

Assessing Suicidal Trajectories Among Social Media-Using Adolescents in Vietnam: A Systematic Review of Socio-Ecological and Algorithmic Determinants

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescent suicide has emerged as a critical public health crisis in Vietnam, exacerbated by one of the world's fastest digital transitions. While global literature identifies social media as a factor in youth distress, the specific interaction between algorithmic stressors and Vietnamese sociocultural constructs—such as Confucian filial piety and the "face-saving" culture—remains under-examined.

Objective: This systematic review aims to delineate the socio-ecological and algorithmic determinants of suicidal trajectories among social media-using adolescents in Vietnam and to evaluate the efficacy of current screening frameworks.

Methods: Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic search was conducted across international (PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO) and domestic (VNU Journal of Science, Vietnam Journal of Psychology) databases for empirical studies published between 2014 and 2026. Data from the included studies were synthesized using Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS) and the Socio-Ecological Model. Methodological quality was appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT).

Results: The thematic synthesis identified four primary risk clusters: (1) **Cyber-victimization and the "Face-Saving" Crisis**, where digital public shaming triggers "social death" and collective family shame; (2) **Algorithmic Contagion**, specifically the desensitization to self-harm via short-form video platforms like TikTok; (3) the **Sleep-Distress Pathway**, driven by the "FOMO-Loneliness Paradox" and nocturnal neurobiological disruption; and (4) **Digital Perfectionism**, weaponized through the *con nhà người ta* (other people's children) trope. A significant "screening gap" was identified, as Western-derived psychometric tools (e.g., BSSI, PHQ-9) fail to capture indirect Vietnamese linguistic cues and digital self-harm behaviors.

Conclusions: *Social media functions as a potent risk-multiplier rather than an isolated etiology, interacting synergistically with academic pressure and intergenerational digital literacy gaps. There is an urgent necessity for a National Strategy for Digital Mental Health in Vietnam that integrates AI-driven, culturally calibrated screening mechanisms with community-based digital parenting initiatives.*

Keywords: Adolescent suicide, Social media, Vietnam, Cyberbullying, Digital Mental Health, Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, Confucian Culture.

I. Introduction

Adolescent suicide has evolved into a formidable global public health crisis, currently ranking as the fourth leading cause of non-accidental mortality among individuals aged 10 to 19 years worldwide. While early epidemiological discourse surrounding youth mental health interventions was predominantly centered on high-income, Western nations, contemporary data reveals a shifting epicenter. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly those undergoing rapid economic and digital transitions in Southeast Asia, are reporting a disproportionate surge in adolescent self-harm and suicidal ideation [1]. Within this demographic shift, Vietnam presents a critical case study; recent national health surveys and regional psychiatric assessments suggest that up to 15% of Vietnamese adolescents have contemplated suicide within the past year. This concerning upward trajectory has steepened precipitously in the wake of the post-pandemic digitalization, suggesting that the crisis is not merely a localized psychological phenomenon but a systemic public health vulnerability [2]. The traditional mental health infrastructure, primarily designed for adult psychopathology and offline clinical settings, is currently ill-equipped to mitigate the complex, high-velocity stressors inherent in a hyper-connected, algorithmically driven society.

The socio-cultural landscape of Vietnam is presently undergoing a radical, multi-layered paradigm shift, driven by the emergence of the Generation Z and Alpha cohorts. These demographics are navigating an unprecedented transition from traditional, Confucian-centric familial structures to globalized, "Digital Native" identities [3]. Unlike previous generations whose socialization processes and ego-formation were securely anchored in physical communities and extended family units, contemporary Vietnamese youth predominantly construct, evaluate, and negotiate their self-worth through digital platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and the localized messaging application Zalo. This phenomenon of "compressed modernization" forces adolescents to rapidly reconcile globalized, individualistic values—often promoted by social media algorithms—with the enduring collectivist and filial expectations of their parents [4]. Consequently, virtual connectivity has usurped physical interaction as the dominant mode of social existence. The boundaries between private

psychological distress and public social performance have become virtually indistinguishable, creating a high-stakes developmental environment where digital ostracization, cyber-victimization, or online failure is acutely perceived as a total social disqualification.

