



**UNIVERSITY
OF
LUSAKA**

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Exploring The Burden of Suicide Among University of Lusaka Students

BY

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**A Dissertation submitted to the University of Lusaka in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of a Degree in Bachelor of Science in Public Health**

DECLARATION

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I declare that this proposal is my creative work and to the best of my acquaintance has not been presented for a degree in any other institution.

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Date: 26th September2023

Supervisor Name: Dr Loveness A. Nkhata

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval as a University of Lusaka (UNILUS) supervisor.

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Date: 28/09/2023

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DEDICATION

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Suicide is a tragic act in which an individual takes their own life. It is a global public health concern, with approximately 703,000 people dying by suicide each year. This makes suicide a leading cause of death worldwide, surpassing diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, homicide, and war. Suicidal thoughts are a common experience, with the majority of people having transient or brief episodes of such thoughts at some point in their lives. Suicide accounted for more than 1% of all deaths in 2019.

Objective: To explore the burden of suicide among university of Lusaka students

METHODS: This study used a qualitative design method .data was collected from final year school medicine and health science students at UNILUS using focus group discussions. The respondents were chosen using a data saturation and convenience sampling procedure, the data collected was analysed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS: A total of 48 respondents took in the discussions, The findings revealed that emotional distress and various social stressors were significant factors leading to suicidal ideation and suicide, with sub-themes including experiences of abuse, interpersonal relationships and mental illness.

CONCLUSION: Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the burden of suicide is a significant issue among University of Lusaka students. The study has shed light on the factors that contribute to suicidal ideation and the challenges that students face when seeking help. The findings also highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the mental health needs of university students in Zambia.

Key words ;Suicide, suicidal ideation, emotional distress, social factors

List Of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| ADD | Attention Deficit Disorder |
| ADHD | Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder |
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| HIV | Human Immune Deficiency Virus |
| PTSD | Post Traumatic Stress disorder |
| UNILUS | University of Lusaka |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

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Table 4.1.1 Participants Demographics Description

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background

Suicide is the act of taking one's own life, as mentioned. When someone damages themselves in order to end their life, it constitutes a death (Johnson, 2019). The majority of people will experience a suicidal idea at some point in their lives, although most of the time this will be a transitory or at the very least brief experience (Ndelei, 2014). Suicide is a significant problem for worldwide public health. Every year, 703 000 individuals commit suicide throughout the world. Suicide is one of the major causes of mortality in the world, accounting for more fatalities than diseases like malaria, HIV/aids, breast cancer, even homicide and war. Suicide accounted for more than one in every 100 fatalities (1.3%) in 2019 (Fleischmann, 2021).

Suicide ranks as the second top cause of death among the university students (Owusu-Ansah, 2020). Because the majority of the population in the university was founded in the productive age, the suicidal behaviours and traits of university students should not be seen as a problem just for the students in question and their families. However, there hasn't been much research done nationally on student suicide and its contributing factors (Abdu, 2020). University students who consider suicide are without a doubt a multifaceted problem that is recognized negatively around the world and has bad repercussions on families, friends, and even the socioeconomic growth of nations where it occurs. "Suicide is the second most common cause of death among young people, especially university students, after self-inflicted injuries, making this population a high-risk category" (Owusu-Ansah, 2020). Increased academic stress exacerbates suicidal thoughts, and as resilience increases, so does the likelihood that academic stress will result in suicidal ideation. Additionally, using inadequate coping mechanisms encourages students to consider suicide, while resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms reduce the connection between stress in the classroom and suicide ideation (Okechuku, 2022).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Each suicide is the outcome of a complicated dynamic with particular relationships among the various risk factors (Bilsen, 2018). According to a study conducted in Sub-Saharan African nations, Zambia had the highest prevalence of suicidal ideation among students (31.9%), followed by Kenya (27.9%), Botswana (23.1%), Uganda (19.6%), and Tanzania (11.2%). Each suicide is the outcome of a complicated dynamic with particular relationships among the various risk factors (Bilsen, 2018). According to a study conducted in Sub-Saharan African nations, Zambia had the highest prevalence of suicidal ideation among students (31.9%),

followed by Kenya (27.9%), Botswana (23.1%), Uganda (19.6%), and Tanzania (11.2%). Each suicide is the outcome of a complicated dynamic with particular relationships among the various risk factors (Bilsen, 2018). According to a study conducted in Sub-Saharan African nations, Zambia had the highest prevalence of suicidal ideation among students (31.9%), followed by Kenya (27.9%), Botswana (23.1%), Uganda (19.6%), and Tanzania (11.2%). (Abdu Z, 2020). It is for this reason that are study exploring the burden of suicide proves significant.

1.2 Justification of the study

A study of this manner would prove of importance to the public practice and practitioners alike, by making known the factors leading to suicide ideations will be to provide information about the risk factors associated with suicide among university students. This research will give insight for addressing why suicides are emerging and occurring among students at the University of Lusaka, as well as measures in place to address the occurrences of said suicides. Hence the study will provide a base for future studies on and related to the topic, while also closing some gaps that would be identified.

1.4 General Objectives

To explore the burden of suicide among university of Lusaka students

1.5 Specific Objectives

- i.** To obtain the views and understand the rise in suicide among university of Lusaka students.
- ii.** To have understanding of why students, commit suicide at university of Lusaka.
- iii.** To probe the relationship between social stress and suicide risk among university of Lusaka students.

