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The experiences of Young People who use social media regularly and who deliberately self-harm

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research.

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Abstract:

The use of social media (SM) has significantly altered the daily lives of young people (YP), raising concerns about its potential impact on their mental health, specifically its association with deliberate self-harm (DSH) and suicidal ideation. This study explores how regular SM use affects youth engagement in DSH and suicidality, unveiling the intricate link between youth mental health and SM through an extensive Medline and CINAHL database search. The findings of this review explain a complex link between online imagery, SM, and suicidal behaviour in YP, where SM can foster peer connections and treatment access but may also exacerbate DSH and suicidal thoughts, especially in vulnerable YP. Overall, this review highlights the in depth experiences between regular SM use and youth who DSH and experience suicidal ideation, identifying the need for education of YP concerning the risks of using SM and monitoring of YP by them, parents, teachers, and mental health professionals. Despite prior inconsistencies, regular use of SM by YP is associated with an increased risk of DSH and suicidality, particularly among those who are vulnerable due to exposure to triggering online content and the potential for negative social interactions.

Key Words:

Deliberate self-harm, Suicidality, Regular social media, Adolescents, Young People, Internet

Deliberate self-harm (DSH) among young people (YP) is a severe public health concern (Plante, 2010). YP here refers to people between 10 years and 24 years of age; psychologists and neuroscientists now believe this is the most acceptable cut-off for late adolescence (United Nations, 2015).

Over the years, various nomenclature has been used to describe DSH; according to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE),2020), DSH refers to a deliberate action of self-poisoning or self-injury, irrespective of motivation or apparent goal, as an expression of emotional anguish. Additionally, individuals are deliberately self-harming when they transform thoughts or feelings into a visible harmful action to transform emotional pain into physical pain. YP undertake self-harm actions as a way of coping with overwhelming feelings, escaping traumatic memories, and communicating suicidal thoughts which fall short of taking their own life (O'Reilly, Kiyimba and Karim, 2016). The Office for National Statistics (2021) found that young person suicide accounted for 468 fatalities in England in 2020, making suicide the fourth-largest cause of death amongst 15–19-year-olds (World Health Organisation (WHO),2021).

Some psychiatric disorders are known risk factors for causing self-harm (Cybulski et al., 2021). These include post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Depression is the most prevalent psychiatric disorder in persons who self-harm and commit suicide (Claes et al., 2014; Boxer, 2010; Hawton et al., 2012). The internet, especially social media (SM), has gained popularity, with an estimated 50.6% of people and a significant adolescent readership using it (Dean, 2021). SM are online communities where users can distribute information and communicate instantaneously with individuals with shared interests and experiences. SM has become vital to many people's everyday lives worldwide due to the growing dependence on the internet and mobile devices (Madianou, 2018). Mainstream media has portrayed SM as a platform which normalises and glamorises depressive messages and depressive images and music, which can cause DSH and suicide among YP (Guardian, 2014; Lavis and Winter, 2020).

SM normalises risky behaviour and creates a closed community where the conversation is hidden from parents, and YP are pushed into taking chances and adopting the "live dangerously" lifestyle (Livingstone, 2009). According to Livingstone (2009), to grow, YP must take social, emotional, and intellectual risks, which involve opportunities and threats. Therefore, establishing online friendships using SM, for instance, can lead to interactions with malicious persons.

Although YP find blogging about suicide beneficial because it provides an outlet for self-expression and emotional support, there is a risk of suicidal idealisation affecting other vulnerable or depressed YP to SH (Colombo et al., 2016). The suicide contagion effect pertains to a heightened likelihood of engaging in suicidal actions among those who have been exposed to suicide, particularly through media or interpersonal relationships (World Health Organisation, 2015). Furthermore, when looking at Twitter posts related to suicide, these posts can reach those who tweet regarding suicide and those who do not (Sadagheyani and Tatari, 2020). For instance, a study conducted by Coppersmith et al. (2016) discovered that throughout the years 2016 to 2017, there were more than 1.3 million tweets containing wording that suggested thoughts of suicide.

In addition, the TikTok, a platform which primarily targets a younger audience, experienced a 400% surge in the utilisation of hashtags associated with suicide and self-harm during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as compared to the preceding year (Sinyor et al., 2020). Knowing how suicide is depicted in SM media may help identify harmful posts that could influence YP to indeed take their own lived lethality (Pollock, 2019). Despite these trends, there are still reservations about establishing a causal link between exposure to such content and suicidal behaviour, highlighting the need for further research (Ortiz and Khin, 2018).

Question:

What are the experiences of young people who deliberate self-harm and who use regular social media?

