

#SuicidePrevention on Instagram: Content Analysis of Comments

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Introduction

- From 2007 through 2021, suicide rates for Americans ages 10 to 24 rose 62%.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college-age youth and ages 12-18.
- Studies have shown that social media has the potential to encourage interconnectedness among adolescents and promote greater suicide prevention awareness on its platforms.
- A reported 59% of U.S. teens use Instagram, meaning they can potentially be exposed to content surrounding suicide prevention on the social media platform.
- Gap:** Currently, it is unclear how Instagram users are responding to content surrounding suicide prevention or engaging with the comments under these posts in particular.

The purpose of this study was to examine the content of Instagram users' comments under suicide prevention posts and what type of comments they are engaging with the most.

Methods

Design

- Content analysis on Instagram

Subjects & Data Collection

- The top 10 posts that had at least 10 comments under the #SuicidePrevention hashtag on Instagram were gathered. The first 10 comments from each post were selected to be analyzed using the codebook variables created. Date collected: 7/25/2024.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Post specifically mentioned mental health/suicide prevention
- Comment had at least 1 like or reply

Exclusion Criteria:

- Post mentioned a specific mental illness
- Comment had 0 likes and replies

Variables

- Comment demographics: likes and replies

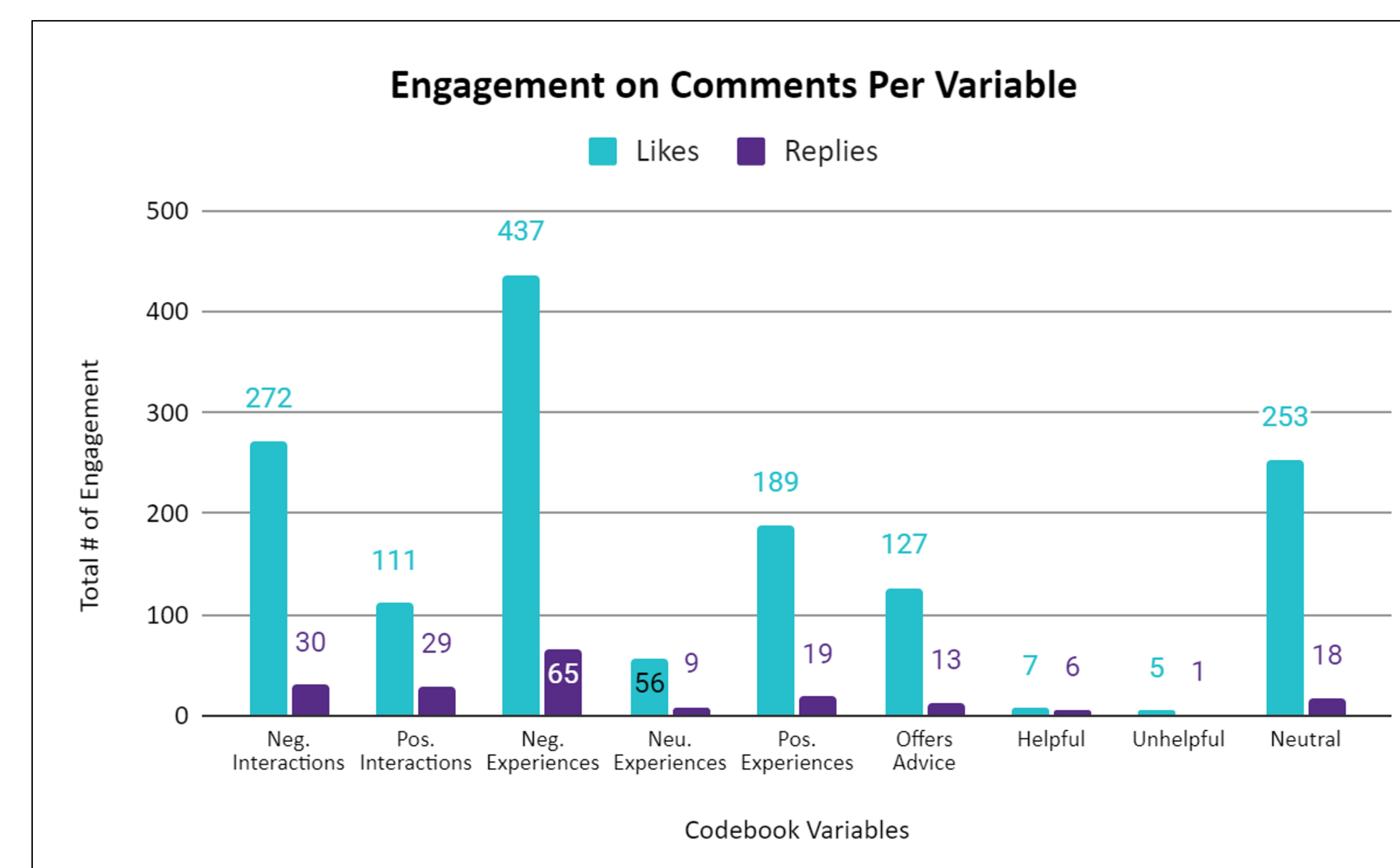
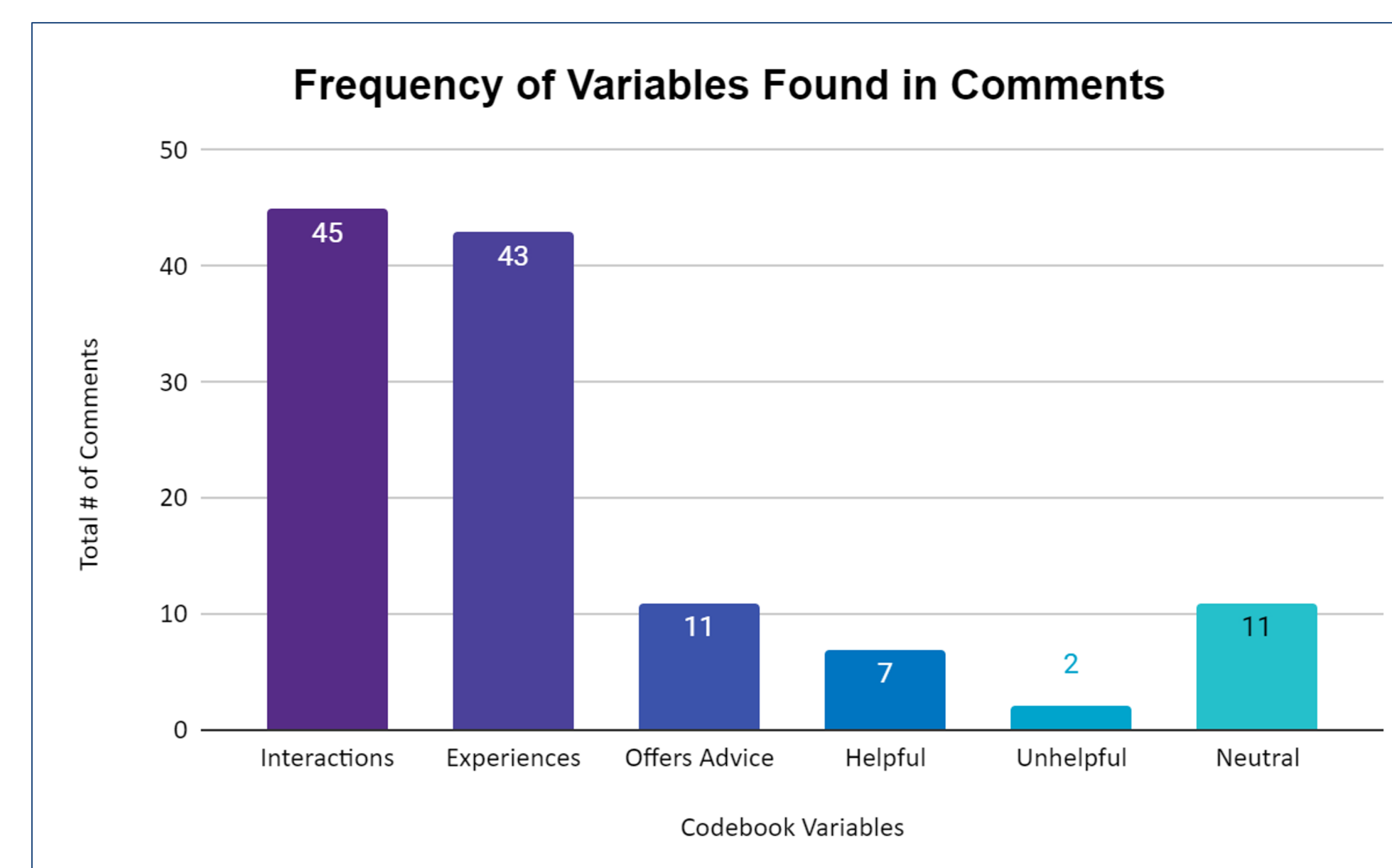
Variables	Definitions
Negative Interactions	Negative comments related to the content, disagreeing with it - shouldn't, made me feel worse, thumbs down emoticon, sad face emoticon
Positive interactions	Positive comments related to the content - thanks, sharing, important, love, positive, beautiful, uplifting, heart emoticon, raised hands emoticon (agreement)
Negative Experiences	Sharing their own/loved ones' experiences, "I/me" statements, sad, alone, tired, pointless, burden, etc, had a negative effect on their mental health
Neutral Experiences	Just sharing their own/loved ones' experiences, doesn't mention how it has affected their mental health
Positive Experiences	Sharing their own/loved ones' experiences, "I/me" statements, happy, had a positive effect on their mental health
Advice	Yes if they give any type of suggestion, ex. offering resources to others in the comments, "you" statements
Helpful	"This was helpful," "I needed this"
Unhelpful	"This was not helpful," "this was triggering"
Neutral	Comments that don't apply to any variables, have no specific tone

