

Social Support and Suicidal Ideation in Educated Unemployed: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

The unemployment is associated with negative economic, psychological and social consequences. Unemployment is often associated with higher risk of suicidal thoughts. Educated unemployed are highly prone to develop suicidal ideation. In this regard, the purpose of the present study was to understand the relationship between social support and suicidal ideation among educated unemployed. The demographic data sheet was used to collect important socio-demographic information. The multidimensional scale of perceived social support and suicidal ideation scale were used to examine the study related outcome variables. Sixty-two (n=62) participants age range (22-35 years) were study sample for the present study. Obtained data was analyzed with descriptive statistics and correlational analysis. The results revealed that there was a negative correlation between over-all social support and its three domains i.e. family, friends and significant others and suicidal ideation among unemployed. The findings suggest that improved social support through various psychological interventions is effective in dealing with suicidal ideation in educated unemployed youths.

Keywords: Social support, Suicidal ideation, Educated, Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

Suicidal behavior is generally preceded by suicidal thoughts which in turn are related to various external and internal factors [1,2], and are a major cause for suicide completion. Unemployed individuals have lower self-esteem. Durkheim [3] proposed that unemployment enhanced the social isolation, which further lead to increased suicidal risk. This theoretical perspective was further analyzed and supported [4]. Further, Kposowa [5] conducted a cohort analysis on the data of longitudinal study by cox regression modeling. The study found a strong association of suicide and unemployment. Among women, the unemployed had a significantly greater risk of suicide than employed. Similarly, Corcoran and Arensman [6] found that the unemployment is a risk factor for suicide in both the genders. The study also highlighted that this relationship was stronger when the unemployment was rare. The researchers studied relative risk of suicide in two consecutive time periods therefore the role of confounding variables was minimized. A study conducted on suicide attempters resulted into the positive relation between unemployment status and suicide attempts [7]. In another study utilizing the psychological autopsy, unemployment and adverse psychosocial working conditions were found to be linked with higher suicide rate [8]. The researches have also highlighted the relation between duration

of unemployment and suicide. In this context, other studies [9] in meta-analysis found that incidence of suicide is highest in first five years of unemployment, but the risk persists up to 16 years after unemployment. Suicidal ideation is also related with factors such as education, occupation, income and employment status [10,11]. In a community-based study [12], significant risk of suicidal ideation was found in unemployed population after controlling for demographic and psychosocial factors including marital status, education, depression, anxiety and available social support. Further, rise in unemployment is linked to corresponding increase in risk for suicide [13].

However, socio-economic factors were considered to be less important than unemployment in determining suicide [14]. This suggests that the association between suicide and

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unemployment is more important than the association with other socioeconomic measures. Unemployment is linked with higher perceived stress [15]. This stress may contribute in the development of suicidal behaviors [16].

The suicide-unemployment association may differ with respect to different behavioral disorders. A significant positive relationship between hopelessness and suicide ideation among students in college was reported [17,18]. The suicidal ideations are connected to high level of hopelessness. The similar results have been found elsewhere [19]. Unemployment, hopelessness, discrimination and homelessness are associated with suicidal ideation. Few research studies have not found significant relationship [20,21]. Researchers [22] studied older population with respect to employment. The researchers highlighted the greater participation of older population (especially from low income households) in job market resulting in struggle for jobs. The engagement in job reduces the risk factors of suicidal behavior and duration of unemployment was found to be positively related to the attempts to suicide (e.g., [23,24]. The stress associated with joblessness moderates the relationship between unemployment and suicidal ideation [25].

The linkages between an individual with in the social system and social support perception might assist in the adjusting to stressful conditions. An adequate social support network facilitates the development of coping strategies in hostile situations. On the contrary, poor support of social/family or its absence is often considered as an increased level of suicidal behavior risk factor [26-28].

A significant hidden risk factor for adolescent's suicidal ideation, attempts, as well different types of other difficulties is perceived lack of parental support [29]. In the study on Finnish population, researchers [30] concluded that even after painful life event and depressive mood, unemployment preceded suicidal ideation. According to Kinsinger et al. [31], there are four types of important supportive behavior which included, appraisal support (feedback, affirmation), emotional support (concern, self-esteem, affect), instrumental support (time, money, aid in labour) and informational support (information, suggestion, advice). After the trauma an essential determinant of positive adjustment is perceived social support from family members, close friends and other significant person in our lives. Among young adults the lack of belongingness or lack of family support influences the suicidal ideation [32]. Reinherz et al. [33] in their study on young adult concluded that the families possessing problematic functioning during childhood may lead to suicide ideation. The risk of attempted and completed suicide increases by the life events i.e. the death of a parent and loss of parents at early stage of life [34]. Generally, the adolescence is a period of transition from authority of parents to the influence of peer therefore the attachment of peer is thought to be extremely important among youth. In reference

to suicidal ideation [35-37] found that in both clinical sample and general population, low level of peer support is associated with an increased probability of suicidal behavior among young population.

Current Study

There are multiple life-and-work related stressors, such as loss, unemployment, stressful events of life and other stressors present in our environment that could be related with suicidal ideation. The studies suggested greater risk of developing suicidal thoughts in people who were unemployed. Lack of family/social support is often considered as a potential risk factor for suicide. In Indian context, family support constitutes an important aspect of life. The purpose of the present study was at understanding the relationship between social support and suicidal ideation among educated unemployed in Indian context.

