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Strategies for Coping with Suicidal Ideation as Expressed by Polytechnic Students in Oyo State: Implications for Mental Health Counselling

[1*]**FADIPE, Rasaq Abimbola**   fadiperasaqabimbola@gmail.com
[2]**SAADU, Yusuf Olatunji**   saaduyusuf24434@gmail.com
[3]**ATOYEBI, Mary Omolola Olajumoke**   jummybrooks@yahoo.com
[4]**ATOYEBI, Oyeniran Kayode**   oyescafe004@gmail.com
[1,2,3,4]Department of Educational Guidance and Counselling,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract
This study examined strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive survey design. A sample of 450 students was randomly selected and administered questionnaires across various faculties. However, only 443 responses were properly retrieved and analysed for this study. A research instrument, titled: "Strategies for Coping with Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SCSIQ)", was used to collect data from the respondents. The content validity of the instrument was done by five experts from the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies at the University of Ibadan and the reliability was established using test re-test reliability method, which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.79. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that polytechnic students cope with suicidal ideation by seeking support from friends when feel overwhelmed, seeking professional counselling services when in distress, and engaging in physical activities (e.g., sports, exercise) to improve their mood. Findings also indicated that there were no significant differences in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age and religion. However, there were significant differences in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender and place of residence. It was therefore, recommended that students struggling with suicidal ideation should seek help from friends for support, access professional counselling services, engage in physical exercises and relaxation techniques, and set achievable goals to mitigate academic frustration and cope more effectively. Guidance counsellors, social workers, academic advisors, and mental health professionals should provide support services, including mental health counselling, academic advising, social skills training, and guidance, without hesitation to students struggling with suicidal ideation in school.

Keywords: *Suicidal ideation, Coping strategies, Polytechnic students, Oyo State*

Introduction

The rising incidence of suicide among students remains a serious national issue that demands urgent attention from the Nigerian government, mental health professionals, and education stakeholders. Suicide refers to a deliberate act in which an individual intentionally ends his or her own life. This act can be carried out through various methods, including hanging, drowning, jumping from high places, bomb detonation, ingestion of toxic substances, electrocution, and firearm use, among others. In Nigeria, one of the most prevalent methods is the misuse of the insecticide SNIPER, which has gained recognition due to its frequent use by suicide victims (Ikuburuju-Orola, Makinde & Olusakin, 2022; Animba, Osim & Ezema, 2025).

Suicidal ideation is the first stage that can lead to suicide or a suicide attempt, involving thoughts, contemplation, or planning of self-harm. It can also be defined as the thoughts, intentions, plans, and mental images an individual forms about to end his or her life (Adetola

& Oluwaseun, 2022). Suicidal ideation shows a deliberate desire to end one's life, often as a means to escape intense suffering or emotional trauma. As a crucial aspect of suicidal behaviour, it reflects feelings of meaninglessness in life, prompting individuals to develop plans and dwell on thoughts of suicide (Larry, Chukwuorji, & Ekwe, 2023; Kolawole & Arulogun, 2025). This condition often manifest with various symptoms, including mood swings, sleep and appetite disturbances, neglect of personal care, anxiety, loss of interest, anhedonia (inability to experience pleasure), fatigue, overwhelming feelings of worthlessness and guilt, and difficulty concentrating or making decisions.

Suicidal ideation is a significant mental health concern among students on campus, and its prevalence continues to rise at an alarming rate across all age groups, posing a major public health challenge in Nigeria. It is not only prevalent among university undergraduates but also among polytechnic students. A study by Adetola and Oluwaseun (2022) found that 53.8% of undergraduates reported experiencing high levels of depression, while 64.8% of polytechnic students in Oyo State admitted to having suicidal thoughts and attempts due to academic pressures. Similarly, research by Akinyemi, Okpue, Onigbinde, Okafor, Akodu, and Odeyemi (2023) revealed that approximately 51.7% of Lagos State Polytechnic students had been diagnosed with mental health conditions linked to suicidal ideation. Several reported cases further highlight the severity of the issue. In 2014, a part-time student at The Polytechnic, Ibadan, committed suicide by hanging himself. In 2019, a male student from Lagos State Polytechnic took his own life after his girlfriend disappointed in relationship. That same year, a National Diploma 1 student from the Civil Engineering Department of Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State, was reported to have died by suicide. In 2022, a final-year student at the Federal Polytechnic, Oko in Anambra State was reported to have died by suicide after a relationship failed. In 2023, a student of Ilaro Polytechnic allegedly took his own life after losing his tuition fees to gambling. Also in 2024, a 30-year-old graduate of the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede was said to have died by hanging in Imo State.

