

# Perfectionism, career indecision and suicidal ideation among undergraduates

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## **Abstract**

*Increasing prevalence of suicide among undergraduates is a major concern worldwide. The incidences of suicide in Nigeria within this few years is alarming and demands for a considerable research attention. This study sought to find out the predictive powers of career indecision and perfectionism on suicidal ideation among Nigerian university students. Data were collected from 570 university undergraduates using the Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS), Career Decision-making Difficulty questionnaire (CDDQ) and the multi-dimensional perfectionism scale (MPS). Data collected were analyzed using, descriptive and inferential statistics. The results among others indicated that career indecision and perfectionism scores were significant predictors of students' suicidal ideation. All career decision difficulty questionnaire subscales as well as the total CDDQ score had positively significant relationships with suicidal ideation of the participants. The total perfectionism score, as well as the three perfectionism dimensions (SPP, OPP and SOP), predicted suicidal ideation significantly in a positive direction such that high SPP, OPP and SOP, each accounted for increased suicidal ideation. It was concluded that the career difficulty and perfectionism are significant risk factors for suicidal ideation in university undergraduates.*

**Keywords:** *career indecision, perfectionism, suicidal ideation, university students*

## **I. Introduction**

High prevalence of suicide is increasingly becoming a world-wide issue. World suicide rate has increased by 60% in the last 45 years (World Health Organization (WHO), 2019). It is estimated that about 1 million persons worldwide die of suicide every year; and suicide accounts for one in three deaths among male and female youths aged 15 - 44 (WHO, 2014; 2019). In Nigeria, the rate of cases of suicide and suicide attempts among youths in the recent couple of years is alarming (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2019; Okoedion & Okolie, 2019). Nigeria has the fifteenth world highest rate of suicide (International Centre for Investigative Study (ICFIS), 2019; Motunrayo, 2019), recording about 17.3% prevalence rate (WHO, 2016). In the last 5 years, Nigerian Universities have recorded outrageous incidences of suicide and suicide attempts among graduates and undergraduates (Punch, June 21 2019). In 2019, about 42 university undergraduates and graduate youths committed suicide within a period of 6 months (Punch, June 21 2019). A good number of the incidences are

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from the University of Nigeria (Punch, June 21 2019). This has become of great concern to parents, students, University administrations and the wider society. Researchers and all stakeholders alike are consequently intensifying their searchlights towards digging out the root cause of the overarching cases of suicide and attempts among graduates and undergraduate students in Nigeria.

Research-based evidences tend to suggest that every suicide occurrence and suicide attempt tend to commence with a relatively minor psychological condition referred to as suicidal ideation (Klonsky, May & Saffer, 2016; Wetherall, Cleare, Eschle, Ferguson, O'Connor, O'Carroll, & O'Connor, 2018). Suicide ideation otherwise called suicide thoughts is a psychological disturbance leading one to consider or plan to harm or kill self (Esfahani, Yasaman & Alavi, 2015). Suicidal ideation is often induced by negative life experiences that threaten individual's mental health. It is symptomized in a feeling of hopelessness, verbalising death and dying, loss of interest in possessions, pathological substance use, severe mood imbalance, aggressiveness, irritability, extreme negative risk-taking, isolating self from loved ones and feeling of extreme anxiety. Suicide ideation is the precursor of all suicides and suicide related behaviours (CDCP, 2008; O'Connor, Gaynes, Burda, Williams, & Whitlock, 2013). It can either be passive (mere wish to be dead) or active (intention to take one's life) cognitive disposition to suicidality (O'Connor, et al., 2013).

Suicide ideation has been found to be highly prevalent across all races and populations (Amare, Meseret Woldeyhanes, Haile, & Yeneabat, 2018; Donath, Bergmann, Kliem, Hillemacher, & Baier, 2019; Lee, Lee, Liao, Chang, Sung, Chiang, & Tai, 2010; Nock, Borges, Bromet, Alonso, Angermeyer, Beautrais, & De Graaf, 2008). In recent times, studies on adolescents and young adults have indicated increased prevalence rate of suicide. Amare, et al (2018) found 22.5% prevalence of suicide ideation among high school adolescents in Northwest Ethiopia. Suicidal ideation has also been shown to be of high prevalence around different parts of Nigeria. Evidence from Nigeria suggest about 6-7% suicide ideation rate among adolescents and adult populations (Adewuya and Oladipo, 2019; Adewuya, Ola, Coker, Atilola, Zachariah, Olugbile, & Idris, 2016).

