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Incitement to Suicide in the Digital Age: A Comparative Legal Study of Criminal Liability

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Abstract

From a comparative legal point of view, the research focuses on incitement to suicide in contemporary times, noting the challenges that modern technologies and social media platforms bring. The study poses a key question about the adequacy of national and international laws in tackling the phenomenon of digital incitement to suicide and establishing the criminal responsibility of perpetrators and digital companies. The study uses analytical and comparative methods by analyzing the legal systems of some countries (for instance, Saudi Arabia and France) and international treaties like the Budapest Convention. It also analyzes the extent to which digital platforms and artificial intelligence algorithms are either enabling the spread of these crimes or helping to counter them. The results point out the lack of laws against digital incitement to suicide — and most prominently, how to hold digital companies responsible. The report concluded that international cooperation should be strengthened to create unified legislation, while technical tools should be developed to reduce incitement through digital platforms. It also calls for national legislation to be updated to meet the digital challenges of today (Council of Europe, 2001). This ongoing research seeks to contribute to the legal literature around this issue by providing insights and recommendations for policymakers and legislatures on how to better support prevention and accountability in this area.

Introduction

Social media have become a powerful tool shaping behaviors and influencing public opinion in the digital era, and numerous studies have highlighted significant changes in interpersonal communications and reading habits from past generations (BBC News, 2019).

Indeed, dangerous phenomena start to negatively take advantage of these platforms in this context, with one of the most worrying of them being incitement to suicide, which becomes a real threat to individuals and societies. As more people commit suicide due to digital incitement, the incidence raises many pertinent issues of these individuals' and digital companies' criminal liability (Euronews, 2024). Scholars have argued that social media, beyond being tools for connection, can function as instruments of psychological manipulation and even harm, particularly when weaponized for ideological or destructive purposes (West, 2016).

The problem of this research is how to discuss the legal aspects of incitement to suicide in the digital space, that is, how to determine the actus reus and mens rea, and what is the criminal liability of the perpetrators. Legislators and legal scholars must analyze the existing legal frameworks, and how they account for rapid technological advancements, in depth. It also aims to identify the legal deficiencies that hinder effective prevention of this crime, and to make

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preventive legal findings for legal mechanisms to combat digital incitement of suicide (Omerović, Albakjaji, & Zilić-Čurić, 2023).

This issue is important because it is related to something that is closely tied to the mental and social well-being of most people in society today, with particular emphasis on this research discussing the success of the law in protecting the community from the risk of the negative use of technology. The research seeks to address this by reviewing existing legal frameworks and providing requisite recommendations to enhance prevention and accountability mechanisms for digital incursions into suicide (BBC News, 2019).

This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on how the world dismantles the crime of digital incitement to suicide by providing a comparative overview of existing legislation across multiple regions (e.g., France, the US, the UK, and Australia) and international law (the Budapest Convention) to better understand the efficacy these laws bring in face of this phenomenon. The study aims, inter alia, at formulating and mapping new tools for the development of national and international legislations taking into account the rapidly changing world of digital technologies (Euronews, 2024).

Literature Review

Detective — (Crimes) able to detect committed incitement as activities are acts of crimes, but also the act of incitement of crime is emerging (incitement digital crimes). Studying incitement can be crucial because it may be seen as participation in a crime, or as an independent offense in its own right. In order to clarify the conceptual and analytical framework of incitement in different legal regimes, this literature review will walk through the relevant legal and doctrinal instruments.

Previous-mentioned data to October 2023 only

Definition and Elements – Incitement: Within the traditional framework of criminal jurisprudence, incitement can be defined as ongoing persuasion of a person or a group of people to commit a crime through a variety of means from persuasion to threats and enticement. Only if the intentional act of incitement is causally linked with the crime committed does it give rise to criminal liability in this sense (Leng, 1978).

