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Orginal Article

Modeling of Suicidal Ideation in Women Based on Perceived Stress and Self-Silencing with Mediating Role of Difficulties in Emotion Regulation

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Abstract

The risk of suicidal behaviors grows with suicidal ideation. Thus, it is essential to examine this complex and multifactorial phenomenon in non-clinical samples, especially among women. This study aimed to develop a structural model of suicidal ideation based on perceived stress and self-silencing components, considering the mediating role of difficulties in emotion regulation in women. Using a multi-stage random sampling method, 350 female students from Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz were selected as the sample. The participants, with full awareness and consent, completed the Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation (Beck & Steer), the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al.), the Self-Silencing Scale (Jack & Dill), and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer). Structural equation modeling was employed to ascertain the proposed relationships and analyze the collected data. According to the results, all direct and indirect paths embedded in the model were significant, with the model demonstrating acceptable fit ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate that perceived stress, self-silencing, and difficulties in emotion regulation have high predictive power for suicidal ideation in women. Further, the findings suggest that the predictor variables together account for 23% of the variance in suicidal ideation.

Keywords: Suicidal Ideation, Perceived Stress, Self-silencing, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation, Structural Equation Modeling, Women

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts of intentionally ending one's life, ranging from vague ideas to detailed plans, and represents the earliest stage of the suicidal continuum. Globally, suicide accounts for 1.5% of all deaths, with higher completed suicide rates observed among men but higher ideation rates in women. Women confront specific risk factors such as social rejection, low self-compassion, and low autonomy. Perceived stress—the body's reaction to demanding situations—activates feelings of entrapment, which according to the Integrated Motivational-Volitional (IMV) model, drive suicidal motivation. The diathesis-stress model further highlights that stress interacts with individual vulnerabilities to trigger suicidal thoughts. Recent ecological momentary assessment studies confirm stress sensitivity as a strong predictor of daily suicidal ideation. Another critical factor is self-silencing—the tendency to suppress authentic self-expression to maintain relationships—which makes women vulnerable to depression as well as self-destructive behaviors. Difficulties in emotion regulation (e.g., lack of emotional clarity, limited adaptive strategies) serve as a mediating mechanism linking perceived stress and self-silencing to suicidal ideation. Maladaptive strategies such as rumination, catastrophizing, and self-blame exacerbate suicide cognitions. This study, undertaken for the first time in Iranian women, examines a causal model in which emotion regulation difficulties mediate the relationship between perceived stress, self-silencing, and suicidal ideation.

Method

Using multi-stage random sampling method, 350 female students of Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz were selected as the sample. The participants completed the Beck Suicide Ideation Scale (BSI), the Perceived Stress Inventory (PSQ), the Self-Silencing Scale, and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (S-DERS) with full knowledge and satisfaction. Structural equation modeling (AMOS-22 software) was utilized to appraise the assumed relationships in the model and to analyze the collected data.

Result

According to the research results, all direct and indirect paths embedded

in the model were significant and had an acceptable fit ($p<0.001$). In this research, the $\chi 2$ (df) was estimated as 0.13, indicating the fit of the model with the data. Also, GFI, AGFI, and CFI indices were obtained as 0.94, 0.90, and 0.95, respectively, reflecting the acceptable fit of the model. Among the fit indices of RMSEA is the basis of acceptance or rejection of a hypothesized model, which was obtained as 0.05. Also, according to the multivariable regression analysis, the R value was equal to 0.237, signifying that 23% of the variance of suicidal ideation can be predicted and explained by difficulty in emotion regulation, perceived stress, and self-silencing.

Conclusion

Designing a model of suicidal ideation made it possible to explore the role and influence of difficulty in emotion regulation, perceived stress and self-silencing. Based on the findings of the present study, difficulty in emotion regulation has a positive and significant association with suicidal ideation in women.

Difficulty in emotion regulation is a type of emotional vulnerability that can forecast suicidal ideation. The relationship between perceived stress and difficulty in regulating emotion was another finding confirmed in this study. A stressful situation is defined as a situation where the demands expected of a person are greater than his ability to adapt .Indeed, when dealing with stress, a person focuses on the stressful and problematic situation and the awareness of his emotions decreases. Meanwhile, limited access to effective emotion regulation strategies under conditions of intensified pressure and finally the ability of a person to manage his emotions decreases.

Another assumed relationship of the proposed model in this research was the relationship between self- silencing and difficulty in emotion regulation. As expected, a direct relationship was confirmed between self-silencing and difficulty in emotion regulation. This means that the more self-silencing increases, the more difficult the emotion regulation process will be. The requirement of self-silencing is the suppression and denial of emotions, and this process is strengthened by ignoring oneself as well as giving priority to the desires, needs and emotions of others and getting attention and approval or maintaining relationships.

These results mean that perceived stress, self-silencing, and difficulty in emotion regulating have a high predictive power for suicidal ideation in

women. Further, the findings suggest that predictor variables all predict a total of 23% variance of suicidal ideation.

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