Suicidal ideation has been found to be linked to psychiatric conditions including border-line personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, generalised anxiety disorder, adjustment disorder and substance use (Adewuya & Oladipo 2019; Adewuya, Ola, Coker, Atilola, Zachariah, Olugbile, & Idris, 2016). Such conditions could result from distresses emanating from personal experiences regarding successes and failures in individual's goals. For instance, adolescents and young adults in the universities are continuously faced with diverse personal challenges that tend to translate into such psychiatric conditions leading to suicide ideation. Challenges arising from career decision making is among the threats to university students. University students in Nigeria are among the most vulnerable group to career-related difficulties, given the state of high unemployment rate across the country. Many students in the universities are not certain about their career path even after completion of university majors. Consequently, they are filled with dysfunctional career thoughts including career indecision.

Career indecision is the inability to make and commit oneself to a career choice (Goliath, 2012). It is stereotyped in difficulties setting long-term career goals in relation to selecting a career that is appropriate for one's vocational interest and aptitude. Career indecision cuts across a range of life endeavours and circumstances that could necessitate individuals to revise their careers over their life span (Goliath, 2012; Lock, 2009). Hence, career indecision manifests when there is a considerable uncertainty and/or discomfort in an

individual's intended or chosen career. Career indecision accounts for a good number of distresses experienced by undergraduates while in the university and at their completion of majors (Goliath, 2012; Killam, Wise, & Weber, 2017). Kim, and Lee (2019) observed that many university students experience a significant incongruence between their college majors and their intended career paths.

This is because, in as much as career path at primary and high schools is mostly taken after selecting university majors based on self-knowledge and self-examination of the vocational aptitude that inform academic goals (Etzel & Nagy, 2016) career decision-making university level tend to bring these into contrast with what is available in the world of work (Au, 2011; Kim, 2014). Thus as the undergraduates proceed and complete their majors, they face the challenges of continuous adaptation of their intended careers. Majority of the undergraduates who experience difficulties due to mismatch between their majors and the world of work tend to show negative career attitudes (Kim, 2014). Such students report high level of negative emotional reactions as disappointment, frustration, stress and depression (Ntemngweh, 2016). Increasing research are beginning to focus on these negative emotional reactions associated with career indecision which have long been disregarded in the field of career counselling (Hartung, 2011; Puffer, 2011).

Apart from choosing an unsuitable lifestyle implications of career indecision, an inappropriately career decision has long-term negative consequences on students' vocational and social life and affect all areas of life and well-being (Vaiopoulou Papavassiliou-Alexiou, & Stamovlasis, 2019). For instance, career indecision has been linked to anxiety and negative meaning of life (Miller, & Rottinghaus, 2014), as well as depression and decision making confusion (Saunders, Peterson, Sampson Jr, & Reardon, 2000; Walker III, and Peterson, 2012) which are precursor of suicidal ideation (Pompili, 2019; Szanto, de Bruin, Parker, Hallquist, M.N., Vanyukov, & Dombrowski, 2015). Pieces of evidence shows that about 50% of university undergraduates experience career problems, associated with indecision (Goliath, 2012; Talib & Aun, 2009) about various career options. Mylonas, Argyropoulou and Tampouri (2012) noted that poor motivation is one of the causes of career indecision among undergraduates. Other works have indicated a positive link between career indecision and individual perfectionistic traits (Khasmohammadi, Noah, Kadir, Baba, & Keshavarz, 2010; Musch, 2013; Page, Bruch, & Haase, 2008; Rohlfing, 2013) and parents perfectionism (Khasmohammadi, Noah, Kadir, Baba, & Keshavarz, 2010).