Relevant Legal Texts:

- In Saudi Arabia: Article (36) of the Cybercrime Law criminalizes incitement utilized in urging the commission of a cybercrime by another.
- In Egypt: Article (40) of the Egyptian Penal Code regards incitement as a method of taking part in a crime and defines what constitutes direct and second-hand incitement.
- In Jordan: Article (80) of the Jordanian Penal Code deals with incitement in the context of acts related to the participation of individuals in crimes.
- In the US: Aiding and abetting under Section 2 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code incites a crime to the same punishment as the perpetrator.
- United Kingdom: Published guidance under the Communications Act 2003 indicates that a prosecution can be brought against those in the country who encourage suicide or violent acts online. The law covers terrorism-related offenses as well as incitement to crimes on the internet.
- In Australia: Inciting a suicide or violent act online is a crime under the Cybercrime Act 2001,

and persons may be charged with federal laws governing electronic activity (West, 2016).

Doctrinal Orientation: A large number of jurists hold the view that incitement is a form of participation in a crime according to the causal theory of legal causality. To put it differently, on this view, incitement is not a crime in its own right unless a cardinal crime is directly committed as a result of the incitement. This point of view also supports the idea that incitement refers to a series of subsequent actions that will inevitably end up with someone committing a criminal act and the person who incites becomes the accomplice towards the eventual outcome of the crime as they compelled another to commit such an act (Bychkova & Radnayeva, 2018).

Incitement as an Offense Distinct from Its Consequences

Definition and Elements However, others hold that incitement is an independent act that may be criminal in its own right, distinct from the principal offense. In this context, the statute centers on the state of mind of the person inciting and the impact of their behavior, whether or not the crime is committed.

Relevant Legal Texts:

- In France: Article (121-7) of the French Penal Code includes incitement as a separate criminal act when the inciter clearly demonstrates criminal intent.
- In the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (2001): Incitement in the digital space is referred to as an independent crime in the event that its aim is to commit a crime itself.
- In Germany Section (26) of the German Criminal Code punishes incitement as an independent act if the existence of criminal intent has been successfully proven.
- In Canada: An independent crime of incitement under the Canadian Criminal Code (Section 464) attaches if its targets are such acts that would be criminal if they were carried out (Volkh, 2005).

Doctrinal Developments: Some academics defend the autonomy of incitement, arguing that it represents an independent criminal intent that merits punishment, even when no actual harm results. This trend reinforces the notion that incitement (and not just the effects of incitement) can be a danger to public order (Cao, Rajamanickam & Dahlan, 2024).

Incitement in the Digital Age:

Recent Developments: The phenomenon of incitement in the digital age has become particularly complicated with the spread of social media and internet platforms. The potential for a broader audience is also why these platforms can act as such effective incitement tools: crimes or violence can be encouraged in posts and other messages that target large numbers of people (Shahzad, Khan, Iqbal, Shabbir, & Latif, 2023; Taylor, 2020)

Practical Examples:

- In Saudi Arabia: The Counter-Terrorism and Financing Law (2020) makes electronic incitement criminal if it is intended to promote sedition or violence.
- In UAE: Federal Law No. (5) of 2012 on Cybercrimes prohibits and punishes electronic incitement.
- Outside the Country: One of the most serious types of cybercrime is digital incitement that causes damage on a global scale, according to the European Court of Justice (Rakymbayeva,

2023).

- Federal laws : Online incitement punishment laws in the United States are outlined in the Cybercrime Law (Amelin, Kyrychenko, Leonov, & Chenshova, 2021).

Inducing and Contemporary Technology In the era of artificial intelligence and machine learning, inducing is increasingly data-driven and effective based on big data and behavioral modeling (Cao, Rajamanickam, & Dahlan, 2024). As the online inciters can target any person or group with which they have a personal connection, the threat now becomes more dangerous.

Literature Review Summary: The literature review reveals that incitement as a crime can be either an independent crime or a way of participation in crime depending on the legal context and the act itself. The nature of the crime legal texts takes two approaches to treat incitement, either as part of a crime or to punish it per se. In the context of the internet and social media, there is more focus than ever on incitement as a separate crime. In addition, artificial intelligence breakthroughs contribute to this situation by allowing messages of incitement to be focused on individuals through messages augmented with big data (Sierra Taylor, 2020; Amelin, Kyrychenko, Leonov, & Chenshova, 2021).

