



The Impacts of Social Media Use on Growing Rates of Suicide Among Teenagers in the U.S.

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Abstract

Background: The cases of suicide among teenagers in the U.S. have increased significantly. Among the factors considered responsible for this trend is the increasing cases of depression. Several sources, including [Shain \(2016\)](#) have associated this trend with the internet age and the increasing use of social media. Understand the connection between these three things, depression, suicide rates, and social media uses, can be the foundation for determining reasonable solutions to the problem of increasing suicide rates. **Methods:** The paper used a narrative review. A web search was conducted on the following key phrases: social media, depression, suicide, suicide trends among American teenagers, social media use among American teenagers, and the relationship between social media use and suicide rates. Afterwards, the information was compiled to formulate a more comprehensive outlook at the problem of suicides as is affected by social media use. **Results:** It was found that depression is among the primary causes of suicidal tendencies among teenagers in the U.S. Furthermore, it was noted that social media is a prominent contributor to the increasing cases of depression, and hence suicidal tendencies, among American teenagers. **Conclusion:** There is a need for intervention methods for teenagers with suicidal tendencies and increased control of content posted on social media.

Keywords: Social media; Growing rates; Suicide; Teenagers; U.S.



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1. Introduction

In a CNN article posted in June 21019, Jacqueline Howard points out that the suicide rates among teenagers in the U.S. is increasing significantly. Her observations are backed by several other sources, including statistics provided by the CDC, which records that suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers in the country. The first cause of death is recorded as unintentional injury and [Shain \(2016\)](#) observes that there is a possibility that some of these deaths recorded as accidents might actually be suicides. He goes further to note that the only other time these cases increased was from 1950 to 1990, where suicide rates increased by 300%. Later, they reduced from then until 2013, after which the numbers started soaring again.

The rising cases of suicide among the youth indicate an underlying problem in society. That said, it is necessary that some effort be taken to identify the cause of these rising trends. One primary factor associated with the increasing cases of suicide and self-harm is depression. The [WHO \(2012\)](#) refers to depression as a mental disorder. It manifests as “depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, and poor concentration” as well as anxiety (Ibid). The source goes further to observe that depression can reduce an individual’s ability to take care of themselves. In extreme cases, it leads to people committing suicide. That said, approximately 3.2 million adolescents in the U.S. have experienced depression at a point in their lives ([National Institute of Health, 2019](#)). While these numbers cannot be directly linked to the suicide rates, it would not be misplaced to assume that they contribute to the rising cases of suicide among teenager in the U.S. today.

Various factors have been associated with these many cases of depression as well as suicide rates. However, one prominent factor that continues to be blamed is social media and the internet [Primack et al. \(2017\)](#). As more people continue to join the internet and use social media sites, the power granted to these platforms increases. As a result, its influence on society, especially parties that are more reliant on them also increases. Among such influences are some negative ones that have a lot of potential to cause depression among the youth and enhance their desire for self-harm and suicide (Ibid). This observation does not undermine the importance of these sites. Observably, social media has helped to open up the world and allowing more people to connect. This interaction bears many positive benefits, including increased awareness for equity and understanding. However, within these benefits are some small

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instances that have dire effects on society. In this case, the parties that are exposed to these influences the most are the youth, who are the most ardent users of social media sites and the internet.

As they continue to become popular, social media sites are transitioning from being modes of communication into being a type of culture. That said, the behavior of most people who use these sites is shaped in a certain fashion that is similar, to some extent, among all users. This observation is true for the case of teenagers and the youth, who have lived most of their lives in the era of social media (Huang *et al.*, 2014). As they interact, these youngsters share their views and experiences online. On a global scale, this interaction leads cultures to mix and, in the process, some positive trends get to be spread. However, the same avenues for sharing can also become channels via which toxic intents and views are spread. Some of such negativity includes body shaming and bullying, which can cause psychological trauma and led to depression. Furthermore, there have been claims that overreliance on social media for communication and reduces opportunities to engage in more personal and face-to-face communications (Lin *et al.*, 2016). According to Walther *et al.* (2015), this reduced level of interpersonal interactions has a detrimental effect on the development of individual cognitive abilities. Virtual interactions can form a good basis for building interpersonal relationships between people who might not interact in normal settings. However, for some people, they can create a falsified sense of belonging, which might eventually lead to loneliness and depression (Kim *et al.*, 2015). The condition of these at-risk parties can be worsened by continue reliance on these platforms since they do not offer a similar level of interactions that face-to-face communications create (Ibid).