Perfectionism is the tendency or strong desire to pursue extremely high-performance standards and being excessively self-critical about the standard accomplishments (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Shahnaz, Saffer, & Klonsky, 2018). Literature has identified two major types of perfectionism: adaptive perfectionism (a healthy type of perfectionism characterised by deriving satisfaction from achievements made from intense effort yet tolerating the imperfections without resorting to the harsh self-criticism) and maladaptive perfectionism (the tendency to prescribe high personal performance standards and being extremely self-critical in self-evaluations) (Rice & Stuart, 2010; Stoltz & Ashby, 2007; Stoltz & Ashby, 2007).

Adaptive perfectionism is associated with desired psychological outcomes such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, positive affect, emotional regulation, exam performance and academic achievement, study behavior, school motivation, career decision-making self-efficacy, active coping, secure adult attachment, interpersonal adjustment, and perceived social support (Stoltz & Ashby, 2007). On the other hand, maladaptive perfectionists view performance as competitive and approach it with a high sense of aggressiveness and

criticism, leading to psychological symptoms such as depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, stress, eating disorders, emotional deregulation, recurrent physical pain and other medical problems, insecure adult attachment, marital and premarital difficulties, and less desirable academic performance (Chang as cited in Rice & Stuart, 2010; Stoltz & Ashby, 2007).

The maladaptive perfectionism which forms the crux of the present study has three maladaptive dimensions: self-oriented (SO) perfectionism (setting precise standards, striving for perfection in oneself and avoiding failures as well as harsh evaluation of self-directed behaviour); other-oriented (OO) perfectionism (placing importance and unrealistic standards on others being perfect), and socially prescribed (SP) perfectionism (believing that others have unrealistic expectations for oneself and striving for the unrealistic perfection) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Perfectionism may impact on the choices one make on issue relating to academics and career paths. Sometimes, in the course of choosing career, students may exhibit perfectionist behaviours during career decision making. They may want to make choices that will present them good without considering whether it will be realistic in relation to their aptitude and vocational skills. In such instances making decision concerning career paths becomes difficult, leading to career indecision, especially when such perfectionism is maladaptive.

Maladaptive perfectionism has been identified as one of the risk factors for negative psychological outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Smith et al., 2016; Smith, Sherry, Mushquash, in press; Smith, Vidovic, Sherry, Stewart, & Saklofske, 2018) suicide ideation (Flett, Hewitt, & Heisel, 2014; Roxborough et al., 2012; Shahnaz, 2018). Additionally, research shows that 68% adolescents and young adult who had committed suicide were known for expressed high expectations from self and others in perfectionistic manner (Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, & Caelian, 2006). Flett et al. (2014) discuss how the experience of perfectionist thoughts may contribute to rigid thinking styles and feelings of inferiority, deficiency, and hopelessness which may prompt and escalate suicidal ideation.

Given the escalating rate of suicide incidences among university students in Nigerian universities, one begins to wonder the emerging factors that could be accountable for such devastating terminal behaviour. It is not known whether perfectionism could account for career indecision, and if career indecision is linked to suicidal ideation in undergraduate students in a Nigerian university. The current study yield itself to finding out the predictive relationships between perfectionism, career indecision and suicidal ideation among university undergraduates in Nigeria. We hypothesized that perfectionism dimensions would significantly predict career indecision and suicidal ideation. Finding of the present study would add to existing knowledge in these areas and would also inform career counselling in both secondary and tertiary institutions.

## **II. Method**

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study was approved by the Education Research Ethics Committee, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought for the consent of the participant which was given by signing written consents? The participants were given assurance of confidentiality of personal information. Also, questionnaires were unanimously completed. Participation in the study was also optional.

## Research Design

The research design was cross-sectional survey method capitalising on quantitative data. This design enabled the researcher to compare data on the study variables. A total of 572 university students, consisting of 310 males and 260 females with an overall mean age of 17.04 (SD = 3.18), participated in this study. The participants were First and Final year undergraduates in two universities in Enugu state, Nigeria. The random sampling method was adopted in this study.

## Instruments

Three psychological instruments were used in this study – the Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSS), Career Decision-making Difficulty questionnaire (CDDQ) and the multi-dimensional perfectionism scale (MPS).

**Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSSI):** BSSI is a 21-item is a self-reported measure the spectrum of suicidal ideation in adults and adolescents. The instrument measures both clinical and non-clinical cases of suicidal ideation. Items of the instrument are measures in 3-point scaled statements of intensity, ranging from 0 to 2. Participants are required to circle the statement that best describes their feelings in the past week including the day of administration. The minimum obtainable score of BSSI is 0, while the maximum score is 42. For the purpose of this study, we worked with the mean score, so that, to ascertain the BSSI score, the total scores obtained were divided by 21, giving a mean score of 0-2. Hence, a mean score between 0 and .5 is regarded as low ideation score while .6 – 2 is a high score. It takes about 10 minutes to complete. The instrument has been found to be to have good psychometric property with internal consistency, ranging from .87 to .90, using Cronbach's Alpha (Esfahani, Hashemi, & Alavi, 2015; Kliem, Lohmann, Mößle, & Brähler, 2017). In order to assess the usability in a sample of university students in Nigeria, the instrument was trial-tested the instrument by administering it to 67 university students in Nigeria. Cronbach alpha method showed a good internal consistency for the scale ( $\alpha=.79$ ), showing the instrument is reliable.

**Career Decision-making Difficulty questionnaire (CDDQ):** The CDDQ developed by Gati, Krausz and Osipow (1996) was used to gather data on career indecision of the participants. The CDDQ is a 34-item Likert-type scale that assesses career decision-making difficulties based on the taxonomy proposed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996). The CDDQ is measured in three major subscales (Lack of Readiness, Lack of Information, and Inconsistent Information subscales). Lack of readiness measures the individual's Lack of motivation, General indecisiveness and Dysfunctional beliefs. Lack of Information measures lack of information in the stages of the career development process, self, occupations and ways of obtaining additional inform. Difficulties relating to inconsistent information are measured in Unreliable information, internal conflicts and External conflicts. The CDDQ has been found to have good psychometric property (Gati, Osipow, Krausz & Saka, 2000) and of a good convergent validity with the Career Decision Scale and good discriminant validity (Lancaster, Rudolph, Perkins & Patten, 1999; Osipow, 1999). The internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .70 to .93 for the three subscales and it was .95 for the full questionnaire. For the usability in Nigerian Context with university students, it was administered to 67 university students, with mean age  $19\pm 7.34$  years. Cronbach Alpha gave good reliability indices for all the three subscales and the full scale. The alpha coefficient values were .88, .91, .81, and .76 for the Lack of Readiness, Lack of Information, and Inconsistent Information subscales, and the full scale, respectively.

**The multi-dimensional perfectionism scale (MPS–HF) developed by Hewitt and Flett (1991b)** was used to assess perfectionism in university students. The instrument is a 45-item 5-point Likert-type scale measuring perfectionism in three-dimensions-self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP). The MPS has been found to be of good psychometric property (Hewitt, Flett, Turnbull-Donovan, & Mikail, 1991). For the purpose of the present study, the MPS was trial tested in the context of university students in Nigeria. Cronbach Alpha gave a good psychometric quality of the instrument with high reliability indices for all the three subscales:  $\alpha=.77, .87, .71$  and  $.83$  respectively for SOP, OOP, SPP and total Perfectionism.

### Data Collection Analysis

The three instrument used for the present study were administered to the study participant through face-to-face on-the-spot contact with the researchers and three research assistants. Quantitative data were generated and keyed into SPSS software. SPSS 24.0 program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 24) was used to analyse the data. Descriptive analysis (Mean and standard deviation) regression analysis and structural equation modelling were used for the study.

## III. Results

First, we used descriptive analysis and ANOVA to ascertain the participants' levels of suicidal ideation (dependent variable) score in relation to the dimensions of CDDQ and MPS (independent variables) (See Table 1). Data in Table 1 show that 153 out of 572 participants had high ratings of their suicidal ideation, while 419 scored low in suicidal ideation measure (BSSI). Participants who scored highly in BSSI ( $1.53 \pm .39$ ) also had high scores in all dimensions of career decision difficulty questionnaire: Lack of readiness ( $6.89 \pm 1.30$ ); Lack of information ( $6.63 \pm 1.31$ ); inconsistent information ( $6.34 \pm 1.33$ ) and Total CDDQ score ( $6.72 \pm 1.11$ ).

