

# Self-Expressivity and Social Support as Predictors of Suicide Ideation among Undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

Sustaining life and controlling negative thoughts is vital to attaining academic goals and looking forward to a better and fulfilling life. This study examined self-expressivity and social support as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was used for the study with 394 respondents comprising of 246 (62.4%) males and 148 (37.6%) females. The respondents were aged between 17 – 55 years. The Self-expressivity Scale, Social Support Scale and suicide ideation Scale were validated and used for data collection. Three research hypotheses were formulated and tested using Multiple Regression analysis. Result from the first hypothesis indicated that, self-expressivity significantly predicted suicide ideation among the undergraduates. The result of the second hypothesis showed that social support significantly predicated suicide ideation among the students. On the third hypothesis, self-expressivity and social support significantly predicted suicide ideation when they were jointly tested. Findings were discussed in line with studies reviewed and conclusions were drawn. It was recommended among others that healthy self-regulating mechanisms be employed to boost self-expressivity be encouraged among students while help and care from families, friends and significant others be sought to when encountering life-threatening challenges as students. Also, there is a need to seek professional help.

**Key Words:** Self-expressivity, social support, suicide ideation, undergraduates.

## INTRODUCTION

Life is sacred and has to be protected by self and society. However, there could be negative development across social borders which could lead to unexpected level of poverty, joblessness, permissive behaviour, selfishness, nepotism and many more has always been a difficult situation not just among students but to the society at large. Several life situations could pose threat survival and make people begin to think otherwise and feel life is not worth living because the result of long-term difficulty with thoughts, feelings, or experiences that students may have could make them feel life is not worth living. Issues such as sadness or grief, shame, worthlessness, intense guilt, rage, or a desire to seek revenge, being a burden to others, being trapped physically or emotionally, hopelessness, intense physical or emotional pain among other life challenging situations could make one think of taking one's life.

It is important therefore to note that taking one's life does not happen without the person involved first thinking about it before committing the act. As dangerous as suicide is, suicide ideation is more dangerous since the thought first comes before the individual proceed to taking the action. According to Hakeem (2020), almost every year, close to 800,000 people die as a result of suicide and by ration, it is one person every forty (40) seconds meaning that in every second, one person commits suicide globally. Studies have shown that suicide is a global phenomenon and occurs throughout the lifespan. According to World Health Organization (2021), there are indications that for each individual who died by suicide, it is obvious that there may have been more than twenty (20) or more people who attempted suicide. People who commit

suicide have lovely dreams about life and curiously, they look into the future of their lives with so much expectations and have hopes that for no reason, life could not defeat them and as such they work hard and hope that they would win all the battles of life.

Daily hassles of life and other life challenges that propel students to have different thought patterns can also lead to having suicidal thoughts. Worthy of mention is that, suicide cannot take place without first of all thinking about it. The global perspective about suicidal thought leading to suicide most times is not different from what is happening in Nigeria and in many part of the sub-Sahara Africa. In Nigeria, in particular, suicide among young people particularly, students is at an alarming rate as there is no day that goes by without one hearing of reason, thinking of attempting or committing suicide which makes suicide prevalence experts to put it at that rate. These students first of all have thoughts about suicide before making efforts to take their life in the process.

Thinking about suicide is the first step towards the act. As reported by World Health Organization (2019), suicide does not just take place without the ideator first of all having a thought about it. The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP 2020) reported that suicide is the second leading cause of death among people between the ages of 15 – 29 years old across the globe. Specific report shows that over 79% of global suicide occurs in low-and middle-income countries such as Nigeria. Specific cases in Nigeria particularly among students are still fresh in our minds, the case of a 22 year old Chukwuemeka Akachi, a final year students of Department of English and Library studies, University of Nigeria Nsuka, the case of Uzaka Ebiweni, a 300-level student of Medicine and Surgery at Niger Delta University (NDU) who dived into Amassoma river, a 17 year old Amos Ibrahim who committed suicide in Jos, Olaitan Gbadamosi, an 18 year old 100 level student of University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) among other are some of the few cases of suicide reported in Nigeria recently. Recently, precisely on 20th march, 2021, a 300 level student of the Department of Management and Accounting, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Emmanuel Adedeji reportedly committed suicide. He was said to have left a suicide note after he took a poisonous substance which led to his death.