Furthermore, apart from being a platform via which positivity is spread, social media can also be used by both malicious and unknowing parties to spread hate and toxic cultures. One outstanding aspect of social media is that people share exaggerated information and images of themselves (Brusilovskiy *et al.*, 2016). The result is that an unattainable lifestyles and appearances are popularized as being ideal. For parties incapable of reaching these standards, it is easy to feel out of place and uneasy about themselves. As a result, they may feel dissatisfied with themselves and with life, which can then lead to depression. This risk is higher for the youth who are more likely to want to feel appreciated and are still not comfortable with their personalities and appearances. The presence of malicious parties, such as bullies and internet trolls can also be a risk for social media users. While these parties may represent a small portion of users, they are still capable of dealing significant damage to parties that are at risk from depression.

The association between depression and social media use is based on the impact of the latter on the lives of teenagers. These effects can range from the impact on cognitive development to the role of third parties on the experience an individual can have on these sites. However, identifying these negative impacts of social media requires the researcher to look past its benefits and consider the commonly overlooked negative impacts. In terms of cognitive development, it may be argued that these sites can hinder development as they can replace the more effective interpersonal relationships that are necessary for cognitive growth. Further, they can expose individuals to harmful, radicalizing, and discriminatory content that can affect one's psychological health. The effect of such negative factors can manifest in various ways, including depression. Social media has the potential to cause depression through various avenues. While there is no evidence linking social media use to the increasing suicide rates, the fact that it can cause depression among its users makes it necessary to consider its harmful effects. At-risk parties are primarily adolescents, who are more susceptible to negativity that can be spread through social media. That said, there is need to evaluate the association between social media use, depression, and suicide rates among teenagers in the U.S.

Significant research exists on the impact of social media on the mental health of teenagers. However, despite these efforts, not much has been done to explore the possible alternatives for reducing the prevalence and potency of these negative effects of social media use, especially regarding depression. Exploring these options will help to address the role played by social media in increasing the suicide rates among teenagers in the U.S. In this regard, the paper attempt to address the following hypotheses:

- i. Social media use is a major cause of depression among teenagers in the U.S.
- ii. Social media use can be linked to rise of suicide rates among teenagers in the U.S.

In addressing these hypotheses, the paper will fulfill the following objectives:

- i. Identify the prevalence of social media use among teenagers in the U.S.
- ii. Analyze the relationship between social media use and depression among teenagers in the U.S.
- iii. Analyze the negative effects of social media use on teenagers in the U.S.

2. Literature Review

The literature review considers what other researchers have noticed about social media use among teenagers in the U.S. Some of these works will also be linked to the situation in the U.S. while others will take a global perspective to provide a wider outlook on the issues. These materials also associated social media to depression, while others made the connection between depression and suicide. However, focus was on depression and social media. The connection to suicide was primarily from the earlier mention of the depression being one of the causes of suicide among teenagers in the U.S.

Teenagers are among the most ardent users of social media sites in the U.S. Pew Research Center (2018), reports that 85% of teenagers from the age 13 to 17 use YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, Whatsapp and Facebook. These platforms offer an opportunity to share feelings, media, and news. As a result, they are suitable for virtual interactions. This benefit is increased by the fact that these platforms eliminate hindrances that are caused by geographical location. In this regard, people from diverse background can communicate and share ideas. To some

level, these interactions can be beneficial. In fact, they formulate a suitable platform via which people can create awareness for such issues as depression and suicide that affect teenagers.