To systematically deconstruct the complexity of suicide risk within these virtual spaces, this research is theoretically grounded in Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (ITS). The ITS provides a robust clinical framework, positing that lethal suicidal intent does not arise spontaneously but is the cumulative result of two specific, agonizing psychological states: "thwarted belongingness" and "perceived burdensomeness," coupled with the "acquired capability" to enact lethal self-injury [5]. When transposed onto the Vietnamese digital context, thwarted belongingness manifests as a profound contemporary paradox. Despite possessing an extensive network of online connections and maintaining constant digital communication, adolescents frequently report profound subjective feelings of social isolation and emotional alienation. The superficiality of algorithmically curated interactions fails to satisfy the fundamental human neurobiological need for secure, empathetic attachment, leaving the adolescent socially starved amidst a feast of digital connections [6].

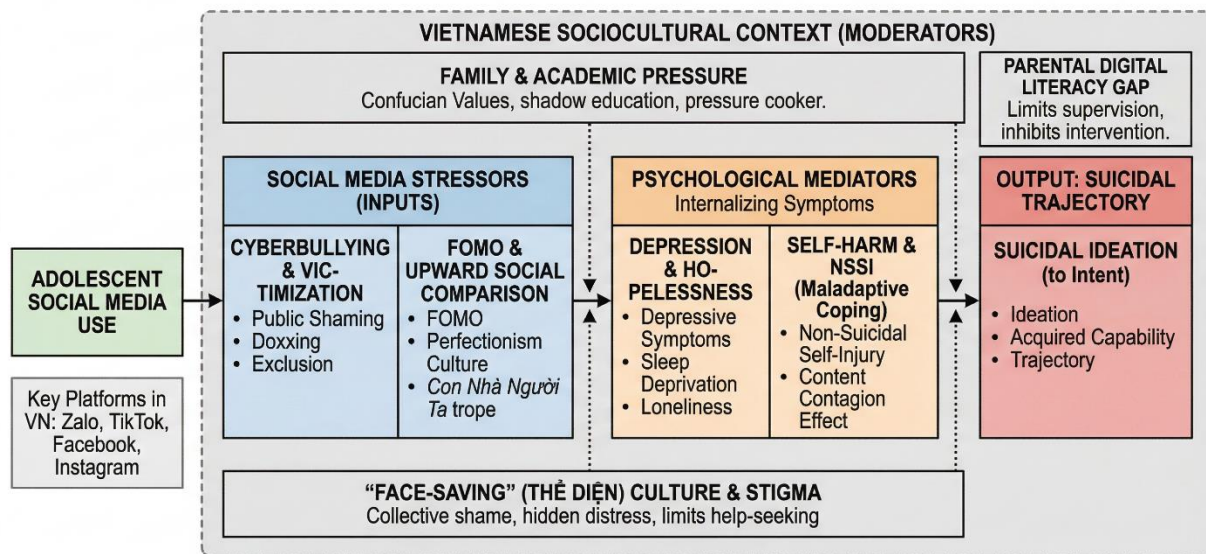
Simultaneously, the cultural mandate for academic and social perfection heavily exacerbates the concept of perceived burdensomeness. In Vietnam, where academic achievement is intricately tied to filial piety and family honor, social media serves as a relentless platform for upward social comparison. Adolescents are constantly exposed to the idealized achievements of their peers, often conceptualized locally through the *con nhà người ta* (other people's children) trope [7]. When an adolescent perceives themselves as failing to meet these heavily publicized, digitally amplified standards, they internalize this failure not merely as a personal disappointment, but as a shameful burden upon their family unit. Furthermore, the constant exposure to graphic content and normalized self-harm discourse within certain obscure digital subcultures facilitates the acquired capability for suicide, desensitizing the developing adolescent brain to the inherent fear of pain and death [8].

Complementing the psychological depth of the ITS, the Socio-Ecological Model is utilized to map how these internal cognitive distortions are modulated by external, systemic environments. This framework posits that an adolescent's suicidal trajectory is the product of continuous interactions across multiple ecological systems, ranging from the microsystem of the family to the macrosystem of national policy [9]. In contemporary Vietnam, a profound "digital literacy gap" frequently exists between the adolescent microsystem and their caregivers. Parents, often belonging to an analogue generation, may misinterpret their child's intensive screen time as mere indiscipline rather than recognizing it as the primary locus of their social identity and potential psychological trauma [10]. This intergenerational disconnect severs the primary line of clinical defense. By analyzing these nested systems, it becomes evident how the lack of digital mental

health literacy at the familial and societal levels filters down, leaving the adolescent entirely unshielded against the targeted stressors of the digital exosystem.