Aim:

This review aims to understand the experiences of YP who use social media regularly and who DSH.

Objectives:

1. To gain deeper insight into SM's helpful and harmful influences on the lives of YP
2. To explore naturally occurring communication about self-harm behaviour
3. To gain an understanding regarding any connection between SM and engagement in DSH in YP

Methodology:

The MEDLINE and CINAHL databases were used to undertake a literature search to identify and select articles that answer this research question (RQ).

Table 2. Key Search Terms

Population		Exposure 1	Exposure 2		Outcome
Adolescent*	AND	Social media	Regular*	AND	Self-injuriou*
OR		(MeSH term)	OR		behaviour*
Young adult*		OR	Frequent*		OR
OR		Blogging (MeSH term)	OR		Self-destructive
Young person*		OR	Much*		Behavio?r*
OR		OR	OR		OR
Teen*		Social networking sites	Continual*		Parasuicid*
OR		OR	Or		OR
Youth*		Blog*	Repeated*		Suicid*
OR		OR			OR
Child*		Facebook			Self harm*
ORpaediatric*		OR	OR		OR
OR		Twitter	Use*		Selfharm*
High school Pupil*		OR	OR		OR
OR		Virtual community	Spend		Suicidal self
College Pupil*			OR		injury
OR			Consume		OR

Secondary School Pupil*		OR Vlog*	OR Time Or Hours		Non suicidal self injury
OR		OR			OR
Hight School student*		Youtube			Self-injury
OR		OR			OR
High school Pupil*		Instagram			Suicidal behaviour
OR		OR			OR
College Student*		Content communities			Attempted suicide
		OR			OR
		Digital media			Unsuccessful suicide*
		OR			OR
		Online platform			Self-mutilation
		OR			OR
		Online social network			OR
		OR			Self-cut*
		Internet addiction			OR
		OR			NSSI

		Snapchat			OR
		OR			Self-mutilat*
		Tumblr			
		OR			
		Hashtag*			
		OR			
		e?communit			

This search identified a total of 3,294 articles, having removed any duplicates, 162 articles remained (figure 1). To further refine the search results, inclusion/exclusion criteria were defined so that the most suitable articles could be selected to answer this RQ (Table 2).

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
Population	YP aged between 10years and 24 years	Individuals less than 10 years of age and those above the age of 24	This review will focus on the potential impact of SM on DSH and suicidality among young individuals aged 10 to 24. This age range was selected based on their high SM usage, with 78% of 10 to 12-year-olds, 80% of 12 to 16-year-

			olds, and the most active group, 16 to 24-year-olds, reported using SM (OFCOM, 2021). In addition, limiting the population inclusion criteria to this age range helps to reduce bias and allows for comparisons between the early stages of SM, its association with DSH and suicidality, and the current state (Salkind et al., 2010).
Exposure	Studies focusing on SM, which are websites and computer programs that enable individuals to communicate and exchange information on the Internet (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). These include Instagram, Twitter,	Studies relating to sites that are not considered to be a form of SM	SM is now an integral part of daily life, with YP spending an average of eight hours daily on these platforms (Broadband Search, 2022). SM promotes global connectivity, online learning, content discovery, and civic engagement (Hemsley et al., 2018). However, excessive use can lead to adverse outcomes such as cyberbullying, depression, and exposure to inappropriate content; all well-

Time	Tumblr, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, Self-harm websites, Suicide websites, Vlogging and Blogging sites. Regular <u>OR</u> <u>Frequent</u>		documented in the media. Moreover, depressive content on SM has been linked to DSH and suicide (Dorol-Beauroy-Eustache and Mishara, 2021). Conversely, some studies have reported that SM provides a safe platform for people to share hidden anxieties with peers and receive support (Lopez and Polletta, 2021). Therefore, a thorough investigation of the relationship between SM use, DSH, and suicide is warranted.
Outcome(s)	Studies with a clear measurement of DSH or suicidality when linked to the regular use of SM	Studies not linked to DSH or suicidality	Because ideas and behaviours are not reduced to statistics, the current review will use qualitative research to depict the underlying intricacies of human behaviour, resulting in a holistic approach (Holloway and Galvin, 2017). Also, because individuals are allowed

			full licences to express themselves, it reveals rich details about how people think and behave; hence, it has higher validity because the researcher is more likely to assess the variable of interest (Liamputtong, 2019). Finally, the qualitative research methodologies fully explain the relationship between regular SM use, DSH, and suicidality.
Years of Publication	2015 to the current date	Prior to 2015	The emergence of Facebook in the mid-2000s paved the way for many digital social platforms, including Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, and Reddit, which have since become ubiquitous among YP (Boulianne and Theocharis, 2018). To ensure that current and reliable data are presented in the review and that comparisons are made, research from 2015 to the current date will be scrutinised.

