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Effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy on Suicidal Ideation Among Undergraduate Students of the Federal University of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Suicidal ideation has emerged as a significant mental health concern among undergraduate students, with increasing evidence suggesting that academic, social, and financial pressures contribute to suicidal thoughts and behaviours. This study examined the effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) on suicidal ideation among undergraduate students of the Federal University of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria. A true experimental pre-test, post-test control group design was adopted. Twenty undergraduate students identified with suicidal ideation using the Suicidal Ideation Identification Questionnaire (SIIQ) were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received a structured CBT intervention, while the control group received no treatment. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that suicidal ideation was prevalent among the participants, with the intensity of suicidal thoughts recording the highest prevalence (80%), followed by thoughts of death (75%), suicidal wishes (65%), and suicidal plans (65%), while suicidal intent (20%) recorded the lowest prevalence. The study further revealed that CBT had a significant effect on reducing thoughts of death ($p = .040$) and suicidal wishes ($p = .011$). However, CBT did not produce significant effects on suicidal plans ($p = .247$), suicidal intent ($p = .475$), or the intensity of suicidal thoughts ($p = .092$). The study concluded that CBT is effective in reducing the early cognitive manifestations of suicidal ideation among undergraduate students. It was therefore recommended that CBT-based interventions be incorporated into university counselling programmes to promote students' mental health and wellbeing.

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BACKGROUND

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts, fantasies, wishes, or persistent preoccupations concerning self-inflicted death, ranging from passive thoughts about death to active planning and intention to end one's life (Iweama et al., 2024). Suicide remains a major public health concern globally and is recognised as one of the leading causes of death among adolescents and young adults (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). University students are particularly vulnerable because of the developmental transitions associated with emerging adulthood, academic pressures, social expectations, interpersonal challenges, and economic uncertainties that characterise university life (Lim et al., 2022). In Nigeria, mental health challenges among undergraduates are increasingly being reported, although a substantial proportion of cases remain undocumented due to stigma, limited mental health awareness, and inadequate counselling and psychiatric services (Iweama et al., 2024). Undergraduate students frequently encounter stressors such as examination anxiety, poor academic achievement, financial difficulties, family instability, and relationship problems. When inadequately managed, these challenges may contribute to feelings of hopelessness, psychological distress, and suicidal ideation (Fadipe & Okesina, 2024; Ezea & Ugwu, 2025).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), developed by Aaron Beck, is based on the premise that thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are interconnected. CBT assists individuals in identifying and modifying maladaptive cognitive distortions while developing healthier coping strategies and adaptive behavioural responses (Nakao et al., 2021). Recent evidence suggests that CBT is effective

in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety disorders, self-harm behaviours, and suicidal ideation among adolescents and young adults (Rudd et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2024). Through cognitive restructuring, behavioural activation, and problem-solving techniques, CBT equips individuals with practical skills for managing emotional distress and challenging negative thinking patterns associated with suicidality. Consequently, CBT represents a promising evidence-based psychological intervention for addressing suicidal ideation among university students and promoting positive mental health outcomes (Guo et al., 2024).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Suicidal ideation among university students has become a growing concern due to the psychological, social, and academic consequences associated with it. Despite increasing reports of suicide attempts and suicide-related behaviours among Nigerian youths, many higher institutions lack structured intervention programmes specifically designed to reduce suicidal ideation. The Federal University of Education, Pankshin is not exempt from these challenges. However, empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in reducing suicidal ideation among its students remains limited. This study therefore sought to determine the effectiveness of CBT as an intervention for suicidal ideation among undergraduate students in the University of Jos.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study are expected to benefit students, counsellors, university administrators, parents, policy makers, and mental health professionals. The study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of CBT in reducing suicidal ideation and offers practical guidance for designing counselling interventions within tertiary institutions. The findings may also contribute to the development of mental health policies and suicide prevention programmes in Nigerian universities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on **Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT)** developed by Aaron Beck and the **Interpersonal Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPTS)** proposed by Thomas Joiner. CBT posits that maladaptive thoughts influence emotions and behaviours and that modifying cognitive distortions can reduce psychological distress and suicidal ideation (Guo et al., 2024; Nakao et al., 2021). In contrast, IPTS explains that suicidal ideation develops from perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, while acquired capability increases the likelihood of suicidal behaviour (Chu et al., 2021). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the cognitive and interpersonal factors associated with suicidal ideation among undergraduate students and support the use of CBT as an intervention for reducing suicidal thoughts (Iweama et al., 2024).

