

Suicide Risk Assessment of UMTC Students: Basis for Intervention Program

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Abstract— The study dealt on suicide risk level of college students in UM Tagum College. The primary goal of the study was to assess the level of suicide risk among students at the UM Tagum College in terms of perceived burdensomeness, low belongingness/social alienation and acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury utilizing quantitative non- experimental study with 380 students in UM Tagum College as respondents of the study. Mean was the statistical tools used for the data treatment. Moreover, the study aims to determine the mean of the level of the suicide risk assessment in terms of program, type of student, age, year level, civil status and gender. And lastly, to design an intervention program for those identified students with high suicide risk. Results showed a low level of suicide risk in terms of perceived burdensomeness, low belongingness/social alienation and acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury.

Index Terms— Suicide Risk, Perceived Burdensomeness, Low Belongingness/Social Alienation, Acquired Ability to Enact Lethal Self-Injury, UM Tagum College, Philippines

1 INTRODUCTION

THE definition of suicide is taking one's own life intentionally. Globally, for the past 30 years, people who die from suicide increased tremendously. The World Health Organization (WHO) disclosed that in every one year there were nearly one million people who died from completed suicide. It was also the tenth leading cause of death worldwide. For youngsters ages 15-24 which is the typical age as well of college undergrads, suicide was the second topmost cause of death after accidents. Even though suicide is an individual action, studies verified that its aftermath leaves a wide path of destruction. It affects negatively the individuals who care with the person, which may be their family, loved ones and expand perhaps to campuses and communities. Aside from that, loss survivors also may experience self-imposed isolation, because of the fear of judgment and adverse reactions from others. On the positive side, efforts for preventing suicide is already commencing, it is now an issue focused by different groups, most of their aims are to increase the awareness of the public health on suicide and suicide attempts and to make suicide prevention top priority on the global public health agenda (Cerel & Sanford, 2016).

In the Philippines, a country of which people are predominantly Christians, suicide is branded as unacceptable and rarely discussed in public and private settings. Studies from the National Statistics Office (NSO) have shown that the suicide rate in the Philippines from 1984 to 2005 rising from 0.46 to 7 out of every 200,000 men and 0.24 to 2 for every 200,000 women. It is factual that suicide rate in the Philippines is low compared to other countries such as Lithuania who have 31.9 suicides per 100,000, Russia who holds 31 deaths per 100,00, Guyana with 29.2 suicides per 100,000, etc. Regardless of that, it should be still addressed seriously, considering that studies found that adolescents and young adults have relatively high rates in suicide (Tacio, 2017).

In Davao Region, an administrative region in the Philippines designated as Region XI, which comprised of Davao del Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Davao Oriental provinces, suicide victims were steadily rising per current statistics. In the year 2016, the Davao region accounts for having 54 suicide casualties growing up to 81 in 2017. Under

Police Regional Office 11, Davao City was recorded to have the greatest number of suicide casualties with 25 in the year 2016 to 38 last 2017. This is trailed by Davao del Norte with the suicide casualties of 3 in the year 2016 to 13 during 2017, followed by Davao del Sur with 9 to eleven 11 in the year 2017, Compostela Valley with suicide casualties of 8 to 9 still around the same time and Davao Occidental with 5 to 8 (Alivio, 2018).

Nevertheless, the researchers after a thorough investigation have recognized that there are already established studies in global down to local settings about suicide assessments and preventions. However, the researchers have not come across a study focusing on the suicide risk assessment as a basis for an intervention program at UM Tagum College. For that reason, it proposed that the current research shall make a specific contribution and generate new insights on the level of suicide risk among the respondents and may recommend it to the concerned offices of the university and utilize the data usefully for possible courses of action. The stated set of circumstances have convinced the researchers that there is a need to conduct a suicide risk assessment on college students through the suicide risk assessment survey. This study became a strong and solid factor for the UM Tagum College and other interested college institutions to raise suicide awareness and possibly develop a following scheme on preventing suicide ideation, suicide attempt and completed suicide.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on the proposition of Joiner (2005), which postulated that there are three essential elements for suicide ideation that leads to successful enactment, these are perceived burdensomeness, sense of low belongingness or social alienation and the acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury. The first element is a mental state of an individual which views himself that his existence burdens his family, friends and to other people important to him. The sense of low belongingness or social alienation is a social indicator of suicide, and it refers to the experience that an individual is not an integral part or feels alienated from family, a circle of friends, or other valued

