

Levels of Suicidal Ideations and Intentions among the Inmates in the Correctional Institutions in Baghdad City - Iraq

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Abstract

Background: Suicidal ideations concern thinking about suicide or an uncommon and inappropriate preoccupation with suicide. The range of suicidal ideation and intent differs significantly from brief thoughts to wide thoughts, to comprehensive planning, and role-playing.

Objectives: To explore inmates' levels of suicidal ideation and intent in the prisons of Baghdad City and to find out the relationship between these levels and some demographic characteristics of those inmates.

Methodology: A descriptive analytic design was used to guide this study which was conducted from October 15th, 2015 to the June 10th, 2016. A non-probability sample of 100 inmates in Baghdad correctional institutions was recruited. The study instrument is a questionnaire consisted of nine demographic characteristics and 19 items represent Beck suicidal ideations and intents scale. Data were analysed by using descriptive statistical measures of frequency, percent, and distribution; and inferential analysis (Chi-square).

Results: The study results displayed that more than half of the inmates are from twenties and thirties decades (58.0%), 68.0% having elementary and secondary school, half of them are with six to 15 years imprisonment, and 69.0% are married. Three quarters have moderate and high levels of suicidal ideations and intents. The study also finds that the more the period of imprisonment and the less of income the inmates have the higher the levels of suicidal ideation they have.

Recommendations: There must be a good awareness of suicide by being well-trained to identify the behavioral and verbal signs that point out to early successful suicide prevention.

Keyword: Correction Institutions, Inmates, Intentions, Suicidal Ideation

Introduction

Suicidal ideation is any self-reported thoughts of engaging in suicide-related behavior⁽⁵⁾ and to have suicidal intent is to have suicide or deliberate self-killing as one's purpose⁽⁶⁾. A suicide attempt may result in no injuries, injuries, or death⁽⁷⁾. Intent refers to the aim, purpose, or goal of the behavior rather than the behavior itself⁽⁸⁾. Suicide and other forms of suicidal behaviors such as suicidal ideation and direct nonfatal self-harm, present substantial difficulties

in correctional settings⁽¹⁶⁾. Suicidal thoughts are predictors and precursors of suicide in prisons⁽⁹⁾. As a set, inmates have greater suicide rates than their community counterparts⁽¹⁰⁾ and there is some indication that rates are growing even in places where the numbers of inmates are declining⁽¹¹⁾. Accordingly, pre-trial convicts have a suicide attempt rate of about 7.5 times, and sentenced prisoners have a rate of nearly six times the rate of males out of jail in the general population⁽¹²⁾. In a rare prospective study, Lekka and

his colleagues (2006) found that 17.9% of inmates with suicide ideation attempted suicide within 12 months, whereas none of the inmates without ideation attempted suicide⁽¹³⁾. There is also an evidence that people who have attempted suicide in the past are more likely to have current suicidal thoughts⁽¹⁾.

There are very few studies examining the prevalence of suicidal ideation and intents in inmate populations and none of these have focused on inmates of correctional institutions in Baghdad City.

This study aims to (1) explore the levels of suicidal ideation and intent among the inmates in the correctional institutions of Baghdad City, and (2) find out the relationship between the levels of suicidal ideation and intents and inmates' demographic characteristics.

Methodology

A descriptive analytic study was conducted from October 15th, 2015 to June 10th. A formal consent was issued by the Ministry of Justice to facilitate data collection from the correctional institutions. A

purposive sample of 100 inmates (70 male inmates and 30 females) who were selected from two correction institutions of Baghdad City. A questionnaire was built to measure the levels of suicidal ideation and intents. This questionnaire consists of nine demographic characteristics of the inmates: gender, age, level of education, marital status, residency, period of imprisonment, period to elapse, occupation, and income; and 19 items represent BSI for Beck suicidal ideations and intents scale⁽⁴⁾ which supposed to assess these levels among the inmates in correction institutions. Each item ranged from zero as “there is not”; one as “somehow there is; two as “there is”; and four as “strongly there is”. The total score ranged from zero to 57 for the total suicidal ideation and intents scale. The total items scores were measured scored and finally rated on 3-level rating scale. Three levels were determined by applying quartile descriptive analysis; low level is with cut-off point ranged between 14 and 22; moderate level is with cut-off point ranged between 23 and 28; high level is with cut-off point ranged between 29 and 54.

Data Analyses/Statistics

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical measures of distribution, cross-tabulation, frequency, percent; and an inferential data analysis (Chi-square).