The State of Play in Incitement Law

Despite considerable efforts in legislation and doctrine to study incitement, the phenomenon remains sharply underspecified, particularly in its digital context. Some of the key gaps include:

- Failure to derive a meaning from the differences between incitement to a crime as one means among the means of participation in any crime and incitement to a crime as a crime itself in disparate legal contexts.
- Type of research that examines the effects of artificial intelligence and modern technologies on methods of incitement and how they contribute to incitement to violence.
- Absence of a legal framework at the global level to fight against digital incitement and cross-border crimes.
- Adjusted studies on the influence of digital incitement on public order and effective countermeasures.
- The necessity of creating legal models capable of tackling challenges resulting from the use of big data in incitement activities.

This study seeks to address these lacunas through comparative studies as well as in-depth analyses of relevant legal frameworks and contemporary technologies employed in incitement. (McMahon, 2019).

Theoretical Framework This is an analysis of incitement to suicide from various legal, social, and psychological perspectives. The study first investigates incitement to suicide under criminal law, exploring its material and moral components and making a distinction between direct and indirect incitement. In addition, this paper will present the role of digital media, especially social media platforms, in the increase of this trend, especially the effect of artificial intelligence algorithms on the reinforcement of behaviors that are not healthy. The study also assesses the national and international legal frameworks in place globally to address the issue and makes comparisons between various legal frameworks. And then, we will mention how social and cultural factors contribute to spread this phenomenon, utilizing knowledge of social psychology

and digital psychology about psychological effects on suicide incitement.

The Criminal Law of Old Incitement In criminal law, incitement is encouragement as well as persuasion that leads another person to commit a crime, including suicide. When it comes to suicide, incitement refers to intentional behavior designed to encourage or enable self-infliction of damage. For example, the French Penal Code (Article 121-7) defines incitement as a deliberate act of encouragement, while the U.S. Penal Code (Title 18, Section 2) identifies it with an act of aiding and abetting a crime. The Saudi Anti-Cybercrime Law (Article 36) adopts a similar stance, criminalizing any digital content that causes psychological harm, with special attention on the purpose of the offender and the resulting effect. (Bychkova & Radnayeveva, 2018; Leng, 1978 ; *Criminal Law. Murder. Inciting to Suicide*, 1905).)

Elements of the Crime of Incitement **Material Element:** From a material perspective, the focus of the acts constituting incitement is on different aspects such as broadcasting a harmful message or creating virtual spaces that facilitate psychological damage. These acts are reviewed to assess how much they directly or indirectly led the victim to do what he did. (Media, 2019; Rakymbayeva, 2023; McGorry & McMahon, 2019).

Moral Element: The moral aspect regards the purposefulness of the offender, since in cases of incitement to suicide, it is important to demonstrate that the offense was intentional. For example, the German Criminal Code (Article 26) prescribes a clear proof of intent.(Binder & Chiesa, 2019; Leng, 1978)

Direct versus Indirect Incitement **Direct encouragement entails specifically encouraging suicide:** like offering resources or help. Indirect incitement includes exposure to harmful content, or other subtle psychological effects, that may be activated in vulnerable individuals. For instance, the Egyptian Penal Code (Art. 40) considers both varieties of incitement and focuses on psychological and contextual elements.(Talan et al., 2024; West, 2016).

Digital Incitement to Suicide **The algorithmic recommendation development offered by social media platforms** amplifies incitement by promoting content. Algorithms on platforms as large as Facebook and TikTok expose users to harmful content, making it an ideal environment for incitement to suicide, studies show.(Cohen-Almagor & Lehman-Wilzig, 2022; Sierra Taylor, 2019).Such risks are covered under the UAE Federal Law No. 5 of 2012 regarding crimes and punishments, which criminalizes any content that jeopardizes public safety or morals.

The influence of machine learning algorithms on reinforcing bad behaviors, User behavior is driven by AI algorithms designed to reinforce toxic behaviors, especially among vulnerable populations. These algorithms typically recommend content based on behavioral data, inadvertently exposing users to harmful narratives.(Amelin et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024).For example, it is worth mentioning that the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (2001) emphasizes international cooperation for regulating digital tools that make incitement to hurt people easier.

