

# **IT revolution and Juvenile suicidal deaths:**

## **Evidence from Sri Lanka**

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Exponential growth of access to Internet particularly through mobiles and social media has influenced youth including high school girls and boys. Media reports support the view that the impact of IT environment on the day to day life particularly of youth (16 to 30 year age group) in the past 10-12 years is substantial. Some pose the question whether the importance of traditional factors that lead to suicidal deaths among youth such as broken love affairs, economic reasons such as poverty, unemployment, marriage disputes among young couples or mental diseases have become less important while deaths due to conflicts with teachers and parents, relatives, friends, teachers etc result due to IT related factors has become more crucial factor leading to loss of life of youth. The objective of the study was to examine the trends of suicidal deaths among the youth in the context of end of civil war in 2009 and changes seen before and after the peace was dawn. The analysis has been carried out using secondary data maintained by the Department of Police from 2004 to 2015 which has been analyzed using descriptive methods. The study has found that over one third (30 percent) of these deaths are those of the age category of 16 to 30, that could generally be considered as juvenile deaths. Though deaths due to suicide has declined from 4876 to 3058 during the period from 2004 to 2015 by about – 3.8 per cent annually, and more significantly deaths due to suicides among the youth category has dropped by 5.0 per cent annually from 31.9 to 27.1 from 2004 to 2015, there is a greater variance by reason of deaths due to suicides among youth. The share of category falling under “any other reasons” has increased significantly from 16.7 percent to 32.7 percent during this period, while there has been no change in the shares of suicide deaths between females and males which remain around 2:8 during this period. By religion, shares of youth suicidal deaths in 2015 are Buddhists 62.6 percent, Hindus, 28.9 percent, Catholics and Christians 5.8 percent and Muslims 2.8 percent. By ethnic group, the

distribution is Sinhala 67.0 percent, Tamils, 30.0 percent, Muslims 0.03 percent. The distribution of total suicidal deaths by provinces shows that only Western Province 28.7 percent (population share 20.9 percent), Northern Province 5.2 percent (population 8.5 percent), North Western Province 11.7 percent (population 16.1 percent) do not compare with population share of respective province. The hypothesis that these trends may have been resulted significantly from IT related developments during this period cannot be rejected. As such greater attention of researchers and policy makers should be paid to the relation between youth suicidal deaths and the extensive use of IT.

**Key words:** *Juvenile suicides, Youth and IT.*