It is of essence to mention that self-expressivity may facilitate communication of emotions and enable people to obtain feedback from others to challenge the maladaptive thought patterns that maintain the hopeless thinking and depressed mood that subsequently yield suicidal thinking. Though some research suggests that suppression of emotions (that is lack of expressivity) is maladaptive, given its positive association with psychological symptoms, this relation may be culturally inclined (Kwon, Yoon, Joormann, & Kwon, 2013). For instance, women with predominantly Nigerian values are found to suppress emotions less frequently in daily life than women in other parts of the world particularly those who are independence, and emotion suppression is associated with negative emotions among women with African values especially those who are not bold enough to express themselves. Bad enough, in an academic environment, when students have issues bothering on their academic and general life and are not able to express themselves, several thought may come their minds and this is capable of leading them to negative thoughts such suicidal thought (ideation).

Social support is another important factor in student's life the importance of social support is consistent across research on suicidal behaviour which emanates from ideation leading to attempt and subsequently carrying out the act. The need to belong, in particular, is a central theme in most of the research that relates to social support particularly those gotten from friends and significant others. Studies such as Rueger, Chen, and Jenkins (2014) opines that when this key developmental task is not successfully navigated and youth perceive low social support either from friends, family or significant others, they are at heightened risk for depression, suicide ideation and subsequently, suicide attempt.

Students particularly in tertiary institutions have had series of life challenges both physical and emotional. This may include thinking of how to cope with academic activities, live challenges, their wellbeing, family

issues among others. Failure to be able to handle some of these challenges could propel them to have negative thoughts particularly thoughts of ending their lives. This is the reason why suicide and self-harm rates are predicted to increase on daily basis particularly among students. World Health Organization has reported that close to 800,000 people die every year due to suicide and on average, people commit suicide in every 40 second; an alarming rate worthy of concern. It is important to mention that, the act of suicide proceeds from thoughts before it could lead to the act.

Gunnell, Appleby, and Arensman, (2020) opined that there are gigantic imbalances according to admittance to innovation and capacity to remain safe especially when students are faced with challenging issues; worst still when they cannot express themselves to ease some emotional issues. In some circumstances, they may not even find someone to provide any kind of support to them which could worsen the situation. It is therefore pertinent to mention that the key concerns in relation to suicide prevention include uncertainty regarding how best one expresses his/her emotions and assess support people can offer.

It is important to mention that there are several causes of suicidal thoughts especially as it relates to students. Other studies have looked at psychological factors such as depression among others neglecting the fact that when individuals are not able to express themselves and perhaps have no support either from friends, family or significant others, it could result to thoughts probably leading to attempts. People who find it hard to express themselves are more prone to suicide ideation because they are left alone as they go through depression hence there is no room for expression as they are misinterpreted. Sometimes they may feel that the emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support they are supposed to receive from relatives and friends including significant others may be hard to come by thereby resulting to suicidal thoughts (ideation).

It is important to note that since suicide does not take place without the person first of all having a thought about it (suicidal ideation), investigating on the construct that could predict suicide can help in understanding the underlying predictors of suicide ideation thereby understanding the predictors of suicide and then efforts can be made to avert the scourge on the individual and the society at large. It is against this background therefore that this study was born out to investigate self-expressivity and social support as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate self-expressivity and social support as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. Specifically, the study is set to achieve the following objectives;

