Author’s response to reviews

Title: Prevalence and correlates of suicidal ideation in Korean firefighters: A nationwide study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for taking your precious time to review our manuscript “Prevalence and correlates of suicidal ideation in Korean firefighters: A nationwide study.” We have made every effort to incorporate all the feedback. Accordingly, the following changes were made in our manuscript.

Thank you, again.

We look forward to your positive reply.

Yours sincerely,

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Response to the comments from the editor and reviewers:

Reviewer 1

1. Abstract
1) In line 26, described rather than explained?

    Thank you for the suggestion.

2) In lines 39 – 42, consider re-writing for better clarify

    The Conclusion section in the abstract was modified per your suggestion. Please, see lines 40-43.

    “The 1-year prevalence of suicidal ideation was high in Korean firefighters and was associated with various occupational factors as well as psychiatric symptoms. Early detection and management of these risk factors could reduce the risk of suicidal ideation in firefighters.”

2. Methods

1) In line 156, language

    Thank you for the correction. “Was indicates” was changed into “was indicated”. Please, see line 158.

2) In line 160, the medium strong correlation to the suicidality item of the PHQ is interesting and well worthy a paragraph in the discussion. What might this mean for the interpretation of the findings?

    Both the SBQ-R item 2 and the PHQ-9 item 9 are direct questions about the frequency of suicidal ideation. Therefore, a strong correlation between the two is predictable. However, there was a moderate correlation between the two measures, and the reason might be that the PHQ-9 item 9 assesses the most recent suicidal ideation, rather than the SBQ-R item 2. Specifically, the PHQ-9 item 9 evaluates the frequency of suicidal thoughts over the last two weeks, while the SBQ-R item 2 inquires about the frequency of suicidal ideation over the past twelve months. We modified the sentence describing the correlation between the two items, as follows. Please see lines 160-162 in the revised manuscript.

    “The correlation coefficient between SBQ-R item 2 and PHQ-9 item 9, which inquires about the frequency of suicidal thought over the last two weeks, was r = 0.499 (p < 0.001).”

3. Results

1) In line 273, language

    Thank you for the suggestion. “was associated with the female gender” was changed into “was associated with female gender”. Please see line 274.

4. Discussion
2) In lines of 313-315, it is interesting that other risk factors are related to suicidal ideation even when controlling for depression and PTSD. It is an interesting finding in itself given the importance of mental disorders for suicidal thoughts and behavior. It is also a bit surprising given the relative weak relationship between other demographic and occupational factors and SI and the strong relationship between probable depression and PTSD and SI. I am not able to find the actual analysis supporting these findings, could the authors provide more information on these analysis, and also; when controlling for depression and PTSD is the remaining association not only statistically but also clinically relevant?

Thank you for the valuable comments. In a logistic regression analysis, we entered the presence of probable PTSD and depression with the other variables into a regression equation. In the results, not only probable PTSD and depression were significant, but also age, female, divorced/separate/widowed, and recent traumatic experience were also significant factors. This result indicates that age, female, divorced/separate/widowed, and recent traumatic experience were related to suicidal ideation even after adjusting for probable PTSD and depression. It is interesting and noteworthy that recent traumatic experience was associated with suicidal ideation even without the effect of PTSD and depression symptoms. With respect to this, we added the comments and the previous reports supporting our findings. See below (lines 316-329).

“We found that a recent exposure to traumatic event significantly heightened the possibility of developing suicidal ideation in the past year even after adjusting for demographics as well as PTSD and depressive symptoms. In other words, firefighters who experienced a recent traumatic event could be at higher risk for developing suicidal ideation, despite the lack of PTSD or depressive symptoms immediately following the traumatic event. This finding is consistent with the previous studies showing that the association between traumatic experience and suicidal behaviors held irrespective of a presence of PTSD (Stein et al, 2010; Belik et al, 2007; Belik et al, 2009). It is clear that mental disorders such as PTSD and depression, accounted for a significant portion of the association between suicidal ideation and traumatic experience. However, these findings suggest that the association between suicidal ideation and traumatic experience does not occur only in the presence of psychiatric disorders and that psychiatric disorders might partially mediate the association. Further study is needed to investigate the interactions between traumatic experience and mental disorders in predicting suicidal ideation.”