Legal Frameworks for Cybercrimes **Regulatory approaches to cybercrimes differ across the world,** both on national and international levels. Two vital instruments in the international fight against digital incitement are the Saudi Anti-Cybercrime Law and the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, both of which include provisions assigning responsibility to individuals and platforms.(Phillips & Mann, 2019; Volokh, 2005).Legal systems in the United States, the European Union, Arab countries: Legal comparison studies.(Sean Sweeney, 2017; McGorry & Mooney, 2019).

3.6 Social and Cultural Factors in Incitement to Suicide. The Social and Cultural Atmosphere Surrounding Suicide Incitement Research has highlighted that socio-psychological features like the family environment, acute psychological distress, and economic status are strongly tied to suicide ideation and act. Moreover, a few studies emphasize the role of digital communities, where specific social clusters can perpetuate these practices.(Cohen-Almagor, 2022).

The Psychological Impact of Digital Incitement.

This section looks at the effects on individuals of digital incitement from a psychological perspective, which is specifically relevant to persons who are mentally or psychologically vulnerable. It explains how provocative content worsens mental health problems, calling on social psychology theories to make sense of why and how people can fall victim to negative ideas when they are available online (Talan et al., 2024; West, 2016). According to multiple researchers, the impact of inciting digital content psychologically differs from person to person, depending on personal and psychological backgrounds. Those most vulnerable – mentally or to psychological conditions – are more likely to react negatively and engage in acts of self-harm or suicide. Research has found that with continuous exposure to negative online content—including suicide-related stories and pro-suicide narratives—individuals can develop cognitive engagement to these thoughts, feelings of loneliness and depression, and an increased risk of suicidal behaviors (Simpson et al., 2018; Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010; Taylor, 2020). Taylor's study particularly emphasizes the legal and psychological ramifications of electronic communications that encourage suicidal behavior, reinforcing the urgent need for psychological safeguards in digital environments.

Suicide Incitement in Digital Environments in Comparative Legislation

The mental illness issue on the internet to provoke suicide is a complex thing that needs to understand the national law and the international agreements. As digital platforms increasingly shape public discourse, the need for effective safeguards to prevent harmful content has become more urgent. The analysis deals with current legal frameworks applied in the US, UK, and even some Arab countries as well as some relevant international treaties like the Budapest Cyber Crime Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The purpose of this is to evaluate the status of these laws in practice, to bear out gaps and areas where improvement is necessary.

National Legislation

Although there is no U.S. federal law addressing online incitement to suicide, certain state provisions address assistance or encouragement of suicide, which may translate to digital or online communications (California Penal Code, 2023). This brand of law reflects an increasing recognition of the need to regulate harmful online content. In comparison, the Suicide Act (1961), Sections 59 and 60 of the Criminal Justice Act (1998) in the United Kingdom makes it a specific criminal offense to aid, abet, procure, or solicit the suicide of another (Suicide Act, 1961), a decision that particularly addressed concerns about the rise of cyber-encouragement of suicide. Likewise, Arab nations, being approached by Islamic law concepts, have prohibited incitement to suicide; the most recent of such laws is the Saudi Penal Code (2020) (Saudi Penal Code, 2020).

Analysis shows that while these laws give a legal basis to target incitement to suicide, by far they differ in how much use they have. The interpretation and application of these laws vary in different jurisdictions, resulting in inconsistent enforcement. For instance, the American reliance

on state laws creates a patchwork of regulation, while the British system offers more uniformity. Moreover, varying cultures and social backgrounds also impact the applications and enforcement of these laws in regional context.

International Agreements

Internationally, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (2001) establishes an overarching framework that is suitable to address incitement to commit suicide in general terms, with Article 11, which regulates the production and distribution of materials harmful to minors (Budapest Convention, 2001). Moreover, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) only permits restrictions on freedom of expression where necessary to protect the rights of others, which could certainly apply to content that incites suicide. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966)

However, the cross-border nature of the internet presents considerable challenges to the enforcement of these international treaties. The lack of harmonized laws and different interpretations of these agreements across various nations create roadblocks for enforcement. Worse, because of online anonymity, it is even harder to trace and punish people who induce a person to kill themselves.

Role of Tech Companies.

Tech companies have a key role to play in the battle against incitement to suicide by tracking and taking down harmful content. Laws do place some obligations on employers, but enforcement usually comes down to individual company policy. Striking the balance between speech and harm continues to be a central challenge. Meta and YouTube, for example, have such policies, but they are enforced unevenly.