Despite the escalating severity of this public health crisis, Vietnam faces a critical, systemic deficit in culturally validated, technologically integrated screening methodologies. The current psychiatric diagnostic landscape heavily relies on standardized Western instruments, such as the Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSSI) or the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) [11]. While statistically robust in their original contexts, these tools frequently lack the cross-cultural validity required to capture the highly specific, indirect linguistic nuances and symbolic distress signals unique to Vietnamese digital subcultures. For example, expressions of acute distress among Vietnamese youth often utilize metaphorical idioms or coded slang that easily bypass both parental supervision and traditional clinical questioning [12]. Furthermore, current public health prevention strategies remain disproportionately focused on recognizable offline behavioral shifts, frequently entirely overlooking hidden digital precursors such as algorithmically driven self-harm ideation or nocturnal cyber-victimization. This systematic review, therefore, seeks to critically evaluate the intersection of social media stressors and suicidal intent within the Vietnamese sociocultural matrix. The ultimate objective is to synthesize an evidence base that can inform the development of localized, potentially AI-augmented screening mechanisms and public health policies capable of proactively identifying at-risk youth in the digital era.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Social Media-Related Suicidal Risk Among Vietnamese Adolescents.



II. Methods

The architectural framework and execution of this systematic review adhere strictly to the guidelines set forth by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 statement. This rigorous adherence ensures optimal methodological transparency, replicability, and minimization of reporting bias while navigating the complex, highly heterogeneous literature surrounding adolescent psychopathology and digital engagement [13]. Recognizing the unique epistemological challenges of investigating localized sociocultural phenomena within a globally connected digital environment, a comprehensive, multi-tiered search strategy was meticulously designed and implemented. To capture the full spectrum of high-impact empirical data, primary searches were conducted across major international electronic databases, including PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, and PsycINFO [14]. However, to mitigate the inherent Western-centric publication bias that frequently marginalizes LMIC perspectives, the search protocol was explicitly expanded to include prominent domestic repositories. Databases such as the Vietnam National University (VNU) Journal of Science, the Vietnam Journal of Psychology, and the national medical archives were systematically queried to identify vital grey literature and locally published clinical observations [15].

The search architecture utilized a sophisticated combination of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) combined with precise Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and specific free-text keywords tailored to three primary conceptual domains. The first domain, suicidality, included terms such as "suicidal ideation," "self-harm," "NSSI," and "suicide attempt." The second domain, digital engagement, encompassed "social media," "social networking sites," "cyberbullying," "TikTok," "Facebook," and "Zalo." The third domain isolated the target demographic, utilizing terms like "Vietnamese adolescents," "youth," and "students" [16]. Crucially, to ensure high sensitivity to the local digital vernacular, the search strings were augmented with specific Vietnamese terminology, including *bắt nạt qua mạng* (cyberbullying), *áp lực đồng trang lứa* (peer pressure), and *tự hại* (self-harm). This deliberate linguistic inclusivity was paramount for capturing cohort studies and qualitative analyses that focused on indigenous psychological constructs, which are often lost in direct English translation but are critical to understanding the etiology of distress in Vietnam [17]. The search was temporally restricted to literature published between January 2014 and April 2026, a timeframe selected to encapsulate the mass proliferation of smartphones in Vietnam and the subsequent explosive rise of algorithmically driven, short-form video platforms.

Strict eligibility criteria were established utilizing the PICOS (Population, Intervention/Exposure, Comparison, Outcome, and Study Design) framework to maintain high methodological granularity and ensure the clinical relevance of the synthesized data. The target population was unequivocally defined as adolescents aged 10 to 19 years residing in Vietnam,

