

Adolescent Mental Health in the Age of Social Media: The Link to Suicidal Ideation

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Abstract—Introduction: social media has drawn criticism for its detrimental impacts on people's mental health as well as praise for its capacity to bring people together and give them extensive access to knowledge. The purpose of this essay is to investigate how social media affects teenage mental health, specifically as it relates to suicidal thoughts.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive research approach and chose 480 Kodagu adolescents using simple random sampling. The study's objectives were to investigate how teenagers use social media, gauge how aware parents are of their kids' online behaviour, and pinpoint social media sites that can encourage suicide ideation in young people. Both Pre-University College (PUC) students and high school students (grades 9 and 10) received questionnaires. Block Education Officers (BEO), Deputy Directors of Public Instruction (DDPI), District Educational Officers (DDPU), and the institution's director all granted permission to conduct the study.

Results: According to the results, 67.9% of peers are aware of their children's social media activity, 49% of parents are not, and 94.2% of respondents are active on social media. Furthermore, 18.3% of participants stated that social media sites like YouTube, Instagram clips, and movie have affected their suicidal thoughts. While the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a robust correlation between social media use and suicidal ideation, chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between suicide attempts and the effects of social media.

Conclusion: A comprehensive strategy involving cooperation from parents, educators, peers, school counsellors, and licensed social workers is needed to address the effects of social media on teenagers. The welfare of youth and the development of a better future depend on such initiatives.

Index Terms—Suicide Ideation, Social Media, Mental Health, Adolescent

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence comes from a Latin word, *adolescere*, meaning to grow. Before, puberty and adolescence were considered the same in the life span. And when the child is capable of reproduction, it is regarded as an adult. But nowadays adolescence means mental, emotional and social maturity, also including physical maturity. Since they have so many changes they deal with, it confuses their identity. During this age, adolescents are distracted by various stimulating factors around them, mostly by the colourful things of social media. Majority of the adolescents gets introduced to most of the social media platforms by the influence of the peers of school and college life and adding to this curiosity of various factors added by the psychological factors sometimes may lead to the factors which will be opposed by the parents and These conflicts between children and parents lead to a disturbance in the parent-child relationship and also psychological maladjustment in adolescent child. This starts from loneliness and stress, where an adolescent spends time by themselves due to the consequences they will be facing in their social and academic life. This can lead to stress, depression, and finally to suicidal ideation. India has an adolescent population of 253 million, which means every fifth person is 10 to 19 years old. WHO data says that every year, there are more than 7 00,000 deaths that occur around the globe by suicide. (Organisation, 2023) According to the NCRB data of 2022, there is a continuous hike in the rate of suicidal deaths. In the year 2020 rate of suicide was 11.3, in the year 2021, it was 12.0, and in the year 2022, it was 12.4, which means there is a drastic hike in 02 years, which seems to be worrying. And 10,205

deaths happened in the year 2022, below 18 years in which males were 4,616, females 5,588 and 01 transgender. (Accidental Deaths & Suicides In India Year Wise | National Crime Records Bureau, n.d.) Suicide happens to be the fourth leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds in the world. (Organisation, 2023) Adolescents at higher risk commonly have a history of depression since they will undergo both physical and psychological changes which also triggers the identity crisis, a previous suicide attempt as a result of mismanagement of individual when he or she is in crisis., a family history of psychiatric disorders (especially depression and suicidal behavior) due to hereditary, family disruption happens due to the disagreement specially happens between parents and children specially at the age of adolescence, and certain chronic or debilitating physical disorders or psychiatric illness. Alcohol use and alcoholism indicate a high risk for suicide. (American academy of pediatrics. 2000) explains that suicide is a worldwide phenomenon, and it has affected both rural as well as urban regions. But there have been more studies and a focus shown to the urban areas. In this article, an attempt is made to understand the social media usage of adolescent students and factors related to suicide ideation.

II. METHODS

The research adopted a descriptive research design. Simple random sampling was employed to ensure unbiased representation of the target population. This method enhances the generalizability of findings to the broader adolescent community in Kodagu. A structured questionnaire was meticulously formulated by the researcher to gather data on multiple dimensions of adolescent suicide ideation and social media usage. The study involved 480 participants comprising high school (9th and 10th standard) and PUC students. This selection aimed to encompass a diverse group, reflecting the varied experiences and challenges faced by adolescents in different educational stages. Permission was obtained from the DDPI, DDPU, and institution heads before administering the questionnaire. This ensured adherence to ethical standards and institutional guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from each student before collecting any data. The participants were briefed about the purpose, confidentiality

measures, and their voluntary participation in the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected participants, allowing them adequate time to respond. The process was conducted in a conducive and confidential environment to encourage open and honest responses. The collected data underwent statistical analysis, primarily using the Kruskal-Wallis test and percentage calculation. This analytical approach helped identify significant associations between variables and provided a quantifiable representation of the prevalence of suicide ideation among adolescents. This scientific methodology aimed to systematically investigate adolescent suicide ideation in Kodagu, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing this critical issue.

