

## The Role of Help-Seeking Behaviors in Relationship between Loneliness and Self-Concealment with Suicidal thoughts

1.Zeynab Ghaffari\*, 2. Pariya Ghaseminezhad Dehkordi, and 3.Maryam Chorami<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>:Corresponding author: MA in Clinical Psychology, Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran.  
z\_ghaffari2@yahoo.com.

<sup>2</sup>. Master of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord Branch, Shahrekord, Iran.  
pariya\_gh1995@yahoo.com

<sup>3</sup>. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord Branch, Shahrekord, Iran.

### Abstract

It is very important to identify the factors that can cause suicide in people. The purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating role of help-seeking behaviors in relationship between loneliness feeling and self-concealment with suicidal thoughts in university students. The research method was descriptive and research population included all Shahrekord Azad University students in academic year 2019-2020 that among them, selected 100 participants by using of available sampling method. Data collection tools were Beck's standard Scale of Suicide Ideation, Fischer & Farina Help-Seeking Scale, Asher and collage Loneliness Scale and Larson & Chastain Self-Concealment Scale. Data were analyzed by using path analysis. The findings indicated that research model had a goodness of fit. According to the findings, both loneliness feeling and self-concealment had significant relationship with suicidal thoughts by mediating the role of help-seeking behaviors.

**Keywords:** Loneliness, self-concealment, suicidal thoughts, help-seeking behaviors

### Introduction

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds worldwide, and suicidal thoughts are common among academic students (Loftis, et al., 2019). Not only suicide, but also suicide attempts and suicidal ideation are among the social concerns. Studies have shown that there is a significant association between feelings of loneliness and adverse psychological conditions such as depression and suicide (Chang, et al., 2017). Suicide prevention is also possible in cases where a person has a sincere relationship with others. Self-concealment, which involves hiding one's tendencies and personal information from others while predicting loneliness, can lead to suicidal ideation (D'Agata, et al., 2020). People who feel more lonely and tend to hide their disturbing thoughts are less likely to seek help (Demir, et al., 2020); This can increase a person's motivation to commit suicide (Han, et al., 2018).

Based on what has been suggested, loneliness, self-concealment, and helpful behaviors appear to be associated with suicidal ideation; therefore, the main hypothesis of the present study is that help-seeking behavior mediates the relationship between self-concealment and loneliness with suicidal ideation.

## Method

The present study was descriptive based on path analysis. The study population was all students of Shahrekord Azad University. The research sample consisted of 200 students who were selected by available sampling method. The research instruments were:

**Beck's suicide ideation scale:** This is a self-report scale consisting of 19 items, each item being scored between zero and 2. Kliem, et al. (2017) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire for the general population is 0.97 and the at-risk group is 0.94.

**Help-Seeking Scale:** this scale was developed by Fischer & Farina (1995) and has 10 items that are scored as (I agree to I disagree). In their study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.72. Exploratory factor analysis also confirmed the existence of a factor.

**Loneliness Scale:** Loneliness Scale was developed by Asher, et al. (1984) and has 24 items and is scored on a 5-point scale. Heredia, et al. (2017) obtained the scale validity using the Cronbach's alpha method of 0.83.

**Self-concealment scale:** This scale was developed by Larson & Chastain (1990) and has 10 items that are scored on a 5-point. Mendoza, et al (2018) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire in the Asian-American student community, black Americans ranged from 0.88 to 0.91. Divergent validity of this questionnaire was obtained with social wellbeing questionnaire ( $r = -0.46, p < 0.005$ ).

## Result

To collect data, first a questionnaire was distributed among 657 students and students who scored 5 or higher in the first five items of the Suicide Thought Questionnaire entered the research process. In evaluating the path analysis using Amos software, the final model fit indices (CMIN / DF = 1.09, NFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.98, RMSE = 0.023) which indicated the good fit of the research model. Figure 1 shows the final path analysis model and Table 1 shows the direct and indirect path coefficients and the total effects.

