors. Studies acclaimed that the highest risk to the suicidal actions was known to be those who struggled in mental health problems such as anxiety disorders and depressive symptoms as well as adolescents who were physically abused (Jo et al., 2015)

1.2 Problem statement

University students were those who have successfully passed the qualification levels in terms of academic achievement, psychometric test, and soft skills. They were well educated and had been selected by using certain of selection procedures. Therefore, they were not supposed to have a kind of destructive behavior such as suicidal thought. In fact that they were able to reach to the highest level of the university, it shows that they were actually managed to endure the struggle since primary school, so the thought of suicide should not arise when it came to the life as a university student.

However, ideation towards suicidal was one of the most burdensome issues in the higher education system in Malaysia and even worse suicide was still happening among university students. Regardless of differences in terms of their cultural background, students who entered university education had experienced a wide range of changes in which influenced them in every aspect of their lives (Arslan, Ayranci, Unsal, & Arslantas, 2009). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 800,000 people were estimated to die from suicide actions and those aged between 15 to 29 years old contributed to these numbers

of suicide cases, brought suicide to be the second leading cause of death worldwide (New Straits Times, 2018).

Meanwhile, there had been a lot of cases involving suicide that happened among university students. For instances, a Civil Engineering student from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak committed suicide after he made a fatal leap into a man-made lake located in the university (Borneo Post Online, 2011). Another case involved a 19-year-old college student who committed suicide by hanging himself up on the basketball pole due to depression (Harian Metro, 2011). At the same time, a 23-year-old student from a private college in Kajang was plunged into buildings after his body was found dead on the ground of the college building (BH Online, 2018). To add, a 20-year-old engineering student decided to jump off from a flat due to being a victim of cyber-bullying (New Straits Times, 2017).

Regarding this issue, so many cases occurred among university students in West Malaysia. Thus, it was crucial to determine the prevalence of suicidal ideation among university students in one of the universities located in East Malaysia. Since there were higher rates of suicide young generation, this, in turn, created concern whether suicidal thought affects university students as well. Subsequently, there was still a lack of information and data representations towards suicidal ideation among university students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the prevalence of suicidal thought among students and identify the dominant psychological factor that influences a student to think about suicide.

1.3 Research objectives

The main objective was to identify the prevalence of suicide thinking among university students in one of the higher institutions in Malaysia. Other objectives were to determine the following in order to generate the outcome regarding the suicidal ideation issue.

- i. To identify the association between gender and suicidal ideation among university students
- ii. To identify the correlation between age and suicidal ideation among university students
- iii. To determine the relationship between depression, anxiety, and stress with suicidal ideation among students

1.4 Research questions

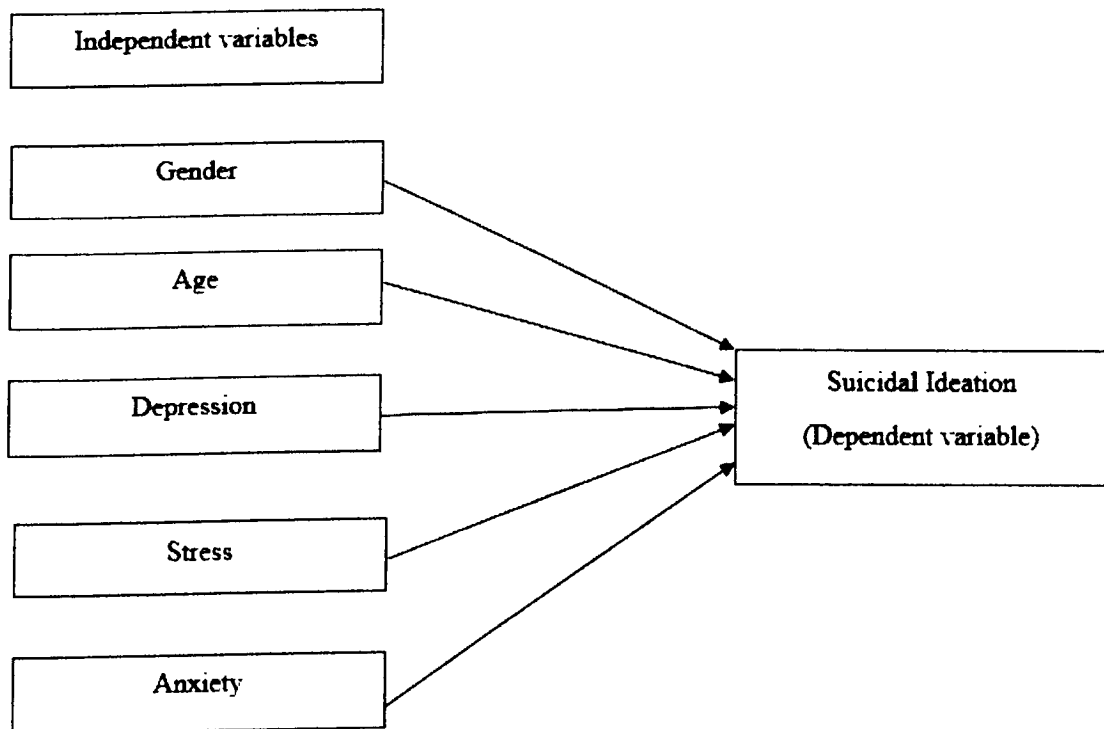
In this issue, the following questions regarding the research were developed.