groups of people around him. The last element which is the acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury refers to the aspect of the theory suggesting that suicide necessitates opposition with self-preservation motivations. Conferring to the theory, having brawled this fight frequently and in diverse domains instills the capacity to bring down the self-preservation instinct – should an individual develop the desire to.

Van Orden et al. (2008) illustrated that the statistical contact between high burdensomeness and low belongingness projected current suicidal ideation: this happened beyond essential covariates like depressive symptomatology manifestations.

A previous study on psychotherapy patients has also provided empirical proofs for a statistical contact between numbers or scores on an acquired capacity measure and to the first element. Such that upon the existence of the acquired capability with the presence of high levels of the first element helped the clinicians to predict a higher level of suicide risk beyond the presence of other contributory factors such as gender, age, and depression test scores.

Burdensomeness and belongingness interacted as well as predicting suicide risks in the first study conducted by Joiner et al. in a diverse and vast number of young people. However, in the second study, he had undertaken in a large number of young adults, the three elements have co-existed as hypothesized that predicted to many suicide attempts (Joiner et al., 2005).

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Presented in Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of the study. The variable that assessed the level of suicide risk of the participants is the Suicide Risk Assessment. The SRA comprises of three interdependent elements that are coined and are used to generate applicability among respondents through a series of studies. The elements are perceived burdensomeness, sense of low belongingness or social alienation and acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury (Joiner et al., 2005).

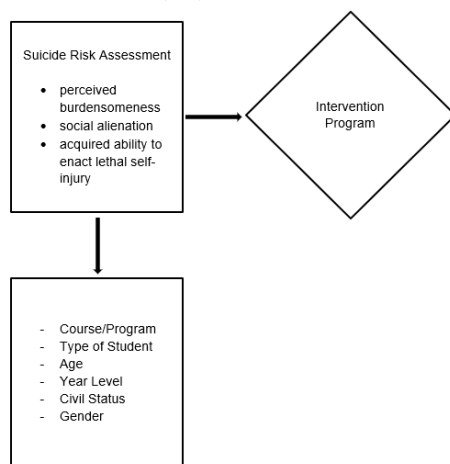


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

4 RESULTS

Shown in Table 2 are the mean scores for the indicators of suicide risk in students at UM Tagum College with an overall

mean of 0.90 describe as low with a standard deviation of 0.528. The low level could be attributed to the low rating given by the respondents in all indicators. This means that the respondents' level of suicide risk at UM Tagum College is less observed in majority of the cases in the items of perceived burdensomeness, low belongingness or social alienation and acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury.

The cited overall mean score was the result gathered from the following computed mean scores from highest to lowest: 0.95 or low for perceived burdensomeness with a standard deviation of 0.550; 0.91 or low for low belongingness or social alienation with a standard deviation of 0.588 and 0.85 or low for acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury with a standard deviation of 0.630.