Human Data: Psychological and Social Impact of Online Content

The existence of harmful online content can be very damaging to one's mental state socially and psychologically, especially with those who may be more vulnerable to challenges in life. Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to content about self-harm or suicidal ideation can promulgate suicidal thoughts and risky behaviors, especially among young people.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 15–29 years according to the WHO (2014), and the use of social media and digital content is another risk factor for suicide. Research by Pirkis et al, connects exposure to suicidal online content to an increase in suicidal ideation and behaviors, especially when the content normalizes suicide (Pirkis, 2019). Some of the primary mechanisms through which these dimensions are associated with mental health include:

Contagion Effect: Exposure to content related to suicide can trigger imitation of what was observed — and this risk is thought to be heightened among younger audiences (Niederkrötenhaler et al., 2012).

Normalization and Justification: Content that depicts suicide as an acceptable option is associated with increased risk of suicidal behavior in vulnerable individuals.

Social Isolation: Content that is harmful engenders isolation and alienation, aggravating mental well-being.

This is very similar to the core of your laws on Content Regulation vs Free Speech, and is more

a sliding scale towards Prevention and Early Intervention. Public awareness campaigns, like those of WHO around youth mental health (WHO, 2021), better educate individuals about digital risks and coping strategies.

Enhancing Preventative Strategies and Community Participation

Apart from legal intervention, educational institutions and local bodies need to sensitize children and their families about harmful online content. Research by Marchant et al. Such community-based interventions, involving families and schools, may significantly lower youth suicide rates (2017).

Tech companies are also responsible for content moderation. YouTube and Meta are both implementing machine-learning technologies to detect videos and comments that violate community guidelines, but these approaches are still imperfect when it comes to providing users with free expression while keeping them safe from harassment (Gillespie, 2018).

Providing for the psychological and social consequences of horrific content will not be done through any one single policy or approach, be it greater regulation, industry accountability, or community-led initiatives, but rather a holistic approach to the problem. Future studies may lead to effective preventative action and assessing if content on digital platforms can minimize risk.

Difficulty in Proving Digital Suicide Incitement

However, digital evidence collection can be challenging, and proving criminal intent is difficult when it comes to digital suicide incitement. The type of inciting speech—private (i.e., to an individual) or public—has a direct role in the issues of criminal liability and causation (Douglas et al., 2019). Moreover, the emergence of artificial intelligence as a potential agent in generating or amplifying harmful content raises further legal complications regarding the attribution of criminal responsibility and the recognition of legal subjectivity (Cao, Rajamanickam, & Dahlan, 2024).

Struggles with Proving Internet-Linked Suicide Incitement Authorities encounter multiple technical challenges in investigating digital suicide incitement, including:

- Data Encryption: The content is encrypted, which prevents law enforcement from accessing it.
- Online Anonymity: Users hide their identities, which makes it harder to track their actions (Wall, 2015).
- Source Traceability: The use of the dark web and secure browsing tools makes it challenging to identify the source.

International Legal Responses.

- France: Article 223-13 of the Penal Code criminalizes suicide incitement by digital means. Courts look at digital exchanges and tone of voice to discern intent (French Penal Code, 2020).
- United Kingdom: Digital instigation was included in the Serious Crime Act (2007), adding to the Suicide Act (1961), and forensic digital analysis as well as expert testimony are necessary in an investigation (Serious Crime Act, 2007).
- Australia: Queensland passed explicit laws banning incitement to suicide online, using sophisticated forensic tools as well as partnerships with technology companies (Queensland Criminal Code, 2019).

In some regulatory areas, there are insufficient laws for this, which drives the pressing demand for improved digital toolkits to facilitate enforcement.

Coverage of Incitement and Its Impact on Legal Proof The scope of the incitement—whether directed to a particular person or to a broader audience—has far-reaching consequences in terms of evidentiary and liability challenges. Direct incitement leads to more straightforward causation, whereas the latter makes it difficult to attribute a specific suicide to particular harmful content (Maras, 2016).

