

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Assessment of Psychological Distress, Suicidal Behaviour & Deliberate Self Harm in Medical Interns - An Institutional Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Deliberate self harm, psychological distress and suicidal behaviour is found to be prevalent among students as per research from western world, but there is a dearth of research from developing countries like India despite its serious implication. Thus this study aim to assess deliberate self harm and suicidality among medical interns.

Method: cross sectional study, convenient sample of 100 medical interns. Assessment included- General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) Deliberate Self harm inventory-9R (DSHI-9r) Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire-r (SBQ-r) Along with semi-structured proforma consisting of socio-demographic variables.

Results: Mean age of sample was 23.9 yrs, 52% were females and 48% males. Mean GHQ score was 13.8, 38% were distressed as per GHQ-12. Mean SBQ-r score was 4.52, 27% interns scored were above cut off range of SBQ-r, 26 % had attempted any kind of deliberate self harm.

Conclusion: Index study showed high level of psychological distress, suicidal behaviour and deliberate self harm in a significant proportion of medical interns. There is an urgent need for targeted action and further research to address the issue.

Key words: haematuria, etiology, glomerular, non glomerular, gross, microscopic

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INTRODUCTION

Medical training & Internship is characterized by multiple challenges like - Long working hours, lack of peer support, competitive environment, imbalance between professional and personal lives, lack of recreational activities, staying away from home & Financial problems, Uncertain future and emergency situations. ¹ Medical Interns are a vulnerable population, experiencing higher levels of mental health problems including suicidal behaviour and deliberate self harm (DSH). The magnitude of suicidal ideation among medical students by including 13 Western countries ranged from 1.8% to 53.6% ². A lifetime prevalence of DSH (17.3%) was reported in Australian medical students.³ Medical students are less likely than the general population to receive appropriate management, despite their training and access to services. Potential reasons for this include stigma and concerns about impact on career options⁴. Most of available research evidence about this area comes from developed countries &

western world. little attention is given in developing countries like India despite its serious implications .

AIM & OBJECTIVES

1. Assessment of Psychological distress among medical Interns
2. Assessment of Suicidal Behavior among medical Interns
3. Assessment of Deliberate Self Harm among medical Interns

MATERIALS & METHODS

The Study Site was MGM Medical College, Indore, India. A cross sectional survey was conducted among 100 medical interns, recruited through convenient sampling. Subjects filled a pretested semi-structured questionnaire - demographic data and validated measures of assessment. Psychological distress was assessed through General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)⁵. Suicidal behavior was assessed through Suicide behavior Questionnaire

Revised (SBQR)⁶. Deliberate self harm was assessed with deliberate self harm inventory (DSHI-9r)⁷.

RESULTS

The Mean Age of the sample was 23.9 Years (SD ±2.59). There were 48% males and 52 % females. 51% were day scholars and 49 % were residing in hostels. The Mean GHQ 12 score was 13.8 . 38 % sample was found to be distressed as per GHQ 12 criteria. 32.6 % of Male Interns and 43.7 % of Female Interns were found to be distressed. SBQR Mean Total score was 4.52 (SD-2.47). Considering cutoff score of 7 points – 27 % subjects were above cutoff . Association of SBQ status with gender was non significant (P – 0.07). TABLE 1 shows distribution of SBQ 1 scores concerning Life time suicidal ideation / attempt - 12 % reported suicidal ideas, 10 % plans and 2 % suicidal attempts in their

lifetime. TABLE 2 shows distribution of SBQ 2 scores - frequency of suicidal ideation in past one year where 18 % sample reported having such ideation atleast once while 9 % reported having more than once . TABLE 3 shows distribution of SBQ 3 scores - exhibiting threat of suicide attempt - where 20% sample reported positively . TABLE 4 shows distribution of SBQ 4 scores - future likelihood of suicidal behaviour where 5 % of sample reported likelihood for the same. Deliberate Self Harm was found to be Present in 26 % . 11 % attempted multiple types of self harm. The Most common methods were Cutting (15 % - 5 % attempted multiple times) , Punching & Banging Head (12 % , - 4 % attempted multiple times) , Sticking sharps (5 % - 1 % attempted multiple times).

SBQ 1 (Life time suicidal ideation / attempt)