Geographical Location	International research from any country and all settings	No restrictions on the geographical location of the study	Individually studying the association between SM usage and DSH and suicidality outcomes internationally is difficult due to limited resources, underlining the need to evaluate research from multiple countries and determine the transferability of findings (Burchett et al., 2012). Because SM is a global phenomenon, this review will include research from many countries and settings to provide a more thorough knowledge of the association between SM usage and mental health outcomes, allowing for cross-national comparisons.
Language of Publication	Papers written in the English language	Papers in a language other than English	While using English-language studies may result in a language bias and limit the representation of evidence, it may be impractical to include

			studies in other languages due to resource constraints such as language skills and the availability of resources for evaluation (McDonagh et al., 2013). As a result, although admitting the possible limits of this technique, this evaluation will concentrate solely on English-language research.
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Articles were then-selected using only the inclusion and exclusion criteria. 25 potential studies were identified and, therefore, screened for inclusion. The full texts of these articles were read to see if they addressed or answered the research question. Having read the full texts, 21 studies were excluded because the focus of these articles was not on young people who deliberate self-harm and who experience suicidal idealisation. A PRISMA diagram in Figure 1 demonstrates this identification and selection process.

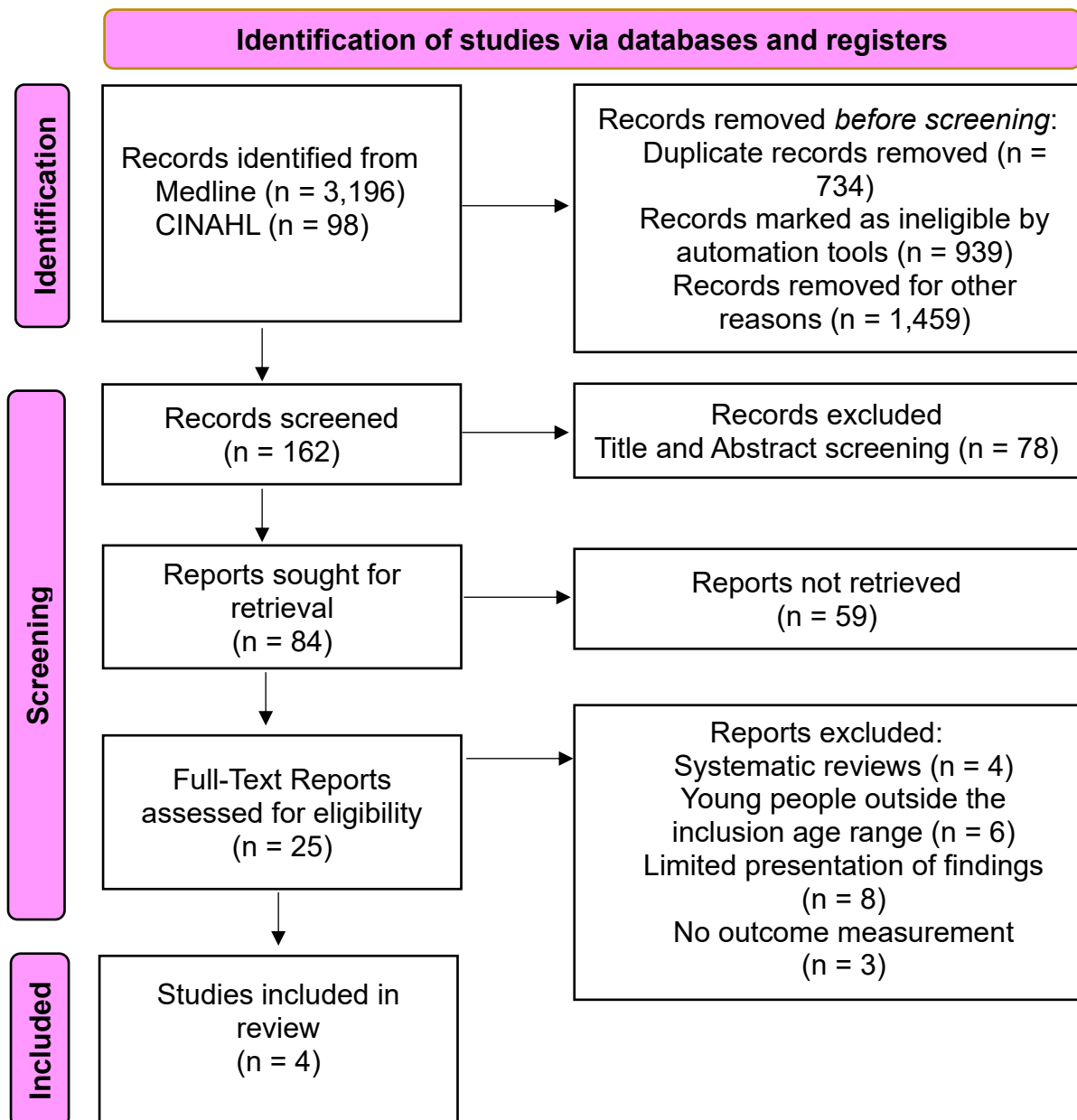


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The studies included diverse participant groups across different settings. In the United States, Khasawneh et al. (2020) analyzed online content from social media users to understand how digital interactions might influence self-harm behavior, while Weinstein et al. (2021) interviewed hospitalized adolescents with a history of suicidal ideation to explore their social media usage. The UK study by Jacob et al. (2017) involved young people aged 13-19 with lived experiences of self-harm, using

semi-structured interviews to gather insights into their online behaviors. Meanwhile, the Italian study by Logrieco et al. (2021) focused on adolescents who had been exposed to pro-anorexia content, using a case study approach to investigate its impact on their mental health.