**Table 1: ANOVA Table for the interactions between the study variables**

Measures	Subscales	Ideation Levels		df	Mean square	P-value	Effect size
		High (n=153)	Low (n=419)				
<b>BSSI</b>		$1.53 \pm .39$	$.48 \pm .29$	1, 570	152.107	.000	.70
CDDQ	Lack of Readiness <b>M ± SD</b>	$6.89 \pm 1.30$	$2.44 \pm 1.55$	1, 570	3058.580	.000	.71
	Lack of Information	$6.63 \pm 1.31$	$2.53 \pm 1.45$	1, 570	2278.714	.000	.66
	InconsistentInfo	$6.34 \pm 1.33$	$2.54 \pm 1.50$		2280.478	.000	.63

	<b>M ± SD</b>			1, 570			
	Total CDDQ	6.72 ±1.11	2.50 ±1.44	1, 570	2526.558	.000	.71
MPS	<b>SPP</b>	3.86±.88	2.21± .91	1, 570	370.074	.000	.44
	<b>OPP</b>	3.98 ± .89	2.22 ±.91	1, 570	399.122	.000	.46
	<b>SOP</b>	4.09± 2.01	2.23 ± .90	1, 570	470.611	.000	.28
	Total MPI	3.90 ± .87	2.21 ± .89	1, 570	380.455	.000	.45

On the other hand, participants who scored low in the BSSI (.48 ± .29) also scored low in all subscales of CDDQ: Lack of readiness (2.44 ± 1.55); Lack of information (2.53 ± 1.45); inconsistent information (2.54±1.50) and Total CDDQ score (2.50 ±1.44). Furthermore, Interaction effect using ANOVA showed that subscales of CDDQ are could lead to significant change in the level of suicidal ideation. Specifically, Lack of readiness lead to a significant change in the BSSI level ( $F(1, 570) = 3058.580$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .70$ ). The other subscales of the career decision difficulty measures also bring about significant variation in the BSSI scores: Lack of information [ $F(1, 570) = 2278.714$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .66$ ]; inconsistent information [ $F(1, 570) = 2280.478$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .63$ ]and Total CDDQ score [ $F(1, 570) = 2526.558$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .71$ ]. The high effect size in each case indicates that the independent variables are accountable for changes in the dependent variable.

In the case of the MPI, all the participants who had high score in BSSI also scored high in the MPI subscales: SPP (3.86±.88), OPP (3.98 ± .89), SOP (4.09± 2.01) and the total MPI (3.90 ± .87). Additionally, participants with low score in BSSI also scored low in the MPI subscales: SPP (2.21± .91), OPP (2.22 ±.91), SOP (2.23 ± .90) and the total MPI (2.21 ± .89).

Furthermore, Interaction effect using ANOVA showed that subscales of MPI are significant determinants of levels of suicidal ideation: SPP lead to a significant change in the BSSI level ( $F(1, 570) = 370.074$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .44$ ); OPP [ $F(1, 570) = 399.122$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .46$ ]; SOP [ $F(1, 570) = 470.611$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .28$ ] and Total MPI score [ $F(1, 570) = 380.455$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $n^2 = .45$ ]. The high effect size in each case indicates that the independent variables are accountable for changes in the dependent variable.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlations between the dependent and independent Variables**

	Measure		N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	BSSI	Ideation	572	.89	.61	1								
2	<b>CDDQ</b>	Lack of Readiness	572	1.92	.92	.77**	1							

3		Lack of Information	572	2.06	1.14	.83**	.98**	1						
4		Inconsistent Information	572	1.92	1.14	.81**	.94**	.98**	1					
5		Total CDDQ Score	572	1.98	1.06	.82**	.98**	.99**	.98**	1				
6	MPS	Self-Prescribed Perfectionism	572	2.99	1.69	.71**	.84**	.87**	.87**	.87**	1			
7		Others'-oriented Perfectionism	572	2.99	1.69	.72**	.84**	.87**	.87**	.87**	.99**	1		
8		Social-oriented Perfectionism	572	3.02	1.66	.73**	.82**	.86**	.87**	.86**	.98**	.99**	1	
9		Total MPS Score	572	3.00	1.68	.72**	.84**	.87**	.88**	.87**	.99**	.99**	.99**	1

