

## MANAGEMENT OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN EDO STATE

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### Abstract

The purpose of this work was to examine the management of suicidal behaviours among university students in Edo State. To carry out this study, four research questions were raised. Descriptive research design was employed. The population of the study comprised 79,813 students in Edo State which were purposively selected. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by the experts in the field while the reliability was established through Cronbach's Alpha statistic. Copies of the instrument were administered and collected by the researchers and three research assistants. The results showed that the suicidal behaviours among university students in Edo State were very low. Poor relationship with family members was revealed as the major causes of suicidal behaviour among university students. It was recommended that parents should be advised to create peaceful home environment that will enhance students' academic studies.

**Keywords:** Management, suicidal behaviours, university, students, depression

### Introduction

Human being across the globe aspire to live a good, happy and enjoyable life. Whiles some people seem to be living an honest life, full of integrity, joy and happiness, others seek wealth, social status and fame, hopping these aspect of life will help them to live a better life. However, societal conditions and problems could increase or decrease the propensity for individuals to react to problems and issues by exhibiting suicidal behaviours which may most often lead to suicidal act. Suicide means self-murder. It could be death from poisoning, injury, shooting, suffocation and the like.

Suicidal behaviour could be defined as a deliberate act intended to end one's life in order to escape unbearable suffering or to help change adverse condition of living, Kerkhof (2004). Suicidal behaviour could mean a range of behaviours that include thinking about suicide, planning for suicide, attempting suicide and committing suicide itself. Suicidal behaviour could be fatal and non-fatal. Fatal suicidal behaviour refers to completed suicidal behaviour that reflects the person's intent to die. The non-fatal suicidal behaviour refers to suicidal behaviour that does not end the person's life and involves certain manifestations such as those seen in attempted suicide as observed by the researcher.

Schwartz (2011) stated that transitioning into university life can be challenging as students introduced to new freedoms, new responsibilities and feel overwhelmed with academic and social pressures. The American College Health Association and National College Health Assessment (2012) indicated that in 2011, more than 6 percent of students admitted to seriously thinking about suicide with another 1.1 percent having made an attempt. The study also found 30 percent of university students reported feeling so depressed, they were unable to function at least once within a one – year period, yet only 6.7 percent of male and 13.1 percent of female students had been formally diagnosed or treated for depression within the year 2011. Okani (2016) reported that the methods of suicide that are commonly used by the victims in South Africa are hanging, poisoning and firearms, pesticides, fall from height and drowning. In Nigeria, hanging, poisoning seem to be common methods.

Ebohon (2022) gave the following signs as indication that a student may be considering suicide: Sudden decrease in school performance, Fixation with death or violence, Unhealthy peer relationships, Violent mood swings or sudden change in personality, Indications that the student is in abusive relationship, sign of eating disorder, difficulty in adjusting to gender identity and /or depression. Ebohon (2022) described suicide behaviours as problem-solving behaviours. Ebohon opined that student with such behaviour often believe that the real lasting solution to their problems is to die. Ebohon (2022) classified suicidal behaviour into four and they are:

- **Surcease suicidal behaviour:** This is an attempt with the desire to be released from emotional or physical pain.
- **Psychotic suicidal behaviour:** This is as a result of mind associated with clinically diagnosed manic–depressive psychosis.
- **Cultural suicidal behaviour:** This results from the interactions between self- concept and cultural beliefs about death. This means that the victim’s self- concept is confused with imaginings of what others think about him. The implication of these classifications of suicidal behaviour is that students with terminal illnesses or those who are mentally deranged might engage in suicidal behaviours. Those with negative self-images about themselves or those confused of what others think about them might also be tempted to engage in self- distinctive behaviours.

World Health Organization ([WHO], 2016) reported that suicide is the third leading cause of death among people aged 15-44 years and ranked second for adolescent between 15-19years. The following factors seem to be associated with suicidal behaviours in the universities; bad economic times, pressure of work load, poor relationship and personal factors.

In a study carried out by Pan American Health Organization, (2016), male suicide account for roughly 79% of all self- inflicted death but in most western countries, rates of attempted suicide seem to be higher. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data of the year 2015, every hour, a student commits suicide in India. The number of attempted suicide, many of which go unreported in Africa, is likely to be much higher.

In most African Countries especially in Nigeria where Edo State belong, committing suicide was seen as a taboo, disgraceful and brings shame to the family. Such actions are

sometimes concealed with secrecy by the family members or even the attempters to avoid stigmatization of the family member and the entire community. In this contemporary in Nigeria universities, suicide has continuously been on increase rate. For instance, on Monday May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a 400 level student of the Department of English and Literacy Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) was reported to have committed suicide after taking two bottle of “sniper” (Muanya, 2019). Again, a 300 level of medicine and surgery, at the faculty of Basic Medical Science of the Niger Delta university (NDU) also committed suicide after realizing that he was among the 22 students short-listed to be withdrawn from the college for failing the Bachelors of Medicine Examination, (Onyedika, 2019), World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), discovered that many students attempt suicide every year. Some “cry for help” while others are fatal. In Nigeria, suicidal behaviour is against the natural law and the law of country.

