

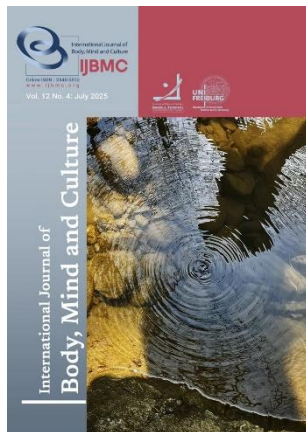
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Introduction

Behaviors of Suicide are complex issues that are not easily explained, even when there is documented information. According to The World Health Organization's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan for 2013–2030 (World Health Organization, 2019). Sets an ambitious goal of reducing the global suicide rate by one-third during this period. Additionally, suicide

Hopelessness and Its Role in Suicidal Ideation among University Students in Baghdad

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Suicide is a critical health concern globally; it is the second leading cause of death among university students worldwide. Hopelessness is a severe psychological factor linked to suicidal behaviours, which has been increasingly prevalent among university students in Baghdad, Iraq, warranting focused investigation. The study aimed to examine hopelessness and its role in suicidal ideation among university students in Baghdad, Iraq.

Methods and Materials: A descriptive research design was used for the study. Study Setting: The study was conducted among university students in Baghdad City, Iraq. Research Subjects: A convenience sample of 150 students was included from the designated setting. Tools: Two tools were used for data collection: Part I collected demographic information, while Part II assessed the risk factors and causes of suicidal behaviors. Tool II explored the attitude of university Students regarding suicide.

Findings: The findings revealed that the majority of male students (80.2%) reported experiencing suicidal ideation, while nearly three-quarters (70.2%) of female students also reported the same. Over three-quarters (76.7%) attributed their suicidal ideation primarily to depression, followed by factors such as non-supportive family environments (56.7%), lack of faith (52%), challenging life circumstances (49.3%), educational stressors (43.3%), and a desire to attract attention (32.7%).

Conclusion: Based on the results, it can be concluded that a significant number of university students experienced suicidal ideation, with depression being the primary cause identified.

Keywords: Hopelessness, Suicide, Risk Factors, Ideation.

rates are incorporated into the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, serving as a key indicator for target, which aims to lower premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third by the year 2030 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023). WHO (2021), suicide is the second leading cause of mortality worldwide for people between the ages of 15 and 29, generally coinciding with the years

spent in attending university. The global aim is to decrease suicide rates worldwide by one-third by 2030. Suicidal ideation is a thought that includes a variety of ruminations, aspirations, and obsessions about suicide and death. Suicide is a significant public health issue with long-term consequences for people, families, and communities. Around 77% of suicides worldwide occur in low- and middle-income countries, while poor access to services, poverty, and stigma around mental health are listed as barriers to receiving care. Every 40 seconds, a suicide occurs around the world (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023; World Health Organization, 2019, 2021).

Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one's death. It is often associated with despair, frequently related to mental disorders as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, alcoholism, or abuse of drugs. Suicidal factors, including economic problems, the death of a loved one, or interpersonal relationship problems, often play a role (Baqi & Naas, 2024). Suicide, if attempted or completed, significantly affects young adult persons and adolescents. The WHO (2019) reported that more than 700,000 people worldwide die from madness/year. Additionally, there are around 20 suicide trials for every suicide (Vermont Department of Health, 2023).

Suicidal ideation is a disorder in which somebody has suicidal thoughts, which can increase depending on circumstances. A person experiencing thoughts may give serious consideration to suicide and develop a well-thought-out plan. Worldwide, the age-consistent suicide rate is 2.3 times higher for men than for women. The proportion is somewhat higher than 3 in high-income countries (2.9) and lower in low-income countries (1.8) and middle-income nations (2.6) (Pirkis et al., 2024). A variety of contributing factors can lead to suicidal thoughts, including association difficulties, disturbance, substance abuse, stress at work or in education, physical health problems, or financial constraints. Mental health conditions such as anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or depression also contribute to suicidal thoughts. Also, females attempt suicide more often than men, but men are three to four times more likely to succeed (Ferreira et al., 2023). The most common symptoms of suicidal behavior include talking about suicide, making commands such as globally; the age-standardized suicide rate is 2.3 times higher in men than in women. The ratio is slightly more than 3 in high-

income countries (2.9) and lower in low-income (1.8) and middle-income (2.6) countries (Pirkis et al., 2024).