- i. What is the association between gender and suicidal ideation among university students?
- ii. What is the correlation between age and suicidal ideation among university students?
- iii. What is the relationship between psychological factors and suicidal ideation among students?

1.5 Hypotheses

- i. H_0 : There is no significant association between gender and suicidal ideation among university students
- ii. H_0 : There is no significant correlation between age and suicidal ideation among university students
- iii. There is no significant prediction of suicidal ideation by depression, anxiety, and stress

1.6 Conceptual framework



1.7 Significant of the study

- i. Enable the identification of students who struggle with suicidal ideation
- ii. To discover the dominant psychological factor that affects students to have suicidal thought

1.8 Definition of key terms

Table 1.0

Conceptual and Operational Key Terms

Terms	Conceptual	Operational
Suicidal ideation	Intention or idea to commit suicide with the absence of any suicide attempt (Ranieri et al., 1987)	There are several indicators to detect suicide ideation among suicidal people and the most popular assessment known as the Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation.
Insomnia	Inability to sleep or sleeplessness (Roth, 2007).	In order to measure insomnia, Athens insomnia scale is widely used by referring to the sleep pattern and eight different parameters of sleep (Soldatos, Dikeos, & Paparrigopoulos, 2000).

Anomic suicide	Relate to the low level of regulation or disappointment and this suicide happens under frustration and stress, such as loss in financial (Durkheim, 1951).	Durkheim's suicide model helps in identifying the risk of suicide using the concept of regulation and integration continuum (Durkheim, 1987).
Egoistic suicide	Individual who has excessive individualism and low social integration with the society	
Altruistic suicide	Individual who has low individualism and high social integration with the society	

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the area of research by defining the background of the study, statement of problems, research objectives, research questions, and terminology in terms of conceptual and operational definitions. Relationship between independent variables and dependent variable also had been included and clarified in the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the highlights of the past study related to this study. This chapter was divided into five subtopics: definition of suicidal ideation; the growth of suicidal ideation; past research on suicide; risk factors of suicidal thought; theorist's view on suicide. This chapter concluded with a conclusion to this chapter.

2.1 Definition of suicide ideation or thought

In order to understand the issue, the meaning of suicidal thought or ideation was clearly defined. There were few definitions about suicidal thought. In general, suicidal thought was known as the thoughts in which people think about or in the state of being amused by suicide (Gliatto & Rai, 1999). Another broad term of suicidal ideation was proposed by the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention 2001, which characterized suicidal thought as the self-destructive thoughts involving suicide action. Ranieri et al. (1987) emphasized suicide ideation as the intention and idea to commit suicide without any presence of a suicide attempt. Though it was just an intention, full attention must be given to those who have suicide thought because suicide behavior generally occurs after the ideation. Suicide was seen as one of the moral issues. In countries such as China and India, suicide had been practiced in the name of culture. *Suttee* was well-known as a ritual suicide in China and India as well as *hara-kiri* in Japan's culture. In Buddhist faith, some volunteered to suicide to show the symbols of despair and surrender (Dublin, 1963).

2.2 The growth of suicidal ideation

Suicidal ideation in a child was rarely discussed as the information was inadequate. However, the development of ideas of death in children was related. The concepts of death may occur in the child as early as the first year of life as suggested by Lourie (1967). In recent studies, it was found that 70% of children in school age had fantasies on death and it was common to have that kind of fantasies during that age (von Hug-Hellmuth, 1965). Subsequently, a survey had been conducted to adolescents around the world and it was found that 9% to 26% of them do have a suicidal ideation in a particular period of their lives (Garrison, Jackson, Addy, McKeon, & Walter, 1991; Kirmayer, Malus, Boothroyd, 1996; Lamb and Pusker, 1991; Martin, Rozanes, Pearce & Allison 1995; Olsson and von Knorring, 1997).

Suicidal ideation resulted from many predictors such as psychological well-being (depression, mental health issues), poor anger control, modeling, family dysfunction, physical and sexual exploitation, impoverished school performance, and substance misuse, low social support, delinquency and deviancy, and unwanted events in life (Berman & Schwartz, 1990; Garrison, Jackson, Addy, McKeown, & Walker, 1991; Gartrell, Jarvis & Derksen, 1993; Grossman et al., 1991; Hirsch & Ellis, 1995; Hovey & King, 1996; Howard-Pitney et al., 1992; Martin et al., 1995; Spirito et al., 1989; Swanson et al., 1992).

