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Patterns and Determinants of Suicidal Ideation Outcomes among University Students: A Socio-demographic and Academic Contextual Analysis

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Abstract

Suicidal ideation remains a critical public health concern among university students, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where empirical evidence is still emerging. This study examined the patterns and determinants of suicidal ideation among undergraduate students, with specific emphasis on sociodemographic characteristics and academic-contextual factors. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 2,366 university students. Suicidal ideation was conceptualised into three categories: past suicidal ideation, current suicidal ideation, and no suicidal ideation. Sociodemographic variables (age grade, gender, and family structure) and academic factors (academic level, faculty affiliation, and cumulative grade point average [CGPA]) were analysed using chi-square statistics and effect size measures. The results showed that suicidal ideation varied significantly across age grades, academic levels, faculty affiliations, family structures, and CGPA classifications. Younger students and those in the early stages of university education reported higher proportions of both past and current suicidal ideation. Pronounced faculty-based differences were observed, indicating the potential role of discipline-specific academic demands and stressors. Students from divorced or separated family backgrounds exhibited elevated levels of suicidal ideation compared to their counterparts from intact families. Academic performance emerged as a particularly strong determinant, with students in lower CGPA categories demonstrating substantially higher levels of current suicidal ideation. Gender differences were statistically significant but modest, with female students reporting higher past suicidal ideation and male students exhibiting slightly higher current suicidal ideation. Overall, the findings highlight the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of suicidal ideation among university students. Distinguishing suicidal ideation into temporal categories provides nuanced insights that can inform targeted screening, early intervention, and evidence-based, campus-focused suicide prevention strategies within higher education institutions.

Keywords: *Suicidal Ideation; University Students; Sociodemographic Factors; Academic Performance; Mental Health; Nigeria*

Introduction

Globally, suicide thoughts and behaviour remains one of the major public health concern accounts for a substantial proportion of preventable deaths, particularly among the young population (Pirkis et al., 2024). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), suicide is one of the leading causes of death in young populations (15–29 years), underscoring the vulnerability of adolescents and young adults during critical developmental transitions (WHO,

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2025). Beyond completed suicide, suicidal thoughts and ideation represent key precursors that signal elevated psychological distress and increased risk for future self-harm, making their early identification and understanding imperative for effective prevention (Hockey et al., 2022). It is estimated that some mental health-related disorders especially suicide do affect youths more acutely than physical diseases (Buhari et al., 2021).

Similarly, the study of Nock (2020) posited that suicide as the number two cause of death among youths. From the United States context, suicide among adolescents has been reported as being increasingly recognized as an important public health problem (Stone, 2023). In Nigeria, the significant increase in the cases of suicide among Nigerian youths are on the increase (Abamara & Ozongwu, 2024). However, empirical studies investigating the predisposing and causes of suicide among students in tertiary institutions are still scanty in the Nigerian literature (Ladi-Akinyemi et al., 2023).

Suicide could be described as the complete process of a continuum that starts with a cognitive process, emanating from ideation, followed by an attempt, and finally completed suicidal act (Van-Heeringen, 2020). It could be inferred that every suicide attempt or completed suicide most times begins with suicidal thoughts (Nock, et al., 2020), and this is captured in the concept of suicidal ideation. Suicide accounts for 1.5 percent of global deaths and this psychopathology are ranks among the top 20 leading causes of death globally (Ogbolu, 2019; WHO, 2025). Ogbolu (2019) also revealed that 78% of suicide acts are found among low-and-middle-income nations like Nigeria.

Undergraduate students constitute a population of particular concern in suicide research (Buhari et al., 2021; Ogbolu, 2019). The university period often coincides with a number of age-bound problems associated with late adolescence and emerging adulthood, a developmental phase characterised by identity exploration, emotional instability, academic pressure, and increased exposure to psychosocial stressors (Akash & Suganya, 2024; Suganya, 2024). Aside adjustment problems, students are frequently confronted with challenges such as academic workload, financial strain, social integration difficulties, and uncertainty about future career prospects (Akash & Suganya, 2024; Suganya, 2024). These stressors may exacerbate underlying vulnerabilities, increasing the likelihood of suicidal thoughts and ideation (El-Ghareap, 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Okechukwu et al., 2022).