1.6 Research Questions

- i.** What are the views and perspectives of suicide among university of Lusaka students?
- ii.** What situations are likely to cause suicidal ideations/actions among students?
- iii.** What is the relationship between social stress and suicide among university of Lusaka students?

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature review

The aim of this section of the study is to take a look at the varying literature, conducted by a magnitude of researchers in relation to the topic of this study. The layout of this review will be presented in a thematic manner. The objective of this section will be to give the study more depth and give insight of the concepts, theories and thought patterns this study was subjected to.

2.1 suicide

Today 1 in 100 deaths in the world is a suicide death. The suicide rate in the African Region is the highest in the world, estimated at 11.2 per 100,000. Today, suicide is the cause of 1 out of every 100 fatalities worldwide. The greatest suicide rate in the world, estimated at 11.2 per 100,000 people, occurs in the African region. Compared to the global average of 9.0 per 100,000 people, there were 000 people in 2019. In comparison to the global average of 12.4 per 100,000 people, the male suicide rate in the WHO African Region is the highest of all Regions at 18.4 per 100,000 people. Suicide can happen at any time; among this age range in 2019, it was the fourth greatest cause of death. Suicide is a problem worldwide, not only in wealthy nations. According to estimates, 77 percent of suicides in 2019 took place in low- and middle-income nations. The highest age-adjusted suicide rates in the world are found in a number of African nations. All have rates exceeding 15 per 100,000 people, with Lesotho and Eswatini having the highest rates at 87.5 and 40.5 per 100,000 people, respectively. On a global scale, data on suicide and suicide attempts are not readily available and are of poor quality. Given how sensitive the subject is, there is probably underreporting and misclassification that makes suicide more problematic than most other causes of death (Bataliack, 2022). The report provided insightful information about suicide and its frequency in Africa, particularly in Africa. The report gives a narrative of suicide in Africa and how it is viewed, in though it gives no rates representative to Zambia or even Lusaka, it still gives usual information necessary to the study of suicide. it also helps in the understanding and stating of suicide as a public health concern.

"An investigation with the aim of estimating the possible prevalence and correlations of suicide attempts in the past 12-month suicidal behaviour (ideation, plan and/or attempt) among adults in Zambia. The prevalence of lifetime suicide attempt (2.3%) was higher than in previous studies in Nigeria (0.7%) and Bhutan (0.7%), but similar to South Africa (2.9%), and the

prevalence of past 12-month suicidal ideation (7.8%), plan (3.6%) and attempt (1.1%) was higher than in low- and middle-income countries (ideation 2.1%, plan 0.7% and attempt 0.4%), but similarly to a low-resourced community in Ethiopia (ideation 7.0%, plan 4.6% and attempt 3.7%). The high rate of suicidal behaviour in Zambia is also confirmed in a previous study among adolescents in Zambia, where a prevalence of past 12-month suicidal ideation of 31.1%. The suicide rate in Zambia (11.3 per 100 000) was comparable to the rate in lower middle-income countries (11.4 per 100 000). Compared with some studies on suicidal behaviour in other countries, a high prevalence of suicidal behaviour was observed in Zambia. The results of this study give information to mental healthcare providers who screen for suicide risk. A practical example, the higher rate of suicidal behaviour among women, persons with a non-paid work status, those who have psychosocial distress, those who are dependent on alcohol and those who suffer from cardiovascular disorders should be addressed by healthcare providers when screening and treating Zambians who might be suicidal" (Supa Pengpid, 2021). This study by Supa was conducted in 2017 to 2021 mostly focused on adults in Zambia it is titled; Prevalence and correlates of suicidal behaviour among a national population-based sample of adults in Zambia. It gives insight as to some of the possible factors that could lead to suicide among the adult Zambian populace, Similar to this study it focuses on suicide the factors leading to it in Zambia and is a correlation study. but unlike in this study, the population focuses on adults whereas for this study focus will suicide in adolescent population in Lusaka and the factors leading to them.

2.2 Students and Suicide

This stage of life is distinguished by the exceptional cognitive, psychological, and social growth that it fosters in a student's life, including the development of autonomy, emotion, identity, moral development, self-concept, self-esteem, sexual development, and a system of beliefs (Runcan, 2020). The analysis performed by Runcan sheds light on how to comprehend this time of a person's life, referencing to the challenges they had while pursuing university education because it is a transitional period.

"Even though the small numbers per year make it difficult to detect statistically significant differences, the suicide rate for tertiary education students in England and Wales in the academic year ending 2020 was 3.0 deaths per 100,000 students (64 suicide deaths); this is the lowest rate seen over the last four years. This is consistent with societal patterns showing that males are more likely to commit suicide than females. 319 students died by suicide during the academic years ending in 2017 and 2020, according to statistics linked to the Higher Education

