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MICROSYSTEM INTERACTION AS PREDICTOR OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents in school face the challenge of navigating safely through adolescence in a world full of depressive challenges. As adolescents progress through this stage, they face an increasing number of depressive challenges, which can lead to suicidal behavior. Although parents and peers play an important role in socializing their adolescents to deal with life challenges, it is unclear how well the ecological model predicts suicidal behavior in school-aged adolescents. The study investigated how peers, parent-child relationship predicts suicidal behaviours among in–school adolescents in South East, Nigeria. The study was guided by one research questions. Correlational research design was used and the sample consisted of 4550 in- adolescents in the senior secondary school selected using multi-stage procedure. The instruments for data collection were, Microsystem of In-School Adolescents Questionnaire (MISAQ), made up 8 items and gave reliability coefficient of .82 and In-School Adolescents Suicidal Behaviours Questionnaire (IASBQ), *made up of 7 items which gave reliability coefficient of .82. The Research question was answered using Simple Regression Analysis at 0.05 Level of Significance. The results showed that many of the adolescents had good interactions in their Microsystem. It was concluded that Microsystem is a significant predictor of in-school adolescents' suicidal behaviours. The Ministry of Education and the school Management Board should keep trained resident school counsellor or psychologist who do not teach for them to identify students with depressive behaviours, which are precursors to suicidal bwhaviours. Government should organise workshops and seminars for parents to enable them recognise the individuals' talents and gifts. Also parent should be advice to listens to their children in other to understand their concerns and reassure them it will be better Health educators should find innovative ways of educating the adolescents on how to cope with the challenges of life, using peer and media since it has been found to be a predictor of sexual risk behaviours.*

Keywords: Suicide, In-School, Microsystem, Adolescents, Relationship, Suicidal Behaviours, Uriel Bronfenbrenners, Ecological model, Predictor.

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Introduction

Suicide is a serious global public health issue, with completed suicide rates among young people increasing by 60% in the last 50 years (Gómez et al., 2019). Suicide is a human, complex, multi-determined behavioural phenomenon that is most likely be the result of several factors (psychological, biological, and socio-cultural) interacting (Gómez et al., 2019). These known risk factors, however, are of little assistance in improving clinical detection of suicidal behaviour (Gómez-Romero et al., 2018). Suicidal behaviour encompasses a wide range of psychological and behavioural manifestations such as suicidal ideation, suicide gestures, and suicide attempts (Gvion & Apte, 2011; Mortier et al., 2018; Wilcox et al., 2010).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 800,000 people die by suicide each year, making it the second leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 29. There are indications that for every adult who died by suicide, there were more than 50 attempts. The global suicide rate will reach 2% by 2020. Similarly, 75% of suicides take place in low- and middle-income countries (Koyanagi et al., 2019; OPS, 2014; WHO, 2018).

Suicidality is considered to be a multifactorial phenomenon [Hawton & van Heeringen], and adolescence is the time of greatest risk for the onset of suicidal behaviours. However, suicide prediction in young ages is complex and difficult Lyons-Ruth, Bureau, Holmes, Easter brooks & Brooks, 2013). Non-fatal suicidal behaviors, such as seriously considering suicide, making a suicide plan, and attempting suicide, occur at least ten to twenty times more frequently than completed suicides. Previous research has identified a number of risk factors associated with adolescent suicidality. 2015, Dilillo, Mauri, Mantegazza, Fabiano, Mameli, and Zuccotti. The link between psychiatric disorders (such as depression) and adolescent suicide is now well documented, mood disorders, substance abuse, and prior suicide attempts are all strongly linked to youth suicides (Gart & Kelly 2015). Suicide risk is influenced by factors such as social alienation and precipitating problems (Onishi 2015). To fully understand suicide risk factors and develop intervention strategies, it is also necessary to examine the relationship between adolescent suicidality and their family's social and psychological climate. Several studies have attempted to investigate the impact of parental and peer factors, as well as other factors related to family adversity (Law & Shek 2015). The vast majority of studies, however, did not investigate whether familial risk factors preceded the development of suicidal symptoms. However, this study investigated how the microsystem (parents and peers) relationship predicts suicidal behavior in high school adolescents.

