# ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS THAT PREDISPOSES PEOPLE TO SUICIDE IN NSUKKA UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

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## Abstract

The study aims to investigate the underlying sociocultural dynamics that contribute to suicidal behavior among students at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). Recognizing the global public health significance of suicide, this research addresses a critical gap by focusing on the unique challenges faced within Nigerian university communities. The study employs a cross-sectional survey design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the perspectives of 611 respondents selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. The quantitative data, analyzed using SPSS, is complemented by in-depth interviews with university staff members to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Findings reveal that relationship breakups (30.6%), loss of loved ones (30.4%), and social stigma (18.1%) are prominent social factors predisposing individuals to suicide in the Nsukka community. Additionally, cultural stigma and religious beliefs significantly deter individuals from seeking help, exacerbating feelings of isolation and hopelessness. The study highlights the profound emotional and social impacts of suicide, including anger (57.3%), depression (36.8%), and social withdrawal among the victim's close associates. The research underscores the need for targeted interventions, recommending the establishment of comprehensive mental health services, educational programs to reduce cultural and religious stigma, and the integration of stress management training into the university curriculum. By addressing these factors, the study aims to inform the development of effective prevention strategies and support mechanisms tailored to the needs of the Nsukka University community, ultimately contributing to improved mental health and well-being of students.

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**Background of the Study**

Suicide is a significant public health issue globally, with millions of people engaging in suicidal behavior each year (WHO, 2017). The complexity of suicide is evident in the various contributing factors, including neurobiological, psychological, and sociocultural elements (Turecki & Brent, 2016). Sociocultural factors, in particular, play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards suicide and influencing its prevalence within different communities (Olatunji, 2015). These factors encompass a wide range of elements such as religious beliefs, cultural practices, social norms, and economic conditions, which collectively impact an individual's mental health and well-being.

Globally, the methods and rates of suicide vary significantly. In many countries, hanging is the predominant method, while in others, methods such as firearm use and poisoning are more common (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2008). In Nigeria, the choice of suicide method often depends on availability and perceived effectiveness, with men typically opting for more violent means and women choosing less violent methods (Offia & Obiorah, 2014). The sociocultural context in Nigeria further complicates the issue, as suicide is criminalized and stigmatized, discouraging individuals from seeking help and leading to underreporting of cases (Lawal, 2018).

Within university communities, students are particularly vulnerable to suicidal ideation and attempts due to the unique challenges they face. Academic pressure, social integration issues, and mental health struggles are common among students and can significantly impact their well-being (Wilcox et al., 2010). In the United States, for example, suicide is a leading cause of death among college students, with many reporting feelings of overwhelming sadness and anxiety (American College Health Association, 2012). Despite the global prevalence of suicide among university students, there is a paucity of research focused on this issue within Nigerian university communities, particularly in Nsukka.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite the global recognition of suicide as a critical public health issue, there is limited research on the sociocultural factors that predispose individuals to suicide within Nigerian university communities. Existing studies in Nigeria primarily focus on the general population, with little emphasis on the unique experiences and challenges faced by university students (Okoedion & Okolie, 2019). The university environment presents a distinct set of stressors, including academic demands, social pressures, and mental health challenges, which can exacerbate suicidal tendencies among students (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2020).

In the Nsukka University community, incidents of suicide have highlighted the urgent need for targeted research to understand the underlying causes and contributing factors. Personal observations and reports of suicide among students at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) underscore the importance of examining the social and cultural dynamics that influence these tragic events. Previous studies have identified various risk factors for suicide among university students, including depression, substance use, interpersonal conflicts, and academic stress (Nyorere, James, & Udom, 2020). However, specific data on the Nsukka University community is lacking, necessitating a comprehensive investigation into the factors that predispose individuals to suicide in this context.

Nigeria's sociocultural landscape adds an additional layer of complexity to the issue of suicide. Cultural stigma, religious beliefs, and legal implications all play a role in shaping attitudes towards suicide and influencing the likelihood of individuals seeking help. For example, the belief that suicide brings shame to the family can deter individuals from reporting suicidal behavior or seeking support, leading to significant underreporting and a lack of reliable data (Igwe et al., 2013).

The sociocultural dynamics within the Nsukka University community, including the roles of family support, peer relationships, and community attitudes, are critical areas for investigation. Understanding these factors can

provide valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by students and inform the development of culturally sensitive intervention strategies.

This study aims to fill this research gap by assessing the social and cultural factors that predispose individuals to suicide in the Nsukka University community and by understanding the impacts of these incidents on the community. The findings will contribute to the development of effective prevention strategies and support mechanisms tailored to the needs of students and staff. Understanding the sociocultural dynamics at play is crucial for addressing the mental health needs of university students and preventing future suicides.

## Objectives of the Study

1.      To determine the social factors predisposing people to suicide in the Nsukka University community.
2.      To determine the cultural factors predisposing people to suicide in the Nsukka University community.
3.      To ascertain the impacts of suicide in the Nsukka University community.

