

## Unveiling the Silent Struggle: Understanding and Addressing Suicide Ideation among Adolescent Students in Kodagu

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**Abstract:** Background: Adolescence is one of the major stages of human being it is where a person goes through physical and psychological changes as well as genetically and environmental and social factors will influence his/her course of life. The good thing like joy, happiness, care and love will guide them positively whereas emotions like sadness, anger, frustration. Disappointment and disagreement may make them emotionally vulnerable if a proper guidance is not given. So, this vulnerability can lead to take negative steps like getting stress, going under depression and committing suicide. India has a adolescent population of 253 million which means every fifth person is 10 to 19 persons. In the year 2022 as per the NCRB data total number of 10,205 persons below 18 years lost their life. 7.6% out of entire population of India were students who lost their life in the year 2022. To know the roots of the adolescent students, issue and their view on suicide a study was conducted on the adolescent students of Kodagu. Questions were asked using questionnaire keeping the fact in mind to learn the factors associated with adolescents of Kodagu and factors associated with adolescent suicide. Methods: Exploratory research design was adopted, Simple random sampling method was chosen. Questions were asked to adolescents using questionnaire formulated by researcher. Objective of the study was to know the intensiveness of the ideation among students, attempt made by the students and also to know the gender and age-wise distribution. Questionnaires were distributed to the 480 high school (9th and 10th std) and PUC students. Permission from BEO, DDPI and Institution head was taken before administering the questionnaire. Results: Data was analysed using statistical method and chi-square value. It was found in the study that out of 480 respondents only 32.5% students did not have any thoughts rest of them had from minimal to sever level. Out of 480 respondents 155 students have attempted to commit suicide. Compare to female (31.3%) respondent's male (39.6%) respondents has more thoughts of committing suicide. Class wise II PUC students has more suicidal thoughts 46%, compare to I PUC respondents which is 35.8%. And age wise the respondents aged 18 years (52.7%) has more suicidal thoughts when compared to 17 years (36.5%), 16 years (38.2%), 15 years (23.7%) and 14 years (34.3%). Conclusion: Karnataka is in the 4th place on NCRB suicide data of the year 2022. Which was 5th place last year students are failing psychologically to put up with the challenges faced in the society as a form of pressure of exam, parents and society and also fear is overpowering their will to fight. Every death by suicide is a failure of the entire system to protect the children's right to live. It is important for a social work profession to play a major role in promotion, prevention, cure and rehabilitation of the future generation

**Keywords:** Adolescence, suicide ideation, psychological changes, socio-environmental factors, NCRB data, gender distribution, age-wise distribution, mental health, societal pressures, social work, prevention

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is always an age of confusion and euphoria. There are so many social problems in the society and adolescents are the one who most of the time are affected by it because of the tender age they are in. We Indians always depended on the bio-medical concept of the health which tells health means absence of disease, and it is always being resulted in ignoring mental health. WHO data says that every year there is more than 7, 00,000 death happens around the globe by suicide. (Organization, 2023) According to the NCRB data of 2022 there is a continuous hike in the rate of suicidal deaths in the year 2020 rate of suicide was 11.3, in the year 2021 it was 12.0 and in the year 2022 it is 12.4 which means there is a drastic hike in 02 years which seems to be worrying. And 10,205 deaths happened in the year 2022 who were below 18 years in which male were 4,616, female 5,588 and 01 transgender. (*Accidental Deaths & Suicides In India Year Wise | National Crime Records Bureau, n.d.*) Suicide happens to be the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29 years

in the world. ((Organization, 2023) In India people follow a different set of tradition compared to the other part of world where family is a protective factor in individual's life where the whole family supports their son or daughter. Still due to the taboo about mental health or less knowledge on mental health, most of the parents end up going to use herbal remedies, seek help from religious leaders, and attend religious establishments prior to obtaining a mental health evaluation in those that are subsequently deemed as mentally ill. (Samuel & Sher, 2013) When there is no proper diagnosis problem will never be cured and it will haunt the victim until it will fully devour him/her. Suicide is all about cry for help. When an individual is having no other way to get help or out of all the options and when he is totally out of options suicide is most people's choice, for which a proper intervention should be introduced. All these starts with a concept called as suicide Ideation. There has always been a small confusion with the terminology of Suicide ideation and

