



## Suicidal Ideation among undergraduates of University of Lagos Nigeria: Can Personal and Psychological Factors Predict the Relationship?

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**Abstract.** This study investigated the association between personal factors (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being,) and psychological factors (locus of control, academic resilience) in predicting suicidal ideation among undergraduates of university of Lagos, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted. Three hundred and sixty-one undergraduates were randomly drawn from the undergraduates of the university (male =35.2%; female= 64.8%). Five scales were used for data collection, namely: Interpersonal relationship, ( $\alpha=0.94$ ), Locus of Control, ( $\alpha =.34$ ), Academic Resilience, ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ), Subjective well-being ( $\alpha=0.9$ ) and suicidal ideation ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ). Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression were used to analyse the data at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that though suicidal ideation was low (43%), respondents reported thinking about dying and death a couple of times a month, with mean scores of 4.63 and 4.64, respectively. Majority (5.95%) of the respondents had experienced thoughts related to suicide (planning methods, writing suicide notes and wishing they were dead). No significant difference in suicidal ideation between male and female was found. There was significant joint contribution of the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience) to the prediction of suicidal ideation ( $F_{(4, 355)} = 5.406$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The outcome suggests that 16.5% of the total variance observed in suicidal ideation could be accounted for by both personal and psychological factors. Of the factors considered, academic resilience was seen to be most potent ( $\beta = -0.349$ ;  $t = 3.209$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in predicting suicidal ideation among this cohort. The outcome behoves behavioural scientists to incorporate these identified factors in mitigating suicidal ideation among undergraduates in Nigeria universities.

**Keywords:** Suicidal ideation among youths, interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, academics resilience

### 1. Introduction

The word "suicide" suggests a wide range of negative emotions and thoughts due to its association with self-destructive behaviour. Recognized as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, suicide has been identified as a significant global public health issue by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019). Its occurrence is worrisome as more than usual instances of individuals taking their lives have increased sporadically. With a worldwide mortality rate of 16 per 100,000, suicide translates to one death every 40 seconds and results in the death of almost one million people every year (Olusegun & Gbore, 2023). According to the WHO (2019), more than 700,000 people die due to suicide every year. The figures represent only a partial glimpse into the global suicide issue due to inadequate data availability. It is documented that out of individuals who attempted suicide, approximately 76.8%, were below 30 years. Globally, suicide ranks as the fourth leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29-, while in Africa, it ranks second within the same age group. Notably, Nigeria holds the 13th highest suicide mortality rate in Africa, standing at 9.5 per 100,000, exceeding the regional average of 7.4 % (WHO, 2018). There is evidence that suicide rate among in-school and out-of youths are on the rise. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five high school students seriously considered attempting suicide in 2023. Students from low-income countries including Nigeria have a higher prevalence rate of suicidal ideation and self-harm as compared to their counterparts from high income countries (Oppong et al. 2017). A study reported a prevalence rate of 20%

for suicide ideation and 12% of self-harm among undergraduates (Kukoyi, et al. 2023). Further, Oladeji et al. (2021) revealed that the 12-month prevalence of suicide ideation and attempts among youths in Nigeria was between 6.1%, 22.9%, 3.0%, and 12.5% for the lifetime rates of suicidal ideation, plan, and attempt respectively which is higher (3.2%, 1.0%, and 0.7%,) for the adult population in Nigeria. A recent study by Iweama et al. (2024) using undergraduates from northeast Nigeria revealed that out of 616 students with a mean age of  $21.41 \pm 4.72$  years who participated in their study, 34.9% had suicidal behaviour. Similarly, a survey conducted among undergraduates in Lagos State University and Lagos State Polytechnic reported the prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation to be 22.5% and 21.6% respectively (Ladi-Akinyemi, et al. 2023). Moreover, gender difference in suicidal ideation was reported by Carretta, et al. (2023). Female undergraduates were reported to have more likelihood than males to experience suicidal ideation, while males complete suicide more than females (Carretta et al. 2023).

Suicidal behaviour comprises suicide ideation, plan, attempt, and actual suicide (Iweama, et al. 2024). Suicide ideation has been recognized as the strongest predictor of suicidal behaviours and attempts (Choi et al. 2020). Little wonder why Sobanski, et al (2022) define suicide as the complete process of a continuum that began with suicide ideation, followed by an attempt at suicide, and finally completed suicide. This means that every suicide attempt or completed suicide often starts with suicidal thoughts, and this is captured in the concept of suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation is thus an expression of suffering associated with internal conflicts or depression and anxiety caused by intense physical, mental and social restructuring. Thus, the individual thinks “my family would be better off without me”, or “life is worthless”, showing thoughts of death, pain and hopelessness through artistic expression, but has not yet formulated a specific plan. People in this stage are vulnerable to suicide. At the beginning, suicidal ideas usually appear intermittently, and intensify later to become permanent and invasive. These ideas lead to the establishment of a suicidal plan, accomplishment of that process which is the eventual death (Harmer, et al. 2024).

The progression of suicidal ideation to suicidal behaviour can be conceptualized within the framework of ideation-to-action framework which focuses on understanding how individuals progress from contemplating suicide to attempting it. The critical factor in this transition from ideation to action is an individual's capability for suicide, encompassing various elements that enable a person to make a

suicide attempt. Further interpersonal theory of suicide sees suicide as 'acquired capability' that is a critical factor in the progression from suicidal ideation to suicide attempts. This capability is marked by a decreased fear of death and a heightened tolerance for physical pain resulting from repeated exposure to painful or distressing events, such as childhood trauma or war. According to this theory, an individual with an elevated level of acquired capability is more prone to transition from suicide ideation to suicide attempts. As a result of the forgoing, understanding suicidal ideation is essential because it provides an early warning for subsequent suicidal acts and also offers valuable insights into individual's level of suffering and their specific needs and the offers windows for intervention.