Findings from the global north show that suicidal ideation among students is not uniformly distributed but varies according to sociodemographic and contextual factors (Geith et al., 2025; Lin et al., 2025). Variables such as age, gender, family structure, and academic level have been identified as significant correlates of suicidality (Geith et al., 2025; Lin et al., 2025). Younger students and those in the early stages of higher education often report higher psychological distress, likely reflecting adjustment-related stress (Smart et al., 2025). Similarly, family disruption, such as parental separation or divorce, has been linked to diminished emotional support and increased vulnerability to suicidal ideation (El-Ghareap, 2025). Gender differences have also been widely reported, with females generally exhibiting higher rates of suicidal ideation, while males tend to show higher rates of suicide completion (Umaroh & Nugroho, 2025). Not much has been documented about the role of socio-demographic factors in determining suicidal ideation among university students in Nigeria.

In addition to individual and family-level factors, emerging research highlights the importance of academic and institutional contexts in shaping students' mental health outcomes (El-Ghareap, 2025). Faculty affiliation and discipline-specific demands may expose students to varying levels of academic stress, performance pressure, and competitive environments, thereby

influencing suicidal ideation patterns (Whitwer et al., 2025). Despite this growing recognition, faculty-based differences in suicidal ideation remain underexplored in many settings, particularly within low- and middle-income countries.

In Nigeria, some research efforts have been made in the last decade that shed light on the phenomenon examining the university settings (Ladi-Akinyemi et al., 2023; Okechukwu et al., 2022). However, there is a paucity of studies that had attempted to explore the prevalence, pattern and determinants of suicide outcomes among undergraduates in Nigeria Universities. A campus-based suicide prevention strategy is important because it would show university authorities' clear commitment to prioritizing and tackling suicide and even mental health generally while making available leadership and guidance on the key evidence-based suicide prevention interventions (WHO, 2012).

There has not been agreement on the conclusion of the epidemiological and demographic factors that predispose students to suicidal outcomes. Some studies identified that socio-demographic factors are prevalent in influencing suicidal acts (Choi et al., 2025; Lin, et al., 2025), while some others concluded that the socio-demographic factors do not affect mental health like suicide, but epidemiological factors (e.g., Owusu-Ansah, et al., 2020). Many studies focused only on risk and protective factors of suicide, neglecting the triggers and motivating factors among students (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2020).

A further limitation of existing literature lies in the tendency to conceptualise suicidal ideation as a binary construct (present vs. absent), which obscures important temporal distinctions. Differentiating between **past suicidal ideation**, **current suicidal ideation**, and **no suicidal ideation** allows for a more nuanced understanding of suicide risk trajectories. Such a classification is clinically and epidemiologically relevant, as individuals with resolved ideation may still require monitoring, while those with current ideation necessitate immediate intervention. Within the African and Global South contexts, research on suicidal ideation among university students remains comparatively limited, despite increasing concerns about student mental health and rising reports of psychological distress in tertiary institutions.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the **patterns and determinants of suicidal ideation among university students**, with particular emphasis on sociodemographic characteristics and academic-contextual factors. By distinguishing suicidal ideation into past, current, and no-risk categories, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how suicide risk is distributed across different student subgroups. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on student mental health and to inform evidence-based interventions within university settings.

Research Questions

In response to the identified gaps in knowledge and the informing policy research, the following questions therefore arise:

1. How does suicidal ideation vary across students' age grades?
2. What is the relationship between academic level and suicidal ideation among university students?
3. To what extent does faculty affiliation influence patterns of suicidal ideation among university students?
4. To what extent does students' academic performance influence patterns of suicidal ideation among university students?
5. Are there significant gender differences in past and current suicidal ideation among university students?

6. How does family structure relate to suicidal ideation among university students?

Research Methods

This section presents the step-by-step approach adopted in the study. Detailing the research design, research setting, participants, instruments, procedure for collection of data, ethical approval, and statistical analysis are well outlined.

Research Approach

The study adopted a **quantitative research approach**, aimed at examining patterns and associations between suicidal ideation and selected sociodemographic and academic-contextual variables among university students. This approach was considered appropriate for systematically describing prevalence patterns and testing group differences using statistical procedures.

Research Design

A **cross-sectional survey design** was employed. Data were collected at a single point in time to assess students' suicidal ideation status (past, current, or none) and its association with age grade, academic level, faculty, gender, family structure, and CGPA. The design allowed for the examination of relationships among variables without inferring causality.

Setting

The study was carried out at the University of Ilorin, located within the North Central geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country in West Africa and is the most populous country on the continent, with a population of over 200 million. Geographically, Nigeria is situated between the Sahel to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south in the Atlantic Ocean. It covers an area of 923,769 square kilometers (356,669 sq mi). Nigeria is a multinational state inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups speaking 500 distinct languages, all identifying with a wide variety of cultures.