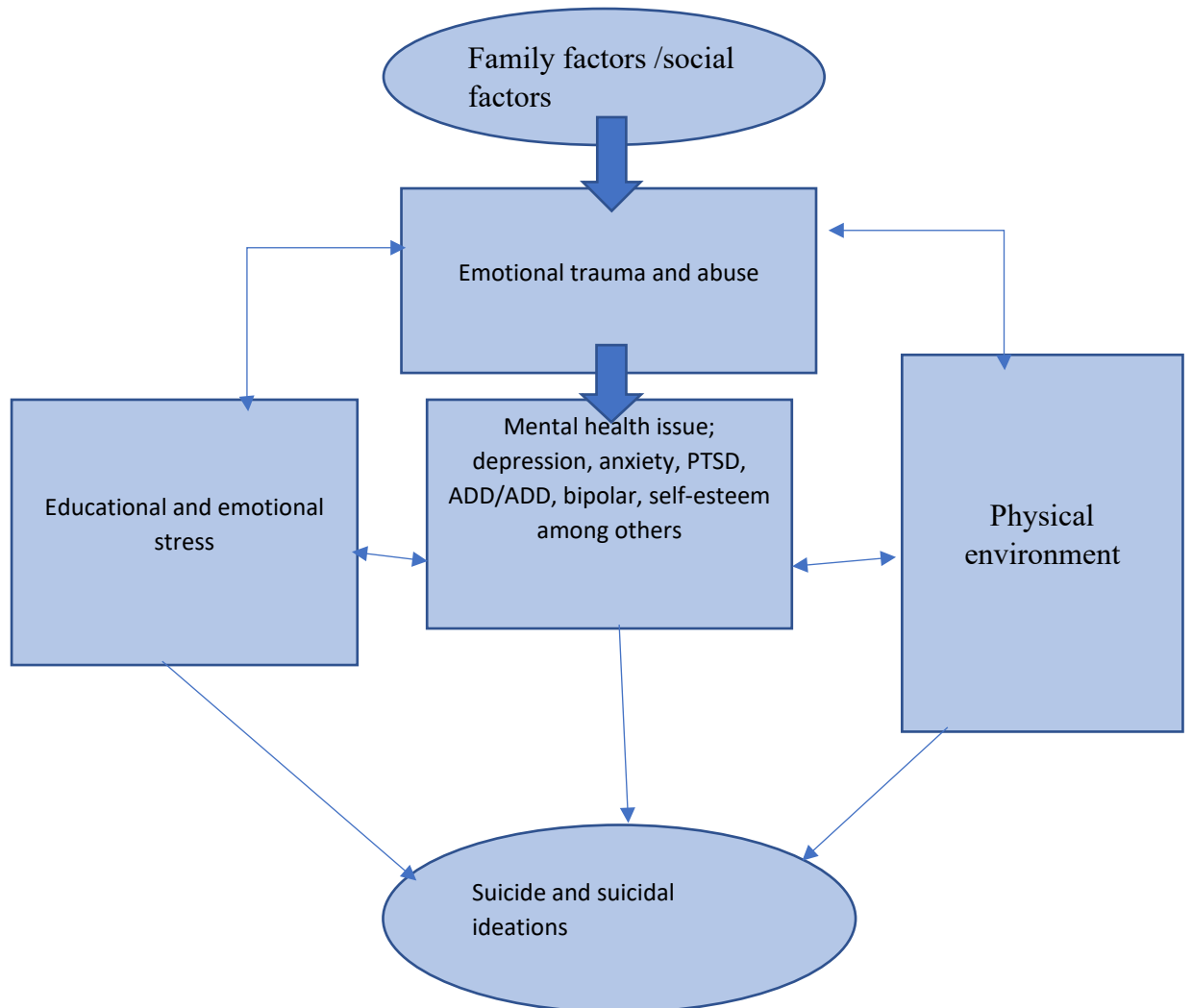
Statistics Authority. This translates to 3.9 deaths per 100,000 students. 202 (63.3%) men and 117 (36.7%) women made up this group." (Rabiya Nasir, 2022). It is a complex, poorly understood, and potentially fatal phenomenon. It is difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to know about or even be aware of a potential suicide victim because most suicide victims do not express their intentions. "Among young individuals, Uganda, Botswana, Kenya, Zambia, and Nigeria have among the highest rates of suicidal ideation. These young people, who are transitioning into productive ages, are seen going from tertiary institutions into the uncertain job markets of the emerging and/or some developed worlds. Additionally, it appears that suicide had a variety of underlying causes, necessitating the adoption of various investigation techniques. The study thus examined the moderating effects of coping and resilience on student suicide ideation and academic stress. The requirement for proper coping skills is as ubiquitous in society as the stresses associated with obtaining university education, as well as concern over unemployment, poverty, destitution, economic crises, feelings of insecurity, marginalization including biases, and economic disempowerment. Lack of good coping skills considerably raises the risk of separating young people from the conventional values and moral laws that appeared to have previously provided moral support and guidance, which can result in suicidal thoughts. (Okechukwu, 2022). Okewchukwu et al explored suicide and suicidal ideations in students and the possible reasons that may cause suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Their researcher proved helpful in furthering this study. It outlines what gender may be at higher risk of suicidal behaviour and what percentage.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The idea of a hierarchy of needs was first presented to the public by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" and later in his book "Motivation and Personality." According to this hierarchy, people are driven to meet their basic requirements before moving on to their more sophisticated needs. (Cherry, 2022) Deficiency needs and growth needs are the two categories of requirements that make up Maslow's five hierarchy of needs. Needs for deficiency: Deficiency needs, which result from deprivation, include those for physical well-being, safety, social interaction, and esteem. To prevent unpleasant emotions or consequences, it's crucial to satisfy these lower-level requirements. Growth needs: Maslow identified the needs for growth at the top of the pyramid. These demands don't result from a lack of anything; rather, they come from the desire to develop personally. Maslow's idea of the hierarchy of needs, which suggested that higher level growth requirements would be hindered

if lower-level deficiency needs were not addressed, has gotten a lot of theoretical attention. (Noltemeyer, 2021).