Suicide behaviour, suicide behaviour is where a spectrum of activities related to thoughts and behaviours that include suicidal thinking, suicide attempts, suicide related communication both verbal, non-verbal and completed suicide and suicide ideation is when an individual is often having thoughts, ideas wishes and preoccupations about taking one's own life. (Suicide Response (Postvention): Suicide Related Terminology / Education. Vic. Gov. Au, n.d.) This paper is an attempt made to understand the adolescent's mindset over suicide ideation. So, in this article an attempt is made to understand the attitude of adolescents towards suicide who belong to a small district of Karnataka, Kodagu. Kodagu is a small district of Karnataka with 4,102 square kilometres (1,584 sq mi) in the Western Ghats of south-western Karnataka. As per the census of 2011, the total population of Kodagu is 5,54,519, one of the state's lowest populations. (KODAGU CENSUS HANDBOOK-2011 / Kodagu District, Government of Karnataka / India, n.d.) Most of the studies concentrate on the urban part of the country and the focus of this study is to know the mindset of rural adolescents.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research adopted an exploratory research design due to the complex and nuanced nature of adolescent suicide ideation. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of various factors contributing to the phenomenon. Simple random sampling was employed to ensure unbiased representation of the target population. This method enhances the generalizability of findings to the broader adolescent community in Kodagu. A structured questionnaire was meticulously formulated by the researcher to gather data on multiple dimensions of adolescent suicide ideation. The questionnaire aimed to gauge the intensity of ideation, suicide attempts, and understand gender and age-wise distribution among students. The study involved 480 participants comprising high school (9th and 10th standard) and PUC students. This selection aimed to encompass a diverse group, reflecting the varied experiences and challenges faced by adolescents in different educational stages. Permission was obtained from the Block Education Officer (BEO), District Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI), and institution heads prior to administering the

questionnaire. This ensured adherence to ethical standards and institutional guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from each student before collecting any data. The participants were briefed about the purpose, confidentiality measures, and their voluntary participation in the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected participants, allowing them adequate time to respond. The process was conducted in a conducive and confidential environment to encourage open and honest responses. The collected data underwent statistical analysis, primarily using the Chi-square method and percentage calculation. This analytical approach helped identify significant associations between variables and provided a quantifiable representation of the prevalence of suicide ideation among adolescents. Stringent measures were implemented to ensure the reliability and validity of the study, including careful questionnaire design, ethical considerations, and robust statistical analyses. This scientific methodology aimed to systematically investigate adolescent suicide ideation in Kodagu, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing this critical issue.

## RESULTS

**Table 01:** Suicide Ideation

Suicide Ideation	Frequency	Percent
Never	156	32.5
Minimal	157	32.7
Mild	76	15.8
Moderate	44	9.2
Sever	47	9.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>100</b>

The results highlight that 32.5% of them don't have any thought of committing suicide, 32.7 % of them have minimal thought, 15.8 % of them have mild thought, and 19% of them have strong thought of committing suicide. Out of 480 respondents 327 had suicidal thoughts ranging from mild to severe. Which is shocking to see that 67.5% of the respondents at least once had a thought of suicide. It can be seen that from the study that students these days are facing problems but psychological problems are not prioritised compared to physical issues. Failing to detect and intervene problems are causing adolescents become weak.

**Table 02: Suicide Ideation with Gender**

Suicide Ideation with Gender	Gender		Total	Chi -Square Value
	Male	Female		
Never	65	91	156	11.68
Minimal	55	102	157	Sig
Mild	38	38	76	0.041
Moderate	25	19	44	
Sever	16	31	47	
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>480</b>	

The Chi-square results shows that there is a significant association with Gender and thought of suicide of respondents at 5% level of significance. Compare to female respondents(31.3%) respondent's male (39.6%) respondents have higher level of ideation. Most of the previous studies it is seen that female population is more

prone to suicide it is seen in NCRB data also that previous years had more of the female suicidal deaths but in this study it is vice-versa. Females being academically stronger than males gives them an advantage to stay psychologically strong which can help in reducing the suicide ideation.