Table 2. Level of Suicide Risk Among Students at UM Tagum College (n=380)

Indicators	x	SD
Perceived Burdensomeness	0.95	0.550
Low Belongingness	0.91	0.588
Acquired Ability to Enact Lethal Self-injury	0.85	0.630
Overall	0.90	0.528

Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Program

The mean scores for the suicide risk in students of UM Tagum College as analyzed per program is shown in Table 3 are with the following computed mean scores from highest to lowest: 1.32 or moderate for BS Accountancy with a standard deviation of 0.255; 1.29 or moderate for BS Computer Science/IT with a standard deviation of 0.171; 1.25 or moderate for BS Criminology with a standard deviation of 0.239; 1.12 or low for BSED Mathematics with a standard deviation of 0.126; 1.04 or low for BSED Physical Education with a standard deviation of 0.500; 0.91 or low for BS Hotel and Restaurant Management with a standard deviation of 0.417; 0.90 or low for BS Accounting Technology with a standard deviation of 0.825; 0.88 or low for BSED English with a standard deviation of 0.487; 0.85 or low for BSBA Financial Management with a standard deviation of 0.759; 0.85 or low for BS Hotel and Restaurant Management with a standard deviation of 0.501; 0.73 or low for AB English with a standard deviation of 0.403; 0.73 or low for BS Psychology with a standard deviation of 0.384; 0.70 or low for BSBA Human Resources Management with a standard deviation of 0.509; 0.70 or low for BS Electrical Engineering with a standard deviation of 0.414; 0.64 or low for BSBA Marketing Management with a standard deviation of 0.337; 0.60 or very low for BS Elementary Education with a standard deviation of 0.557; 0.57 or very low for BSED Biological Science with a standard deviation of 0.340; 0.55 or very low for BSED Filipino with a standard deviation of 0.535; 0.51 or very low for BSED Social Studies with a standard deviation of 0.556; 0.48 or very low for BS Electronic Engineering with a standard deviation of 0.303; and 0.35 or very low for BS Computer Engineering with a standard deviation of 0.303.

Table 3. Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Program

Program	N	X	SD
BSBA Human Resources Management	38	0.70	0.509
BSBA Financial Management	24	0.85	0.759
BSBA Marketing Management	31	0.64	0.337
AB English	8	0.73	0.403
BS Psychology	10	0.73	0.384
BSED-Biological Science	4	0.57	0.346
BS Elementary Education	16	0.60	0.557
BSED English	17	0.88	0.487
BSED Mathematics	5	1.12	0.126
BSED Physical Education	13	1.04	0.500
BSED Filipino	7	0.55	0.535
BSED Social Studies	15	0.51	0.556
BS Computer Engineering	6	0.35	0.303
BS Electronic Engineering	4	0.48	0.303
BS Electrical Engineering	14	0.70	0.414
BS Hotel and Restaurant Management	27	0.91	0.417
BS Tourism Management	7	0.85	0.501
BS Computer Science /IT	3	1.29	0.171
BS Criminology	81	1.25	0.239
BS Accountancy	29	1.32	0.255
BS Accountancy Technology	23	0.90	0.825

Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Gender

Shown in Table 4 are the mean scores for the suicide risk in students at UM Tagum College as analyzed per gender with the following computed mean scores from highest to lowest: 1.08 or low for Bisexuals with a standard deviation of 0.621; 1.01 or low for Females with a standard deviation of 0.456; 0.96 or low for Lesbians with a standard deviation of 0.67; and 0.69 or low for Males with a standard deviation of 0.515.

Table 4. Level of Suicide as Analyzed per Gender

Gender	N	X	SD
Male	130	0.69	0.515
Female	190	1.01	0.456
Bisexual	22	1.08	0.621
Lesbian	38	0.96	0.67

Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Civil Status

Shown in Table 5 are the mean scores for the suicide risk in students at UM Tagum College as analyzed per civil status with the following computed mean scores from highest and lowest: 0.90 or low for Single students with a standard deviation of 0.532 and 0.88 or low for Married students with a standard deviation of 0.475.