2.4 Conceptual framework



CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Study Methodology

This chapter is about the methodology used in the study and it includes; the study approach, study design, study population, sampling procedures, sample size determination, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, data piloting and ethical consideration.

3.1 Study Approach

This study used the phenomenological approach. This approach allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of participants through methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation (Polit, 2021).

3.2 Research Design

This was a qualitative study design. This design is particularly helpful in understanding challenging structural or normative presumptions and bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives (Lester, 2022).

3.3 Research Setting

The study was conducted at the University of Lusaka Leopards hill campus and Silverest campuses. The University of Lusaka is a private higher education institution located in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. The university has three campuses, Leopards Hill, Silverest and mass media, all of which are located in different parts of the city. Leopard's Hill campus is situated in a serene and quiet environment, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, while Silverest campus is located in a more urbanized area, with Mass media campus surrounding by busy offices and a mostly student populated neighbourhood. However, this study was conducted at Silverest and Leopards hill campuses because they house a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses that attract students from different parts of the country and beyond. The campuses are also easily accessible to the researcher.

3.4 Study Population

The study population in this study comprised 4th year public health and 5th year medicine & surgery under graduate students. The total population of the final year students for both programs is estimated to be 285, subdivided as 155 public health and 130 medicine and surgery students. This study population was chosen because they have it was assumed that they had stayed longer on campus and could have more beneficial information.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Criteria

Focus group interviews are recommended to have at least 8-12 participants (Khan, 2020), in this study the upper limit of 12 was considered and 4 focus group interviews were held which gave an approximate sample of 48 participants.

Sampling criteria

This study made use of convenience sample, it is a type of sampling method where the sample is selected based on the availability and willingness of participant (Abdi, 2018)

3.6 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria

- Final year students in the school of medicine and health sciences (public health and medicine & surgery students).
- All students who were willing to take part in the research.

Exclusion criteria

- Students who were not willing to take part in the research.
- All members of staff and postgraduate students.

3.6 Data Collection Tool and Techniques

The focus group discussions for this study were conducted as four separate focus groups, with two groups held at each campus of the university. Each discussion session typically took approximately 45 to 60 minutes from start to finish, allowing sufficient time for participants to share their perspectives and engage in meaningful conversations (David W. Stewart, 2018). The discussions were conducted in empty classrooms, chosen specifically to provide a conducive environment where participants could freely express their thoughts without distractions. The choice of empty classrooms ensured that the discussions were uninterrupted, allowing for clear and focused conversations (Greg Guest, 2022). The researcher followed a structured interview guide, which served as a guide to facilitate the flow of the discussions and ensure that all relevant topics were addressed. The interview guide provided a framework for posing open-ended questions and probing further into participants' responses (Tong, 2019). Data collection continued until saturation was reached, indicating that no new information or insights were emerging from subsequent focus group sessions (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). This approach ensured that a comprehensive understanding of the research topic was achieved.

During the focus group discussions, the researcher recorded all the information gathered from the discussions using a mobile phone record tool, ensuring that all the details were captured accurately. Additionally, the researcher took notes to supplement the recorded data, ensuring that no valuable insights or information were missed during the discussions.

3.7 Piloting

Testing study tools Trustworthiness

In this study the trustworthiness of the data was ensured through various methods. Firstly, the sample size was determined using the saturation point, where data collection was continued until no new information or themes were emerging from the participants. Secondly, convenience sampling was used to select participants who are final year under graduate students under the school of medicine and health.

To ensure that the data was accurate, a pilot study was conducted on 10 final year students under the school of business at the University of Lusaka mass media campus. These 10 participants took part in a focus group discussion. After they had participated in the discussion, they were asked to give feedback on the questions. The feedback was recorded and the appropriate adjustments to the question were made (Thabane, 2019).

Another crucial aspect of the pilot study was the testing of the tools used in data collection. This included the mobile recording and interview guide. Researchers were ensuring that the tools used were reliable and that the time it takes to conduct the discussion is reasonable. Additionally, ethical considerations were taken into account when conducting pilot studies, just as they are in the final sample. (Al-Qutob, 2020)

Based on the results of the pilot study, the researcher improved the interview questions and data collection tools to ensure that they were clear and concise. Question 4 originally read “What are the major life experiences that student face in school and outside school that are issues facilitating suicide among students?” and was adjusted as “What life experiences do student face in school and outside school that may lead to suicide?”. For the reason the wording was suggestive and not as easily understood by participants. Additionally, a rapport was established with the participants, creating a safe space for them to share their experiences and ensured confidentiality to maintain their privacy. Overall, these steps were taken to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data.

3.8 Data Analysis

Recorded data was transcribed verbatim and this allowed the close examination and analysis of the content of the data. Once the data has been transcribed, researchers used a thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes within the data (Braun, 2019). The thematic analysis method is a method used for analysing qualitative data that involves identifying patterns or themes within the data. It is a useful technique when conducting research on a group of people, as it is not always possible or practical to collect data from every member of that group (McCombes., 2019). After conducting verbatim transcription and thematic analysis, the data was presented as narrated by the participants. This involved using direct quotes and descriptions from the participants to highlight the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis. By presenting the data in this way, the researchers were able to provide a more authentic understanding of the views and experiences of the participants.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted with the necessary approval and permission from the relevant authorities, including the University of Lusaka's Research Ethical Committee and the national research health authority. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants, and their confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Respondents who agreed to participate were given written informed consent to ensure transparency. The ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice were strictly adhered to, ensuring that the participants' rights were respected, and any potential harm was minimized. These measures ensured that the study was conducted ethically and that the participants' well-being was safeguarded.