1. To investigate self-expressivity as a predictor of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.
2. To ascertain social support as a predictor of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.
3. To determine self-expressivity and social support as joint predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Lee, Chiang, Li, Li, Wu, Lin, Zhao and Zhang (2020) investigated on the influence of humor expression on suicidal ideation among adolescents: mediating effects of depressive emotion and positive emotion with specific concentration on expressivity among adolescents. According to them, the occurrence and degree of suicidal ideation during the past month in adolescents should be regarded seriously. A total of 1551 students in junior high school completed questionnaires. The result showed that expressivity predicted suicide

ideation among adolescents during the past month particularly when it is related not only to humor expression but also to depressive emotion and positive emotion. The stronger the depressive emotion felt, the stronger the suicidal ideation; in contrast, the stronger the positive emotion, the weaker the suicidal ideation.

In the same vein, Lee et al (2020) opined that depressive emotion and positive emotion were found to mediate the relationship between humor expression and suicidal ideation; additionally, positive emotion was found to mediate the relationship between depressive emotion and suicidal ideation. They concluded that highlight of depressive emotion and positive emotion may mediate the influence of humor expression on suicidal ideation among adolescents, and positive emotion may mediate the influence of depressive emotion on suicidal ideation. More attention should be paid to decreasing adolescents' self-deprecating humor expression and depressive emotion, whereas more witty response humor expression and positive emotion should be encouraged to prevent their suicidal ideation.

Tabaac, Perrin and Rabinovitch, (2016) looked at the relationship between social support and suicide risk in a national sample of ethnically diverse sexual minority women. Participants (N = 150) completed measures of social support and suicidal ideation/attempts. After controlling for socioeconomic status, social support explained 12.3% of the variance in past suicidal ideation and 10.7% in lifetime suicide attempts. Social support from family and significant other were both inversely associated with suicidal ideation, and social support from family inversely with lifetime attempts. Interventions that strengthen family relationships could be a buffer of suicidality in this population.

Moreover, greater social support in students samples has been associated with higher levels of self-esteem and lower depression and anxiety. In studies of lesbian groups youth particularly among students, school safety, perceived care from adults, perceived social supports, and supportive social environments (Hatzenbuehler, 2011) have been associated with decreased suicidal ideation or attempts. In the only empirical study uncovered in this literature review on social support and suicide in adult sexually minority women, Irwin and Austin (2013) found that social support from family and friends was associated with decreased suicide risk in their sample of southern, White lesbians.

Miller, Esposito-Smythers and Leichtweis (2015) looked at the role of social support in adolescents suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Participants were 143 adolescents (64% female; 81% white; range, 12e18 years. Main and interactive effects of social support on the odds of suicidal attempt were tested with logistic regression. Results from the linear regression analysis revealed that perceptions of lower school support independently predicted greater severity of SI, accounting for parent and close friend support. Further, the relationship between lower perceived school support and SI was the strongest among those who perceived lower versus higher parental support. Results from the logistic regression analysis revealed that perceptions of lower parental support independently predicted suicide attempt history, accounting for school and close friend support. Further, those who perceived lower support from school and close friends reported the greatest odds of suicide attempt history.

Furthermore, Kerr, Preuss and King (2006) examined the relation between perceptions of support from three sources (parents, nonparent adults, and peers) and suicide ideation in a sample of 220 psychiatrically hospitalized adolescents. They found no interactions between these various sources of support. It is obvious therefore that there is relative importance of adolescent perceptions of parent, close friend, and school support in relation to current suicide ideation and suicide attempt history, as well as whether lower support across two of these social domains increases this risk in a clinical sample of adolescents. Knowledge of the relative importance of various types of social support to suicide ideation and behaviour may help inform suicide risk assessment and treatment strategies with clinically distressed adolescents.