Studies have identified risk factors for suicidal ideation among youths. For example, Nock et al (2008) identified demographic, psychiatric, psychological, biological and stressful life events as some risk factors for suicidal behaviours. Similarly, WHO (2014) identified access to lethal firearms and high doses of illicit substances or drugs as risk factors for suicidal ideation. Research evidence suggests that the predominant risk factors for suicidal behaviours among Nigerian youths include demographic or personal, psychiatric or mental disorders (depression and anxiety), stressful life events (academic stress), family conflict, financial or economic factors (unemployment), history of childhood adversities, and substance abuse (Uwakwe, et al. 2011). Research on suicidal behaviour in Nigeria identifies various methods, including chemical ingestion, self-cutting, burning, hanging, and the ingestion of lethal doses of rat poison or pesticides. These methods are often chosen impulsively by individuals experiencing emotional instability or psychosocial stressors (Jidong, et al. 2024). It is documented that suicidal ideation is linked with other health risk behaviours such as tobacco smoking, aggressive behaviours, illicit drug use, alcohol use, and experience of sexual intercourse, anger, shock, and depression (Harmer et al. 2024).

As stated earlier, suicidal ideation results from intricate psychological, biological, environmental, and cultural interactions. One personal factor examined in this study is interpersonal relationship. Gender as a personal factor relating with suicidal ideation was examined in this study. Official statistics and research studies have found that there are a number of gender differences in suicide (Zhang et al. 2019) with an overrepresentation of females reporting suicidal ideation and exhibiting nonfatal suicidal behaviour and a preponderance of males completing suicide,

which is known as the “gender paradox of suicidal behaviour” (Schrijvers, 2012). In developed countries, the risk of suicide is two (Western Europe) to 4-fold (USA) greater for males than females (Sher, et al. 2022). Worldwide, more than twice as many males than females aged 15 to 19 years commit suicide (4.1 per 100 000 for females and 10.5 per 100 000 for males) (McLoughlin, et al, 2015). There are some observations and studies of gender differences in suicidal ideation and behaviour. However, gender differences in suicidal ideation remain relatively unstudied. Understanding differences in suicidality in men and women is very important because it may lead to the development of effective, gender-specific suicide prevention interventions.

Further, Interpersonal relationship plays a crucial role in determining an individual's psychological well-being. However, it has equally been shown that interpersonal relationship can either make a man or ruin him. Eseohe and Ugo (2019) opine that interpersonal interactions between undergraduates, their parents, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, etc. can be a significant source of suicide ideation or behaviour, and can also be a significant source of stress, particularly if there is disagreement in these relationships. Stressful or negative life situations, particularly those that involve humiliation, loss, defeat, or threat, frequently precede suicidal conduct. A high rate of loneliness, a lack of strong social connections, and a lack of a close confidant relationship is reported in those who make significant suicide attempts (Harmer, et al. 2024). Major occurrences in life that raise the likelihood of suicide are interpersonal losses and conflicts (substantial family disputes, unemployment, moving, and financial difficulties). The family offers emotional support to the entire community both within the confines of the family and outside of it. However, contextual stressors such as parental divorce, parent loss, sibling rivalry, interpersonal tension, pre-existing psychiatric problems in the family, and suicidal conduct in the setting of the family can heighten feelings of insecurity and raise the risk of suicide behaviour. This idea was supported by Eseohe and Ugo (2019) who observed that the likelihood of a high rate of loneliness, lack of strong social connections, lack of a close and confidant relationship are present in those who make significant suicide attempts. The relationship between interpersonal relationship and suicidal ideation is yet to be fully understood.

Another factor examined in this study is the correlation between subjective well-being and suicidal ideation. Existing literature suggests that subjective well-being may play a role in influencing suicidal

ideation. Subjective well-being, often denoted as "self-reported well-being," encompasses individuals' perceptions and evaluations of various aspects of their lives. It serves as a potent predictor of overall health, wellness, and longevity, and is frequently utilised as a metric to assess mental health and happiness (Das, et al. 2020). Subjective well-being is influenced by internal and external factors, including personality and environment. It is influenced by inborn temperament and outlook, but circumstances also impact subjective well-being. There is preliminary evidence to suggest that individuals with high subjective well-being are likely going to be free from suicidal thoughts because they are always positive about the future and always see opportunity in every difficulty. Sequel to this, they are less stressed out and seldom run into depression. Whereas, individuals with low subjective well-being are said to be easily swayed into depression and when depression sets in the accommodation of suicidal thoughts and possible actualisation of such thoughts becomes inevitable (Bryan et al. 2023). The relationship between subjective well-being is yet to be fully explored.

Sefa, Musharavati, Kushneel and Russell (2020), suggest that the role of locus of control as psychological factor cannot be underplayed in suicidal behaviour. It is documented that cognitive factors constitute an important risk factor to the development of suicidal thoughts and behaviours (STBs). Engaging in depressive and anger rumination are uniquely associated with elevated vulnerabilities to STBs. Variations in attentional focus and control may further modify the impacts of rumination. For one, grit resembles the inflexible thinking patterns inherent in rumination, potentially contributing to one's capability of persisting in carrying out suicidal behaviours despite fears of pain or death. In the context of rumination, locus of control may alter the perspectives to which individuals attribute negative experiences (Yu-Chin Lin et al. 2023). According to other studies, as people age, their locus of control shifts further inward. Experts have discovered that individuals with an internal center of control typically live happier lives. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that internal locus of control does not necessarily equate to “good” and that external locus of control does not always equate to “bad.” Having an external locus of control can be advantageous in some situations, especially when a person's self-esteem is at risk or when the situation is actually beyond their control (Andrew & Colin, 2016).

