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TOPIC

Suicide Ideation among Creative Writers and its Relationship with Self-Esteem

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Suicide Ideation among Creative Writers and its Relationship with Self-Esteem

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ABSTRACT:

According to literature, creative writers are more likely to commit suicide than the general population. Creativity, on the other hand, may be harmful to one's mental health. Suicidal ideation and low self-esteem are two of these issues. Until now, research has focused on the writings of creative writers who have committed suicide. This study is directly relevant to poets and fiction writers who are suffering with suicide ideation and low self-esteem. According to the findings of this study, there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and suicide ideation in creative writers. Fiction writers have a higher risk of suicidal thoughts than poets. Furthermore, Self-esteem has a predictive influence on suicide ideation. The findings highlight many considerations regarding the mental health challenges that creative writers face, which require to be resolved.

Keywords: Suicide Ideation, Self-esteem, Creative Writer

Introduction:

Suicide is defined as killing oneself deliberately¹. According to WHO², 700,000 People die because of suicide each year. Around 77% of the suicides occur in low and middle income countries. In Pakistan, there is no official statistical report about suicidal rates³.

Suicide among creative writers is more common than general population, as it is predicted that poets are at a higher risk of mental illness and suicide⁴. They are five times more vulnerable to commit suicide than the general population and the other form of creative writers⁵. Gender wise, studies have suggested that female poets are more probable to commit suicide than non-fiction writers of both genders and poets⁶. Suicide ideation and suicide behavior can be taken differently in Islamic country because it is an absolutely banned conduct in Islam, and it has disastrous effects. Islamic hadiths may indeed be beneficial in encouraging Muslims to avoid suicide conduct⁷.

According to Kaufman⁸, there are four reasons why poets commit suicide. First the diction and the nature of poetry. Second, poetry does not reduce mental illnesses like other forms of writing. Third, the excessive expectation from the field may cause illness in successful poet. Last, typically a poet gets its peak at a younger age in which the chance of mental illness is much higher to strike.

Self-esteem refers to a person's favorable or negative views of himself as well as his attitude towards himself⁹. It is a summation of all the things that one thinks about himself. Although the interest in the links between self-esteem and creativity is reviving, the evaluative component of the self, especially self-esteem, has gotten little attention in relation to suicidal tendencies among creative writers.

Suicide ideation and self-esteem are negatively related to each other as one increases the other decreases¹⁰. Suicide ideation is defined as thinking and preoccupation about killing one own self¹¹. self-esteem is an attitude towards oneself or having positive or

negative opinion about self. An individual who thinks (idealize) suicide do not commit suicide often but they idealize and think about it¹². Negative self-esteem causes a person to think adversely about himself, and when it gets out of hand, the individual begins to consider suicide¹³. A correlational study about self-esteem and suicide ideation suggests that both have a negative correlation among each other i.e., low self-esteem causes greater levels of suicide ideation¹⁴.

Worldwide, there are a lot of eminent writers who have committed suicide e.g., Sappho, Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Alice Walker, John Berryman, Virginia Woolf, Randall Jarrell, Sara Teadale, Paul Celan, Hart Crane, Yokio Mishima and many more. Nationwide, Shams Agha, Shakeb Jalali, Shabir Shahid, Sara Shagufta, Anas Mueen, and Sarwat Hussain are famous poets and writers who had committed suicide¹⁵. There are few writers from Balochistan who had committed suicide including Noor Khan Bizenjo, Raziq Didag, Kifayat Karar and Iqbal Raz. One of Sylvia Plath's poems perfectly expresses how a creative writer perceives death.

“Dying is an art, like everything else I do it exceptionally well”¹⁶

Method:

The study aimed to explore the relationship of self-esteem with suicide ideation in creative writer. A cross sectional study was conducted to take responses of creative writers.

Objectives of the study:

Following are the objectives of the study.

1. To explore the presence of suicide ideation in creative writers.
2. To examine the relationship of self-esteem with suicide ideation among creative writer.

Sample:

A Purposive Sampling Technique was used in the study. The sample consists of 100 creative writers (57 poets, 28 fiction writers, and 25 both) from various cities in Pakistan. Only those above the age of 18 were included in the sample.

Instrument:

Suicide Ideation Scale: Rudd¹⁷, developed The Suicide Ideation Scale. It has ten items. Item no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 & 10 are measuring behavioral factors in suicide ideation and the other e.g., 5, 6, 7, & 8 are measuring affective factors. It is a Likert type scale having five options including 1= Never, 2= infrequently, 3=sometimes, 4= frequently and 5=always, among which one has to be selected as answer.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: It is a 10-item scale measuring global self-worth by using both positive and negative opinion about oneself. Self-esteem scale is a unidimensional scale¹⁸. A 4-point Likert scale for all items is ranging from strongly agree = 1 to strongly disagree = 4. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 have reverse scoring.

Procedure:

Each subject initially provided informed consent. Respondents were given questionnaires and told how to fill them out. They were extensively briefed/debriefed on it. There was no time restriction for completion, so they could complete it as quickly as they wanted. The research ensured confidentiality. After obtaining the data, the analysis

and findings were estimated.

Results: The study sought to determine the relationship between self-esteem and suicidal ideation. It was also intended to assess suicidal thoughts among creative authors. The findings indicate a negative relationship between suicidal thoughts and self-esteem. Suicidal ideation is also prevalent among creative authors.