Many cases of suicide often go unreported due to stigma, cultural and religious beliefs, as well as the criminalisation of suicide under the Nigerian constitution (Adegbite-Badmas, 2024). This growing issue among polytechnic students is particularly concerning, with most victims being individuals who have faced academic failure, severe academic stress, failed relationships, financial challenges, or substance abuse. The prevalence of suicidal ideation among students tends to rise during examination periods and while awaiting results. Other contributing factors include financial strain, sleep disturbances, increased academic workload, inadequate or inefficient transportation systems, lack of support from friends and family, disruptions in academic activities, and incidents of campus crime and violence (Uzoekwe, Nnadi, Mokwelu, Nwanna, & Ojo, 2023).

Adetola and Oluwaseun (2022) identified various factors contributing to the prevalence of suicidal ideation among polytechnic students in Nigeria. These include feelings of hopelessness, social isolation, lack of social support, mental health disorders, aggressive tendencies, impulsivity, substance abuse, a history of trauma or abuse, chronic illness, severe emotional distress, family history of suicide, and previous suicide attempts. Additionally, socio-cultural influences on suicide include the belief that suicide is a noble escape from shame and hardship, societal stigma, limited access to healthcare, and the impact of others who have died by suicide (Larry, Chukwuorji, & Ekwe, 2023). Situational factors that linked to suicidal ideation include financial difficulties, the loss of significant social or emotional relationships, stressful life events, and access to lethal means (Sikiru, Nurudeen, & Shehu, 2022; Ezea, 2025). These aspects provide a broad understanding and coping strategies for

preventing the prevalence of suicidal ideation, regardless of gender, age, religion, or place of residence.

Coping strategies refer to the ways of tolerating, reducing or minimizing stressful events. It is an effort made by individuals in managing situations that are seen as potentially harmful or stressful (Teismann, 2022). Essentially to cope with challenges of suicidal ideation, polytechnic students need to adopt various strategies to manage the problem in school. One key strategy is seeking social support, where students are encouraged to openly communicate with trusted people (including family members and friends) or experts like teachers, guidance counsellors, social workers, and mental health practitioners (Värnik, 2020; Ofole, 2025). Peer support groups can also provide a crucial emotional safety support, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation. Schools should create an environment where talking about mental health is normalized, reducing stigma and encouraging students to seek help when needed (Ipem, Azukaego, & Alaribe, 2023). Safe spaces within schools allow students to share their feelings or emotions without fear of judgment, which can help alleviate despair (Gritemeyer, 2021). Moreover, fostering a community that supports open dialogue about mental health can strengthen the overall well-being of students and prevent prevalence of suicidal ideation.

Another essential strategy is engaging in regular physical activities, which has been an effective way to improving mental health and reduce psychological distress. Physical exercise releases endorphins, natural chemicals in the brain that help lift mood and reduce the symptoms of depression (Värnik, 2020; Ibrahim & Adebowale, 2024). Schools can promote this through sports, yoga classes, or even mindfulness practices such as walking meditation. These activities not only provide a healthy outlet for stress but also foster social connections, which are essential in preventing the isolation that often accompanies suicidal ideation (Wong, 2022). Participation in group activities can help build a sense of community and shared experience, reducing feelings of loneliness. Additionally, movement-based mindfulness practices can increase mental clarity and emotional resilience, helping students manage difficult emotions more effectively (Wong, 2022; Ngwu, Lucy-Obil, Anyin & Oshima, 2023). Regular physical activity is thus both a preventive and therapeutic tool for managing mental health.

Equipping students with problem-solving and emotional regulation skills is another critical strategy in managing suicidal ideation. By learning how to break down complex issues into manageable steps, students can regain a sense of control over their lives, reducing the hopelessness that often leads to suicidal thoughts (Ibrahim & Adebowale, 2024). Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques, for example, help students identify and challenge negative thought patterns, replacing them with more constructive thinking (Ifem, Ifeoma, & Alaribe, 2023). Similarly, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) can help students manage intense emotions without resorting to harmful behaviours like self-harm or suicide (Abdel-Khalek, 2021). Schools can integrate these therapeutic techniques into regular counselling sessions or workshops, giving students the tools to cope with emotional distress. Practicing these skills in a supportive environment can enhance students' emotional resilience, allowing them to handle stress more effectively. The focus on problem-solving and emotional regulation helps students face challenges with a healthier mindset.