However, an issue comes up when parties are too reliant on these platforms. In such cases where parties become addicted to social media, it becomes harder to formulate meaningful relationships (Walton and Hassreiter, 2015). For these parties, virtual communication gains more precedence than physical interactions. As a result, forming connections away from the virtual platforms becomes harder. The misconception that these online interactions are equal to real life ones denies these parties important emotional and psychological support that come with face-to-face interactions (Ibid). Therefore, while one may have many acquaintances online, none can actually offer enough help when need arises. That said, the connections may feel real but are far from, as it is easy to fake how one is perceived online. Basing relationships on unreal connections renders the interaction as fake as the basis on which it was formed (Ibid).

For some people, relying on social media can turn into addiction. These parties would prefer to lead their lives on social media as opposed to in the real world. As a result, they are more receptive of the online trends all the while lacking necessary cognitive development that comes from face-to-face interactions. The situation is made worse by instances where people may opt to 'be alone together' in online forums (Turkle, 2013). Regardless of the scenario, such tendencies are just attempts to mask a certain level of loneliness that accompanies not having a social life. Teenagers who lead such lives are more likely to be emotionally and psychologically immature. As a result, they are more susceptible to exposure to negativity online, which then makes it easy for them to be traumatized. It is also notable that for such parties, being away from social media forums causes anxiety, which they cannot handle as they lack the necessary maturity to tackle discomforts in life.

Psychological health can also result from the overuse of social media such that it interferes with sleep schedules. Notably, sleep is crucial for psychological development. Therefore, anything that reduces one's ability to get enough rest endangers their mental health. One notable trait about social media is that people are always active. As global tools of communication and interaction, people post at different times according to their geographical time zones. Parties that are addicted to social media likely to spend more time than is necessary on these sites (Kuss and Griffiths, 2017). As a result, their sleep hindered, which leads to mental fatigue. Furthermore, the blue light emitted by mobile phones and screens can damage the eyes and even cause insomnia. Parties that are affected end up missing or affecting a crucial part of their mental development, which makes them more prone to psychological problem (Kaimal *et al.*, 2017). One such health issue that can arise from poor psychological growth is depression, which has a significant impact on an individual's wellbeing.

Furthermore, becoming engrossed in social media comes with the pressure of wanting to be connected at all times. Notably, the younger generations rely more on the internet as a source of news as opposed to classical avenues like radio and TV. The internet offers easier accessibility to content. However, with this ease comes the need to maintain one's online presence to avoid missing out on the latest news. Failure to keep up can lead individual to feel left out, especially if specific news is relevant in one's circles (Turkle, 2013). That said, any instance where individuals are disconnected can cause stress. On an even more personal level, news concerning an individual can spread too fast and be exposed to various opinions by various parties. In such instances, it is easy for the party to become victimized and subject to unfavorable attention. That said, it is common to find people trending. In cases where undesirable news about an individual spread, it is easy for the affected parties to feel traumatized, which can then lead to depression and intentions to self-harm (Turkle, 2015). In one such case Jay Nelson, singer who gained fame from the X Factor in the UK, revealed that she attempted suicide in 2011 following online trolls (Press Associate Reporter, 2019). Notably, teenagers are the most susceptible to the impacts of the spread of unfavorable news and jokes online.

In other instances, social media can be used to spread negativity and toxic cultures. Take the case of media sharing. While everyone has the freedom to share pictures of themselves as long as they are decent, some people are more likely to have their uploads more appreciated than others. In most of these cases, parties that are deemed to be attractive or leading certain lifestyles gain a lot of approval. Such parties are perceived as leading the ideal lifestyles and having the ideal bodies or appearances. Therefore, they are perpetrated as being the representation of what the society considers ideal (Gaffney, 2017). As a result, more people emulate them. Those who cannot emulate them tend to receive negative criticism. The result of this criticism is that these parties may feel like outcasts and insufficient (Ibid). That said, social media paves the way for the toxic culture of body shaming, which is based on the perception that certain appearances are ideal. Parties that are victim to these toxic cultures may be emotionally distraught and are likely to become depressed. Furthermore, individuals are likely to feel like they are worthless if they are incapable of leading the lives their peers are (Ibid). It is easy to compare one's life to that of others posting online. However, without considering the fact that most of the information and media online is choreographed, it is easy to get a false sense of how life should be (Ibid). For parties with low self-esteem or unrealistic expectations in life, such comparisons can cause feelings of worthlessness, which can then lead to depression.