Clinical elements are crucial, and indeed, interventions that are clinically relevant or necessary are entirely fitting for individuals who find themselves in a crisis. These should be fundamental components of national strategies aimed at preventing suicide. However, our Series emphasizes the importance of selective and universal strategies that address the widespread issue of suicide more proactively, working to stop individuals from arriving at a crisis stage. Numerous social factors are often best tackled by entities beyond the healthcare sector, which is why we are advocating for a comprehensive governmental commitment to suicide prevention. We propose specific actions in the realms of policy, practice, research, and advocacy. Individuals who have personal experience with suicide should play a meaningful role in all of these initiatives (Ferreira et al., 2023).

The most important symptoms of suicidal behavior include talking about suicide, and setting up wings as "I am going to kill myself," "I hope I am dead," or "I wish I had not been born." Other signs include obtaining means of suicide (e.g., buying a weapon or lethal drugs), withdrawing from social contact, feeling hopeless, increasing the use of alcohol or drugs, feeling very anxious, changing everyday routines as eating or sleeping patterns, or saying goodbye to people in a way that may they will not be seen again (Harmer et al., 2023).

The factors leading to suicide differ by location and can depend on ethnic group, country, latitude, season, and societal structure. Recent research reported that a depressive state, which is often treatable, is common among many persons experiencing suicidal behaviors (Pirkis et al., 2024; Sinyor et al., 2024).

The Lancet Public Health Series emphasizes the need for policymakers to expand their focus beyond clinical or indicated interventions and to place greater importance on both selective and universal approaches. These strategies can effectively tackle critical social determinants of suicide, including financial difficulties, as highlighted in the third paper of this Series (Kasemy et al., 2022), as well as issues related to alcohol use, gambling, domestic violence and abuse, and bereavement due to suicide, discussed in the fifth paper. Additionally, our findings demonstrate that selective and universal interventions can help reduce physical access

to suicide means, as explored in the second paper. They can also lower the cognitive availability of suicide, meaning the awareness of suicide as a potential option and familiarity with methods, covered in the fourth paper (Kourgiantakis et al., 2019).

Suicide methods vary worldwide depending on socio-cultural causes and national laws, which affect both suicide rates and methods. Self-poisoning, firearms, and hanging are the most common methods. In the USA, firearms are the most popular method of suicide among minors, while in the United Kingdom, self-poisoning accounts for nearly 25% of all suicides. In developing countries, self-poisoning suicide deaths are at the top (Hawton et al., 2024; Kasemy et al., 2022; Kourgiantakis et al., 2019).

Prevention of suicide requires coordinated collaboration among various sectors of society, including healthcare, education, employment, agriculture, commerce, justice, law enforcement, politics, and the media. These efforts must be holistic, as no single sector can fully address this complex issue. On a psychological level, hopelessness—a state characterized by despair and a decrease in motivation for future aspirations—often emerges from prolonged negative experiences and stress. This condition, frequently associated with mental health disorders such as depression, significantly increases the risk of suicide, particularly among youth facing academic, social, and economic pressures (Sinyor et al., 2024).

Advancements in real-time monitoring technologies are revolutionizing the prevention of suicide. Recent research has shown that suicidal thoughts are episodic, with rapid onset and short duration. While traditional factors, such as hopelessness, are effective predictors (Hawton et al., 2024; Pirkis et al., 2024).

Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among younger adults aged 15-29, with a global goal of reducing suicide rates by one third by 2030. Recently, Iraq has witnessed an alarming increase in suicide rates, especially among its youth. This trend highlights the urgent need to understand the social attitudes and factors leading to suicidal thoughts within Iraqi society. This study explicitly addresses these factors among university students at Baghdad University, aiming to provide critical insights into the social and psychological precursors to suicidal behaviors (Ferreira et al., 2023; Otten et al., 2022).

Aim of the Study:

The objectives of the study are to examine the social perspectives and factors related to suicidal behaviors among university students in Baghdad, Iraq. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To examine the demographic characteristics of university students in Baghdad, Iraq.
- To evaluate the social ideation of university students regarding the phenomenon of suicide.
- To investigate the precipitating aspects associated with suicide among university students in Baghdad, Iraq.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

A Cross-Sectional Study, a descriptive design was used to achieve the aim of the current study.

The research was conducted at Al Esraa University in Baghdad, Iraq.

In this study, a non-probability, convenience sample of 150 university students affiliated with the previously mentioned study setting was included.

Researchers review books, articles, periodicals, and relevant literature from local and international sources regarding the phenomenon of suicide.

Pilot study: performed on ten percent of the studied sample (15 students at Al Esraa University) to determine the applicability of the tools. Concerning the consequences of the pilot, modifications to the study tools were complete.

