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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON SUICIDAL IDEATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

Considering the increasing suicide cases among Indian students all over the country, the present study intended to analyze whether emotional intelligence correlates significantly towards suicidal ideation and mental health among secondary school Indian students. Students (N=87) aged 15 to 17 were selected by the assistance of their school guidance and counseling teachers. Quantitative survey method was adopted as the method of this study. The respondents were responded to three types of questionnaire namely Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF) to measure emotional intelligence of respondent, The Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R) and The General Health Questionnaire which widely used to measure mental health status. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and suicidal ideation and mental health. Moreover, result also revealed significant relationship between suicidal ideation and mental health, which suggested that individual with lower mental health score has tendency to have suicidal thoughts. This study documented very critical notion of emotional intelligence on overcoming suicidal thoughts and improving mental health among students. Therefore, planning appropriate strategies to enhance students emotional competencies should be take into consideration in various sectors specially among Indian school students..

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, suicidal ideation, mental health, secondary school.

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Introduction

“Every 40 seconds a person dies by suicide somewhere in the world and many more attempt suicide,” (WHO, 2014)¹. Suicide is a very critical issue among teenagers today. Globally, as many as one million individuals commit suicide each year (WHO, 2012)². The World Health Organization expects that in 2020, a total of 1.53 million individuals will commit suicide due to various issues (WHO, 2012)². This number of suicide cases around the world revealed to us regarding the feeling of hopelessness and despair face by an individual in a fast paced developing world. Continuous depression and dissatisfaction in life due to the external difficulties devitalize the structural functioning of every individual in society (Ganaprakasam & Hutagalung, 2018)³. Suicidal ideation described as an individual tendency to think destructively regarding suicide and involved in self-harm activities that associated with zero fatal outcome. Individual with active suicidal ideation have thoughts such as formulate planning to end their life and suicide attempt. Action must be implemented in order to prevent this destructive phenomenon earlier. Despite, various factors that contributing towards suicidal ideation but somehow comprehending the utmost psychological reason for that behavior is very critical and essential to developing best suited intervention strategies. Apart from that, it would also help therapist and many other social workers to planned and provide positive community support. Psychologists have made significant contributions to identify several protective factors and enhance understanding regarding the interconnected nature of the causes of suicidal behavior. Therefore, current study conducted to investigated the relationship between spiritual intelligence as protective factor on suicidal ideation and mental health among Indian adolescent.

Public has established very unreasonable assumption that associated committing suicide associated with mental disorder. People tend to believe that individual who committed suicide as an abnormal with severe mental disorder yet almost 40% of the individual who committed suicide shown are not previously diagnosed having any type of mental disorder. These scenarios implicated that there are many other psychological reason that would lead an individual to engage in suicide. For an instance personality and individual difference, cognitive factor, social factor, and negative life events (O'Connor & Nock, 2014)⁴. According to the McIntosh and Drapeau (2012)⁵, suicide has been key factor to cause death approximately 38.364 individual per year in United States.

Suicide is a public health problem in Malaysia (WHO, 2014)¹. Suicide has received much attention in last few years when it on the rise among youth. Although the issue of suicide is a social problem that can be prevented but the study shows an increase of 65% over 45 years in Malaysia. Data shows that 16.2% of suicide cases in 2009 are those aged between 15 and 24 years old. Individuals aged 15 to 24 have a high incidence of suicide due to various factors such as identity crisis, socioeconomic imbalance and others. According to O'Connor & Nock (2014)⁵, suicide is one of the ways that contributes about 15.2% in total deaths in the world.

Teenager in 16 to 19 year old more vulnerable to having suicidal thoughts and many more of them are women than men. Based on the study conducted by Aishvarya, Maniam, and Hatta Sidi (2013)⁶, there is no evidence found in identifying the key factor of social surrounding climate in predicting suicide. According to National Suicide Registry Malaysia (2009), the suicides rates was higher among Indians (3.67/100,000) followed by Chinese (2.44/100,000) and Malays (0.32/100,000). These numbers were taken into count based on the reported case and indicating that there are still many unreported case. Therefore it is very essential to identify the key protective factor that guard an individual to engaged in such self-harm activities.

What is Suicidal Ideation?

Table 1 show critical theories that explained individual thought of committing suicide. Based on the theories, we able to summarized that an individual committed suicide due to the extreme external pressures that disrupt their whole thinking process and psychological well-being.