Results

Table 1. Inmates' demographic characteristics

Gender			Place of Residency		
Gender	f	%	Place	f	%
Male	70	70.0%	Rural	90	90.0%
Female	30	30.0%	Urban	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%	Total	100	100.0%
Age			Level of Education		

Cont.... Table 1. Inmates' demographic characteristics

year	f	%	Level	f	%
20-29	19	19.0%	Illiterate	10	10.0%
30-39	39	39.0%	Elementary	22	22.0%
40-49	29	29.0%	Secondary	42	42.0%
≥50	133	13.0%	College and more	26	26.0%
Total	100	100.0%	Total	100	100.0%
Period of imprisonment			Period to elapse		
Year	f	%	Year	f	%
≥5	18	18.0%	> 1	22	22.0%
6-10	32	32.0%	1-5	30	30.0%
11-15	18	18.0%	6-9	16	16.0%
16-20	20	20.0%	10-14	22	22.0%
≥21	12	12.0%	≥15	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%	Total	100	100.0%
Occupation before imprisonment			Income		
Occupation	f	%	Income	f	%
Jobless	70	70.0%	Adequate	30	30.0%
Employee	2	2.0%	Almost adequate	31	31.0%
Self-employer	28	28.0%	Inadequate	39	39.0%
Total	100	100.0%	Total	100	100.0%
Marital status					
Status			f	%	
Unmarried			23	23.0%	
Married			69	69.0%	
Divorced			7	7.0%	
Widowed			1	1.0%	
Total			100	100.0%	

Seventy percent of the inmates are males; more than a half age twenties and thirties; 90% live in country; half are imprisoned for 10-years and less; more than a half having five years to elapsed; 66% are of education of elementary and secondary; 70% are jobless; 70% having almost adequate and inadequate income; and 69% of the inmates are married.

Table 2. Distribution in levels of suicidal ideation and intents

	Levels of Suicidal Ideation and intents							
	Low		Moderate		High		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
No. of inmates	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%

More than two-fifth (41.0%) have high level; 31.0% have moderate level; and 28.0% have low level of suicidal ideation.

Table 3. Levels of inmates' suicidal ideation according to the gender, age, period of imprisonment and period elapsed

Variables f		Levels of Suicidal Ideation and intents							
		Low		Moderate		High		Total	
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Gender	Male	22	22.0%	18	18.0%	30	30.0%	70	70.0%
	Female	6	6.0%	13	13.0%	11	11.0%	30	30.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Age	20-29	6	6.0%	6	6.0%	7	7.0%	19	19.0%
	30-39	10	10.0%	13	13.0%	16	16.0%	39	39.0%
	40-49	9	9.0%	7	7.0%	13	13.0%	29	29.0%
	50≤	3	3.0%	5	5.0%	5	5.0%	13	13.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Period of Imprisonment	≤5	4	4.0%	9	9.0%	5	5.0%	18	18.0%
	6-10	11	11.0%	6	6.0%	15	15.0%	32	32.0%
	11-15	4	4.0%	7	7.0%	7	7.0%	18	18.0%
	16-20	4	4.0%	5	5.0%	11	11.0%	20	20.0%
	≥21	5	5.0%	4	4.0%	3	3.0%	12	12.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Period Elapsed	≤1	7	7.0%	5	5.0%	10	10.0%	22	22.0%
	2-5	10	10.0%	12	12.0%	8	8.0%	30	30.0%
	6-9	2	2.0%	3	3.0%	11	11.0%	16	16.0%
	10-13	6	6.0%	7	7.0%	9	9.0%	22	22.0%
	≥14	3	3.0%	4	4.0%	3	3.0%	10	10.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%

Less than a third (30.0%) of male inmates and 11.0% of female inmates have high level of suicidal ideation. This table also reveals that 16.0% of thirties decade have high level of ideation and only 3.0% of the age of 50 and more have low level of suicidal ideation.

Regarding the period of imprisonment, 15.0% of the inmates with period of imprisonment of 6-10-years and 3.0% of inmates of period of 21-years and longer have high level of suicidal ideation and intents.

According to the period to elapse, 11.0% of the inmates with 6-10-years period to elapse have high level of suicidal ideation and only 3.0% of the inmates with the period of 14-years and more have low level of ideation.

