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**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOPE AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT WITH  
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS IN STUDENTS OF ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY OF  
AHVAZ**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was done aiming to investigate the relationship between hope and perceived social support and suicidal thoughts in students of Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz in 2016. The research method was descriptive – correlational. From among 16000 students at different education levels, a sample of 365 subjects were selected through random and multistage cluster sampling from among 12 fields of study and different educational levels. After distribution and completion of questionnaires: Snyder Hope Scale, Suicidal Ideation Scale and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, the data was analyzed. To analyze the data, Watson tests and Pearson correlation coefficient were used and to measure the normality of data distribution, Kolmogorov - Smirnov test was used. It should be noted that the above-mentioned tests were

performed using SPSS version 16. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between hope and perceived social support and meaning in life and also there is a significant positive correlation between hope in students and suicidal thoughts.

**Keywords: hope, suicidal thoughts, perceived social support**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Relationship with others is the most important source of meaning and purpose in life. Human being depends on social interaction and social environment is very important in the human desire to live. Studies show that hopeful people in comparison with those who have little hopes have a more secure attachment, and receive better food and care and have enough social support to adapt to problems. They have less family conflict and have more predictable parents. Children who are neglected, have no one to teach them promising thoughts. In such circumstances, caregivers' performance is not the source of will and support for children and cause the loss of purposeful thoughts in him (Kermani et al. 2011). In modern psychology, with the advent of positive psychology, issues considered in the psychology are considered from another perspective and factors such as happiness, optimism, creativity, meaning in life, social support, hope and applying methods based on all these factors in intervention, treatment, and prevention are of great importance (Fatehi et al. 2013).

Development of social and psychological injuries in communities that pass the transmission mode, is inevitable, there is no doubt that the Iranian modern society is passing the transition period. The transition which is called as passing tradition to modernity stage, is associated with particular social and cultural problems. Suicide is one of these social problems. Although it is a tragic problem in public health, is potentially preventable (Hessam, et al., 2011). Suicide is one of the mental health problems. According to the official report in 1996 of World Health Organization, at least 500 thousand people worldwide every year end their life with suicide. Studies of suicide examine three main phenomena, including suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and suicide. Suicidal thoughts is a term that implies the occurrence of any self-destructive thought. The thoughts include a range of vague ideas about the end of life to suicide. Annual prevalence of suicidal thoughts in adults is estimated 2.3 to 5.6 percent. It is estimated that 24 percent of those who report suicidal thoughts, finally go

into action. In other words, suicidal thoughts is a risk factor for suicide (Sharafkhani and Hadian, 2008). In determining mental health as one of the most important factors in the occurrence of suicidal ideation, Berkman (2005) considers social support effective in mental health and consequently reducing suicidal thoughts in people. From the perspective of Sarafinio (2002) social support from friends, family and others reduce stress and suicidal thoughts and is effective in their mental health and social support has a moderating role on stress. Theorists of social psychology have defined social support in the sense of comfort, care, respect and contribution that a person feels to receive from other people or groups (Qamari, 2011). Presence of a sense of solidarity and a sense of belonging as a sample of a healthy strong family ties is deemed important in the incidence of suicidal thoughts. Rogers (2004) also emphasizes that adolescents who had more social support, have accounted for lower levels of risk of suicide, on the contrary, adolescents with less social support, have shown self-destructive behaviors. This study is conducted aiming to understand the differences between students who have suicidal thoughts and students who don't have suicidal thoughts, in terms of enjoying social support, hope and meaning in life, in