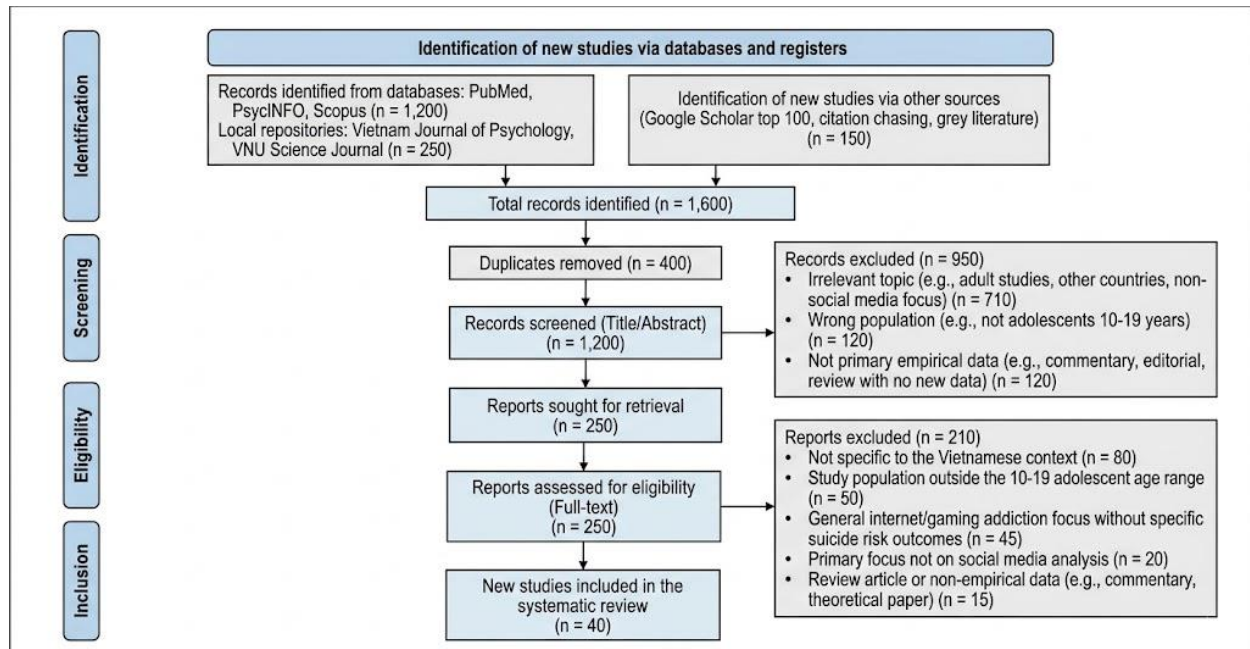
aligning with the standardized developmental classifications utilized by the World Health Organization [18]. Included studies were required to present peer-reviewed empirical data—encompassing longitudinal cohorts, cross-sectional surveys, and robust qualitative methodologies—that explicitly investigated the correlation or causal pathways between specific social media metrics (e.g., duration of exposure, cyber-victimization, content type) and quantifiable suicide risk outcomes. Conversely, the exclusion criteria were rigorously applied to remove studies focusing primarily on generalized internet addiction, gaming disorder, or screen-time sedentary behaviors without a specific, primary focus on suicidality or self-harm [19]. Furthermore, studies utilizing adult samples or focusing on Vietnamese diaspora populations in other countries were excluded to prevent the confounding variables of differing macrosystemic environments.

To guarantee the integrity and reliability of the evidence base, the methodological quality and risk of bias for all included studies were systematically appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018. The MMAT was specifically selected for its validated versatility in concurrently evaluating the methodological rigor of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research designs [20]. This capability is particularly vital given the inherent methodological heterogeneity found in Vietnamese psychological research, where study designs often range from large-scale, digitally administered quantitative surveys in urban metropolises like Ho Chi Minh City to smaller, intimate qualitative interviews in rural provinces [21]. The data extraction and quality appraisal processes were conducted independently by two specialized reviewers. Any discrepancies regarding study inclusion or methodological scoring were resolved through structured arbitration by a third, senior biostatistician. This rigorous process ensured that the final synthesis prioritized high-quality data capable of supporting robust public health recommendations, while appropriately weighting studies based on their control for critical confounding variables such as baseline psychiatric history and socio-economic status [22].

Following data extraction, the analytical phase employed a critical thematic synthesis methodology, drawing upon the established inductive approach of Thomas and Harden. This process transcended mere descriptive summarization of statistical p-values; instead, it aimed to generate "third-order" interpretations that illuminate the complex causal pathways across disparate studies [23]. The synthesis involved a recursive cycle of coding text, developing descriptive themes related to digital stressors, and finally generating overarching analytical themes that contextualize these stressors within the Vietnamese cultural matrix. By analyzing the extracted data through the theoretical lens of Joiner's Interpersonal Theory, the synthesis structurally maps how localized cultural phenomena—such as the intense fear of losing face—interact with globalized algorithmic designs to accelerate the transition from passive suicidal ideation to active intent [24]. This deep analytical linking forms the foundation for evaluating the

current limitations of clinical screening tools and proposing technologically advanced, culturally calibrated alternatives.