Ibrahim, Din, Ahmad, Amit, Ghazali, Wahab, Kadir, Holim, and Halim, (2019) looked at the role of social

support and spiritual wellbeing in predicting suicidal ideation among marginalized adolescents in Malaysia. According to them, the high number of adolescents and young adults harbouring suicidal ideation, as reported by the Ministry of Health Malaysia, is alarming. A total of 176 adolescents in selected urban areas in the states of Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor were selected. The study found that both religious wellbeing and existential wellbeing showed significant negative correlation with suicidal ideation. Similarly, support from family and friends also showed a negative correlation with suicidal ideation. Further analysis using multiple regressions showed that religious wellbeing and social wellbeing, and family support predict suicidal ideation in adolescents.

Moreover, the impact of perceived social support on fear of missing out with moderation on suicide ideation was researched by Dou, Li, Li and Wang, (2021). According to them, fear of missing out is a pervasive phenomenon among college students that may negatively affect the physical and mental health of individuals. Perceived social support, as one of the effective protective factors, can mitigate the harmful effects of fear of missing out, but few studies to date have examined the potential mechanisms underlying this relationship. The present study conducted an investigation involving 806 college students in China and used scales measuring perceived social support, basic psychological needs, perceived stress and fear of missing out to explore the relationship between perceived social support and fear of missing out in line with suicide ideation. Findings indicated that 1) perceived social support was negatively associated with college students' fear of missing out. Also, basic psychological needs partially mediated the relationship between perceived social support and fear of missing out as well as suicide ideation. Moreover, the mediating role of basic psychological needs is moderated by perceived stress.

Based on the findings above, it can be postulated that;

1. Self-expressivity will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.
2. Social support will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.
3. Self-expressivity and social support will significantly and jointly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi.

## METHOD

### Design

For the purpose of this study, cross-sectional survey design was used. According to Lauren (2020), a cross-sectional study is a type of research design in which you collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time. In cross-sectional research, the researcher observes variables without influencing them. The researcher used this design because the use of questionnaire were adopted to carry out the study. This is because a cross-sectional survey collects data to make inferences about a population of interest (undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi) at one point in time. Cross-sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which they gather data.

### Participants

At the time, there were 26,383 undergraduate students in the university.. A total of 394 participants were sampled for the study from different faculties and departments in the university. Among the sampled participants, 246 (62.4%) were males while 148 (37.6%) were females. Their age ranged from 17 to 55 years of age. On their levels of study, 34 (8.6%) of the sampled respondent were in 100 level, 44 (11.2%) were in 200 level, 75 (19.0%) were in 300 level, 212 (53.8%) were in 400 level, 14 (3.6%) were in 500 level while 15 (3.8%) of the respondents did not indicate their level of study.

## Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined using the formula by Yamane, (1967). This is justified by the fact that the total population of undergraduate students in Benue State University, Makurdi is known. The sample size determination can be seen below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n = required sample size

N= Total population of Benue State University Students.

e = level of error at 5%

$$n = \frac{26383}{1 + 26383(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{26383}{1 + 65.96}$$

$$n = \frac{26383}{66.96}$$

$$n = 394.01$$

$$n = 394$$

For the purpose of this study, convenient sampling technique, a non-probability sampling technique was used to sample 394 students across the departments for the study.

## Instruments

The instrument that was used is a questionnaire which comprised of three standardized scales which are;

1. Self-Expressivity Scale
2. Social Support Scale
3. Suicide Ideation Scale

**Self-Expressivity Scale:** This scale was developed by Gross and John (1997). It is a 16-item scale designed to measure an individual's emotional expressivity. The scale is separated into 3 facets: Negative Expressivity, Positive Expressivity, and Impulse Strength. Each item is answered on a 7-point Likert-type ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items of the scale include 'when-ever I feel positive emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling' and 'I sometimes cry during sad movies'. On scoring, items 3, 8, and 9 are reverse scored, items 3, 5, 8, 9, 13, 16 make up the Negative Emotionality facet, items 1, 4, 6, 10 make up the Positive Emotionality facet and items 2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15 make up the Impulse Strength facet. According to Gross and John (1997), scoring of the scale is kept continuous. Researchers can either keep the 3 facets as separate scores or can combine them together to form an overall Emotional Expressivity scale.