Table 3. Summary of Findings of Eligible Articles (n=4)

Title of the article	Logrieco et al. (2021) Rome, Italy	Khasawneh et al. (2020) USA	Jacob et al. (2017) Cardiff, Wales	Weinstein et al. (2021) USA
Research Aims	To investigate how SM platforms may enable and sustain self-injury and eating disorder behaviours among users.	To investigate how the Blue Whale Challenge is portrayed on SM and to identify potential risk factors for vulnerable populations.	The aim is to investigate the utilisation and interpretation of online images of self-harm among young individuals.	This study aims to look into at-risk adolescents' experiences regarding SM and suicide.
Sample	Purposive Sampling 1 participant A 14-year-old patient with a diagnosis of anorexia nervosa TikTok is the SM network under consideration in this context, primarily catering to young teenagers.	Purposive and Snowball Sampling 60 YouTube videos 1,112 YouTube Comments 150 Twitter Posts	Purposive Sampling 21 individuals → 3 male and 18 female Aged 16-24 Mean age: 19 Participants lived in Wales, UK Participants had a previous history of self-harm	Opportunity Sampling Participants were 30 adolescents 13-18-year-olds Participants were recruited from a large metropolitan inpatient psychiatric facility where they were getting treatment for a suicide attempt or serious suicidal thoughts, and their

			16 (76%) participants sought professional help for their self-harm 8 (38%) went to A&E for their injuries	experiences with social media were investigated. All participants had experienced suicidal ideation at some point, while 63.3% had attempted suicide. 70% female and 30% male 80% were White, 7% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 3% endorsed another race/ethnicity (the remainder declined to report)
Methods	Case Study	Content analysis	Semi-structured interviews 19 were conducted independently One was conducted in a dyad	In-depth semi-structured interviews Participants also completed self-report measures on an iPad
Data Analysis	Thematic Analysis	Thematic analysis	Thematic Analysis	Thematic analysis
Key Findings	The researcher noted being motivated by the observations made on the TikTok SM platform, where	By repeated exposure, modelling, and reinforcement, the proliferation of SM posts depicting the blue	A notable finding of this study was that many individuals indicated that online	According to the findings of this study, social technology use is related to positive and negative experiences