## Research Questions

1.      What are the social factors predisposing people to suicide in Nsukka university community?
2.      What are the cultural factors predisposing people to suicide in Nsukka university community?
3.      What are the impacts of suicide in Nsukka university community?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## Sociocultural Factors and Suicide

The concept, socio-cultural relates to social and cultural factors, which means common traditions, habits, patterns and beliefs present in a population group (Olatunji & Ejalonibu, 2013, 2014). It also refers to factors about relationships and interactions within different social settings like family, peers, friendship, work, etc. The term 'sociocultural' is mostly used in sociologic context and refers to the most remarkable drivers that affect thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Olatunji, 2015). Search for literature indicate that stressful sociocultural events can be an important trigger for suicide attempts. For instance, studies by Asogwa and Onyezere, (2018) observed that suicide act is now being embraced by many Nigerians, supposedly, as a way out of their travails, especially, the present harsh economic situation in the country. The authors maintain that the association between economic recession and increase in suicide rates is clear and positive. Thus, suicide is a consequence of complex interactions among various factors, such as socio-demographic characteristics, physical status, religion, and personality traits (Na et al, 2017). Reiss and Dombeck (2021) noted that the sociocultural factors that affect suicide rates operate at many different levels. The degree to which someone's surroundings bring about a positive or negative influence depends on individual factors. These include demographic characteristics, life stressors, coping skills, and biological dimensions linked to suicide. They also include whether an individual's family, community and country are supportive or stressful.

Reiss and Dombeck (2021) outlined social support, group membership, social norms and social change as the elemental sociocultural factors that can predispose an individual to suicide. These factors are further discussed in detail.

**Social Support**: which is a social network of family, friend and colleague relationships is an important part of and foundation for many people's sense of self-esteem. Those who enjoy close relationships with others also cope better with stress and have better overall psychological and physical health. Social networks provide opportunity for sharing emotions and feeling connected to others. Isolation, on the other hand, can lead to feelings of alienation and depression. These feelings can lead to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Social support can help prevent someone moving from suicidal thoughts to suicide attempts.

**Group Membership**: Social and cultural groups can be supportive and create feelings of belonging, love, and comfort. They can serve as a "safety net" to catch individuals who are experiencing problems or stress. In these

cases, individuals who feel suicidal can turn to friends, family members, or other acquaintances for emotional and financial assistance. Being a member of a group that is tightly connected often serves as a suicide obstacle. However, group membership can come with a price. Groups sometimes require stress-inducing obligations and high levels of commitment. They may lead someone to take on behaviors of the group, rather than thinking for ourselves. These types of groups may actually contribute to suicidal thoughts and feelings. In extreme cases, groups can even demand that someone sacrifice him or herself for the "greater good."

**Social Norms**: A norm is a rule that is socially enforced. A particular group, community, or nation promotes norms regarding a range of attitudes and behaviors. For instance, there are norms with regard to how someone should act in a church or synagogue. Social norms regarding suicide can influence its meaning (i.e., whether it is stigmatized) as well as its frequency. Many societies and religious traditions ban suicide and view it as a sin or taboo. Others portray suicide as a legitimate behavior in certain circumstances. For instance, some Islamic groups (e.g Boko Haram in Nigeria) promote suicide as a means of martyrdom in a war against an enemy. Among Buddhist monks, self-sacrifice for religious reasons can be viewed as an honorable act. The Japanese during the Second World War demonstrated a rare kind of suicide by taking poison (Kamikaze) to avoid capture by the enemy (Smithsonian Magazine, 2018). In India, it is acceptable for a widow to burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre; although a similar practice was not recorded for a widower, it was noted that the Hindu code of conduct condones suicide for incurable diseases or as a response to great misfortune (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021). Historically, the cultural attitude of Japan towards suicide has been described as tolerant. Suicide in Japan is *Seppwu* or *Harakin* which refers to the honorable method of taking one's life practiced by men of the Samarai class in feudal Japan (https://www.britannica.com).

**Social Change**: Societies that are experiencing upheaval and unrest have higher rates of suicide. For instance, political violence can increase suicide rates- a long-standing civil war in Sri Lanka has been linked to a higher rate of suicide. Social change brought about by modernization, globalization, economic turmoil, and/or new political systems (particularly when they result in the breakdown of a culture's traditional values and cultures) can also be accompanied by a rise in suicide rates. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many Eastern European countries are dealing with increased rates of alcohol and drug abuse, and have some of the highest suicide rates in the world today (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021). While in Nigeria, most suicide has been attributed to economic recession.