Aliu (2019) reported that a 300 level student of the University of Benin in Edo State committed suicide by jumping down from the second floor of the faculty building after he was asked to withdraw due to poor academic performance. The researcher on many occasions has intervened and help some students who either have suicide attempt or suicidal behaviours.

This study is hinged on social integration and regulation theory by Durkheina (1951). He proposed that suicide results partially from failure of social integration. This is the degree to which individuals in the university were bond by the social ties and relationship while social regulations referred to the degree to which individual in the university have their desire and emotions controlled by the social values of the society. According to this theorist, when social integration is too strong, it can lead to egoistic suicide behaviour while when social regulation is too weak, it can lead to anomic suicidal behaviour. When these two social forces are too strong, it may lead to altruistic and fatalistic suicidal behaviour respectively.

This study is necessary to push forward the implementation of suicide preventive measures and its management. This is a matter of urgency. Knowledge of management of suicidal behaviours seems to be largely limited. Most people tend to look at it as mental health issues rather than social problems. Zhao et.al (2014) stated that conflict in the families have an increased risk of suicidal behaviour among university students. Centre for Disease Control (2013) revealed that depression, hopelessness, relationship problem and substance abuse and the like are the most important risk factors for suicidal behaviours among youths. WHO (2014) stated that not all people who take their own ,lives especially in higher institutions have mental disorders. It is on this premise this study seeks to investigate how university leaders prevent and manage suicidal behaviour in Nigeria Universities in Edo State.

To carry out this study, the following research questions were raised.

1. What is the rate of suicidal behaviour among university students in Edo State?
2. What are the causes of suicidal behaviour among University students in Edo State?
3. What are the predominant methods used by university students to commit suicide in Edo state?
4. What are the management styles applied by university leaders in managing suicidal behaviour in Edo State?

## Methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed. It was descriptive because it enables the researcher to collect factual information from a sample of the specified population. The population of the study comprises all the seventy-nine thousand, eight hundred and thirteen (79,813) full time undergraduates in Edo State as from 2010-2011 to 2018-2019 academic sessions. This was obtained from the National University Commission 2020 and Academic planning units of the various Universities in Edo State, as of January, 2021. The sample size 720 students, purposively selected from University of Benin. The structured questionnaire was design to collect data, and was validated by 3 experts from the Department of Educational Management, of the University of Benin, Benin City. The instrument was established through Cronbach’s Alpha Statistic. Data were administered and collected by the researcher and three trained assistants. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to selected respondents of University of Benin. There was 100 percent retrieval rate. The Date was then analysed using SPSS software application.

## Results.

The results of this study were presented as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What is the rate of suicidal behaviour among University students in Edo State?

**Table 1: Rate of Suicidal Behaviour among University Students in Edo State**

Number of Suicidal Behaviours/ Attempts	Population of the Study	Percentage of Suicidal Behaviour
12	79,813	0.015%

Table 1 showed that the rate of suicidal behaviour among University Student in Edo State is 12 students (0.015% ) as from 2010/ 2011 session to 2019/ 2020 session. This result was obtained through survey of various selected faculties in the University of Benin, Benin City.

**Research Question 2:** What are the causes of suicidal behaviour among University students in Edo State?

**Table 2: Causes of Suicidal Behaviour Among University Students in Edo State.**

S/N.	Items	VHC	HC	MC	LC	VLC
1	Poor relationship with family members	268 (37.2%)	109 (15.1%)	123 (17.1%)	53 (7.4%)	167 (23.2%)
2	Poor academic Performance	112 (15.6%)	184 (25.6%)	182 (25.3%)	111 (15.4%)	131 (18.2%)
3	Substance abuse	175 (24.3%)	114 (15.8%)	130 (18.8%)	89 (12.4%)	212 (29.4%)
4	Hopelessness	116	143	119	214	128

5	Being jilted by lover	(16.1%) 171	(19.8%) 117	(16.5%) 187	(29.7%) 125	(17.8%) 120
6	Burdensomeness	(23.8%) 99	(16.3%) 147	(26.0%) 172	(17.4%) 158	(16.7%) 144
7	Low belongingness	(13.8%) 118	(20.4%) 136	(23.9%) 193	(21.9%) 116	(20.0%) 157
8	Issues with Course Adviser	(16.4%) 71	(18.9%) 35	(26.8%) 123	(16.1%) 188	(21.8%) 304
		(9.7%)	(4.9%)	(17.1%)	(26.1%)	(42.2%)

Key: VHC: Very High Course, HC: High Course, MC: Moderate Course, LC: Low Course, VLC: Very Low Course.

Table 2 shows the cause of suicidal behaviours among university students in Edo State with poor family relationship on the very high side 268(37.2%) followed by drug abuse of 175(24.3%). The lowest among the cause are Burdensomeness 99(13.8%) followed by issues with Course Adviser 70(9.7%).