Setting realistic goals and practicing self-compassion also are key strategies for fostering a sense of hope and purpose in students. Often, suicidal ideation stems from feelings of failure or overwhelming pressure, so helping students set achievable goals can provide them with a sense of accomplishment (Teismann, 2022; Ezea, 2025). Counsellors can work with students

to break down long-term aspirations into manageable steps, helping them focus on their strengths and build confidence. Practicing self-compassion, where students learn to be kind and understanding toward themselves, is also crucial in reducing self-criticism, which often exacerbates suicidal thoughts (Teismann, 2022). Schools can promote self-compassion through mindfulness exercises or self-reflection activities, encouraging students to appreciate their unique strengths and capabilities. Additionally, providing career counselling and mentorship programmes can help students envision a positive future, giving them a sense of direction beyond their current struggles (Zhang, 2023). By combining goal-setting with self-compassion, students can develop a more hopeful and balanced perspective on life.

Empirical studies on coping strategies for suicidal ideation among students often focuses on some demographic factors such as gender, age, place of residence, and religion. These factors can significantly influence both the prevalence of suicidal ideation and the coping mechanisms employed. In particular, empirical studies have found that these demographic characteristics shape how students approach mental health challenges, including suicidal thoughts, and the types of interventions that might be most effective (Värnik, 2020). Studies frequently reveal gender differences in the prevalence of suicidal ideation and the strategies employed to cope with it. Research by Gritemeyer (2021) found that female students are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, yet they tend to seek help more frequently than their male counterparts. However, males often display more reluctance in seeking mental health support, which may be linked to societal norms around masculinity (Eze, Anugwom, & Obasi, 2022). In addition, females tend to prefer emotional and social coping strategies, such as confiding in friends and family, while males may resort to more isolating behaviours, potentially exacerbating their risk (Eze, Anugwom & Obasi, 2022).

The age of students is important in understanding suicidal ideation and coping strategies. According to Teismann (2022), younger students (ages from 18 to 25 years) tend to experience higher rates of suicidal ideation and may be more prone to impulsive reactions, like self-harm. However, older students between the ages of 26 and 35years are more likely to use cognitive-behavioural approaches, such as mindfulness and stress management, as part of their coping strategies. This suggests that developmental stage plays a significant role in how students perceive and handle mental health challenges. Regarding place of residence, Värnik (2020) found that students living off-campus may face limited access to mental health resources or counselling, contributing to feelings of isolation and hopelessness. These students may be more inclined to adopt maladaptive coping strategies, like substance abuse, due to restricted support and interventions. On-campus students, conversely, often have more accessible counselling services and peer support groups, enabling them to engage in more problem-focused coping, such as seeking therapy or joining support groups (Okechukwu, Adeola, & Tunde, 2022). This highlights the importance of on-campus support systems in promoting adaptive coping strategies among students.

Religion often serves as a protective factor against suicidal ideation. Abdel-Khalek (2021) found that students who regularly engage in religious practices or identify strongly with a faith tradition report lower levels of suicidal thoughts. This protective effect is attributed to religious teachings that emphasise the value of life and provide a framework for meaning and hope. Furthermore, religious students tend to use faith-based coping strategies, such as prayer, religious meditation, or seeking counsel from religious leaders, as a way to manage their mental health. Zhang (2023) underscores the importance of multifaceted interventions, and showed that female students in rural areas who are deeply religious tend to use both social and faith-based coping strategies. However, male students from urban settings with less religious involvement were more likely to use problem-solving strategies but also

exhibited higher levels of risky behaviours, such as substance abuse, when facing suicidal ideation.

Essentially, a number of studies had been carried out on nature of suicidal ideation in Nigeria. For instance, Ogunsemi, Olaniyan, and Oloyede (2020) examined the coping strategies employed by university students in Nigeria to address suicidal ideation. The researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey involving 500 students from various Nigerian universities, using standardised questionnaires to assess suicidal ideation and coping mechanisms. The findings revealed that adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving and seeking social support, were significantly associated with lower levels of suicidal thoughts. However, maladaptive strategies, such as avoidance and substance use, correlated with higher levels of suicidal ideation. The study emphasised the importance of promoting adaptive coping strategies through counselling services on campuses.