Analysis

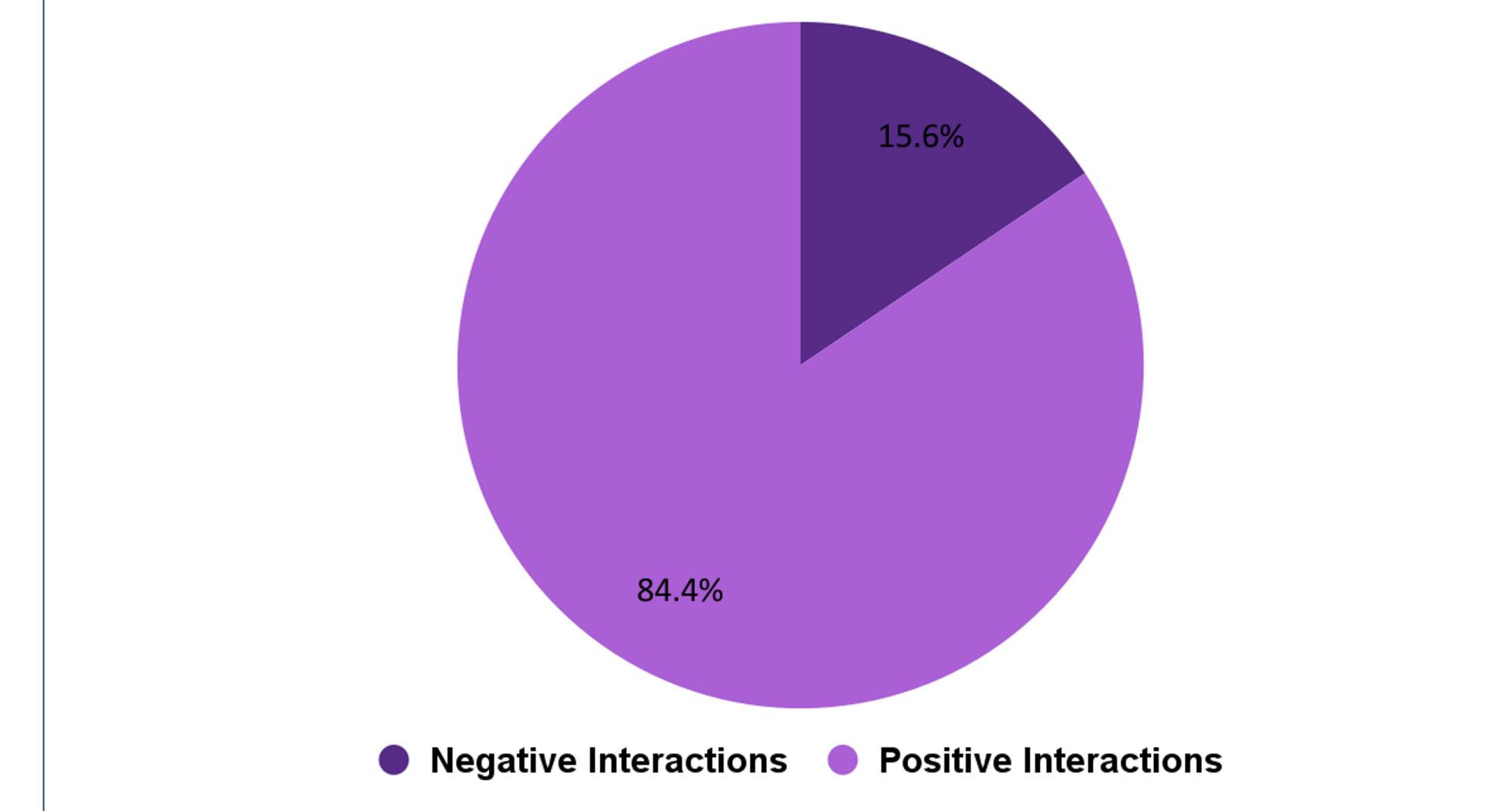
- We used descriptive analyses, which include analyses focused on calculations such as mean comment likes/replies and frequencies of variables.