The study was conducted from October 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher introduced himself to the students at Al Esraa University. All items within the questionnaire have been explained to participants to ensure they obtain accurate answers, in case they face any difficulties. Each student was talked to alone to show their characteristics. The average time is around 30 -40 minutes.

Instruments

To achieve the study's objectives, a questionnaire was developed with the aim of.

The Interviewing Questionnaire includes two parts:

Part 1: The Socio-demographic characteristics as age, level of education, Monthly family income, siblings' number, etc.

Part 2: Risk factors and causes of suicide among university students, such as smoking, drug abuse, sleeping hours, depression, hard life, etc.

The Perspectives of University Students Regarding Suicide: Such as their Opinion related to suicide: Courageous act, Escape from reality, mental trouble, or \ Crime and the Responsibility for suicide is related to Family, friends, etc.

The content of the study tools was assessed by a committee of three experts in the field of mental health nursing from the College of Nursing at the University of Baghdad. Modifications were made according to the committee's judgment.

The Internal consistency reliability of all items of the structured interview questionnaire. The tool was measured using Cronbach's Alpha test. (0.84).

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0) was used for data analysis.. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the study variables, including frequencies and percentages, means, chi-square values, and standard deviations.

Findings and Results

The Results of this study revealed the demographic characteristics of the University's Students. It demonstrates that (47.33%) of them were in the age group (22-< 26) 28%, 19.33% male and female respectively with P-value (0.089.) related to their educational level the table shows that nearly half (49.33%) of them in the 2nd year with P-Value (0.849). Additionally, regarding their monthly income, 58% of them reported an insufficient family income (Table 1). Also presented the number of the University's Students. It demonstrates that (48.4%) of male students had average Study Performance, while nearly half of female students had good academic performance (43.9%) with a P-value of 0.001*. Regarding their having had Suicidal

Ideation, the table shows that the majority of male students (80.2%) had Suicidal Ideation. In comparison, nearly three-quarters (70.2%) of female students had Suicidal Ideation with a P-value of 0.001*(Table 2).

The researcher found that more than three-quarters (79%) of university Students sleep less than 8 hours per day, while only 21% of them sleep 8-10/hours (Figure 1).

According to regular exercise, nearly two-thirds of them (63.3%) had no regular exercise, while more than three-quarters were smokers (76.7%). More than half of them use alcohol (56.7%), while more than one-third (39.3%) of them had drug abuse. Regarding satisfactory relations with others, it was found that more than half of them (59.3%) had satisfactory relations with their families. In contrast, nearly three quarters (74.7%) of them had satisfactory relation with their friends (Figure 2), While regarding the causes of suicide among the university students it was found that more than three quarters (76.7%) of them related the cause of depression followed by Non supportive family, absence of faith, hard life, educational stressors, and/or attract attention with (76.7%), (56.7%), (52%), (49.3%), (43.3%), (32.7%) respectively (Figure 3).

The researcher showed that more than three-quarters (76.7%) of the Studied University Students had Suicidal Ideation, while more than three-quarters of them had no Suicide plans, preparation, or attempt; only 27.3% of them had done so (Figure 4). Also, it was revealed that nearly three-quarters (73%) of university students related the cause of suicide to a hard life (Figure 5).

The results of our study showed that more than two-thirds of university students (65.3%) relate the responsibility of suicide to society. In contrast, the responsibility of suicide is related to family, country, and / or self-representation (43.3%, 37.3%, and 34.0%) respectively (Figure 6). Regarding the support system, it was revealed that more than half of university students (56%) listed their friends as their primary support system, while family represented nearly a third (27.3%) (Figure 7).

Table 1

The Socio-Demographic Data of the University's Students in Percentage Distribution about their gender (n=150).

The Socio-Demographic Characteristics		Gender				X2 - P Value
		Male		Female		
		F	%	f	%	
Gender	Male	93	0.62			
	Female	57	0.38			
Age (years)	18-22	32	21.33	13	8.66	2.921
	22-< 26	42	28	29	19.33	.089
	26-≤30	19	12.66	14	9.33	
	Mean ± SD	20.8 ± 1.7		20.7 ± 1.9		
University Academic Year	1 st year	10	6.67	6	4	.089
	2 nd year	50	33.33	24	16	.849
	3 rd year	5	3.33	2	1.3	
	4 th year	28	18.67	25	16.67	
Family Income\ month	Not Enough	50	33.33	37	24.67	.912
	Enough	43	28.67	20	13.33	.587
No. of siblings	< 3	33	22	22	14.67	.097
	≥3	60	40	35	23.33	.783

F= frequency, %= percentage

Table 2

The Distribution of the University's Students according to the Study Performance and Suicidal Ideation by gender (n=150).

