Abstract

USE OF THE MODIFIED EMOTIONAL STROOP TASK TO DETECT SUICIDE RISK IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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It is a challenge to detect those who are at potential risk for suicide because the base rate of suicidal behaviors in non-clinical samples is low. The aim of the present study was to investigate the concurrent and predictive validity of the emotional Stroop task (EST) as a behavioral marker for suicidal behaviors in a college population. Eight hundred and twenty students were asked to perform the EST and to respond to suicide-related self-report measures and were followed up with 18 months later. The results indicated that participants with past suicide attempts had longer response latencies to the word “suicide” as compared to non-attempters. Further, those with attentional bias toward suicide-related words at baseline were more likely to report suicidal behaviors during the follow-up period. The EST latencies were not affected by ethnicity, but a possible gender effect was detected. These results are discussed as they pertain to suicide risk assessment among college students.