Table 1

Psychometric properties of Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and Suicide Ideation Scale

Variables	No. of items	Alpha
RBSES	10	.84
SIS	10	.94

Note. RBSES=Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; SIS=Suicide Ideation Scale.

The psychometric properties of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale and the suicide ideation scale are shown in Table 1. The reliability of the given scales is quite significant.

Table 2

Inter-Correlation of Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and Suicide Ideation Scale.

Factors	1	2
RBSES	---	-.617**
SIS	---	---
M	28.35	17.27
SD	5.80	9.40

Note. RBSES=Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; SIS=Suicide Ideation Scale.

Table 2 reveals the correlation between Rosenberg self-esteem scale and suicide ideation scale. Aforementioned scales have a significant negative correlation between them.

Table 3

Regression Coefficient of Self-esteem and Suicide ideation

Variables	R2	B	β	SE
Constant		45.56**		3.72
RBSES	.38	-.99**	-.617	.12

Note N=100, ** $p < .01$; RBSES=Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

Table 3 shows the impact of self-esteem on suicide ideation. The R^2 value has revealed that self-esteem has a significant predictive influence on suicide ideation in creative writers. The self-esteem explained 38% variance in the suicide ideation with $F(1, 98) = 60.20, p < .001$.

Table 4

Difference in Mean and Standard Deviation on scores of Self-esteem Scale and Suicide Ideation among Creative Writers

(I) Creat ive	(J) Creat ive	M (SD) of I	F	P	i-j	Mea n D	SE	95%CI LL UL
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	Write r	Write r								
RBS ES	PT	FW	28.46 (5.41)	5. 54	.00 5	PT>F C	3.56 *	1. 50	.05	.7.08
		BT				PT<B T	- 2.14	1. 33	- 5.32	1.03
	FW	PT	24.89 (6.85)			FW<P T	- 3.56 *	1. 50	- 7.08	-.05
		BT				FW<B T	- 5.71 *	1. 71	- 9.87	-1.55
	Both	PT	30.60 (4.82)			BT>P T	2.14	1. 33	- 1.03	5.32
		FW				BT>F W	5.71 *	1. 71	1.55	9.87
SIS	PT	FW	17.63 (9.66)	3. 82	0.2 5	PT<F W	- 3.64	2. 47	- 9.43	2.14
		BT				PT>B T	4.07	2. 19	- 1.15	9.29
	FW	PT	21.28 (10.68)			FW>P T	3.64	2. 47	- 2.14	9.43
		BT				FW>B T	7.71 *	2. 82	.87	14.5 6
	Both	PT	13.56 (6.72)			BT<P T	- 4.07	2. 19	- 9.29	1.15
		BT				BT<F W	- 7.71 *	2. 82	- 14.5 6	-.87

Note. RBSES=Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; SIS=Suicide Ideation Scale; PT=Poet; FW=Fiction Writer; BT=Both

Table 4 depict and compare the mean, standard deviation through one-way analysis of variance of self-esteem scale and suicide ideation in creative writers. A post-hoc analysis has revealed a significant mean difference between poet and fiction writer and a significant mean difference in poet and both in self-esteem scale. Considering suicide ideation scale, A significant mean difference is found in fiction writer and both (poet and fiction writer) in suicide ideation scale.

Discussion:

The current study sought to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and suicidal ideation. It was also intended to assess the level of suicide ideation among creative writers. There is already evidence of a negative relationship between self-esteem and

suicidal ideation in the literature. Our study's findings were consistent with the literature. According to this study there is negative correlation between self-esteem and suicide ideation. Accordingly, low self-esteem was linked to greater levels of depression, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, and an increased risk of having attempted suicide before¹⁹. Another study has detected the relationship of lower self-esteem with suicide ideation as well as anxiety, depression and academic stress²⁰. The results are in line with our study.

Poets outnumber the general population by five times²¹. According to our findings, fiction authors personify suicide more than poets, and both (a writer who is both a poet and fiction writer). The outcome differs with Jamison's study, which found that poets consider suicide more than the other types of creative writers. Overall suicide ideation is not much higher. One of the reasons behind this can be faith. In Islam suicide is strictly prohibited²². There is nothing more valuable than life, according to the Quran, a believer has no right to kill himself or herself. It is written in the Quran that "And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you [Surah al-Nisa, 4:29]"²³.

Conclusion:

According to the findings of this study, creative writers with low self-esteem are prone to commit suicide. Suicide is idealized by all types of literary writers, although fiction writers idealize it more than poets, and those who write both poetry and fiction. The results are prior to the literature. The suicide ideation is not at peak comparatively the writers of other country's researches. This gives us a new pathway of understanding creative writers from another aspect.

Limitation and suggestions:

Suicide is a taboo topic that is rarely discussed or exposed. It is possible that the present study hasn't grasped it in its whole as many other factors can contribute more about creative writers. There should be a series of open-ended studies to understand more about it. A larger sample size can also help with generalizability of study results to a larger population. A cross-cultural or cross religion study on creative writers can present more clarity in this regard.

Implication:

The current study would benefit those who desire to work about creative writers. There are several issues related to creative writers that need to be addressed in this regard. According to literature, creative writers face a variety of mental health issues. Mental health professionals should think about it and work to solve the challenges that creative writers confront because the writers' life is significant, the government must take action to assist them.

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