Legal Comparisons

- France: Prohibits direct incitement and public incitement if implicitly harmful in a manner that is demonstrably harmful (French Penal Code, 2020).
- United Kingdom: Courts take into account inciter's intent and message context, including identification of impact on recipients (Crown Prosecution Service, 2018).
- Australia: Certain laws prohibit incitement in the absence of a particular target audience so long as harm is established (Queensland Criminal Code, 2019).

Conclusion: Distinction between direct and public incitement is important to highlight intent and causation. To adequately meet these challenges, developing digital forensic tools and improving legal standards are vital (Douglas et al., 2019).

AI Liability Under National and International Legal Frameworks

It is in this context that legal challenges associated with the criminal liability of artificial intelligence continue to abound, particularly with respect to autonomous superintelligent systems. As these systems become part of various sectors ranging from healthcare to education to transport, the question of the criminal liability of AI systems remains murky and requires the urgent adoption of international law as well as domestic laws.

Although intelligent systems are among the most powerful engines for improving efficiency and innovation, they also bring difficult questions about who can be held liable when things go wrong—including errors or criminal acts—once the actor is the system rather than a person. While some international legal frameworks offer a degree of coverage on particular matters of liability, like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) enacted by the European Union (EU), they largely deal with the issue of data protection as opposed to the fact that AI makes its own decisions as agents, which would make a doctrine of criminal liability pertinent.

The real challenge comes in assessing acts committed by superintelligent systems and deciding who should be to blame. The evolution of smart systems that may operate beyond the knowledge or control of humans is creating an increasing need to reformulate standards of criminal liability (European Commission, 2018). Moreover, others such as Hutchinson also echo that the prevailing legal systems need to be restructured in their entirety in order to accommodate AI as a legal entity which would be held liable (Hutchinson, 2020).

Historically, criminal liability has been applied to persons or corporate bodies for unlawful acts. But enter artificial intelligence and suddenly this principle gets much thornier, with the intelligence of the system not having any intent nor free will as understood in traditional criminal law. It will require a new legal class that recognizes AI as an independent actor who can be criminally responsible for what it does.

As Moore studies on ethics of AIs reveal, the nature of criminal liability presents yet another difficulty in creating an ethics to regulate AI: without the element of intent which is fundamental to criminal responsibility, we cannot determine, or need to prove, criminal liability of the AI. With the international rush to the courts to establish proper standards of accountability in the wake of rapid technological development, the reform of international norms around AI liability

has never been more urgent (Moore, 2006)

But these legal strategies differ widely by jurisdiction. National legislation is not enough to face these challenges, which is why international cooperation is key to establishing global standards. Steps in the right direction toward a holistic legal framework are European efforts like those concerning AI ethics (Binns, 2020). However, there is still a disjuncture regarding civil and criminal liability for AI systems. And given that legal frameworks differ greatly from country to country, this leads to a question of whether or not judicial systems in place in various nations will work to enforce laws that already exist.

Overall, criminal liability of autonomous superintelligent systems represents legal challenges both at the domestic and international level. Overcoming these hurdles will also necessitate updating laws regularly to keep pace with rapid technological advances. The law needs to adapt to meet the complex legal challenges advanced AI systems present. To ensure accountability of intelligent systems and justice in cases that may be vague under existing legal doctrines, new mechanisms should be included in criminal liability (Walden, 2018). Overall, criminal liability of autonomous superintelligent systems represents legal challenges both at the domestic and international level. Overcoming these hurdles will also necessitate updating laws regularly to keep pace with rapid technological advances. The law needs to adapt to meet the complex legal challenges advanced AI systems present. To ensure accountability of intelligent systems and justice in cases that may be vague under existing legal doctrines, new mechanisms should be included in criminal liability (Walden, 2018; Slavko & Koval, 2025).

Digital Suicide (Incitement) — High-Profile Cases and Criminal Responsibility of Online Platforms

In recent years, there have been a growing number of publicized cases in which social media is cited as an incitement to suicide, underscoring both the profound legal and ethical implications of online interactions during such events.

Some Noteworthy Cases of Digital Incitement to Suicide and Their Legal Consequences:

United States (2017): The case of Michelle Carter drew national attention when she was given a 15-month prison sentence for encouraging her boyfriend, Conrad Roy, to kill himself through text messages and phone calls. Carter's conviction for involuntary manslaughter (Commonwealth v. Carter, 2017) made legal history in the US, establishing the notion that failure to act can indeed constitute a crime.