**Social Support Scale:** The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support developed by Zimet,

Dahlem, Zimet and Farley, (1988) will be used to assess social support for the study. The items tended to divide into factor groups relating to the source of the social support, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri) or significant other (SO). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a widely used scale even in literature. The reliability coefficient as reported by the developer was .82 Cronbach's alpha and at the same time, the scale report a very high content and convergent validity. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a 12-item scale scored at 7-point Likert scale ranging from "1" Very Strongly Disagree, "2" Strongly Disagree, "3" Mildly Disagree, "4" Neutral, "5" Mildly Agree, "6" Strongly Agree and "7" Very Strongly Agree. Furthermore, the scale has three subscales which are friends, family and significant others. Items 6, 7, 9 and 12 constitutes the friends subscale, 3, 4, 8 and 11 constitutes family subscale and items 1, 2, 5 and 10 constitutes significant other subscale. The scale is a self-report scale that is administered using pen and paper type. This means that, participants were given a copy of the questionnaire and asked to indicate on it their responses based on how each item is applicable to them. It can also be administered using computer based but for the purpose of this study, it will be administered using pen and paper type.

**Suicide Ideation Scale:** This scale was developed by Luxton, Rudd, Reger, and Gahm (2011). It is a 10-item scale with sample items such 'I have been thinking of ways to kill myself', 'I believe my life will end in suicide' and 'I have told someone I want to kill myself'. Reliability analysis resulted in a Chronbach's Alpha of .91 for the overall suicide ideation scale. Items to scale correlations ranged from .57 to .89 and all were statistically significant at the .05 level. Split half reliability with the first five items forming the first half and second half forming the second half was .88. In order to test the construct validity of the suicide ideation scale, Luxton, Rudd, Reger, and Gahm (2011) first examined the association between the suicide ideation total score and the BASIS-241 subscales. The results indicated that the Self-Harm subscale was significantly associated with the total SIS score  $r(3072) = .483, p < .001$ . The scale is scored on a 5-point response format ranging from 1 = never, 2 = infrequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently and 5 = always. It can be scored using its composite score or three subscales of suicidal desire, resolved plan/preparations and communality.

## Procedure

The researcher first of all obtained an introductory letter from the department of Psychology, Benue State University Makurdi, to carry out a research in the study area. After the pilot study was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher designed a Google form for data collection and the link was shared to students of Benue State University where 394 students filled the questionnaire online. Cluster sampling was used to select the students. Each of the Faculty in the University constitutes a cluster with different Departments and different levels of study.

The researcher first of all identified the Faculties which include Faculty of Science, Social Science, Law, Environmental Science, Education, Management, and College of Health Sciences among others. These Faculties constitute different departments for instance Psychology, Economics, Political Science, Public Administration and Sociology are in the Faculty of Social Science. The researcher visited these clusters and identified the departmental and course representatives of different levels and shared the link from the Google form to them for onward sharing to the students. Their consents were sought through the link soliciting them to respond to the questionnaire under consideration. Those who were willing to participate in the study used the Google form link to respond to the questionnaire and this constituted the data for this study for subsequent analysis.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher employed the use of descriptive and inferential statistics for data analyses. The researcher used descriptive statistics such as frequencies for the bio-data and inferential statistics such as multiple regression analysis for testing the stated hypotheses. These tools were used because they are considered

most appropriate for the study. All the hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis while incidental findings were tested using univariate analysis of variance with the use of computer software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis 1

This hypothesis stated that self-expressivity will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi. This hypothesis was tested using regression analysis and the result is presented table 1.

**Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis summary table showing self-expressivity as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi**

DV	Predictor(s)	R	R2	F	df	T	p
Suicide Ideation	Constant	.044	.002	8.062**	1, 358	4.142	<.001
	Self-Expressivity					-.044	-.831 <.05

\*\* Sig at 0.001

Result in table 1 shows that self-expressivity significantly predicted suicide ideation among undergraduate students in Benue State University, Makurdi [ $\beta = -.044$ ,  $t = -.831$ ;  $p < .05$ ]. Observation of beta weight shows that self-expressivity significantly contributed 4.4% in the total variation observed in suicide ideation among undergraduate students [ $\beta = -.044$ ]. The result further showed a negative score meaning that the more students expresses themselves, the less their tendency to have suicide ideation. On the other hand, students who finds it difficult to express themselves have high tendency for suicide ideation. Based on this result, hypothesis one which stated that ‘self-expressivity will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi’ was therefore accepted.

### Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis stated that social support will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi. This hypothesis was tested using regression analysis and the result is presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis summary table showing social support as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi**

DV	Predictor(s)	R	R2	F	df	T	p
Suicide Ideation	Constant	.192	.037	8.062**	1, 359	5.142	<.001
	Social Support					-.192	-3.614 <.001

\*\* Sig at 0.001

Result in table 2 shows that social support (either from family, friends and significant others) significantly predicts suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi [ $\beta = -.192$ ,  $t = -3.614$ ;  $p < .001$ ]. Observation of beta weight shows that social support significantly and negatively accounted for 19.2% of the variation in suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi [ $\beta = -.192$ ]. The result further showed a negative score meaning that students who have social



support either from family, friends or significant others have low tendency to engage in suicide ideation while students who have no social support have high tendency for suicide ideation. Based on this result, hypothesis two which stated that ‘social support will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi’ was therefore accepted.

### Hypothesis 3

This hypothesis stated that self-expressivity and social support will significantly and jointly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Multiple regression analysis summary table showing self-expressivity and social support as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi**

DV	Predictor(s)	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df	T	p
Suicide Ideation	Constant	.207	.043	8.062**	2, 360	9.142	<.001
	Self-Expressivity					-.044	-.831 <.05
	Social Support					-.192	3.614 <.001

\*\* Sig at 0.001

Result in table 3 shows that self-expressivity and social support significantly and jointly predicted suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi [ $R = .207$  and  $R^2 = .043$ ;  $F(2, 360) = 8.062$ ;  $p < .001$ ]. Observation of coefficient of determination [ $R^2 = .207$ ] shows that both self-expressivity and social support significantly and jointly accounted for 4.3% of the total variation observed in suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi. Based on this result, hypothesis three which stated that ‘self-expressivity and social support will significantly and jointly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi’ was therefore accepted.

## DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate self-expressivity and social support as predictors of suicide ideation among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. Three research hypotheses were formulated and tested and the results are presented in the previous chapter. The first hypothesis which stated that self-expressivity will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi was tested using regression analysis and the result showed that self-expressivity was a significant negative predictor of suicide ideation among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. The negative result showed that students who scored low on self-expressivity significantly scored high on suicide ideation while student who scored high on self-expressivity significantly scored low on suicide ideation. This finding is consistent with that of Lee, Chiang, Li, Li, Wu, Lin, Zhao and Zhang (2020) who found that expressivity predicted suicide ideation among adolescents during the past month particularly when it is was related not only to humor expression but also to depressive emotion and positive emotion.

In the same vain, Lee et al (2020) further opined that depressive emotion and positive emotion were found to mediate the relationship between humor expression and suicidal ideation; additionally, positive emotion was found to mediate the relationship between depressive emotion and suicidal ideation. This means that highlight of depressive emotion and positive emotion may mediate the influence of humor expression on suicidal ideation among adolescents, and positive emotion may mediate the influence of depressive emotion on suicidal ideation. More attention should be paid to decreasing adolescents’ self-deprecating humor

expression and depressive emotion, whereas more witty response humor expression and positive emotion should be encouraged to prevent their suicidal ideation.