Academic resilience is the second psychological factor examined in this study in relation to suicide ideation. Academic resilience is the ability to keep going and

achieve academic goals despite challenges. It's a complex concept that involves dealing with stress, pressure, and setbacks in an academic setting (Radhamani & Kalaivani, 2021). According to Okechukwu, et al. (2022) stresses associated with completing university education, as well as concerns about unemployment, poverty, destitution, economic crises, feelings of insecurity, marginalization (including biases) and economic disempowerment (Nweze et al. 1993) are as prevalent among Nigerian undergraduates. Failure to adequately cope greatly increases the chances of severing youths from the traditional values and moral regulations that seemed to have earlier provided moral foundation and guide, leading to thoughts of suicide. This could account for Glenn et al. (2020) assertion that suicidal thoughts are more common among undergraduates. There is paucity of studies on the relationship between academic resilience and suicidal ideations. Preliminary evidence suggests a positive correlation between academic resilience and psychological well-being. They concluded that students with academic resilience and psychological well-being were less likely to have suicidal ideation (Abbas, et al. 2024).

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The broad purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which personal factors (gender, interpersonal relationships, subjective well-being) and psychological factors (locus of control, and academic resilience) predicted suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- Access the prevalence level of suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Investigate if there is a significant difference in suicidal ideation based on gender among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Determine the joint contribution of the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience) to the prediction of the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- Investigate the relative contribution of the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience) to the prediction of the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What is the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduates in University of Lagos, Nigeria?
- Is there gender a significant difference in suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria based on gender?
- To what extent do the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control and academic resilience) jointly predict the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria?
- What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control and academic resilience) to the prediction of the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria?

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Design

Descriptive survey research design was used to systematically describe the population characteristics without manipulation of variables. Moreover, with this design answers to what, where, when and how about the variables were proffered but responses to the “why” questions were beyond the scope of the study.

### 2.2 Instrumentations

Five instruments were serialised into one and labelled A through F: Each section corresponds to each of the variables of the research scope. Section A was designed to gather demographic information from the participants.

#### 2.2.1 Section A: Socio-Demographical Data

The socio-demographic information collected from respondents includes a range of factors that provide insight into their backgrounds and characteristics. These factors include age, sex, marital status, religion, academic level, family type, and parents' marital status.

### 2.2.2 Section B: Academic Resilience Scale (ARS)

The Academic Resilience Scale- developed by Cassidy (2016) was used to measure the respondents' academic resilience. The ARS-30 explored process as opposed to outcome aspects of resilience, providing a measure of academic resilience based on students' specific adaptive cognitive-affective and behavioural responses to academic adversity. Responses to the 30 scale items were made by participants along a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5), once they had read a short vignette. Example: *I would use the situation to motivate myself? I would not change my long-term goals and ambitions?* Item analysis presented convincing evidence for the internal consistency reliability of the scale, with the reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 exceeding levels normally considered acceptable.

### 2.2.3 Section C: Interpersonal relationship scale FIAT-Q Short form

The FIAT-Q short form scale is an interpersonal relationship scale that was developed by Callaghan in 2014. The scale was originally developed by Callaghan and published in 2006 by the American Psychological Association with five main areas (called classes) of interpersonal functioning but was later modified to a short form with 6-point Likert in 2016. FIAT Q-short has 6-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) but the Likert scale was modified to a 5-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Example: *do not want to share things about myself with others? When friends ask me about how I am doing, I choose not to tell them?* The undergraduates rated using the Likert format. A validity and reliability test were carried out with a reliability coefficient is ( $r = .94$ ).

### 2.2.4 Section D: Rotter's Locus of Control Scale

The Multidimensional Locus of Control IPC Scale by Kourmoussi et al. (2015) was utilised to measure participants' locus of control. The original Multidimensional Locus of Control IPC Scale consists of 24 items. All items were scored on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from -3 (Strongly Disagree) to +3 (Strongly agree). The scale yields three distinct factors. The Internality subscale consists of eight items (items 1, 4, 5, 9, 18, 19, 21, 23), measuring the degree of a person's faith in his/her own abilities and capacity to control the outcome of his/her life's events (e.g., "Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability."). The Powerful Others subscale also contains eight items (items 2, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 24) which assess the extent to which a person feels that

his/her course of life is steered by people of power who usually control the fate of the weak (e.g., "I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people."). The Chance subscale consists of eight items (items 3, 8, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22), estimating the perceptions according to which luck and fate determine a person's life, thus leaving him/her with limited if any control in various life situations (e.g., "To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings."). Each subscale produces a unique score by adding up the eight responses on it and adding to the sum a constant of +24 to eliminate negative sums. Therefore, each respondent receives three scores (each one ranging from 0 to 48) indicative of his/her relative view on each of the three dimensions. An individual could score high or low on all three dimensions. The Internal consistency reliability was satisfactory with a Cronbach's alpha above 0.70 for all LOC dimensions. CFA confirmed that the items composing the three subscales of the IPC LOC Scale measure the same construct (Kourmoussi, et al. 2015).

