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## Research article

## Suicidal ideation during COVID-19 lockdown in Greece: Prevalence in the community, risk and protective factors



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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of suicidal ideation in the community as well as the risk and protective factors of suicidal ideation during restriction measures in Greece, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. A web-based anonymous survey was conducted during the first lockdown period. Participants completed the Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-2), the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2), the Systemic Clinical Outcome and Routine Evaluation (SCORE-15), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISK-2), and a self-report questionnaire for COVID-19 pandemic-related data. From a total of 5,116 adults included in the study, 5.20% reported suicidal thoughts, 14.17% were potential clinical cases of anxiety, and 26.51% of depression. Participants presented significantly higher suicidal ideation rates during the last two weeks of the lockdown compared to its previous two weeks. Unmarried or divorced marital status, mental health history, poor perceived quality of physical health, impaired family functioning, anxiety and depression symptoms were independently associated with higher odds of suicidal ideation, whereas higher resilience, positive feelings with regard to the lockdown measures, relationship with friends, and faith in a Supreme Being were associated with lower suicidal ideation odds. According to the findings, suicidal ideation prevalence might be considered elevated and its increase during the lockdown period alarming. The risk and protective factors identified in the study offer valuable information for the development of preventive strategies against suicidal ideation, especially in times of crisis.

## 1. Introduction

The World Health Organization declared Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic having a great impact on public mental health. Indeed, several studies that have been carried out in the community just after the pandemic outbreak, showed an increase of common psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, and stress (Cao et al., 2020; Mazza et al., 2020; Nalleballe et al., 2020; Özdin and Bayrak Özdin, 2020; Sønderkov et al., 2020; Tian et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

Despite the early detection of psychological distress in the general population due to the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on suicidal behavior, and mainly on suicidal ideation, has not been largely assessed in cross-sectional studies, as yet. Current evidence supports the need for expanding our knowledge on suicide risk during the pandemic. More specifically, Job et al. (2020) found an increased rate of suicidal ideation (18%) in 44,775 participants in the UK in the first month of the lockdown. In cross-sectional studies in the USA in a total of 10,625 individuals, Bryan et al. (2020) reported a 4.6% past month suicidal ideation, which was not considered by the authors elevated. Gratz et al.

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