Data in Table 1 show the mean scores, standard deviation and the Pearson correlation analyses of the study variables. On the whole, the mean suicidal ideation score of the participants was high (.89±.61). The participants had relatively high scores in all dimensions of the Career Decision-making Difficulty questionnaire, Lack of Readiness (1.92 ±.92), Lack of Information (2.06 ± 1.14), and Inconsistent Information subscales (1.92 ± 1.14) as well as the total CDDQ score (1.98 ±1.06). In the same vein, participants had high scores in all the multidimensional perfectionism subscales, Self-Prescribed Perfectionism (2.99 ± 1.69), Others'-oriented Perfectionism (2.99 ± 1.69), Social-oriented Perfectionism (3.02 ± 1.66), Total MPS Score (3.00 ± 1.68). Results of correlation analysis (Table 1) show a significant positive relationship between suicide ideation and all dimensions career decision-making difficulty questionnaire score (r=.82\*\*) and also significant positive correlations between all subscales of the CDDQ. Lack of readiness, lack of information and inconsistent information about career had significant positive relationships with suicide ideation,  $r = .77^{**}$ , .83 and .81\*\* respectively. These indicated that lack of readiness for career decision making accounts for about 77% difference in university students' suicide thoughts. 83% of university undergraduate suicide thought is also linked to their lack or poor information about their future careers. Inconsistent information is linked to 81% of suicide ideation. Furthermore, 82% of suicidal thoughts in participants is associated with their global score on career decision-making.

Considering the participants' multi-dimensional perfectionism scale, all the dimensions of the perfectionism had significant positive correlation with suicide ideation, [Self-oriented perfectionism (r=.71\*\*); Other-oriented (r=.72\*\*); socially prescribed (r=.73\*\*)]. The total perfectionism score also correlated significantly and positively with the participants' suicide ideation (r=.72\*\*). These suggest that a high perfectionism leads to a significant increase in the suicide ideation of university students.



**Table 3: Regression Table showing the Predictive powers of the CDDQ and MPI subscales on the BSSI scores.**

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

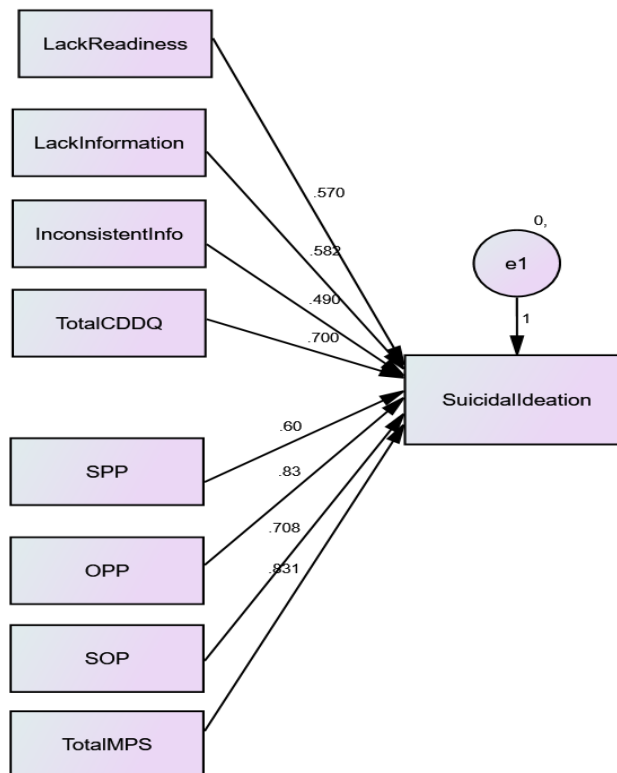
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 Total CDDQ	.22	.031	.88	45.14	.000
Lack of Readiness	.20	.004	.89	46.52	.000
Lack of Information	.21	.006	.85	38.616	.000
Inconsistent Information	.19	.006	.81	38.03	.000
SPP	.37	.01	.72	25.25	.000
OPP	.48	.07	.96	6.88	.000
SOP	.19	.01	.54	15.62	.000
Tota IMPS	.36	.02	.71	17.84	.000