The Socio-Demographic Characteristics		Gender				X2 P-Value
		Male		Female		
		F	%	f	%	
Study Performance	good	18	19.35	25	43.9	14.906
	Average	45	48.4	17	29.8	.001*
	Bad	30	32.3	15	26.3	
Do you have Suicidal Ideation	Yes	75	80.2	40	70.2	15.260
	No	18	19.8	17	29.8	.001*

F= frequency, %= percentage

Figure 1

Percentage distribution of the studied university Students according to their sleep hours / per day (No. = 150).

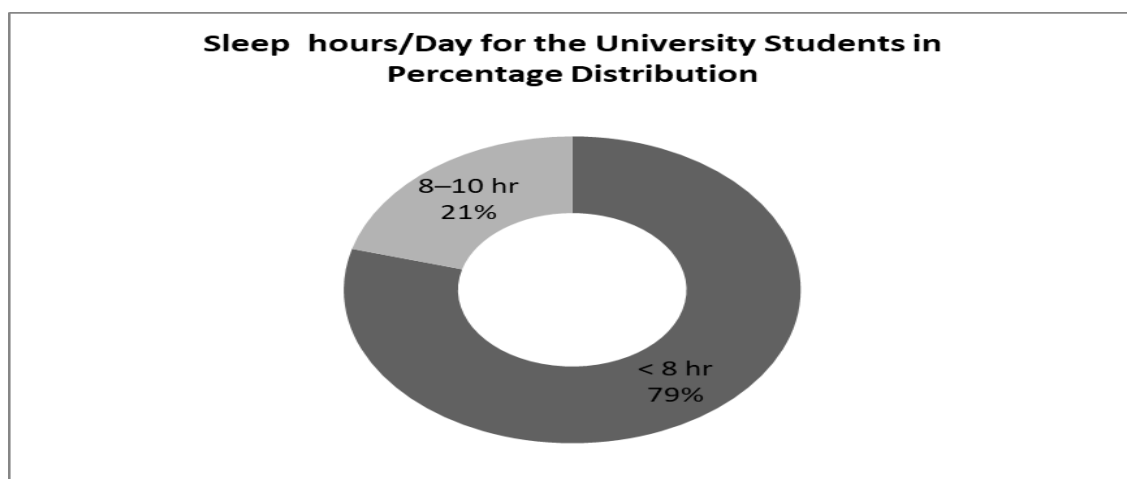
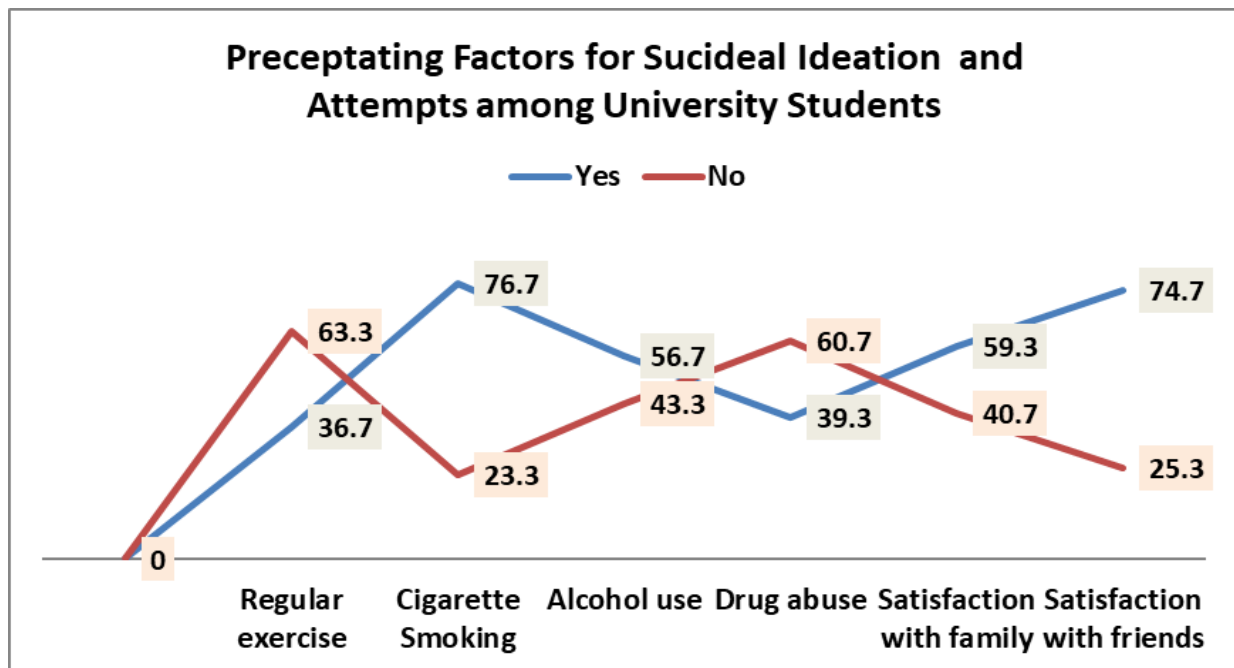


