



Respondents versus non-respondents to suicide risk assessment requests do not differ in severity of suicidal thoughts and behaviors

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Background

While timely suicide risk assessments (SRA) may critically benefit intervention efforts, their utility also depends on their accessibility and patient willingness to participate. Differences in suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STBs) may potentially influence individual decisions to engage in SRAs, which, if identified, may inform intervention efforts. The present study aims to identify potential differences between individuals who do and do not respond to SRA requests in order to gain a better understanding of intervention need.

Methods

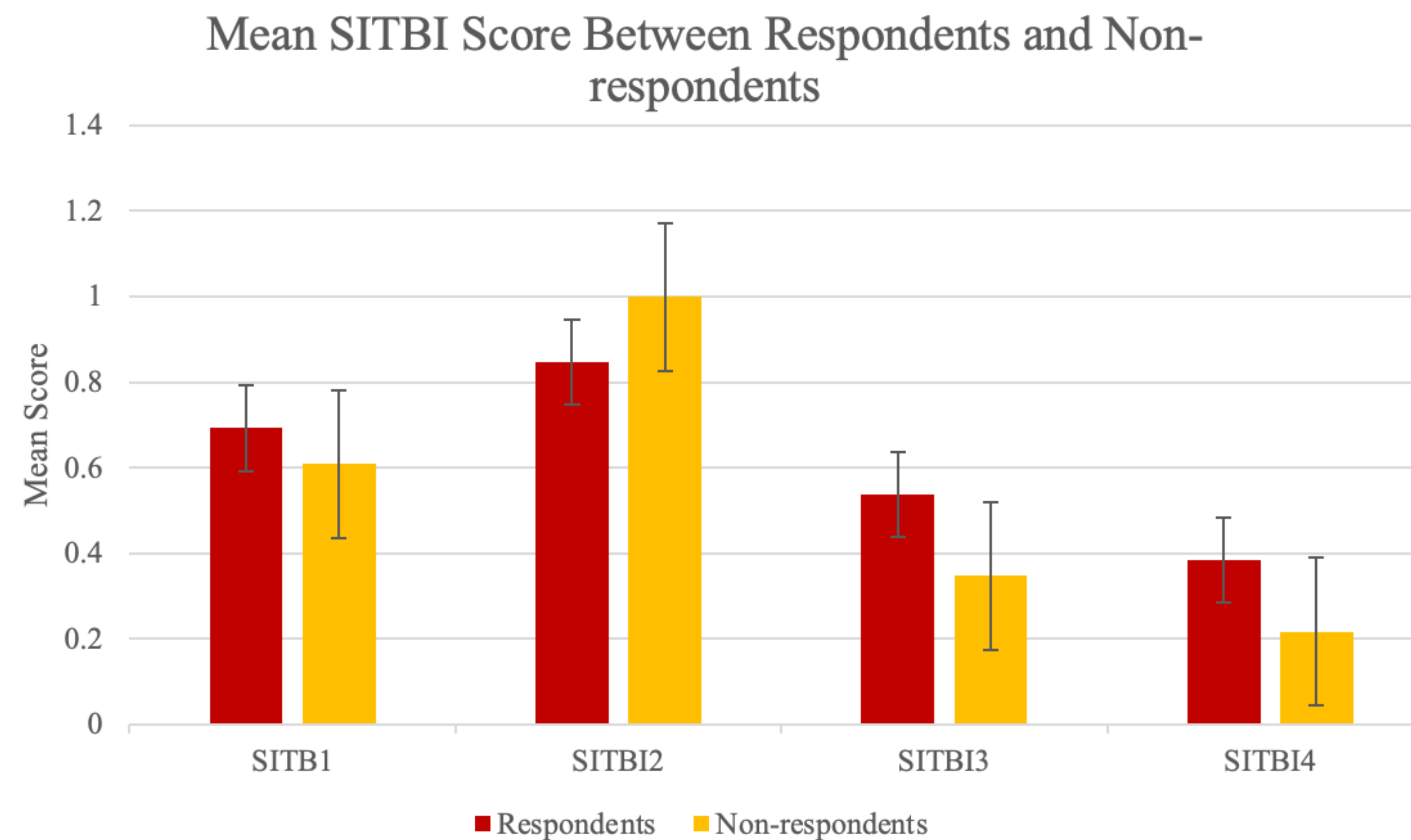
A sample of young adults with suicide risk (N = 46, age 18-23, 84% white, 36.9% Hispanic/Latine, 71.7% female, 58.6% heterosexual) were examined to determine whether those who responded to SRA requests via telephone versus those who were not reachable significantly differed in terms of STB severity. STB severity was assessed by the Self-Injurious Thoughts and Behaviors Interview (SITBI). Completion or non-completion of the SRA was recorded and both t test and ANOVA methods of analysis were used to assess any differences in suicidality between respondents and non-respondents across four SITBI items measuring degree of non-suicidal self-injury (SITBI 1), suicidal thoughts (SITBI 2), ideation (SITBI 3), and attempts (SITBI 4).

Results

Between groups of respondents and non-respondents, no significant differences were observed concerning history of non-suicidal self-injury, suicidal thoughts, planning, and attempts. Respondents (N = 13) did not differ significantly from non-respondents (N = 23) in terms of non-suicidal self-injurious behavior (M = 0.69, M = 0.61, respectively), suicidal thoughts (M = 0.84, M = 1.00), ideation (M = 0.54, M = 0.35), or attempts (M = 0.38, M = 0.22). The results of individual ANOVA and t tests did not return a significant p-value for any variable.

Conclusions

Our sample did not indicate any significant differences in suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STBs) between groups of participants who did respond to suicide risk assessment requests and those who did not. Much of the current research on suicidality aims to gain a better understanding of motivation and decision-making regarding suicidal individuals as there have not been many reliable risk factors or indicators identified. While this study does not examine risk factors, the analyses do provide helpful insight into the motivations of individuals who experience STBs. A lack of significant difference between patients who do and do not respond helps to eliminate the concern that individuals with more severe suicidal ideation or behaviors are less likely to seek professional care. The results of this analysis do not indicate that highly suicidal individuals are more or less likely to seek care, which may be valuable information for clinicians who treat individuals with STB risk.



Average scores across SITBI 1-SITBI4 for a sample of 36 individuals. The means of all participants who responded (n=13) and did not respond (n=23) to an SRA request were compared. No significant differences were observed.