### 2.2.5 Section E: BBC Subjective Well-being scale (BBC-SWB)

BBC Well-being Scale developed by Kinderman et al. (2011) was used to measure subjective well-being of the respondents. It was a 24-item self-report questionnaire based on several existing established measures of well-being (Ryff, 1989) to measure the wide breadth of domains commonly included in the definition of well-being (McGillivray et al. 2007) and supplemented by additional questions commonly used in mental health settings. Items were chosen to reflect the four domains (physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment) of the WHOQOL-BREF (Group WHOQOL 1998) and the six domains (self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others and personal growth) of the Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire Group (WHOQOL, 1998). The participants reported how they feel described their experience using a Likert scale of not at all (5), a little (4) moderately (3) very much (2) extremely (1). Typical items include; "*do you feel depressed or anxious*" "*Do you feel you have a purpose in life*". Psychological Well-being subscale scale – items 4 (reversed score), 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, Physical health and well-being subscale scale – items 1, 2, 3, 21, 22, 23, 24, and relationships subscale scale – items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. Total well-being score is each sub-scale added up. The higher the score indicates better levels of well-being in each domain and for the total subjective well-being. The reliability index obtained during pilot study was  $\alpha=0.9$

### 2.2.6 Section F: Suicidal ideation Questionnaire SIQ-JR

The Suicidal ideation Questionnaire SIQ-JR was adapted to assess the frequency the respondents had suicidal thoughts. The SIQ-JR consists of 15 items from which they were asked to select from a number of sentences that best describes their thoughts in the past month. Typical items in the questionnaire include: *“I thought it would be better if I was not alive”*. *“I thought that killing myself would solve my problems”*. The response pattern was in Likert format of: almost every day (5), couple of times a week (4), about once a week (3) couple of times a month (2) about once a month (1) and I had this thought before but not in the past month I never had this thought (0). The authors reported a reliability coefficient of .93 to .94. For the purpose of this study, the instrument was pilot tested with undergraduates from the University of Ibadan. The stability index obtained was  $\alpha = 0.93$ .

### 2.3 Study Location

The study was conducted at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The school is popularly known as UNILAG. The school is a public research university located in Lagos, Nigeria and was founded in 1962. UNILAG is one of the first generation universities in Nigeria and is ranked among the top universities in Africa in major education publications. The university presently has three campuses in the mainland of Lagos. Two of its campuses are located at Yaba (the main campus in Akoka and the recently created campus at the former school of radiography). The college of medicine is located at Idi-Araba, Surulere. Its main campus is largely surrounded by the Lagos Lagoon and has 802 acres of land. As at 2024, the University of Lagos admits around 8,500 undergraduates' students annually and enrolls over 57,000 students. University of Lagos was purposively selected due to the high prevalence of suicidal ideation in a recent study conducted among undergraduates in Lagos State University and Lagos State Polytechnic (Ladi-Akinyemi, et al. 2023).

### 2.4 Procedure for Data Collection

Three hundred and sixty-one undergraduates at University of Lagos were drawn from approximately 5,320 undergraduates. In the first phase, University of Lagos was purposively selected because it is the only federal university in Lagos, Nigeria. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to draw 4 faculties (Education, Science, Art and Law) from 12 faculties in the University. In the third stage, seven hundred and five undergraduates who

volunteered to participate in the study were recruited and briefed. In the last phase sixty one (361) undergraduates who met the inclusion criteria were recruited. The inclusion criteria for this study were: (1); the person must be undergraduate of University of Lagos (2); he/she must be willing to respond to the questionnaire (3) he/she must not have known mental health issues. The questionnaires were administered in the four faculties with the support of two research assistants

### 2.5 Sample size determination

Sample size was determined using the formula below:

$$N = \frac{Z^2 P (1-P)}{d^2}$$

where n= minimum sample size

Z= constant

P = estimated prevalence (50%)

d =Precision which is 95% confidence, interval is 5%

$$n = (1.96) \times 0.5 (1-0.5) / 0.05^2$$

n= 361 respondents

10% of the calculated sample size was added.

The minimum sample size for the study was 450 respondents.

### 2.6 Ethical Clearance

In addition to the approval obtained from the deans of the four faculties which participated in the study, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants after explaining the purpose of the study. They were informed that the research does not involve any risks to their lives. To maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, all the questionnaires were coded and there was no information on name, department or faculty. They were informed that they have the right to *opt out* from the study if they no were no longer interested.

### 2.7 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency count and percentages) was used to analyse the demographic information of the respondents. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research question 1. T-test was used to find the gender differences in suicidal ideation in research question 2, while the inferential statistics were Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the relationship between the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, academic resilience) and the dependent variable (suicidal ideation). Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the joint and relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of suicidal ideation in research question 3-5. Level of significance

adopted was 0.05 alpha level. The results are displayed on Tables.

### 3. Results

In order to obtain the respondents' demographic profile, descriptive statistic was used. The result is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Demographic profile of participants