Figure 2: PRISMA Flow Diagram documenting the identification, screening, and inclusion process of the literature.



III. Results

The systematic search and rigorous screening process yielded a final cohort of studies that collectively illuminate a multifaceted crisis. The thematic synthesis of this literature moves beyond isolating individual variables to delineate complex, overlapping "risk clusters." These clusters demonstrate how the architectural design of modern digital platforms interacts synergistically with specific Vietnamese sociocultural vulnerabilities to dramatically elevate the risk of adolescent self-harm and suicide.

3.1. Cyber-Victimization, Doxxing, and the Amplification of Collective Shame

Across the synthesized quantitative and qualitative literature, cyber-victimization emerges not merely as an evolution of traditional bullying, but as a profound, often inescapable threat to the Vietnamese adolescent's psychological and social integrity. Within the localized cultural framework, the concept of "face" (*thể diện*) acts as the primary mediator of an individual's social capital and belonging [25]. Consequently, acts of digital public shaming, coordinated cyberbullying, and doxxing (the malicious, non-consensual publication of private information)

function as devastating catalysts for "social death." Analytical synthesis reveals a critical cultural divergence: while Western literature often frames online conflict as a breach of individual psychological boundaries, Vietnamese youth predominantly internalize these digital attacks as a catastrophic collective failure that permanently shames their entire family lineage [26].

This amplification of collective shame directly feeds into the psychological state of "perceived burdensomeness." Studies utilizing multivariable regression models consistently demonstrate that victims of online harassment on highly saturated local platforms like Zalo and Facebook are significantly more likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) compared to peers experiencing traditional, offline bullying [27]. NSSI in this context is frequently utilized as a maladaptive, physiological coping mechanism to neurobiologically regulate the overwhelming, acute emotional pain generated by public ostracization. Furthermore, the persistent, indelible nature of the digital footprint means that "incidental doxxing"—such as the unauthorized sharing of poor academic transcripts within parent-student Zalo groups—creates an environment of inescapable, panoptic scrutiny. This lack of an "offline sanctuary" correlates strongly with rapid escalations in suicidal impulsivity, as the adolescent perceives no temporal or spatial escape from the humiliation [28].

3.2. Algorithmic Mediation and the Virtual Contagion Effect

A second critical risk cluster identified in the literature revolves around the content-driven risks inherent in the algorithmic architecture of contemporary platforms, most notably TikTok. The literature highlights a modern iteration of the "Werther effect," or suicidal contagion, driven by machine-learning algorithms optimized for maximal user engagement. Critical interpretation of recent observational data indicates that "For You" page algorithms frequently expose psychologically vulnerable adolescents to emotionally intense, graphic content, including subtle "self-harm challenges" and romanticized, aestheticized depictions of depression and suicide [29]. This passive exposure is highly deleterious, as it bypasses conscious content selection and preys upon the adolescent's developing, highly plastic neural circuitry.

Within the Vietnamese digital subculture, the synthesis identifies the proliferation of covert, pro-suicide virtual communities that utilize sophisticated coded language, metaphors, and specific aesthetic tropes to bypass platform moderation algorithms [30]. These echo chambers serve to normalize pathological self-destructive behaviors, validating them as shared, profound experiences rather than clinical crises. Longitudinal data tracking suggests that prolonged immersion in these algorithmically curated echo chambers facilitates the "acquired capability" for suicide. By repeatedly exposing the adolescent to graphic narratives of self-harm, the brain becomes progressively desensitized to the instinctual fear of physical pain and mortality [31]. Moreover, the viral nature of short-form video creates a dangerous "prestige effect," wherein

publicly expressing suicidal ideation is tragically reframed as a valid, even heroic, form of social protest against insurmountable academic and familial pressures.

3.3. Neurobiological Disruption: The Sleep-Distress Pathway

The synthesis of recent neurobiological and behavioral surveys integrated into the review reveals a critical, physiological pathway linking intensive social media use to suicidal trajectories: severe circadian rhythm disruption. The psychological phenomenon of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) serves as the primary cognitive driver for nocturnal digital engagement, a behavior documented as nearly ubiquitous among Vietnamese high school students facing intense daily academic schedules [32]. This relentless late-night scrolling, primarily characterized by prolonged exposure to blue light emitted by smartphone screens, directly inhibits the pineal gland's synthesis of melatonin. The resulting chronic sleep deprivation and alteration of sleep architecture profoundly impair the prefrontal cortex's ability to execute higher-order emotional regulation and impulse control [33].