Figure 2

Percentage distribution of the precipitating factors for Suicidal Ideation and Attempts among University Students (N = 150)

**Figure 3**

The Causes of Suicide according to the perspectives of University Students in Percentage distribution (No = 150)

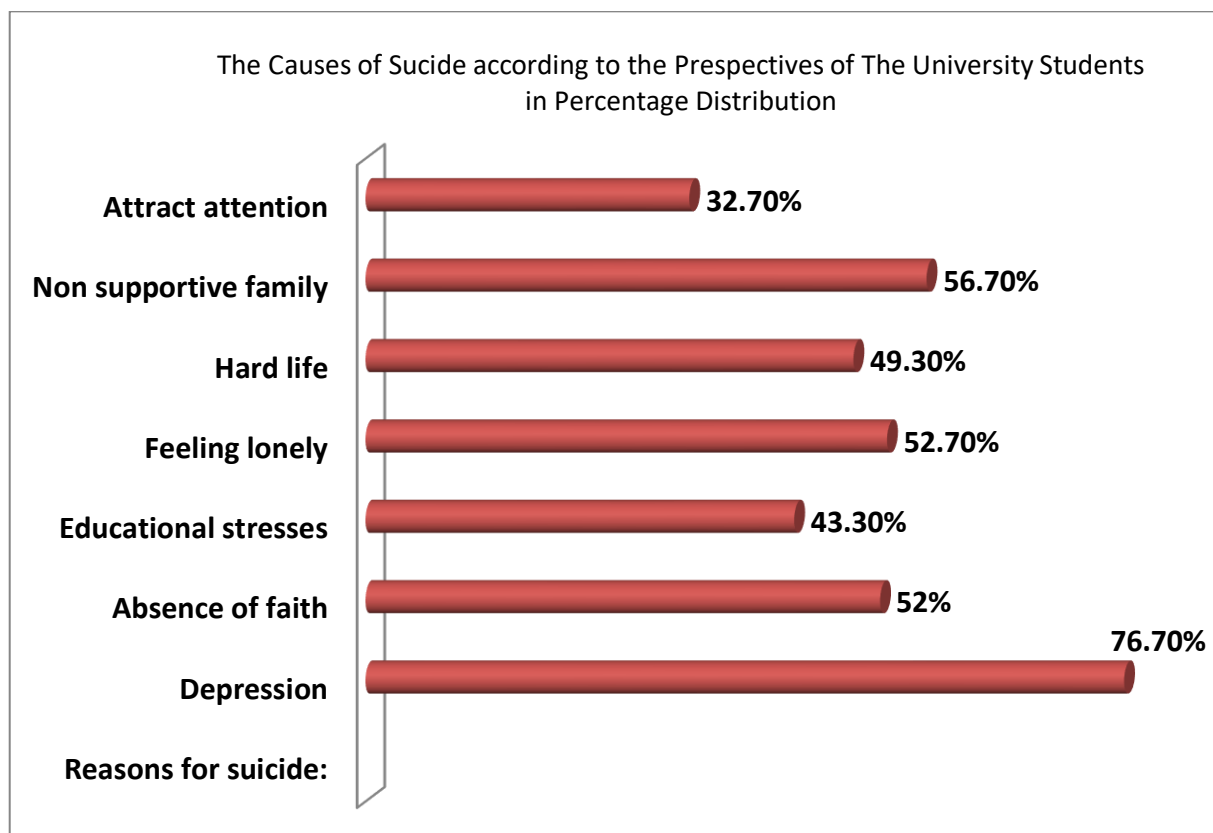
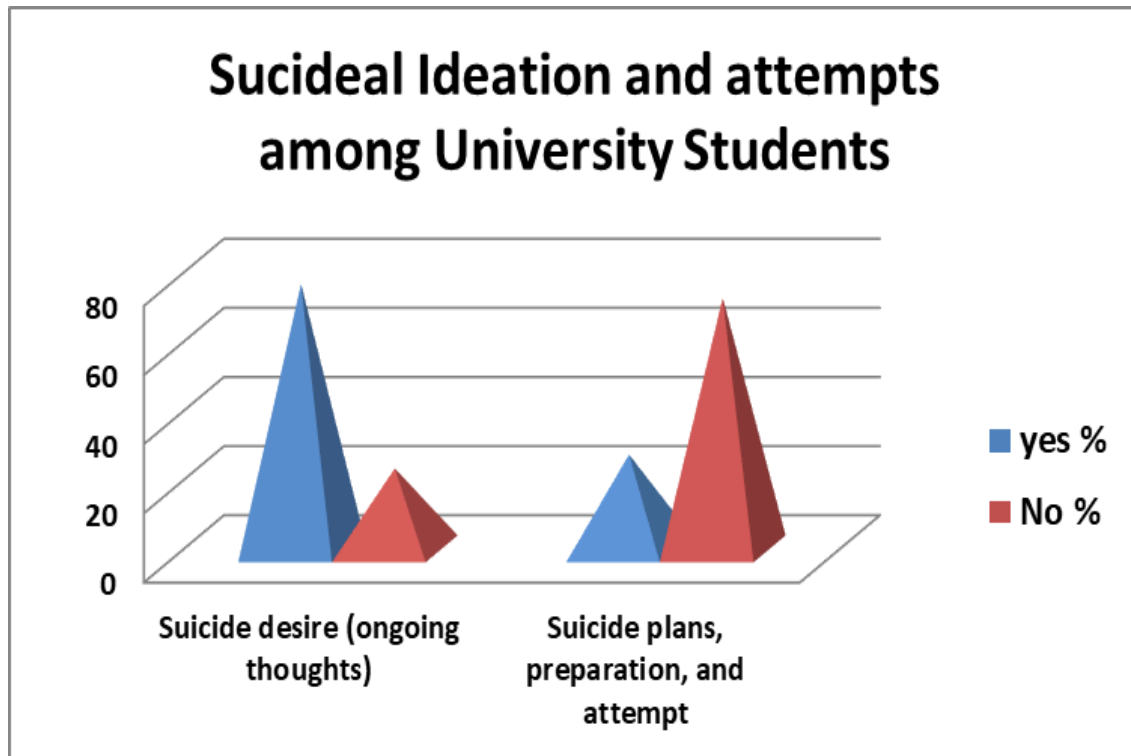


