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Exploratory Path Models Regarding the Associations Between Suicide Ideation, Depression, Interpersonal Difficulties, and Self-esteem Among Young Adults

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Introduction: Interpersonal and self-esteem difficulties are among top concerns of college students who utilize on-campus mental health services, and depression was cited among the main mental health reasons for functional impairment. While numerous research studies identify suicide ideation as occurring concomitantly with elevated depression, suicide ideation and behaviors seem to also occur with mild or moderate levels of depression and in the absence of severe clinical depression (Cukrowicz et al., 2012).

Objectives: To determine (a) if there is an association between interpersonal or family difficulties and suicide ideation, and (b) the potential role of depression and self-esteem for the above association.

Aims: To examine the fit of two concurrent path models, containing direct and mediated paths from interpersonal difficulties to suicide ideation (with depression and self-esteem as possible mediators).

Methods: Cross-sectional, self-report data from 1,916 college students was collected. The subscales of Depression, Suicidal Ideation, Interpersonal Problems, and Family Problems of the *The College Adjustment Scale (CAS)* (Anton & Reed, 1991) were used.

Results: The model including both direct and mediated paths was a better fit. Notably, interpersonal difficulties were associated with suicide ideation even when depression scores were not elevated. Also, the association between self-esteem difficulties and suicide ideation can occur in the presence or absence of feelings of elevated depression.

Conclusions: These findings challenge the traditional view that only elevated depression can contribute to suicide ideation and brings a new light regarding the importance of self-esteem among young adult college students' mental health. Longitudinal studies are further needed.