

# Dysfunctional Parental Styles and Suicidal Ideation in School Adolescents in Huánuco, 2020

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## Abstract

This study is the result of a quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive, correlational and cross-sectional research. Its objective was to describe the relationship between the variables: dysfunctional parental styles and Suicidal Ideation. For this purpose, the parental styles scale (MOPS), adapted by (Matalinares, 2014) and the Beck Suicidal Ideation Scale constructed by Beck (1970), were applied, adapted to the national context by Bobadilla in Chiclayo (2004). The study found significant relationships between maternal and paternal dysfunctional styles and Suicidal Ideation. The highest correlation scores were between the dimensions: father abuse ( $\rho=0.45$ ) and mother abuse ( $\rho=0.396$ ) with Suicidal Ideation, i.e., the greater the imposition and verticality in parental relationships, the greater the presence of Suicidal Ideation. Another associated element shows that if there are significant differences (significance $<0.05$ ), in ideation by gender, it is women who present greater ideation than men. No significant differences were found in the variables studied, according to educational level. It is concluded that, by verifying the significant relationships between parental styles and Suicidal Ideation in a sample of adolescents in school in Huánuco, the results are interpreted in the prevention of suicide in the local context.

**Keywords:** Adolescents • Parenting styles • Suicidal Ideation

## Introduction

In recent decades, Suicidal Ideation (SI) in adolescents has become a public health problem in which a series of personal, family, economic and social factors are interrelated; consequently, it is considered one of the main causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide that increases in the juvenile child population [1].

Multiple studies have related SI to the absence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a fundamental component in the establishment of behavioral patterns that allow coping with different situations that arise in daily life. In case of absence of EI, there are methods such as Targeted Intervention that seeks to improve EI skills could help to weaken the association between peer victimization, loneliness and SI in adolescents [2].

Suicidal Ideation has components prior to suicidal behavior, as such it comprises cognitive aspects such as self-destructive thinking caused by the marked hopelessness to the future, but without action planning, followed by behavioral aspects, such as lack of skills to cope with difficulties, at the emotional level, intense suffering [3]. One of the characteristics is the desire not to exist, it can be considered as the previous motivation of self-destructive behavior, as a sign of deep dissatisfaction with their way of life in the present moment [4]. Therefore, it should be assumed that Suicidal Ideation in the preliminary step of the suicidal attempt with the risk of ending their existence.

According to WHO specialists (2018), epidemiological data indicated that more than 1.1 million adolescents died between 10 and 19 years of age due to suicide, being the second cause of mortality together with interpersonal violence and HIV-AIDS, after death caused by traffic accidents. In Latin America, each year more than 81,000 people take their own lives, 56% of

them in the United States and Canada, with higher rates in Cuba, Brazil and Colombia and lower rates in Uruguay and Peru. Evidence suggests that risk factors vary according to the age and sex of the person [5,6]. In this regard, researchers from PAHO (2019) reported that worldwide, men have a higher rate of suicide than women, with a ratio of approximately 3.5 to 1; although women have a higher number of attempts than men, although men use more violent and lethal methods.

Existing explanatory models of suicidal behavior coincide in postulating that the phenomenon of suicide occurs as a consequence of vulnerability between predisposing factors and interaction with triggering stressors [7]. Family factors such as physical and psychological abuse, maltreatment among parents and other family members, economic and social situation, among others, have been continuously identified as possible risk and protective factors for youth at risk of suicide. The suicidal adolescent, from his early years and throughout his evolutionary development, has experienced an accumulation of experiences with a high emotional charge, within the interactions with his family nucleus, peers and other socializations, which structured a weak self-concept and a particular way of facing the world [8,9]. On the other hand, adolescence is a stage of emancipation in the search for autonomy and the consequent questioning of obedience and the value of respect for parental authority.