the hope that understanding these factors paves the way for the development of preventive programs. Yang et al., (2012) explore the personal lives of Korean girl who had committed suicide. The results of this study emphasized the role of "desire for independence and individualism" and "avoiding social stigma" as the cultural factors in girls tendency to suicide. Studies show that a high proportion of teenage girls who have attempted suicide, are more likely to have risky behaviors. In adulthood they are more likely to commit suicide again. Lin, D.; Li, X.; Fan, X. & Fang, X (2011) in a study revealed that suicidal tendency with low academic performance, perceived more pressure from peers to high-risk behaviors and previous history of child abuse in adolescent girls attempted suicide is higher. Randy, F. P. M.; West, J. H. & Hall, P (2011) found that suicidal thoughts were associated with substance abuse, loneliness, despair and anxiety in Chinese teenage girls and of course annoying event in the past month is a risk factor and in fact the longleftarrow for suicide attempt. This paper studies goals such as the relationship between hope, suicidal thoughts, perceived social support and meaning in life, the relationship between hope and suicidal thoughts, determining the relationship

between hope and perceived social support, and the relationship between hope and meaning in life among students of Azad University of Ahvaz.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive and correlational in terms of nature. To analyze the research data in this study, Watson tests and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used and to measure the normality of distribution of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. It should be noted that the above-mentioned tests were performed using SPSS.

### **Population and statistical sample**

The population of this study include all students of Azad University of Ahvaz whose number based on the data from the education department of Islamic Azad University is equal to 16,000 in four levels: associate degree, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in 64 disciplines. The sample of 365 subjects was selected from among the entire population.

### **Data collection tools**

In this study, data collection method was as field study. The main tool for data collection included Snyder Hope Scale questionnaires (1991), Scale for Suicide Thoughts of Mohammadi Far, Habibi and Besharat (2005), Zimet multidimensional scale of

perceived social support (1988), and meaning in life test by Steger, M. F. Frazier, P, Oishi, S, Kaler, M. (2006).

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Examining demographic variables in any research is a part of the process that in turn is of considerable importance, so the analysis of these data will be useful in the research process. Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of respondents by gender, age and educational level. The results of the research show that 54.79% of respondents are male and 45.21% female, and the highest percentage of respondents belong to the age group Under 25 years with 49.86 percent. The least frequency also belong to the age group over 45 years with 3.28 percent and 29.86 percent of respondents had an associate degree, 56.43 percent bachelors and 13.69 percent at the master level.

#### **Inferential statistics**

**Hypotheses desired in this study consist of three sub-hypothesis and a main hypothesis:**

To study and present a model of hope, suicidal thoughts, perceived social support and meaning in life, after review of the adequacy of the model in Table 2, we present the fitted model. The correlation between the variables of hope, suicidal thoughts,

perceived social support and meaning in life is equal to 0.945. Coefficient of determination obtained 0.882 and the value indicates that 88.2 percent of hope changes relates to suicidal thoughts, perceived social support and meaning in life. According to the indicators mentioned, the model has the required efficiency. At this stage, the independent and dependent variables were entered into the equation. At this stage, a simple correlation coefficient was equal to  $R = 0.945$  and the coefficient of determination equal to 0.882 and adjusted coefficient of determination equal to 0.871 and also the F value obtained from variance analysis was equal to  $F = 609.726$  and its significance level was  $\text{Sig} = 0.000$  which is significant at less than a thousandth level. Therefore, by observing the coefficient of determination, it

can be stated that the variable alone has explained 88.2 percentage of changes in the dependent variable.

According to Table 4, the critical value for the hypotheses of this study is 0.000 or the level of significance considered to test by SPSS. According to Table 4, the validity of the test for the first hypothesis is 0.000 and less than 0.05 and as a result hypothesis H1 is confirmed for all of them at the error level 5% and we can say that there is a relationship between hope, suicidal thoughts, perceived social support and meaning in life among students of Azad University of Ahvaz and this is a positive and significant relationship. The more social support, meaning in life will be increased and hope will be at a higher level and suicidal thoughts would be reduced.

