

## Social Media Sites and the Spread of Suicide Among Their Users



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### **Abstract:**

*the phenomenon of suicide in the Algerian society is one of the anomalies that has seen an unprecedented tangible rise in recent times, prompting us to be alert in order to detect its causes. According to this standpoint, there are apparent and hidden reasons that necessitates us to discover the problems in the Algerian family, that can be directly attributed to the researcher's view of technological and media liberalization, as well as the extraneous culture that carries along with it values that are foreign to Algerian families. According to the researcher, social media platforms are among the reasons that has become a legitimate fear and a constant concern for Algerian families due to the sheer number of discussion forums whose visitors are mostly adolescents, whom are more exposed to addiction to social networking sites, which in turn may lead some of them to commit suicide.*

**Keywords:** *suicide; Social Media; adolescence.*

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**Introduction:**

It is well established that suicide is a decision made by a person to end his/her life for certain reasons. According to the psychiatric definition, it is an extreme kind of self-harming behaviour that happens to very depressed people. In other words, it is considered as a form of self-punishment, retribution against oneself, and self-harm. Furthermore, severe depression may lead to the development of the idea of suicide, which is often taken into action. Additionally, suicide is a phenomenon as ancient as mankind itself, and it has been recognized by numerous people who have included it into their rituals, religious and philosophical beliefs. The Greeks, for example, defined suicide and examined it philosophically, and were divided between advocates and opponents. Suicide, according to Aristotle, is an act against the rules of society and the state, as well as human principles in existence, and therefore should be punished. (M. de Clercq, F. Lebigot et Al 2001.p 11).

It goes without saying that all monotheistic faiths were opposed to the tragedy of human suicide, particularly Islam, which condemned killing oneself "And do not murder yourself, for God has been compassionate to you, replied the Almighty".

In this regard, the phenomenon of suicide in the Algerian society is one of the anomalies that has seen an unprecedented tangible rise in recent times, particularly amongst the category of children who were unsusceptible to this phenomenon yet have taken terrifying forms and images that have manifested in suicide through burning with fire, prompting us to be alert in order to detect its causes.

According to this standpoint, there are apparent and hidden reasons that necessitates us to discover the problems in the Algerian family, that can be directly attributed to the researcher's view of technological and media liberalization, as well as the extraneous culture that carries along with it values that are foreign to Arab families in general, and Algerian families in particular.

According to the researcher, social media platforms are among the reasons that has become a legitimate fear and a constant concern for Algerian families due to the sheer number of discussion forums whose visitors are mostly adolescents, whom are more exposed to addiction to social networking sites, which in turn may lead some of them to commit suicide. (B.Dorayet, C-Louzoum 1997.p 97). Addiction to these sites can also cause a state of chaos within the family, as well as impacting marital relations in a way that may lead to divorce, especially if the husband has romantic relations with others, as the wives who suffer from such husbands have been called (internet widows). These sites weaken the social fabric of relationships, through isolation, introversion, loss of social contact and loss of friends, which, in the researcher's view, may lead to serious psychological problems, such as permanent depression, which may eventually result in people

committing suicide, especially among children and adolescents who are quickly affected due to their ability to imitate everything.

According to Canadian research, youngsters have a strong desire to copy anything new they encounter, especially what they see through visual media. such as television or through social networking sites with the freedom it provides for users to access these sites and see their contents through: exchanging photos and videos and chatting between people of various ages, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are some of the most important sites that allow Users to freely view thier content without preconditions or control, which may pose a significant risk to the category of children who may be affected by some violent scenes, in addition to acquiring some destructive and extraneous ideas such as: drug abuse, drinking alcohol, watching Pornographic films or imitating some mythical characters, and chatting through these sites, whether by exchanging text messages between users using audio and video technology, which often aims to blackmail and defame victims, whether by means of pornographic images or videos, most of which may be fabricated, or establishing forbidden romantic relationships that may result in sexual assault on the opposite sex (girls), or sexual abuse and exploitation of some children as a result of acquiring abnormal behaviors that lead to sexual abuse.

Certain people act immorally without remorse, causing a breakdown in social controls and values among individuals, leading to the suicide of some victims who are afraid of the shame that society may impose on them. As a result, we can pose the following questions:

- What is the impact of modern media and communication, especially social networking sites, on the spread of suicide among children and adolescents?
- Do social networking sites contribute to the destabilization and cohesion of the family entity?
- Can social, economic and psychological pressure be considered the boiling point, which shapes the idea of suicide among those who adopt this behaviour against life, morals and religion?
- What are the procedural and practical methods used by social and psychological specialists to prevent and limit the spread of the phenomenon of suicide?