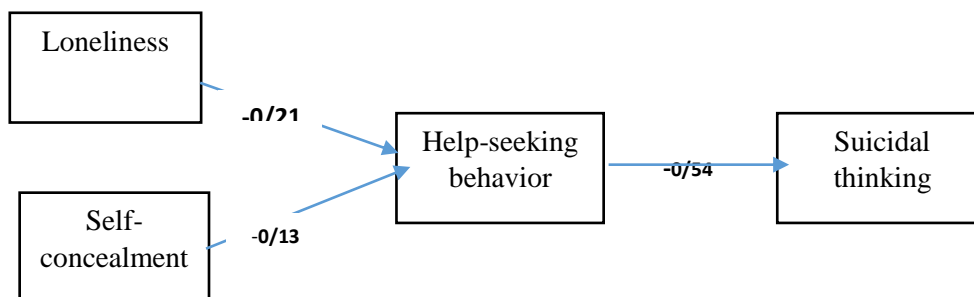


Figure 1: Regression weights of the paths of the variables in the final model

Table 1: Path coefficients of direct, indirect and total effects in the model

path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Help-seeking behavior from			
Loneliness	** -0.19		-0.21
Self-concealment	-0.14		-0.12
Suicidal thinking from			
Help-seeking behavior	** -0.46		-0.54
Loneliness		** 0.24	0.16
Self-concealment		** 0.21	0.14

## Conclusion

Lonely and self-concealment has various consequences such as anxiety, stress, depression and reduced psychological well-being (Chang, et al., 2017) that these psychological problems cause helplessness (Butel, et al., 2017), because people are always trying to suppress their thoughts. Such efforts can increase the frequency of these unwanted thoughts and lead to a cycle of harmful rumination.

There were some limitations in this study, including the fact that this study was performed on a sample with a limited number of non-clinical students, and to generalize it, more research should be done on other groups with larger samples. The results of this study can provide new insights into the factors associated with suicide in adults. In related models or explanations of suicide, the role of help-seeking behaviors and asking for help should be considered as a key factor in suicide prevention and focus on the factors that limit or facilitate this help-seeking.

## References

Beutel, M.E., Klein, E.M., Brahler, E., Reiner, I., Junger, C., et al. (2017). Loneliness in the general population: prevalence, determinants and relations to mental health. *BMC Psychiatry*, 17(97): 1-7.

- Chang, E.C., Chang, O.D., Martos, T., Sallay, V., Lee, J., et al. (2017). Family support as a moderator of the relationship between loneliness and suicide risk in college students: having a supportive family matters. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. 25(3): 1-7.
- D'Agata, M.T., Granek, J.A., Holden, R.R., Nazarov, A. (2020). The relation between self-concealment and self-reported mental health symptoms in a sample of Canadian Armed Forces personnel. *Military Behavioral Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21635781.2020.1838365>
- Demir, R., Murat, M., & Bindak, R. (2020). Self-concealment and emotional intelligence as predictors of seeking psychological help among undergraduate students. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*. 6(3): 448-455.
- Han, J., Batterham, P. J., Calear, A. L., & Randall, R. (2018). Factors influencing professional help-seeking for suicidality: A systematic review. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*. 39(3): 175–196.
- Heredia, D., Gonzalez, M.L.S., Rosner, C.M., He, R.X., Castillo, L.G. (2017). The influence of loneliness and interpersonal relations on Latino middle school students' wellbeing. *Journal of Latinos Education*. 16(4): 338-348.
- Kliem, S., Lohmann A., Möble, T., Brähler, E. (2017). German Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS): psychometric properties from a representative population survey. *BMC Psychiatry*. 17:1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-017-1559-9>
- Loftis, M.A., Michael, T., Luke, C. (2019). Relationship between alexithymia, impulsivity, and internal locus of control. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*. 8(3): 246-269.
- Mendoza, H., Tully, E.C., Goodnight, B., Gray, J., Masuda, A. (2018). The indirect effect of self-concealment on distress through psychological inflexibility in Asian American, Black American, and White American college students. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 126: 93-98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.01.024>
- Nosratabadi, M., Halvaiepour, Z. (2016). Explaining suicide ideation based on drug abuse and depression in soldiers of Aja University of Medical Science. *Journal of Military Medicine*. 17(4):249-255. (Text in Persian).

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all the loved ones who helped us in this research.

## Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not for profit sectors.