The Relationships Between Loneliness, Parenting Styles, And Suicidal Behavior Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

This aim of this study was to examine the relationship between loneliness, parenting styles (i.e. authoritative, authoritarian, permissive), and suicidal behavior among university students. This study involved 150 respondents who were university students in Shah Alam. The instruments that have been used in this study were UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1978), Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991), and The Scale for Suicidal Ideation (Beck, Kovacs & Weissman, 1979). The results found a significant relationship between loneliness and suicidal behavior. When loneliness level increases, the suicidal behavior among university students also increases. There was also a significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style, and suicidal behavior. This can be explained as authoritarian parenting style were positively correlated with suicidal behavior. A significant relationship between permissive parenting style and suicidal behavior was found in this study. High level of suicidal behavior can be explained as the result of permissive parenting style. However, no significant correlation was found between authoritative parenting style and suicidal behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is a distressing experience that occurs when a person's social relationships are perceived by that person to be less in quantity, and especially in quality, than desired (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Parenting styles is a constellation of attitudes or a pattern of parental authority towards the child which are conveyed to the child, creating the emotional context for the expression of parent behavior (Aziz & Ali, 2020; Michalos, 2014). There are three types of parenting style that has been discussed in this research such as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting style. Authoritative parenting is characterized by reasonable demands and high responsiveness. Authoritarian parenting is a parenting style characterized by high demands and low responsiveness. Permissive parenting is a type of parenting style characterized by low demands with high responsiveness. Suicidal behavior is any action that could cause a person to die, such as taking a drug overdose or crashing a car on purpose (MedlinePlus, 2018).

Over the last few years, the number of suicidal cases has been increasing. According to the World Health Organization, suicide is the second leading cause of death among the adolescents. Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah (2019), who is the Health Director of Malaysia, stated the effects of suicidal cases which is about 20 family members and friends are affected emotionally, socially, and economically. In Malaysia, at least five people kill themselves daily and about 1,760 preventable deaths a year (Wong, 2019). The Ministry of Health survey in 2017 showed that prevalence of suicidal thoughts 10%, which is an increase from 7.9% in 2012 (Hassan, 2019). This research will be helpful to the parents and teachers in terms of raising a kid, which is important to build a strong positive character in future. Hence, when a person has a strong positive character, the person will find solutions for the problems instead of attempting suicide even though the person is lonely (Abd Rahman & Keat, 2017; Buhan, Rehman & Keat, 2017). In addition, this research is also important for the government to stop negative parenting styles such as isolating, abusing, and many more.

According to the World Health Organization, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people (15 to 29 years) worldwide. Since there was a case about a female university student committed suicide in the year of 2019, hence the research has been conducted at university located in Shah Alam. The present study aims to determine the relationship between loneliness, parenting styles (i.e. authoritarian, authoritative, permissive), and suicidal behaviors among university students.

Methodology

Research on suicidal behavior is a quantitative research where quantitative research collects information from existing and potential customers using sampling methods and sending out online surveys, online polls, questionnaires, the results of which can be depicted in the form of numerical. Cross-sectional design and correlational study have been used in this research. This research has been conducted among 150 university students. This is a non-probability sampling method where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected (Chan & Keat, 2020; Keat, Rajaratnam & Yuniardi, 2020). The instrument that has been used to measure loneliness variable is UCLA Loneliness Scale, developed by Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson in 1978. This scale consists of 20 items. Other than that, Parental Authority Questionnaire developed by Buri in 1991 used to measure permissive, authoritarian, and

authoritative parenting styles. This scale consists of 30 items. Scale for Suicidal Ideation developed by Beck, Kovacs, and Weissman in 1979 used assess suicidal intention among university students. This instrument consists of 19 items. In the process of data analysis, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) has been used as a software to analyze the data. Pearson Correlation used to measure the relationship between loneliness, parenting styles, and suicidal behavior among university students.