Chapter Four

4.0 Results

It is important to note that the Results chapter of this dissertation is solely dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of the data collected from the participants who took part in the study. The results are based on the information provided by the participants, as given by the participants. The researcher has taken measures to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data analysis process and findings should be interpreted within the context of the study and the limitations associated with the research design

4.1 Participants Demographics Description

Table 4.1.1 Participants descriptions; this table provides important demographic information about the participants involved in the study. This table includes variables such as age, major, and gender, illustrated as by frequency and percentage as well.

| VARIABLES | FREQUENCY (N) | PERCENTAGE (%) |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Age | | |
| 17-20 years | 8 | 16.7% |
| 21-24 years | 24 | 50% |
| 25-28 years | 12 | 25% |
| 29-31 years | 3 | 6.25% |
| 32-35 years | 1 | 2.08% |
| Major | | |
| Public Health | 24 | 50% |
| Medicine | 24 | 50%. |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 26 | 54.17% |
| Male | 22 | 45.83% |

4.2 Participants Definition Of Suicide, Suicidal Ideation; Views and Understanding of Rise in Suicide

The definition suicidal ideation and suicide given by participants was consistent. The definition of suicidal ideation being the desire to end one's life, due to various factors such as mental illness, trauma, or stressors in one's life. The act of taking one's own life, whether purposefully or accidentally, was consistently defined by the participants as suicide. Participants said;

“Suicide is when one decides to take away his or her own life while suicide ideation is the thought of taking one's own life without actually doing it”

“Suicide: a person intentionally taking their own life. Suicidal ideation: thoughts of killing oneself and plans on how to execute it”

The participants in the study acknowledged that there had been observed number of suicides but they were uncertain if this signified an increase. They shared their observations and experiences, attributing the rise in suicides to a combination of emotional and social stressors. Two participants respectively said;

“I have heard about a few students taking their own lives, one of them if I remember, had financial pressures. Something about his business failing”

“This one girl, ended her life shortly after results were published, maybe she didn't want to disappoint.”

4.3 Participants Understanding on Why Students Commit Suicide

The phenomenon of emotional distress emerged as a common theme in the responses gathered from the participants. The sub-themes that arose from their responses included experiences of abuse, peer pressure, mental illness, self-esteem and self-worth, family expectations, and romantic relationships. These sub-themes provided insights into the various factors that contribute to emotional distress among individuals, and shed light on the different ways in which these factors manifest in their lives, as alluded by one participant;

“Societal stigma causes shame among people suffering emotionally. This leads to them seeking an escape from it all i.e., suicide”.

For instance, some participants described how abusive experiences in their past had left them feeling emotionally drained and hopeless, while others spoke of the intense pressure, they felt from their peers to conform to certain standards as a participant suggested;

“A lot, failure to get or achieve one's expectations, rejection, depression, lack of resources, etc”.

The presence of mental illness was also a prominent sub-theme, with participants describing how it had affected their emotions and behaviour.

“Stress, fear and trauma from one's ability to withstand or maintain the diverse change in society. Or unable to handle one's emotion with regard to a particular occurrence”.

The sub-theme of self-esteem and self-worth revealed how individuals struggled with negative self-image and feelings of inadequacy, while the family expectation's sub-theme highlighted the stress and tension that arises when individuals feel pressured to meet certain expectations from their families. Finally, the sub-theme of romantic relationships shed light on how the ups and downs of romantic relationships can contribute to emotional distress. This participant gives insight;

“Relationship deal to heartbreak people can't handle it, alcohol and smoking cause people to do terrible things like stealing in the process once they are wanted by the police to escape guilt one ends their life”.

4.4 Participants Understanding of the Relationship between Social Stress and Suicide

The phenomenon of social factors that lead to suicide and suicidal ideation involves various elements that can affect an individual's mental and emotional state. Some of these social factors include the pervasive influence of social media.

“Comments from people about your appearance, competition from social media platforms that make people feel less or bad about themselves”

“Wrong association with friend groups, Social media triggers and Personal life misunderstandings”

The stress of financial obligations, academic pressure and competition, as well as exposure to crime. These factors can often lead to feelings of despair, hopelessness, and helplessness, which may culminate in suicidal thoughts or actions.

“When it comes to income levels, when one is unable to fend for his or her family, they are not able to afford enough food, clothes maybe say they even accumulate date this can lead to one committing suicide”

“Income: having a low income can cause depression. Unemployment: also linked to ‘income’ ...not being able to find a job because of high unemployment rates can cause one to think maybe they studied the wrong course or spent a lot of money on a course that can’t even get them a job”

“Also, when you don’t have much money, you’re inclined to go through stigma this causes suicide”

Academic stress emerged as a sub-theme in the phenomenon of social factors that lead to suicide and suicidal ideation. Participants in the study reported experiencing academic stress due to factors such as pressure to perform well, heavy workload, and competition with peers. The pressure to succeed academically was seen as a significant contributing factor to the overall burden of suicide and mental health issues among university students.

“Education: pressure from school e.g., failing exams you worked so hard for can cause stress and sometimes depression. Social image: trying to keep up social appearances can cause one to have low self-esteem”

In addition, social factors such as a lack of support from family or friends, feelings of isolation, and discrimination can also contribute to an individual's vulnerability to suicide. Understanding the complex relationship between these social factors and suicide is crucial for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to address this important public health concern.

