

## **Influence of Peer Pressure on Suicidal Ideation Among School Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study aimed to investigate the influence of peer pressure on suicidal ideation among adolescent school students. A sample of 200 male and female adolescent students were taken from different Kendriya Vidhyalayas of Delhi. Peer Pressure scale constructed by Singh and Saini was used to measure peer pressure and to measure suicidal ideation, scale developed by Sisodia and Bhatnagar was applied. A 2x2 factorial design was used and Two-way ANOVA was applied for statistical analysis of the data. After analysing the data, peer pressure was found significantly affecting the level of suicidal ideation while influence of gender as well as interaction effect were not found significant in the present study. Findings suggest that peer pressure was affecting suicidal ideation among adolescents significantly.*

**Key Words:** Peer pressure, Stress, Suicidal ideation, Adolescents.

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to WHO (2021) at least seven lakh people die by suicide globally each year, which certainly makes "Suicide" a public health issue with a suicide rate of 9.2 per 100,000 people (World Bank Open Data, 2024). Furthermore, it is estimated that there are more than twenty suicide attempts per suicide death (Hegerl, 2016.)

Suicidal ideation is a significant risk factor for suicide (Franklin et al., 2017). It includes both concrete preparations to take one's own life and temporary feelings that life is not worth living (Klonsky et al., 2016).

A complex interplay of psychological and physiological factors leads towards suicide, which is frequently linked to stressful situations and depressing circumstances like loneliness (Chesney et al., 2014; Lee & Jung 2006). From suicidal thoughts to actual suicide attempts, suicidality is

sometimes viewed as a continuum. A variety of ideas, desires, and obsessions with death and the potential to take one's own life are referred to as "suicidal ideation" (Harmer et al., 2022). Suicidal ideation is also frequently classified into two categories: 1. Persistent ruminations and active ideation which refers to specific suicide ideas , plans , transitory thoughts 2. Passive ideation which refers to thoughts about death in general (Liu et al., 2020; Hyland et al., 2022).

According to O'Carroll et al. (1996) any self-reported ideas that involve behaviours connected to suicide are considered suicidal ideation. Someone may feel suicidal thoughts if they are unable to maintain self-control or if they are experiencing emotional distress that exceeds their coping strategies and resources.

Peers play a vital role in the life of each and every student. Knowing someone well makes it easier to approach them, share feelings and experiences with them ( Kuntsche et al., 2005). In many aspects of their life, including language, clothes, drug usage, sexual activity, violence, criminal and antisocial behaviour and many more, teenagers are typically affected or dictated by their peers ( Padilla- Walker & Bean, 2009). For example, peer pressure frequently leads to alcohol consumption, which is associated with social gatherings in peer groups.

According to De Leo and Heller (2004) environmental risks include exposure to abuse or neglect, family conflict, and poverty. The influence of peer relationships and bullying on the suicide intentions and even deaths of teenagers in their school settings has drawn a lot of attention recently (Klomek et al., 2008).

In the present study researcher made an effort to further explore these variables in Indian context with the following objectives:

- To study the effect of peer pressure on suicidal ideation among adolescents.
- To study the effect of gender on suicidal ideation among adolescents.
- To study the interaction effect of peer pressure and gender on suicidal ideation among adolescents.

### **Hypotheses**

- Peer pressure would significantly affect suicidal ideation in adolescent students.
- Gender would significantly affect suicidal ideation in adolescent students.
- Interaction effect of gender and peer pressure would significantly affect suicidal ideation in adolescent students.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

In the present study a sample of 200 students was taken from different K.V. schools of Delhi. The age group was between 14-17 years. High peer pressure and low peer pressure groups were formed on the basis of their measured score on peer pressure scale. There were 50 male and 50 female students in each group.

### *Tools used*

**Peer Pressure Scale-** Developed by Sandeep Singh and Sunil Saini (2010) was administered. There were 25 items in this scale with internal consistency 0.79. The concurrent validity of the scale was 0.38, which was found significant at .01 level.

**Suicidal Ideation Scale –**Developed by Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia and Dr. Vibhuti Bhatnagar (2011) was applied. Likert technique was used in this scale with an aim to measure suicidal ideation. There were 25 statements in this scale. The internal consistency method and the test-retest method were used to assess the scale's reliability. The scale's consistency rating was 0.81, and its test-retest reliability was 0.78. The content validity of the scale was found high with coefficient 0.74 after it was verified using external standards.

### *Research Design*

Effect of two independent variables both having two levels each, gender (male & female) and peer pressure (high & low) on the suicidal ideation was studied in the present research therefore, 2\*2 factorial design was applied.