Table 4. Inmates’ levels of suicidal ideation and intents according to their age

Variables f		Levels of Suicidal Ideation and intents							
		Low		Moderate		High		Total	
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Marital status	Unmarried	6	6.0%	9	9.0%	8	8.0%	23	23.0%
	Married	20	20.0%	21	21.0%	28	28.0%	69	69.0%
	Divorced	2	2.0%	1	1.0%	4	4.0%	7	7.0%
	Widowed	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	1	1.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Occupation	Jobless	20	20.0%	18	18.0%	32	32.0%	70	70.0%
	Employee	8	8.0%	12	12.0%	8	8.0%	28	28.0%
	Self-employee	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	1	1.0%	2	2.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Monthly Income	Adequate	11	11.0%	11	11.0%	8	8.0%	30	30.0%
	Almost adequate	3	3.0%	12	12.0%	16	16.0%	31	31.0%
	Inadequate	14	14.0%	8	8.0%	17	17.0%	39	39.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Level of Education	Illiterate	2	2.0%	4	4.0%	4	4.0%	10	10.0%
	Read & write	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.0%	3	3.0%
	Primary	4	4.0%	9	9.0%	6	6.0%	19	19.0%
	Secondary	12	12.0%	14	14.0%	16	16.0%	42	42.0%
	College	13	13.0%	6	6.0%	7	7.0%	26	26.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%
Residency	Rural	25	25.0%	27	27.0%	38	38.0%	90	90.0%
	Urban	3	3.0%	4	4.0%	3	3.0%	10	10.0%
	Total	28	28.0%	31	31.0%	41	41.0%	100	100.0%

Married inmates have the highest level of suicidal ideation and intents (28.0%) and 1.0% of widowed inmates have high level of ideation.

Concerning inmates’ occupation, 32.0% of jobless inmates have high level of suicidal ideation and only 1.0% of self-employed inmates have high level of suicidal ideation.

Furthermore, 17.0% of inmates with inadequate income and 16.0% of inmates with almost adequate income have high level of suicidal ideation and intents.

Moreover, 16.0% secondary school level of education have high level of ideation and only 1.0% with read and write level of education have low level of ideation.

Finally, 38.0% of inmates living in country have high level of suicidal ideation and intents and only 3.0% of urban inmates have high level of suicidal ideation.

Table 5. Association between prisoners’ suicidal ideation and intents and demographic characteristics

×2		Suicidal Ideation and intent		
		df	p-value	
Variables	Age	1.32	3	0.97
	Gender	3.27	1	0.19
	Period of Imprisonment	11.58	4	0.02
	Period to elapse	9.03	4	0.34
	Marital Status	3.07	3	0.80
	Occupation	4.18	2	0.38
	Monthly Income	10.09	2	0.03
	Level of Education	8.67	4	0.37
	Residency	6.34	1	0.73

There is a significant relationship between period of imprisonment and monthly income regarding the levels of suicidal ideation (x²= 11.58, p-value= 0.02) (x²= 10.09, p-value= 0.03) respectively.

Discussion

Different periods of imprisonment and periods to elapse reflect the dissimilarity of levels of criminality of convicted persons and do not related to other reasons⁽¹⁶⁾. High percentages of inmates who are jobless and with almost adequate and inadequate income indicate the logic interpretation to commit crimes of different intensities^(13,17). Regarding the levels of suicidal ideations and intents, the study reveals different levels; low, moderate, and high. These levels allocate randomly according to demographic characteristics which are considered as risk factors to the suicidal ideations and intents, for gender differences; 30.0% of the total male inmates have high level of suicidal ideation while only 11.0% of total female inmates have high level. This is because the majority of inmates are men^(11,12) but women in prison are also at high risk of suicide⁽¹⁹⁾. Those who age thirties have high level of the total 41.0% with high level of suicidal ideation and intent⁽²⁰⁾. Period of imprisonment greatly influence the level of ideation

and intent and it is considerable risk factor for suicidal ideation. Long period might cause hopelessness within the inmates⁽²¹⁾. Many studies indicate that the more period of imprisonment to elapse the higher levels of suicidal ideation intent are, contradicts the present study which reveals that the long period to elapse does not give indicator to higher level of suicidal ideation and intent⁽¹²⁻¹³⁾. 28.0% of married inmates have high level of suicidal ideation. This is due to the majority of inmates are married. So, the percentage does not reflect the real prevalence of the suicidal ideation. Also, this high level of suicidal ideation among jobless inmates does not represent real fact of the prevalence of suicidal ideation and intent because the majority of inmates are jobless. The less income the inmates have, the higher level of suicidal and intent they have. This could be inmates with adequate income would ensure good life for his family and for his future after release from imprisonment. The high levels of suicidal ideation and intent among secondary school and rural residency do not represent the real

prevalence the majority of distribution of inmates is among these two variables.

Recommendations:

1. To prevent suicidal risk among the inmates the staff of correctional institutions should have a good awareness regarding suicide.

2. Well-trained staff can identify the behavioral and verbal signs that indicate early successful suicide prevention.

3. An appropriate suicide prevention program needs to let the staff engage.

Conflict of Interest: The researchers confirm that there is no any conflict of interest.

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Ethical Clearance: The researchers obtained the ethical approval from the University of Baghdad, College of Nursing

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