

# IMPACT OF STUDENT SUICIDES ON NATIONAL ECONOMY: ANALYSING THE KOTA CRISIS

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## Abstract

Students form a vital part of a nation's human capital and the future potential of its economy. But the growing incidences of suicides of several students is an alarming trend which has increased due to the highly competitive environment and neglect towards the clear headedness of students. This has a negative impact on the economy considering the loss of a labour force that could contribute to its GDP, especially in its phase of a demographic dividend. This article examines the burgeoning cases of suicides of students, especially those preparing for competitive exams, and its potential impact on the country's economy. To further elaborate on this, the context of loss of student lives in Kota, has been analysed as a specific case study.

Through this article, the objective is to spread an awareness of the issue of student well-being and the possible remedies to mitigate this issue which is posing threat in the Indian economy.

**Keywords:** Student, Demographic Dividend, Economy, Suicide, Education System, Remedies, Kota

## Introduction:

The year of 2023 was an especially grim year for the city of Kota in Rajasthan with 27 cases reported of students taking their own lives. This is becoming more rampant in the city with such reports arising each year. Once famous as an educational hub, the city has been infamously termed as the 'Kota Factory'. However, this is just one instance of a problem that is also there in other parts of India as well.

There is a rising trend of suicides among the student group, especially among those preparing for competitive tests like JEE, NEET and UPSC. This has had an adverse impact on the economy especially when it boasts of a huge young population, which are the potential drivers of the country's growth. Studies are showing that the major reason for suicides is the "all or nothing" mentality of several students. Though, there are other options even if they couldn't get into the desired institutions. They could have been able to find other alternatives and be a potential skilled labour force.

Many students have been forced to choose their career paths by their parents and they become highly stressed. If they were allowed to choose their stream, there is a huge probability that they could have been highly successful. This aspect

is really important and sadly it is neglected.

According to "The Huffington Post" 57 students committed suicide in the entrance exam hub Kota in the years from 2011 to 2016. The problem has since gained greater traction by authorities. Though not the only region facing this menace, Kota is a prime instance of the adversities of the competitive environment of the present education system.

### From Industries to Educational Hub

Kota was initially an industrial colony with few residential spaces. After the Supreme Court order to close down industries in 1999 due to air pollution, many employees were forced to find other alternatives for jobs. Industries in this place were known for their manufacturing of fertilisers, mining, production of synthetic fibres etc.

The structural change of this area happened when a graduate from IIT Delhi, V.K Bansal started coaching classes in 1986. This was followed by various institutes like FIIT JEE, Resonance etc., afterwards. Since then, it has become a major centre of coaching institutes of the nation. The residents of Kota since 2018 witnessed differential growth rate of population since the mid-1980s. Initially after the closure

of the industries there was a fall in the population in Kota, as many people lost their jobs. After the arrival of coaching institutions in that area there is an increase in student population. Leading to various landowners providing accommodation facilities for the students arriving from various parts of the country. In 2000, the built-up area increased to around 4181.6 ha from 3025.8 ha in 1990 with an increase of 38.2 %. (Ravi Shekar,2018). This has led to difference in the structure of that area, many water bodies were reduced and vegetation cover were reduced in this due process.

#### Concerns of student mental health

Student life has been marred by the rising competitiveness associated with entering the fields of higher education. This is prevalent in Engineering and medical courses, which have traditionally had a higher demand in India owing to them being perceived as fields providing higher future returns. Large amounts of money are spent for coaching of children, especially by people from the middle-class section of the country. Students are afraid that the money spent on them could go in vain. There is an “all or nothing” mentality in the minds of the students. Then there is an anxiety associated with separation in the minds of the

children. It probably may be the first time that they would be living all by themselves and thus feel lonely. There are also scarcely any recreational facilities provided by the coaching centres nor by hostel owners to brighten up the moods of the children.

The coaching centre sets examinations and induces students to compete themselves with others, which hinders their self-esteem. Many students, were toppers in their respective schools. When they would come to Kota and compete with other bright students across the country, they would often not obtain the results they desired. Many of them aren't accustomed to failures and then are adversely affected by depression, lack of self-esteem, which at times leads to their suicide.

It is reported that many students, mainly those from lower income families, resort to small crimes to gain money to meet their expenses.

#### The Kota Model of Dummy Schooling

Cities like Kota are famous for their coaching institutions but not for schooling. Often, students after joining these institutions are admitted to schools in their hometowns and continue as students of those schools while spending their time studying for their entrances

in Kota. This is done by the method commonly known as Dummy Admission, or Dummy Schooling. This arises from the concern of balancing one's time in coaching classes and school. Often, coaching classes take place in shorter durations in comparison to the longer hours spent in schools.

Parents of the children desire that their child spend the maximum time studying for their coaching rather than going to school. This perception has especially arisen, caused by the prevalence of tight competition for seats in premier institutes. They think that only if their child spends their time studying for the competitive exam, will he or she have a real chance of making it to the desired institute. In the dummy model of schooling, the student is part of the random school but on paper only, as physically he or she is not present. In some other cases, the student is only required to attend the classes in school for a short duration, which is much less than the requirement in regular schooling.

Large part of the students taking coaching classes in Kota study in dummy schools. While this has sparked many concerns regarding the improper quality of education reaching such students, students being deprived of any interpersonal skills and the poor impact on

mental health, dummy schooling has become the preferred mode for many students.