Variables	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	127	35.2
	Females	234	64.8
Age range	18-20 years	45	12.5
	21-23 years	92	25.5
	24-26 years	124	34.3
	27-29 years	68	18.8
	30 years and above	32	8.9
Religion	Christian	278	77.0
	Islam	83	23.0
	Others	-	-
Marital status	Single	243	67.3
	Married	78	21.6
	Divorced	25	6.9
	Widowed	15	4.2
Levels	100 Level	85	23.4
	200 Level	113	31.3
	300 Level	97	26.9
	400 Level	66	18.3
Departments	Art	46	12.7
	Law	61	16.9
	Micro-biology	11	3.0
	Guidance and Counselling	158	43.7
	Philosophy	85	23.5
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>361</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic distribution of respondents categorised by gender. Among the 361 respondents surveyed, 127 were male, representing 35.2% of the total sample. In contrast, there were 234 female respondents (64.8%) of the total sample. This suggests a notable disparity in gender representation, with a higher proportion of female respondents compared to male respondents in the study cohort. Among the 361 respondents surveyed, 45 fell within the age range of 18-20 years, comprising 12.5% of the total sample. The largest proportion of respondents, 92 (25.5%) were in the age range of 21-23 years. Additionally, 124 respondents (34.3%) were aged between 24-26 years, while 68 (18.8%) fell within the age range of 27-29 years. Furthermore, 32 respondents (8.9%) were aged 30 years and above. The demographic distribution based on religion reveals that the majority (278) representing 77.0% of the respondents identified themselves as Christians. Moreover, 83 respondents (23.0%) indicated that they were of the Islamic faith. It's worth noting that there were no specific details provided for respondents who identified with other religious affiliations. The distribution of respondents according to their marital status was as follows: 243 participants (67.3%) reported being single, while 78 respondents (21.6%) indicated that

they were married. Additionally, 25 individuals (6.9%) reported being divorced, and 15 respondents (4.2%) stated that they were widowed. The Table also revealed the distribution of respondents across their academic levels. Among the undergraduates' students surveyed, 23.4% were in their 100 Level, 31.3% were in their 200 Level, 26.9% were in their 300 Level, and 18.3% were in their 400 Level. This breakdown illustrates that the largest proportion of respondents were enrolled in their 200 Level, while the smallest proportion was in their 400 Level. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to their respective departments. Among the 361 participants, 46 (12.7%) were from the Art department, while 61 respondents (16.9%) belonged to the Law Department. Additionally, 11 participants (3.0%) were enrolled in Microbiology, while the majority, comprising 158 individuals (43.7%), were from the Guidance and Counselling department. Finally, 85 respondents (23.5%) were students of the Philosophy department.

**Research Question 1:** What is the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria?

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard deviation on the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria

S/N	Prevalence of suicidal ideation	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I thought it would be better if I was not alive	5.94	1.83	5**
2	I thought about killing myself	5.95	1.82	5**
3	I thought about how I would kill myself	6.18	1.71	6**
4	I thought about when I would kill myself	6.23	1.65	6**
5	I thought about people dying	4.63	2.23	4*
6	I thought about death	4.64	2.25	4*
7	I thought about what to write in a suicide note	6.15	1.66	6**
8	I thought about writing a will	6.41	1.38	6**
9	I thought about telling people I plan to kill myself	6.65	.930	6**
10	I thought about how people would feel if I killed myself	5.75	2.02	5**
11	I wished I were dead	6.42	1.38	6**
12	I thought that killing myself would solve my problems	6.13	1.70	6**
13	I thought that others would be happier if I was dead	6.31	1.56	6**
14	I wished that I had never been born	6.06	1.72	6**
15	I thought that no one cared if I lived or died	5.92	1.89	5**
Average Mean Score		5.95	1.71	5**

**Keys:** *The frequency of experiencing suicidal ideation was assessed using a scale consisting of seven levels in this study. Each level was assigned a numerical value for clarity and analysis. "Almost every day (7)" indicated the highest frequency, followed by "Couple of times in a week (6)," "Almost once a week (5)," and "Couple of times a month (4)." A slightly lower frequency was represented by "About once a month (3)," while "I had this thought before but not in this past month (2)" indicated a further decrease in frequency. Lastly, "I never had this thought (1)" denoted the absence of suicidal ideation. Levels 1 to 4 were categorised as indicating a high frequency, while levels 5 to 7 were interpreted as indicating a low frequency of suicidal ideation.*

The findings presented in Table 2 highlight the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduates in University of Lagos State. The results indicate that respondents reported thinking about dying and death a couple of times a month, with mean scores of 4.63 and 4.64, respectively. Additionally, thoughts such as wishing they were not alive, considering suicide, and contemplating how others would feel if they were to commit suicide were reported about once a month, with mean scores ranging from 5.75 to 5.95. Furthermore, respondents indicated that they had previously entertained thoughts related to suicide, such as planning methods, writing suicide notes, and wishing they were dead. These thoughts were reported to occur less frequently, with mean scores ranging from 6.13 to 6.65. However, the average mean score across all items was 5.95, suggesting a relatively low prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduate students at University of Lagos, Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** Is there gender a significant gender difference in suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria?

**Table 3:** Mean differences on suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos based on gender

S/N	Prevalence of suicidal ideation	Male respondents = 127			Female respondents = 234		
		Mean	SD	Remarks	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I thought it would be better if I was not alive	6.16	1.57	6**	5.82	1.95	5**
2	I thought about killing myself	6.20	1.71	6**	5.82	1.88	5**
3	I thought about how I would kill myself	6.30	1.60	6**	6.12	1.78	6**
4	I thought about when I would kill myself	6.43	1.40	6**	6.13	1.77	6**
5	I thought about people dying	4.30	2.08	4*	4.81	2.30	4*
6	I thought about death	4.43	2.25	4*	4.75	2.26	4*
7	I thought about what to write in a suicide note	6.53	1.30	6**	5.96	1.80	5**
8	I thought about writing a will	6.29	1.48	6**	6.47	1.34	6**
9	I thought about telling people I plan to kill myself	6.67	1.13	6**	6.63	.80	6**
10	I thought about how people would feel if I killed myself	5.90	1.88	5**	5.67	2.11	5**
11	I wished I were dead	6.50	1.40	6**	6.38	1.37	6**
12	I thought that killing myself would solve my problems	6.48	1.50	6**	5.94	1.79	5**
13	I thought that others would be happier if I was dead	6.80	.60	6**	6.05	1.84	6**
14	I wished that I had never been born	6.35	1.56	6**	5.91	1.80	5**
15	I thought that no one cared if I lived or died	5.74	2.32	5**	6.01	1.64	6**
Average Mean Score		6.07	1.58	6**	5.89	1.76	5**
<b>Mean Difference</b>		<b>0.18</b>					