Figure 4

Percentage Distribution of the Studied University Students according to the Suicidal Ideation and Attempts (No = 150)

**Figure 5**

Percentage distribution of the opinion about Suicide according to the perspectives of University Students (N = 150).

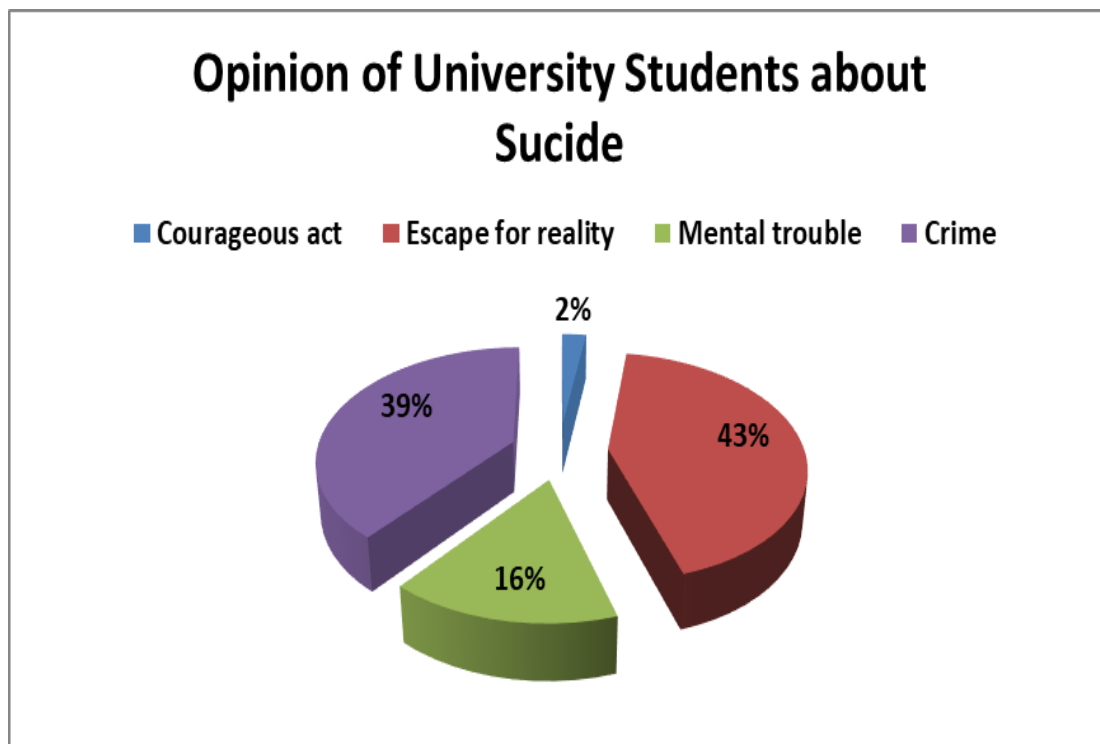


Figure 6

Percentage distribution of the responsibility of suicide according to the University Students' perspectives (No = 150).

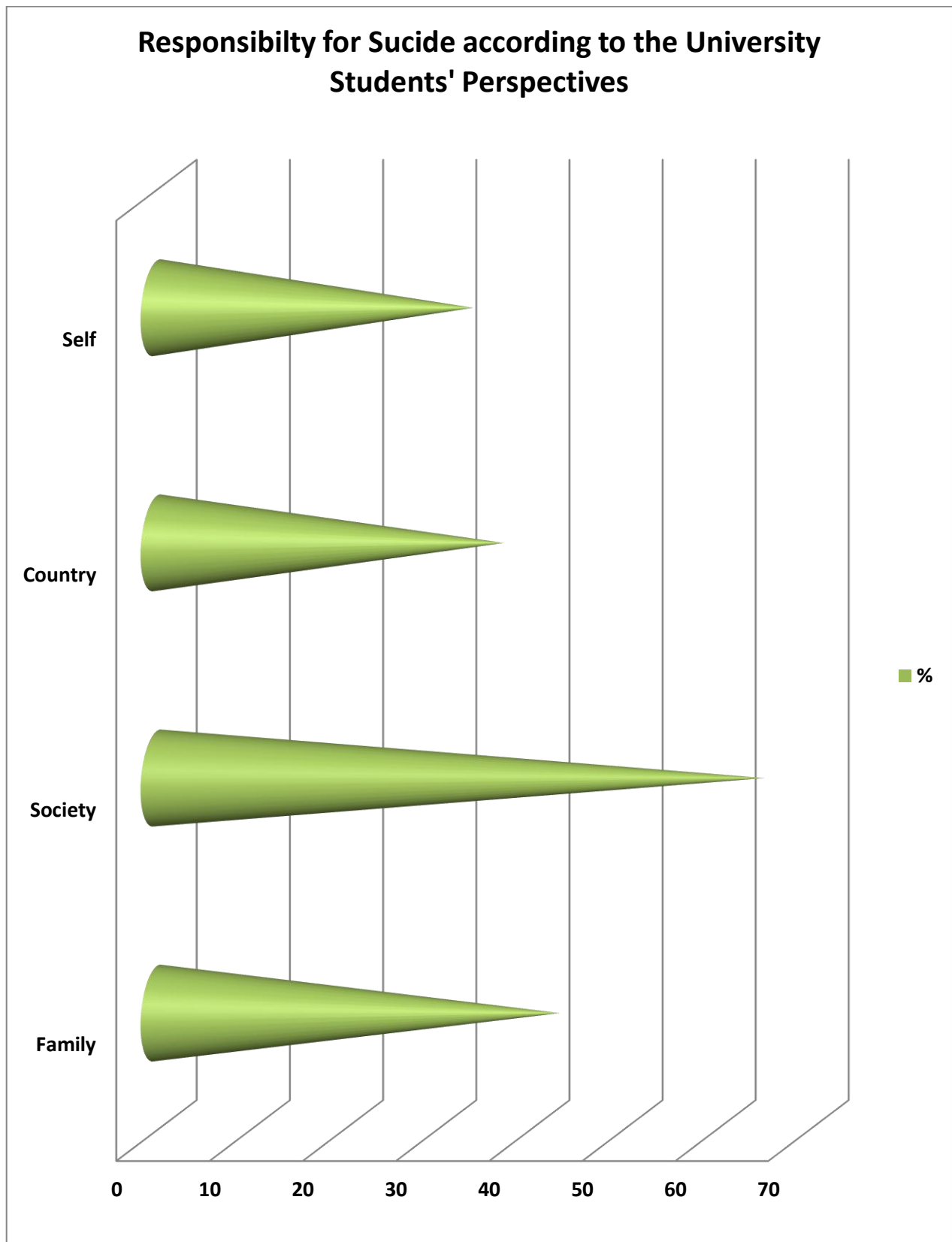
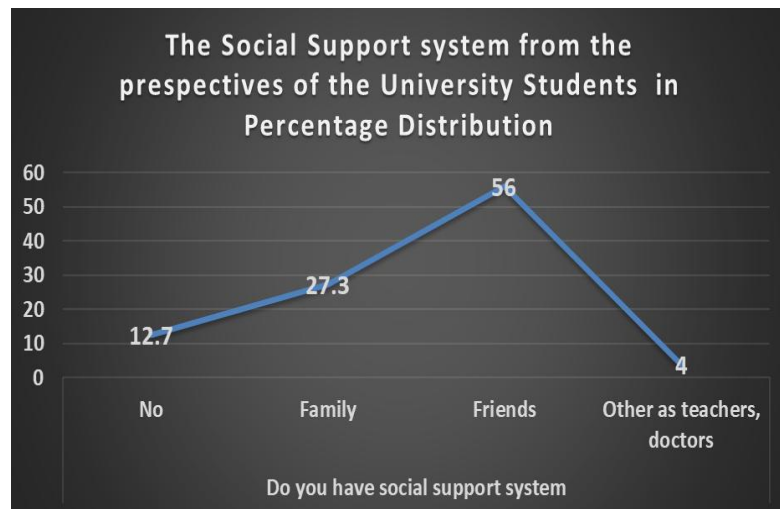


