

The influence of Internet in the Increased Suicides among Young Male Homosexuals

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Abstract

The figures on suicide among young people have been increasing in most countries around the world, specially among LGBTI people. Some researches show that a gay man has 5 to 11 times more possibility to commit suicide than a heterosexual of the same gender and age. The study we are working on tries to understand why it has been increasing and the influence of social media on that.

Keywords: homosexuality, suicide, internet

Problem

According to sociological and medical studies, the number of suicides among young gay men - traditionally very high - has been in the rise since the beginning of the third millennium. This study aims to find out if there is a correlation between the popularization of internet and this phenomenon.

Questions already answered:

1. *What is a suicide?*

When the person decides to end his or her own life

That sounds a very simple question, but how can I define what are the limits of that?

Definition:

Suicide constitutes all cases of death directly or indirectly resulting from an act of a person who is aware of the consequences of such behaviour.

2. *What are the causes?*

Two main causes:

- Organic-psychological situation of the individual
(40% of schizophrenic commit suicide)

In France, schizophrenic commit suicide 16x more than general people
Borderline Psychological Disorder, commit suicide 50x more than general people – Current Psychiatry Archives - 2009))
Borderline – 1,7% to 6% of the population

➤ The environment:

1. 60% of suicides happen during spring and summer. 40% in the rest of the year, from monday to thursday, from 6am to 4pm.
2. Protestants are 3 times more probable to end their lives than Catholics or Jews.
3. They are much more common among men (4 men for 1 woman). Only 5 countries more women commit suicide than men
4. Last century, the highest number of suicides was among people over 70 years of age. Nowadays it is from 15 to 24.
5. A married man with children has 2,9 times less probability of committing suicide
6. The bigger the family, the fewer suicides.
7. It is inconclusive, but all researches seem to show that people that life in rich countries are more probable to commit suicide. 183 countries were analysed by the World Health Organization. Among the top 20 with highest figures, 13 were from Europe. Among the bottom 50 (fewer suicides), only 1 European: Greece.

World Health Organization

The WHO reports that, of its 172 Member States for which suicide estimates are published, only 60 have good-quality vital registration data that can be used directly to estimate suicide rates. They estimated suicide rates for the other 112 Member States.

Three statements accepted by the majority of the Academia (as first stated by Emilie Dukenhein):

1. As more religious the person, less suicide
2. As more integrated inside their families, less suicide
3. As more integrated into the society, less suicide

3. *Is suicide a taboo?*

Historically, we often look at the Victorian era in the later nineteenth century as a time when public discussion of sex was considered “taboo”; for much of the twentieth century, some argue, death replaced sex as the great taboo operating in our culture.

Throughout the centuries, for religious and moral reasons, suicide was considered one of the worst sins, perhaps the worst that a human being could commit. **Suicide has been considered as something sinful.**

In 2012, according to the World Health Organization, 804,000 people in the world died this way and, every year, the number of suicides is higher than that of homicides and war casualties

combined. A person commits suicide every 40 seconds.

4. *Is there such a thing like right to live... right to die?*

If one had a right to live, then one must have the right to die, both on their terms.

Death is a natural process of life thus there should not be any laws to prevent it if the patient seeks to end it.

What we do at the end of our lives should not be of concern to others (or should it?).

5. *Is there still such a thing like homophobia?*

According to professor L. Mosse, the ideal of masculinity has been evoked to preserve society against the evils of modernity. Anything that is against this ideal of masculinity, virile and heterosexual, should be considered unnatural and therefore exterminated.

In a society based in the role differences for men and women headed by religion, the biggest example of abnormality and rebellion to rules (civil or God's) has to be the homosexuals.

By the end of XIX century to the beginning of XX, the Medicine takes from Religion the precedence of differing Normal from Abnormal, things didn't get any better. Even the father of Modern Sexuality, the psychiatric Kraft-Ebing, influenced by what we believe was the Zeitgeist of that era, declared that "the degeneration derived from homosexuality brings tension to society, leading families and all nation to decay".

From the religious concept of abomination, they started being labeled insane, sick or perverted. In other words, Medicine criminalize homosexuality and gives to secular Governments back up to persecute and condemn that social group. Such nonsense lasted until 1990, when finally the World Health Organization withdrew homosexuality from its list of mental diseases.

The burden is still around, very much alive on the shoulders of all homosexuals, but it is heavier on the young ones. Even in countries that are considered more tolerant, we can not state that they have a life we could declare as easy or normal.

