Social media and mental health

What is the issue?

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- Blue Whale Challenge is said to be the reason behind some recent suicides by teenagers in India.
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- Huge number of youngsters seeking to play the game may already be prone to mental disorders such as depression or anxiety.
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What is Blue whale?

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- Blue Whale is the most disturbing of trends driven by social media.
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- Players who sign up are ordered around by an administrator, referred to as the “Blue Whale”.
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- Players log on at odd hours to receive instructions.
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- They are told to complete painful, dangerous “tasks” such as carving letters on their bodies for a 50-day period with the final task being death.
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- The game is already banned in most jurisdictions and police in many nations have issued advisories.
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What is the status of mental disorders among urban teens?

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- A study suggests that mental disorders in the age group of 13-17 years in the urban metros at 13.5%, nearly double the countrywide prevalence

(7.3%).
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- Many teen agers in urban cities has Sub Subclinical depression.
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- It is a condition in which a person has symptoms which signify a chance of depression but does not meet the criteria for a depressive disorder.
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- Teenage girls were at a higher risk for experiencing depressive symptoms than boys.
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- The overall prevalence in India was higher than statistics obtained from similar studies in the West.
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What are the reasons for ill -mental health?

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- **Family setup-**There is glaring gap between the number of teenagers and their family members.
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- With nuclear families and lesser interaction with peers, children these days depend just on their parents, who may both be working and busy with their day-to-day lives.
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- **Technological access-**Many youngsters get their own smart devices before they hit their teens.
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- Parents are clueless about how easy it is to bypass ‘parental controls’ installed on these devices.
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What are the consequences of these disorders?

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- Youngsters in the age group of 16-20 were socially withdrawn after getting addicted to online gaming and social media.

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- Many of these youngsters show a decline in their academic performance and social skills after becoming addicted.
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- Some may be introverts by nature or may have become withdrawn after getting addicted to the online world.
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- When parents intervene, these teenagers respond with anger, irritability, and in a few cases they resort to self-harm.
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- Depression can be a killer, and sometimes even a trivial online game can push someone to a place of no return.
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What are the measures taken so far?

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- The Indian government has done a sensible job by asking all major social media and communication platforms to remove any links pertaining to the Blue Whale challenge.
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- There are new “positive” challenges such as Happy Blue Whale Challenge and The Pink Whale challenge which help youngsters learn methods to cope with depression and low moods.
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- Parents are aware to pay greater heed to their children’s social behaviour patterns and online surfing habits, by various efforts by NGO’s and government.
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- Service for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) clinic, India’s first technology de-addiction clinic in Bengaluru helps teenagers to get rid of addictive technology.
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Source: Business Standard, The Hindu

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