Based on the survey responses, it appears that the school administrative role in addressing academic stress was largely perceived as low or non-existent among the participants. Only a smaller margin of respondents reported that it was mediocre. However, there was one report that the university had peer-run safe spaces, indicating some efforts to address academic stress;

“We have social groups that talk about all kinds of issues and help find solutions so I’d like to say the students and the student body are very active when it comes to mental health awareness”

It is important to note that these findings were based on self-reported perceptions and experiences of the participants, so further research may be necessary to fully understand the role of school administration in addressing academic stress among university students.

Chapter Five

5.0 Discussion

The discussion presented in this chapter is based on the interpretation of the collected data. It highlights important findings, provides conclusive evidence, and supports decision making. The chapter begins with a summary of the key findings, followed by a comparison with previous studies to gain a broader understanding of the topic. A critical analysis of the findings is then conducted, exploring underlying meanings and offering interpretations based on theory and evidence. The chapter also acknowledges the study's limitations and identifies areas for future research. Overall, it contributes to the existing knowledge, informs future directions, and provides practical implications and recommendations.

This study aimed to explore the burden of suicide among university students, focusing specifically on those enrolled at the University of Lusaka (Unaus). The participants demonstrated a general understanding of the concepts of suicide and suicidal ideation. They provided insights into the various factors that may contribute to suicidal behaviour. Notably, there were disparities in the influencing factors, which included differences based on gender and age groups. However, despite these variations, there were also similarities observed in certain factors that were identified as leading to or influencing suicide and suicidal ideation. These findings highlight the complex nature of suicidal behaviours and the need for tailored prevention and intervention strategies. The study provides valuable insights into the specific context of Unilus students, shedding light on the unique challenges they face regarding mental health and suicide.

The consistent nature of this response by the participants that suicide and suicide ideation are; the act of killing/ harming oneself with intention ending their own life and the thoughts to do so. This aligned with what Johnson et al (2021) suicide is a sequence that goes from suicidal ideation (ideas/thought) to plan, then to attempt and ultimately death, through a specific action. Therefore, suicidal ideation is a lead or a starting point to self-harm and suicide is the result. The findings of this study found that a significant number of students perceive suicide as a viable solution to cope with their difficulties of life. These findings align with the findings made by Nguyen et al. (2021), who found that students experiencing suicidal thoughts often view suicide as a potential option when faced with difficult circumstances.

The study participants consistently identified emotional distress as a major factor contributing to suicide. This distress was attributed to various factors including abuse, peer pressure, mental illness, self-esteem and self-worth issues, family expectations, and romantic relationships.

These findings align with the research conducted by Wu et al. (2019) and Czyz et al (2016) who reported significant associations between perceived stress, depressive symptoms, hopelessness, perceiving oneself as a burden were predictors of suicidal ideation among

The experiences shared by participants in this study highlight the significant impact of romantic and interpersonal relationships on suicidal ideation and suicide. Female participants particularly expressed the distress they felt when experiencing heartbreak, betrayal, or abandonment by their partners and friends. These emotional experiences were closely associated with feelings of emotional distress, which contributes to the development of suicidal thoughts. Studies have found that difficulties in romantic relationships, such as conflicts, breakups, or unrequited love, can contribute to increased distress and vulnerability to suicidal ideation as expressed by Chen et al (2019) and (Teo, 2019).

The stigmatization from peers and the larger society was also reported to be a factor that caused the students a lot of emotional distress, fuelling and feeding their suicidal thoughts. The stigma surrounding poor mental leaves students feeling alone and isolated. These students experiencing mental health issue, felt like their peers would reject them, view them as weak or even bullying them for seeking help. A study by Yun et al (2020) found that stigma was a significant barrier to help-seeking among college students with mental health issues.

Multiple social factors were identified as significant contributors to suicide among students in this study. The influence of social media emerged as a prominent factor, highlighting the potential negative impact of online platforms on mental well-being. Additionally, financial strain, academic stress, and inadequate social support were also recognized as influential factors that contribute to the burden of suicide among students.

A study by Yun Cheng (2020) explored how financial stress was a social factor/stressor of suicidal ideation among university students. This coincides with some the participants reported. Financial strain coming from various sources, the inability to pay tuition fees, accommodation costs, basic living expenses as well as the cost of funding a lifestyle that their peers approve of. This may leave them with feeling hopeless and helplessness, ultimately leading to suicidal ideation and even suicide. Farahmand et al. (2019) revealed that use of social media was positively associated with stress. Cyberbullying has become a prevalent thing on social media, it takes many forms, including being sent threatening or harassing messages, spreading rumors or embarrassing information online and even impersonating someone else to damage their reputation. It has serious negative effects on mental health especially in younger students.

Cyberbullying causes feelings of isolation and depression, which can lead to suicidal ideation. Which according to Hinduja and Patchin (2018), victims of cyberbullying are two to nine times more likely to report suicidal thoughts and attempts compared to non-victims.

Academic stress, particularly the fear of failure, is another social factor that can lead to suicidal ideation among students. A study by Wu et al (2019) found that academic stress was a repeated theme of suicidal ideation among university students. Students expressed that there are high expectations and demands to perform well at school coming from themselves and the people around, which can create significant pressure and stress. This constant pressure to perform well and meet deadlines leads to overwhelming stress levels, affecting their mental health and sense of self. As a result, some students experience thoughts of suicide as a response to the intense academic pressure.