Based on the aforementioned statement and through this study, researchers seek to accomplish a basic goal:

To determine the extent to which social networking sites contribute to violence, crime, and intrusive thoughts that are destructive to the individual and society, most of which are inciting immorality and violating societal norms and laws, whether official or customary.

Cases of frustration and depression that result in a teenager or child committing suicide are the result of addiction to these sites within the so-called "virtual environment," and thus this study aims to investigate this urgent phenomenon and provide some necessary solutions to the phenomenon in question by analyzing some statistics, data, and indicators.

### **1. Terminology of study:**

#### **a. Social media sites:**

Maloney-preece defines these sites as "a place where people meet for specific goals and are guided by policies that include a number of rules and standards that the program proposes." It can also be defined as "a system of electronic networks that allow the subscriber to create his own website, and then link it through an electronic social system with other members who have the same interests and hobbies."

The researcher defines it procedurally as follows: "A group of websites on the Internet, allowing a group of active individuals to communicate with each other, within specific relationships of a virtual interactive nature, and we can summarize them as follows: (personal files or web pages, friends or families in the virtual community). Sending messages through direct chat such as: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and My Space" and others, or by e-mail, sending photo albums, groups, pages available in the form of blogs for advertising campaigns or products).

#### **b. Adolescence:**

Adolescence is defined as the state approaching physical, mental, psychological and social maturity, as the individual begins in adolescence in mental, physical, psychological and social maturity, but does not reach full maturity until after many years, which may reach 10 years. It can also be defined as the development of physical, mental, psychological, and social maturity. This stage is marked by a number of significant traits, including a period of volatile emotions, a period of behavioural extremism marked by emotions, volatility, and instability. (DSM-IV.2003. p 152) . The adolescent at the beginning of this stage cannot control the external manifestations of his emotional state, so we see him screaming and pushing things and throwing food dishes and cups of water on the ground, so adults bear the responsibility of directing and supervising adolescents and find that this period is the stage of problems for them.

#### **c. Suicide and its types:**

Suicide is the deliberate act of a person terminating his or her life. Others might say its the murdered the soul so as he or she rids himself or herself of the life that God had given to him or her. Opinions vary on whether suicide displays the courage of the suicide person or his cowardice and lack of need to prolong his existence. (M. de Clercq, F. Lebigot et Al 2001.p 115)

Durkheim divides suicide bombers into four types: selfish, altruistic, non-compulsive and fatalistic.

Selfish suicide: It is frequently observed in civilizations or organizations when the individual is not fully integrated into the wider social unit. It frequently occurs when social integration is very poor. (DSM-IV.2003. p 201).

Altruistic suicide: Occurs when "social integration is too strong."

Non-normative suicide: Whether the nature of the disruption is beneficial (for example, economic rebound) or negative (economic depression). Both sorts of disorders result in the group's temporary suspension of its authoritarian function over individuals. Periods of upheaval unleash non-normal trends, such as a sense of rootlessness and a lack of standards—and they contribute to an increase in normative suicide rates.

Fatal suicide: It occurs when the controls transcend the desired limit, such as when a slave kills himself due to a lack of hope caused by the controls that drive all of his activities.