**Empirical Review**

In their study, Suicide methods in Europe: a gender-specific analysis of countries participating in the ''European Alliance Against Depression'', Vamik et al (2008) were poised to identify the most frequent gender-specific suicide methods in Europe. The authors sourced their data from proportions of seven predominant suicide methods utilized in 16 countries participating in the European Alliance Against Depression (EAAD). According to them, hanging was the most prevalent suicide method among both males (54.3%) and females (35.6%). For males, hanging was followed by firearms (9.7%) and poisoning by drugs (8.6%); for females, by poisoning by drugs (24.7%) and jumping from a high place (14.5%) (Vamik et al, 2008). Also, the study found that in all countries, males had a higher risk than females of using firearms and hanging and a lower risk of poisoning by drugs, drowning and jumping (Vamik et al, 2008).

Examining the validity of suicide statistics in Europe, Vamik et al (2012) found that, the quality of suicide statistics depends on various country-specific circumstances such as: (1) routines for registering suicides and other external causes of deaths; the economic situation, which determines the resources available for medical and legal inquest into causes of death (autopsy, forensic autopsy, police/prosecutor investigation); (3) the strictness of and adherence to regulations concerning statistical data about causes of death; (4) varying proportions of suicide methods (hanging and jumping, which are usually easy to diagnose as suicides, versus drowning, using

street drugs, or traffic accidents, in which the intent is more difficult to determine); (5) cultural issues (stigma and denial at the family level); (6) financial implications for relatives, depending on life insurance regulations and practices; (7) the sociopolitical situation, which may bring forth wishes of the government to suppress one diagnosis of death at the expense of another. The authors noted that all these combine to affect the statistical outcome of suicide.

In a study carried out in Korea, Na et al (2017) found that attitudes toward suicide are increasingly unfavorable as a function of age among members of the Korean general population. These results are contrary to their earlier hypothesis that attitudes toward suicide would become more favorable as a function of age, possibly serving as the sociocultural background for the higher suicide rates among older individuals. The authors initially thought that high suicide rate in elderly might arise from favorable attitude toward suicide. However, increasing age group was the strongest influence on unfavorable attitudes toward suicide; it was more powerful than all other risk factors, such as prior suicide attempts, depression, and religion (Na et al, 2017).

In their study, "Determination of the social related factors of suicide in Iran: a systematic review and meta-analysis", Nazarzadeh et al (2013) searched scientific databases including PubMed and Science direct; adopting meta-regression to analyze data. This review of 20 studies found that social factors contributing to attempted suicide include family conflicts (30%), marital problems (26%), economic constrains (12%) and educational failures (5%), with family conflicts found to be the most prevalent for this Iranian study population (Nazarzadeh et al, 2013). The authors noted that, their meta-regression results also found that climate types and sample size produced significant levels of heterogeneity.

Eskim (2019), in a study "Suicidal Behavior in the Mediterranean Countries" found that more men kill themselves than women in Mediterranean Countries except in Morocco. The study was conducted with official data retrieved from several sources such as World Health Organization's data repository, while descriptive statistics, group comparison, correlational and regression statistical analyses were used to summarize the data. It was concluded that the prevalence of suicidal deaths, thoughts and attempts vary between the Mediterranean countries, along indices like religion, sex and culture (Eskim, 2019).

Studying youth suicidal behaviour in Edo state, Okoedion and Okolie (2019) found that, depression and mental illness, substance use, interpersonal conflict, anxiety and stress, unemployment and poverty, sexual violence, previous suicidal behaviour, childhood adversity, hopelessness amongst others are risk factors that influence or predict suicidal behaviours among youth in Edo state. Also, depression and mental illness, substance use, interpersonal conflict, anxiety and stress, unemployment and poverty, previous suicidal behaviour, sexual violence, childhood adversity, and hopelessness were found to individually influence or predict youth suicidal behaviour in Edo State (Okoedion & Okolie, 2019). The authors therefore recommend among others that greater emphasis should be placed on encouraging healthy peer relationships among youths. This is because social cohesiveness and tolerance have been shown to improve the mental well-being of young people

**Strain Theory of Suicide (STS)**

The ideas underlying strain theory originate from Emile Durkheim's anomie theory, which was later advanced by American sociologist Robert K. Merton in the 1930s. Classic strain theories primarily focused on disadvantaged groups, where common aspirations, such as realizing the "American dream," and the inability to achieve those goals drove individuals toward criminal behavior. Those below the poverty threshold, unable to realize socially accepted ambitions through legal means, were often pushed into criminal activities.

The Strain Theory of Suicide (STS) posits that suicide is typically preceded by psychological strains, which differ from everyday stress. Strains are intense pressures that push or pull individuals, causing frustration, anger, or pain. These can include conflicts between cultural values, discrepancies between aspirations and reality, status

differences, and an inability to cope with crises. Severe strains can lead to mental disorders, and the extreme resolution for an unresolved strain may be suicide. The basic tenet of STS involves a lack of social integration or connectedness, combined with acquired capability, escalating the progression from suicidal ideation to attempts. STS suggests that unbearable and inescapable psychological strains can force individuals to make choices to minimize pain and maximize rewards. While most people with daily life strains do not consider suicide, those who do may see it as a rational choice to avoid further suffering. Critics argue that social disconnectedness alone is not the root cause of suicidal thoughts, as many people feel lonely or burdensome without considering suicide. Despite these criticisms, STS remains theoretically sound in explaining suicide, highlighting how pain and hopelessness motivate suicidal ideation. The theory has deep roots in sociological studies of crime, emphasizing both societal-level inadequate regulation and individual-level frictions and pains.

