



Relationship between Severity of Suicidal Ideation and Regulation of Emotion (SSIRE)

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Introduction

- Prior research looking at suicidal ideation often investigates the role of emotional regulation on the presence of suicidal ideation (1; 2; 4).
- There is less research investigating the role that emotional regulation plays on the severity of suicidal ideation.
- Prominent theoretical models of suicide, such as the 3 Step Theory (3ST) and the Interpersonal Psychology Theory of Suicide (IPTS), emphasise the importance of hopelessness and belongingness as risk factors for suicidal ideation (5; 6).
- In this study, we examined the relationship between emotional regulation and current severity of suicidal ideation using a psychiatric population ($N=91$) and whether this relationship is moderated by hopelessness and belongingness.
- Prediction: 1) higher emotional regulation will be correlated with lower severity of suicidal ideation, 2) this relationship is moderated by belongingness, and 3) this relationship is moderated by hopelessness.

Methods

Participants

- $N = 91$ adults were recruited from a Utah hospital for a couples crisis response planning intervention for reducing post-discharge suicide risk. One participant was excluded for missing data, so a total of 90 participants were included.

Demographics

- **Suicide Ideation** = 60% ($n = 54$) of adults reported experiencing current suicide ideation and 40% ($n = 36$) of adults reported not experiencing current suicide ideation.
- **Median Age** = 33 (Range = 20-57).

Measures

- **Suicidal Ideation Severity:** Severity of Suicidal Ideation (SSI) (e.g., "I have no wish to live.")
- **Difficulties in Emotional Regulation:** Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS) (e.g., "I am attentive to my feelings.")
- **Hopelessness:** Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) (e.g., "I just don't get the breaks, and there's no reason to believe that I will in the future.")
- **Belongingness:** Belongingness (INQ) (e.g., "These days, I feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.")