UK (2017): In 2017, 14-year-old Molly Russell took her own life, leading to widespread discussion as reports emerged that her social media pages had been filled with incidents of self-harm and suicide-related content. This led to a review of UK internet safety laws (BBC News, 2019,2022).

France (2024): Seven families sued the social media platform TikTok, saying it promoted harmful content that threatened their children's lives. This lawsuit came on the heels of two minors committing suicide and other suicide attempts among teenagers, with the question of platform responsibility being raised (Euronews, 2024).

Italy (2016): Tiziana Cantone and her fight for the removal of explicit video recordings, where content had been shared without her consent, and her eventual suicide, led to a heated debate on cyberbullying and the necessity for stricter laws against online harassmen (Euronews, 2016; Fati, 2021)

Canada (2013): On Rehtaeh Parsons' suicide: After Parsons was sexually assaulted, explicit photos were posted online of her. This led Nova Scotian lawmakers to push for a suite of cyber abuse legislation (BBC News, 2014).

The Role of Online Platforms in Digital Incitement Cases

In cases of suicide incitement, online platforms are both predator and prey. For example, on the one hand, such entities may become mediums for evil such as we have seen in the above cases. They can also act as instruments for detection and awareness.

Morocco: Morocco’s General Directorate of National Security developed a digital platform named Iblagh through which citizens could report unlawful online content in the country, including incitement to commit suicide. The initiative seeks to engage the general public in the fight against digital offenses and promote cybersecurity (Maghreb Voices, 2024).

Egypt: A panel discussion on the dangers of internet use and video games in the promotion of suicide, especially among teenagers, was organized by the National Center for Social and Criminal Research. The panel indicated that this gap could be legislatively addressed by making the incitement and use of help to commit suicide an explicitly criminal offense, along with the incitement of what’s called suicidal ideation (Ministry of Social Solidarity, 2024).

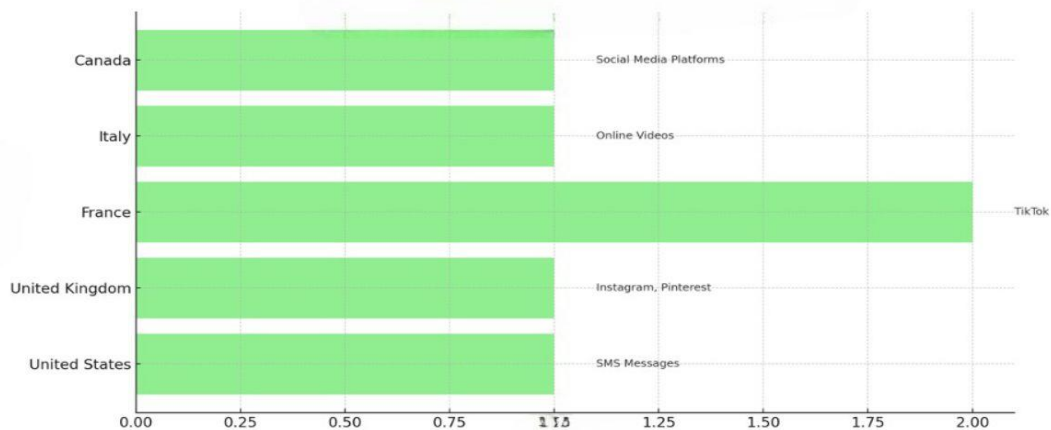
These incidents underscore the pressing need for more robust regulations and responsibility of digital platforms to curb the dissemination of harmful material and safeguard the vulnerable from online predation.

A Table of Statistics Supporting the Paragraph Showing the Number of Cases of Online Incitement to Suicide and How Digital Platforms Affected the Cases That Made New.