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of research subjects**

Demographic variables		Frequency	Frequency percentage
Sex	Male	200	54.79%
	Female	165	45.21%
Age category	Under 25 years	182	49.86%
	35-26 years	132	36.16%
	45-36 years	39	10.68%
	Over 45 years	12	3.28%
Grade	Associate degree	109	29.86%
	Bachelor	206	56.43%
	Master	50	13.69%

**Table 2: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test**

Hypothesis	Test statistics	Significance level	Result
First	1.591	0.066	Rejection of H <sub>1</sub>
Second	1.591	0.066	Rejection of H <sub>1</sub>
Third	1.591	0.066	Rejection of H <sub>1</sub>
Original	1.591	0.066	Rejection of H <sub>1</sub>

Table 3: Regression coefficients for hypotheses

Model			Standardized coefficients	t-statistic	Significance level (sig)
			Beta		
1	First hypothesis	y-intercept	.....	78.64	.000
		Suicidal thoughts	-0.87	-24.88	.000
2	Second hypothesis	y-intercept	.....	78.64	.000
		Perceived social support	-0.87	-24.88	.000
3	Third hypothesis	y-intercept	.....	78.64	.000
		Meaning in life	-0.87	-24.88	.000
4	Main hypothesis	y-intercept	.....	78.64	.000
		All three variables	-0.87	-24.88	.000

Table 4: Pearson correlation coefficient test

	Hope	Suicidal thoughts	Perceived support	Meaning in life
Pearson's correlation coefficient	1	-0. 871	0. 665	0. 681
Sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Number of data	365	365	365	365

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The results of this study on the first hypothesis is completely coordinated and consistent with the results of the study by Randi, West and Hall (2011). Randi, West and Hall (2011) found that suicidal thoughts is associated with substance abuse, loneliness, despair and anxiety in Chinese teenage girls and of course occurrence of uncomfortable event, is a risk factor and actually is the longleftarrow for suicide. Also, the second hypothesis is completely coordinated and consistent with results of study by Babaei Heydarabadi et al. (2013) and Hessam et al (2011). Babaei Heydarabadi et al (2013) found that there are several ways through which social support has a direct effect on the health of people. For example, people who have higher

levels of social support, their sense of belonging, hope and self-esteem may be higher than those who do not have this advantage. That leads to a positive optimistic perspective that regardless of the level of stress experienced by the people, it can be useful for their health. Also some studies, such as research by Hessam et al., (2011) showed that high levels of social support can encourage people to do healthy behaviors and adopt a healthy lifestyle. For example, one with social support, may feel that others need him, therefore he should exercise, have proper nutrition, and refer to the doctor before his physical disabilities or hope go up. The third hypothesis is also completely consistent and coordinated with results by Frankel (1948). Frankel (1948) believed when a man does his favorite activities,

meets with others, watches the artistic and literary works and takes refuge in the lap of nature, he feels the presence of meaning in himself. Also, when he feels that his existence is tied to an eternal source and rely on extensive and reliable supports and frameworks such as religion and philosophy that has chosen to live; he finds meaning and life expectancy will be strengthened in him. Batista and Almond (1973) considered the meaningful life as a process of individual beliefs rather than an ultimate source of the content of the beliefs. According to the researchers, the more people believe in more values and are committed, he feels that his life has greater meaning. Accordingly, researchers recommend the future researchers to have comprehensive studies in the field of despair and suicidal thoughts among youth and consider the predicting role of despair and suicidal thoughts as a risk factor to commit suicide and to prevent this social problems. It is suggested to perform counseling sessions and push students toward teamwork and engaging them in extra-curricular affairs to enhance social protection and reduce their stress and depression. It is also recommended to perform the study in other cities and compare it with the results of this research. And also research in other

organizations and its comparison with the results of this study.

This study, like many studies have limitations, such as lack of research findings on the tests used in Iranian culture. It is suggested to examine the lifestyle as a sociological factor among different cultures and ethnic groups in future studies due to the diverse cultures in the country. Faint tendency of students to participate in research. Limited time opportunities for more studies.

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