Results

Correlations

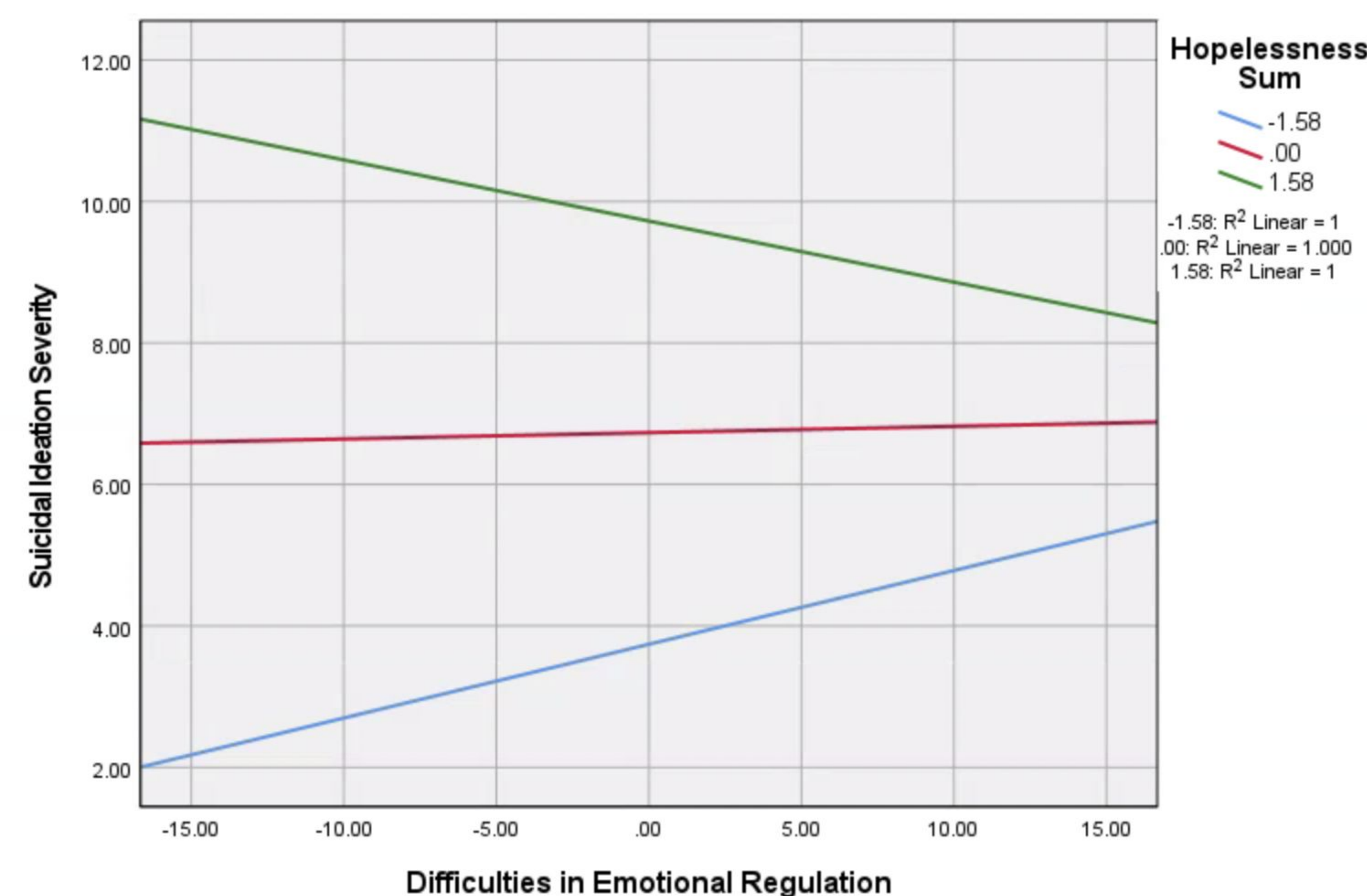
Table 1

Bivariate correlations among severity of suicidal ideation (SSI), hopelessness, belongingness, and difficulties in emotional regulation (DER).

	1.	2.	3.
1. SSI	-		
2. Belongingness	-.55***	-	
3. Hopelessness	.41***	-.71***	-
4. DER - Sum	.25*	-.52***	.50***
5. DER - Lack of Emotional Awareness	.04	-.31**	.30**
6. DER - Lack of Emotional Clarity	.25*	-.45***	.39***
7. DER - Difficulty with Goal-Directed Behavior	.17	-.30**	.31**
8. DER - Impulse Control Difficulties	.12	-.28**	.24*
9. DER - Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses	.26*	-.37***	.42***
10. DER - Limited Emotion Regulation Strategies	.23*	-.53***	.48***

$p < .05 = *$, $p < .01 = **$, $p < .001 = ***$

- The Severity of Suicidal Ideation (SSI) sum score and the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS) sum score were weakly positively correlated ($r(90) = .249$, $p = .018$).
- The SSI sum score was strongly negatively correlated with the Belongingness (INQ) sum score, $r(90) = -.553$, $p < .001$, and moderately positively correlated with the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) sum score $r(90) = .419$, $p < .001$.



Results Continued

- Regression was used to investigate whether hopelessness might moderate the effects of difficulties in emotional regulation (DER) on suicidal ideation severity (SIS). The results indicated a significant interaction, $b = -.060$, $SE = .030$, $p = .044$, 95%CI [-.120, -.002].
- To probe the interaction, simple effects coefficients were computed at three values of hopelessness, 1 SD below the mean, at the mean, and 1 SD above the mean. At high, mean, and low levels of hopelessness, there was no statistically significant relationship between DERS and the SSI.
- Regression was used to investigate whether belongingness might moderate the effects of DER on SIS. The results did not indicate a significant interaction, $b = .007$, $SE = .005$, $p = .156$, 95%CI [-.003, .016].

Discussion

- Our regression results support the hypotheses that lower DER is correlated with lower SIS, and that DER and SIS are moderated by hopelessness. Belongingness was not found to be a moderator.
- While the relationships between DERS and SIS were not significant at the levels of hopelessness probed, trends were noted.
 - Low hopelessness: As DER gets higher, SSI gets higher.
 - High hopelessness: As DER gets higher, SSI gets lower.
- Possible explanation: Difficulties in emotional regulation may be correlated with coping strategies that provide immediate relief, but have negative long-term consequences. Those that are experiencing greater levels of hopelessness may be using such strategies, thus reducing their severity of suicidal ideation in the moment.
- Limitations: 1) small sample size and 2) BHS and SSI score variability may explain the different outcomes of relationship between DER and SIS during different levels of BHS.
- Future research: 1) larger participant pool, 2) full BHS for more variability in hopelessness, and 3) investigate the role of coping mechanism type.

References

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