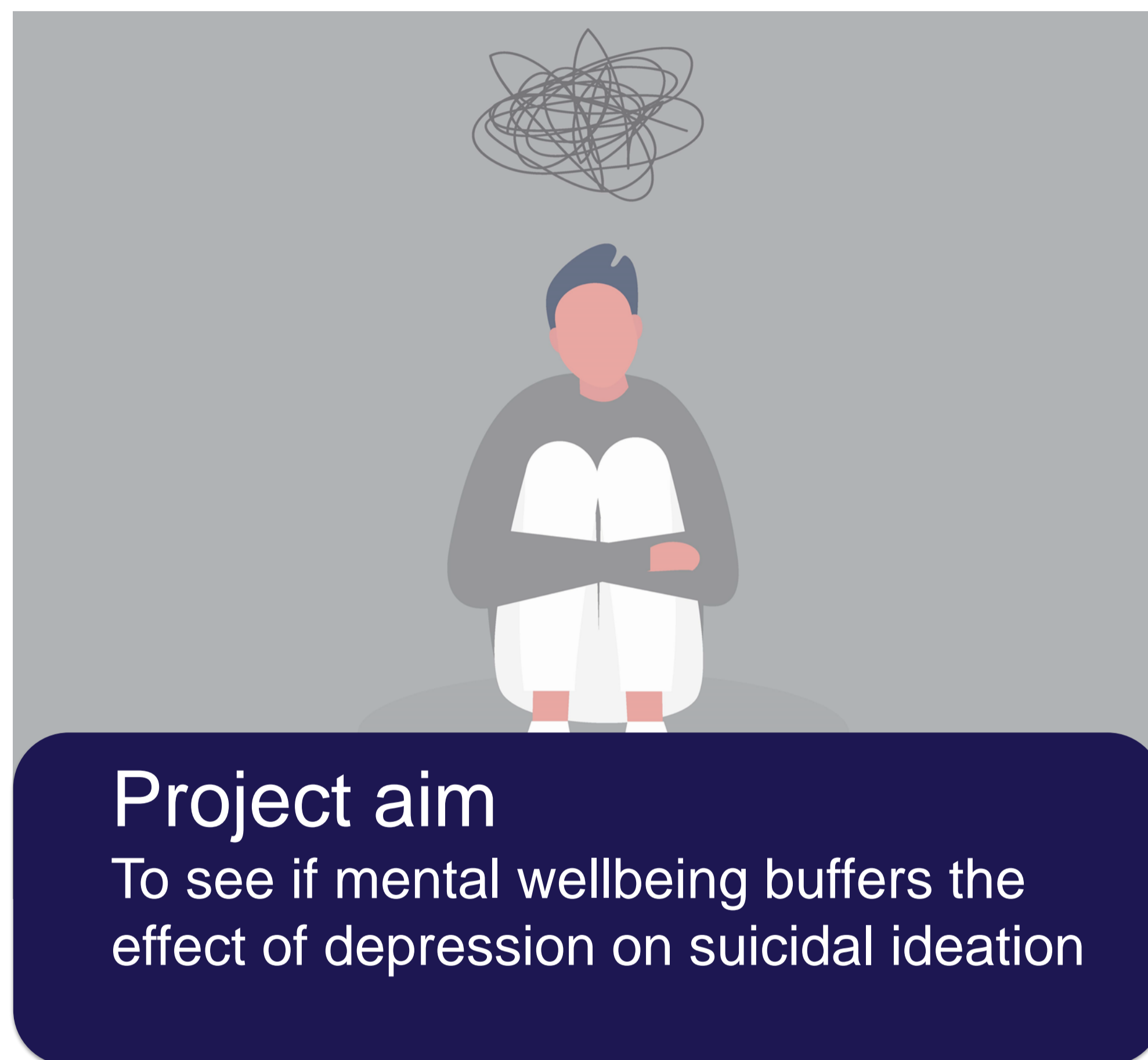


The Buffering Hypothesis of Suicide Risk in Young Autistic Adults: Does Mental Wellbeing Buffer the Effect of Depression on Suicidal Ideation?

Darren Hedley, PhD¹, Jacqueline den Houting, PhD^{2,4}, Susan Hayward, PhD^{3,4}, Mirko Uljarević, MD, PhD⁵, Simon Bury, PhD¹, Lauren Lawson, PhD^{1,4}, Angela Clapperton, PhD⁶, Alexandra Haschek^{1,4}, Cheryl Dissanayake, PhD¹, Jo Robinson, PhD^{5,7}, Julian Trollor, MD⁸, Mark Stokes, PhD⁹

¹Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria., Australia. ²Macquarie University, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. ³School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University, Burwood, Victoria, Australia. ⁴Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC), Long Pocket, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. ⁵School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. ⁶School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. ⁷Centre for Youth Mental Health, Orygen, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. ⁸Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry, School of Psychiatry, UNSW, Sydney, NSW, Australia. ⁹School of Psychology, Deakin University, Burwood, Victoria, Australia.



Background

Autistic people are at significantly increased risk of suicide, yet few studies have examined resilience factors in this population. In general populations wellbeing can moderate the effects of depression on suicidal ideation, thereby mitigating the impact of this risk factor. Additionally, while some studies have demonstrated a relationship between autistic traits and suicide risk, results are mixed and no studies to date have examined the relationship over time.