The second hypothesis which stated that social support will significantly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi was tested using regression analysis and the result showed that social support significantly and negatively predicted suicide ideation among students of Benue State University meaning that students who have adequate social support have less tendency to engage in suicide ideation compared to those who have little or no social support either from family, friends and significant others. This finding is consistent with that of Tabaac, Perrin and Rabinovitch, (2016) who found that social support from family and significant other are both inversely associated with suicidal ideation, and social support from family inversely with lifetime attempts.

In the same vain, this study is consistent with that of Hatzenbuehler, (2011) who opined that greater social support in student samples has been associated with higher levels of self-esteem and lower depression and anxiety. In studies of lesbian groups youth particularly among students, school safety, perceive care from adults, perceived social supports, and supportive social environments have been associated with decreased suicidal ideation or attempts. In the only empirical study uncovered in this literature review on social support and suicide in adult sexually minority women, Irwin and Austin (2013) found that social support from family and friends was associated with decreased suicide risk in their sample of southern, White lesbians. Miller, Esposito-Smythers and Leichtweis (2015) further confirmed that perceptions of lower school support independently predicted greater severity of suicide ideation, accounting for parent and close friend support. Further, the relationship between lower perceived school support and SI was the strongest among those who perceived lower versus higher parental support. Furthermore, finding shows that perceptions of lower parental support independently predicted suicide attempt history, accounting for school and close friend support.

The third hypothesis which stated that that self-expressivity and social support will significantly and jointly predict suicide ideation among undergraduate students of Benue State University, Makurdi was tested using multiple regression and the result showed that self-expressivity and social support significantly and jointly predicted suicide ideation among students of Benue State University, Makurdi. Researchers are of the opinion that difficulties in emotion regulation which result in non-expressivity that is reduced expression of emotions, may impact risk for suicide ideation via increases in hopelessness and depressive symptoms particularly when there is no one to support the individual involved (Miranda, Types, Gallagher, & Rajappa, 2013). According to them, emotion expressivity may facilitate communication of emotions and enable people to obtain feedback from others to challenge the maladaptive thought patterns that maintain the hopeless thinking and depressed mood that subsequently yield suicidal thinking.

Moreover, the importance of social support is consistent across multiple theories of suicidal behaviour and developmental psychopathology research. Individuals who have social support either from friends, family or significant others stands a better chance of expressing themselves. Rueger, Chen and Jenkins (2014) opined that the need to belong, in particular, is a central theme in Joiner's interpersonal theory of suicide which emphasize that complement developmental research, which suggests that the maintenance of strong relationships with parents while concurrently establishing an independent network of close friends and close community connections (often within school settings) is needed for normative socioemotional growth of individuals who are socially isolated and cannot express themselves.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that self-expressivity significantly and negatively predicted suicide ideation meaning that students which have high tendency to express themselves scored

low on suicide ideation while those who scored low on self-expressivity scored high on suicide ideation. In the same vein, it was also concluded that social support significantly and negatively predicted suicide ideation among students of Benue State University, Makurdi meaning that students who have adequate social support either from friends, family or significant others had low tendency to engage into suicide ideation and vice versa. Furthermore, self-expressivity and social support significantly and jointly predicted suicide ideation among students of Benue State University, Makurdi.

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that awareness campaign should be organized by student governing bodies and religious associations on campus to intimate students on the alarming rate of suicide which proceeds from ideation (thought), planning and committing the act. This will put them on the know as they go about their daily lives on campus with the rigors of academic pursuit and other life events. Also, students should learn the character of expressing themselves in whatever condition they find themselves. That way, it will be easy for them to open up on issues bothering them instead of keeping them and having negative thoughts such as suicide ideation.

Again, social support is important not just to the students but to the entire society. Therefore, based on the finding of this study, it is therefore recommended that family members, friends and significant others should make conscious efforts to provide adequate support to students to enable them cope with the huddles of academics and other live events that could propel them to having suicide ideation. Benue State University management should make conscious efforts to monitor the activities of students and try to ensure that their welfare is properly taken care of. This can be done through ensuring that they utilize the services of guidance and counsellors in school to help them settle challenges in life during their studies.

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