**Application of the theory**

According to the Strain Theory of Suicide (STS), various factors predispose individuals to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Economic strains, such as poverty and financial hardships, create a sense of hopelessness, particularly when students struggle to pay tuition fees or living expenses. Academic pressures, characterized by high expectations and poor performance, lead to feelings of failure when there is a gap between aspirations and actual results. Social isolation, resulting from a lack of social support and feeling disconnected from peers, is common among international students or those from different cultural backgrounds. Family conflicts, stemming from dysfunctional family dynamics and high parental expectations, also contribute to psychological strain. Pre-existing mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety, make individuals more vulnerable to additional stressors. Cultural and social expectations exert pressure to conform, causing significant stress when individuals strive to meet socially accepted goals, like professional success or family obligations. Addressing these factors through targeted interventions can help mitigate the risk of suicide in the Nsukka University community.

**Design of the Study**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, considered suitable for capturing the views, opinions, attitudes, and interests of respondents on a given research issue at any point in time using tools like questionnaires and interviews (Obikeze, 1990). This design is deemed appropriate for the present study as it provides a snapshot of the research population.

**Area of the Study**

The study was conducted at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), a federal university in Enugu State, Nigeria. Founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1955, UNN has three campuses in Enugu State and one in Aba, Abia State. As the first full-fledged indigenous and autonomous university in Nigeria, UNN is modeled on the American educational system and is one of the most reputed universities in Nigeria, with a diverse representation of different ethnic nationalities.

**Population and Sample Size**

As of the 2019/2020 academic session, UNN had a student population of 48,487, with 22,336 males and 26,151 females (Academic Planning Unit UNN, 2020). The target population for this study comprised all undergraduate students at the Nsukka campus, totaling 27,917 (12,593 males and 15,324 females). Using Taro Yameni's (1967) formula, a sample size of 611 respondents was selected for the quantitative part of the study. Additionally, nine staff members were purposively selected for in-depth interviews, including deans, SERVICOM staff, and security personnel, who are well-informed about the campus dynamics and student welfare.

**Sampling Technique**

For this study, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the quantitative part, and a purposive sampling technique was used for the qualitative part. Multi-stage sampling involves combining different probability sampling techniques to systematically select participants.

First, the faculties at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), which naturally form clusters, were considered. Five faculties were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Each faculty name was written on a separate folded paper, placed in a transparent container, and thoroughly shaken. One folded paper was picked at a time without replacement until five faculties were selected.

Next, within each of these five selected faculties, all departments were listed, and two departments from each faculty were chosen using the same simple random technique. This process resulted in the selection of 10 departments in total. The final respondents were then selected based on availability. The researcher, assisted by research assistants, distributed 61 questionnaires in each of the 10 departments, resulting in 610 distributed questionnaires. To ensure the sample size of 611 was achieved, an additional respondent was assigned to the first department listed alphabetically among the selected ones.

For the in-depth interviews (IDIs), nine respondents were purposively selected. These included three deans of faculties, three SERVICOM staff, and three security personnel. Deans were chosen for their comprehensive knowledge of faculty happenings, SERVICOM staff for their role in overseeing student welfare and handling complaints, and security personnel for their first-hand experience with life-threatening emergencies and suicide ideation on campus.

**Instruments and Data Analysis**

Data were collected using questionnaires and an in-depth interview guide (IDI). The questionnaire included structured, close-ended questions divided into two sections: socio-demographic information and views on suicide incidence in the university community. The in-depth interviews provided further probes on pertinent issues. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 20, with frequency tables and charts presenting the results. The IDI responses were used to complement the quantitative data, providing a richer understanding of the subject matter. Inferential statistics such as Chi-square and Spearman Correlation were used to test the study hypotheses.