Research Question 3: What are the predominant methods used by University students to commit suicide?

**Table 3: Predominant method use by University students to commit suicide**

S/N.	Items	VCM	CM	MM	UM	VUM
1	Use of poison such as Pesticide/ insecticide	347 (45.2%)	87 (12.1%)	98 (13.6%)	78 (9.7%)	118 (16.4%)
2	Hanging	173 (24.0%)	119 (16.5%)	174 (24.2%)	149 (24.7%)	105 (14.6%)
3	Jumping// Falling from height	151 (21.0%)	114 (15.6%)	220 (30.6%)	84 (11.7%)	151 (21.0%)
4	Fire arm	41 (5.7%)	58 (12.4%)	160 (22.2%)	211 (29.3%)	219 (30.4%)
5	Drowning	119 (16.5%)	63 (8.8%)	161 (22.4%)	232 (32.2%)	145 (26.1%)
6	Wrist cutting with Sharp instrument	105 (14.6%)	24 (3.3%)	216 (30.0%)	163 (22.6%)	212 (29.4%)
7	Running into a moving car	77 (10.7%)	98 (13.6%)	155 (21.5%)	156 (21.7%)	234 (32.5%)
8	. Fire/ burning	83 (11.5%)	98 (13.6%)	641 (19.6%)	163 (22.6%)	235 (32.6%)

Key: Very Common Method (VCM), Common Method (CM), Moderate Method(MM), Uncommon Method(UM), Very Uncommon Method(VUM).

Table 3 revealed that the predominant methods used by University students in committing suicide in Edo State are pesticide, (45.2%), Hanging (24.0%) Jumping and falling height (21.0%) and

wrist cutting with sharp instrument (30.0%) respectively are moderate methods used. However, 30.4%, 32.5%, and 32.6% of the respondents stated that firm arm, running into a moving car and fire burning respectively are very common methods used. Thus the use of poison is a very common method.

Research Question 4: What are the management styles applied by University managers in managing suicidal behaviours among students?

**Table 4: Management styles apply by University managers in managing suicidal behaviours among students.**

Management styles	Percentage
Controlling	21.6 (156)
Collaborative/ integrating	20.6 (148)
Accommodating	19.9 (143)
Compromising	19.5 (140)
Avoiding	18.4 (133)
Total	100.00 (720)

From the numerical evidence therefore, it could be concluded that the highest conflict management styles by University manager in Edo State is controlling/authoritative style with 21.6 percent while the lowest among the styles is avoiding with 18.4 percent.

### Discussion of Results

This study was an investigation of suicidal behaviours among University in Edo State. The findings in table 1 revealed that the rate of suicidal behaviour among University student in Edo State was very low, 0.15% for the of 2010/2011- 2019/2020 academic session. This finding is against the findings of Onyedika (2019) who discovered that many University students attempt suicide every year. This could be explained by the fact that suicidal actions are regarded as taboo in Benin culture and a bad omen with very calamitous repercussions.

Finding in Table 2 revealed poor relationships with family members of (37.2%) as a very high cause of suicidal behaviour. This is in line with Zhao et al (2014) who opined that conflict in the families have an increased risk of suicidal behaviour among university students. This could be so because family is the first environment where each child develops. Similarly, substance abuse, hopelessness, relationship problem and depression were found to be moderate or low causes of suicidal behaviours among University Students. This finding was in line with centre for disease control (2013) who posited that depression, hopelessness, substance abuse and the like were among the major causes of suicidal behaviour among the youths. These could be as a result of hardship across the country where the youth have no hope of survival.

The finding in Table 3 revealed that the use of poison such as pesticide insecticides is a very common method used by university students to commit suicide. This finding in Table 3 agreed with Uchendu et al (2019) who opined that poisoning or pesticides are the leading methods of suicidal acts among university students in Nigeria. The reason for this finding could be that the students know that it is very poisonous and easy to get.

The finding in Table 4 showed that the majority of the University managers manage suicidal behaviour using an authoritative style with a cumulative response of 21.6%. This implied that most University managers in Edo State are bossy. This type of style could be used to save time by punishing the offender accordingly.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it was concluded that there was a low level of suicidal attempts among University students in Edo State. Substance abuse was found to be the most prevalent suicidal behaviour among University students. Poor family relationship was also found to be a very high cause of suicidal behaviour. Injecting some poison such as sniper was found the most common method use by University students to commit suicide in Edo State. University managers employed authoritative management styles to manage suicidal behaviour among University students in Edo State.

### **Implication of the Findings for Educational Managers' Practice**

The finding of this study will enable policymakers on University Education to involve University managers in their planning and implementation of educational policy.

University managers will take critical look at the teaching, learning and examination issues within the campus with the aim of correcting the anomalies in the system.

University managers will be able to educate parents that their physical presence in their children, a peaceful home environment are very crucial to their child's behaviours.

#### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The study has contributed to knowledge through the provision of information on the true state of the prevalent rate of suicidal behaviours among university students in Edo State.

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