Suicidal ideation and behaviour among university students are concerning issues that require further investigation to understand the contributing factors. While existing studies have identified some factors associated with suicidal ideation, more research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes. Effective interventions and prevention strategies should be tailored to the diverse student population, considering their cultural backgrounds and individual experiences. Collaboration among mental health professionals, university administrators, and policymakers is essential in developing comprehensive approaches to address this issue. Prioritizing research and intervention efforts is crucial in effectively addressing suicidal ideation and behaviour among university students.

5.2 Limitations

A limitation in research refers to any factors or circumstances that could have influenced the results of the study in an unintended or unexpected way, and thereby compromised the study's internal or external validity. Several limitations of their study, including the small sample size, the lack of diversity in their sample, and the reliance on self-reported data, which may have introduced response bias and social desirability bias. These limitations suggest that the findings of the study should be interpreted with caution (Manoharan, 2021).

1. Limited generalizability: the study only included a specific group of students from one institution under the same faculty, the findings may not be applicable to other populations.
2. Potential for biased sample: Final year students in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences may not represent the experiences and perspectives of all university students or the general population.

3. Group dynamics: Focus group discussions are prone to group dynamics, which may affect the responses of individual participants. The presence of dominant or passive participants may affect the quality of data collected.

4. Lack of confidentiality: Participants may be hesitant to provide honest responses if they feel that their responses may be shared with others outside the group.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the burden of suicide is a significant issue among University of Lusaka students. The study has shed light on the factors that contribute to suicidal ideation and the challenges that students face when seeking help. The findings also highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the mental health needs of university students in Zambia.

Through the use of focus group discussions and thematic analysis, this study has provided an understanding of the experiences and views of students regarding suicide. The understanding of the participants has been captured and presented in a way that can inform policy and practice aimed at addressing the issue.

However, this study is not without limitations. The sample size was relatively small and may not be representative of the larger population of University of Lusaka students. Additionally, the study was conducted at a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other universities in Zambia. Further studies at other institutions and from different population may be necessary to get a more wholistic understanding.

5.4 Recommendations

1. There is a need for increased awareness and education on mental health and suicide prevention among university students. This can be achieved through the establishment of mental health awareness campaigns, clubs and workshops within the university setting. These initiatives should be aimed to reduce stigma around mental health issues and encourage students to seek help when needed.
2. The university should strengthen mental health support systems that are already available to the students. This includes the provision of counselling services, health hotline and support groups.
3. The university should also work closely with mental health professionals to ensure that the support provided is effective and tailored to the needs of students.

4. There is a need for further research to understand the underlying causes of suicide among university students in Lusaka. This can help inform the development of targeted interventions and policies to prevent suicide and support students at risk.

Overall, addressing the burden of suicide among university students requires a multi-faceted approach that involves the collaboration of various stakeholders, including the university, mental health professionals, and policy makers. By taking proactive steps to address this issue, we can create a safer and more supportive environment for university students in Lusaka.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Consent form



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

It's me, MWEENE HAAMAUNDU. I'm a University of Lusaka student in my fourth year of study for a public health bachelor's degree. Exploring the Burden of Suicide Among University of Lusaka Students is the name of the research project I'm working on right now. One of the university's criteria for earning a bachelor's degree in public health science is the research report. The study's conclusions may be helpful for further study or for the government's Ministry of Health to use in developing rules and regulations on the topic. As a result, your participation in this study is completely optional, and declining to take part has no negative effects. Please be aware that your comments to this form and your identity will remain anonymous, upholding your right to privacy. It's me, MWEENE HAAMAUNDU. I'm a University of Lusaka student in my fourth year of study for a public health bachelor's degree. Exploring the Burden of Suicide Among University of Lusaka Students is the name of the research project I'm working on right now. One of the university's criteria for earning a bachelor's degree in public health science is the research report. The study's conclusions may be helpful for further study or for the government's Ministry of Health to use in developing rules and regulations on the topic. As a result, your participation in this study is completely

optional, and declining to take part has no negative effects. Please be aware that your comments to this form and your identity will remain anonymous, upholding your right to privacy.

DECLARATION

I being of sound mind and body understand all that is expected of me if I choose to participate in the study, I therefore give my consent to take part in the study.

SIGNATURE

Appendix II;Data Collection Tool

Making reference to the study approach chosen, which will be used in this research study as qualitative study approach, the appropriate data collection tool in this case will be face-to-face interview to be used in the research so that the main objective is achieved accordingly. This will help with understanding the burden of suicide among University of Lusaka students.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEWEE'S PARTICULARS

AGE:

SEX:

Major:

1. What is your understanding of the term suicide and suicidal ideation?

.....
.....

2. Do you think that there has been an increase of student suicide, explain?

.....
.....

3. Are there any social factors that are linked to suicide, explain this in detail?

.....
.....

4. What life experiences do student face in school and outside school that may lead to suicide?

.....
.....

5. In what ways can these social factors increase the Chance of suicide?

.....
.....

6. What is the level of participation in the awareness of suicide among the student body?

.....
.....

7. In what ways do you think the burden of suicide can be eased off students?

.....
.....

8. What are the ways in can the school administration help ease the burden of suicide among students?

.....
.....

9. What measure would be appropriate to create awareness for suicide among students?

.....
.....