**Result Presentation**

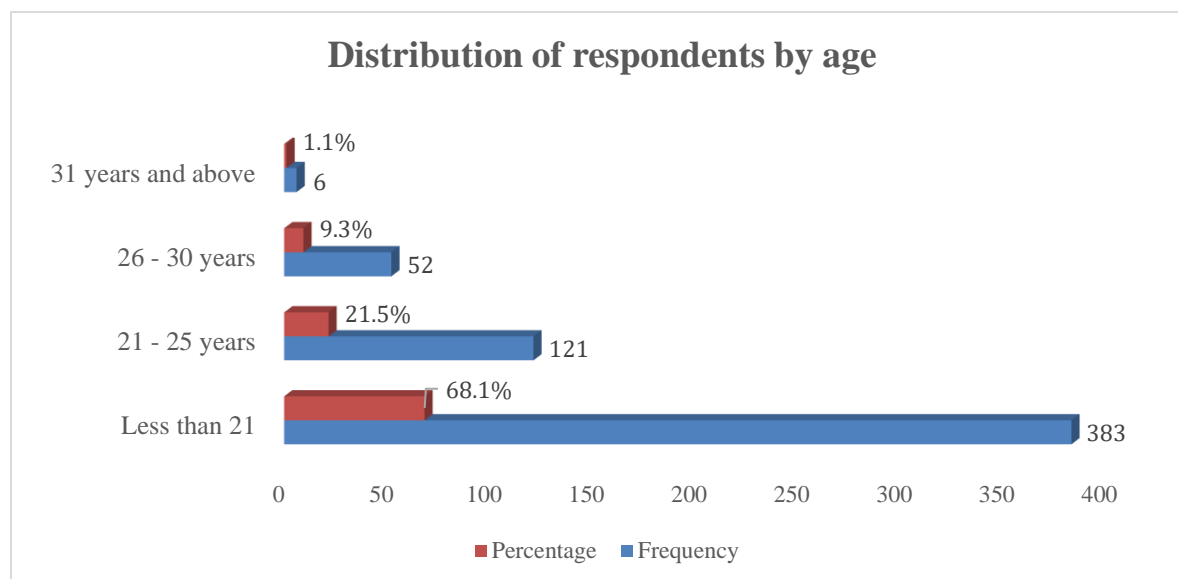**4.1     Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**



**Figure 4.1.1: Distribution of respondents by age** [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

Figure 4.1.1 presented information on age distribution of respondents. It showed that 1.1% of the respondents are 31 years and above, 9.3% are 26-30 years, 21.5% are 21-25 years, while 68.1% are less than 21 years old. This implies that bulk of the participants is not over 21 years old. This is also an indicator of the dominant age bracket of undergraduates in University of Nigeria, and aligned with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) benchmark for enrollment in the scheme after graduation.

**Table 4.1.1: Distribution of respondents by Department**

| Department | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Food Science & Tech | 54 | 9.6 |
| Agricultural Economics | 56 | 10.0 |
| Computer Education | 56 | 10.0 |
| Business Education | 56 | 10.0 |
| Sociology | 58 | 10.3 |
| Economics | 56 | 10.0 |
| English and Literary Studies | 56 | 10.0 |
| Foreign Language | 58 | 10.3 |
| Industrial Chemistry | 56 | 10.0 |
| Microbiology | 56 | 10.0 |
| **Total** | **562** | **100.0** |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.1.1 presented information on department of respondents. It showed that 9.6% of the respondents are from the Department of Food and Science Tech. Seven other Departments has percentage representation of 10% namely; Agricultural Economics, Computer Education, Business Education, Economics, English and Literary

Studies, Industrial Chemistry and Microbiology. The remaining two Departments; Sociology, and Foreign Language each has 10.3% respondent representation respectively. This implies that the 10 Departments sampled had proportionate representation in the study.

**Table 4.1.2: Distribution of respondents by Level of study**

| Level of study | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 100 Level | 58 | 10.3 |
| 200 Level | 129 | 23.0 |
| 300 Level | 299 | 53.2 |
| 400 - 500 Level | 76 | 13.5 |
| **Total** | **562** | **100.0** |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Information on level of study of the respondents were presented in Table 4.1.2 as follows; "100 level" (10.3%), "200 level" (23%), "300 level" (53.2%), and "400-500 level" (13.5%). This implies that there were more 300 level participants in the study, and indication that majority of the participants has spent reasonable number of years in the university community and therefore vast in the happenings within the university community.
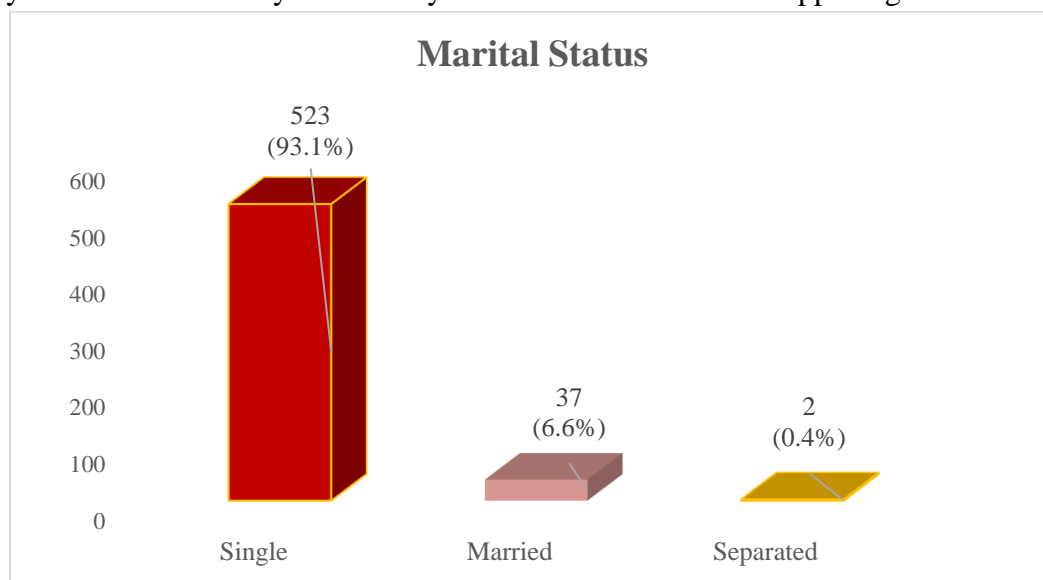