Most researchers consider the direct correlation between depression and social media. In this regard, these sources offer some insight into the role played by social media in the increasing suicide rates. However, most of them do not offer sustainable initiatives that can help to reduce the impacts of these sites. Researching these solutions can help to offer doctors, parents, and teachers the required skills to identify cases of depression and suicidal tendencies. Furthermore, these parties will be in better position to offer guidance to these at-risk teenagers to help them counter the negative effects of social media.

3. Methodology

The method that was used to collect data is called "narrative review." This is a method that involves a careful analysis of literature, intending to get information that could help to address the research questions (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, while engaging in the process, the focus was to get materials and articles that had substantive findings. These include journal articles that came up with a conclusion that was able to provide an answer to the hypothesis.

For instance, one of the hypotheses of the study was the fact that social media is a significant cause of depression amongst the youth in the United States (Ventresca and Mohr, 2017). While engaging in the review of the literature to prove this hypothesis, the focus of this study was on journal articles that tied depression to social media use.

In this regard, the researcher carried out an internet search for these articles, and the focus was to find them in reputable journal sources such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and EBSCO (Rubin and Babbie, 2016). Indeed, this is what was done, and the following were the search results for the various keywords use:

Keyword	EBSCO Search Results	JSTOR Search Results	Google Scholar
Depression and social media	1130	63161	2, 550, 000
Growing Rates of Depression	1055	76, 504	2,410,000
Social Media and Suicide	1130	50217	1270,000

Indeed, the identified keywords were used for the entire hypothesis because they related and sought to address an almost similar problem. Moreover, it is possible to assert that the kind of literature results provided was many and extensive (Drake *et al.*, 2017). Thus, there was a need for sorting them out and identifying the most relevant article that could help to address the problem.

One of the methods used to sort out the articles was the date of publications (Bernard, 2017). The researcher relied on journal articles that were published within the last five years. The reason is that the research provided a current situation on the effects of social media and depression amongst the youths.

Still, another method used to sort out the literature was the qualifications of the authors. This was an important strategy because the researcher did not want to use articles written by scholars who are not an authority in the study of depression and the use of social media. This strategy would help to eliminate the risks associated with getting or collecting inaccurate information (Bryman, 2016). Using data from scholars who are not an authority in the identified field can result in the collection of data and information that is not valid and reliable.

While collecting information, there was a need to test their points of consistency. This was useful because it would help to eliminate inaccurate and unreliable information (Coolican, 2017). The researcher achieved this objective by comparing data obtained from one article with another (Walliman, 2017). This was done to test if they were similar or contradicted. Data that contradicted many articles were not used.

Furthermore, to avoid plagiarism, the researcher had to cite all the information obtained from the review of the literature. Submission of plagiarized work is unethical, and can seriously affect the validity and reliable of the research.

4. Results

It was found that suicide is the second highest cause of death among teenagers in the U.S. This trend was observable for individuals from 10 years till 34 years. It was also observable that these parties are more susceptible to emotional stress and trauma caused by life. Furthermore, it was observed that there is a possibility that most cases of suicide among this population is not reported as such. Therefore, it is likely many cases of unintentional harm are actually suicides (Shain, 2016). That said, 517 cases of suicide were reported for parties from 10 years to 14, and 6,252 for parties from 15-24 (CDC, 2017). It was also noted that depression is quite prominent among teenagers in the U.S. The National Institute of Health (2019) reported that approximately 3.2 million adolescents have been depressed at some point in their lives.