Study Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study population comprised **registered undergraduate students** of the University of Ilorin. The population included students across different age grades, academic levels, faculties, gender categories, family structures, and academic performance levels. A total of **2,366 students** constituted the final sample for analysis. Participants were selected using a purposive **sampling approach**. Inclusion criteria required that participants be enrolled students who provided informed consent and completed the relevant sections of the survey instrument.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire**, administered in accordance with the pre-field guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously to reduce social desirability bias and encourage honest reporting of sensitive information. The inclusion criteria entail individuals with current and valid registration with the university of Ilorin; undergraduate students; and consent to participate in the study.

Instruments and Measurements

Questionnaire booklets made up of multi-segmented sections of the study's data. The questionnaire was being made up of five sections, Section A-E;

- **Section A:** Measure respondents' socio-demographic characteristics assessed included **age grade** (adolescents, youths, young adults), **gender** (male, female), and **family structure** (together, separated, divorced). These variables were measured using standard self-report items.
- **Section B:** Measures the academic and contextual variables of the study. The academic-contextual variables included **academic level** (Years 1–6), **faculty affiliation**, and **CGPA**.

These variables were included to capture institutional and performance-related influences on suicidal ideation.

- **Section C:** Measure the outcomes of suicidality among student participants. Suicidal ideation was assessed using a **self-report measure** that captured respondents' experiences of suicidal thoughts currently and in the past. Responses were categorised into three mutually exclusive groups: **Past suicidal ideation** (*Yes, but not anymore*); **Current suicidal ideation** (*Yes, still ongoing*), and *No suicidal ideation* (*No*).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to summarise suicidal ideation categories across groups. **Chi-square tests of independence** were conducted to examine associations between suicidal ideation and sociodemographic and academic variables. Effect sizes were estimated using **Cramér's V**, with values interpreted as small (≈ .10), moderate (≈ .30), and large (≈ .50). Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical approval certificate (number: ERC/2025/s7733/0401) was retrieved as clearance to fulfill all ethical requirements and considerations. It was subsequently issued. The study ensures strict compliance with the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, voluntariness, informed consent, and other principles.

Results

This section present the findings of the study that provide answers to the research questions/objectives of the study. The study objective one that set to examine h**ow suicidal ideation vary across students' age grades was presented in Table 1.**

Table 1: Showing the distribution of Suicidal Risk Factors by Age Grade

Age Grade	Past Risk (%)	Current Risk (%)	No Risk (%)	χ^2(df)	Cramér's V
Adolescents (n = 74)	45.9	18.9	35.1		
Youths (n = 2,039)	34.8	16.3	48.9	15.12 (4)**	.057
Young Adults (n = 253)	44.7	15.8	39.5		

Note. p < .01.

The outcome of the study as presented in table 1 revealed that the distribution of suicidal risk factors varied significantly across students' age grades [χ^2(df) = 15.12; P < 0.01; Cramér's V = .057]. Younger students showed relatively **higher proportions of past** (45.9%) **suicidal thoughts/ideation compared to young adults (44.7%) and youths (34.8%). Younger students (adolescents; 18.9%) expressed predominant current risk of suicide (18.9%) compared to students who are youths (16.3%) and young adults (15.8%). Notably, passive and/or active suicidal ideation/thoughts is more prevailing among younger students compared to other counterparts. W**hereas youths (48.9%) reported the **highest proportion of no suicidal ideation/thoughts compare to other counterparts (adolescents, 35.1%; and young adults, 39.5%)**. Notably, current suicidal ideation was present across all age categories at comparable levels, indicating that **active suicide risk is not confined to a single developmental stage**. Although the effect size (v = 5.7%) was small, the result indicates that **younger respondents are disproportionately vulnerable to suicidal ideation/thought**, highlighting age as a meaningful developmental risk factor.

The study objective two that set to examine **the relationship between academic level and suicidal ideation among university students as presented in Table 2.**

Table 2: Showing the distribution of Suicidal Risk Factors by Academic Level

Academic Level	Past Risk (%)	Current Risk (%)	No Risk (%)	χ^2(df)	Cramér's V
Year 1 (100)	39.1	13.0	47.8		
Year 2 (200)	32.6	17.0	50.4		
Year 3 (300)	36.8	14.9	48.3	19.59 (10)*	.064
Year 4 (400)	35.1	18.6	46.3		
Year 5 (500)	48.1	13.0	39.0		
Year 6 (600)	20.0	20.0	60.0		

Note. $p < .05$.