**Figure 4.1.2: Distribution of respondents by marital status** [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

Figure 4.1.2 showed that with regards to marital status, 93.1% of the respondents are single, 6.6% are married, while 0.4% are separated. This aligns with information presented in Figure 4.1.1 where the dominant age categories of the respondents are less than 21 years old. This implies that at least nine out of every 10 undergraduate students in University of Nigeria are single.

**Table 4.1.3: Distribution of respondents by Religious affiliation**

| Religious affiliation | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Christianity | 538 | 95.7 |
| Islam | 19 | 3.4 |
| African Traditional Religion | 5 | .9 |
| **Total** | **562** | **100.0** |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Information presented in Table 4.1.3 showed religious affiliation of respondents. It indicated that 95.7% of the respondents are Christians, 3.4% of the respondents are Islam, while 0.9% of the respondents are African Traditional Religion practitioners. This shows that the dormant religion amongst undergraduate students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka is Christianity.
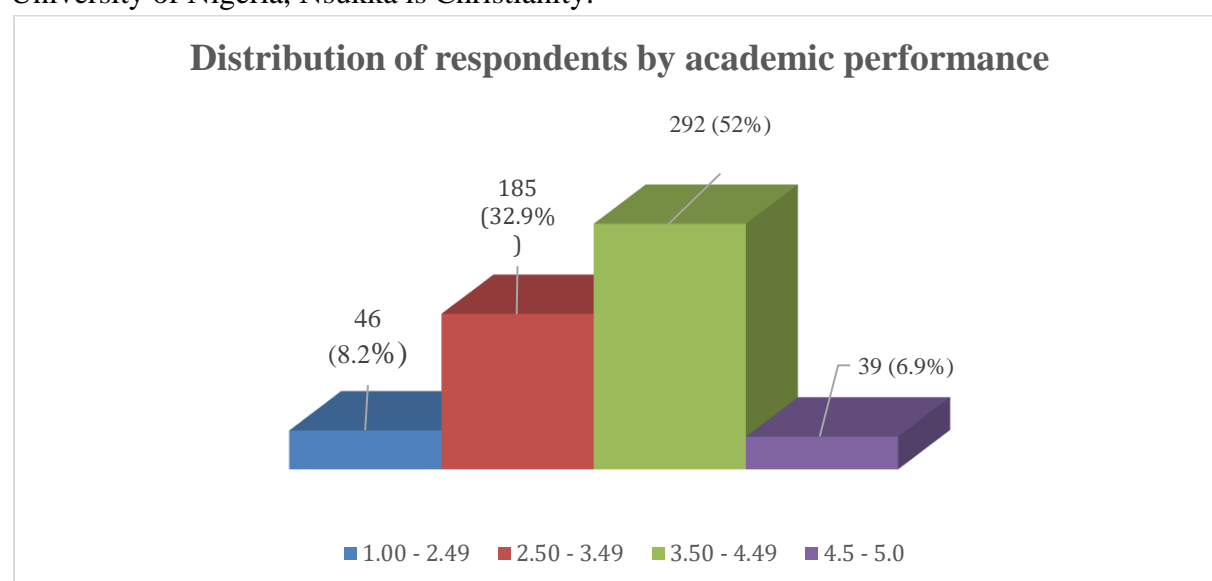


**Figure 4.1.3: Distribution of respondents by Academic performance** [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

On academic performance of the respondents, Figure 4.1.3 showed that 8.2% of the respondents are on 1.00-2.49 cumulative grade point (CGP), 32.9% of the respondents are on 2.50-3.49 CGP, 52% of the respondents are on 3.50-4.49 CGP, while 6.9% are on 4.50-5.00 CGP. Impliedly, a little more than half of the total respondents are within 3.50-4.49 CGP.