Appendix III;Study Budget

The following budget outlines the estimated cost of carrying out this study

| CATEGORY | DESCRIPTION | UNIT | UNIT PRICE | TOTAL PRICE |
|---|--|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Transportation | To and from data collection destinations | | K450.00 | K450.00 |
| Stationery | Plain papers | 500 paper pack | 1 | K150.00 |
| | Pencils | X2 | K2.50 per pencil | K5.00 |
| | Pens | X10 | K2.5 per pen | K25.00 |
| Internet subscription | Monthly subscription | X3 | K215.00per month | K645.00 |
| Printing and binding of research document | | | | K400.00 |
| Food and water | Lunch | X 14 | K40.00 | K560.00 |
| | water | X 14 | K5.00 | K70.00 |
| Contingency funds | | | | K400.00 |
| Total | | | | K2905.00 |

Appendix IV ;Time plan

This outlines the estimated time frame in which the study will be conducted.

| | Activity | June-July 2022 | September- November 2022 | January- March 2023 | April-June 2023 |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| I | Research Topic Submission | | | | |
| ii | Proposal writing | | | | |
| iii | Data Collection | | | | |
| iv | Data Analysis | | | | |
| v | Report Writing | | | | |
| vi | Submission of Dissertation | | | | |

Appendix V; Ethical Approval Letters

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES LEOPARDS
HILL CAMPUS
Plot No. 37413, Off Alick Nkhata Mass Media. P. O Box 36711, Lusaka.
Phone: +260211258505, 258409 Fax +260211233409; Cell +260976075850,961917862,
E-mail:unilus@zamnet.zm,ictar@zamnet.zm

| |
|---|
| SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE |
|---|

Ref no: IORG0010092-2023/081

Date: 15th DECEMBER, 2022

MWEENE HAAMAUNDU - BSPH19217426

**Re: RESEARCH TITLE: EXPLORING THE BURDEN OF SUICIDE AMONG
UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA STUDENTS**

The above research was submitted to the research ethics committee for review. The study has no major ethical problems and is approved subject to the following:

1. The study cannot be changed without express permission of the UNILUS Research ethics committee
2. Approval from the Lusaka District health Management or equivalent health authorities should be sought.
3. The study tools should be added.
4. An informed consent form should be attached and filled by all study participants (If dealing with primary data)
5. The risks and benefits should be included in the consent form.
6. Ensure before commencement that approval is sought from ZNHRA

Congratulations and the committee wishes you success in your work.



Prof Kasonde Bowa
MSc(Glasgow),M.Med(UNZA),FRCS(Glasgow),FACS,FCS,DPH(LSTMH),MPH(UCL)
Chairman- UNILUS REC
Professor of Urology and Consultant Urologist
Executive Dean
University of Lusaka and University Teaching Hospital School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

**SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES LEOPARDS
HILL CAMPUS**

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E-mail:unilus@zamnet.zm,ictar@zamnet.zm

Date: 15th DECEMBER, 2022

.....
.....
.....
**PERMISSION FOR MWEENE HAAMAUNDU - BSPH19217426 TO CONDUCT A
RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR FACILITY/ INSTITUTION/ORGANIZATION**

Reference is made to the above subject matter

The University of Lusaka, School of Medicine and Health Sciences here by requests for permission for **Mweene Haamaundu** Public Health Student to conduct research at your facility/ institution/ organization, entitled; **EXPLORING THE BURDEN OF SUICIDE AMONG UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA STUDENTS**. The research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science Public Health. This is purely for academic purposes and information gained in such a way will not be used in the public domain without prior authorization from the institutions/ organizations involved.

The research topic has been cleared by the University of Lusaka, School of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee as per the attached copy. Data collection is expected to be done from **1st January, 2023 to 31st March, 2023**.

The University of Lusaka avails itself of this opportunity to review to your office the assurances of its highest considerations and looks forward to your timely and favorable response.



Prof Kasonde Bowa
MSc(Glasgow),M.Med(UNZA),FRCS(Glasgow),FACS,FCS,DPH(LSTMH),MPH(UCL)
Chairman- UNILUS REC
Professor of Urology and Consultant Urologist
Executive Dean University of Lusaka and University Teaching Hospital School of Medicine and Health Sciences.



NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH AUTHORITY

Lot No. 18961/M, off Kasama Road, Chalala, P.O. Box 30075, LUSAKA
Tell: +260211 250309 | Email: znhrasec@nhra.org.zm | www.nhra.org.zm

Ref No: NHRA00006/25/01/2023

Date: 25th January 2023

The Principal Investigator,
Mweene Haamaundu,
UNILUS,
Lusaka, Zambia.

Dear Ms Haamaundu,

Re: Request for Authority to Conduct Research

The National Health Research Authority is in receipt of your request for ethical clearance and authority to conduct research titled “**Exploring The Burden Of Suicide Among University Of Lusaka Students.**”

I wish to inform you that following submission of your request to the Authority, our review of the same and in view of the ethical clearance, this study has been **approved** on condition that:

1. The relevant Provincial and District Medical Officers where the study is being conducted are fully appraised;
2. Progress updates are provided to NHRA bi-annually from the date of commencement of the study;
3. The final study report is cleared by the NHRA before any publication or dissemination within or outside the country;
4. After clearance for publication or dissemination by the NHRA, the final study report is shared with all relevant Provincial and District Directors of Health where the study was being conducted, University leadership, and all key respondents.

Yours sincerely,

National Health Research Authority

Ms Sandra Chilengi Sakala,
Acting Director/Chief Executive Officer