	numerous YP shared their accounts of intense suffering, frequently concerning non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) or eating disorders. The researcher found TikTok videos about eating disorders, NSSI, and depression. These videos were designed to portray the destructive features of these conditions in order to dissuade anyone who may have idealised or endorsed them. The ostensibly harmless tone of some videos about anorexia or self-injury may, in reality, have the ironic effect of enticing people to emulate these harmful behaviours.	whole challenge can potentially normalise self-harming and suicidal acts. This is especially troubling for vulnerable populations like adolescents, who may be at a higher risk of emulation due to their developmental stage and vulnerability to peer influence. Further efforts are needed to develop safe messaging norms and discourage SM contagion effects among users and content creators.	community discussions had normalised self-harm as a routine, day-to-day practice. The impact of Internet usage on participants' self-harm was significant. The online environment and associated communities allowed the participants to explore and exchange self-harm practices and techniques. Some participants demonstrated an escalation in the severity of their self-harm behaviours as they gravitated towards more injurious methods. Participants were motivated to replicate certain practices	among the adolescent population currently at risk of suicide. In particular, most participants reported a mix of positive and bad experiences. The study's findings indicate that at-risk adolescents' use of SM was not without drawbacks. For example, participants reported difficulties with self-regulation of use, stress from SM metrics, exposure to "triggering" content, encounters with hostility and meanness, self-demeaning comparisons, and onerous friendship expectations. Interestingly, participants reported a mix of positive and negative experiences, with the former including social connection, social
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			depicted in images. Many participants reported relying on or being triggered by specific images to initiate self-harming behaviour. Participants who shared images of their self-harm injuries were likelier to engage in extreme self-harm behaviours. Participants in the study discussed using Tumblr as a platform synonymous with online self-harm activity, with many using it to share imagery related to self-harm behaviours. The unregulated accessibility to Tumblr and the	support, affect-enhancing content, shared interests, and mental health and coping resources. The documented hazards and advantages of using social media coincide with proven risk and protective variables for suicidal thoughts and behaviours in offline situations, implying that the exact mechanisms work in both online and offline domains. Participants in the study put a high value on abstaining from social technologies while hospitalised while simultaneously recognising their need for social re-entry. However, they also discovered several related problems.
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			discretion of its users to share images depicting severe self-harm have contributed to the normalisation of self-harm practices among the participants.	
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Findings:

Thematic analysis is an adaptable and systematic methodology for examining qualitative data, routinely utilised in systematic reviews (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). It helps determine patterns and themes, including commonalities, contradictions, and weaknesses and guides future research. Additionally, thematic analysis reveals the data's mechanisms, processes, and significance and helps develop a theoretical framework (Walters, 2016). For instance, this review employed thematic analysis to ascertain how those with a history of self-harm and active self-harmers use SM to understand their behaviour.

The author became acquainted with the data by reading and establishing preliminary codes to undertake thematic analysis. Next, the codes were examined and integrated to create wider themes that ensured coherence, distinctiveness, and comprehensiveness. Finally, the analysis produced four themes that address the research question about SM's function in YP DSH and suicidality, which are presented in the following section.

Four common themes were identified within the findings of the research studies.

These themes were:

- The influence of online images and SM on YP DSH/suicidal behaviour
- The contagion effects
- The pre-existing psychological challenges YP experience, such as depression and social isolation
- The need for awareness and education regarding the harmful effects of SM on YP

The influence of online images and SM on YP DSH/suicidal behaviour

DSH and suicidal tendencies in YP are critical health concerns, particularly in the digital age, where SM and online images play a significant role in the lives of YP. Logrieco et al. (2021), Weinstein et al. (2021), Khasawneh et al. (2020), and Jacob et al. (2017) all provide essential insights into the impact of SM and online pictures on YP, DSH and suicidal behaviour.

The study by Jacob et al. (2017) highlights the influential role of online images in shaping people's DSH behaviour. While using these images may offer a coping mechanism and a sense of belonging, the study also highlights the negative impact these images can have by triggering and exacerbating DSH behaviour. In addition, online images can romanticise and normalise DSH behaviour, perpetuating the misconception that it is a socially acceptable way to confront challenging emotions,

"I would go on Google and look at the images; ... it became this like addictive high and then each picture had to be worse than the one before." (Jacob et al., 2017, p. 143)

"Because I saw on the Internet wrist banging, I'd heard the term before, wanted to know what it was and then I was like, oh I'll give that a try." (Jacob et al., 2017, p. 142)

Logrieco et al. (2021) extends this discussion by highlighting the potential harm caused by SM platforms on the mental health of adolescents, explicitly concerning DSH and eating disorders. Regardless of incorporating anti-pro-anorexia content on TikTok, promoting "thinspiration" and NSSI persists,

"...extreme experience... too simple and free of suffering... reported being inspired on Tik Tok." (Logrieco et al., 2021, p. 1-2)

This study highlights the complex nature of SM sites, which attempt to prevent DSH but may inadvertently promote it. Moreover, the study reveals the potential for SM to normalise DSH and eating disorders, principally amid YP, who have pre-existing mental health conditions like depression and anxiety.

A study by Weinstein et al. (2020) found that the adverse effects of SM usage on adolescent mental health, such as the elevated threat of DSH and causing eating disorders. The coexistence of both anti-pro-anorexia and pro-anorexia content on SM adds complexity to the situation. Although the use of SM by YP can offer opportunities for connection, support, and mental health advocacy, it also exposes them to potentially distressing content, cyberbullying, and feelings of being socially isolated.