**Table 03: Suicide Ideation with Class**

Suicide Ideation with Class	Class				Total	Chi -Square Value
	9th Std	10th Std	I PUC	II PUC		
Never	69	49	16	22	156	107.61
Minimal	15	38	61	43	157	Sig
Mild	22	15	25	14	76	0.000
Moderate	9	8	6	21	44	
Sever	5	10	12	20	47	
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>480</b>	

The Chi-square result shows that there is a significant association with Class and thought of suicide of respondents at 1% level of significance. The respondents who studies II PUC has more suicidal thoughts 46%, compare to I PUC respondents are 35.8%, 10<sup>th</sup> std respondents are facing 27.5% and 9<sup>th</sup> std respondents are facing 35.6% of suicidal thoughts. II PUC students are

more vulnerable because of the pressure they handle at school, since II PUC has board exams it's been filled in the mind of the students that the exam will be difficult and for these students even recreational activities will be removed from the academics which causes students to go under stress resulting in suicide ideation.

**Table 04: Suicide Ideation with Age**

Suicide Ideation with Age	Age					Total	Chi -Square Value
	14	15	16	17	18		
Never	36	62	32	21	5	156	92.87
Minimal	6	28	47	64	12	157	Sig
Mild	14	15	22	20	5	76	0.000
Moderate	6	5	12	12	9	44	
Sever	1	6	13	10	3	33	
Intensive	1	2	2	7	2	14	
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>480</b>	

The Chi-square results shows that there is a significant association with Age and thought of suicide of respondents at 1% level of significance. The respondents aged 18 years (52.7%) has more suicidal thoughts when compared to 17 years (36.5%), 16 years (38.2%), 15 years (23.7%) and 14 years (34.3%). Suicide ideation is more as the

age increases, along with the age growing student's faces the difficulties in their academic life, personal life and being with their family members. Adolescent students face problems because of the failure in the intervention they fail to get in their family, school and their environment.

**Table 05:** Attempt to commit suicide

Attempt to commit suicide	Frequency	Percent
No	325	67.7
Yes	155	32.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>100</b>

Among the total respondents 67.7% of them not attempted for suicide and 32.3% of them have attempted to commit suicide. Out of 324 respondents who had suicide ideation 155 of them have made an attempt to commit suicide which is 47.83%. Looks like students has more strong tendencies towards converting ideation to attempt

the major reason seems to be less awareness given to the students about suicide. Most of the faculty member in schools thinks talking to students can motivate students to indulge in suicidal activities. Majority of the schools and colleges do not have any sort of counsellor and resulting student's psychological difficulties to be ignored.

**Table 06:** Attempt to commit suicide with Gender.

Gender	Attempt to commit suicide		Total
	No	Yes	
Male	134	65	199
Female	191	90	281
<b>Total</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>480</b>

The above cross tab shows that compare to female 31.7 % respondent's male respondents did more suicide attempt that is 32.1%. Compared to ideation level we can see that there slightly higher number of male respondents who have attempted suicide. Female number may be lesser because of fear factor in converting ideation to committing suicide. Male students seems to be more daring and recent trends also shows that students specially falling in love/infatuation leading the students to lose their concentration and most of the students fail to balance this psychological imbalances fail to choose academics over the aspects like entertainment, extra-curricular activities and love/infatuation leading to psychological imbalances resulting in ideation.

## DISCUSSION

The evident gender differences in suicide rates, as highlighted by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2022, underscore the vulnerability of the female population to suicide. The data reveals that while there were 4,616 male suicides, the number rose to 5,588 for females, indicating a higher prevalence among women (*Accidental Deaths & Suicides In India Year Wise / National Crime Records Bureau, n.d.*). In the context of the present study, it is noteworthy that a higher proportion of female adolescents reported suicidal thoughts (190) compared to their male counterparts (134). Moreover, the conversion of suicidal ideation to attempts was more pronounced in females (64) than in males (90). This gender-based discrepancy raises concerns about the

psychological resilience of female adolescent students.

(Harmer et al., 2023) emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address suicide risk factors. Education for practitioners on suicide risk, early patient screening, collaborative multidisciplinary approaches, and proactive management of depression are recommended strategies. Implementing such measures can be pivotal in mitigating the escalating vulnerability observed among female adolescent students in this study.

The age-specific analysis reveals that adolescents aged 16 and 17 exhibit a higher prevalence of suicidal ideation, aligning with broader trends in suicide rates among the 15-30 age group (Vijayakumar, 2010). Pediatricians, as the primary healthcare contact for adolescents, play a crucial role in identifying and addressing mental health issues. Gupta et al. (2015) emphasize the responsibility of pediatricians to guide parents in screening, assessing, managing, and preventing suicidal behavior among adolescents.