Method

Participants completed the longitudinal Study of Australian School Leavers with Autism (SASLA). Variables included age and gender and the predictors:

1. Autistic traits (AQ)
2. Depression (HADS-D)
3. Mental wellbeing.(Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)
4. Suicidal Ideation.(PHQ9, item-9)

Participants $N = 83$
15-25 years of age ($M = 18.86$, $SD = 2.33$)
Males = 60%

Correlational and hierarchical regression analyses were used to examine relationships between predictor variables at baseline (T1) and suicidal ideation at 2-year follow-up (T2). The moderating effect of mental wellbeing on the relationship between depression and suicidal ideation was examined by including the Depression \times Wellbeing interaction term in the regression analysis.

Results

- 26-28% reported suicidal ideation across timepoints (Fig 1)
- T1 age and autistic traits were not significantly correlated with T2 suicidal ideation ($p > .05$)
- Final model results are provided in Table 2 (only significant T1 correlates of T2 suicidal ideation were entered into the model)

Figure 1: Rates of suicidal ideation

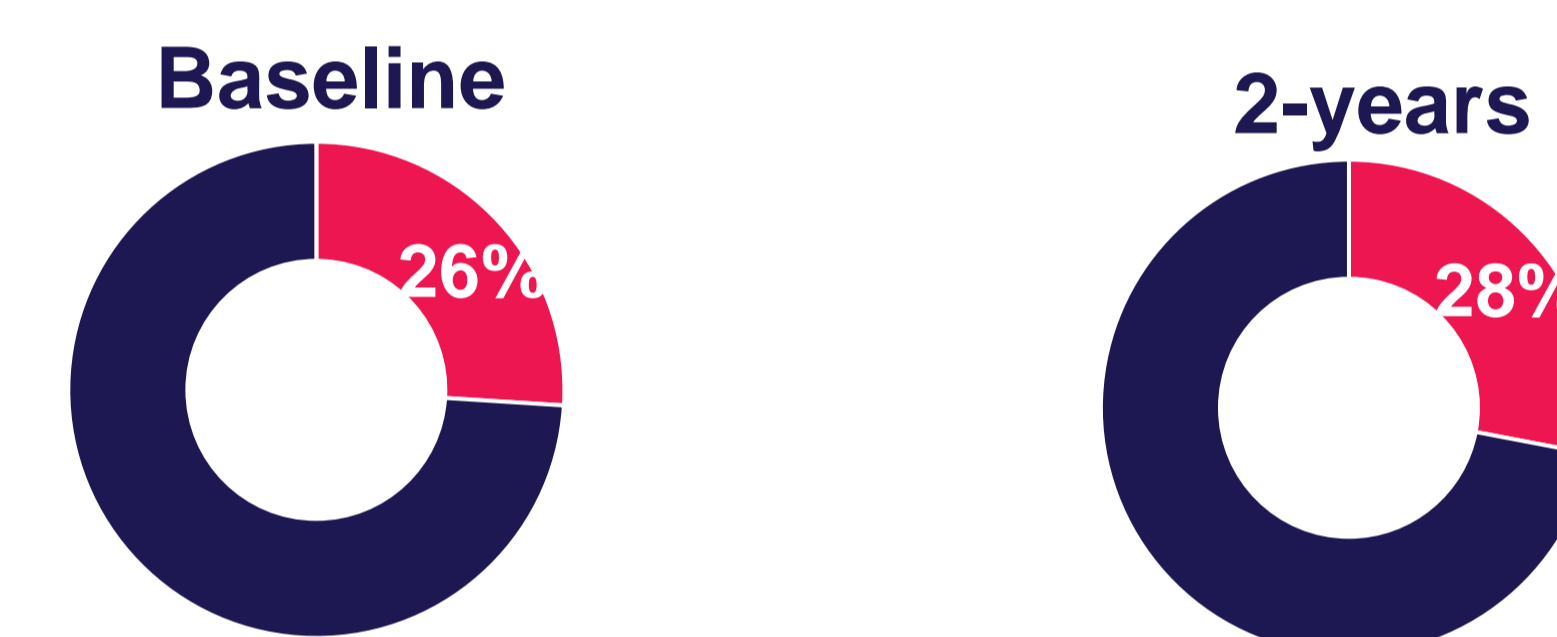


Table 1. Model predicting T2 suicidal ideation

	B	β	t	p
Constant	-1.495		-1.676	.099
Gender	.147	.096	.808	.422
Depression	.228	1.009	2.513	.015*
Wellbeing	.023	.317	1.299	.199
Dep. x Wellbeing	-.003	-.392	-1.223	.226
Model	$R^2 = .303$			
	$F(4,63) = 6.415$, $p < .001$			

Conclusions

- We did not identify a significant relationship between autistic traits and suicidal ideation at 2-year follow-up.
- Mental wellbeing did not buffer the relationship between depression and suicidal ideation in young autistic adults.
- In the present sample, only baseline depression was identified as a significant predictor of suicidal ideation at 2-year follow-up.

In developing suicide risk models in the autistic population it is imperative that the identification of risk factors is balanced with the identification of protective factors that might mitigate suicide risk, thereby informing suicide prevention strategies and intervention.

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Objectives

1. Test the hypothesis that positive mental health moderates the impact of depression on suicidal ideation in a two-year follow-up study of young autistic adults
2. Examine autistic traits as a predictor of suicidal ideation at 2-year follow-up

For more information

Darren Hedley | Email: d.hedley@latrobe.edu.au




autismcrc.com.au
[@autismcrc](https://twitter.com/autismcrc)