In contrast, Khasawneh et al. (2020) identified the Blue Whale Challenge as a harmful influence on adolescents' DSH and suicidal behaviour, particularly among those with pre-existing mental health conditions. The Blue Whale Challenge is an internet-based game that has gained popularity as a dangerous fad, specifically

aimed at teenagers, and promotes self-destructive actions through a sequence of 50 daily tasks (Mukhra et al., 2017). YouTube and Twitter were the main SM channels for sharing information about the challenge, with a large proportion of the material promoting DSH and death. Interestingly, this study also found that YouTube had a higher prevalence of similar content than Twitter. This study emphasises the importance of monitoring and controlling online content that may promote destructive behaviour,

"Husband silently downloaded the Blue Whale Game on his wife's phone. Fifty days later the blue whale committed suicide." (Khasawneh et al., 2020, p. 7)

The contagion effects

Logrieco et al. (2021), Weinstein et al. (2021), Khasawneh et al. (2020), and Jacob et al. (2017) have shed light on the concept of contagion effects, which refers to the phenomenon in which YP who are exposed to online content featuring DSH and suicidal behaviour are at risk of imitating these behaviours. Furthermore, this risk is exceptionally high in YP susceptible to such effects.

Weinstein et al. (2021) highlight the dual nature of SM's influence on suicide contagion. On the one hand, SM can provide a supportive network for YP struggling with suicidal thoughts and behaviours, enabling them to connect with others who share their experiences. However, SM can also serve as a platform for the spread of harmful suicide-related content, which may increase the risk of contagion effects,

"there's a lot of self-harm accounts out there that sometimes I stumble upon that's like, 'oh, since you may like this, or something you may be interested in might be like a self-harm account, graphic pictures,' and that can be really triggering," (Weinstein et al., 2021, pp. 68)

The study underscores the need for SM firms to develop effective strategies to reduce the spread of suicidal content and to create a safe and supportive online environment.

Similarly, Jacob et al. (2017) found that the social context is vital in NSSI behaviours. According to the findings of the study, individuals commonly engaged in NSSI in reaction to social stressors such as bullying and social isolation. Furthermore, these social stressors may be exacerbated by SM content connected to NSSI, increasing the risk of contagion effects. This finding emphasises the necessity of considering the social context and its relationship to NSSI when developing interventions to reduce the impact of harmful online content.

These findings imply that SM has a complicated and multifaceted impact on self-harm behaviours. While SM can provide mental health assistance and advocacy, it can also spread toxic content, increasing the risk of contagion effects.

Furthermore, the studies by Logrieco et al. (2021) and Khasawneh et al. (2020) offer critical insights into the potential contagion effects of harmful content on SM platforms. Logrieco et al.'s (2021) study highlights the potential role of SM in normalising and perpetuating harmful behaviours such as anorexia and NSSI, as well as the potential role of SM algorithms in fostering and increasing harmful content.

"...if a user accidentally views a video dealing with anorexia on the homepage and, intrigued, searches for other videos alike, the algorithm will keep suggesting such videos, contributing to the development of obsessive behaviors." (Logrieco et al., 2021, pp. 2)

This study's qualitative methodology, which includes interviews with persons who have undertaken these behaviours, provides a unique viewpoint on the impact of SM on the progression and maintenance of these behaviours.

Similarly, Khasawneh et al.'s (2020) study found the prospective contagion effects of harmful online content, specifically the Blue Whale Challenge, on vulnerable individuals. In addition, the study highlights the potential role of SM sites like YouTube and Twitter in promoting and amplifying destructive content and using hashtags to facilitate the rapid dissemination of harmful information.

Overall, these studies emphasise the implication of taking a pre-emptive action to regulate harmful information on SM platforms to limit the spread of contagion effects. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the potential impact of harmful content on vulnerable individuals and construct effective interventions to mitigate these effects. Doing so can establish a safer and more supportive online environment for all users.

The pre-existing psychological challenges YP experience, such as depression and social isolation

In the context of SM and its effect on mental health, the theme of comorbidity with other psychological illnesses, notably depression and social isolation, is an essential and frequent issue. The four articles selected offer distinct perspectives on the complex interaction between SM and comorbid psychological disorders, emphasising the potential for SM to worsen or ease these issues (Khasawneh et al., 2020; Weinstein et al., 2021; Logrieco et al., 2021; Jacob et al., 2017).

Logrieco et al. (2021) critically analysed SM's impact on adolescent comorbid psychiatric disorders, particularly depression and social isolation. The study highlights the paradoxical nature of TikTok, which offers both anti-pro-anorexia

content and promotes harmful behaviours such as NSSI and "thinspiration." The authors underscore the normalisation of DSH and eating disorders as considerable problems, particularly for individuals with pre-existing mental health concerns like depression and anxiety. The study calls for SM sites to proactively limit harmful information to reduce contagion effects on vulnerable populations.