Figure-1. Top 10 causes of death in the U.S. by age group

Rank	Age Groups										All Ages
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
1	Congenital Anomalies 4,580	Unintentional Injury 1,267	Unintentional Injury 718	Unintentional Injury 860	Unintentional Injury 13,441	Unintentional Injury 25,669	Unintentional Injury 22,828	Malignant Neoplasms 39,266	Malignant Neoplasms 114,810	Heart Disease 519,052	Heart Disease 647,457
2	Short Gestation 3,749	Congenital Anomalies 424	Malignant Neoplasms 418	Suicide 517	Suicide 6,252	Suicide 7,948	Malignant Neoplasms 10,900	Heart Disease 32,658	Heart Disease 80,102	Malignant Neoplasms 427,896	Malignant Neoplasms 599,108
3	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 1,432	Malignant Neoplasms 325	Congenital Anomalies 188	Malignant Neoplasms 437	Homicide 4,909	Homicide 5,488	Heart Disease 10,401	Unintentional Injury 24,461	Unintentional Injury 23,408	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 138,139	Unintentional Injury 169,936
4	SIDS 1,363	Homicide 303	Homicide 154	Congenital Anomalies 191	Malignant Neoplasms 1,374	Heart Disease 3,681	Suicide 7,335	Suicide 8,561	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 18,667	Cerebro-vascular 125,653	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 160,201
5	Unintentional Injury 1,317	Heart Disease 127	Heart Disease 75	Homicide 178	Heart Disease 913	Malignant Neoplasms 3,616	Homicide 3,351	Liver Disease 8,312	Diabetes Mellitus 14,904	Alzheimer's Disease 120,107	Cerebro-vascular 146,383
6	Placenta Cord Membranes 843	Influenza & Pneumonia 104	Influenza & Pneumonia 62	Heart Disease 104	Congenital Anomalies 355	Liver Disease 918	Liver Disease 3,000	Diabetes Mellitus 6,409	Liver Disease 13,737	Diabetes Mellitus 59,020	Alzheimer's Disease 121,404
7	Bacterial Sepsis 592	Cerebro-vascular 66	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 59	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 75	Diabetes Mellitus 248	Diabetes Mellitus 823	Diabetes Mellitus 2,118	Cerebro-vascular 5,198	Cerebro-vascular 12,708	Unintentional Injury 55,951	Diabetes Mellitus 83,564
8	Circulatory System Disease 449	Septicemia 48	Cerebro-vascular 41	Cerebro-vascular 56	Influenza & Pneumonia 160	Cerebro-vascular 593	Cerebro-vascular 1,811	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 3,975	Suicide 7,982	Influenza & Pneumonia 46,862	Influenza & Pneumonia 55,672
9	Respiratory Distress 440	Benign Neoplasms 44	Septicemia 33	Influenza & Pneumonia 51	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 188	HIV 513	Septicemia 854	Septicemia 2,441	Septicemia 5,838	Nephritis 41,670	Nephritis 50,633
10	Neonatal Hemorrhage 379	Perinatal Period 42	Benign Neoplasms 31	Benign Neoplasms 31	Complicated Pregnancy 168	Complicated Pregnancy 512	HIV 831	Homicide 2,275	Nephritis 5,671	Parkinson's Disease 31,177	Suicide 47,473

The study also revealed that a significant portion of teenagers in the U.S are active on social media (83%). Of all the available social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are the most popular ones. In terms of overall global users, Facebook accounts for 85% of internet use (Ahmad, 2019). Furthermore, teenagers are the most ardent social media use, with up to 70% checking at least one social media site once a day. This persistence is also indicated by the fact that 27% of the youth check these sites at least once every hour (Pew Research Center, 2018).

In terms of the connection between social media use and depression, it was observed that there is a direct correlation between the two. Three essential factor were drawn with relation to the connection between them. The first was the role played by the role played by addiction in reducing the development of cognitive skills, affecting sleep patterns, and formulating what was termed as shallow relationships online. The second was in relation to the role played by these sites in promoting disruptive and toxic cultures such as body shaming and idealized appearances that are not attainable by everyone. Last was the impact of malicious parties on social media users. These malevolent individuals can be bullies, trolls, and sexual predators.

