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Letter to the Editor

Hike in student suicides – Consequence of online classes?

To the Editor,

COVID-19 has significantly become more than a health crisis. By focusing on all of the nations it contacts, it has made ravaging social, financial and political emergencies that will leave profound scars. Many the world's most noteworthy urban communities are abandoned as individuals stay inside, either by decision or by government order. Over the world, shops, theatres, restaurants and bars are being shut down. The pandemic also raises concern for the mental health as fear, worry, stress and anxiety are normal responses when we are faced with uncertainty (Tandon, 2020a). In addition to the fear of acquiring the disease and the added new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, home schooling and lack of physical contact with other family members and friends, psychological well-being also have to be attended (Tandon, 2020b).

The education system has been experiencing a devastating situation ever since the beginning of the pandemic. From conducting online classes to online examination, the process is rather intricate (Lathabhavan and Griffiths, 2020). While it is enough that classes are held online the confusion regarding the exams continues. Most of the exams stay postponed, others cancelled as many of the state governments took decision on not conducting the exam - seen the existing situation and decided on evaluating students based on previous assessments (Bisht et al., 2020; George, 2020; Iacobucci, 2020).

Technological advancements had subsidized a lot of issues and also had been able to address and eliminate many of the pain points that might occur due to lack of tutoring to students. The education system has been formulated to enhance healthy competition between students, but being tutored at home that too in a monitoring less atmosphere, many are not able to get on to the runway of online and remote education, which also leads to egoistic mentality and mental stress among students (Duan et al., 2020; Mamun et al., 2020). Also existing are the issues related to connectivity and unavailability of smartphones, televisions and other gadgets, which added on to the mental imbalance and wellbeing of students (Bisht et al., 2020).

An increase in the number and thus the rate of suicide among students is a disturbing reality of mental instability caused by this new situation. Incidents has been reported across the country from different states and the commonality. Most of the reported cases of student suicides was attributed to not being able to attend the class online. Financial insecurities and difficulties due to lockdown has made it difficult for the parents to even afford smartphones just to attend classes. Between all these are loss of wage or loss of job, education system forcing students and parents to adopt to the technology, unaffordability of devices, lack of connectivity and so on. Majority of the reported incidents of suicides were in the age group of 13–17 years. Stress generated by day long classes implying increased screen time and piled up homework which otherwise while in school will be much less are some

of the other reasons being pointed out (India Today, 2020; Nath, 2020).

Several initiatives and programmes to curb this problem is put forth by various state education departments. Yoga, recreational activities and other stress bursting sessions are being conducted in parallel with the other sessions with regard to these alarming incidents of student suicides (Varalakshmi and Arunachalam, 2020). With no trace of falling back to the offline situation in near future, students will have to move ahead by adopting to the current situation until the virus is swiped off the planet.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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