2.3 Previous studies regarding suicide

Recent studies described suicide to be one of the moral issues. Some researchers attempted to identify the suicide rate by relating it to several sociological variables (Ferracuti, 1957). *Le Suicide* book written by Durkheim was considered to be the first statistical and sociological work done towards suicide. He classified suicide in accordance with the integration of an individual with society (Durkheim, 2005). An insufficient integration with society lead to egoistic suicide, extremely integrate with society lead to altruistic suicide and anomic suicide happened when a person was abandoned by society. A study among secondary school students in Limpopo area regarding the predominance of suicidal behavior of adolescents attempts suicide happened in urban areas as the highest rates compared to other areas (Madu & Matla, 2003). This was because individuals who lived in the city have a low attachment with the society and lack of traditional and cultural values that lead to egoistic suicide.

Meanwhile, a person who extremely attached to the society lack in individual skills, lead the person to be independent when it came to family and social disengagement. This lead to altruistic suicide if the person was not able to cope with individualism. Other than that, changes in social life such as changes in family structures and unemployment that suddenly occur in a person's life mostly triggered an anomic suicide (Davison & Neale, 2001). In conclusion, the contributing factor to suicide in the earliest research was the pressure in social interaction that leads a person to do self-destruction.

Besides, clinical studies regarding suicide were also put into actions in order to discover many solid and reliable indicators in predicting the intention of people towards suicide. Two groups of the population which were the patients who attempted suicide and patients who really commit suicide act as the participants for this study. The result showed that high chance of suicide occurs in male, rising age, the status of being divorced, infertility, a high population of people in a residence, preoccupation of drugs, children from a broken family, and the existence of physical breakdown. In addition, there was also a correlation between suicide and people who suffer mental illness. Clinical studies involving the psychiatric type participants had been carried out and people with schizophrenia, severe depression, and brain disorder were said to have high chances of suicide. In contrast, individuals with psychopathic behavior and histrionic personality disorder (HPD) tended to attempt suicide rather than performing a real suicide (Dorpat & Ripley, 1960; Dorpat & Boswell, 1963; Parnell & Skottowe, 1957; Schmidt, O'Neal & Robins, 1954; Tuckman & Youngman, 1968).

However, Neuringer (1962) outlined the methodological problems that occur in suicide clinical research. He highlighted the struggle of choosing the right subjects for this research was one of the problems since it was not possible to have the successful suicide person as the subject and it was unreliable to choose the person who attempted suicide or in the state of being depressed. Plus, personal items left by the deceased person who commits suicide such as the suicide notes or diaries were unable to give a clear explanation of suicide due to its incomplete information and some might have a misleading understanding of it. At last, Neuringer (1962) characterized that it was hard to select the control subjects because there might be just a group of people who have normal fantasies and latent tendencies towards suicide.

2.4 Risk factors of suicidal thoughts

In general, a recent study had been carried out to investigate the existence of suicidal thought among the population of Korean people in an urban area. It showed that suicide ideation had a correlation with some factors. In their findings, it was clearly shown that individuals with a depressive mood disorder were reported to have suicidal thought (Cho et al., 2001). In fact, it was also supported by previous studies which show that 95% of suicidal people suffered from a mental disorder and 80% of them were diagnosed with depression had committed suicide (Kaplan & Sadock, 1989). Subsequently, there was also an association between suicide ideation and anger, in which person who restrains anger has the high possibility in increasing the suicidal thoughts (Engin, Gurkan, Dulgerler & Arabaci, 2009). People who have a high level of anger tend to demonstrate the existence of suicide ideation. Even worse, individuals were prone to suicidal behaviors if anger was uncontrolled (Lee et al., 2009).

Besides, Krakow et al. (2000) described sleep eruption or insomnia as one of the contributing factors to suicidal behavior. Current research had been done and it showed that sleep disturbance could lead to suicide (Bernert, Joiner Jr, Cukrowicz, Schmidt & Krakow, 2005), however, the relationship between duration of sleep and suicide idea was yet to be conducted. Fawcett et al. (1990) in their recent studies revealed that hypersomnia contributed to the suicide behavior, in which their research focused more on the growth of suicide among depressed subjects with hypersomnia. Depressed people with hypersomnia showed the symptom of atypical depression and this was described as one of the chronic disorder (Stewart, McGrath & Quitkin, 2002; Stewart, Quitkin, McGrath & Klein, 2005). This happened because depression was caused by excessive sleep which was similar to a sleep disorder such as sleep narcolepsy and apnea (Harris, Glozier, Ratnavadivel, Grunstein, 2009; Mamelak, 2009). The current study also acknowledged the history of the family with