**a. Dependent Variable: Suicidal Ideation**

Regression analysis shows that all three dimensions of career decision difficulty questionnaire and the total CDDQ score significantly predicted suicidal ideation of the participants. The mean score of the lack of readiness subscale had significant predictive power on participants' ideation score,  $B=.22$ ,  $\beta = .89$ ,  $t = 46.52$ ,  $p < .001$ . Lack of Information and Inconsistent Information components of the career decision difficulty questionnaire had significant predictive powers on participants' suicidal ideation,  $B= .21$ ,  $\beta = .85$ ,  $t = 38.61$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $B= .19$ ,  $\beta = .81$ ,  $t = 38.03$ ,  $p < .001$ . On the whole, the total CDDQ score, significantly predicted participants' suicidal ideation,  $B= .22$ ,  $\beta = .88$ ,  $t = 45.14$ ,  $p < .001$ . In other words, 88% increase in participants' suicidal ideation can be attributed to their career indecision due to lack of readiness. 85% and 81% increase in undergraduates' suicidal ideation can be attributed to their Lack of Information and Inconsistent Information components of the career decision difficulty respectively. The total CDDQ score accounts for 88% variation in suicidal ideation. Further, the result suggest that a unit changes in lack of readiness, lack of information,

inconsistent information and total CDDQ scores respectively account for .22, .21, .19 and .22 changes in the suicidal ideation scores of the participants.

Considering the Multidimensional perfectionism scale, data in Table 2 further show that all the dimensions of perfectionism showed significant positive predictive powers on participants' suicidal ideation score [SPP( $B = .37$ ,  $\beta = .72$ ,  $p < .001$ ); OPP ( $B = .48$ ,  $\beta = .96$ ,  $p < .001$ ); and SOP ( $B = .19$ ,  $\beta = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ )]. The global perfectionism (Total MPI) score significantly and positively predicted suicidal ideation ( $B = .36$ ,  $\beta = .71$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that a unit increase in self prescribed perfectionism brings about a corresponding .37 increase in suicidal ideation score of students and vice-versa. Similarly, the suicidal ideation of participants increases by .48, .19, and .36 with a corresponding unit increases in their others prescribed perfectionism, socially oriented perfectionism and the global perfectionism scores respectively. On the other hand, 72%, 96%, 54% and 71% changes in suicide ideation scores are accounted for, by changes in their SPP, OPP, SOP, and global



**Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

	Estimate
SuicidalIdeation <--- LackReadiness	.570

	Estimate
SuicidalIdeation <--- LackInformation	.582
SuicidalIdeation <--- InconsistentInfo	.490
SuicidalIdeation <--- TotalCDDQ	.700
SuicidalIdeation <--- SPP	.603
SuicidalIdeation <--- OPP	.830
SuicidalIdeation <--- SOP	.708
SuicidalIdeation <--- TotalMPS	.831

Figure 1 shows that all the components of career decision making difficulty, lack of readiness, Lack of Information and Inconsistent Information respectively had significant direct paths with suicidal ideation. On the other hand, perfectionism score, as well as all the three dimensions (self prescribed, others' prescribed and society oriented perfectionism) of perfectionism had significant positive direct prediction on the suicidal ideation (figure 1). These further showed that perfectionism as well as career decision difficulties could lead to suicidal ideation in university students.

#### IV. Discussion

The current study sought to investigate the predictive powers of career indecision and perfectionism on the suicidal ideation of university undergraduates in two universities in Nigeria. Interestingly, compared to those with high suicidal ideation, participants who scored low in suicidal ideation had significantly lower ratings in all subscales of career decision making difficulty questionnaire and perfectionism. This indicated that suicidal ideation is emanating from both career difficulties and perfectionism. Overall, participants had low rating in suicidal ideation; however, a good number of the participants reported high experience of suicidal ideation and high rating of career difficulty and perfectionism as indicated by the grand total mean score on each case. We also found that all the subscales of career difficulty and perfectionism significantly predicted suicidal ideation.