In this regard, the family as the main socializing agent, has received significant attention reported among the findings related to family structure, cohesion and the presence of conflicts, studied in relation to different criteria of psychological adjustment of children [10]. The study of these family variables argues that optimal family functioning is related to a good psychological adjustment of the offspring, otherwise when family functioning denotes negative aspects it is related to emotional underdevelopment, lack

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of competence and mal adjustment [11]. Thus, parenting styles understood as a set of behaviors committed to parental responsibilities, spontaneous expressions of affection, communication and attitudes come to shape an emotional climate in the interaction between parents and children [12]. However, dysfunctional parenting styles can become determinant factors for the incubation of suicidal attitudes and risks in adolescents or, on the contrary, protective factors for the development of life skills.

It is also known that family factors that have been related to Suicidal Ideation in Latin American adolescents are poor communication between parents and children, recurrence of family conflicts, deficiency of problem-solving skills and negative criticism of children's performance [13].

The preceding studies on Suicidal Ideation suggest the existence of clinical epidemiological work on Suicidal Ideation, risk factors aggravated by depressive disorders, lack of a life project, dysfunctional families with the presence of alcohol consumption, family violence. In addition, there is empirical evidence suggesting controversies in the results of research on the combination of affection with imposing, strict and indulgent actions by parents, with controversial results for and against in relation to greater psychological adjustment and psychosocial adaptation of adolescents [14].

Finally, there is a need to strengthen parental skills in child rearing, mainly in terms of autonomy, protection and affection in the interaction as protective factors against various emotional and personality disorders. Baumrind (2005) and Bio (2020) point out that parental styles are related to the emotional intelligence of adolescents, stating that the higher the degree of abuse, overprotection or indifference, the lower the emotional capacities of the adolescent related to the intrapersonal area, stress management, adaptability and mood. Therefore, the question was: What is the relationship between dysfunctional parental styles and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents attending school in Huánuco, 2020? [15,16].

## Objectives

### General objective

To determine the relationship between dysfunctional parenting styles and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents in school in Huánuco, 2020.

### Specific objectives

- To identify the levels of dysfunctional parenting styles and Suicidal Ideation among adolescents in school in Huánuco, 2020.
- To establish the relationship between the parental style of Abuse, Overprotection and Indifference and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents attending school in Huánuco 2020.
- To compare, according to sex and high school grade, the variables dysfunctional parental styles and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents in school in Huánuco, 2020.

### General hypothesis

Between dysfunctional parental styles (Abuse, Overprotection and Indifference) and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents in school in Huánuco, 2020.

## Methodology

The purpose of the research work was to correlate dysfunctional parenting styles associated with Suicidal Ideation in adolescents from secondary schools in Huánuco.

### Design

The study was typified with a quantitative, non-experimental approach, with a descriptive correlational design, as it relates the variables parental styles and Suicidal Ideation. According to Hernandez, the type of study aims to know the relationship or degree of association that exists between two or more concepts, categories or variables in a particular context.

### Sample

The estimated student population in the province of Huánuco is 16.015 students from the third to fifth year of secondary school and from the total number of educational institutions (Minedu-Ministerio de Educación, 2019). The sampling used was non-probabilistic, by convenience, given the accessibility and proximity of the sample to the researchers of the study [17]. Thus, the sample participants are collected and amounted to 289 students from third to fifth grade of high school: 60.2% males and 39.8% females (Table 1). Of the total, 66.8% indicated living with both parents and 97.9% indicated having at least one significant person in their lives.

### Instruments

The Parker et al. [18] Parenting Styles Scale (MOPS), adapted to the reality by Matalinares, was used as an instrument for data collection. The reliability of the Dysfunctional Parental Styles Scale was estimated by the dimensions of each subscale (father and mother). In the father abuse dimension, values above .700 were obtained (Table 2), placing it in the level considered moderate [19]; similarly, the abuse and indifferences dimensions in both subscales achieved moderate levels. It is worth mentioning that the results of the overprotection dimension of both subscales obtained values below .700 and should be considered with caution as recommended by Viladrich et al. [20].