Figure 7

Percentage distribution of the Social Support System according to the University Students' perspectives (No = 150)



Discussion and Conclusion

Routines that can be harmful to health regarding the demographic characteristics of university students. It demonstrates that nearly two-thirds of the study group were male (62%), with nearly half of them in the age group (22–< 26) (47.3%). More than half of them had insufficient family income per month (58%). This finding is consistent with a study by [Abozaid et al. \(2022\)](#), which discovered that 62.3% of the students were male, compared to 38.0% who were female. Two studies found that higher rates of suicidality in males than in females were associated with greater suicidal behavior. At the same time, this disagrees with a study ([Hawton et al., 2024](#)), which reported that the majority (80.5%) of participants in our study were female.

Regarding their suicidal ideation, this study clarified that the majority of male students (80.2%) had suicidal ideation, while nearly three-quarters (70.2%) of female students had suicidal ideation. This result is consistent with a study ([Pirkis et al., 2024](#)), which stated that suicidal thoughts throughout life were more frequent among individuals who had contact with someone with suicidal behavior, which may be related to the phenomenon of contagion. In terms of academic achievements, nearly half of the students had average academic performance. This agrees with studies ([Hawton et al., 2024](#); [Kourgiantakis et al., 2019](#)), which reported that qualified education and support for students and

health professionals are important for improving suicide prevention and are associated with more favorable attitudes related to suicidal behavior.

The results demonstrated that regarding the causes of suicide among university students, it was found that more than three-quarters (76.7%) related the cause to depression, followed by non-supportive family (56.7%), absence of faith (52%), hard life (49.3%), educational stressors (43.3%), and attracting attention (32.7%), respectively. These results agree with a study ([Otten et al., 2022](#)), which reported that factors such as feeling depressed, educational pressures, and feeling lonely were found to be major contributors to suicidal behaviors. Also, a study ([Vermont Department of Health, 2023](#)) stated that psychological distress predicted suicidal ideation among university students. The presence of psychological distress increased the likelihood of suicidal ideations, consistent with general findings of a strong link between suicide and psychological distress ([Norheim et al., 2016](#)).

The present study confirmed that more than half of university students (56%) identified their friends as their primary support system, while family represented nearly one-third (32.7%). This is explained by the fact that as young people spend more time with their peers throughout this stage of life, friends become a more vital source of social support ([Abozaid et al., 2022](#)). These findings agree with various studies. In Germany, middle or high social support was associated with a lower probability of reporting suicidal ideation (OR = 0.42,

95% CI = 0.34–0.52) (Sinyor et al., 2024). Furthermore, in Ethiopia, students with poor social support were found to be significantly associated with social isolation (World Health Organization, 2021).

The majority of university students experienced suicidal ideation, with causes related to a difficult life, family issues, and societal pressures.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to Al Esraa University and the dedicated students who participated in this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional. Official permission was obtained from the dean of the previously mentioned setting before commencing the study. All participants were given their verbal consent after being informed about the nature and aim of the study.

Transparency of Data

Following the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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