The interaction between individual-level characteristics, such as those mentioned previously, and the immediate environment, such as peers and home (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), including relationships and roles, is referred to as a microsystem. Adjusting to a

different developmental change in roles and relationships for in-school adolescents may have a significant impact on attitudes toward suicide. Given the well-established relationship between social well-being and suicidal behavior (Witte, & Rudd, 2009), peer relationships provide emotional support; therefore, when peer interactions suffer or a valued peer member attempts suicide, an individual's attitudes toward suicide and suicidal behaviours may be negatively impacted. Although the presence of healthy and supportive peer relationships is linked to a lower risk of suicide (Alexander, Haugland, Ashenden, Knight, & Brown, 2009; Peltzer, 2008). Being overly connected with peers may increase the risk of suicidal behaviour (Kaminski et al., 2010); what appear to matter most is the quality of the peer support and the offer of adaptive versus maladaptive advice. Shilubane et al. (2012) discovered that peer suicide attempt was associated with personal suicide attempt in an interview-based study of South Africans, supporting social learning theory (Stack & Kposowa, 2008) and emphasizing the importance of investigating the history of social relationships in the investigation of suicide and mental health (De Leo & Heller, 2008). There may also be an association between familial suicide and personal attitude toward suicide; in general, a family history of suicidal behavior increases risk for personal suicidal behavior independent of psychopathology. For example, Zhang and Jia (2009) found no differences in suicide attitudes between family members of suicide survivors and non-suicide survivor family members. Roles that promote attachment, commitment, and social responsibility, such as marriage or employment, may be linked to attitudes toward suicide and mental health status (Stack & Kposowa, 2008).

The ecological approach to the study of adolescent suicide with several theories (e.g., biological theories, psychological theories, sociological theories) and ecological theories of Uriel Bronfenbreners Ecological model, which guided this study, provide explanations for their findings. Adolescent suicide is multi-cause and may be viewed as the result of challenges arising from the interplay of biological, psychological, developmental, psychiatric, social, cultural, and family environmental forces at work in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Borowsky, Ireland, & Resnick, 2001; Bridge, Goldstein, & Brent, 2006; Garbriano, 1985). As a result, a more robust and multidisciplinary model is required to establish a thorough understanding of adolescent suicide (Bridge et al., 2010).

Because it is a framework that allows for the integration of previous work on adolescent suicide and their families and peers (microsystem) within a single model, the Uriel Bronfenbenners Ecological model appears to be a good fit for understanding adolescent suicide. Rather than emphasizing specific risk factors, it is a multidisciplinary approach to understanding adolescent suicide that integrates individual, family, and social system forces that may be associated with adolescent suicidality within the broader environmental context. The ecology of human development is defined by

Bronfenbrenner (1979) as "the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing individual person lives" (p. 21).

Bronfenbrenner views the environment as a series of nested structures that include, but are not limited to, the home, school, and neighborhood settings in which developing individuals spend their days. Adolescent suicide, according to this model, emerges from the adolescent's interactions and interdependencies within multiple-level ecological contexts. Individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystems are all concentric circles within the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The individual level includes the suicidal adolescent's individual psychological and personal historical characteristics (e.g., depression and substance abuse). The focus of the microsystem is on the patterns of roles, activities, and personal relationships that adolescents have in the factor-face settings that form their specific social encounters (e.g., family and peer groups). The focus of this study is, therefore, on how forces within microsystem that is peers and family relationships help to identify and understand the trends and risks factors of adolescent suicidal behaviour in South East, Nigeria.