Eze, Anugwom, and Obasi (2022) investigated the role of religious coping strategies in managing suicidal ideation among Nigerian students. The research involved a survey of 400 students from various tertiary institutions, and findings revealed that students who engaged in prayer, meditation, and religious community activities reported significantly lower levels of suicidal thoughts. Okechukwu, Adeola, and Tunde (2022) examined the moderating roles of coping style and resilience on the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among Nigerian students. The researchers found that adaptive coping and resilience can significantly mitigate the impact of academic stress on suicidal thoughts. However, maladaptive coping, such as avoidance, was associated with higher levels of suicidal ideation, emphasising the need for resilience-building programmes within institutions.

Gritemeyer (2023) explored the effects of social support and mental health services on coping with suicidal ideation. The study underscored the importance of fostering open communication within educational settings, where students are encouraged to reach out to mental health professionals or peer support groups. Creating safe spaces and reducing stigma around mental health topics were highlighted as critical in lowering suicidal thoughts among students. Senapati, Kar, and Gupta (2024) examined the role of perceived social support and avoidant coping in predicting suicidal ideation. The study found that students who received strong family and peer support were less likely to experience suicidal ideation. However, those using avoidant coping strategies, such as ignoring or escaping stressful situations, faced a higher risk.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of suicidal ideation in Nigeria, none, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, have specifically examined the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State. Most existing research has focused on coping styles, predisposing factors, and students' perceptions of suicidal ideation, often varying in sample size, participant demographics, and geographical scope. However, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the coping strategies employed by polytechnic students in this specific region. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating the strategies adopted by polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria, to cope with suicidal ideation, thereby contributing valuable insights to both research and intervention efforts.

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of the study was to investigate strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The moderating variables were also considered to determine whether gender, age, place of residence, and religion would

influence the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation among polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Question
1. What are the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age.
3. There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on place of residence.
4. There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on religion.

Methodology
The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design as the most appropriate method for collecting and analysing data on strategies for coping with suicidal ideation among polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study population consisted of all students at The Polytechnic Ibadan. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select three faculties based on population, while a simple random sampling technique was used to select 450 respondents across these faculties. Specifically, 150 respondents were chosen from the Faculty of Engineering, 150 from the Faculty of Financial and Management Studies, and 150 from the Faculty of Business and Communication Sciences.

The data collection instrument, titled "Strategies for Coping with Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (SCSIQ)," was developed by the researchers based on a literature review. The content validity of the instrument was done by five experts from the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State. To assess reliability, the test-retest method was applied by administering the questionnaire twice to students in the Department of Electrical Engineering Technology at Kwara State Polytechnic, with a two-week interval between administrations. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse the correlation between the two sets of scores, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.79.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A gathered demographic information, while Section B focused on strategies for coping with suicidal ideation. Section B adopted a four-point Likert rating scale, with response options of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The instrument's benchmark was established by summing the response points and dividing by four, resulting in a mean score of 2.5 (i.e., 4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5). Mean scores of 2.5 and above were considered as effective coping strategies for suicidal ideation, while scores below 2.5 were considered less strategies.

Ethical Considerations
Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process. Consent to participate was obtained through the completion of an informed consent form. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no form of coercion involved. Assurance was given that all responses would remain confidential and that participants' privacy would be fully protected.

Results

This is about the data that was gathered. Four hundred and fifty (450) samples were randomly selected for the study, but 443 questionnaires were properly retrieved and analysed. The hypotheses were analysed using Independent t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: What are the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by   polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Rank Order of the Strategies for Coping with Suicidal Ideation as Expressed by Polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria

N	As far as I am concerned, coping with suicidal ideation involve:	Mean	SD	Rank
1	seeking support from friends when feel overwhelmed.	3.92	.932	1st
15	seeking professional counselling services when in distress.	3.89	.084	2nd
5	engaging in physical activities (e.g., sports, exercise) to improve my mood.	3.87	.737	3rd
3	practicing deep breathing exercises when feel anxious.	3.85	.972	4th
14	limiting exposure to negative media content.	3.81	.549	5th
11	establishing a regular sleep routine to improve mental clarity or emotional resilience.	3.78	.727	6th
4	learning effective study habits to manage my academic workload better	3.76	.703	7th
9	practicing time management to reduce academic anxiety.	3.69	.661	8th
12	developing problem-solving skills to feel more capable of handling challenges.	3.63	.849	9th
7	avoiding substance use (e.g., alcohol or drugs) as a way to cope with psychological stress.	3.57	.904	10th
8	practicing mindfulness or meditation to manage emotional stress.	3.52	.895	11th
10	practicing relaxation techniques (e.g., yoga, aromatherapy) to reduce academic pressure.	3.49	.724	12th
2	using journaling to express emotions while reflect on positive aspects of life.	3.40	.628	13th
6	seeking religious support or guidance in school.	3.36	.632	14th
13	reaching out to helplines, including crisis services, when feeling	3.31	.741	15th

distressed.

