

Research Assessment 3

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Citation: Jashinsky, Jared, Scott H. Burton, Carl L. Hanson, Josh West, Cristophe Giraud-Carrier, Michael D. Barnes, and Trenton Argyle. "Tracking Suicide Risk Factors Through Twitter in:the US."

Crisis: Vol 35, No 1 . Hogrefe, 6 Aug. 2013. Web. 15 Oct. 2015.

Analysis:

Today, the world has advanced to an impressive stage. For the first time in history, humans can communicate in real time via phone, text, email, blogs, twitter, facebook, instagram, and snapchat. A person in North Dakota can continuously interact with an individual in Turkey. A unexpected beneficial outcome that has come out of creations such as social media is that researchers can monitor posts to track things such as suicide risk factors. The researchers of the article I am currently evaluating did exactly that. By searching specific keywords in twitter tweets, researchers were able to identify individuals with potential of committing suicide. A total of 1,659,274 tweets were analyzed over a 3 month period and 37,717 were identified as at-risk for suicide.

Geographically, the results showed that " midwestern and western states had a higher proportion of suicide-related tweeters than expected, while the reverse was true for southern and eastern states." Some of the states with the highest numbers were Alaska New Mexico , Idaho, South Dakota, and Montana . Some of the states with the lowest values were Louisiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware , and the District of Columbia. The map below is of the United States and shows the levels of concentration of individuals who are at-risk for



This research was gathered through an application programming interface offered by Twitter, which allows researchers to obtain data through the form of tweets. Since almost all tweets are public,

it gave researchers an accessible and steady source of data. To distinguish possible suicide related tweets, a list of keywords was created. These list included words related to bullying, depression, previous suicide attempts, family abuse, drug usage, self-harm, and feelings of isolation. For example, words related to depression include the following- “sleeping”, “feel irritable”, and “feeling restless.” For drug related issues, tweets were searched for words such as “pills”, “depressed”, “Zoloft” and “alcohol.”

The purpose of this study was to show that suicide related discussions and comments can be found on social media, in this case, Twitter. The results also demonstrate that Twitter and other social media platforms can be used to identify and help individuals. Furthermore, such identification can lower suicide rates or at the very least improve aid for those considering suicide. The biggest problem with suicide prevention is that people who come in direct contact with suicidal people often times do not notice these tendencies or the tendencies are well hidden from the eye.

With social media becoming a phenomenon not only among the younger generations but also with the older, it would be beneficial to tap into this system. As a teenager growing up in the technology and social media age, I have noticed that many individuals use platforms such as instagram to get attention and reach out for friends and help. Whether it is for people to tell them that they are indeed pretty or to tell them to hang on through the tough times, people are increasingly using social media. Unfortunately, these “friends” that people reach out to are not very close or genuine friends. Essentially, they are strangers. And strangers usually do not have much concern for those they do not know.