The findings can be summarized in the following table

Authors	Title and date	Type of paper	Method used	Findings
Bilsen, J.	Suicide and youth: Risk factors, 2018.	A review of literature on the causes of suicide among teenagers	Various sources were reviewed to determine the cause of suicide among teenagers.	Among the factors identified in the source were mental conditions. It was observed that such things as depression increased the likelihood teenagers would be suicidal.
CDC	10 leading causes of death, United States: 2017, all races, both sexes. 2017	A presentation of national statistics on top 10 causes of death among all age groups as of 2017	National medical and death report statistics.	It was found that the leading cause of death among teenagers was unintentional injury. Second was suicide, which accounted for 517 and 6,252 deaths for age groups 10-14 and 15-24 respectively.
Gaffney, K. J.	Negative effects that Social Media causes on Body Imaging	An undergraduate thesis on the association between social media and negative body imaging	A discussion on the various effects social media has facilitated negative body imaging.	It was found that social media plays a significant role in advancing society's perceptions of perfection and

				stereotypes on acceptable body types. That said plus size people are most likely affected by these stereotypes that promote the 'Barbie effect'
Levenson, J., Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E. & Colditz, J. B.	The association between social media use and sleep disturbance among young adults, 2016	A review of statistics on the impacts of social media use on sleep quality among young adults.	1788 U.S. young adults aged 19-32 took part in a research. Self-reported minutes were used to gauge sleep disturbance. A brief Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System was used.	It was found that parties that individuals that used social media more frequently were likely to experience sleep disturbance compared to those that were less active on these platforms.
National Institute of Mental Health	Suicide, 2012.	National data and information concerning depression in the U.S.	National statistics collected by the National Institutes of Mental Health	It was found that depression was a prominent mental disorder among Americans. That said, a significant portion of adolescents, 3.2. millions, have suffered from depression at a point in their life.
Shain, B	Suicide and suicide attempts among adolescents, 2018.	Review of literature and statistics on	Various sources were analyzed to provide insights into the current trends of suicide among adolescents	It was found that suicide rates among teenagers in the U.S. has increased by 28% from 1990-2013. Further, it was observed that internet use exceeding 5 hours a day increased the likelihood of becoming depressed and suicidal among teenagers.
(Zhang and Li, 2013)	Association between depression and suicide when hopelessness is controlled for.	A study testing the relationship between suicide rates and depression.	Proxy informant for suicide victims aged 15-34 and parties that attempted suicide were interviewed. 392 participants were interviewed as well as 416 community living controls.	It was found that there was a strong correlation between major depression and suicide.

5. Discussion

There are significant correlations between excessive use of SNS and depression among the youth. This effect is prominent because of the importance these sites have on the lives and experiences of these parties. Notably, social media does come with significant good. In fact, the benefits they offer greatly outweigh the negative effects. However, for a selected portion of users, the negative aspects related to these sites can have dire effects. Overreliance on these sites increase the likelihood these impacts would be significant on the individual. Research suggests that social media can lead to addiction synonymous to drug and substance overreliance (Kuss and Griffiths,

2017). As is the case with drug abuse, these parties are incapable of functioning well without accessing social media sites for a while. Kuss and Griffiths (2017), observe that using these sites results in the release of endorphins, as would the case of any addiction, which then results in feelings of satisfaction and release. For these parties, the virtual world offers more satisfaction than reality (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). However, it should be noted the negative effects of social media use does not apply primarily to addicted parties. That said, all teenagers are at risk. Exposure to some aspects of social media, as will be discussed below, can cause psychological stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies among teenagers.

The most influential aspect about social media is its popularity. This observation is especially true among teenagers, where a larger portion of individuals in this age group use at least one social media platform. For such parties, engaging these sites not only offers an opportunity to connect to others but it also ensures that they can fit in with their peers. The resulting popularity of the sites makes it a suitable avenue for popularizing trends and specific behavior. However, since these platforms are also used by mature parties, it is very likely that teenagers can be exposed to mature content such as alcoholism. In a bid to fit in, individuals can choose to engage in such negative behavior to fit in Huang *et al.* (2014). Otherwise, one would risk being an outcast, which then increases the likelihood of being lonely and depressed. However, engaging in these destructive behavior does not make things better. Younger parties are susceptible to making poor decisions. Therefore, coupled with these negative behavior propagated by social media sites, the probability of taking part in actions that can be life-altering and destructive increases, which increases the likelihood of being exposed to psychological trauma (Ibid). For such parties, bouncing back can be hard, with the effects causing severe depression among some parties. Without intervention for such parties, the depression can advance to major depression, which is a prominent factor that can lead to suicidal tendencies (Bilsen, 2018).