In the case of the instrument as such, Matalinares state that the validity and reliability of the Dysfunctional Parental Styles Scale (MOPS), by Parker et al. [18], has Peruvian scales. The sample consisted of 2370 adolescents aged 13 to 19 years (47.6% male, 52.4% female), 56.5% aged between 15 and 16 years, in the third (32%), fourth (34.2%) and fifth (33.8%) years of secondary school in 14 cities representing the coast, highlands and jungle of Peru. The scale showed a moderate reliability of 0.87 in the father's parenting styles subscale, as well as a reliability of 0.80 in the mother's parenting styles subscale. In the exploratory factor analysis, 3 factors were obtained: indifference, abuse and overprotection. The other instrument used was the Suicidal Ideation Scale [SSI] created by Aaron Beck and Maria Kovacs-1970. The scale is composed of 18 items distributed in four dimensions: desire to live or die, suicidal thinking, suicidal attempt, and hopelessness adapted in Peru by Bobadilla et al. in Chiclayo-2004. The reliability of the Suicidal Ideation Scale achieved an alpha=0.85 and omega=0.851, indicative of a level considered moderate of internal consistency [19] (Table 3).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the sample of secondary school students in Huánuco (n=289).

Frequency			Frequency		
Gender			Institutions		
Female	174	60.20%	San Agustín	192	66.4%
Male	115	39.80%	La Salle	50	17.3%
Grade			Marcos Duran	32	11.10%
Third	56	19.40%	Other	15	5.20%
Fourth	110	38.10%	With whom do you live?		

Fifth	123	42.60%	Father and mother	193	66.80%
<b>Significant people in your life</b>			Father only	68	23.50%
Yes	283	97.90%	Mother only	12	4.20%
No	6	2.10%	No parents but with other family members	16	5.50%
Total	289	100	Total	289	100

**Table 2.** Reliability of the Dysfunctional Parental Styles Scale in high school students in Huánuco (n=289).

Subscales and dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha	McDonald's Omega
<b>Dysfunctional parenting styles</b>			
Abuse	7	0.766	0.787
Overprotection	2	0.566	0.567
Indifference	5	0.724	0.701
<b>Mother's dysfunctional styles</b>			
Abuse	6	0.779	0.789
Overprotection	3	0.559	0.64
Indifference	5	0.701	0.724

**Table 3.** Reliability of the Suicidal Ideation Scale in high school students in Huánuco, Peru (n=289).

	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	McDonald's Omega
Suicidal ideation	18	0.842	0.855

## Procedures

This research is divided into five phases: 1) Design and approval of the research project by the University Research Directorate of UNHEVAL; 2) Phase of theoretical information gathering regarding the topic and management of permissions from the directors of the participating schools; 3) Application of the instruments, which due to the pandemic, the virtual digital survey was used, with a google application, coordinated and supported by classroom tutors, making use of informed consent and later tabulation and statistical analysis of the data; 4) Preparation of the Research Report and the scientific article; 5) Return of the results obtained to the participating institutions; 6) Return of the results obtained to the participating institutions; 7) Preparation of the research report and the scientific article; 8) Preparation of the research report and the scientific article; and 9) Return of the results obtained to the participating institutions. The responses from the instruments, duly completed and verified, were transcribed into an Excel 2013 program template. This information was exported to JAMOVI version 1.2, and SPSS version 25 [20,21]. Descriptive analyses were performed for each study variable and for the sociodemographic data of the sample, using frequency tables and percentages. On the other hand, inferential analyses were performed through Spearman's rho, Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis hypothesis tests, since the normality analysis showed the absence of this assumption in the variables studied. Finally, following the recommendation of the APA (2010), the inferential results are accompanied by the effect size and reliability of the instruments used in this study.

## Results

This section presents the results according to the proposed objectives and the central hypothesis of the research, the statistical analysis was performed using non-parametric statistics.

Specific objective 1: To identify the levels of dysfunctional parental styles and Suicidal Ideation presented by adolescents in school in Huánuco, 2020.

According to objective 1, Table 4 contains information on dysfunctional parental styles and their dimensions in a sample of high school students. The information highlights a predominance of the "average" level in all dimensions except in the mother's indifference dimension, which mostly achieves a low level (64%). According to Table 5, Suicidal Ideation achieved a low level in the total sample studied.