## **Objectives of the paper**

The aim of this article is to examine how suicide of students affect the economy of a nation. Since students form the core strength of a nation as the demographic dividend, this article especially focuses on their psychology in their academic life and explores potential measures to mitigate the mental issues they face in coaching centres. This given the fact that there is a huge craze of cracking entrance exams in India.

## **Methodology**

The analysis is subjective in nature with references from various literature like research papers, magazines, official websites as well as from newspapers.

## **An Economic Impact Analysis of Student Suicides**

While a suicide itself is considered a loss to the society as a whole, the deaths of students through this medium is more alarming for an

economy as they are the future generation who would drive the economy's rise. In instances like those in Kota, there are several implications on the economy of India.

### Dampened Productivity and Demand for Greater Mental Healthcare

The competitive and often regressive environment that students feel in cities like Kota have led to many students developing anxiety disorders and depression, which would harm them over their lifetime and it reduces productivity of individuals. These anxiety attacks and depression often lead the victim to form some sort of coping mechanisms. These can be overeating, hypersomnia etc. It also stops children from efficiently studying for their respective exams, thus further aggravating their anxiety and again leading to bad outcomes. This vicious cycle continues if not interrupted by healthcare professionals.

This can drastically affect the economy. When people cannot achieve their potential because of a disease preying on them, it often leads to suboptimal outcomes. As a result, the economy faces a loss of about 12 billion working days annually owing to depression and anxiety alone. This is an absolutely shocking fact and it has a severe economic impact caused by the large

amount of efficiency loss. Prolonged exposure to these sorts of disorders often makes the scenario worse. Therefore, a sincere effort must be made from the parents and the teachers to identify this problem at the earliest and solve them before it gets worse.

Mental healthcare has become a highly demanded service thanks to the work of awareness programs which has raised the concerns of mental health amongst people. As per a report shared by CNBC, a third of psychologists are seeing a rise in patients in the USA. The employment in the psychology sector will increase by 19% by 2024. India has also witnessed such a trend. According to data from "upgrad", clinical psychologists are anticipated to see a 11% rise in their demand by 2032 in India.

Some students sustain grave injuries after unsuccessful suicide attempts, who in their future would require more healthcare services. This is a tremendous cost on a family. For instance, a student sustaining major injuries having survived a fall from a building and been paralysed would require special healthcare facilities in the future, which are really costly.

### The Harmed demographic potential

India's much talked of demographic strength has faced a dent with the rising trend of suicides of students. Though this is not reflected in the absolute numbers of its demography, this does have a bearing on the nation's human resource. At a time when a large majority of India's demographics, comprising of its massive youth, are yet to be transformed into a demographic dividend which could become an engine of the economy's growth, the suicide cases are a major blot. Many of the lost youth were pursuing fields that are very necessary to the nation's development. India faces a major challenge of a lack of qualified doctors and engineers. The cases of suicides further aggravate the situation.

Many of them could potentially have served in these essential fields, but have been lost to the economy. Many of the students giving up their lives are bright students who would otherwise have the potential to excel in their fields on receiving adequate guidance. But no sooner do they receive the necessary counselling than they take the ultimate step.

Other than their chosen field of coaching, such students may have an unrealised potential in some other fields or professions in which they could have excelled. But social pressure and stigma force the student to give up. This causes the nation to forfeit a workforce that could

significantly contribute in other fields. Thus, the economy faces various costs due to these incidents. Further, it is often the case that the mental health of other students -in proximity to the victims or those who failed in their suicidal attempts or have such tendencies- is often in a bad state. They cannot be reasonably expected to contribute as a demographic dividend to the economy's ascension. Thus, demographic costs are also created due to such actions.

### **Mitigation measures**

Building a proper routine is essential, it must entail proper sleep of at least 7 to 8 hours. Students should try to add variety to the diet. They must be provided facilities to play sports, which helps to relieve stress and helps to maintain good physical health. It must always be remembered that for a healthy mind proper physical health is essential.

There must be psychological counselling sessions arranged for students. Teachers must be given awareness of the importance of mental health, as each of their words can make a big difference in a student's life. Yoga and other brain relaxing exercises must be done by students. Humans are social animals and meaningful friendships must be built. In this day and age of social media people are

constantly exposed to the achievements of people of a similar age, economic background etc. and make unrealistic expectations. Students must keep realistic expectations and aim for a long-term success. They tend to overestimate what they could possibly do in the short run and drastically underestimate what they could do in the long term.

This also entails a major responsibility on the various governments to take a stand. They must reduce the competitiveness of the fields students opt for, by developing more quality institutes. More expenditure should be done on counsellors and psychologists who would communicate with students to help relieve their stress. Governments must realise that incidences of untimely deaths only harm the educational centre's economy in the long term as parents would resist sending their children to these areas.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, it is true that these instances underlie a serious economic threat to the nation and preventive measures must be taken at all costs. Counselling facilities are therefore necessary, and hence recreational facilities must be made available and exercises be made compulsory for students. Especially in this time of a demographic window it must be made sure that

this issue is stemmed so that the nation could be led to greater heights.

The student populace forms the backbone of the country's demographic strength. It is therefore necessary to address the inherent shortcomings of the education system which are taking a toll on the psyche of the students.

Kota is just one instance of an issue present in several regions of the country. Hence, a proactive approach must be taken by authorities and parents to secure the future of the nation and its economy.

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