



“I will kill myself” – The series of posts in Facebook and unnoticed departure of a life



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ABSTRACT

Social media has connected the world and transformed the concept of social interaction and traditional communication. However, the concern is rising as people started using the platform for sharing fake news, violent intentions and activities including suicide and homicide. In this paper, I report the case of a media worker in Bangladesh who committed suicide after sharing series of Facebook posts mentioning her intentions to commit suicide. Thousands of her Facebook friends and followers noticed the posts; few of them shared the posts and made critical comments. This case documented the use of Facebook to disclose the intention of committing suicide in Bangladesh. Though Facebook is gaining attention as a potential source to predict and provide timely intervention to prevent suicide, this case raised the question about the effective participation of Facebook users in such programs. We need to emphasize and focus on ensuring active participation of most of Facebook users in any social media based suicide prevention program. This report may inspire future researchers to find out more user friendly and participatory social media focused suicide prevention programs.

1. Introduction

Suicide is the leading cause of death for women ages 15–19 year and second leading cause of death for teenagers worldwide (WHO, 2018). These young people are also the most active group in social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, twitter. Social media has transformed the tradition communication into a more dynamic and interactive real-time platform to express ourselves. SNSs contain information regarding our online interaction and behavior in the natural environment. Moreover, Social media contents spread rapidly within the site (Yoo et al., 2018). Along with other different social, emotional or personal information, people share suicidal thoughts, search suicide methods and even broadcast their suicide Live in social media platform (Cheng et al., 2017). These important sources of information can help in timely intervene to prevent a suicide. Ruder et al. (2011) reported a case of 28-year-old male who committed suicide after announcing his intention on Facebook. In this case, his Facebook friends were enthusiastic in reporting to family members and police. However, they failed to rescue him. In another case Ahuja et al. (2014) reported a suicide attempt after posting the intention on Social Media. Here, his friends succeeded in preventing the death due to their prompt action and availability of immediate intensive medical care. Detection of suicidal ideation from social network is an emerging research area where accurate identification of risk factors and warning signs to prevent it is a major

challenge (Vioulès et al., 2018). Facebook is gaining increased attention for its role in reducing suicide behavior and Muñoz-Sánchez et al. (2018) considered that social media and mobile apps could be used for suicide prevention. We expect and assume people will respond with enthusiasm whenever he/she notice any a suicidal post on Facebook. In an interesting study O’Dea et al. (2018) found people respond quicker for suicidal post than non-suicidal twitter post, however 23% of the replies of the post were dismissive or encouraging of the suicide. Though suicide after sharing the intension on Facebook has been reported in different countries, it is yet to be reported in Bangladesh-a densely populated country with highly active large huge number of Facebook users. In this case, I portrait and analysis a case of suicide after sharing the suicide intention and plans on Facebook in Bangladesh.

2. Description of the case

I report the case of a 25-year-old media worker who committed suicide by hanging after a series of posts sharing her intention to commit suicide on her social media. She got married at the pick of her career. However, her conjugal life was stressful due to the hostile attitude from her in laws family that put her career at a risk. Though her deteriorating mental condition can be tracked by her different Facebook posts, her Facebook friends and followers hardly considered

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the posts seriously. In couple of her Facebook post she clearly declared her intention to commit suicide. Four days prior to committing the suicide, in one of her Facebook post she said, “I will commit suicide tomorrow. Nobody has dumped me, nor did I dump anyone. But I will kill myself” (Rahaman, 2019). Her public profile revealed that sixty-seven people shared the post and her 2200 Facebook friends reacted as it was funny. Ironically, within a few hours of this post, one of her Facebook followers provoked her asking “when and how you are going to commit suicide, let me know”. Unfortunately, 255 Facebook users liked this harsh comment. In another post, she wrote “stepping towards death slowly and would commit suicide”. Twenty-seven hundred people reacted in this post and 130 responded to this statement with joy and laughter like symbol (ha ha emoji). Here, a female friend commented “O Really!”. However, people removed most of the serious criticism and provoking comments such as “you should die” when they came to know she completed suicide by hanging.