Specific objective 2: To establish the relationship between the parental style of Abuse, Overprotection and Indifference and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents attending school in Huánuco 2020. The statistical tests used were nonparametric. Thus, the correlation was analyzed with Spearman's rho coefficient. Table 6 shows the presence of significant relationships between maternal and paternal dysfunctional styles and Suicidal Ideation. The highest correlation scores were between the dimensions father abuse ( $\rho=0.45$ ) and mother abuse ( $\rho=0.396$ ) with Suicidal Ideation. The effect size ( $r^2$ ) associated with all correlations was significant ( $>0.10$ , Dominguez-Lara, 2017).

Specific objective 3: To compare, according to sex and high school grade, the variables dysfunctional parental styles and Suicidal Ideation in adolescents in school in Huánuco, 2020. Table 7 compares the variables of interest according to sex. The result detected significant differences (significance $<0.05$ ), only in the Suicidal Ideation variable with a greater presence in females. No significant differences were obtained between males and females for the variable dysfunctional parenting styles. Additionally, the effect size ( $r$ ) was estimated, whose absolute values below .10 are considered insignificant (Field, 2017). Table 8 presents the comparisons of the study variables according to the student's grade (third, fourth and fifth). No significant differences were detected in the variables studied or in their dimensions. It should be specified, when estimating the effect size ( $\epsilon^2$ ), values of  $<0.01$  were found (Field, 2017), except in the dysfunctional styles abuse and overprotection of the father and mother where there were significant effect sizes with a greater presence in adolescents in 5<sup>th</sup> grade of high school (abuse of the father, overprotection of the father and mother) and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of high school (abuse of the mother) (Table 9).

**Table 4.** Levels of Dysfunctional Parental Styles in high school students in Huánuco, Peru (n=289).

	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
	<b>Father abuse</b>			<b>Mother abuse</b>	
High	5	1.7	High	30	10.4
Average	184	63.7	Average	259	89.6
Low	100	34.6	Low	-	-
	<b>Overprotection of the father</b>			<b>Overprotection of the mother</b>	
High	5	1.7	High	32	11.1
Average	284	98.3	Average	257	88.9
Low	-	-	Low	-	-
	<b>Indifference of the father</b>			<b>Mother's indifference</b>	
High	65	22.5	High	1	0.4
Average	224	77.5	Average	103	35.6
Low	-	-	Low	185	64
Total	289	100	Total	289	100

**Note:** The categories were established according to local scales obtained by Matalinares.

**Table 5.** Levels of Suicidal Ideation in high school students in Huánuco, Peru (n=289).

	Frequency	Percentage
Under	289	100
Average	-	-
High	-	-
Total	289	100

**Table 6.** Correlation between Dysfunctional Parental Styles and Suicidal Ideation in high school students in Huánuco (n=289).

<b>Correlation between dysfunctional parental styles</b>		<b>Suicidal ideation</b>	
Dysfunctional parenting styles	Father abuse	Correlation (significance)	0.45 (<0.001)
		r <sup>2</sup>	0.203
	Father's overprotection	Correlation (significance)	0.388 (<0.001)
		r <sup>2</sup>	0.151
	Father's indifference	Correlation (significance)	0.347 (<0.001)
		r <sup>2</sup>	0.12
Dysfunctional styles of the mother	Mother abuse	Correlation (significance)	0.396 (<0.001)
		r <sup>2</sup>	0.157
	Mother's overprotection	Correlation (significance)	0.377 (<0.001)
		r <sup>2</sup>	0.142
	Mother's indifference	Correlation (significance)	0.218 (<0.001)
		r <sup>2</sup>	0.048

**Note:** r<sup>2</sup>=coefficient of determination; estimator of effect size (Dominguez-Lara, 2017).

**Table 7.** Comparison, according to sex, of the variables: Dysfunctional Parental Styles and Suicidal Ideation in high school students of Huánuco (n=289).

