

Suicide-Related Searches Spike 19 Percent After '13 Reasons Why' Premiere

A new study shows online searches for suicidal topics grew a staggering 19 percent after the premiere of *13 Reasons Why*.

The Netflix show follows high-school student Hannah through a series of tapes to explain why she killed herself.

The team found a spike of between 900,000 and 1.5 million more searches about suicide and suicide methods than expected over the first 19 days after the show aired. San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health associate research professor John W. Ayers led the study.

According to *Mashable*:

The findings showed that after the release of 13 Reasons Why, which follows the events surrounding a fictional teenager's eventual suicide through a series of tapes she leaves behind, all suicide-related searches were 19 percent higher than expected.

While awareness-related phrases like "suicide hotline" and "suicide prevention" were up 12 percent and 23 percent, respectively, "how to commit suicide" increased by 26 percent, "commit suicide" by 18 percent and "how to kill yourself" by 9 percent.

"While it's heartening that the series' release concurred with increased awareness of suicide and suicide prevention ... our results back up the worst fears of the show's critics: The show may have inspired many to act on their suicidal thoughts by seeking out information on how to commit suicide," Ayers says. "We are calling on Netflix to remove the show and edit

its content to align with World Health Organization standards before reposting. Moreover, the planned second season, and all suicide-related media, might undergo testing before wide release to prevent well intended content from producing unintended results.”

It’s not the only study of its kind.

Movieguide® has numerous studies on the impact of media on children who have different susceptibilities. The proof is shown very clearly in this situation by the fact that more calls than ever are coming into suicide hotlines, in fact a “steadily increasing stream of calls and emails” are coming from teenagers and parents, according to some Australian Mental Health organizations.

Christian activists, including filmmaker Ray Comfort, issued major outcry after the series premiere.

“There is my concern with the death scene in *13 Reasons Why*. It seems that the series producers didn’t take into account the thousands of young people known as ‘cutters.’ These people regularly cut their skin and draw blood, and in doing so repeatedly, they get used to it. It loses its intuitive horror. Studies show that 40 percent of cutters have thought of suicide. In essence, many cutters may be actually rehearsing their own deaths. Someone slitting their wrists is not as horrific to them as it would be to you and me. Couple that mentality with a celebrity hero who slits her wrists, and you have potential copycats,” Comfort says.

In the aftermath of the show, 16-year-old blogger Lauren McRoberts released a post about “13 Reasons Why Not,” that is, more than a dozen reasons to remember your life has worth.

“After watching the series, I feel like the Holy Spirit just laid it on my heart,” she says. “I think when you are a Christian, you accept the Holy Spirit into your heart which is like a conscience for you, and I just felt like I was being

called to do that, and it was something heavy on my heart. My personal testimony includes some clinical depression and anxiety that I suffered from a few years ago.” {eoa}