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was delimited to undergraduate students of the Federal University of Education, Pankshin who exhibited symptoms of suicidal ideation. The investigation focused on the effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy on thoughts of death, suicidal wishes, suicidal plans, suicidal intent, and the intensity of suicidal thoughts during the 2025/2026 academic session.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to determine the effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy on suicidal ideation among undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduate students at Federal University of Education, Pankshin
2. Examine the effect of CBT on thoughts of death among undergraduate students at Federal University of Education, Pankshin
3. Determine the effect of CBT on suicidal wishes among undergraduate students at Federal University of Education, Pankshin
4. Assess the effect of CBT on suicidal plans among undergraduate students at Federal University of Education, Pankshin
5. Determine the effect of CBT on suicidal intent among undergraduate students at Federal University of Education, Pankshin
6. Examine the effect of CBT on the intensity of suicidal thoughts among undergraduate students at Federal University of Education, Pankshin

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of suicidal ideation among undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin?
2. What difference exists between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students on thoughts of death after CBT intervention?
3. What difference exists between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students on suicidal wishes after CBT intervention?
4. What difference exists between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students on suicidal plans after CBT intervention?
5. What difference exists between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students on suicidal intent after CBT intervention?

6. What difference exists between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students on the intensity of suicidal thoughts after CBT intervention?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in thoughts of death between students exposed to CBT and those not exposed.
2. There is no significant difference in suicidal wishes between students exposed to CBT and those not exposed.
3. There is no significant difference in suicidal plans between students exposed to CBT and those not exposed.
4. There is no significant difference in suicidal intent between students exposed to CBT and those not exposed.
5. There is no significant difference in the intensity of suicidal thoughts between students exposed to CBT and those not exposed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescence and Undergraduate Development

Adolescence and early adulthood represent critical periods of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. During this phase, individuals experience identity formation, increased independence, academic demands, and career-related decision-making (Arnett, 2021). Undergraduate students are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress because they encounter numerous developmental challenges simultaneously. The transition from family dependence to self-reliance, coupled with academic competition and financial pressures, often creates emotional strain that may negatively affect mental health (Lim et al., 2022). Research has shown that difficulties in adjusting to university life can increase vulnerability to anxiety, depression, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation (Auerbach et al., 2022). University students also face challenges related to peer relationships, social acceptance, and uncertainty about the future. In the Nigerian context, inadequate mental health services, economic hardship, and societal expectations further compound these challenges (Iweama et al., 2024). Consequently, many students experience emotional difficulties that, when left unaddressed, may result in suicidal thoughts and behaviours (Ezea & Ugwu, 2025).

Suicidal Ideation Overview

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts, wishes, fantasies, or preoccupations about ending one's life. It exists along a continuum ranging from passive death wishes to active planning and intent to commit suicide (WHO, 2023). Suicidal ideation is generally categorised into passive and active forms. Passive suicidal ideation involves a desire to die without specific plans or actions, whereas active suicidal ideation includes deliberate thoughts, plans, and intentions to engage in self-harm (Iweama et al., 2024). Globally, suicidal ideation has emerged as a major public health concern among young people. The World Health Organization identifies suicide as one of the leading causes of death among adolescents and young adults (WHO, 2023). In Nigeria, studies indicate an increasing prevalence of suicidal thoughts among university students, although many incidents remain undocumented due to stigma and fear of social discrimination (Iweama et al., 2024). Suicidal ideation is often associated with feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, loneliness, and emotional pain (Chu et al., 2021). If appropriate interventions are not provided, suicidal ideation may progress to suicide attempts and completed suicide (WHO, 2023).