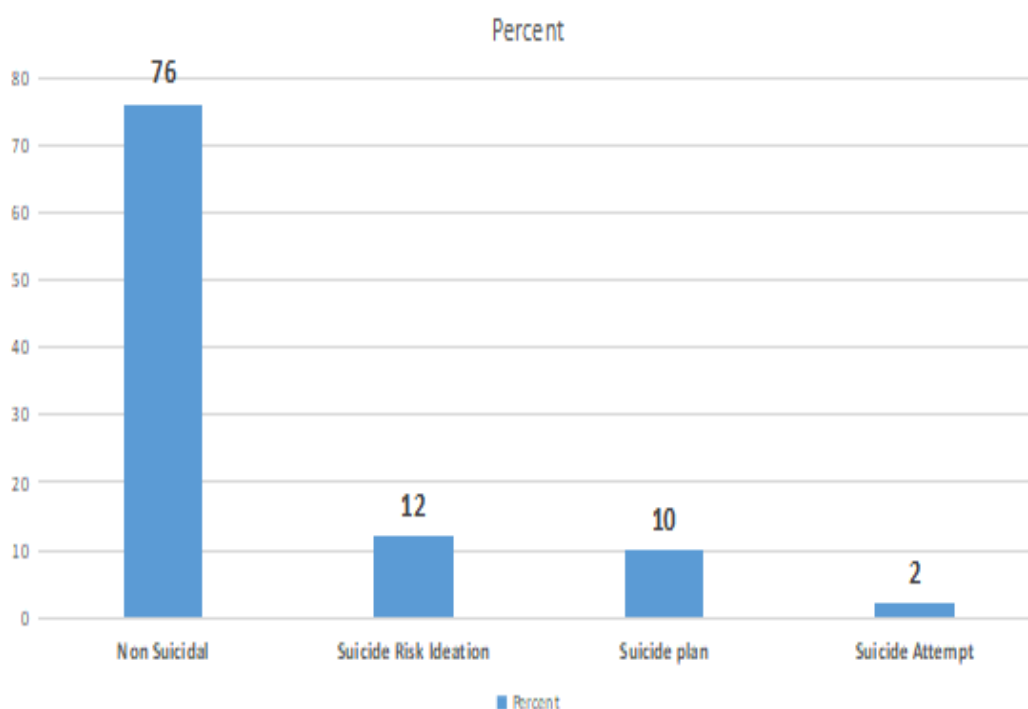


TABLE: 1 - Distribution of SBQ 1 Scores

SBQ 2 (frequency – suicidal ideation 12 months)

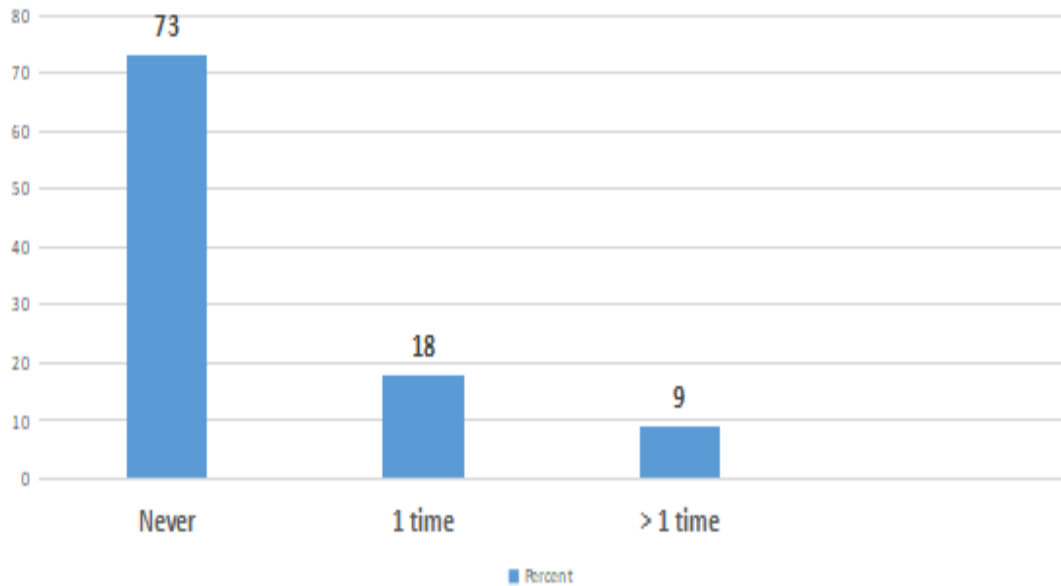


TABLE: 2 - Distribution of SBQ 2 Scores

SBQ 3 (Threat of suicide attempt)