Table 1 presented the mean scores and rank order of strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State, Nigeria. All items listed in the table were identified as strategies for coping with suicidal ideation among polytechnic students in Oyo State, as they were ranked above the midpoint mean score of 2.50. Specifically, items with mean values of 3.92, 3.89, and 3.87, respectively, were ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, indicating that seeking support from friends when feeling overwhelmed, seeking professional counselling services when in distress, and engaging in physical activities (e.g., sports, exercise) to improve mood were considered the most effective strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender*

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test on Strategies for Coping with Suicidal Ideation as Expressed by Polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Female	230	57.07	4.894				
				441	2.21*	1.96	0.012
Male	213	55.96	4.723				

* Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 2 showed the calculated t-value of 2.21 and critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value was greater than the critical t-value; hence, the hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there was a significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age*

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Strategies for Coping with Suicidal Ideation as Expressed by Polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age

Source	df	SS	MS	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between group	2	39.369	19.684	1.85	3.00	0.071
Within group	440	4672.801	10.620			
Total	442	4712.170				

* Not significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 3 indicated the calculated F-ratio of 1.85 and critical F-ratio of 3.00. The calculated F-ratio was less than the critical F-ratio; hence, the hypothesis was accepted. This showed that there was no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on place of residence*

Table 4:Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test on Strategies for Coping with Suicidal ideation as expressed by Polytechnic students in Oyo State based on place of residence

Residence	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
On-campus	243	52.11	5.816				
				441	2.19*	1.96	0.014
Off-campus	200	51.03	5.148				

* Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 4 showed the calculated t-value of 2.19 and critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value was greater than the critical t-value; hence, the hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there was a significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on place of residence.

Hypothesis Four: *There is no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on religion*

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test showing on strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by Polytechnic students in Oyo State based on religion

Religion	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Christian	233	57.64	5.816				
				441	0.74	1.96	0.601
Muslim	210	53.96	5.148				

* Not significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 5 indicated the calculated t-value of 0.74 and critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value was less than the critical t-value; hence, the hypothesis was accepted. This showed that there was no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on religion.

Discussion of Findings
The findings revealed that polytechnic students adopt various strategies for coping with suicidal ideation in school. These include seeking support from friends when feeling overwhelmed, seeking professional counselling services when in distress, and engaging in physical activities (e.g., sports, exercise) to improve their mood. The finding is in line with Gritemeyer (2021) that found that physical activity significantly reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, both of which are associated with suicidal thoughts. Ibrahim and Adebowale (2024) showed that mindfulness practices, such as meditation and body awareness exercises, helped students reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, which contributed to a reduction in suicidal ideation. The reason supporting this finding could be that many polytechnic students face academic stress, including rigorous coursework and high expectations. This shared stress can make students more receptive to coping strategies that reduce academic pressure, such as time management skills, mindfulness practices, and peer support.

Findings showed that there was a significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender. This implied that both male and female respondents had a different expression on strategies for coping with suicidal ideation in Oyo State. This finding is in line with Gritemeyer (2021) who revealed that gender of students had a significant influence in the coping strategies for managing suicidal ideation in school. Gender differences in psychosocial experiences such as gender-based discrimination, social expectations, or roles, could lead to distinct emotional responses to stress. These experiences might shape how males and females react to suicidal ideation, influencing their choice of coping strategies.

Another finding indicated that there was no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age. This implied that regardless of age, respondents adopted the same strategies for coping with suicidal ideation in school. The finding contradicted Teismann (2022), whose study revealed a significant difference in the strategies for reducing suicidal ideation among undergraduates based on age. The reason for this finding could be that students, regardless of age, have similar access to mental health resources, such as counselling services, peer support groups, or online mental health platforms. This could mean that coping strategies do not vary significantly between age groups, as they all rely on the same support systems. Another reason is that students might experience similar levels of stress or pressures related to academics, peer relationships, and future uncertainties. These common stressors could lead to the use of similar coping strategies, regardless of age.

Findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on place of residence. This implied that students who stay off-campus were differed from on-campus in their expression regarding strategies for coping with suicidal ideation in Oyo State. The finding is not in line with Värnik (2020), whose study revealed no significant difference between undergraduates that stayed on-campus and off-campus on ways to cope with suicidal ideation in school. Therefore, the reason for this finding could be that on-campus students have more opportunities to interact with peers and participate in extracurricular activities, which can provide emotional support during difficult times. In contrast, off-campus students might feel isolated or disconnected from such support systems, leading to greater use of maladaptive coping strategies such as substance abuse or withdrawal.

Findings also showed that was no significant difference in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based religion. The finding is in line with Abdel-Khalek (2021), who revealed that students on campus adopted similar coping strategies for managing suicidal ideation when under distress. This implied that both Christian and Muslim respondents adopted similar strategies for coping with suicidal ideation in school. The reason for this finding could be that both Islam and Christianity emphasise the sanctity of life and discourage suicidal behaviour, which might influence their followers to adopt coping strategies that align with religious teachings. These teachings could provide a common ground, resulting in a shared approach to dealing with suicidal ideation across religious groups. Another reason could be that both religious groups rely on universal coping strategies such as prayer, meditation, social support, or seeking professional help from their religious leaders.

Implications of Findings for Mental Health Counselling
The study's findings highlight counselling implications for polytechnic students in Oyo State, particularly regarding the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation. Many students rely on friends for emotional support, confiding in them during moments of distress. Some students also seek professional counselling services, demonstrating a readiness to get expert help when dealing with overwhelming thoughts. Engaging in physical activities such as sports or regular exercise also emerged as a coping strategy among students, helping to improve their mood and mental well-being. Despite these efforts, the findings revealed no significant differences in coping strategies based on age and religion. However, notable differences were observed based on gender and place of residence, which should not be overlooked. These results underscore the need for targeted mental health counselling programmes that take into account the specific backgrounds and challenges students face.

Students living off-campus may have limited access to mental health services, making it essential for guidance counsellors to extend support beyond the school environment. Tailored mental health counselling initiatives should be designed to reach both on- and off-campus students effectively. Gender differences in coping strategies also suggest that male and female students may benefit from different types of counselling interventions. For instance, some students might respond better to one-on-one sessions, while others may find group therapy or peer-led support more effective. Furthermore, even though religion did not show a significant influence statistically, it remains an important part of students' identities and may inform their coping choices. Culturally and spiritually sensitive counselling methods can help make interventions more relatable and impactful. Promoting access to responsive, inclusive, and student-focused mental health counselling is key to helping students manage suicidal ideation and build healthier coping mechanisms.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that various strategies were adopted by polytechnic students for coping with suicidal ideation in school. These include seeking support from friends when overwhelmed, seeking professional counselling services when in distress, and engaging in physical activities (e.g., sports, exercise) to improve their mood. Further findings revealed that there were no significant differences in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on age and religion. However, there were significant differences in the strategies for coping with suicidal ideation as expressed by polytechnic students in Oyo State based on gender and place of residence. Sequel to the findings of the study, it was recommended that;

1. Students struggling with suicidal ideation should seek help from friends for support, access professional counselling services, engage in physical exercises and relaxation techniques, and set achievable goals to mitigate academic frustration and cope more effectively.

2. Students should be empowered by school guidance and counselling programmes with effective strategies for coping with suicidal ideation through workshops, seminars, conferences, and symposia, to promote their mental and psychological wellbeing.

3. Students should have access to gender-sensitive counselling and support services, provided by institutions that tailor support to address the specific needs and challenges of male and female students coping with suicidal ideation.

4. Students, regardless of age, should feel encouraged to seek support services, such as mental health counselling, academic advising, social skills training, or help from guidance counsellors and level advisors in their various departments, without hesitation when struggling with suicidal ideation in school.

5. All students, either living on-campus or off-campus, should make use of campus support services such as mental health services to cope with suicidal ideation and address their distinct needs.

6. Students of all faiths should engage in help-seeking behaviours, including religious counselling, as a coping strategy to mitigate academic pressure, thereby reducing suicidal ideation.

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