Table 1: Theory of Suicidal Ideation

Theory	Key factor of Suicidal Thoughts	Factor leads to action from thoughts
Interpersonal Psychological Theory (Joiner, 2005) ¹⁶	Onerous task of responsibility and social alienation.	Gain ability to commit suicide
Integrated Motivational-volitional (O'Connor, 2011) ¹¹	Series of events that caused defeat and humiliation.	Individual trapped with negative destructive thought which take their life away. Capability, impulsivity, planning, access to means, imitation, and other volitional moderators.
Three-steps (Klonsky & May, 2015) ¹⁷	Combined factor of pain and hopelessness.	Dispositional, acquired, and practical contributors to increased capacity for suicide

(Adapted from Klonsky, May & Saffer.2016. *Suicide, Suicide Attempts, and Suicidal Ideation*. Annu.Rev. Clin. Psychol, 2016)⁷

Suicidal ideation refers as an individual thought to end up their life intentionally due to the several reasons. These types of thought emerged as a final solution for their life struggle

(Pederson, 2018)⁸. Experiencing suicidal thoughts is common among people who have suffering from stress and depression. In various circumstances, these self-destructive thoughts caused an individual to attempted and committed suicide.

The notion of suicidal ideation has received greater attention among researchers. Various studies have been conducted to identify the key factor towards the emergence of suicidal thoughts. Research conducted by Ibrahim, Amit, & Suen (2014)⁹, showed that suicidal ideation was significantly correlated with anxiety, stress and acute depression. Result explained that individual with severe mental health problem more prone to having suicidal thoughts and if didn't concern about would lead to committing suicide. Many attempts has been made (Jayervand et al, 2013; Moran, 2013; Rochmawati, 2009)^{10,11,12} revealed that psychological well-being associating self-acceptance, quality relationship with others, sense of autonomy and purpose of life, and ability to manage complex situation plays very important element in predicting the development of suicidal idea.

The suicidal ideation framework shown in figure 1 indicated three main theories that explained key factor of emerging suicidal thoughts and its capability to bringing those thoughts in reality. The interpersonal psychological theory explained that individual gradually developed the thought of suicide when overwhelming by two main psychological elements such as burdensome and social alienation (Joiner, 2005)¹³. These two psychological states prepared an individual to gain capability to work towards committing suicide. According to the theory, individual who have attempted suicide previously has higher chance to committing suicide in future if the element of burdensome and social alienation still not resolve therapeutically.

Furthermore, Integrated Motivational Volitional explained that suicidal behavior resulted from interplay between an individual intention and the feeling of entrapped in destructive defeat or humiliation (Goleman, 1995)¹⁴. Theory suggested that, individual in that scenario would utilize suicide as a greater method to solve their entire problem. Finally, the Three-step Theory hypothesized that the suicidal behavior resulted from the association of pain and hopelessness (Klonsky & May, 2015)¹⁵. This contemporary theory suggested, suicide should view in two distinct processes with distinct predictor and explanation.

One of the major limitations of previous studies indicating that, most of the studies conducted based on the adolescent suicidal tendency generally but none of them concentrate specifically on Indians adolescent suicidal tendency in Malaysia. Therefore, the present study attempted to identify the association between emotional intelligence on suicidal ideation and mental health among secondary school Indian students.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers as an individual ability to manage and control their own emotion as well as interacting with others (Mayer, 1995)¹⁶. The term emotional intelligence has been carried

out from Thorndike (1920)¹⁷ in his prominent theory called social intelligence. Social intelligence theory proposed the ability of an individual to manage wise relation between others. These social intelligence theory gradually developed by Gardner (1983)¹⁸ by divided that notion into interpersonal and intrapersonal element in his multiple intelligence concept. Before Goleman (1995)¹⁴ explained the idea emotional intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (1988)¹⁹ discovered the utmost important of managing and control own emotion. They have developed theoretical framework that emphasized four elements such as perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotion internally and when interact with outer world.

There is a vast amount of literature identified the protective factor emotional intelligence against emergence of suicidal thoughts (Paradiso, Beadle, Raymont & Grafman, 2016; Cha & Nock, 2009)^{20,21}. Present study intended to identify the role of emotional intelligence as a protective factor towards the emergence of suicidal thoughts.