Table 5. Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Civil Status

Civil Status	N	X	SD
Single	349	0.90	0.532
Married	31	0.88	0.475

Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Year Level

Shown in Table 6 are the mean scores for the suicide risk in students at UM Tagum College as analyzed per year level with the following computed mean scores from highest to lowest: 1.25 or moderate for Fifth Year students with a standard deviation of 0.328; 0.94 or low for Third Year students with a standard deviation of 0.500; 0.94 or low for First Year students with a standard deviation of 0.477; 0.84 or low for Second Year students with a standard deviation of 0.548; and 0.83 or low for Fourth Year students with a standard deviation of 0.610.

Table 6. Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Year Level

Year Level	N	X	SD
1 st Year	70	0.94	0.477
2 nd Year	112	0.84	0.548
3 rd Year	139	0.94	0.500
4 th Year	56	0.83	0.610
5 th Year	3	1.25	0.328

Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Age

Shown in Table 7 are the mean scores for the suicide risk in students at UM Tagum College as analyzed per age with the following computed mean scores from highest and lowest: 0.91 or low for students ages 21-39 with a standard deviation of 0.568 and 0.89 or low for students ages 13-20 with a standard deviation of 0.461.

Table 7. Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Age

Age	N	X	SD
13-20	151	0.89	0.461
21-39	229	0.91	0.568

Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Studying Status

Shown in Table 8 are the mean scores for the suicide risk in students at UM Tagum College as analyzed per age with the following computed mean scores from highest and lowest: 0.96 or low for Full-time students with a standard deviation of 0.546 and 0.81 or low for Working students with a standard deviation of 0.484.

Table 8. Level of Suicide Risk as Analyzed per Studying Status

Studying Status	N	X	SD
Full-time	231	0.96	0.546
Working	149	0.81	0.484

5 DISCUSSION

The data on the level of suicide risk of UMTC students are presented in this chapter and said discussions are based on the findings that appeared in the previous section.

The respondents' level on suicide risk of college students in UM Tagum College is low. This result suggests that the three components of the development of completed suicide notably, perceived burdensomeness, low belongingness/social alienation and acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury among college students in UMTC were less observed. This further means

that the undergrads in UMTC were far from committing completed suicide as they have low desire to die through suicide and the acquired ability to undertake such action.

This outcome is supported by Tacio (2017) who revealed that the level on suicide risk in the Philippines is low unlike other countries such as Lithuania, Russia, Guyana, South Korea, Belarus, Suriname and Kazakhstan who have around 20-40 suicides per year. Unexpectedly, this result conveys opposing viewpoint to the proposition of Foo et al., (2014) which suggests that college students who are aged 16-25 years old belong to "high risk" group individuals in suicide. It is because of a wide range of transition which arises in both the social and psychological facets of the individual. It is fueled moreover by the different forms of struggles such as academic distress, occupational choices and life goal decisions. This finding is also anchored to the low coping skills of undergrads especially in areas of finance, romance, stress, hopelessness, and loneliness. Thereby, considering suicide as a solution to these challenges.

In terms of perceived burdensomeness, the level of suicide risk in UMTC undergrads is low. This result denotes that the perceived burdensomeness or the belief that one's existence burdens family, acquaintances, and society, which yields the idea that one's death will be worth more than one's family, friends, society, etc. that also represents correspondingly a potentially fatal misperception is low among UMTC undergraduates. This result is incongruous to the findings of Vanyukov et al., (2016) which posits that perceived burdensomeness is most prominent in a subgroup of younger individuals which comprise of college students.

With regards to low belongingness/social alienation, the degree is low. The outcome means that UMTC undergrads have a minimum experience from being alienated - the feeling of being not an essential part of a family, friends, or other valued groups. Moreover, Filipinos are known to have a healthy and cohesive family and social relationships. This statement is parallel to the theory of Richards (2016) which postulates that the presence of social support is one of the most well-researched protective factors against college student suicide. Given the heavy emphasis on social relationships and forming peer networks as part of the college experience, those students who feel restricted in this area are likely more vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation.