Risk Factors Associated with Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal ideation among undergraduate students is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors. Depression remains one of the strongest predictors of suicidal thoughts. Individuals experiencing depression often report persistent sadness, hopelessness, and diminished self-worth, which increase the likelihood of suicidal thinking (Iweama et al., 2024). Academic stress also contributes significantly to suicidal ideation among university students. Pressure to achieve academic success, fear of failure, examination anxiety, and poor academic performance can negatively affect students' psychological wellbeing (Auerbach et al., 2022). Similarly, financial difficulties and concerns about unemployment create uncertainty about the future, increasing emotional distress among students (Ezea & Ugwu, 2025). Social isolation and relationship problems constitute additional risk factors. Students who lack social support or experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships are more likely to report feelings of loneliness and hopelessness (Chu et al., 2021). Furthermore, family instability, substance misuse, traumatic experiences, and exposure to violence have been identified as factors that increase vulnerability to suicidal ideation (WHO, 2023). In conflict-prone environments and economically disadvantaged communities, the cumulative impact of these stressors may significantly elevate suicide risk (Iweama et al., 2024).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Suicide Prevention

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is one of the most widely used evidence-based psychological interventions for mental health disorders. Developed by Aaron Beck, CBT is founded on the principle that thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are interconnected (Nakao et al., 2021). Dysfunctional thinking patterns often result in maladaptive emotional and behavioural outcomes. CBT therefore focuses on identifying, challenging, and restructuring irrational beliefs while promoting adaptive behaviours and effective

coping strategies (Guo et al., 2024). The application of CBT in suicide prevention has received considerable empirical support. CBT helps individuals recognise negative automatic thoughts associated with hopelessness, self-blame, and despair. Through cognitive restructuring, clients learn to replace distorted beliefs with more realistic and constructive perspectives (Rudd et al., 2023). Behavioural techniques such as problem-solving training, behavioural activation, relaxation strategies, and coping-skills development further enhance resilience and psychological wellbeing (Guo et al., 2024). Among adolescents and university students, CBT has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Rudd et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2024). The structured and goal-oriented nature of CBT makes it particularly suitable for educational settings where students require practical tools for managing emotional challenges. Consequently, CBT is widely regarded as an effective intervention for reducing suicidal thoughts and promoting positive mental health outcomes among young people (Nakao et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a true experimental pre-test, post-test control group design. Participants consisted of undergraduate students identified as experiencing suicidal ideation using the Suicidal Ideation Identification Questionnaire (SIIQ), adapted from Reynolds (1987). Twenty participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received a structured CBT intervention for twelve weeks, while the control group received no therapeutic treatment. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance.

The validity of the Suicidal Ideation Identification Questionnaire (SIIQ) was established through construct validation using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which extracted 14 components, indicating that the instrument adequately captured the dimensions of suicidal ideation. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was assessed using the split-half method and Cronbach's Alpha statistics. The results yielded Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of **0.813** and **0.878** for Parts 1 and 2 respectively. Since these coefficients exceeded the acceptable benchmark of 0.70, the instrument was considered sufficiently reliable and internally consistent for the study

RESULTS

Prevalence of Suicidal Ideation Among Undergraduate Students

Table 1: Prevalence of Suicidal Ideation among Undergraduate Students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin (N = 20)

Dimension of Suicidal Ideation	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean Score	Level of Prevalence
Thoughts of Death	15	75.0	1.85	Moderate
Suicidal Wishes	13	65.0	1.55	Moderate
Suicidal Plans	13	65.0	1.40	Moderate
Suicidal Intent	4	20.0	0.50	Low
Intensity of Suicidal Thoughts	16	80.0	2.05	High

Benchmark: 0.00-1.00 = Low; 1.01-2.00 = Moderate; 2.01-3.00 = High; 3.01-4.00 = Very High.

Table 1 shows that the intensity of suicidal thoughts had the highest prevalence (80.0%, Mean = 2.05), indicating a high level of suicidal ideation among the participants. Thoughts of death (75.0%, Mean = 1.85), suicidal wishes (65.0%, Mean = 1.55), and suicidal plans (65.0%, Mean = 1.40) were moderately prevalent, while suicidal intent recorded the lowest prevalence (20.0%, Mean = 0.50). Overall, the findings indicate that suicidal ideation is prevalent among undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin, particularly with respect to the intensity of suicidal thoughts and thoughts of death.