**Table 4.2.11: Distribution of respondents on triggers of suicide thoughts**

| Response | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Relationship breakups | 172 | 30.6 |
| Sexual abuse | 117 | 20.8 |
| Loss of loved one/benefactor | 171 | 30.4 |
| Social stigma/stereotype | 102 | 18.1 |
| **Total** | **562** | **100.0** |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.11 presented information on triggers of suicide thoughts. It showed that 30.6% of the respondents indicated that relationship breakup is one of the triggers of suicide thoughts while 20.8% of the respondents indicate "sexual abuse". Also, while loss of loved one/benefactor was indicate as one of the triggers of suicide thought by 30.4% of the respondents, 18.1% of the respondents indicate "social stigma/stereotype". Impliedly, suicidal thoughts in university campus drive from high emotional bankruptcy resulting from relationship breakups and loss of loved one/benefactor respectively.

**Table 4.2.9: Distribution of respondents on extent to which they experienced family stressors**

| Family related stressors | Low | Moderate | High | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poor communication | 91 (16.2%) | 184 (32.7%) | 287 (51.1%) | 562 (100%) |
| Hatred from siblings | 215 (38.3%) | 267 (47.5%) | 80 (14.2%) | 562 (100%) |
| Physical abuse/violence | 299 (53.2%) | 114 (20.3%) | 149 (26.5%) | 562 (100%) |
| Sexual abuse | 145 (25.8%) | 168 (29.9%) | 249 (44.3%) | 562 (100%) |
| Parental divorce/separation | 276 (49.1%) | 152 (27%) | 134 (23.8%) | 562 (100%) |
| Perennial sickness | 272 (48.4%) | 179 (31.9%) | 111 (19.8%) | 562 (100%) |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.9 presented information on the extent to which the respondents' experience family stressors. The following results were captured; "Poor communication" – low (16.2%), moderate (32.7%) and high (51.1%); "Hatred from siblings" – low (38.3%), moderate (47.5%) and high (14.2%); "Physical abuse/violence" – low (53.2%), moderate (20.3%) and high (26.5%); "Sexual abuse" – low (25.8%), moderate (29.9%) and high (44.3%); "Parental divorce/separation" – low (49.1%), moderate (27%) and high (23.8%); "Perennial sickness" – low (48.4%), moderate (31.9%) and high (19.8%). Impliedly, family stressors associated with suicide amongst university students in Nsukka campus tilts more on the side of poor communication and sexual abuse.

**Table 4.2.12: Distribution of respondents on the rate of impact of suicide on victim's close associates**

| Impacts | Low | Moderate | High | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Loneliness | 419 (74.6%) | 96 (17.1%) | 47 (8.4%) | 562 (100%) |
| Depression | 170 (30.2%) | 185 (32.9%) | 207 (36.8%) | 562 (100%) |
| Hopelessness | 205 (36.5%) | 159 (28.3%) | 198 (35.2%) | 562 (100%) |
| Anger | 140 (24.9%) | 100 (17.8%) | 322 (57.3%) | 562 (100%) |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.12 presented ratings on impact of suicide on victim's close associates as follows; "loneliness" – low (74.6%), moderate (17.1%), and high (8.4%); "depression" – low (30.2%), moderate (32.9%), and high (36.8%); "hopelessness" – low (36.5%), moderate (28.3%), and high (35.5%); and "anger" – low (24.9%), moderate (17.8%), and high (57.3%). This implies that against all odds, anger ranks higher in the opinion of respondents on the impact of suicide on victim's close associates. It can therefore be argued that the anger felt originates from the feeling of disappointments and shame associated with death from suicide which is greatly felt by the victim's close associates.

**Table 4.2.13: Distribution of respondents on ratings of demands of university requirements on students**

| University requirements | Low | Moderately | Highly | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Class assignment | 61 (10.9%) | 191 (34%) | 310 (55.2%) | 562 (100%) |
| Quiz/Test | 77 (13.7%) | 161 (28.6%) | 324 (57.7%) | 562 (100%) |
| Semester Examination | 21 (3.7%) | 87 (15.5%) | 454 (80.8%) | 562 (100%) |
| Class attendance | 18 (3.2%) | 80 (14.2%) | 464 (82.6%) | 562 (100%) |

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Information on demands of university requirements on students was rated by the respondents in Table 4.2.13 as follows; "class assignment" – low demanding (10.9%), moderately demanding (34%) and highly demanding (55.2%); "quiz/test" – low demanding (13.7%), moderately demanding (28%) and highly demanding (57.7%); "semester examination" – low demanding (3.7%), moderately demanding (15.5%) and highly demanding (80.8%); and "class attendance" – low demanding (3.2%), moderately demanding (14.2%) and highly demanding (82.6%). This implies that all the university requirements are highly demanding on the students as indications on "highly demanding" were consistently above 50% and exceeding two-third in "semester examination" and "class attendance".