For the third component the acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury, the level is also low. This outcome indicates that the respondents' level on intentional opposition towards self-preservation motives is less observed. Further, the result suggests that the respondents' exposure to painful or fearsome experiences that results to the habituation which causes higher tolerance for pain and a sense of fearlessness in the face of death are also minimal. Nobakht (2017) further stated that trauma, pathological dissociation, and depersonalization play critical functional roles in self-harm behaviors. The outcome also is not consonance to the viewpoint by Carville (2017) who presented that for the past 15-20 years self-harm among young adults increases overly worldwide.

The highest level of suicide risk among all programs was determined moderate in Bachelor of Science in Accountancy. This end result means that among the programs in UM Tagum

College, BS in Accountancy students' level of suicide risk is moderately observed. Previous researches worldwide also showed a number of accounting students who died because of suicide, in the case investigated by Pradesh (2016) an 18 years old girl, studying accountancy committed suicide by jumping from the fifth floor of their campus building -- parents unveiled that it was because of the depression that she has experienced. This is somehow match also to the other investigation of Busby (2015) which showed that the suicide completer who came from China and studies accountancy in a university believed that having mental illness was "culturally inappropriate" that taking antidepressants is just a shame for her and her family which in turn made her think suicide as her last resort.

In the same manner, the highest level of suicide risk in terms of gender was seen on bisexuals. This standpoint is by some means supported by Harris (2013) in a study in Canada, which found that sexual minorities consisting of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) are determined to have a higher risk compared to individuals that are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex or the heterosexuals. Furthermore, recent reviews have also presented strong proof of an increased occurrence of both suicide attempts and completed suicides by sexual minorities.

Still, the highest suicide risk is determined to single college students. This result is somehow corresponding to the findings of the study of Petrovic et al., (2016) which stated that among married and single individuals, suicide rates are higher among widowed and divorced men. And, among women both married and single, the number of suicides are declining. Married women committed more suicides by poisoning than single women. In both groups, the most frequent way is hanging. Single people are very vulnerable and the time and method of suicide show that their reasons are more severe than among married ones.

Similarly, the year level that holds the highest degree of suicide risk was obtained by the 5th year or the final year in college. This result connects to an outcome of a meta-analytic study conducted in China by Yang et al., (2015). It was determined that the spread of the pervasiveness of suicide attempts among first years to final years college students was in "U" shape. This denotes that, the first years and the final year students have a higher prevalence than those in between them. This phenomenon also implies that first year and last year students faced more stress than others. First years faced more pressure due on the new social environment, higher academic demands, physical separation from family and the changes in social support networks. For the final year students, what fuels their stress is the great employment pressure. This was also supported by past surveys on college students which showed that employment was considered the most significant source of their stress.

In terms of age, 21-39-year-old college students garnered the highest rank. However, the difference is minute on ages 13-20. This is somehow corresponding to the findings of Curns (2014) that 18 through 25 years old are emerging adulthood spans. Suicide among emerging adults became a concern as rates continually rose from the 1950s through the 1990s. By Foo et al. (2014), persons who belong to the "high risk" group came

from ages between 16 and 25 years old. This identification was according to the Health Ministry of Malaysia. The said identified persons possible include a significant proportion of Malaysian undergraduates.

From students' statuses whether they are full-time or working students, the study reveals that full-time students show a high level of suicidal risk. When compared to the mode of learning as being studied by Yunus et al. (2015) at Malaysia, there is no significant difference between the two and to the mode of learning. But In another study that was conducted at England and Wales, the result does support the findings of their study. Their study showed that in five years, full-time students aged 21 above are more susceptible to the higher level of suicide risk.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, conclusions are drawn in this section. The level of suicide risk is low for perceived burdensomeness, low for low belongingness/social alienation, and low for acquired ability to enact lethal self-injury, and the overall mean level of suicide risk among college undergraduates in UM Tagum College is low. In terms of program, the level of suicide risk is moderate in BS Accountancy, BS Computer Science/Information Technology, and BS Criminology. Furthermore, the level of suicide risk is low in the following programs, BSED Mathematics, BSED Physical Education, BS Hotel and Restaurant Management, BS Accounting Technology, BSED English, BSBA Financial Management, BS Tourism Management, AB English, BS Psychology, BSBA Human Resources Management, BS Electronics Engineering and BSBA Marketing Management. Lastly, BS Elementary Education, BSED Biological Science, BSED Filipino, BSED Social Studies, BS Electrical Engineering, and BS Computer Engineering are the programs who are low in the level of suicide risk.