Methodological triangulation across several included studies demonstrates that this physiological vulnerability operates synergistically with the "FOMO-Loneliness Paradox." Despite spending hours maintaining continuous digital connectivity, these sleep-deprived adolescents report statistically significant increases in subjective loneliness and a profound sense of "thwarted belongingness" [34]. The data suggests that algorithmically driven, superficial interactions—such as exchanging "likes" or viewing curated stories—fail to stimulate the oxytocin-mediated neurochemical pathways associated with genuine, face-to-face social support. This relentless cycle of neurobiological exhaustion and perceived social isolation creates a dangerous "pressure cooker" effect. During moments of acute crisis, the adolescent's compromised executive functioning severely limits their capacity for rational problem-solving or help-seeking behavior, directly paving the way for suicidal actions [35].

3.4. Cognitive Distortions: Digital Perfectionism and Upward Social Comparison

Finally, the thematic synthesis strongly underscores the pervasive role of "digital perfectionism" in systematically eroding the self-worth and psychological resilience of Vietnamese youth. The digital ecosystem is fundamentally engineered to foster continuous, upward social comparison, where the meticulously curated, idealized lives of peers and influencers are presented as the baseline standard for normalcy and success [36]. In the context of Vietnam's high-stakes, hyper-competitive academic culture, this digital perfectionism is frequently weaponized through the magnification of the *con nhà người ta* trope. What was once a localized neighborhood comparison has been amplified to a relentless, global scale via social media metrics [37].

Synthesis of large-scale psychometric surveys indicates a strong, dose-dependent relationship between the time spent passively consuming idealized content and chronic feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy [38]. Adolescents consistently report an agonizing inability to reconcile their complex, flawed lived reality with the flawless digital facades they consume daily. Unlike traditional, episodic stressors, digital perfectionism is ambient and pervasive, constantly demanding attention and validation. This continuous cognitive dissonance fosters an internalized, inescapable belief that the adolescent is fundamentally defective and a permanent "failure" in the eyes of the omnipresent digital collective. The literature identifies this entrenched state of digital hopelessness as one of the most potent, independent predictors of long-term suicidal intent among the demographic [39].

Table 1: Summary of Key Included Studies

Author / Year	Sample Size (n)	Primary Platform	Main Risk Factors Identified	Assessment Tools
Tran et al. (2022) [3]	1,200	Facebook, Zalo	Cyberbullying, Sleep loss, FOMO	DASS-21, BSSI
Le & Nguyen (2023) [9]	850	TikTok, Facebook	Cyber-victimization, NSSI, Contagion	MMAT, PHQ-9
Nguyen & Le (2021) [10]	540	TikTok	Social comparison, Digital perfectionism	RSES, BSSI
Pham et al. (2020) [14]	2,100	General SM	Academic stress, Online "Face" loss	Custom Survey
Ha et al. (2019) [11]	420	Facebook	Doxxing, Social isolation, FOMO	SDQ, BSSI

IV. Discussion

The comprehensive synthesis of the current literature illuminates a critical, ongoing paradigm shift in the Vietnamese mental health landscape. The digital environment can no longer be conceptualized merely as a neutral tool for communication; it has evolved into a highly active, potent socio-psychological determinant of adolescent suicidal behavior. While global psychiatric trends broadly acknowledge the correlation between heavy social media consumption and youth distress, the Vietnamese experience is uniquely, and often dangerously, defined by the high-speed collision of hyper-modern algorithmic technology with deeply entrenched, centuries-old Confucian cultural imperatives. The following discussion critically interprets these findings through a culturally specific lens, identifying the systemic clinical gaps and profound ethical dilemmas that currently paralyze effective suicide prevention efforts in Vietnam.