The outcome of the study as presented in Table 2 showed that the distribution of suicidal risk factors varied significantly across students' academic levels [χ^2(df) = 19.59; $p < .05$; Cramér's V = .064]. Students in lower academic levels exhibited relatively higher proportions of **past suicidal ideation**, particularly those in Year 1 (39.1%) and Year 3 (36.8%), compared to students in higher academic levels such as Year 4 (35.1%) and Year 6 (20.0%).

In terms of **current suicidal risk**, students in Year 4 (18.6%) and Year 2 (17.0%) reported higher proportions compared to those in Year 1 (13.0%) and Year 5 (13.0%). Notably, Year 6 students recorded the highest proportion of **no suicidal ideation** (60.0%), suggesting increased psychological stability at advanced stages of academic progression.

Overall, suicidal ideation, both past and current appears more prevalent during the **early and middle years of university education**, likely reflecting transitional stressors and academic adjustment challenges. Although the effect size was small (v = 6.4%), the pattern indicates that academic level constitutes a **meaningful contextual risk factor**, particularly during the formative years of university life.

The study objective three that set to examine the **extent to which faculty affiliation influence patterns of suicidal ideation among university students, as presented in Table 3.**

Table 3: Showing the distribution of Suicidal Risk Factors by Students' associated Faculty

Faculty	Past Risk (%)	Current Risk (%)	No Risk (%)	χ^2(df)	Cramér's V
Agriculture	30.5	6.3	63.2	307.19 (30)**	0.255
Arts	37.5	19.6	42.9		
Basic Clinical Sciences	32.0	12.4	55.6		
Basic Medical Sciences	29.6	7.4	63.0		
Clinical Sciences	27.4	10.5	62.1		
Communication & Info Sciences	26.0	11.0	63.0		
Education	37.0	22.2	40.7		
Engineering & Technology	62.0	19.0	19.0		
Environmental Sciences	53.3	16.7	30.0		
Law	48.3	17.2	34.5		

Life Sciences	31.4	25.5	43.1		
Management Sciences	24.7	12.9	62.4		
Pharmaceutical Sciences	43.6	30.8	25.6		
Physical Sciences	37.5	20.8	41.7		
Social Sciences	52.8	33.3	13.9		
Veterinary Medicine	48.5	29.3	22.2		

Note. **$p < .001$.

As shown in Table 3, suicidal risk factors differed significantly across faculties [χ^2(df) = 307.19; $p < .001$; Cramér's V = .255]. Marked disparities were observed in the prevalence of both past and current suicidal ideation across academic disciplines. Faculties such as **Social Sciences**, **Pharmaceutical Sciences**, and **Engineering and Technology** recorded notably higher proportions of **current suicidal ideation** (33.3%, 30.8%, and 19.0%, respectively), whereas faculties including **Agriculture**, **Management Sciences**, and **Basic Medical Sciences** reported substantially higher proportions of **no suicidal ideation** (above 60%).

Past suicidal ideation was particularly pronounced among students in Engineering and Technology (62.0%), Environmental Sciences (53.3%), and Social Sciences (52.8%), suggesting accumulated or recurring psychological distress within these academic contexts.

The relatively large effect size (v = 25.5%) indicates that **faculty affiliation is a strong determinant of suicidal ideation**, underscoring the influence of discipline-specific academic demands, workload intensity, and psychosocial environments. This finding highlights the necessity for **faculty-tailored mental health screening and intervention strategies**.

The study objective four that set to examine the **extent to which students' academic performance influence patterns of suicidal ideation among university students, as presented in Table 4.**

Table 4: Showing the distribution of Suicidal Ideation by Students' C**umulative Grade Point Average (**CGPA)

CGPA Category	**Past Risk (%)**	**Current Risk (%)**	**No Risk (%)**	**χ^2(df)**	**Cramér's V**
Third Class	7.9	84.3	7.9		
Second Class Lower	57.2	13.5	29.3		
Second Class Upper	9.1	0.1	90.8	1674.25 (6)**	.595
First Class	11.8	5.9	82.4		
Total	**36.2**	**16.3**	**47.5**		

Note. **$p < .001$.

The outcome of the study as presented in Table 4 revealed that the distribution of suicidal risk factors varied significantly across students' cumulative grade point average (CGPA) categories [χ^2(df) = 1674.25; $p < .001$; Cramér's V = .595]. Students with **lower academic performance**, particularly those in the **third-class CGPA category**, exhibited disproportionately higher levels of **current suicidal ideation** (84.3%) compared to students in second-class lower (13.5%), second-class upper (0.1%), and first-class (5.9%) categories.