There is no denying that social media has advanced interactions between people. The tolerance it promotes has reduced instances of discrimination and allowed people from diverse backgrounds to interact. However, with this increased connection comes the risk that interpersonal relationships may not bear the same significance they did in the past. As a result, while individuals may feel connected to others, they may feel lonely and isolated. This loneliness can be the foundation for the depression and psychological stress. Notably, most online relationships do not offer the same level of emotional support that an individual may need. Therefore, behind the facade of followers and online friends, individuals may be quite lonely. However, since their interactions are primarily online, these individuals are incapable of getting the physical encounters necessary for building character and cognitive skills O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011). These people may lack the necessary experience and capability to deal with difficult situations in life. As a result, they are more likely to buckle under extreme psychological distress.

Psychological development can also be interfered with by the interference that social media can cause on sleep and other important activities in which one engages in the course of the day. For students, there is a direct relationship between these interferences and performance levels in class (Levenson *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, people that are active online are more likely to receive notifications in their sleep as well as spend late nights online, which interfere with their sleep patterns (Ibid). For teenagers, these impacts affect psychological development since the brain relies on rest to recharge. Younger parties, whose brains are still developing are at risk from this interference. The resulting poor psychological health can trigger depression, which is a proven factor that increases the risk of developing suicidal tendencies (Zhang and Li, 2013).

Some common toxic cultures include body shaming and intolerance that can be caused by exposure to popularized ideals on body image and radicalized opinions respectively. In such instances, social media becomes a conduit for negativity and can be used by malicious parties to cause psychological harm to others. Teenagers are most susceptible because of their emotional fragility and susceptibility to persuasion (De Vries and Kühne, 2015). For the case of body shaming, many people can gang up on an individual directly or indirectly thereby causing the said party to feel stressed, unworthy, and unloved. Such feelings can lead to lowered self-esteem and increase the likelihood of becoming depressed. On the other hand, intolerant thoughts can be a basis for trolling and online bullying, which has been proven to cause psychological stress and even depression (Turel and Serenko, 2012). That said, there have been some cases of people committing suicide after being trolled or bullied aggressively on social media platforms.

6. Conclusion

Social media use has many benefits to society. However, these benefits are undermined by a few instances of misuse, negativity, and toxic cultures. The most susceptible parties are the teenagers who are more vulnerable at the emotional and psychological level. In an attempt to understand and curb the rising suicide trends in this age group, it is necessary to breakdown the factors that increase the likelihood of having self-harm intentions. In this specific scenario, the case of social media is presented as a primary factor in contemporary society. The role these sites play in causing psychological stress and later depression cannot be overlooked. This is especially true considering that most teenagers in the country are on social media sites. An effort is required to control the use of these sites to ensure that the dangers they present are mitigated to reduce their intoxicating effect on the country's teenagers.

It was assumed that, of all age groups, teenagers are the most emotionally and psychologically vulnerable. Therefore, they are most likely to react to external factors that affect their psychological health. Parties with low self-esteem are most susceptible to the negative impacts of social media. For these individuals, the likelihood of facing psychological trauma is higher, which can then lead to depression and even suicide. The paper also assumes the positive impacts of social media and focuses on the negative ones that have the potential to cause psychological trauma and, eventually, depression. Further, since there is no direct correlation between social media use and suicide

rates, the paper assumes this relationship by linking social media to depression, which is then linked to suicide rates. That said, depression is considered a primary cause of suicide among teenagers in the U.S. All other factors are assumed as depression remains the point of focus

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