In Portugal, for example, research financed by the Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género states that homosexuals have suffered, during their lives, physical or verbal abuse – and the Christianity was considered by them as the main source of discrimination.

Still in Portugal, a research developed by PUC-RS University from Brazil, in 2019, among the students of Ciências de Educação – University of Coimbra (with 108 students interviewed), showed threatening results:

- a) a total of 63,9% considered possible to change sexual orientation
- b) for 43,5% see homosexuality as illness and abnormal
- c) for 50%, homosexuality is a choice
- d) homosexuality is a result of a trauma during childhood, for 94,4%
- e) as more homosexual talking, as more easily people 'become' homosexuals, for 90,7%

6. *Are young homosexuals more probable to commit suicide?*

As for the EUA, another research, developed by Columbia University among 32.000 youngsters with ages varying from 13 to 17 got the conclusion that a homosexual commit suicide is 5 times more probable than a young heterosexual.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center, one of the most reputable american NGOs says that 30% to 40% of all homosexuals try to end their lives during their existence. Brazilian NGOs say that the number of victims among homosexuals are 8 times higher than the Brazilian average (32 in every 100 thousand per year, comparing to an average figure of 4 in each 100 thousand – among non homosexuals).

7. *Is Internet harmful for the young ones?*

According to the North-American psychologist Jean Twenge (for the Clinical Psychological Science Magazine), teens who spent five or more hours a day online were 71% more likely than those who spent less than an hour a day to have at least one suicide risk factor (depression, thinking about suicide, making a suicide plan or attempting suicide).

“Interacting with people face to face is one of the deepest wellsprings of human happiness; without it, our moods start to suffer and depression often follows. Feeling socially isolated is also one of the major risk factors for suicide. We found that teens who spent more time than average online and less time than average with friends in person were the most likely to be depressed .”

Another study led by University of Pittsburgh and presented by BBC, states that spending two hours a day in one or more social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat, duplicates the possibility of feeling isolated. That is the solitude among the multitude. Another research, led by ISPA in Portugal and published by Observador, claims that 25% of all young Portuguese are addicted to Technology.

According to the Royal Society for Public Health, those social networks are associated to several different forms of mental illnesses, such as anxiety, depression and bullying. According to their studies, Instagram is on top of all the mischievous platforms.

The emergence of a new mental illness, FOMO (fear of missing out), has been added to the long list of psychological disorders. The fear of losing information, relevance, rewarding experiences... the fear of being irrelevant or forgotten... the eternal anxiety for approval, being constantly under the pressure of being evaluated.

According to the child psychiatrist Timothy Wilens, from Massachusetts General Hospital (EUA), as published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, "During this period (the childhood) there is an increase in the emotional excesses that are followed by little capacity of discernment".

In the same path, the specialist in mental health from Unicamp / Brasil, doctor Neury Botega, the teen brain is not fully prepared for such pressure. Their brains haven't had enough time to build a system to deal with so many pushes. That asymmetry in their brains, according to him and to other scientists, make the brain more psychologically fragile, more susceptible to anxiety, panic syndrome and depression. Those mental imbalance may become triggers to suicide.

Questions to be answered:

We have got quite a rich range of books which covers the phenomenon of suicide and its main causes. We also have many researches about suicides among LGBTI+ people and main reasons for such radical act. Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Social Educators and even some Anthropologists are dealing with the influence of Internet and Social Networks on the young one's lives.

The answer still to be answered is the main reason for this work:

1. *Is there a connection between the increase in suicides among gay people related to their use of Internet? What is the influence of the Digital World on it (assuming there is some)?*

We are conscious of the fact that:

- I. The connection between LGBTI+ people and suicide has been studied
- II. The connection between Internet and suicide has just started been on stage
- III. There is very little material on the influence of Internet among LGBTI+ people

The focal point of our study will be to connect these 3 subjects: Male Homosexuals + suicide rates + internet influence. And that hasn't been done so far.

Methodology:

A questionnaire will be handed out among young male homosexuals (ages varying from 13 to 25) in order to collect some data.

We aim to know:

- × How many have ever had suicidal thoughts
- × How many are dealing with suicidal thoughts
- × How many have already tried to commit suicide
- × What are their moral values related to suicide

- ✘ How many hours a day they use internet (try to confirm if those that are more linked to Internet are more at risk)
- ✘ What are their favourite digital platforms
- ✘ Their impressions about the main digital platforms

The field: young male homosexuals (13 to 25 y.o.) that use the internet in Brazil and Portugal. They will be contacted on line (from gay digital pages) and invited to answer the questionnaire.

State of Art / Bibliography

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