In contrast, students with **higher academic achievement** demonstrated markedly lower levels of current suicidal ideation and substantially higher proportions of **no suicidal ideation**. Specifically, students in the **second-class upper** (90.8%) and **first-class** (82.4%) categories

reported the highest proportions of no suicidal ideation, suggesting strong psychological resilience and academic stability within these groups. Past suicidal ideation was most prevalent among students in the **second-class lower category** (57.2%), indicating that academic strain may have been experienced but subsequently resolved for a substantial proportion of these students.

Overall, both past and current suicidal ideation were heavily concentrated among students with **poorer academic outcomes**, highlighting academic performance as a critical correlate of suicide risk. Notably, the effect size was large (v = 59.5%), indicating a **substantial and practically significant relationship** between CGPA and suicidal ideation. This finding suggests that academic performance is one of the **strongest determinants of suicidal ideation** in the present study and underscores the importance of integrating academic monitoring with mental health screening within university settings.

The study objective five that set to examine the **gender differences in suicidal ideation among university students, as presented in Table 5.**

Table 5: Showing the distribution of Suicidal Risk Factors by Students' Gender

Gender	Past Risk (%)	Current Risk (%)	No Risk (%)	χ^2(df)	Cramér's V
Male	34.4	18.0	47.6	6.15	
Female	38.0	14.6	47.4	(2)*	.051

Note. $p < .05$.

The results presented in Table 5 revealed a statistically significant association between gender and suicidal ideation [χ^2(df) = 6.15; $p < .05$; Cramér's V = .051]. Female students reported a higher proportion of **past suicidal ideation** (38.0%) compared to male students (34.4%). Conversely, males exhibited slightly higher proportions of **current suicidal ideation** (18.0%) relative to females (14.6%). However, both male and female students reported nearly identical proportions of **no suicidal ideation** (47.6% and 47.4%, respectively), indicating comparable overall resilience levels. Although the effect size was small (v = 5.1%), the findings suggest **gender-specific patterns in the expression and persistence of suicidal ideation**, rather than large differences in overall prevalence.

The study objective six that set to examine how family structures relate to **suicidal ideation among university students, as presented in Table 6.**

Table 6: Showing the distribution of Suicidal Risk Factors by Students' Family Structure

Family Structure	Past Risk (%)	Current Risk (%)	No Risk (%)	χ^2(df)	Cramér's V
Divorced	40.7	27.8	31.5		
Separated	36.1	22.4	41.5	28.40	
Together	35.9	14.8	49.3	(4)**	.077

Note. **$p < .001$.

As indicated in Table 6, suicidal ideation varied significantly across family structures [χ^2(df) = 28.40; $p < .001$; Cramér's V = .077]. Students from **divorced** and **separated** family backgrounds reported higher proportions of both **past** (40.7% and 36.1%, respectively) and **current suicidal ideation** (27.8% and 22.4%, respectively), compared to those from **intact families**. In contrast, students from intact family structures reported the highest proportion of **no suicidal ideation** (49.3%), suggesting a buffering effect of family cohesion and stability. Although the effect size was small to moderate (v = 7.7%), the findings indicate that **family disruption constitutes a salient psychosocial risk factor** for suicidal ideation among students.

Discussion

The present study examined the patterns and determinants of suicidal ideation among

university students, with suicidal ideation disaggregated into **past**, **current**, and **no-risk** categories. Overall, the findings confirm that suicidal ideation is **prevalent, patterned, and unevenly distributed** across sociodemographic and academic-contextual characteristics, thereby reinforcing suicide as a critical public health concern among young people (Pirkis et al., 2024; WHO, 2025).

Consistent with global evidence, suicidal ideation varied significantly across age grades, with younger students exhibiting disproportionately higher levels of both past and current suicidal ideation. This finding aligns with developmental perspectives that identify late adolescence and emerging adulthood as periods of heightened psychological vulnerability, characterised by identity exploration, emotional instability, and limited coping resources (Akash & Suganya, 2024; Suganya, 2024). The persistence of current suicidal ideation across all age categories, however, suggests that suicide risk is **not confined to a single developmental stage**, corroborating earlier assertions that suicidal thoughts may persist beyond adolescence when psychosocial stressors remain unresolved (Nock et al., 2020; Hockey et al., 2022). Although the effect size was small, its public health significance is notable given the large student population involved.