Mental Health among Indian Adolescent

National Health Morbidity Survey (2015)²² conducted by Ministry of Health Malaysia stated that mental health related issues among Indian adolescent rise sharply due to various reason. Mental health defined as an individual capability realizes their own abilities, able to overcome stress and socially functioning by contributes to the well-being of their family and society. Most of the adolescent, suffering from severe anxiety and depression resulted from unbearable burdensome (WHO, 2014)¹. Adolescents with a good sense of mental well-being possess problem-solving skills, social competence and a sense of purpose. These assets make them resilient and help them thrive in the face of adverse circumstances. They then avoid risk-taking behavior and generally lead productive lives (Nintachan, 2007)²³.

This study aimed to identify the association between emotional intelligence on suicidal ideation and mental health among Indian students of secondary school; so that the protective factor able to identify to plan appropriate intervention in future to reducing the destructive suicide cases.

Methodology

Participants

The present study was selected respondent based on convenience sampling method. The population of this study was includes secondary school Indian students in one of the district of Kedah. Eighty seven (87 students) was selected to participated in this study. They were selected based on the assistance of their respective school guidance and counseling teacher. Gender of participants was self-identified as male (33.33%) and female (66.7%). Present study selected

sample age range 15 to 17 year old because suicide is the leading cause of death and they are more exposed to suicide (Ibrahim, Amit & Suen, 2014)⁹.

Measures

Section A comprised demographic items such as respondent gender, age and socioeconomic factor. Section B comprised, Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF) consisted of 30-item designed to examined global trait emotional intelligence (trait EI). This revised questionnaire (Osman et al.,2001)²⁴ consists two items from each of the 15 facets of the TEIQue were selected for inclusion, based primarily on their correlations with the corresponding total facet scores (Cooper & Petrides, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2006)^{25,26}. Section C consisted 4 items from The Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire-Revised (SBQ-R). This brief survey able to obtained broad scale of information in a detailed way and used to identify at-risk individuals and specific risk behavior. Section D comprised 12 items from The General Health Questionnaire which widely used to measure mental health status.

Procedure

Initially, researchers had contacted school administrators through telephone calls and obtained permission to conduct studies using their respective school students. Prior after obtained permission, researcher arranged meeting with respective school counselors to explain to them the focus of the study and inclusion criteria of respondent needed to this study. The respondent were grouping in one class and prior to distributing survey form researcher took 10 minutes to explained the purpose of the present study to the respondent. Respondent were given ample time to complete the survey form and researcher with school counselor was there to assisted students who unable to comprehend the question in the survey form.

Data Analyze

Data obtained from respondent were analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Researcher has utilized descriptive test to describe basic feature of respondent such as gender and age. Bivariate correlation test was conducted to identify the relationship between the studied variable.

Informed Consent

They were informed in advance about the purpose of the study and the students not willing to participate, were excluded from the study.

Result

Table 2: Correlation Matrix between Variables

	Suicidal Ideation	P -Value
Emotional intelligence	-.539*	0.05
Emotional Intelligence	Mental Health .381	0.05
Suicidal Ideation	Mental Health -.473	0.05

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed): Pearson Correlation Coefficient ($N = 87$)

Pearson's correlation was used to analyze the correlation between emotional intelligence and suicidal ideation, and mental health. The overall result showed that there was a moderate negative correlation between emotional intelligence and suicidal ideation, $r(87) = -.539$, $p < .05$ which explained that higher emotional intelligence has capability to reduce suicidal ideation, The finding showed moderate positive correlation between emotional intelligence and mental health, $r(87) = .381$, $p < .05$ which indicated that higher emotional intelligence enhanced mental health. Finding also shows moderate negative correlation between mental health and suicidal ideation, $r(87) = -.473$, $p < .05$ which explained that individual with lower mental health has tendency to have suicidal thoughts.

Discussion

The goal of present study to examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and suicidal ideation and mental health among Indian students of secondary school. Consistent with hypothesis study found significant relationship between emotional intelligence, suicidal ideation and mental health.