Participants

Sixty-two unemployed educated people (n=62), age range (22-35) years were considered for the study.

TOOLS

Socio-demographic data sheet

In order to collect information about demographic details, the data sheet was prepared by the investigators.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

The social support was assessed by MSPSS, a 12- item questionnaire [38]. The scale assesses perceived social support from three support domains i.e., significant others, friends and family. The rating in MSPSS is done on a 7-point scale (1=disagree very strongly; 7= agree very strongly). The values of cronbach alpha is between 0.83 and 0.91 in 3 Turkish samples, where the means were (M=53.56, SD=16.99) for psychiatry, (M=65.98, SD=15.63) for surgery, and (M=66.42, SD=11.60) for normal. Perception of positive social support can be inferred from higher scores on the scale.

Scale for Suicide Ideation (SSI) [39]

There are nineteen items in the scale which are designed to quantify the intensity of current conscious suicidal intent by scaling various dimensions of self-destruction thoughts or wishes. There are three alternative statements graded in intensity from 0 to 2 in each item. The reliability (Cronbach alpha) and validity coefficients of the scale are 0.89 and 0.41, respectively.

PROCEDURE

Informed consent was obtained before the administration of tools. The data sheet for demographic information, multidimensional scale of perceived social support and suicidal ideation scale were administered on sixty-two participants, age ranged from 22-35 years in Bijnor, Uttar

Pradesh, India. Initially, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants. After that, the participants were given the questionnaires and proper instructions for completing the questionnaires were provided. The participants were ensured about confidentiality of information. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 21.0 version was used for data analysis. Descriptive Statistical procedures and Correlation Coefficient were carried out for data analysis.

Table 1 reveals that twenty-seven participants have completed professional courses, eighteen post-graduation, fourteen graduation and five Ph. D degree. In the total sample, thirty-six participants were unemployed for six months, seventeen participants six months to twelve months and nine participants were unemployed for more than one year. There were forty-three male and nineteen females. There were seventeen married participants and forty-five single. In terms of religion, twenty-two were Hindus, twenty-nine Muslims, seven Sikh and three Christians. Forty-one participants were from urban area and twenty-one were from rural areas.

Table 1. Demographic profile.

Education	Years of Unemployment	Gender	Marital Status	Religion	Rural/urban
Professional Course (n=27)	36 participants 0-6 months	Male 43	17 Married	22 Hindu	Urban 41
Postgraduate (n=18)	17 Participant 6-12 Months	Female 19	45 Single	29 Muslim	Rural 21
Graduate (n=14)	9 More than one year			7 Sikh	
Ph. D (n=5)				3 Christian	

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 2 revealed that the mean of three dimensions and over all social support were 17.72, 20.25, 19.56 and 57.74 respectively which indicated that the participants’ perceived low level of social support. The mean of suicidal ideation was

22.00 which highlighted above average level of suicidal ideation. Certain stressors are related to the life and work situations, such as stressful events of life, unemployment loss, and other environmental stressors could be associated with suicidal ideation [25].

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

Scale	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Family	62	17.72	5.09
Friends	62	20.25	4.96
Significant Others	62	19.56	3.93
Total Social support	62	57.74	8.87
Suicidal ideas	62	22.00	5.70

Table 3 revealed that the correlation between family, significant others and suicidal ideation was negatively correlated at 0.05 levels. The correlation between social support from friends, general social support and suicidal ideation was significant at 0.01 levels. It indicated that if the level of social support and the associated domains increases then the level of suicidal ideas decreases among the unemployed participants. It may be vice-versa as well.

Similarly, studies [32] found that among young adults the lack of belongingness or lack of family support influences the suicidal ideation. The risk of attempted and completed suicide increases by the life events i.e. the death of a parent and loss of parents at early stage of life [34,40]. Suicidal ideation is also related with factors such as education, occupation, income and employment status [10,11]. Studies [19] reported that the unemployment, hopelessness, discrimination and

homelessness may lead to suicidal ideation. In 26 European countries the findings of the study reported that every 1% rise in unemployment was related with 0.79% risk in suicides for age groups <65 years old [13]. The unemployment status in Sweden has been found to be both a unique and significant

risk factor for suicidal ideation in the community-based population aged 16-65 years, after controlling psychosocial and demographic factors such as education, marital status, anxiety, depression, anxiety, and social support [12].

Table 3. Summary of correlations between social support and suicidal ideation among educated unemployed.

	Family	Friends	Sig others	Total SS	Suicidal Ideation
Family	1				
	62				
Friends	0.135	1			
	0.296				
	62	62			
Significant others	0.108	0.196	1		
	0.402	0.127			
	62	62	62		
Total S S	0.649	0.706	0.589	1	
	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	62	62	62	62	
Suicidal Ideation	-0.314*	-0.533**	-0.263*	-0.582**	1
	0.013	0.000	0.039	0.000	
	62	62	62	62	62

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

CONCLUSION

The result revealed that there was negative correlation between overall social support and its three domains with suicidal ideation among unemployed. It can be inferred that there is a need to develop good social support system for managing suicidal ideation among unemployed. The findings suggest that improved social support through various psychological interventions is effective in dealing with suicidal ideation in educated unemployed youths. The reduction in suicidal ideation would be associated with prevention of suicidal behavior.

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