The observed variation in suicidal ideation across academic levels further underscores the role of **academic transition and adjustment stress**. Students in the early and middle years of study reported higher levels of past and current suicidal ideation compared to those in advanced academic levels. This pattern is consistent with previous findings indicating that early university years are marked by academic uncertainty, social reorientation, and performance anxiety (Smart et al., 2025). Conversely, students in higher academic levels demonstrated greater proportions of no suicidal ideation, suggesting that academic progression may be associated with improved coping skills, psychological adaptation, or institutional familiarity. This finding supports assertions that academic context plays a crucial role in shaping students' mental health trajectories (El-Ghareap, 2025).

Faculty affiliation emerged as one of the strongest determinants of suicidal ideation in the present study. Marked differences were observed across faculties, with some disciplines exhibiting substantially higher proportions of current suicidal ideation. This finding lends empirical support to emerging literature highlighting discipline-specific academic cultures, workload intensity, and competitive pressures as important determinants of students' mental health (Whitwer et al., 2025). The relatively large effect size suggests that institutional and contextual factors may exert stronger influences on suicidal ideation than individual sociodemographic characteristics alone. This has important implications for campus-based suicide prevention strategies, particularly within resource-limited settings.

Gender differences in suicidal ideation were statistically significant but modest. Female students reported higher levels of past suicidal ideation, whereas male students exhibited slightly higher levels of current suicidal ideation. This pattern mirrors global trends indicating greater emotional expressiveness and reporting of psychological distress among females, alongside more persistent or severe risk trajectories among males (Umaroh & Nugroho, 2025). While the effect size was small, the finding reinforces the need for **gender-responsive mental health interventions** that recognise differential expressions and trajectories of suicidality.

Family structure was significantly associated with suicidal ideation, with students from divorced or separated families reporting higher levels of both past and current suicidal ideation compared to those from intact families. This finding supports prior evidence linking family disruption to reduced emotional support, increased psychological distress, and heightened suicide

vulnerability (El-Ghareap, 2025). Within the Nigerian context, where family cohesion often serves as a primary psychosocial buffer, family instability may have particularly pronounced implications for students' mental well-being.

Academic performance, as measured by CGPA, showed a particularly strong association with suicidal ideation. Students with lower CGPA classifications (especially those in the third-class category) exhibited disproportionately high levels of current suicidal ideation, while students with higher academic performance reported markedly lower suicide risk. This finding corroborates earlier studies suggesting that academic failure or perceived underachievement may function both as a stressor and as a marker of psychological vulnerability (Okechukwu et al., 2022). The large effect size underscores academic performance as a **critical indicator for early identification of suicide risk** within university settings.

By disaggregating suicidal ideation into past, current, and no-risk categories, this study advances existing literature that has predominantly relied on binary conceptualisations of suicidality. This nuanced classification provides clinically meaningful insights into suicide risk trajectories and supports calls for more refined epidemiological approaches (Van Heeringen, 2020). Importantly, the findings contribute context-specific evidence from Nigeria, addressing a documented gap in the literature (Abamara & Ozongwu, 2024; Ladi-Akinyemi et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that suicidal ideation among university students is **multidimensional and context-dependent**, shaped by sociodemographic characteristics, academic progression, faculty affiliation, family structure, and academic performance. While some factors exert modest effects, others particularly faculty affiliation and CGPA emerge as powerful correlates of suicide risk. The persistence of current suicidal ideation across multiple subgroups highlights the urgent need for **comprehensive, institution-wide suicide prevention strategies** within Nigerian universities.

Limitations

Despite its strengths, this study has several limitations. First, the **cross-sectional design** precludes causal inferences regarding the relationships observed. Second, reliance on **self-reported data** may introduce recall bias or social desirability effects, particularly given the sensitive nature of suicidal ideation. Third, the study was conducted within a specific university context, which may limit generalisability to other institutions or regions. Finally, the absence of psychological variables such as depression, anxiety, or coping mechanisms restricts deeper explanatory interpretations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Institutionalise routine mental health screening**, particularly targeting early-year students and those with poor academic performance.
2. **Develop faculty-specific suicide prevention programmes** that address discipline-related stressors.
3. **Integrate academic monitoring with psychosocial support**, especially for students at risk of academic failure.
4. **Strengthen family-inclusive interventions**, recognising the protective role of family cohesion.
5. Future research should adopt **longitudinal designs** and incorporate psychological, social, and cultural variables to better understand suicide risk trajectories.

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