The notable finding of protective factor towards reducing suicidal ideation is very important in this study. Present study revealed that emotional intelligence play very essential role as protective factor against suicidal ideation among secondary school Indian students. This finding was comparable with several studies (Paradiso, Beadle, Raymont & Grafman, 2016; Abdollahi, Abbas et al.,2015; Cha, Christine & Nowak, 2009)^{20,27,21}. Although these studied conducted used various methodology and sample, the overall finding supported the outcome of present study. With their brain growing at a very phenomenal and gradual way, the development of critical element in brain is not complete until approximately 25 years of age (Gavin, MacKay & Brown, 2009)²⁸. Human brain consisted several critical parts that govern their whole process. Prefrontal cortex is one of the parts that covered the front part of our brain. This part is assumed

as most vital in human brain that leads to developed humanity in a civilized way. Prefrontal cortex takes critical role in executing various tasks such as planning, problem solving, decision making, emotional regulation, personality regulation, working memory, impulse control. Several task executed by brain executive function (shown in Figure 2) is remained under progress and didn't achieve maturation yet. Therefore, the immature function of developing elements in prefrontal cortex leads adolescent to engage various risk seeking activities such as suicide, violence, and drug addiction.

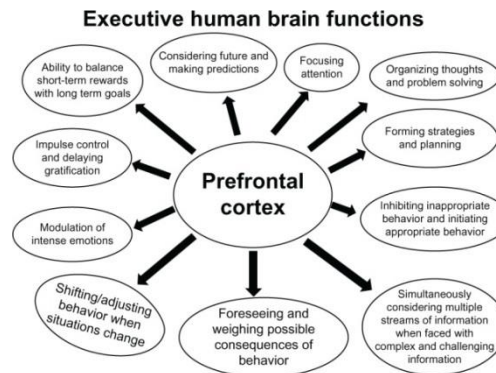


Figure 1: The function of Prefrontal Cortex which remain under progress in Adolescent.

(Taken from: Arain, Haque, Johal, Mathur, Nel, Rais, ... Sharma, 2013)²⁹.

Taken as a whole, reaching the maturity in dealing with emotion among adolescent required the assistance and guidance of family and positive school environment. The correlation between emotional intelligence and suicidal ideation is worth mentioning because this remarkable finding may enlighten the role of family and school in guiding adolescent to able to understand their own emotion and those of others and manage it intelligently.

Secondly, these finding also added in the growing mechanism of literature regarding the protective role emotional intelligence on mental health. Finding indicated positive relationship between those variables and consistent with several previous work (Bhochhibhoya, Branscum, Sharma, 2014)³⁰. According to National Health and Morbidity Survey (2015), the prevalence of mental health issues increase rapidly from 10.7% in 1997 to 29.2% in 2015. Given that rapid increased, it has been concluded that metal illness expected to be second problem affecting Malaysian after heart attack. However, the finding of present study indicated the utmost role of emotional intelligence as a supporting tool to prevent or improves an individual mental health. The ability to regulate our emotion is one of the greatest ways to boost individual mental health. This ability has profound effect on individual capability to responds to their own emotion as well as others. We feel strongly that, empowering emotional intelligence among students not only reduce rising numbers of mental issues but also able to produce well social functioning individual to our Nation. Finally, the finding of present study indicated positive correlation between suicidal ideation and mental health among students. This finding was consistent with to

with numerous previous studies (Zhang, Xiao, Zhou, 2010; Hawton & Heeringen, 2009)³¹. Individual with mental health issues has higher tendency to committing suicide. For an instance, an individual who diagnosed with bipolar disorder depression has greater tendency to committed suicide. Nearly 15 times that of the general population, while those with schizophrenia have a 40 per cent lifetime risk of suicide attempts. Those with personality disorders are three times more likely to die by suicide, a risk that's increased if they also struggle with substance abuse or depression. However, being diagnosed with mental illness doesn't implies that individual have higher tendency to engaged in such behavior. Exposure to proper treatment and behavior modification they able to maintained their ordinary lifestyle. Further data collection is required to determine exactly how mental health related with suicidal ideation.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the importance of protective role of emotional intelligence of reducing suicidal ideation and improving mental health among secondary school Indian students. The present finding might help involved organization to focus on proper intervention targeting on developing emotional intelligence to students, and encourage public information campaign and media engage firmly and actively in increasing awareness among public concerning the factor that leads to suicide. Besides that, this study also revealed the essence of early identification and prevention is a very essential point to eradicate the occurrences of suicides (WHO, 2014)¹. Therefore, school counselor should play very critical part to identify the key factor which contributed to suicide thoughts among students and assist them to overcome therapeutically. Government also must maximize investment in nurturing the development of mental health through funding government related agencies and non-government agencies to improve and widen their service to public. Other than that, government also provides expert training to school counselor concerning the planning of appropriate evidence based program and intervention. Given that point, to eradicate the destructive element of suicide in civilized society need advanced collaboration from various sector.

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