4.1. Cultural Specificity: The Dual Nature of Digital Distress

A paramount finding synthesized from the data is the inherently paradoxical role that social media plays in the lives of Vietnamese adolescents, functioning simultaneously as a desperate psychological "escape" and a lethal "pressure cooker." Within the rigid framework of Vietnamese academic culture, educational achievement is heavily burdened with moral significance; it is viewed not merely as a pathway to individual economic mobility, but as the ultimate expression of filial piety and the primary mechanism for elevating family honor [40]. In an environment dominated by exhaustive "shadow education" (extra-curricular tutoring), social media initially provides a vital, albeit virtual, sanctuary—a space for autonomy and peer connection independent of adult surveillance [41]. However, this sanctuary rapidly morphs into a pressure cooker when the platforms are simultaneously utilized for the public exhibition of academic rankings and successes. When an adolescent's academic or social failures are publicized online, the resulting psychological trauma transcends individual disappointment. It manifests as an overwhelming sense of "perceived burdensomeness," where the youth feels they have irreparably damaged their family's standing, perfectly aligning with the most lethal components of Joiner's Interpersonal Theory [42].

This dynamic is further complicated by the pervasive cultural mandate of "face-saving" (giữ thể diện), which uniquely modulates the severity and outcome of cyber-victimization in Vietnam. In Western clinical contexts, online shaming is predominantly analyzed through the lens of individual ego and self-esteem damage [43]. However, for Vietnamese youth, losing "face" on highly visible, community-integrated platforms like Zalo or Facebook represents a form of absolute social disqualification that feels permanent and irrevocable. The immediacy and virality of digital doxxing ensure that the humiliation is ubiquitous, stripping the adolescent of any physical or temporal offline sanctuary where they might emotionally recover [44]. This synthesis suggests a terrifying clinical reality: in the Vietnamese context, severe digital public shaming effectively acts as a form of non-lethal social execution. Consequently, the adolescent, trapped by a developing prefrontal cortex unable to contextualize the permanence of the digital event, frequently perceives physical suicide as the sole logical mechanism to terminate an unbearable, unending state of public humiliation [45].

4.2. The Screening Gap: The Critical Failure of Western Psychometrics

A rigorous critical appraisal of the methodologies employed across the literature reveals a profound and dangerous "screening gap" within the Vietnamese psychiatric infrastructure. The current diagnostic reliance on translated, standardized Western psychometric instruments—such as the Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (BSSI) and the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)—presents a significant clinical vulnerability. While these tools boast strong international statistical

validation, they frequently fail completely to capture the nuanced, highly contextualized digital behaviors and linguistic markers indicative of distress among Vietnamese youth [46]. Vietnamese adolescents rarely express suicidal intent through the direct, clinical terminology expected by Western models. Instead, distress is often communicated through layered, metaphorical idioms (e.g., chán đời - weary of life, muốn biến mất - wanting to disappear) or through rapidly evolving, cryptic slang localized to specific digital subcultures [47].

Because these expressions do not align with the literal parameters of standard screening rubrics, they are routinely dismissed by clinicians and school counselors as transient, normative teenage angst, leading to catastrophic missed opportunities for early intervention. Furthermore, traditional screening paradigms are entirely blind to "digital self-harm"—such as the deliberate, purposeful seeking out of emotionally triggering or graphic content as a maladaptive form of emotional regulation. This review explicitly identifies digital self-harm as a highly potent, prevalent precursor to physical suicidal attempts in the Vietnamese context, yet it remains completely unassessed in standard public health protocols [48]. The data underscores an urgent, critical need for the development and rigorous psychometric validation of culturally recalibrated diagnostic tools that specifically incorporate the digital dimension of adolescent life.

4.3. The Intergenerational "Digital Gap" and the Collapse of Microsystem Support

The literature synthesis further demonstrates that the effectiveness of any proposed suicide prevention strategy is currently stymied by a profound, structural "digital gap" within the Vietnamese family unit. The rapid pace of technological adoption has created a stark generational divide. Vietnamese parents, largely socialized in an analogue era, frequently possess low digital literacy. They predominantly perceive social media engagement through a disciplinary lens, viewing it as a distraction from academic duties or a mere waste of time, rather than recognizing it as the central, complex arena where their child's social identity and psychological well-being are negotiated [49]. This fundamental misunderstanding creates an insurmountable barrier to open disclosure.

Adolescents, acutely aware of this digital illiteracy and fearing that disclosing online distress will result in punitive measures—such as the confiscation of their devices, which equates to total social isolation—actively mask their digital trauma [50]. They suffer in silence until the psychological burden reaches an acute crisis point. Analytical linking of the reviewed qualitative studies suggests that this parental digital illiteracy prevents caregivers from identifying crucial, subtle behavioral shifts. Phenomena such as "vague-booking" (posting cryptic, distressing messages at odd hours), sudden, unexplained withdrawal from long-standing online peer groups, or erratic changes in digital sleep architecture are critical warning signs that go entirely unnoticed by the family microsystem [51]. The collapse of this primary support structure leaves

the adolescent solely reliant on the exosystem of online peers, who frequently lack the emotional maturity or clinical knowledge to provide safe, effective intervention.

