

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Suicidality has a significant influence on world public health. It is the second most common reason for mortality for people between the ages of 15 and 29 (The most economically productive age group), whether mentally ill or not. The burden of suicidality is on the rise in Uganda, partly because of economic hardships following the COVID 19 pandemic and the number of mental health practitioners being too low to tackle the problem. Mental illness can have a profound negative impact by exacerbating psychological distress and impairing one's ability to effectively cope with additional stress. Adaptive coping styles can prove beneficial to individuals whereas maladaptive coping styles can predispose one to suicidality. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of suicidality, associated factors and coping styles among people with mental illness accessing care at Mbarara regional referral hospital in Southwestern Uganda.

**Results:** The prevalence of suicidality among people with mental illness was 37%. The factors associated with suicidality included being female (AOR=2.18, 95% CI 1.27-3.71; p= 0.004), being on two or more medications (AOR= 0.34, 95% CI 0.15-0.80; p=0.01), being married (AOR=2.33, 95% CI 1.18-4.61; p=0.02), attending secondary school education (AOR=2.24, 95% CI 1.11-4.53; p=0.03), having a diagnosis of mental illness for less than a year (AOR= 0.41, 95% CI 0.18-0.93; p=0.03), organizational religiosity (AOR=0.80, 95% CI 0.65-0.98; p=0.03) and internalized stigma for mental illness subscales of stereotype endorsement and alienation (AOR= 1.26, 95% CI 1.13-1.42; p<0.001) and (AOR=0.84, 95% CI 0.72-0.97; p=0.02) respectively. Participants mainly used adaptive coping styles. **Conclusions:** This study showed that the prevalence of suicidality is high among people with mental illness. Female gender, being married and attending secondary school were predisposing to suicidality. However organizational religiosity, short duration of mental illness and being on two or more medications were protective against suicidality

**Recommendations:** Routine screening for suicidality among patients with mental illness is recommended. Special consideration should be given to women with mental illness in terms of screening for suicidality as well as those with longer duration of illness and those with secondary school education. Stigma of mental illness should be taken into account since it's a very crucial element in the care of people with mental illness