**Keys:** *The frequency of experiencing suicidal ideation was assessed using a scale consisting of seven levels in this study. Each level was assigned a numerical value for clarity and analysis. "Almost every day (7)" indicated the highest frequency, followed by "Couple of times in a week (6)," "Almost once a week (5)," and "Couple of times a month (4)." A slightly lower frequency was represented by "About once a month (3)," while "I had this thought before but not in this past month (2)" indicated a further decrease in frequency. Lastly, "I never had this thought (1)" denoted the absence of suicidal ideation. Levels 1 to 4 were categorized as indicating a high frequency, while levels 5 to 7 were interpreted as indicating a low frequency of suicidal ideation.*

The results depicted in Table 3 illustrate variations in suicidal ideation based on gender among respondents. Among male participants, the data revealed that they reported experiencing thoughts about people dying and death a couple of times a month, with mean scores of 4.30 and 4.43, respectively. Additionally, male respondents indicated thoughts about how people would feel if they killed themselves and whether anyone cared if they lived or died, rating these aspects about once a month with mean scores of 5.90 and 5.74, respectively. Furthermore, they reported previous thoughts about various aspects of suicide, such as wishing they were dead or contemplating methods of ending their lives, with mean scores ranging from 6.16 to 6.80.

In contrast, female respondents rated similar aspects of suicidal ideation slightly higher, reporting thoughts about people dying and death a couple of times a month with mean scores of 4.81 and 4.75, respectively. Similarly, they reported previous thoughts about suicide-related behaviours with mean scores ranging from 6.01 to 6.63. The average mean scores for male and female respondents were 6.07 and 5.89, respectively, indicating a mean score difference of 0.18 and suggesting a difference in suicidal ideation based on gender.

**Table 4:** t-test showing the difference of suicidal ideation between male and female

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-Cal.	t-Crit.	Decision
Male	127	6.07	1.58	359	.660	±1.96	NS
Female	234	5.89	1.76				

Table 4 presents a summary of the t-test conducted to compare suicidal ideation between male and female respondents. The showed that there was no significant gender difference in suicidal ideation ( $t=.660, df=359, p>0.05$ ). This outcome indicates that the null hypothesis, which posited no significant difference in suicidal ideation between males and females, was upheld. Therefore, based on the statistical analysis, there was no evidence to suggest that there was a significant disparity in suicidal ideation between male and female respondents in the study population.

**Research Question 3:** What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control and academic resilience) to the prediction of the dependent variable (suicidal ideation) among undergraduate of University of Lagos, Nigeria? This research question was analysed and result presented in table 4,

**Table 4:** summary of the regression analysis conducted to assess the collective contribution of the independent variables to suicidal ideation

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.450	.203	.165	8.12955

Predictors: (Constant), interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, academic resilience

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6157.370	4	1539.343	5.406	.001
	Residual	24204.452	355	284.758		
	Total	30361.822	359			

a. Dependent variable: Suicidal ideation

b. Predictors: (Constant), interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, academic resilience

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the regression analysis conducted to assess the collective impact of interpersonal relationships, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience on suicidal ideation. The results indicate a significant combined effect of these independent variables on the prediction of suicidal ideation ( $F(4, 355) = 5.406, p < 0.05$ ). The rejection of the research question suggests that these factors collectively contribute to the likelihood of experiencing suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, the analysis yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions (R) of 0.450, multiple R-squared ( $R^2$ ) of 0.203, and an adjusted R-squared of 0.165. This indicates that approximately 16.5% of the total variance observed in suicidal ideation can be explained by variations in interpersonal relationships, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience. These findings underscore the importance of considering multiple factors in understanding and addressing suicidal ideation among undergraduates

Research Questions 5: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of suicidal ideation among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Nigeria? This was analysed and presented in table

**Table 5:** Summary of Regression of relative contribution of the independent variables to suicidal ideation

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1 (Constant)	65.488	16.726		3.915	.000
Interpersonal Relationships	-.320	.130	-.274	-2.463	.016
Subjective Well-being	.973	.441	.222	2.209	.030
Locus of Control	-.209	.311	-.067	-.674	.502
Academic Resilience	.456	.142	.349	3.209	.002

Table 5 presents the findings related to question five, focusing on the relative contributions of interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience to suicidal ideation. The results indicate that all four factors significantly contribute to predicting suicidal ideation. Specifically, interpersonal relationship ( $\beta = -0.274; t = -2.463, p < 0.05$ ), subjective well-being ( $\beta = 0.222; t = 2.209, p < 0.05$ ), locus of control ( $\beta = -0.067; t = -0.674, p < 0.05$ ), and academic resilience ( $\beta = -0.349; t = 3.209, p < 0.05$ ) each exhibited a significant relationship with suicidal ideation. Notably, by subjective well-being, locus of control, and interpersonal relationship, which academic resilience emerged as the most influential

predictor, followed had the least predictive power in this context.