In the context of the type of student, the level of suicide risk in both full-time and working students is low. With regards to age, ages 13-20 and 21-39 years old, the level of suicide risk is also low. Still, in terms of year level, the level of suicide risk of the 5th year is moderate, while the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year are low. In the context of civil status, both single and married undergraduates' level of suicide risk is low. And, in gender, the mean of the level of suicide risk of male, female, bisexual and lesbian is low

7 RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are offered; The level of suicide risk in the students may be lower down into the lowest level by providing venues for students where their mental health is being given priorities. This can be done by tapping prospect people in the mental health practice or even the program of BS Psychology in the institution by empowering and supporting their projects and activities addressing suicide. UM Tagum College through the Guidance Services Testing Center may also conduct a school-wide Suicide Risk Assessment every semester to monitor the level of suicide risk of the students. Furthermore, the school may unfold suicide-awareness programs and other

therapeutic activities that foster mindfulness within each student to better cope-up with their stressors not only in school but with other problems outside of the school premise. In that way, students can feel the genuine care of the institution for them not only in molding them to become the professional people they aspire but for their mental health wellness as well. By this, students can cope-up with the stress on academic pressure with a mindful being, and that suicidal tendency may be lower down amongst them.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to the school as the performance of the students will be boosted and they will excel even more in their chosen fields. Lastly, it may provide the future researchers a starting point on how to expand the coverage of the research in terms of the variables covered in the study.

Below is a comprehensive intervention plan suggested by the researchers:

Problem Area	Objectives	Activities	Persons Involved
Identified Programs with <i>Moderate Status</i> in the Level of Suicide Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lower down the levels of suicide risk on the identified programs which yield Moderate Status in this assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct activities that foster strengthening of fortitude and enhancing their abilities to maintain mindfulness such as basic self-administered psychological coping-mechanisms and therapies. Create regular mental health consultations or sessions at least once a week. 	Guidance Service Testing Center, BS Psychology Program Faculty, Identified Programs and Students
Identified Programs with <i>Low Status</i> in the Level of Suicide Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lower down the levels of suicide risk on the identified programs which yield Moderate Status in this assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct activities that foster strengthening of fortitude and enhancing their abilities to maintain mindfulness such as basic self-administered psychological coping-mechanisms and therapies. Create regular mental health consultations or sessions at least once a week. 	Guidance Service Testing Center, BS Psychology Program Faculty, Identified Programs and Students
Suicide Awareness Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To spread awareness on the reality of suicidal thoughts and to destigmatize its manifestations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfold suicide awareness seminars and programs regarding the nature and manifestations of suicide. Provide a more approachable and welcoming Guidance Counselors in the Guidance Service Testing Center. 	Guidance Service Testing Center, BS Psychology Program Faculty and Students
Suicide Risk Assessment among Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess regularly the students of UM Tagum College to attend to their mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a Suicide Risk Assessment to all students at least every opening of the academic year to monitor their level of suicide risk. Call into attention those students who are high in the as- 	Guidance Service Testing Center and Students

	and psychological wellness	assessment and provide them necessary counseling.	
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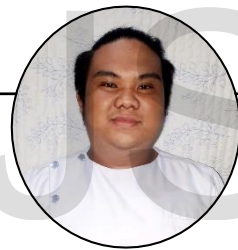
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