Participants from the interviews said:

Students with low intelligent quotient are likely to see academic standard of the university as highly demanding. Such students are mostly vulnerable, and most times lack the requisite resilience to withstand necessary pressure required of a rigorous academic pursuit **[IDI, Male SERVICOM staff, 47 years old, UNN].**

We all pass through the university system and we know that it is stressful, but things are not done in isolation in the campus. It is designed in such a way that students study together in the classroom, read in the library together, exchange and compare notes and most times present seminars in group. But suicide is done in isolation. Students should adapt well with happenings in the university community **[IDI, Male Dean of Faculty, 51 years old, UNN].**

**Table 4.2.14: Distribution of respondents on preponderance of university demands as stressors and mental well-being**

| Response | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Less often | 60 | 10.7 |
| More often | 203 | 36.1 |
| Most often | 203 | 36.1 |
| Not at all | 96 | 17.1 |
| **Total** | **562** | **100.0** |

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Information on the preponderance of university demands as stressors and mental well-being were presented in Table 4.2.14. It showed that 10.75 of the respondents indicate that university demands are less often a stressor, 36.1% indicated that university demands is more often a stressor, another 36.15 of the respondents indicated that university requirements is most often a stressor, while 17.1% of the respondents indicated that university

requirements is not a stressor at all. This is implies that university requirements for graduation has the capability of inducing stressor capable of suicide amongst students when responses on more often and most often are combined.

**Table 4.2.17: Distribution of respondents on whether they have ever told someone they were going to commit suicide as a result of happenings in the university**

| Response | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No | 217 | 38.6 |
| Yes, once but I did not really want to die | 147 | 26.2 |
| Yes, once, and I really wanted to die | 50 | 8.9 |
| Yes, more than once, but I did not want to do it | 100 | 17.8 |
| Yes, more than once, and I really wanted to do it | 48 | 8.5 |
| **Total** | **562** | **100.0** |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.17 presented information on whether respondents ever told someone that they were going to commit suicide as a result of happenings in the university. It showed that 38.6% of the respondents indicated "No", 26.2% of the respondents indicated "ye, once but I did not really want to die", 8.9% of the respondents indicated "yes, once, and I really wanted to die", 17.8% of the respondents indicated "yes, more than once, but I did not want to do it", while 8.5% of the respondents indicated "yes, more than once, and I really wanted to do it". This implies that subconsciously, student in the university community habour suicide ideation in their mind whether or whether not they seriously want to do it or not.

Discussion of Findings

**Discussion**

**Social Factors Predisposing People to Suicide**:

The study reveals that relationship breakups, loss of loved ones or benefactors, and social stigma are significant social factors predisposing individuals to suicide within the Nsukka University community. Specifically, relationship breakups and the loss of loved ones are prominent triggers for suicidal thoughts, highlighting the intense emotional distress these events cause. Additionally, social stigma related to mental health and suicide exacerbates feelings of isolation and hopelessness, preventing individuals from seeking help. This is consistent with findings from Okoedion and Okolie (2019) and Lawal (2018), which emphasize the role of interpersonal conflicts and societal attitudes in influencing suicidal behavior among youths in similar contexts.

**Cultural Factors Predisposing People to Suicide**:

Cultural stigma and religious beliefs are critical cultural factors identified in the study that predispose individuals to suicide in the Nsukka University community. The prevalent cultural stigma around suicide in Nigeria, coupled with predominant religious beliefs that view suicide as a sin, significantly deters individuals from seeking help and discussing their mental health challenges openly. This cultural context leads to underreporting and a lack of preventive measures. Moreover, economic conditions, as highlighted by Asogwa and Onyezere (2018), further contribute to the stress and hopelessness experienced by students, exacerbating the risk of suicide in this community.

**Impacts of Suicide in the Nsukka University Community**:

The emotional and social impacts of suicide on the Nsukka University community are profound, as indicated by the study. Emotional impacts on the victim's close associates include feelings of anger, hopelessness, and depression, illustrating the severe mental health challenges faced by those left behind. Socially, suicide perpetuates stigma and social isolation, leading to further mental health issues within the community. These findings align with Reiss and Dombeck (2021), who note that the emotional aftermath of suicide can lead to significant distress and social withdrawal for the victim's family and friends.

**Conclusion**

This study "Assessment of Factors that Predispose People to Suicide in Nsukka University Community" has provided critical insights into the social and cultural dynamics contributing to suicide within the university. The findings indicate that relationship breakups, loss of loved ones, and social stigma are significant social factors that predispose individuals to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Cultural stigma and religious beliefs also play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards suicide, thereby affecting the likelihood of individuals seeking help. Furthermore, the impacts of suicide on the community are profound, manifesting in emotional distress and social isolation among the victim's close associates. These findings highlight the complexity of suicide and underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these contributing factors effectively.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1.      The University should establish comprehensive mental health services, including counseling and peer support groups, to help students with relationship issues, grief, and social stigma.
2.      The University should create programs to reduce cultural and religious stigma about mental health and suicide through education, workshops, and collaboration with community leaders.
3.      The University should integrate stress management and coping skills training into the university curriculum to help students handle academic pressures and life challenges.

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