



Adolescent Reaction to Signs of Depression Through Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 25% of college students share Facebook posts that demonstrate depressive symptoms online
 - Previous studies evaluate the capabilities of computer programs to accurately assess the mental health of social media users
 - Little is known about how adolescents react to social media posts that exhibit signs of depression.
- Purpose:**
- The purpose of this study is to understand how adolescents react to social media posts that exhibit symptoms of depression.

METHODS

Study Design and Settings:

- Content analysis of example tweets exhibiting signs of depression
- Survey of adolescents

1. Content Analysis:

Post Selection:

- Posts were found on Twitter
- Only posts that contained #depression, were written in English, and were public were included in this study
- Posts with images were excluded

Variables:

DSM-IV Criteria Variables:	
Agitation or Slowing Down of Movement	
Depressed Mood	Fatigue
Decreased Interest in Activities	Feelings of Worthlessness or Guilt
Changes in Appetite	Difficulty Concentrating
Insomnia or Hypersomnia	Recurrent Thoughts of Death

- Codebook used had been verified in a previous study

1. Survey:

Participants:

- A sample of adolescents age 14-18 years
- Participants were recruited through Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit

Variables:

- Adolescents first asked to rate symptoms from the DSM-IV criteria based on how indicative of depression they thought the symptom was with 1 being least indicative and 10 being most indicative
- Adolescents were then presented with an example post that showed symptoms of depression, and asked participants what action they would take if they saw this post

RESULTS

1. Content Analysis:

- Five tweets were selected that exhibited varying symptoms from the DSM-IV Criteria

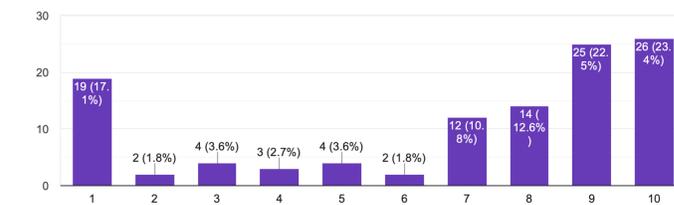
1. Survey:

Demographics:

- 111 adolescents completed the survey
- Average age of 16 years

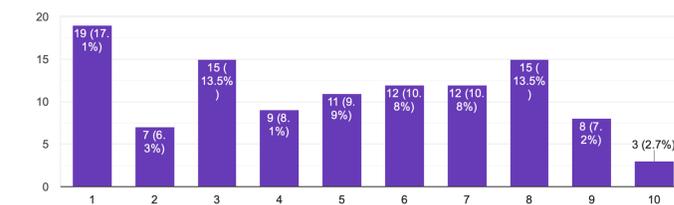
DSM-IV Criteria Symptom Evaluation:

Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
111 responses



- Of the nine symptoms, adolescents strongly identified “feelings of worthlessness or guilt” as a symptom of depression

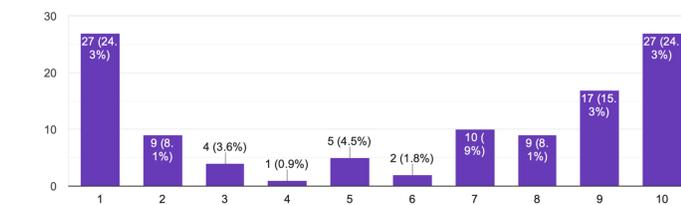
Agitation or slowing down of movement
111 responses



- Adolescents only weakly identified “agitation or slowing down of movement” as a symptom of depression.

RESULTS

Recurrent thoughts of death
111 responses

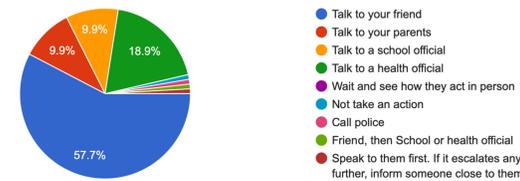


- The symptom “recurrent thoughts of death” received just as many 1’s as 10’s with 27 each

Response to Social Media Posts:

- Every single example post had the majority of responses as “talk to the friend”

“How much pain will I feel if I am strangled? Should I test? What is your opinion? How do I control myself? I’m lost emotionally.”
111 responses



- The only post that didn’t have over 70% of responses as “talk to the friend” was the one that made direct references to self-harm.



CONCLUSIONS

- The average adolescent correlated symptoms from the DSM-IV Criteria with depression
- When adolescents see their friend post posts on social media that demonstrate signs of depression, most will talk to their friend rather than immediately seeking parental or professional guidance
- Adolescents could be used as a reliable way to pick up on symptoms of depression on social media posts
- By understanding how adolescents react to posts on social media, healthcare providers could develop better methods of finding and assisting adolescents who are experiencing early signs of depression

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Moreno MA, Jelenchick LA, Egan KG, et al. Feeling bad on Facebook: depression disclosures by college students on a social networking site. *Depress Anxiety* 2011;28(6):447-55 PMID: 21400639
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