Effect of CBT on Thoughts of Death

Table 2: Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of Thoughts of Death Among Undergraduate Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pretest Mean Score	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean Score	Posttest SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	10	2.20	1.48	1.30	1.25	-0.90
Control	10	1.50	1.27	0.70	0.95	-0.80

Table 3: ANOVA Summary on the significant difference between the pretest and posttest thoughts of death mean scores of undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F crit
Between Groups	7.225	1	7.225	4.534	0.040	4.098
Within Groups	60.550	38	1.593			
Total	67.775	39				

Tables 2 and 3 show the effect of CBT on thoughts of death among undergraduate students. The experimental group recorded a reduction in mean score from 2.20 (SD = 1.48) at pre-test to 1.30 (SD = 1.25) at post-test, with a mean difference of -0.90. Similarly, the control group showed a reduction from 1.50 (SD = 1.27) to 0.70 (SD = 0.95), with a mean difference of -0.80. However, the ANOVA result revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the groups, $F(1, 38) = 4.534$, $p = .040$. Since the p-value was less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that CBT had a significant effect on reducing thoughts of death among undergraduate students.

Effect of CBT on Suicidal Wishes

Table 4: Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of Suicidal Wishes Among Undergraduate Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pretest Mean Score	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean Score	Posttest SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	10	2.30	1.16	1.10	1.10	-1.20
Control	10	0.80	1.03	0.10	0.32	-0.70

Mean Difference = Posttest Mean − Pretest Mean.

Table 5: ANOVA Summary on the significant difference between the pretest and posttest suicidal wishes mean scores of undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F crit
Between Groups	9.025	1	9.025	7.182	0.011	4.098
Within Groups	47.750	38	1.257			
Total	56.775	39				

Tables 4 and 5 show the effect of CBT on suicidal wishes among undergraduate students. The experimental group recorded a decrease in mean score from 2.30 (SD = 1.16) at pre-test to 1.10 (SD = 1.10) at post-test, with a mean difference of -1.20. The control group also showed a decrease from 0.80 (SD = 1.03) to 0.10 (SD = 0.32), with a mean difference of -0.70. The ANOVA result revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups, $F(1, 38) = 7.182$, $p = .011$. Since the p-value was less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that CBT had a significant effect on reducing suicidal wishes among undergraduate students.

Effect of CBT on Suicidal Plans

Table 6: Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of Suicidal Plans Among Undergraduate Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pretest Mean Score	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean Score	Posttest SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	10	1.80	1.32	1.20	0.79	-0.60
Control	10	1.00	1.25	0.70	0.95	-0.30

Mean Difference = Posttest Mean − Pretest Mean

Table 7: ANOVA Summary on thr significant difference between the pretest and posttest suicidal plans mean scores of undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F crit
Between Groups	2.025	1	2.025	1.380	0.247	4.098
Within Groups	55.750	38	1.467			
Total	57.775	39				

Tables 6 and 7 show the effect of CBT on suicidal plans among undergraduate students. The experimental group recorded a decrease in mean score from 1.80 (SD = 1.32) at pre-test to 1.20 (SD = 0.79) at post-test, with a mean difference of -0.60, while the control group showed a decrease from 1.00 (SD = 1.25) to 0.70 (SD = 0.95), with a mean difference of -0.30. Although participants in the experimental group demonstrated greater improvement following the CBT intervention, the ANOVA result revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups, $F(1, 38) = 1.380$, $p = .247$. Since the p-value was greater than .05, the null hypothesis was retained. This finding suggests that while CBT may influence certain aspects of suicidal thinking, its short-term application did not significantly reduce suicidal plans among undergraduate students.

Effect of CBT on Suicidal Intent

Table 8: Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of Suicidal Intent Among Undergraduate Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pretest Mean Score	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean Score	Posttest SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	10	0.70	1.16	0.20	0.42	-0.50
Control	10	0.30	0.95	0.40	1.07	+0.10

Mean Difference = Posttest Mean − Pretest Mean.