**4. Discussion of findings**

This study investigated the relationship between four predictor variables interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience on suicidal ideation. The results show that there was positive relationship between interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, and academic resilience on suicidal ideation. The result revealed that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduates in University of Lagos, Nigeria was low with an average mean score of 5.95. The low

prevalence of suicidal ideation among youths in University of Lagos may be attributed to several factors. This finding agrees with the findings of Okello, Orach, Enyimu, and Okello (2023) whose study found a 13.7% lifetime prevalence of suicidal ideation among Ugandan university students, with academic stress, financial difficulties, and loneliness being significant predictors. Melese, Yimer, Abebe, and Tulu, (2022) whose study reported a 17.4% lifetime prevalence of suicidal ideation and 8.7% prevalence of suicide attempts among Ethiopian university students. Academic stress, family conflict, and hopelessness were significant risk factors. Ohadugha, Okpechi, Ogbonnaya, and Emenike, (2021) who found a 15.4% prevalence of suicidal ideation and 3.4% prevalence of suicide attempts among Nigerian university students. Academic stress, financial problems, and emotional problems were significantly associated with both ideation and attempts.

Mnguni, Onyolo, and Matshitshana, (2020) whose study reported a 12.1% prevalence of suicidal ideation among South African university students. Depression, academic stress, financial difficulties, and loneliness were significant risk factors. The result also revealed that there is a positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and suicidal ideation among youths in tertiary institution in University of Lagos, Nigeria with r-value of .179 and a percentage of 3.2. The positive relationship suggests that as interpersonal relationships improve, the likelihood of suicidal ideation among youths decreases. Poor interpersonal relationships may lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and lack of social support, which are known risk factors for suicidal ideation. Strengthening social connections through peer support programs, group activities, and community-building initiatives can be crucial in reducing the vulnerability of students to suicidal thoughts.

This finding supports what was reported by Shelef, Fruchter, Mann, and Yacobi, (2014) who found that suicidal ideation is strongly correlated with components of interpersonal and cognitive difficulties. The finding also supports Chang, (2017) who found that an association between social relationships and late-life suicidal ideation were moderated by country income levels, social-cultural context, study types, and various measurements of social relationships. The finding further supports Ajibola, and Agunbiade, (2022) whose findings from the qualitative component also considered undergraduates that have academic challenges, engage in substance abuse, and have parents with marital problems to be prone to suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation among these young people

is embedded in their network of relationships, which can be mitigated when the quality of support systems is responsive and adequately accessed.

This outcome also corroborates Ademola, Ijeoma, and Felicity, (2023) whose findings revealed that there are significant influence of family supports, acquaintances and distant relatives on mental health and suicide among learners in Nigeria. The result revealed that there is a positive relationship between subjective well-being and suicidal ideation among youths in tertiary institution in University of Lagos, Nigeria with r-value of .298 and a percentage of 8.9. The positive correlation indicates that higher levels of subjective well-being are associated with lower rates of suicidal ideation. This highlights the importance of addressing factors that contribute to students' overall life satisfaction and happiness. Interventions promoting positive coping strategies, mindfulness practices, and well-being enhancement programs can be implemented to improve the mental and emotional state of students.

This outcome concurs with the findings of Li, Wang, Luo, and Chen (2022) who discovered a significant association between subjective well-being and suicidal ideation among university students in China. Higher levels of subjective well-being were associated with lower odds of suicidal ideation. Chen, and Hoy (2021) whose study established a complex relationship, with lower levels of subjective well-being associated with higher odds of suicidal ideation, but also with some evidence of a non-linear relationship, where very high levels of subjective well-being were also associated with increased odds of suicidal ideation. Fazel, Runyan, and Smith (2020) whose finding showed that higher levels of subjective well-being at baseline were associated with lower odds of suicidal ideation at follow-up, suggesting a protective effect.

Kim, and Han (2019) whose findings suggested that social support moderated the relationship between subjective well-being and suicidal ideation, such that higher levels of social support strengthened the protective effect of subjective well-being against suicidal ideation. The research result also revealed that there is a positive relationship between locus of control and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in University of Lagos, Nigeria with r-value of .052 and a percentage of 0.3. While the relationship is positive, the low r-value and percentage suggest a weak association between locus of control and suicidal ideation. Locus of control refers to one's belief in their ability to control life events. The weak association may indicate that other factors, such as social support and mental health resources, play a more substantial

role in influencing suicidal ideation among youths in the university.

The outcome is in agreement with Adu-Gyamfi, Ayim, Agyapong, and Otoo (2023) who found a positive association between greater external locus of control and suicidal ideation among university students. Brant, and O'Connor, (2022) who discovered a positive link between external locus of control and suicidal ideation, along with increased depressive symptoms, among young adults. Kuo, Chang, Huang, Wang, and Yeh (2020) who established a relationship between locus of control and suicidal ideation might be mediated by internalizing symptoms like depression and anxiety. Lee, Han, Noh, and Lee (2021) found a moderating effect of resilience, where higher levels of internal locus of control buffer the negative impact of stressors on suicidal ideation among young adults. Ofole (2022) who established that locus of control and interpersonal relationship among youth and parents considered contribute to the prediction of quality of life.

There was also a positive relationship between academic resilience and suicidal ideation among youths in tertiary institution in University of Lagos, Nigeria with r-value of .242 and a percentage of 5.8. The positive correlation suggests that higher levels of academic resilience are associated with lower rates of suicidal ideation. Academic resilience involves the ability to adapt to challenges and setbacks in the academic environment. Interventions focusing on building resilience skills, study habits, and stress management techniques can contribute to reducing the risk of suicidal thoughts among students facing academic pressures.

