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Orginal Article

Prediction of Suicidal Thoughts in Students Based on Indicators of Personality Excellence and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation

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Abstract

Suicide, as a psychological and social trauma, poses a significant threat to various segments of society, particularly vulnerable groups such as adolescents and young adults. University students, as a young demographic, are not exempt from this issue, which can be exacerbated by environmental factors, including academic challenges, unemployment, financial difficulties, failures in emotional relationships, inadequate living conditions in dormitories, and uncertainty regarding their career prospects. In addition to these environmental influences, personal factors, particularly psychological characteristics, can either contribute to or protect against the impact of social traumas like suicide. The present study aimed to examine the predictive role of personality transcendence and its dimensions, along with the expertise in emotion regulation, concerning suicidal thoughts among university students at Persian Gulf University during the academic years 1399-1400. The participants included 200 students (119 male and 81 female), selected through multistage cluster sampling. The research utilized the Pakizeh Personality Transcendence Questionnaire and the Gross Emotion Regulation Difficulty Questionnaire as measurement tools. Data were analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistics.The results indicated that personality transcendence serves as a negative predictor of suicidal thoughts, while problems with emotion regulation are a direct predictor of such thoughts among university students. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the dimensions of personality transcendence play a preventive role. Considering these insights, implementing educational programs to enhance character development and teach adaptive emotion regulation strategies could effectively reduce mental and physical distress and mitigate the tragic consequences of suicide within the university setting.

Keywords: suicidal thoughts, difficulties in emotion regulation, personality transcendence, students

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Students today face significant stress and psychological pressure, which can lead to a variety of mental disorders. One alarming consequence of this chronic stress is the increasing prevalence of suicide among students. As a psychological and social trauma, suicide poses a threat to various segments of society, especially vulnerable groups like adolescents and young adults. University students, being part of this young demographic, are particularly at risk due to environmental factors such as educational challenges, unemployment, financial difficulties, failed emotional relationships, inadequate dormitory conditions, and uncertain career prospects. In addition to these environmental factors, personal characteristics can either heighten or mitigate the risk of social traumas like suicide. Numerous epidemiological, clinical, and family studies have found a strong correlation between difficulties in regulating emotions and the risk of suicide. Emotion regulation is a multidimensional concept that involves awareness and understanding of emotions, acceptance of those emotions, the ability to manage impulsive behaviors and act according to personal goals when experiencing negative emotions, as well as employing adaptive strategies to manage emotional regulation challenges effectively. A lack of these abilities can result in emotional dysregulation, which may lead to frequent suicidal thoughts.

Another important concept in mental health is self-transcendence, recognized as a protective factor against mental disorders. The inherent desire for transcendence reflects a human need to find meaning in life. This process entails a continuous journey of moving beyond oneself toward achieving personal perfection and completeness, often by connecting with someone or something greater than oneself. Enhancing personality significantly contributes to mental health by fostering optimism and increasing trust in interpersonal relationships. This research aims to investigate the protective role of personality enhancement and its dimensions, as well as the detrimental impact of emotional regulation difficulties on the development of suicidal thoughts among students.

Method

The present study was conducted as a solidarity project at Bushehr Persian Gulf University. The research population comprised all students enrolled at the university during the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample included 226 students (97 males and 129 females), selected using a multi-

stage cluster sampling method. The research utilized the Pakizeh Personality Excellence Questionnaire, Gratz and Roemer's Emotional Regulation Difficulty Questionnaire, and Beck's Suicide Questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using stepwise regression.

Results

Statistical analysis revealed that personality transcendence negatively predicts suicidal thoughts, while difficulties in emotional regulation positively predict suicidal thoughts among university students. Additionally, specific dimensions of personality excellence, such as spiritual experiences and personal discipline, emerged as the strongest inverse predictors of suicidal thoughts. Conversely, strategies like not accepting emotions and a lack of emotional awareness were identified as the strongest direct predictors of suicidal thoughts in students.

Discussion

Given the preventive effect of personality excellence dimensions and the facilitative role of emotional regulation difficulties in students' tendencies toward suicide, implementing educational programs to enhance personality traits and train students in adaptive emotional regulation strategies can significantly reduce mental and emotional distress, as well as the tragic outcomes of suicide in the university environment. The findings of this study provide a fresh perspective on the protective function of personality enhancement against suicidal thoughts and behaviors in students. Developing intervention programs focused on personality enhancement, as proposed by the corresponding author under the title of "Personality Enhancement Training Methods," offers a valuable opportunity to experimentally investigate the role of personality improvement in reducing suicidal thoughts and preventing suicidal behaviors.

Author Contributions: Author 1 was responsible for leading the overall research process. Author 2 and 3 was responsible for research plan design, data collection and analysis and all authors discussed the results, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. All authors discussed the results, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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