Table 9: ANOVA Summary on the significant difference between the pretest and posttest suicidal intent mean scores of undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.400	1	0.400	0.521	0.475	4.098
Within Groups	29.200	38	0.768			
Total	29.600	39				

Tables 8 and 9 show the effect of CBT on suicidal intent among undergraduate students. The experimental group recorded a decrease in mean score from 0.70 (SD = 1.16) at pre-test to 0.20 (SD = 0.42) at post-test, with a mean difference of -0.50. In contrast, the control group showed a slight increase from 0.30 (SD = 0.95) to 0.40 (SD = 1.07), with a mean difference of +0.10. Although participants in the experimental group demonstrated reduced suicidal intent following the CBT intervention, the ANOVA result revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups, $F(1, 38) = 0.521$, $p = .475$. Since the p-value was greater than .05, the null hypothesis was retained. This finding suggests that while CBT may have contributed to a reduction in suicidal intent, the improvement was not statistically significant within the duration of the intervention.

Effect of CBT on the Intensity of Suicidal Thoughts

Table 10: Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores of the Intensity of Suicidal Thoughts Among Undergraduate Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pretest Mean Score	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean Score	Posttest SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	10	2.90	1.10	0.90	0.88	-2.00
Control	10	1.20	1.55	1.50	1.58	+0.30

Mean Difference = Posttest Mean − Pretest Mean.

Table 11: ANOVA Summary on the significant difference between the pretest and posttest intensity of suicidal thoughts mean scores of undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F crit
Between Groups	7.225	1	7.225	2.979	0.092	4.098
Within Groups	92.150	38	2.425			
Total	99.375	39				

Tables 10 and 11 show the effect of CBT on the intensity of suicidal thoughts among undergraduate students. The experimental group recorded a substantial decrease in mean score from 2.90 (SD = 1.10) at pre-test to 0.90 (SD = 0.88) at post-test, with a mean difference of -2.00. In contrast, the control group showed a slight increase from 1.20 (SD = 1.55) to 1.50 (SD = 1.58), with a mean difference of +0.30. Although the experimental group demonstrated a marked reduction in the intensity of suicidal thoughts following the CBT intervention, the ANOVA result revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups, $F(1, 38) = 2.979$, $p = .092$. Since the p-value was greater than .05, the null hypothesis was retained. This finding suggests that while CBT may have reduced the intensity of suicidal thoughts among participants, the reduction did not reach statistical significance within the duration of the intervention.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the prevalence of suicidal ideation and the effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) on suicidal ideation among undergraduate students of the Federal University of Education, Pankshin. Specifically, the study investigated the prevalence of suicidal ideation and the effects of CBT on thoughts of death, suicidal wishes, suicidal plans, suicidal intent, and the intensity of suicidal thoughts. The first finding revealed that suicidal ideation was prevalent among undergraduate students, with the intensity

of suicidal thoughts recording the highest prevalence, followed by thoughts of death, suicidal wishes, and suicidal plans, while suicidal intent had the lowest prevalence. This finding suggests that many students experienced suicidal thoughts and related cognitive manifestations, although relatively few progressed to developing actual suicidal intent. The finding is consistent with the work of Auerbach et al. (2022), who reported that suicidal ideation remains a significant mental health concern among university students. Similarly, Iweama et al. (2024) found a high prevalence of suicidal thoughts among Nigerian undergraduates, highlighting the growing mental health challenges faced by students in tertiary institutions.

The second finding showed that CBT had a significant effect on thoughts of death among undergraduate students. Although both the experimental and control groups recorded reductions in thoughts of death, the reduction was greater among participants who received the intervention. The hypothesis test further revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups. This finding suggests that CBT was effective in helping students challenge negative cognitions associated with death and hopelessness. The finding supports Guo et al. (2024), who reported that CBT significantly reduces suicidal thoughts and depressive cognitions. It also aligns with the core assumptions of Cognitive Behavioural Theory, which emphasise that modifying maladaptive thought patterns can reduce psychological distress and suicidal ideation.

