

THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS, DEPRESSION, AND SUICIDAL TENDENCIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**Normo'minova Mahbuba Ravshan kizi**

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Abstract

University students face multiple psychological challenges during their academic journey. Academic pressure, social adaptation, financial difficulties, and uncertainty about the future contribute to elevated stress levels. When stress becomes chronic and unmanaged, it may lead to depression and increase the risk of suicidal tendencies. This article examines the theoretical and empirical connections between stress, depression, and suicidal ideation among students. The paper highlights psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship and emphasizes the importance of early intervention and preventive strategies within higher education institutions.

Keywords

stress, depression, suicidal ideation, university students, psychological resilience, mental health.

Introduction

Student life is often perceived as a period of growth and opportunity; however, it also represents a time of significant psychological vulnerability. Transitioning to adulthood, meeting academic expectations, and navigating social relationships create a complex environment that can overwhelm coping resources. Research in contemporary psychology suggests that stress is not only a temporary emotional reaction but can become a persistent risk factor for more severe mental health conditions, including depression and suicidal behavior.

Understanding the interaction between stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies is crucial for developing effective psychological support systems in universities.

Theoretical Background

The concept of stress was systematically explored by Hans Selye, who defined it as the body's nonspecific response to any demand placed upon it. While moderate stress (eustress) can enhance performance, prolonged distress negatively affects emotional regulation and cognitive functioning.

Depression has been extensively studied within cognitive frameworks. Aaron T. Beck proposed that negative automatic thoughts and dysfunctional beliefs contribute to depressive symptoms. Students experiencing chronic stress may develop cognitive distortions such as



hopelessness, self-blame, and catastrophizing, which increase vulnerability to depression.

The interpersonal theory of suicide, introduced by Thomas Joiner, suggests that suicidal desire emerges when individuals experience perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. In student populations, social isolation and academic failure can reinforce these perceptions.

Stress Among University Students

Stress among students originates from multiple domains:

Academic Stressors: examinations, deadlines, competitive environments.

Social Stressors: peer relationships, adaptation to new environments.

Financial Stressors: tuition fees, living expenses.

Future Uncertainty: career anxiety and employment concerns.

When coping strategies are ineffective, physiological and psychological symptoms intensify. Chronic activation of stress responses may disrupt sleep, concentration, and emotional stability, creating a pathway toward depressive states.

The Link Between Stress and Depression

Empirical evidence indicates a strong positive correlation between prolonged stress and depressive symptoms. Stress contributes to:

Emotional exhaustion

Reduced motivation

Negative self-evaluation

Learned helplessness

Over time, stress weakens resilience and depletes adaptive coping mechanisms. Students may begin to interpret challenges as insurmountable, leading to persistent sadness, anhedonia, and withdrawal.

Neurobiologically, chronic stress influences cortisol regulation and neurotransmitter balance, which are associated with mood disorders. Psychologically, stress reinforces negative cognitive schemas, aligning with cognitive theories of depression.

Depression as a Predictor of Suicidal Tendencies

Depression is one of the strongest psychological predictors of suicidal ideation. However, suicidal tendencies rarely emerge from depression alone. The interaction between:

Severe depressive symptoms

Feelings of hopelessness

Social disconnection



Impaired problem-solving skills

creates a high-risk condition.

Students experiencing academic failure or interpersonal rejection may internalize these events as personal inadequacies. Without psychological support, this internalization can escalate into suicidal thoughts.

It is essential to note that suicidal ideation is often a sign of intense psychological pain rather than a genuine desire to die. Early identification and intervention significantly reduce risk.

The Mediating and Moderating Role of Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience acts as a protective factor in the stress–depression–suicide pathway. Students with higher resilience:

Demonstrate flexible coping strategies

Maintain realistic optimism

Seek social support

Regulate emotions effectively

Resilience does not eliminate stress but reduces its harmful psychological consequences. Therefore, resilience-building programs in universities can serve as preventive mental health interventions.

Implications for Higher Education Institutions

Universities should implement comprehensive mental health strategies, including:

Regular psychological screening for stress and depressive symptoms.

Psychoeducational workshops on coping skills and emotional regulation.

Accessible counseling services.

Peer-support initiatives to strengthen belongingness.

Crisis intervention protocols.

Preventive approaches are more effective and ethically responsible than reactive measures.

Conclusion

The relationship between stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies among university students is complex and multidimensional. Chronic stress can trigger depressive symptoms, which, in combination with cognitive distortions and social isolation, increase vulnerability to suicidal ideation. However, psychological resilience and institutional support can significantly mitigate these risks.

Addressing student mental health requires an integrative approach that combines theoretical understanding, empirical research, and practical intervention. Promoting resilience and early detection mechanisms within universities is essential for safeguarding students' psychological



well-being.

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