4.4. Ethical and Policy Implications: Navigating Cybersecurity and Mental Health

Finally, a comprehensive discussion of digital suicide risk in Vietnam must critically address the complex, often conflicting tension between national cybersecurity policy and the ethical imperatives of mental health protection. Vietnam's evolving legal frameworks, including the 2018 Law on Cybersecurity, are primarily designed with a macrosystemic focus on mitigating toxic content, combating misinformation, and ensuring state security [52]. While the removal of pro-suicide content is a positive byproduct, the heavy emphasis on data monitoring, identity verification, and surveillance inadvertently creates a hostile environment for vulnerable youth. The literature suggests a chilling effect: adolescents are increasingly reluctant to seek help through online psychological counseling services or peer-support forums due to profound fears regarding data privacy, surveillance, and the potential for their distress to be exposed to authorities or their families.

This dynamic creates a profound ethical dilemma for future clinical interventions. The integration of AI-driven sentiment analysis and natural language processing into school counseling frameworks represents one of the most promising avenues for early detection of suicidal ideation. However, deploying these technologies requires the continuous monitoring of adolescent digital communications, which directly intersects with highly sensitive issues of data privacy and consent [53]. For digital suicide prevention to succeed in Vietnam, national policy frameworks must undergo a paradigm shift. They must transition from a purely "security-centric" model of internet governance to a comprehensive "digital mental health safety" model. This requires robust, transparent ethical guidelines ensuring that digital monitoring technologies serve strictly as confidential, clinical lifelines, protected by medical privacy standards, rather than functioning as extensions of punitive surveillance.

V. Conclusions & Future Directions

The extensive evidence synthesized within this systematic review unequivocally confirms that social media functions not as an isolated etiology, but as a highly volatile, multifaceted risk-multiplier for suicidal trajectories among Vietnamese adolescents. The data reveals a complex, highly specific psychological profile of vulnerability, forged at the intersection of deeply entrenched Confucian academic pressures, the rigid cultural mandate of "face-saving," and the relentless, desensitizing nature of modern algorithmic architectures. Unlike Western paradigms, where digital risk is frequently analyzed through the lens of individual autonomy and self-esteem, the Vietnamese adolescent experience is profoundly characterized by the weight of

collective shame. This cultural nuance acts as a dangerous accelerant, rapidly facilitating the transition from passive suicidal ideation to active, physical attempts, particularly when the traditional protective microsystem of the family is compromised by a severe intergenerational digital literacy gap.

To effectively mitigate these complex, systemic risks, national public health strategies and clinical intervention models must transition urgently from reactive, offline crisis management to proactive, technologically integrated frameworks. The implementation of culturally adapted, AI-driven sentiment analysis and machine learning algorithms within educational and clinical screening protocols offers a critical, viable mechanism for detecting the subtle, localized linguistic markers of distress that traditional, Western-derived psychometric tools consistently overlook. However, deploying technological surveillance without human context is insufficient and ethically perilous. These advanced detection systems must be inextricably paired with comprehensive, community-based psycho-educational initiatives. It is imperative to enhance the "digital parenting" capabilities of the older generation, equipping them with the specific digital literacy required to foster a safe, empathetic domestic environment that encourages psychological disclosure rather than punitive device confiscation.

Ultimately, the findings of this review underscore the absolute, urgent necessity of developing and implementing a cohesive, multidisciplinary National Strategy for Digital Mental Health in Vietnam. Future empirical research must prioritize rigorous, large-scale longitudinal designs incorporating neurobiological markers (such as actigraphy for sleep architecture) to accurately track the evolving, long-term impact of short-form video algorithms on adolescent cognitive development and emotional regulation. As Vietnam continues its unprecedented trajectory of rapid digitalization, harmonizing robust data privacy protections with culturally specific, technologically advanced clinical interventions will be the paramount public health challenge of the coming decade. This synthesis serves as a critical, foundational evidence base, empowering policymakers, clinicians, and educators to construct a resilient, digitally-informed infrastructure capable of safeguarding the psychological well-being and ultimate survival of its most vulnerable digital natives.

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