Similarly, Weinstein et al. (2021) provide a comprehensive examination of the dual nature of SM in exacerbating and alleviating comorbid psychiatric disorders among YP, particularly depression and social isolation, in the context of suicidal behaviour. The study notes the potential of SM to amplify negative emotions and feelings of isolation while also serving as a helpful network for communication and support. The authors also highlight the potential for SM to be used as a tool for mental health experts to provide timely interventions and support. Finally, the study emphasises the importance of regulating SM's negative impact on vulnerable populations while capitalising on its positive aspects, which is crucial for both doctors and policymakers.

In contrast, Khasawneh et al. (2020) examine the potential impact of SM platforms in increasing comorbid psychological disorders like depression and social isolation by promoting harmful content like DSH and suicidal behaviour, specifically the infamous Blue Whale Challenge. The authors emphasise the eagerness of players to contribute to the game and even share images of DSH and suicidal behaviour,

"I want to play the Blue Whale Game. Please give me the link." (Khasawneh et al., 2020, pp.7)

The study calls for pre-emptive measures to regulate harmful information on SM sites to reduce the dissemination of contagion effects and adverse outcomes on individuals' mental health.

Jacob et al. (2017) critically analyses harmful internet content's negative impact on vulnerable populations, particularly DSH. The study highlights the need for a holistic approach to therapy that considers the social context of DSH, including the potential for social stresses such as bullying and social isolation to increasing the risk of contagion effects. In addition, the authors emphasise the need to create supportive social networks to prevent the occurrence of comorbid psychiatric disorders such as depression and social isolation. By acknowledging the importance of social context in developing effective interventions, the study offers a valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation around mental health and SM use.

The need for awareness and education regarding the harmful effects of SM on YP

Logrieco et al. (2021), Weinstein et al. (2021), Khasawneh et al. (2020), and Jacob et al. (2017) all agree on the necessity for proactive steps to uphold positive mental health and prevent harmful effects of SM use among YP.

The articles by Logrieco et al. (2021) and Weinstein et al. (2021) highlight the pressing need for practical solutions to mitigate the possible negative impacts of SM on YP's mental health. Logrieco et al. (2021) argue that SM platforms must take greater responsibility in preventing the spread of harmful content related to NSSI and eating disorders. While the authors acknowledge the importance of mental health practitioners, they stress the necessity for partnership between SM platforms and mental health experts to develop effective prevention strategies.

Similarly, Weinstein et al. (2021) argue for increased education and training to improve understanding of SM's potential risks and benefits connecting mental health professionals, parents, and YP. Furthermore, the authors recommend further research into effective prevention and intervention strategies targeting SM use in YP. Finally, they argue that mental health professionals and parents should openly and honestly examine their SM use with YP and provide guidance on safe and healthy ways to engage with these platforms.

Furthermore, the studies by Khasawneh et al. (2020) and Jacob et al. (2017) both highlight the urgent need for greater recognition and education regarding the hypothetical risks associated with exposure to harmful digital material linked explicitly to DSH and suicide. Khasawneh et al. (2020) argue for increased education and support for YP and their caregivers in safe and responsible SM usage and incorporating media literacy programs into school curricula and mental health interventions. Jacob et al. (2017) similarly advocates for greater awareness among parents, schools, and mental health specialists regarding the prevalence and impact of online self-harm content and suggest offering information and guidance on seeking help and support.

Key findings:

1. SM and online images play a significant role in shaping youth DSH behaviour, potentially normalising and romanticising these behaviours.
2. Exposure to SM content featuring DSH and suicidal behaviour can lead to imitation of these behaviours, posing a risk, especially for susceptible youth.

3. SM exacerbates or alleviates comorbid psychological issues like depression and social isolation, highlighting the need for proactive regulation to reduce negative impacts.
4. Recognising hypothetical risks linked to harmful digital content associated with DSH and suicide is crucial, advocating for education and support for both youths and caregivers in responsible SM usage and mental health interventions.

Discussion of Findings:

The analysis of various articles reveals a complex and multifaceted association between online pictures, SM, and YP's engagement in DSH and suicidal behaviour. While SM platforms can provide a supportive network for YP to connect with peers and seek help, they can also exacerbate DSH behaviours and suicidal ideation, particularly in vulnerable individuals. These findings are consistent with other studies demonstrating inconclusive evidence regarding how SM contributes to DSH and suicidality.

However, research demonstrates a correlation relating to regular SM use and adverse mental health effects in YP. For instance, a systematic review conducted by Keles et al. (2020) found that YP who engage in DSH are likelier to use SM, which may raise the risk of DSH and suicidality. However, the causal relationship concerning SM use and DSH remain unclear, and additional scrutiny is required to clarify this association.