A major and finding of this study is that there is relatively high number of undergraduate who participated in the study experience suicidal thoughts. This is interesting as it stands to explain the high prevalence of suicide and suicide attempts among university students in Nigeria in the last 2 years (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2019; Okoedion & Okolie, 2019). Nigeria has the fifteenth world highest rate of suicide (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2019; Okoedion & Okolie, 2019; International Centre for Investigative Study (ICFIS), 2019; Motunrayo, 2019; Punch, June 21 2019). Research-based evidences tend to suggest that any accomplished suicide mission started from mere ideation which is a psychological condition that arises from traumatic

experiences (Klonsky, May & Saffer, 2016; Wetherall, Cleare, Eschle, Ferguson, O'Connor, O'Carroll, & O'Connor, 2018). This result also unfolds the vulnerability of undergraduates to suicidal thought. O'Connor, Gaynes, Burda, Williams, and Whitlock (2013) observed that Suicide thought is the precursor of all suicides and suicide related behaviours which may either be passive (mere wish to be dead) or active (intention to take one's life) cognitive disposition to suicidality. .

Secondly, suicidal thought are found to be predictive of career decision-making difficulty. This result agrees with the results of prior study which found links between career difficulty and suicidal ideation. Studies show that suicidal ideation is linked to psychiatric conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, generalised anxiety disorder and adjustment disorder (Adewuya and Oladipo (2019; Adewuya, Ola, Coker, Atilola, Zachariah, Olugbile, & Idris, 2016), which are induced by negative life experiences such as career difficulties (Pompili, 2019; Szanto, de Bruin, Parker, Hallquist, Vanyukov, & Dombrovski, 2015). Career indecision account for a large amount of distress experienced by university undergraduates (Goliath, 2012; Killam, Wise, & Weber, 2017). Hence, it is not surprising that the present study found that career difficulties could explain undergraduates' engagement in suicide mission.

Findings of the study also indicated that all the subscales of perfectionism (self-prescribed, others' prescribed and society-oriented perfectionism), as well as global perfectionism score predicted suicidal ideation among the participants. Results of the study show that high level of perfectionism is linked to suicidal thoughts. This indicates that as increase in perfectionism can lead to increase in the thoughts to commit suicide. This finding is in line with prior finding (Flett, Hewitt, & Heisel, 2014; Roxborough et al., 2012; Shahnaz, 2018) indicating that positive relationship exist between perfectionism and suicidal ideation. Maladaptive perfectionism is one of the risk factors for negative psychological outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Smith et al., 2016; Smith, Sherry, Mushquash, in press; Smith, Vidovic, Sherry, Stewart, & Saklofske, 2018) which precede suicidal thoughts.

The findings may have implications for university teachers and counsellors, for the rehabilitation and redirection of students who experience career difficulty. The findings prioritise the need for career guidance in the university in spite of the fact that they have their majors. Hence the use of career intervention strategies is indicated among university undergraduate in order to minimize suicides. There is also need find out other risk factors associated with suicide incidences in Nigeria Universities. To this end, suicide prevalence may be put under control. Also, perfectionism needs to be minimized among students in order to minimise suicide. Urgent designing of therapeutic modalities to counter maladaptive perfectionist belief is indicated. Ellis (2002) observed that perfectionism is an irrational belief that could negatively impact on mental health. Therefore, therapeutic modalities such as cognitive behavioural therapies can be used to counter perfectionism and keep the students in a better mental state.

An observable flaw of the present study is that it only lends itself to university students, ignoring other individual outside school who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. Also, suicidal ideation may not be a product of career difficulty and perfectionism only, but could be as a result of other personality disorders due to biological factors or other stereotypic factors such as gender and year of study. Further studies should analyse data based on such factors.

## V. Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained in the research, it is concluded that there is a high level of suicidal thoughts among university students in Nigeria. Positive significant relation exists between the suicidal ideation and career decision difficulties as well as perfectionism. Career difficulties and perfectionism are significant risk factors for suicide.

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