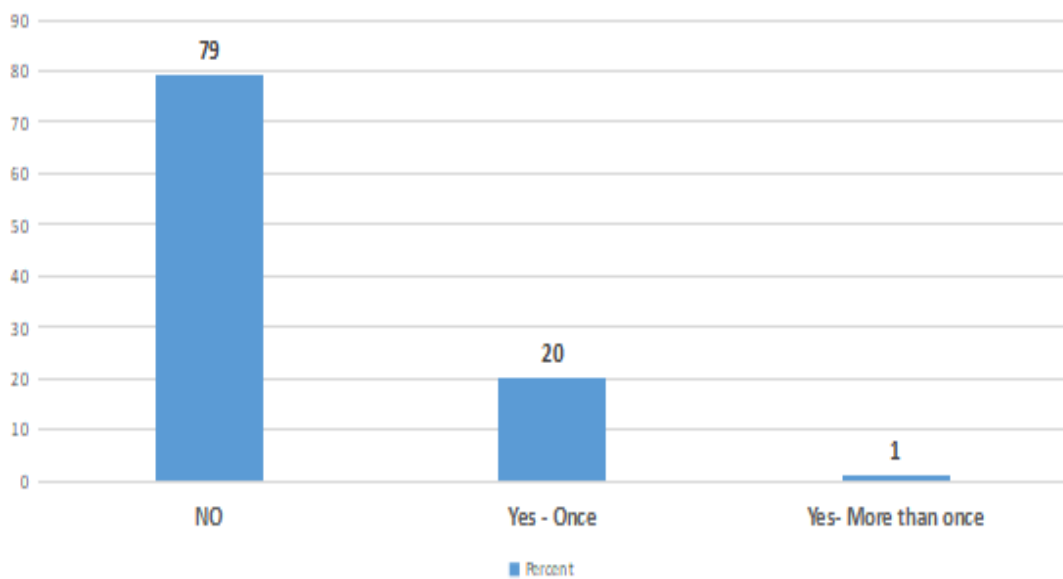


TABLE: 3 - Distribution of SBQ 3 Scores

SBQ 4 (Future likelihood – suicidal behavior)

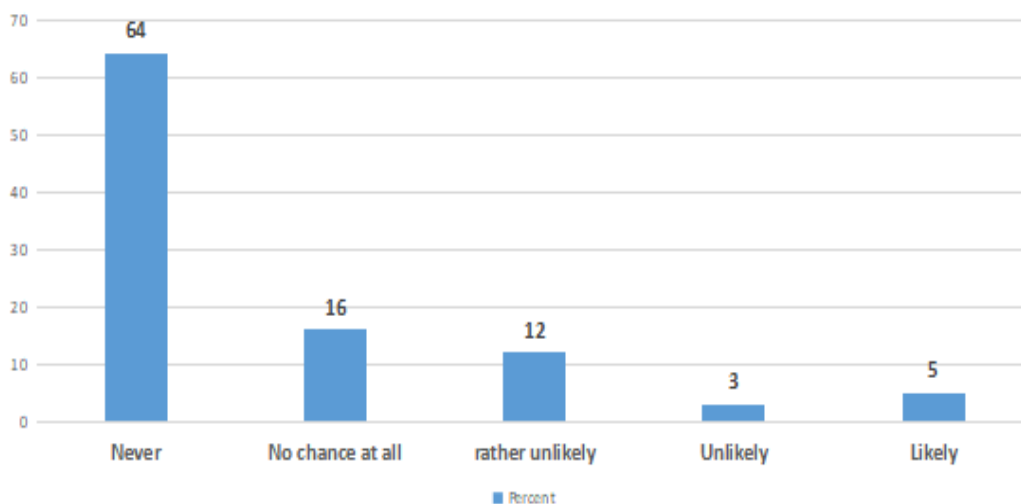


TABLE : 4 - Distribution of SBQ 4 Scores

DISCUSSION

Index study was undertaken at a medical college from central India, with objectives of assessing psychological distress, suicidal behaviour and deliberate self harm among medical interns. It was found out that 38 % of the sample was psychologically distressed as per GHQ 12 scores. Similar results were reported in a study from Malaysia among medical students, where it was also found that distress in clinical phases was more evident than in preclinical phase.⁸ In Index study, Suicidal behaviour was found out to be present in 27 % subjects, as measured by SBQR scores. 12 % sample reported suicidal ideas, 10 % plans and 2 % suicidal attempts in their lifetime. 18 % sample reported having frequency of suicidal ideation at least once in past one year. Similar results are reported previously in medical literature.⁹ Deliberate Self Harm was found to be Present in 26 %. 11 % attempted multiple types of self harm. The Most common methods were Cutting, Punching & Banging Head, Sticking sharps. Similar high scores (36.1%) were reported in a study among nursing students from Thailand¹⁰, however relatively lesser scores (9.1%) were reported in a study among Chinese medical students¹¹. The varied results could also be attributed to heterogeneous scales used for assessment. Thus, index study found significant levels of psychological distress, suicidal behaviour and deliberate self harm among medical interns - in accordance with previous literature. There is an imminent need of addressing these issues and measures like supportive academic atmosphere, incorporation of Stress management, extracurricular activities, support groups, relaxation training, time-

management and coping skills training shall be implemented. There can be Workplace interventions like ensuring reasonable workload and working hours, attitudinal changes of authorities and need for further research like longitudinal interventional studies in this field. There are however certain limitations with this study like the results cannot be generalized since it was an institutional study with convenient sample and response bias could not be ruled out. Also, due to cross sectional design, causal relationships could not be tested.

CONCLUSION

The study was able to show that medical interns also experience psychological distress, suicidal behaviour and deliberate self harm. Measures therefore need to be undertaken to address the mental health needs of medical students. Also there is need for further research especially prospective cohort studies to understand the causes, consequences and preventive measures.

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