Findings And Discussion

Table 1 shows the level of loneliness, parenting styles (i.e. authoritative, authoritarian, permissive), and suicidal behaviour among university students. Based on the table, (30.7%, 46) of respondents reported low level of loneliness and 36.0% (54) of them possessed a high level of loneliness. (28.7%, 43) of respondents reported low level of authoritative parenting style and 19.3% (29) of them possessed a high level of authoritative parenting style. (30.0%, 45) of respondents reported low level of authoritarian parenting style and 22.7% (34) of them possessed a high level of authoritarian parenting style. (26.7%, 40) of respondents reported low level of permissive parenting style and 21.3% (32) of them possessed a high level of permissive parenting style. (22.0%, 33) of respondents reported low level of suicidal behavior and 38.7% (58) of them possessed a high level of suicidal behavior.

Table 1. Level of Independent Variable (n=150)

Variable	n
Loneliness	
Low	46
Medium	50
High	54
Missing	0
Mean	35.41
Sd.	15.969
Authoritative	
Low	43
Medium	78
High	29
Missing	0
Mean	31.93
Sd.	8.404
Authoritarian	
Low	45
Medium	71
High	34
Missing	0
Mean	28.74
Sd.	8.304
Permissive	
Low	40
Medium	78
High	32
Missing	0
Mean	29.95
Sd.	7.315
Suicidal Behaviour	
Low	33
Medium	59
High	58
Missing	0
Mean	25.19
Sd.	5.000

Note: Sd. = Standard deviation, Min. = Minimum, Max. = Maximum

This research is to examine the relationships between loneliness, parenting styles (i.e. authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and suicidal behavior among university students. The finding revealed that loneliness and suicidal behavior were significant positively correlated (r = .342, p < .05) (see Table 2). It supported that adolescents with strong loneliness were more likely to engage with suicidal behavior. This research found that authoritarian parenting style and suicidal behavior were significant positively correlated (r =.374, p < .05) and supported that adolescents with strong authoritarian parenting style were more likely to engage with suicidal behavior. Other than that, it revealed that permissive parenting style and suicidal behavior were significant positively correlated (r = .165, p < .05). Hence, this finding supported that adolescents with strong permissive parenting style were likely to engage with suicidal behavior. However, the finding concluded that authoritative parenting style and suicidal behavior were not significantly correlated (r = -.121, p > .05). Overall, the results showed that three hypotheses have been accepted, while the second hypothesis has been rejected since it is not significantly correlated.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between loneliness, parenting styles (i.e. authoritative, authoritarian, permissive), and suicidal behavior

Variable	Suicidal Behavior	
	r	**p**
Loneliness	.342***	.000
Authoritative	-.121	.141
Authoritarian	.374***	.000
Permissive	.165*	.043

Note: *** p < .00; * p < 0.05

Conclusion And Recommendation

First of all, the results concluded that the higher the loneliness level, the higher the suicidal behavior among university students (Buhan et al., 2017; Kaswadi, Malik & Keat, 2018). Secondly, when the parents use mostly authoritarian and permissive parenting style in raising their children, the suicidal behavior among these children will increase because the children might be not strong enough to face real life problems when they join college and started to be independent. Thirdly, there is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting styles and suicidal behavior. This is because Asian parents are more towards authoritarian parenting style which is being strict to their kids. They believe that their children will make wrong decisions without proper guidance and control from the parents (Aziz & Ali, 2020). This research is important to help the parents and teachers aware that parenting styles is one of the important factors that contribute to suicidal behaviors among the college students (. It is also important for the students, teachers, parents, and government to help the loneliness students to seek help from the counsellors once they notice the differences in the students' behavior, so that they could save the students before it is too late (Loganathan & Foo, 2019; Yusoff, Khan, Latif & Aziz, 2019).

The major weakness in this study is that one of the independent variables which is authoritative parenting style has no significant relationship with the suicidal behavior. Hence, there is no significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and suicidal behavior among university students in Shah Alam. This is because the sample for current study are mostly from the students who follow Asian culture. A further limitation of this study is that the sample size of this research is quite small which consists of 150 respondents only. Last limitation would be the timing when the study was conducted. Cooperation from respondents was almost impossible due to the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia. These recommendation helps in conducting this research equally among Asian students and non-Asian students, so that they could see the differences in characters among college students who have been raised using different parenting styles. Future researchers are recommended to recruit larger amount of sample to produce a more accurate result. The more the respondents, the more accurate the results will be.

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