## **2. Social media sites, their uses, and their effects on children and adolescents:**

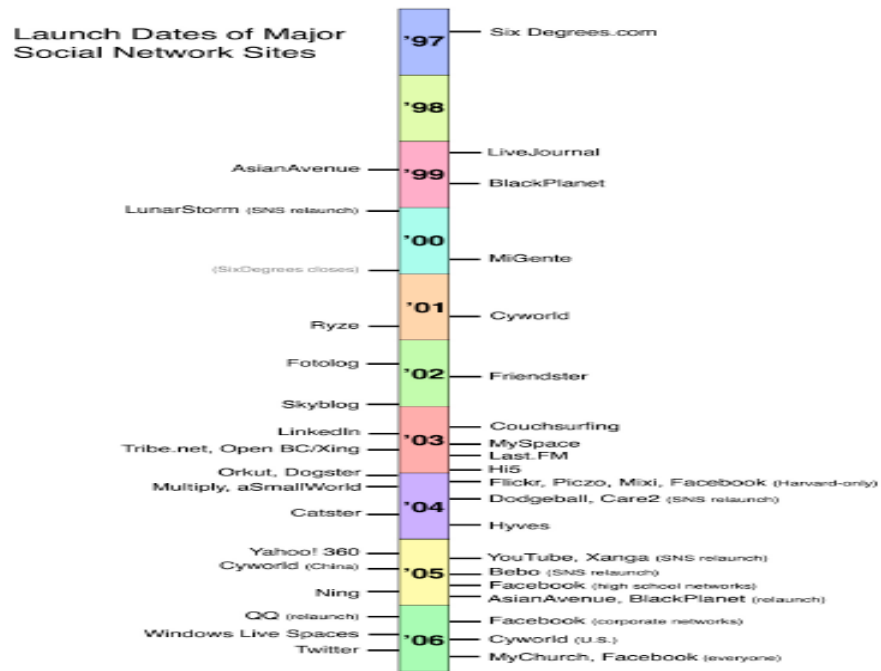
### **a. Social media sites :**

Social networking sites contribute to the engagement and the interchange of roles, through which virtual connections are formed between various people, the most significant of which are:

\*Multimedia sites (MULTY MEDIA SITES), are websites that facilitate the exchange and processing of photos, videos, and text. Among them are: Facebook, Twitter, chat, YouTube rolls, and so on.. These sites have gone through several stages of development, as they first appeared as pages to exchange information, particularly between institutions and businesses, which allow for a small room for interaction, as it was embodied in the SEXDEGREES website network in the year 2000, which allowed some people to express their lives and include their friends. (Porrot .sans année. 171).

The development of modern high-quality communication technologies represented in the second generation of websites provides a virtual environment focused on a large degree of interaction between its members through the privileges it provides through the use of its contents.

The graph below depicts the evolution of online social networks:



**b. Social media features:**

It is the site on which the user introduces himself using text, photographs, music, videos, and other functions since one of the features that separate these sites are their simplicity of use and increased involvement as a consequence of their numerous applications.

**b.1. The most known social media sites:**

Nowadays, social media sites are categorised based on their popularity and the percentage of people that use them. Chief among them: Facebook, Twitter, Chatroulette, YouTube, Skype, Hi5, and so on.

These services help to connect its users' connections inside a virtual environment that allows them to freely communicate information and ideas via textual, voice, or video chat using video cameras.

#### **b.2. Issues raised by social networking sites::**

Social media sites are considered as the bad outcome of modernism by many societies, especially Arab ones, as a result of their negative repercussions on their users in light of this sweeping technological tide, forgetting the ideas that it carries with it that affect the system of behaviours, norms and social values, local to global, to generate new deviant and criminal behaviours outside the context Formal or customary laws.

According to this viewpoint, social media sites have contributed to the emergence of many patterns of violence, crime, and excessive aggression, as well as the development of some psychological diseases inherent in individuals as a result of addiction to these sites, which leads to introversion and isolation, as well as avoiding communication with others, whether inside or outside the family, which may enhance According to the researcher, the desire to commit suicide among individuals, particularly children and adolescents, who have an insatiable desire to imitate and simulate everything new, as well as the age characteristics that they are experiencing psychologically and psychologically, may lead them into mazes with unimaginable consequences. (B.Dorayet, C-Louzoum 2007.p 41)

According to the findings of a study conducted on a subset of young Facebook users, it was discovered that the support they receive from their friends who share with them the same site, whether by admiring or commenting on their thoughts and pictures, negatively affects them and causes them some unconscious psychological disorders. The latter results in an inflated delusional self-concept, which in turn leads to narcissism accompanied by an increased desire to display his personal life in order to gain more admiration and illusory psychological support, which may contradict reality, the same person may lack any self- or social esteem from those around him/her.

On this basis, the adolescent attempts to overcome that personal impediment in the virtual world. Personal, which results in a state of inflated delusional self-concept, which in turn leads to narcissism accompanied by more desire to display his personal life to gain more admiration and illusory psychological support, which may contradict reality, the same person may be lacking any self- or social esteem from those around With it, he tries to overcome that personal obstacle in the virtual world.

As a result of social isolation and the inability of young people to adapt to the reality around them, they resort to obtaining an appreciation for their activities practised on Facebook, such as girls posting semi-naked pictures or in very special life situations on their page, to attract attention, love of appearance and fame.

Facebook creates a state of separation between the real and the imaginary self, which constitutes an obstacle to actual social communication.