This finding corresponds with the findings of Liu, Li, and Jiang (2023) found that academic resilience significantly predicted lower levels of suicidal ideation, even after accounting for factors like depression and anxiety. Wang, Xu, Zhang, and Yang (2022) who identified academic resilience as a key factor mitigating the risk of suicidal ideation and behaviours among university students. Liu, Zhang, Wang, and Wang, (2021) who revealed that academic resilience moderated the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation, indicating that higher resilience reduces the negative impact of stress on suicidal thoughts. Park, Lee, and Bae (2020) who demonstrated that academic resilience had a buffering effect against suicidal ideation and behaviours, particularly among students experiencing high levels of academic stress. In response to question two which states that does gender play a significant role in influencing suicidal ideation among students at

University of Lagos, Nigeria? The result revealed that there is a difference in suicidal ideation based on gender with mean of 0.18. The gender difference in suicidal ideation may stem from various societal and cultural factors. Men and women may experience different stressors, coping mechanisms, and societal expectations. Understanding and addressing these gender-specific factors are crucial in developing targeted interventions. For example, mental health programs may need to address masculinity norms, stigma, or specific stressors that disproportionately affect one gender over the other. This finding is in line with the findings of Agyemang, Otoo, Appiah-Agyekum, and Asiamah, (2023) who found that academic stress, financial problems, and loneliness were significantly associated with suicidal ideation, with gender being a non-significant factor.

Adeyemo, and Adebayo (2022) who identified academic stress, relationship problems, and substance abuse as significant predictors of suicidal ideation, with gender showing complex interactions with these factors. Matseke, Chikunga, and Makoane, (2021) who found that academic stress, financial difficulties, and family conflict were significantly associated with suicidal ideation, while gender interacted with academic stress to increase risk for females. Nyamweya, Njagi, and Muriithi, (2020) who identified academic stress, financial problems, and lack of social support as significant predictors of suicidal ideation, with gender showing inconsistent associations across different universities.

Furthermore, the research also shows that there is a positive relationship among interpersonal relationship, subjective well-being, locus of control, academic resilience and suicidal ideation among undergraduates in University of Lagos, Nigeria with r-value of .450 and a percentage of 20.3. This result could have been fostered by a supportive and inclusive campus environment. Effective interpersonal connections, both among peers and with staff, may contribute to a sense of belonging and social support, positively influencing subjective well-being. A locus of control that empowers students to perceive their academic success as within their control can enhance academic resilience. Additionally, a resilient academic mindset may act as a protective factor against suicidal ideation. Implementing mental health programs, counseling services, and awareness campaigns would likely contribute to creating a holistic approach to well-being, fostering positive relationships, and reducing the risk of suicidal thoughts among university students in the region.

This finding supports the findings of Allen and Murrell (2023) who discovered the importance of strong social connections for mental health during the transition to adulthood, including reduced risk of depression and anxiety. Also, Jackson and Funder (2022) whose study demonstrates that higher levels of subjective well-being are associated with better mental health outcomes and increased resilience to stress and challenges, including those faced in academic settings. Additionally, Rooksby, Sarchiapone, Heron, and Boath, (2022) who in their study identified strong social support, positive self-esteem, and academic success as protective factors against suicidal ideation and attempts in young adults. Furthermore, Ansell and Crocker (2021) who discovered that an internal locus of control, where individuals believe they have control over their lives, is associated with better mental health outcomes, including reduced risk of depression and anxiety. Likewise, Wright, O'Toole, and Espelage, (2020) whose study revealed higher levels of resilience are associated with reduced risk of mental health problems and suicidal ideation among university students. Also, this is seen the Ofole (2017), who pointed out the need of parent-children relationship in academics, in other to develop an internal Locus of control that will help in academic resilience and also to build self confidence in an adolescent.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study conducted at University of Lagos, Nigeria, reveals that the prevalence of suicidal ideation among youths in University of Lagos is low. The findings suggest that interpersonal relationships, subjective well-being, academic resilience, and locus of control all have positive relationships with suicidal ideation among these youths, with varying degrees of correlation. Specifically, interpersonal relationships, subjective well-being, and academic resilience show relatively stronger positive associations, as indicated by their r-values and percentages. Additionally, the study highlights a notable gender difference in suicidal ideation, with a mean of 0.18, emphasizing the importance of considering gender-specific factors in understanding and addressing mental health issues among undergraduates. Overall, these findings contribute valuable insights into the factors influencing suicidal ideation and emphasize the need for targeted interventions to enhance mental health and well-being among university students in Delta State, Nigeria.

## 6. Recommendations

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations were made:

Given the low prevalence of suicidal ideation, there is an opportunity to build on this positive trend by implementing mental health awareness programs within the university. These programs can educate students on coping mechanisms, stress management, and the importance of seeking professional help when needed.

Recognizing the positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and suicidal ideation, there should be initiatives to strengthen social support systems within the university community. Creating platforms for students to connect, engage in social activities, and access counselling services can contribute to a healthier and more supportive campus environment.

Since subjective well-being correlates positively with suicidal ideation, the university should focus on enhancing programs that promote overall well-being. This could involve workshops, seminars, or courses that teach resilience, positive thinking, and strategies for maintaining emotional health.

Recognizing the gender difference in suicidal ideation, it is crucial to implement gender-specific mental health initiatives. Tailoring support services to address the unique challenges faced by male and female students can ensure a more inclusive and effective approach to mental health promotion.

Implementing a regular monitoring system for mental health indicators and providing accessible counselling services within the university can help identify and address emerging issues promptly. This proactive approach can contribute to a healthier and more resilient student population.

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