The third finding revealed that CBT had a significant effect on suicidal wishes among undergraduate students. Participants exposed to the intervention recorded a greater reduction in suicidal wishes than those in the control group, and the difference was statistically significant. This finding implies that CBT enhanced participants' capacity to manage negative emotions and develop healthier coping mechanisms, thereby reducing their desire to end their lives. The finding agrees with Rudd et al. (2023), who observed that cognitive behavioural interventions effectively reduce suicidal ideation among adolescents and young adults. It also supports evidence that psychological interventions can strengthen resilience and foster more adaptive responses to stress.

The fourth finding indicated that although suicidal plans decreased among participants in both groups, the reduction was not statistically significant. While the experimental group demonstrated greater improvement than the control group, the intervention did not significantly affect suicidal planning. This finding suggests that suicidal plans may represent a more advanced level of suicidality that is less responsive to short-term interventions. The finding is consistent with the proposition of Klonsky et al. (2018) that the progression from suicidal thoughts to suicidal plans involves additional psychological and environmental factors beyond those responsible for suicidal ideation alone. Consequently, longer-term or more intensive interventions may be required to influence suicidal planning significantly.

The fifth finding revealed that suicidal intent decreased among participants in the experimental group but the difference was not statistically significant. Although CBT appeared to contribute to some improvement, the intervention was insufficient to produce a significant reduction in suicidal intent within the study period. This finding suggests that suicidal intent may be influenced by deeper motivational and interpersonal factors that require more specialised intervention. The finding supports Joiner's Interpersonal Psychological Theory of Suicide, which emphasises that suicidal behaviour is shaped by perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability. Therefore, reducing suicidal intent may require comprehensive interventions that address both cognitive and interpersonal risk factors.

The sixth finding showed that the intensity of suicidal thoughts declined substantially among participants exposed to CBT, whereas a slight increase was observed in the control group. However, the difference was not statistically significant. This finding indicates that although CBT may contribute to reducing the severity of suicidal thoughts, the effect was not sufficiently strong to achieve statistical significance within the duration of the intervention. The finding contrasts with Guo et al. (2024), who reported significant reductions in suicidal ideation following CBT interventions. However, it may be explained by the complex and multifaceted nature of intense suicidal thoughts, which are often influenced by academic, social, emotional, and environmental stressors. Consequently, sustained intervention and long-term follow-up may be necessary to achieve significant reductions in the intensity of suicidal thoughts.

Overall, the study demonstrated that CBT was effective in reducing thoughts of death and suicidal wishes among undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin. However, it did not produce statistically significant reductions in suicidal plans, suicidal intent, and the intensity of suicidal thoughts. These findings suggest that while CBT is effective in addressing the early cognitive manifestations of suicidal ideation, more severe dimensions of suicidality may require longer-term, intensive, and multifaceted intervention approaches. The findings further support the view that different dimensions of suicidal ideation respond differently to psychological interventions and should be addressed through tailored prevention and treatment strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that suicidal ideation is prevalent among undergraduate students in the Federal University of Education, Pankshin. The findings revealed that the intensity of suicidal thoughts, thoughts of death, suicidal wishes, and suicidal plans were common among students, although suicidal intent was relatively low. The study further established that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) was effective in significantly reducing thoughts of death and suicidal wishes among

undergraduate students. However, CBT did not produce statistically significant effects on suicidal plans, suicidal intent, and the intensity of suicidal thoughts. Therefore, while CBT is effective in addressing the early cognitive manifestations of suicidal ideation, more severe dimensions of suicidality may require longer-term and more comprehensive intervention approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. University management should strengthen counselling and mental health services to facilitate early identification and intervention for students experiencing suicidal ideation.
2. Professional counsellors should incorporate Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) into counselling programmes, as it has been found effective in reducing thoughts of death and suicidal wishes among undergraduate students.
3. Regular mental health awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars should be organised to educate students on suicide prevention, coping strategies, and help-seeking behaviours.
4. Students identified with severe suicidal ideation, suicidal plans, or suicidal intent should receive specialised and long-term psychological interventions beyond CBT to address deeper underlying risk factors.
5. The institution should establish peer-support and mentorship programmes to enhance students' sense of belonging, social connectedness, and emotional support.
6. Future researchers should conduct similar studies using larger samples and longer intervention periods to determine the long-term effectiveness of CBT on suicidal plans, suicidal intent, and the intensity of suicidal thoughts among undergraduate students.

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