Among the most common issues that social networks help with are low self-esteem and the incapacity to speak in person. They offer a solution that constitutes the natural outlet for those who have these psychological characteristics. Some users may resort to impersonating fake personalities such as artists and celebrities, or people of the opposite sex due to their constant feeling of inferiority, And their dissatisfaction with themselves, which leads them to a situation that psychology interprets as psychological schizophrenia so that his Facebook page expresses his unconscious world that he wants to be in. This negatively affects the development and normal psychological maturity, especially in the youth stage, and puts him in isolation. Social and psychological, and he may become depressed at times because of his inability to psychologically reconcile with himself, and his dependence on the illusory character that he produced in his virtual imagination.

- Social media sites can contribute to the emergence of dualism in society and intellectual norms and standards.
- The freedom that social and other sites provide, such as claiming religious or intellectual values in contrast to the user's actual affiliation, and societal censorship, contribute to the development of a dualistic personality that exercises roles that may not be fully realized in reality, such as engaging in immoral actions that society or religion may condemn from its social perspective on Facebook pages.

This in turn leads to the formation of distorted and unbalanced personalities that emit negative emotions towards the other and society, causing a state of psychological and intellectual conflict with the self. Rather, it may cause the growth of currents anti-social.

The suppression rehearsed by society in its various political, religious, and social sects is a major motivator for young people's affiliation with virtual communication sites, which has become a way for them to freely express opinions that they may not have access to in reality, without restrictions or fear of the issues they present, whether personal or social, to expose them. They find support and acceptance for their beliefs, as well as a reaction from those who are also suffering from the same psychological and societal problems, which forces them to embrace one other.

Social networking platforms have evolved into a natural and secure forum for people of all ages and social categories to express their presence and thoughts. The high percentage of Facebook users worldwide, and particularly in Arab countries, indicates something that psychologists regard as extremely dangerous:



➤ The inability of large numbers of people to exercise their natural right to expression or effective social participation, which may result in more closed and unconscious societies in the long run.

➤ The genuine challenges they have previously encountered, as well as their belief that they can effectively participate in resolving their societal concerns.

Despite the cultural and intellectual variety that the information network symbolizes in general, it is remarkable to many, but excessive absorption in it - as revealed by several psychological research in this subject - may exacerbate feelings of loneliness and autism. With the ego, a substantial relationship to actual reality is lost. And not comprehending body language and facial gestures that accompany an emotional condition.

### **3. The phenomenon of suicide and its reality in the Arab world and Algeria:**

#### **a. The semantic definition of suicide:**

Suicide is defined as the deliberate and self-destructive act of killing oneself. It is a human-only act described as willfully killing oneself, and it arises directly or indirectly from a negative or positive action by the victim of this act, the latter understanding in advance that this consequence, i.e. the elimination of life, must be achieved.

Durkheim defined suicide as "all situations of death that come directly or indirectly from positive or negative actions that the individual commits himself," implying that a person actively kills himself.

#### **b. The reality of the phenomenon of suicide in the Arab world:**

In view of the reality and what the world is going through lately in terms of economic, social, political, and societal events, changes, and crises, it must be noted that the seriousness of this phenomenon, which we have begun to hear a lot about in our Arab societies, is the transmission of infection from Western societies, as statistics from 2010 show that approximately one million people commit suicide globally each year, which is equivalent to one suicide every 40 seconds. This raises suicide rates by 60% worldwide over the past 50 years, and for every suicide, 20 failed suicide attempts precede it. - 24 years old, and although suicide rates were higher among older males over 65 years of age, the suicide rate among young people and adolescents is constantly increasing, and South Korea has the highest suicide rate in the world, with an average of 13,000 Koreans per year with a minimum of 33 Case per day, Japan ranks third in the world.

According to the "Arab Thought Foundation for Studies and Research" in 2010, the rate of suicide in the Arab world has climbed to 4 persons per 100,000, up from 2 people per 100,000 a few years before. In Tunisia, for example, the same figures show that the incidence of suicides is high, with (1354) instances recorded in 2010 compared to (905) occurrences in 2008. Between 2009 and 2010, Jordan

had 56 successful suicides and 314 unsuccessful suicide attempts, but Yemen had a significant rate of successful suicides (3651) in the past three years. At the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in the last four years, the State of Kuwait witnessed a high number of (614) cases of suicide, while the UAE witnessed (24) cases, the Sultanate of Oman (23) cases, Bahrain (45) cases, and Qatar (8) cases. . In Egypt, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics announced alarming numbers, as there were (104) thousand suicide attempts in Egypt during 2009, most of them were young people in the age group between 15-25, and nearly (5000) of them managed to commit suicide, due to the reasons for the lack of job opportunities. In front of them, the difficulty of getting rid of debts, and the high expenses of marriage. The strangest thing in Morocco is that more than two million and 900 thousand Moroccans do not hide their desire to put an end to their lives, as a result of poverty, unemployment and blockage of work prospects.