The multifaceted nature of suicide ideation demands a comprehensive prevention approach. Addressing childhood traumas, promoting parenting skills, establishing strong family support systems, and implementing policies to curb substance abuse are suggested strategies (Samhsa, n.d.). This aligns with the adage "prevention is better than cure," highlighting the importance of

proactively addressing underlying factors contributing to adolescent suicide ideation.

In conclusion, the discussion emphasizes the urgency of tailored interventions for female adolescents, underscores the pivotal role of pediatricians in mental health support, and advocates for a holistic preventive approach to curb the rising tide of adolescent suicide ideation.

## CONCLUSION

A nation's future is in the hands of its citizens with sound body and sound mind. Whenever an individual faces hurdles in his or her life the equilibrium of the mind loses its balance. Which leads to the further problems like stress, depression and if not diagnosed or treated well it can lead to suicide. Adolescents mind will be in fragile state, most of the time they are attracted to the colourful things they see outside, and they tend to believe and live in a bubble world thinking whatever they see is true at this stage of life they are least bothered about the responsibilities, discipline and advice they get from parents and their elders. And they also believe that the things they witness in the movies and multimedia platform is real and they want a life like that. What disappoints them really is when they realize that all those things are just a fragment of imagination and if they are courageous enough to face the reality then nothing to fear but actual problems happens when things are vice-versa. Suicide is a last step of one's helplessness. When an individual is totally out of ways and out of ideas, they chose to give up, so it is the responsibility of the society that making them capable of handling the reality. By bringing awareness in social media platform where most of the adolescents indulge themselves it can help them to find solution to their problems they are facing. Physical issues have a indicator which will help to make out when an individual is undergoing a problem so with the help of the indicator's one's problem can be solved whereas psychological issues are approached differently in India where most of the people still believe psychological illness need not be addressed in a systematic manner. So, an awareness to be brought to the school management, teachers, parents and obviously to the students. Stress handling should be added to the syllabus in the earlier stages of the students so that they can be self-sustained. Social worker plays a major role of being a bridge between a better society and people with the problem and earlier intervention is better than mourning for the loss happened. It is more

important to note that schools and colleges are lacking in posting an outsider as counsellor who has a relevant knowledge and who knows better child psychology can handle the issues more methodically than someone from inside who mishandle things and leading to more destruction.

In navigating the complex terrain of adolescence, it becomes apparent that the mental equilibrium of individuals plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of a nation. The susceptibility of adolescent minds to external influences, often driven by unrealistic perceptions from media and societal pressures, underscores the fragility of their mental state. As they grapple with the dissonance between their expectations and reality, the risk of stress, depression, and, tragically, suicide becomes a pressing concern.

The journey through adolescence is marked by a disconnect between youthful aspirations and the harsh realities of life. The disillusionment that follows can lead to a profound sense of helplessness, with suicide representing the final, desperate step for those who feel bereft of options. Recognizing this vulnerability, society must assume the responsibility of equipping adolescents with the resilience needed to confront life's challenges.

The ubiquitous presence of social media in the lives of adolescents provides a unique platform for fostering awareness and addressing their concerns. Initiatives aimed at promoting mental health, dispelling myths surrounding it, and instilling stress-handling mechanisms can significantly contribute to building a mentally robust younger generation. Moreover, integrating stress management into the academic curriculum from an early stage can empower students to navigate the complexities of life with self-sufficiency.

Crucially, the role of social workers emerges as instrumental in bridging the gap between a nurturing society and individuals grappling with mental health issues. Early intervention, guided by professionals well-versed in child psychology, is emphasized as a proactive measure against the irreparable loss incurred by delayed responses. It becomes imperative for educational institutions to prioritize mental health by appointing qualified external counselors who bring a nuanced understanding of psychological intricacies, steering clear of potential mishandling of delicate situations.

In conclusion, safeguarding the mental well-being of adolescents demands a collective effort from society, educational institutions, parents, and mental health professionals. By fostering awareness, integrating stress management into education, and ensuring systematic and knowledgeable intervention, we can pave the way for a resilient generation capable of facing reality with courage and purpose. After all, a nation's future thrives in the hands of citizens with both sound bodies and sound minds.

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