3. Discussion

Though suicide is the leading cause of death among the young women (15–29 year) in Bangladesh (Salam et al., 2017), it is stigmatized and neglected. Moreover, suicide attempt and abetment of suicide is considered as a criminal offence in Bangladesh like few other developing Muslim countries in the South East region (Soron, 2019a; Suryadevara and Tandon, 2018). The legal barrier in addition to wide spread stigma and religious believe, people in Bangladesh hardly report suicide attempts. They are shy about seeking help when they are disturbed with the suicidal ideas. Moreover, the political view, socio-cultural factors and legal barriers hamper in appropriate reporting of suicide and its preventive policy development (Arafat, 2018). In Bangladesh, lack of response in suicide prevention observed in family, community and national level for legal, cultural factors (Soron, 2019a). In this case, I also observed the lack of responsive and caring attitude from many of her Facebook Friends and Followers. A few of her Facebook friends provoked her to commit the suicide by making critical comments. She had more than 200,000 Facebook friends and followers who observed the post for more than 100 hours, yet nobody stepped forward to notify police or family members to prevent the incident. The higher number of followers or friends may not lead to a greater likelihood of reply and about one in every reply may be pro-suicidal- risky for the poster (O’Dea et al., 2018). This harsh response of the people in Bangladesh may arise from the myth that celebrities try to draw media attention by posting controversial or distressful statements. “Schadenfreude”-pleasure derived from others’ misfortunes, this instinct may be another etiological factor. People are more likely to experience schadenfreude if they dislike or envious of the person or believe other’s misfortune is deserved (Greenier, 2018). Due to her inappropriate photos, comments or activities a group of people had a negative perception and attitude towards her, at the same time another group of people was envious of her glamorous life style. However, it is difficult to say that we enjoy or anticipate the suicide of a person whom we dislike or envy. People hardly care about the suicidal note of stranger on Facebook with whom they are not personally familiar or emotionally attached. Corbitt-Hall and Gauthier (2019) found only 33.6% of college students gave a supportive comment on a suicide post if person was known personally and other contextual factors remained favorable. What are the factors that stimulate Facebook friends to engage in preventing suicide of a Facebook friend? This area needs further exploration as several projects and programs are using Facebook to prevent suicide (Cheng et al., 2017). A culture specific national guideline is needed to prepare and systemize the users respond. (Notredame et al., 2018) proposed a new web-based model to promote online help seeking behavior and providing real-time online interventions. However, it is difficult to find a perfect balance between the duty of care and privacy in suicide related posts (Robinson et al., 2015). If I see a friend has given a post of describing his/her intention to commit suicide, I began

to post on her Facebook wall, inform her friend and family and call the 999. It may be embarrassing for him/her, violation of her privacy and her intention may not be so intense. In a recent paper (Soron, 2019b) pointed out few key strategies to reduce suicide burden in the region such as increasing awareness to seek help early, develop readily available helpline and mental health support, restrict the access to poison and other means of suicide and develop appropriate media reporting guideline. The government of Bangladesh should take awareness build up program to respect online and offline privacy. Few mobile and online based mental health service providers are working in Bangladesh to reduce the burden of mental health in the country including the Suicide (Chowdhury and Soron, 2017). Most of the developed countries have their own regional and national suicide help line. Similar service has been initiated in Bangladesh such as “Kaan Pate Roi” and “MindTale” (Synesis IT, 2017; Tasin, 2014). However, none of these are recognized or considered as National Suicide Helpline. We need to establish a secured anonymous helpline and online system need for immediate access to mental health care. Moreover, the enactment of digital privacy law and policy will help to ensure the privacy of the clients or those at risk. The future researchers will explore these areas and will be able to develop a more customized and effective solutions to prevent suicide in the world.

4. Ethical standard

The author asserts that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant national and institutional committees on human experimentation and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008. I collected all the information from various public sources, and it is reported anonymously.

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