Results

Comments Analyzed: 100 Sample Size: 100 Mean Likes: 13.8 Mean Replies: 1.71



Percentage of Negative Interactions vs. Positive Interactions



Examples of Variables:

Positive Experience

I took a mental health day from work just last week. I have had a lot going on in my personal life the past few months and a lot going on at work. I looked at my work schedule and there was nothing that was on it that particular day that couldn't wait for another day so I just stayed home. I cleaned my house. I went for a walk. I went to the shops. I ate some chocolate. I had a lovely day and felt so much better the next day. Sometimes it's really important to just get off the rollercoaster for a day.

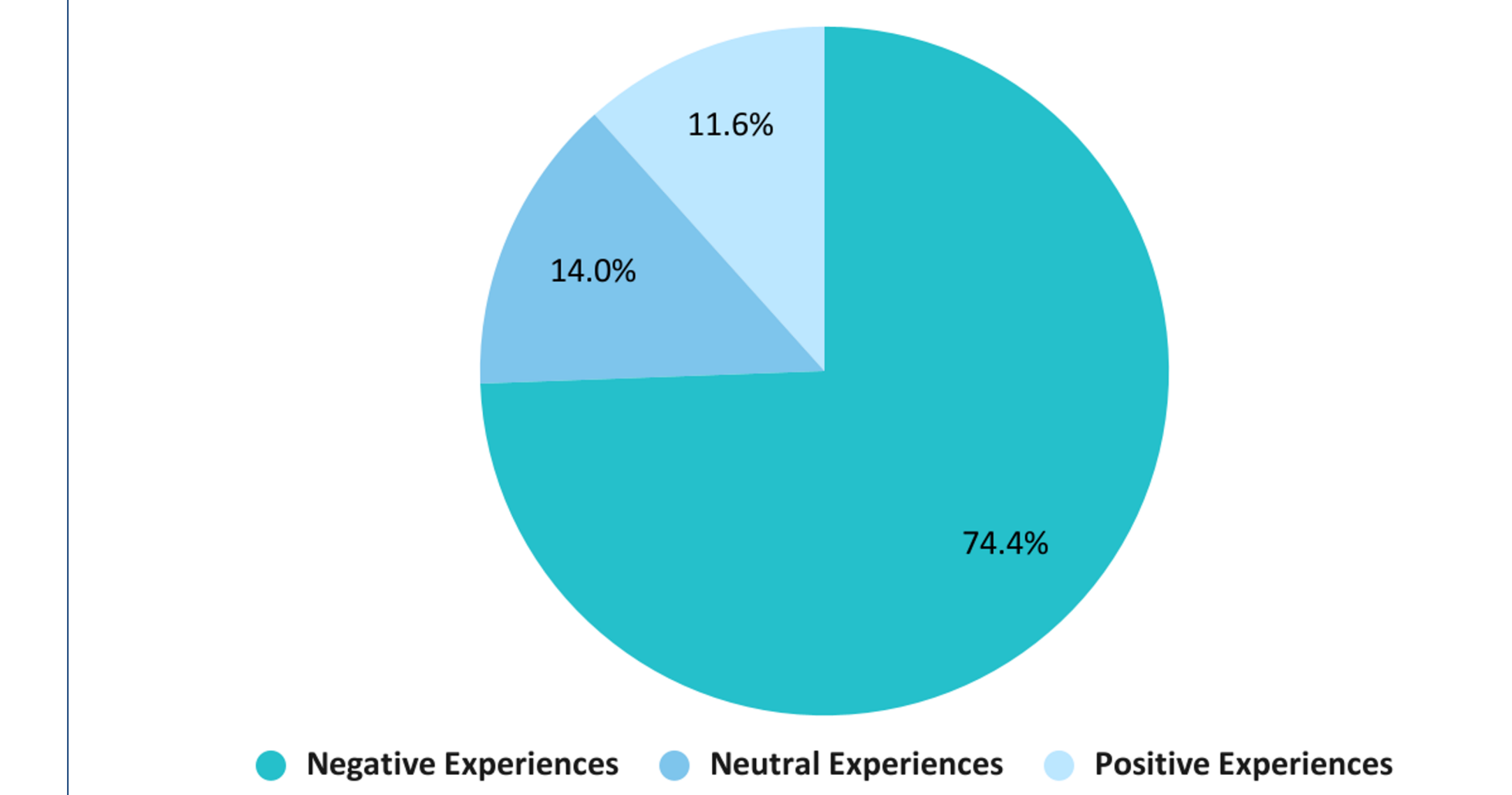
Negative Interaction/
Negative Experience

Make my parents proud?? Really I feel like I've tried enough as per my capacity. Most probably it is not enough in reality... And I know that I'm mostly a burden to them... to may be everyone. I'm tired... I want to leave... I feel insecure in front of my family(most of them). I know I am being ungrateful. I feel the guilt everyday, every hour for being such an ungrateful burden. Meeting with my family makes me anxious. I no longer can express myself to anyone. Especially my family. I want to cry. I want to scream. I want to tear myself apart.

Positive Interaction

this encouraged me more than I could have expected. Thank you so much. It's beautiful. All strength and love to you.

Percentage of Negative, Neutral, and Positive Experiences Shared



Conclusions

Key Findings

- Most frequently exhibited variables were interactions toward the suicide prevention posts and experiences shared by commenters.
- Comments sharing negative experiences were more prevalent compared to positive or neutral experiences.
- More likely to have comments containing positive interactions with the content, however, negative experiences and negative interactions had the most engagement (likes & comments).



Limitations

- Had a small sample size for data collection and restricted time frame for conducting the study. Larger sample sizes could have resulted in different frequencies of variables.
- Many comments shared multiple variables, and the process of labeling these may have been influenced by researcher bias.



Implications & Future Studies

- Suicide prevention posts on Instagram may lend support to those going through dark times.
- This content could establish a safe space where users feel comfortable talking about their own experiences. Many people can use likes/replies to relate to/agree with other users.
- Future research should examine suicide prevention content on different social media platforms to determine if there is a trend in the content of users' comments. Some helpful interventions include more safe spaces and mental health resources.

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