Research Method

Correlational research design was employed in the present study. The area of study was South East, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 400,550 senior secondary school students (SS1 and SS2) in South East, Nigeria. Multi stage sample procedure was used to select the sample size of 4500 (made up of 2200 of SS1 and 2300 of SS2) In-School adolescents. The instruments for data collection were two structured questionnaires known as Microsystem of In-School Adolescents Questionnaire (MISAQ) and In-School Adolescents Suicidal Behaviours Questionnaire (IASBQ). The first questionnaire MISAQ contains 8 items and the second questionnaire IASBQ contains 8 items where the respondents were required to indicate on four point scale, using always (A), often (O), occasionally (OC) and never (N) on the question items respectively. The face and content validity of the instruments was obtained through the judgments of four experts. The internal consistency of the instruments was computed using Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient. The Research question was answered using Simple Regression analysis, the decision rule according to Muijs' (2004 cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 523) suggestion for assessing the goodness of fit of regression model using squared regression coefficient (R^2) and Beta weights (β) was adopted for the study. Which shows that (R^2: 0–0.1 weak fit; 0.1–0.3 modest fit; 0.3–0.5 moderate fit; >0.5 strong fit, For beta weighting (β): 0 - 0.1 = weak effect, 0.1 - 0.3 = modest effect. 0.3 - 0.5 = moderate effect, >0.5 = strong effect).

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Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: How does microsystem interaction predict suicidal behaviour of in-school adolescents?

Table 1. Summary of Simple Regression Analysis with Microsystems Predictor of Suicidal Behaviour of In-School Adolescents

	B	SE B	β
Constant	37.67	4.31	
Microsystem	.70	.13	.35
R .35			
R^2 .12			
Adj.R^2 .12			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in the above table indicates that microsystem interaction is a modest predictor of suicidal behaviour of in-school adolescents. This is shown by the regression coefficient (R =.35) and the coefficient of determination (R^2 = .12).The beta weight (β = .35) shows that microsystem is a positive predictor of suicidal behaviour of in-school adolescents.

Discussion

The study's findings indicate that the microsystem (family and peer interactions) is a modest and positive predictor of suicidal behaviour among in-school adolescents in Nigeria's South East. This finding was consistent with the findings of Prinstein et al. (2000), who investigated the relationship between suicidal ideation and several dimensions of peer functioning, including close friendship support, perceived peer acceptance and rejection, and deviant peer crowd affiliation. According to the findings, a lack of friendship support and perceived peer rejection were directly related to suicidal ideation, whereas deviant peer affiliations were related to suicidal ideation through depression and substance abuse. It means that positive interaction with family and peers will help to prevent suicidal behavior because the in-school adolescent will always have members of his close circle around him.

The findings of the present study is in line to the findings of Hashimoto, Sugawara, Tanaka, Nakamura, & Yasui-Furukori (2014), which stated that receiving learning pressure from parents predicts suicidal ideation. The findings revealed that poor academic performance is hardly addressed significantly, and it is a critical source of suicidal behaviours among in-school adolescent. When the academic pressure is such that the adolescent cannot breath fresh air and it pressed its head so hard that the parents do not consider the mental health of

the adolescents, thus suicidal behaviours set in.

Since, the microsystem of the adolescents comprises of its close environment and the findings of this show that Parents and peers relationship had positive effect on adolescent suicidal behaviours, findings from this research also confirmed that conflict and tension in families can hurt the psychological well-being and perhaps increase suicidal thoughts if such tension or conflicts linger. Issues such as divorce threats, separation of parents could trigger suicidal thoughts including overwhelming when students were overwhelmed with challenges of life and the feeling of being alone in their challenging moments. This was in agreement with the findings of Afifi, Boman, Fleisher, & Sareen, 2009 and Donath 2014 which showed that students from troubled and divorced families had more suicidal ideation.