**c. The reality of the phenomenon of suicide in Algeria:**

The research illustrated the evolution of the phenomenon of suicide in Algeria by giving figures from the previous two years, in which the national gendarmerie services documented 117 suicide instances compared to 109 failed attempts in 2006. A suicide instance, followed by the state of Tizi Ouzou, which had 11 suicides over the same time period.

The number of suicides in 2007 among Algerians reached 128 against 128 unsuccessful attempts. Despite the convergence of the number of cases between the sexes, males remain the most compared to girls. A comparison made by the author of the study suggests that most cases of citizens putting an end to their lives were remarkably recorded among young people of ages Between less than 18 years old to 20 years old, in 2007, 16 minors under the age of 18 committed suicide, 50 people between 18 and 30 years old, 39 people between 30 and 45 years old, and 23 adults over 45 years old.

The study brought attention to failed suicide attempts and their prevalence among females. Approximately 128 attempts were documented in 2007, with 41 males and 87 females participating. According to reports, 57 persons without a career attempted suicide out of 128 attempts, whereas 05 farmers committed suicide, 17 employees committed suicide, and 09 people committed suicide while engaging in leisure activities.

The researchers focused on the causes of suicide that it found in social and familial difficulties, as 16 suicides were documented in 2007 as a result of family tensions and arguments. The report suggests remedies such as "reviewing and addressing the relationships between relatives and within the same family in order to reject the sources of conflict leading to the suicide of members of this core problem of Algerian society."

Neurological and mental diseases are the second leading reasons for suicide. In 2007, 25 persons committed suicide as a result of neurological problems,

and 23 as a result of mental disorders. In the first category, eight suicide attempts were reported, while nine attempts were recorded in the second group. furthermore, in the third-place comes the loss of hope in life, despair and other problems, as 69 suicides were recorded for these reasons during 2007 and 31 other attempts were recorded without a clear reason.

The study created a map showing the frequency of suicides based on the number of instances, with the state of Bejaia at the top, followed by the state of Tizi Ouzou, in addition to the cases of the eastern Algerian states, led by Batna, and suicide cases in the state of Mascara, before the phenomena spread to states in the south such Tindouf, Ghardaia, and El Wadi. (Bensmail.1994. p 168).

According to statistics, 70 % of suicide cases are carried out by hanging, which is the most common method among suicide bombers, and the remaining 30 % represent suicide women who resort to other methods such as poisoning or using firearms and even knives by stabbing themselves or throwing themselves from a high place such as the balconies of buildings or bridging.

Subsequently, the study concluded that the reasons for the emergence of suicide in Algerian society are linked to several factors, including mental illness, loss of hope, and other various problems that the individual suffers from, but it confirms that "the main and fundamental causes that lead to suicide remain unknown, considering that Islam forbids this act." And traditions, regardless of the circumstances, reject it."

According to statistics from the National Authority for the Promotion of Health and Research Development "Forum" and the National Federation for Parents of Students, 1000 thousand children were subjected to violence in 2013 and 25 cases of suicide during examination results, as well as what is known as electronic blackmail behind the spread of child suicide, where Algeria has counted dozens of suicide cases among children in the past months, including four cases in the last four months.

The head of the Algerian Network for Childhood "Nada" revealed that 36,000 cases of violence against children were recorded, most of which were recorded at home, which prompts children to think of escaping from home or attempting suicide as a result of the psychological trauma they receive, which has a severe impact on their psyche, which enhances their motivation to take revenge. What the child receives within the family environment of injustice and poor adequate care, or his loss of the affection of the two children, as well as the poor economic and social conditions inside or outside the home, are felt by his children. A from self-contempt, which enhances his desire for revenge on himself.

According to Professor "Mustafa Khayati," some studies have proven that social networking sites are behind the suicide of the highest percentage of children in Algeria, and this is the reason for the spread of the phenomenon of electronic extortion that children are exposed to after they build relationships with those who

are older than them or access some communication sites. He further stated that certain violent video games place the youngster in a dark virtual world, isolating and isolating him from family and friends, and then causes him to experience despair, frustration, and scholastic failure, leading to suicidal ideation and escape from reality.