The Logrieco et al. (2021) study lends credence to the notion that online exposure to hazardous or triggering content can contribute to DSH in YP. For example, the study found that TikTok anti-pro-anorexia videos can paradoxically promote anorexia and

DSH behaviour by triggering and exposing those who already engage in these behaviours to harmful content. This data supports the idea that YP who self-harm is attracted to similar content on SM, potentially normalising and reinforcing these behaviours.

However, it is crucial to emphasise that this is only one possible explanation for the link between SM usage and DSH among YP. Further research is needed to understand better the complex interaction of elements that impact this link, such as peer group influence, cultural influences, and individual risk factors. Thus, while internet exposure to triggering content may be a factor in DSH among YP, it is only a part of a larger issue, so further study is needed to develop effective solutions for this complex problem (Biernesser et al., 2020).

Additionally, SM can expose YP to bullying, harassment, and other harmful social interactions, leading to poor mental health outcomes. Furthermore, it is also central to consider the possibility of a bidirectional association between SM use and DSH, as those with reduced psychological well-being may be more likely to engage in excessive or hazardous SM use (Canady, 2018). This is supported by the findings of Jacob et al. (2017), who noted that SM could serve as a means of self-expression and communication for those who engage in DSH. Therefore, further research is needed to better understand these variables' complex interplay.

Another potential explanation is that excessive SM use can lead to social isolation and fewer face-to-face interactions, contributing to seclusion and depression (Meshi and Ellithorpe, 2021). This, in turn, can significantly impact one's mental health, including DSH and suicidal behaviour. Furthermore, prolonged SM use may cause distorted cognitions of reality and unreasonable expectations of oneself and others, leading to

a lack of confidence and other severe mental health repercussions (Gillespie-Smith et al., 2021). This idea is reinforced by Khasawneh et al. (2020), who found that exposure to harmful information on SM can increase feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and sadness and may lead to DSH and suicide. Additionally, SM use can distort one's perception of reality, resulting in low self-esteem and critical self-judgement.

However, it is essential to note that the study is limited in its scope, as it focuses primarily on the Blue Whale Challenge and its influence on SM users. Furthermore, the qualitative study cannot show a causal association between SM usage and DSH or suicidal behaviour (Khasawneh et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the study supports the argument that excessive SM use can lead to negative mental health outcomes like DSH and suicide, so understanding this association is vital for developing effective interventions.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that SM can similarly positively impact mental health in certain circumstances, such as by delivering social support and facilitating positive social connections (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016). Additionally, not all YP who use SM are at risk of DSH or suicidal behaviour, and many can use it in healthy and responsible ways. This perspective is supported by the findings of Weinstein et al. (2021), who demonstrated that SM use could provide emotional support and social connections for some adolescents hospitalised for suicidal behaviour. Additionally, Weinstein et al. (2021) revealed that some adolescents use SM for entertainment, keeping up with friends, and finding information on mental health, indicating that SM can be used in healthy and responsible ways.

This appropriately depicts the complexities of the association connecting SM usage and mental health, emphasising both positive and negative influences. However, it is

crucial to highlight that the beneficial outcomes of SM use do not always outweigh the harmful repercussions; SM's bearing on mental health varies in accordance with individual factors like age, gender, and mental health status (Betton and Tomlinson, 2013).

Overall, the relationship involving SM use, DSH, and suicidality among YP is a complex and nuanced topic. While respective evidence indicates that SM use can facilitate adverse mental health outcomes, further research is required to understand the primary determinants of this association and develop productive measures to enhance these outcomes. Nevertheless, the review's findings can aid mental health professionals in assessing the strength of evidence on YP's SM use, which is necessary for evidence-based prevention and treatment approaches.

Conclusion:

This systematic review identifies a potential correlation between regular SM use, DSH, and suicidal behaviours among YP. While the evidence suggests a negative impact of excessive SM usage on mental health outcomes, it is essential to note that not all YP engaging with SM are prone to DSH or suicidal behaviours. Further research is crucial to comprehensively comprehend the intricate association between SM use and YP mental health.

The review underscores the necessity for tailored interventions aimed at enhancing mental health outcomes for YP, including educating them about safe and responsible SM use. Parents, schools, and mental health practitioners play pivotal roles in imparting this knowledge and monitoring signs of mental distress and DSH. Despite the study's limitations, it serves as an initial step toward understanding this complex

relationship, providing a groundwork for future research endeavours to improve YP's mental well-being in the digital age.

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