The findings of this study is also in consonance with that of Moore (2012) which found out that high contribution of authoritarian parenting style to adolescence leads suicidality. But Smith and Moore, (2012) contend that, and opine that when teenagers disagree with their parents' behaviors towards them, the teenagers are more likely to display psychosocial challenges such as depression which may lead to suicide attempts. The findings of the present also agrees with Ying (2013) who studied possible partial correlation between perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and youth suicidality (negative life ideation, and suicidal behaviour) among students. According to Ying (2013), Authoritative theme was the major positive influence on positive ideation as viewed by young people, whereas authoritarian theme and permissive theme were classified as major negative influence towards suicidal behaviors. The findings of this study also concurs with a study done by Donath, Graessel, Baier., Bleich and Hillemacher (2014), who found that parenting style does matter and while children of Authoritative parents profit, children of Rejecting-Neglecting parents are put at risk of suicidal behaviours. However the study disagrees with a study done by Sharma, Sharma and Yadava (2011) who found a significant negative relationship between permissive parenting and adolescent suicidal behaviors. This study found neglectful parenting characterized with low communication to predict less suicidal behaviors. This is contrary to a study done by Silvia, Lai and Daniel (2010) which found that suicidal ideation was positively related to hopelessness which characterizes neglectful parenting, but negatively related to parent-adolescent communication. It was further found that the linkage between hopelessness and adolescent suicidal ideation was stronger under a low parent-adolescent communication which is associated with neglectful parenting. The findings concur with Tyzack (2015), who contend that parents who are there physically and emotionally for teenagers are able to meet their children' expectations, a factor which is associated with less adolescent depressive disorders during the hormonally turbulent years. The findings also concur with Amour,

Laverdure, Devault, & Manseau, (2007) who contend that effects of fatigue and stress experienced at work can affect family life at home thus affecting parent child relationship. This means while the adolescent children at home expect the parent to be available in order to provide advice on various challenges they face, the parent is either not physically or emotionally available at home and even when they are physically available they are tired from their busy schedule. Such parents are unable to meet their children's emotional needs.

This concurs with Lavin (2012) who argue that some parenting styles such as authoritarian may be unresponsive and creates fear and anger in the child who is likely to become resentful and disrespectful to authority figures. The unfriendly nature of authoritarian may easily result to depressive feelings in adolescents, such feelings are precursors to suicide ideation (Yterdal, 2016). The poor relationship between parents and their child, concerns around parent's support and pressure on children contributed to the academic pressures as a risk factor for suicidal ideation. These findings collaborate with that of Donath et al., 2014 who stated that parent-student conflict affects the likelihood of entertaining suicidal ideation. Poor relationships with parents and challenges with academic challenges were also established by Arria et al. (2014) in their study which revealed the poor relationship between parents as a predictor of suicidal ideation.

This study indicated that students who had weak family ties were said to have poor resilience and become easily overwhelmed by challenges of life which makes them be quick to think about taking their lives as the best option. This was also asserted by Zhai et al. (2015) in his findings that parents with negative relationships disrupted the cohesiveness of the family, which could result in suicidal ideation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that suicidal behaviors among in-school adolescents are phenomena common within the secondary schools though few are officially reported. Adolescents need to strengthen the networks of supports and resilience with their peers which helps in mitigating suicidal thoughts. Good and parenting styles are important in predetermining suicidal behavior of secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends that the government, through the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the School Boards Management, keep trained resident school counselors or psychologists in schools who do not teach in order for them to have enough time to identify students with depressive symptoms, which are precursors to suicidal behaviour. Such counselors would be available to assist students as well as follow-up with parents.

Secondary school students face numerous challenges as a result of their parents' expectations. Making career choices

acceptable to parents, academic performance, and social relationships acceptable to parents and teachers are examples of such challenges. The demands put pressure on the students, resulting in anxiety and stress. Due to perceived misunderstanding, this leads to depression and, in some cases, suicidal behavior. The study thus recommends that, through school programs, workshops and seminars be organized for parents on the importance of recognizing each child's individual talents and abilities. Parents must listen to their children in order to understand their concerns and reassure them when the pressure is too much.

Suicidal behaviour is always hidden, and many of them go unnoticed by a third party, such as teachers or parents. This could be because such behaviors are caused by either parents or teachers. This may make the student afraid to reveal what is going on in their minds. As a result, this study suggests that schools implement intervention strategies to help students develop life skills such as self-awareness and self-esteem. These will assist students in recognizing the early signs of anxiety and stress and communicating them to a third party in need of assistance.

During the adolescent stage, students tend to branch out, seek advice, and become more open to their peers. Adolescents in school are to be educated on the potential risk factors that lead to suicidal behaviour, as well as the signs. To prevent suicide, the school administration should educate all students through peer education to report suspicious behavior as soon as possible.

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