III. RESULTS

Table 01: Frequency and percentage of respondent's Social Media Usage

Social media platforms you use	Frequ	Percen
None	28	5.8
Facebook	5	1
Instagram	206	42.9
Snap chat	69	14.4
WhatsApp	153	31.9
Others	19	4
Total	480	100
Parents know everything you do on social media	Frequ	Percentage
No	236	49
Yes	245	51
Total	480	100
Friends know everything you	Frequ	Percen
No	154	32.1
Yes	326	67.9
Total	480	100

Table 01 highlights the social media usage of the respondents; 42.9% are on Instagram, 31.9% are using WhatsApp, and 14.4% are using Snapchat. 5% of them use other platforms, and 5.8% do not use any social media. 51% of respondents said their parents know everything about their social media usage, and 49% said they do not know about this. 67.9% of respondents said their friends know everything about their social media usage, and 32.1% said they do not know about this. 94.2% of the respondents use social media, and

Instagram has the most users. The above table shows that 49% of respondents do not tell what they do on social media to their parents, making respondents keep their parents in the dark about their social media activities. However, it is shocking that 67.9% of the friends know about respondents' social media activities, which shows that adolescent students share and depend more on their friends than their parents. These differences are because adolescents believe their friends will support them, and their parents may punish them, take away their social media privileges, or they will advise and punish, creating this gap between adolescents and their parents.

Table 02: Frequency and percentage of social media influence on suicide ideation

Digital media influencing suicide ideation	Frequency	Percent
No	392	81.7
Yes	88	18.3
Total	480	100

Table 03: Frequency and percentage of social media platforms influencing ideation

If yes, what is it?	Frequency	Percent
NA	392	81.7
TV Serial	8	1.6
Movie	20	4.2
Reels	31	6.5
YouTube Videos	14	2.9
News/others	15	3.1
Total	480	100

Among the total respondents, 81.7% of them are not influenced by social and digital media for suicide ideation or committing suicide, whereas social and digital media are influencing 18.3% of the respondents to have suicide ideation/attempt. Among them, 1.7% of are from TV series, 4.2% of them from movies, 6.5% of them from Reels, 2.9% of them from YouTube videos and 2.7% of them from news games and other platforms.

Table 04: Kurskal-Wallis test for social media influence and suicide ideation

Factors	Suicide Ideation	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square
Social media influence and suicide ideation	Minimal	157	144.16	
	Mild	76	171.5	23.273
	Moderate	44	179.23	4
	Severe	33	190.29	0
	Intensive	14	201.25	
	Total	32		

The above table shows that those who reported being influenced by digital media to think about suicide have higher mean ranks in more severe ideation groups. The "intensive" group for digital media influence had a mean rank of 201.25, suggesting that exposure to media content can significantly impact suicidal thoughts. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that media exposure, particularly to celebrity suicides, and digital content can amplify suicidal ideation and increase the risk of attempts.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ It was proven in the study made by Alavi, Sharifi, Ghanizadeh and Dehbozorgi (2013) that Cognitive-Behavioural therapy (CBT) has been a more effective strategy in suicide prevention, decreasing suicidal ideation and hopelessness in adolescents. Adapting this in educational institutions can be a better way for a better prevention strategy.
- ❖ Applying the major prevention techniques, including awareness programs, screening, gatekeeper training, access to means restriction, follow-up care, hotlines, media strategies, and pharmacotherapeutic and psychotherapeutic approaches. Moreover, methods like QPR (Question, persuade and refer) and gatekeeper training, where an individual who will have

access to the potential victims with suicidal ideation is specially trained to notify and eliminate the early ideation that occurs to an individual, which is mostly in schools. Hence, these gatekeepers include Parents, teachers, peers, school support staff, and specifically appointed counsellors.

- ❖ Parents' pressure and fear of facing parents after failure in academic and non-academic areas were one of the major reasons for suicide stated by the adolescents so parents should attend guidance and professional counselling either in private psychiatric settings or Government psychiatric settings.
- ❖ Every educational institution must have a counsellor with suitable qualifications. Management must make it sure that the counsellor is a person who is from outside and should not have any sort of connection to any of the students or the management, so that there is confidentiality between the adolescent and the counsellor.
- ❖ Suicide prevention must be added to the curriculum. Irrespective of the student's specialisation or field of work, in the future, suicide awareness comes in handy because a social work trainee can use it for themselves or the place he/she work.
- ❖ Social work professionals must take the initiative to create jobs for counsellors with a psychiatric social work background in all schools and colleges, since social work students will have a better experience in the field.

V. CONCLUSION

The use of social media has always been a topic of debate among the major population, where some claim it to be a boon and some blaming it to be a curse. Majority of the parents do believe that social media is the sole reason for their children's downfall both academically and personally. But if we see the adolescent students they are facing their problems not by choice. So, it is important for the inclusive movement of the community towards addressing both the physical and psychological issues of adolescents. This can not be achieved at once but slow and steady steps towards the goal can make a better future!

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