

Spiritual Well-being, Coping and Resilience in Predicting Suicide Thoughts among East Malaysian University Students

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ABSTRACT

University students in Malaysia face significant mental health challenges, including the risk of suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation refers to the contemplation, desire, and preoccupation with death and suicide (Harmer et al., 2023). For over 50 years, researchers have explored thousands of risk factors for these thoughts. Current theories suggest that suicidal ideation results from a complex interaction among psychological, biological, environmental, and cultural influences (Harmer et al., 2023). In Malaysia, data from the National Suicide Registry show that factors like age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status affect suicide risk, with males and certain ethnic groups being more vulnerable (Ali et al., 2014; Ahmad et al., 2014). University students are particularly affected due to academic pressures, developmental challenges, and rapid socio-cultural changes (Ibrahim et al., 2014). Recent research is now focusing on protective factors that could reduce these risks. Spiritual well-being—a sense of purpose, inner peace, and connectedness—has emerged as one such protective factor. Along with effective coping skills and resilience, spiritual well-being may help students manage stress and buffer against suicidal ideation. However, much of the existing research in Malaysia has concentrated on socio-demographic and clinical variables rather than on how these protective factors work, especially in culturally unique settings like East Malaysia. Although extensive research has identified many risk factors for suicidal ideation, studies in Malaysia have mostly focused on demographics and clinical data.

JEL Codes: I12, I31, Z12

Keywords: *Suicidal Ideation; Spiritual Well-Being; Coping Skills; Resilience.*