Variables and dimensions	Average range		U de Mann-Whitney (significance)	r
	Male (n=115)	Female (n=174)		
<b>Dysfunctional parenting styles</b>				
Abuse	139.02	148.95	9317.5 (0.318)	-0.059
Overprotection	145.61	144.6	9935 (0.91)	-0.006
Indifference	140.46	148	9482.5 (0.445)	-0.045
<b>Mother's dysfunctional styles</b>				
Abuse	142.8	146.45	9752 (0.709)	-0.022
Overprotection	153.56	139.34	9020.5 (0.149)	-0.085
Indifference	151.39	140.78	9270.5 (0.273)	-0.065
Suicidal ideation	128.35	156	8090.5 (0.006)	-0.163

**Table 8.** Comparison, by grade, of Dysfunctional Parental Styles and Suicidal Ideation variables in high school students in Huánuco, Peru (n=289).

Variable and dimensions	Average age range (years)			H de Kruskal-Wallis (gl)	£2
	3er (n=56)	4 to (n=110)	5 to (n=123)		
<b>Dysfunctional parenting styles</b>					
Abuse	139.87	135.65	155.7	3.680 (2)	0.013
Overprotection	147.4	134.34	153.44	3.530 (2)	0.012
Indifference	155.47	136.16	148.13	2.354 (2)	0.008
<b>Mother's dysfunctional styles</b>					
Abuse	166.16	136.75	142.75	5.012 (2)	0.017
Overprotection	143.21	132.3	157.17	5.372 (2)	0.019
Indifference	154.93	143.35	141.95	1.075 (2)	0.004
Suicidal ideation	147.47	141.57	146.94	0.305 (2)	0.001

**Note:** gl=degrees of freedom; £<sup>2</sup>=square epsilon, effect size estimator (Field, 2017).

**Table 9.** Normality test of the study variables and their dimensions.

Variables and dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Asymmetry	Kurtosis	Shapiro Wilk (significance)
<b>Father's dysfunctional styles</b>					
Abuse	3.2	3.42	2.05	5.95	0.798 (<0.001)
Overprotection	1.01	1.38	2.18	6.4	0.721 (<0.001)
Indifference	3.08	3.44	1.87	4.21	0.794 (<0.001)
<b>Mother's dysfunctional styles</b>					
Abuse	2.32	2.74	2.06	6.65	0.788 (<0.001)
Overprotection	2.32	2.02	1.11	0.876	0.883 (<0.001)
Indifference	1.89	2.33	1.54	1.78	0.773 (<0.001)
Suicidal ideation	4.28	3.94	1.12	0.511	0.87 (<0.001)

## Discussion

With respect to the first objective: The average level obtained in the dimensions of dysfunctional parental styles (Table 4), evidences that adolescents perceive a moderate management of attitudes and behaviours of parents without influencing extremes, thus shaping a balanced family and emotional climate to lead to good personal adjustment. In addition, parents would be assuming their parental responsibilities with spontaneous expressions of affection, horizontal communication and guiding attitudes about the children, which is associated with shaping protective conditions in the formation of adolescents. It also generates attention in the results the dimension indifference of the mother who shows low levels of Indifference (64%), which means that they perceive a responsible, attentive mother, concerned about supporting the children, before which contributes findings of Canales (2018) is to explain that maternal care favours protective factors of development to face adversity. The discovery of moderate levels of dysfunction in parental styles does not ensure that family interaction can be entirely nurturing, especially in a pandemic context where the family is more exposed to uncertainty, unmet needs, bereavement. In this regard, Andrade and Betancourt (2012) distinguish two lines of understanding: parental styles and practices [22]. "Parental styles refer to the emotional climate in which parents form, affectively influence their children, parental practices are related to the specific behaviours used by parents to educate their children" which implies that both the emotional environment and parental reactions need to be optimized, and can be improved to avoid negative events and the relationship between adolescents and their parents.