## RESULTS

Two-way analysis of variance was used to analyse the data and findings are presented in table no. 1

**Table -1 Summary table of ANOVA for the Effect of Gender and Peer Pressure on Suicidal Ideation. (N = 200)**

Source of variance	sum of squares	df	Mean	F- Value	Significance Level
Peer pressure (A)	4550.580	1	4550.580	15.588	0.01

<b>Gender(B)</b>	444.020	1	444.020	1.521	NS*
<b>A X B</b>	35.280	1	35.280	0.121	NS*
<b>SSW</b>	57218.12	196	291.93		
<b>SST</b>	62248	199			

*NS\* non-significant*

It is evident from the table no 1 that peer pressure was significantly affecting suicidal ideation ( $F= 15.588$ ,  $df= 1$ ,  $p <.01$ ). whereas, the effect of gender as well as interaction effect were not found significant with regard to suicidal ideation at any level of confidence. Findings suggest that the peer pressure emerged as a significant variable to affect the level of suicidal ideation in adolescent school students.

**Table 2: Mean scores of Suicidal Ideation based on Factor A (Peer Pressure)**

<b>A1 High Peer Pressure</b>			<b>A2 Low Peer Pressure</b>		
<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
100	64.97	15.18	100	55.43	18.76

**Table 3: Mean scores of Suicidal Ideation Based on Factor B (Gender)**

<b>B1 Male</b>			<b>B2 Female</b>		
<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
100	58.71	16.99	100	61.69	18.33

**Table No. 4: Mean Scores of Suicidal Ideation Based on Interaction (A xB)**

<b>A1 High Peer Pressure</b>				<b>A<sup>2</sup>Low Peer Pressure</b>		
<b>B1</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>

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<b>(Male)</b>	50	63.90	2.416	50	53.520	2.416
<b>B2 (Female)</b>	50	66.04	2.416	50	57.340	2.416

Results indicated that peer pressure has a significant effect on the level of suicidal ideation of adolescents. Students who had high peer pressure significantly scored higher on suicidal ideation in comparison of the students who had low peer pressure (M= 64.97 and M=55.43 respectively). A significant main effect supported the hypothesis formulated in this regard. Further, the Mean scores of suicidal ideations based on gender reported that gender did not significantly influence level of suicidal ideation among adolescents in the present study. Which indicates that male and female students do not differ significantly on the basis of being a male or a female in the present study. The Mean scores of suicidal ideations based on interaction clearly indicate that the female students who had high peer pressure scored high on suicidal ideation in comparison of female students who had low peer pressure but the difference was non-significant.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings suggest that peer pressure can increase suicidal ideation among adolescents. There may be some pressure on students to perform well academically, achieve higher grades than their peers or expectations from the parents, teachers and other significant that one must excel or at least perform at par. Adolescents often feel confused, sad and nervous, unable to let go their negative emotions about things happening in their lives. In this state of mind, they are more likely to indulge in risky habits such as smoking, taking some substance and sometimes think negatively about themselves, others and life at large. Teenagers spend more time with their friends, feel comfort in their company, and are influenced by their behaviours. In order to stay in their friend groups, they follow them, and feel under pressure to act in a way that will keep them in the circle. Their self-esteem, confidence, and mental health are all directly impacted by peer pressure. They experience pressure to engage in other unhealthy behaviours, such as skipping class or school or abusing drugs or alcohol which create lots of health issues. Researches also suggest that mental health issues such depression, anxiety, drug use disorders, eating disorders, etc., are closely associated with suicidal thoughts (Brådvik, 2018).

Researchers also found that youth who suffer from mental health conditions, particularly despair or anxiety, are more vulnerable to peer pressure. The following emotional and psychological states are more common among teenagers with anxiety and depression: severe self-consciousness, poor self-esteem, sensitive to criticism and failures (Blote et al., 2016).

According to other researchers, under social pressure, people may become less optimistic about various areas of life and even consider suicide if they are unable to fulfil their peers' expectations (Zeyrek et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the findings of the result revealed that gender was not affecting suicidal ideation significantly. The reason may be that the now a days boys and girls are facing equal challenges in their lives, be it at academic or social level. Both are facing issues related to parenting or peer pressure. Another reason may be that the study was conducted in urban area and with relatively small sample size, if the study was conducted in rural, the result may be found different from the present findings. There are some other studies who revealed similar result and supported present finding. According to Sridharan (2017) there was no significant difference between girl and boy students, studying science and commerce in terms of suicidal ideation. Prakruthi and Suman (2021) also did not find any gender and age differences on resilience and suicidal ideation among different age groups. On the other hand, there are some researchers who revealed opposite finding, according to Suvarchala and Manjuvani (2023) girls scored higher than boys on suicidal ideation and on the other hand a study conducted by Ibrahim et al. (2017) revealed that the male participants were experiencing more suicidal ideation in comparison to female adolescents. Therefore, this variable needs to be further explored in future researches.

An effort was made to understand the effect of peer pressure and gender on suicidal ideation in the present study which enhanced clarity about importance of peer influence among adolescent students as well as role of gender in suicidal ideation. The research has some limitations related to sample size and geographical area covered which limits its generalization a bit. Future researches could explore variables such as parenting styles, academic achievement, coping styles, resilience and certain personality factors in relation to suicidal ideation among adolescents to gain more insight.

## **CONCLUSION**

Findings of the present study suggest that peer pressure significantly affects the level of suicidal ideation among adolescent students as students with high peer pressure were experiencing high suicidal ideation in comparison to students with low peer pressure while, male and female students did not differ significantly with regard to their level of suicidal ideation .

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