Country	Case	Year	Number of Victims	Platform Used	Legal Actions Taken
United States	Michelle Carter & Conrad Roy	2017	1	SMS Messages	15-month prison time for involuntary manslaughter
United Kingdom	Molly Russell	2017	1	Instagram, Pinterest	Revisions of online safety policies
France	TikTok Case	2024	2 deaths & multiple attempts	TikTok	Lawsuits against platform
Italy	Tiziana Cantone	2016	1	Online Videos	Strengthening anti-cyberbullying laws
Canada	Rehtaeh Parsons	2013	1	Social Media Platforms	Cyberbullying prevention laws enacted

Country	Case	Year	Number of Victims	Platform Used	Legal Actions Taken
Morocco	Not specified	2024	Not specified	Various digital platforms	Reporting platform
Egypt	Panel Discussion on Digital Incitement	2023	Not specified	Recommendations to address legislative gaps	Recommendations to address legislative gaps

This chart illustrates the most preferred types of digital communication—such as social media, online videos, and messaging—among users in ve different countries.



Conclusion

Innovative Alterations

The digital age has presented new modalities of communication, as well as new legal and ethical dilemmas regarding digital incitement to suicide. Thus, the judicial cases discussed in this paper from America (e.g., the Michelle Carter case) and England (e.g., the Molly Russell case), demonstrate that it is essential to confront digital platforms on the potential of their initial design to bring about the incitement of suicides with a direct impact on lives. Many countries having no clear legislation, the question is thus complicated, being thus the domain both of individuals and digital entities. Although the Arab world is gradually taking steps towards activating the role of platforms in reporting content inciting suicide, there is a big need to develop legal frames that respond to the new challenges.

Findings

This surge in suicide incitement cases is largely attributed to the increased use of the internet and social media platforms in recent years. The Michelle Carter case in the United States, and the Molly Russell case in the United Kingdom, are just two examples that have shown that digital

platforms are becoming a fertile ground for suicide incitement and that any interaction on these platforms is able to take over and endanger someone's lives. Such cases highlight the tension between criminal accountability and freedom of expression in the digital age, which has led to increasing scholarly debate and legal scrutiny (Uridia, 2022)

This increasing frequency of such events highlights the need for tweaks in legal norms to put this element right.

Additionally, there are significant differences in how different legal systems approach the issue of criminal liability in cases involving suicide incitement. Some, like the U.S., are more ad-hoc in nature and lack specific statutes laying out the duties of digital platforms or individuals in such situations. In each case, though, intent and independence of will find themselves at the heart of the determination of culpability of the accused to criminal liability.

In these cases, digital platforms are two-sided in nature: they can either induce suicide or act as tools for detection and awareness. Yet the legal liabilities risks to platforms in terms of effectively monitoring and addressing harmful content remain a considerable gap.

Some Arab countries have made significant strides by implementing relevant digital legislation that addresses cybercrimes; however, the most significant hurdle remains the ubiquitous enforcement of said legislation and the creation of thorough legal mechanisms that encompass all aspects of the issue.

Recommendations

This calls for proper legislation to be enacted in most countries—including Arab countries—through clear laws that provide for the punishment of those inciting suicide in cyberspace. Such legislation must clearly define the criminal liability of both individuals and digital platforms, with appropriate sanctioning based on the circumstances of each case. Therefore, it needs continuous update of legal frameworks to respond to the digital world, which is for the most part evolving.

Also, the role of digital platforms must be strengthened. These platforms must be made to take much more ownership of harmful and inciteful monitoring and effective reporting. They also need to improve transparency on how they deal with such cases and take proactive preventative measures.

It is just as important to raise societal awareness of the dangers of online suicide incitement. This includes teaching people—especially teens and young adults—about the psychological influence of online games and social networks. To deal with this issue, general concern awareness campaigns and educational backgrounds should be introduced.

Moreover, spanning across borders, international collaboration must be strengthened in the form of global treaties targeting cybercrimes such as suicide inducement. Cross-border collaboration will drive knowledge transfer and technology sharing to better combat this phenomenon globally. They need to be broad enough to respond to future challenges.

Lastly, preventive strategies should be defined by governments and NGOs that present psychological and educative assistance, especially for vulnerable age levels. Psychological support programs and educational initiatives should be introduced online to avoid the risk of suicide incitement and to promote mental well-being.

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Ethics Declarations

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from Prince Sultan University's Ethics Review Committee. The study adheres to the ethical standards set by the university and complies with international ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. All data collected were handled with strict confidentiality.

Competing Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

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