In relation to the presence of Suicidal Ideation (Table 5), there was no higher frequency of cases in ideation, with these remaining only at low levels, in contrast to national figures such as those reported by the Global School Health Study 2010 (MINSA Report, 2017) found that 20.0% of high school students had seriously considered the possibility of committing suicide, in the last 12 months, 15.3% made a plan of how to commit suicide and 17.4% attempted suicide one or more times in the last 12 months. This could be explained by the fact that the examinees probably deny the presence of Suicidal Ideation due to fear, lack of trust or loyalty to their family and social ties, while adolescents with greater communication, affection and family ties, as explained above, turn these factors into protection against self-destructive ideation. The results also contrast with

those found by Velásquez, who found that 29.6 % of adolescents ever thought, as an alternative the possibility of suicide to solve their problems and the results of Fonseca [23] who finds 4.1% of the sample of students referred to have attempted suicide in the last year, Gomez (2019) with 20, 7% of presence of suicidal risk and are similar to the epidemiological data reported by the (DIRESA-Huánuco, 2018), which analyze changes in the behavior of risk of death, figures that decrease so it is reaffirmed that to the extent that family functioning is optimal it is related to a good psychological adjustment of the offspring.

In relation to the second objective: Table 6 shows the correlation of the dimensions abuse, overprotection and indifference with Suicidal Ideation, thus confirming the central hypothesis of a significant positive correlation between parental styles and Suicidal Ideation. Such results are more evident in the case of the father's (rho=.45) and mother's (rho=.396) abuse dimension referred to the exaggerated control and sacrifice of the children's autonomy. Such characteristics are similar to those found by Bahamon, who evidenced that the dimensions that predict to a greater extent Suicidal Ideation in men and women are maternal psychological control and paternal imposition, so the role of some parental practices can be constituted as a possible risk factor to dispose young people towards suicide, also the results of Garza suggest that dysfunctional family structures with hopelessness, violence and alcohol consumption report higher suicidal thinking in adolescents [24].

Finally, the third objective: In table 7, it is evident that there are significant differences (significance <.05), in the mean scores of the Ideation Scale on gender, with a higher incidence of Suicidal Ideation in women, results that corroborate with those found by Eisen, PAHO (2019) are women with greater ideation and less suicidal behavior than men [6]. Luján and Bolívar state that the female gender does possess a prevalence of vulnerability against the variables of Suicidal Ideation, and that the functional or dysfunctional perception of family relationships is also related to the variables, as for the other sociodemographic characteristics, it does not possess sufficient values to be taken into account. This is explained due to the influence of social, cultural and educational factors that support differentiated treatment of the rights of both genders; thus, the patriarchal model of society favors greater psychosocial pressure and over exertion on the female gender with greater presence of stress, depressive mood, under development of self-esteem as conditioning factors of Suicidal Ideation.

Additionally, no differences were reported in the case of parental styles. Table 8 shows that there are no significant differences in the variables studied, according to level of education, but there is a tendency towards abuse of the father, the higher the level of education, probably explained by the fact that as the adolescent evolves, he questions more the authority mandates and is struggling to establish his personal autonomy as part of the struggle to build his new identity with self-determination and personal self-efficacy.

## Conclusion

Significant positive relationships between dysfunctional parental styles and Suicidal Ideation were verified. The highest correlation scores were between the dimensions father abuse ( $\rho=0.45$ ) and Suicidal Ideation ( $\rho=0.45$ ).

Significant positive relationships were found between maternal dysfunctional styles and Suicidal Ideation. The highest correlation scores were between the dimensions maternal abuse ( $\rho=0.396$ ) with Suicidal Ideation. It was possible to identify the three categories of parental styles (abuse, over protection and indifference) scored at the average level, which indicates a moderate level of parental dysfunction. The level of Suicidal Ideation found in the students of Huánuco is low, which leads to assume the possibility of denial in order to avoid questioning the personal and family system. It was found that there are significant differences in Suicidal Ideation, according to gender, with a greater presence in women, and there are no significant differences in parental styles according to level of education.

## Recommendations

The current study recommends the following:

- Establishing targeted educational and training programs for teachers and school health nurses as a first line of defence to reach students. This helps in keeping them well informed about the evidence based COVID-19 prevention and control measures, and fear and anxiety alleviation techniques.
- Embolden cooperation between educational and health institutions, to raise students' awareness about COVID-19 and alleviate fear and anxiety among students.
- Expand the implementation of digital-based psycho educational interventions for the community using multimedia to counteract the rising trend of infodemic toward COVID-19.
- Further studies are essential to shed the light on the psychological consequences of infectious disease epidemics.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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