From this perspective, it is feasible to underline the progression of the child's or adolescent's crisis, which goes from "a condition of equilibrium to a state of crisis and passage to action" .

the suicide, whether committed by a child or an adolescent, passes through psychological thresholds that, from the researcher's perspective, are the motive or motivator to commit the suicide crime, whether, on oneself or others, where these psychological thresholds can be summed up in the crises experienced by children and adolescents in the presence of distress, as a result, A problematic circumstance may be expected or unexpected, but the nature of the problem facing it does not exceed the limits of normality. Mourning, diseases, interruption of relationships, and emotional states have a socio-cultural origin. Also, the pathological crises, especially among the mentally or psychologically disturbed, taking into account that the individual lacks strategies for reducing stress, and in the event that the child or adolescent suffers from personality disorders, he can find himself in a quick and impulsive manner in front of the passage to the action and in this case the child can direct his aggression towards others or towards himself.

#### **4. Social Media sites and their relationship to the phenomenon of the suicide of children and adolescents:**

Social media sites are considered one of the most effective poles in the spread of the phenomenon of suicide and its adoption of several dangerous patterns that threaten the entity of Arab societies and Algerian society in particular as a result of the tendency of a large segment of children and adolescents to imitate what they see or exchange during the interaction process within the virtual community that these sites provide freely without restrictions. Or restrictions, which had a great impact, especially on the behavioural and moral side of children and adolescents.

These sites encourage are concepts and contents that lead to the social structure's destruction through children's addiction to following these sites and attracting whatever they carry again.. For example, Facebook, Skype, Twitter and YouTube allow the user to exchange photos and videos, which are mostly are not appropriate for the ages of children, which mostly include obscene or violent and aggressive nature, such as murder and abuse of persons or sexual assaults on minors, in addition to the images that are displayed and circulated among users within these sites, which mostly aim at extortion and defamation of children or sexual exploitation, as well as establishing emotional relationships within this

virtual community leads to an imbalance in the child's personality, especially since these relationships are often unequal between the two parties in terms of age, which may give children ideas that do not match their ages, in addition to the harassment they are exposed to, such as messages that bear the nature of threats and contempt. or blackmail.

The chatting that the child engages in during the process of virtual interaction within these sites using the camera leads him to develop violent and deviant behavior patterns that include extraneous ideas about community beliefs such as drinking alcohol, practising indecency, and establishing illegal relationships.

The child's addiction to these websites and subsequent discontinuation causes the growth of psychological disorders such as dissatisfaction, introversion, and loneliness, which may finally lead to suicide. Furthermore, failed romantic relationships facilitated by these websites lead some to commit violent acts against themselves and others, such as suicide by cutting the arteries of the hand or killing others by employing one of the methods seen on social networking sites by simulating some similar witnesses.

#### **5. Studies on social networking sites and their relationship to suicide:**

According to a recent British survey, one in every five British youngsters who used social networking sites had a terrible experience and were harassed. Bullying, unwelcome sexual texts, and cyberstalking were also identified as forms of harassment in the survey.

In addition, a large number of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube users on the Internet are children under the age of 13, that is, younger than the minimum age allowed to use these sites. The two phenomena of bullying and phishing were the most prevalent of harassment among children who use social networking sites. The study indicated that a 14-year-old girl committed suicide by hanging, as her father confirmed that she had received offensive messages from a social networking site. The study confirms that the feeling of any young person that the only option in front of him is to commit suicide because of bullying on social networking sites is a matter. Unbearable. The study also revealed deeply troubling facts about the devastating effects of bullying on young children, and it needs to be addressed before it gets out of control.

#### **Conclusion:**

In view of the abovementioned, we can propose ways to address the phenomena, which remains tough to control, and we outline them in:

- Taking care of an individual's mental health, particularly by parents during childhood and adolescence.

- The necessity of educating families, especially parents, about the danger of this phenomenon and highlighting the factors leading to it in order to avoid the individual being at risk of temptation.
- Strengthening the role of the media, especially the audiovisual, in dialogue and introducing the phenomenon and addressing its causes and ways to combat it.
- Existence or creation of reception and listening centres that deal with adolescent problems and take care of psychological support for individuals with suicidal tendencies and even individuals who have gone through the act.
- Attempt to early detect teens who may have attempted suicide by paying attention to their reactions and listening to their problems rather than ignoring or rejecting them.
- A specialized team must be formed to provide psychological, medical and social support to suicide attempters.

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