Understanding Student's Suicides in India: Pattern, trend, Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Student suicides in India have escalated into a critical issue over the past two decades. Academic pressure, mental health challenges, societal expectations, and a lack of adequate support systems are the primary factors driving these tragic incidents. The primary objective of this study is to understand the pattern, trend, and issues of student suicide in India. The data source used for this study is from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) during 2002-2022. In 2022 alone, 13,089 student suicides were recorded in India. Male students account for a larger proportion of these suicides compared to females, although the gap has gradually narrowed in recent years. Geographically, the burden is unevenly distributed, with states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu reporting the highest rates of student suicides in India. These figures suggest that socio-economic conditions, educational policies, and cultural factors determines the regional variations. The findings highlight a pressing need for interventions at various levels. Educational reforms that reduce academic stress, comprehensive mental health programs, and better counselling services in schools and universities are essential steps toward addressing the suicidal issue. Furthermore, reducing the stigma surrounding mental health in Indian society is crucial to creating a supportive environment for students.

Keywords: Student suicides, Trends, Male-Female, States, India

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Extended abstract

Introduction

The appalling increase in student suicides in India in recent years has highlighted a crisis that needs immediate attention and intervention. India's educational system has grown significantly in recent years, accompanied by increased pressure on the students. The sad truth is that the emotional and psychological toll that educational institutions or the larger social framework have not been adequately addressed for students. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), over 1,800 students commit suicide each year, and the number is rising. This tragic situation is largely caused by a lack of mental health awareness, academic stress, societal expectations, and an inadequate support system (Kumar & Patel, 2022). The intense pressure to perform academically is one of the main causes of student suicides. India's educational system is very exam-focused and competitive, especially at the secondary and upper-secondary levels. Students feel overwhelmed due to the 'pressure to perform well' on board exams and in competitive entrance exams such as NET, JEE, NEET, and others. Exam failure, or even the fear of failing, is frequently interpreted as a personal failure, that triggers anxiety, and depression among students leading to suicidal thoughts (Pandey, 2017).

Globally, the mean suicide rate for young students, based on data available for the latest year, was 7.4/100,000 (Wasserman et al., 2005). In India, especially for middle-class families, education is viewed as the route to both financial stability and upward social mobility, which sometimes results in inflated expectations. Students' chances of success are limited by society's emphasis on traditional career paths like engineering, medicine, or law. Many students experience frustration and feelings of inadequacy due to feeling trapped by these expectations and unable to follow their passions or alternative career paths. Students frequently experience mental health problems like stress, anxiety, and depression, but they were neither diagnosed nor treated; because mental illness is stigmatized in India (Mathew et al.,2020). Studies indicate that there is a sizable shortage of mental health specialists in educational settings. Furthermore, because mental illness is still taboo in many parts of the nation, cultural factors frequently discourage students from getting help. When students face emotional and psychological difficulties, they are often left to manage on their own, which engenders feelings of helplessness and loneliness (Vijayakumar, 2010).

Further, bullying and peer pressure in schools, and the virtual world play a major part in student suicides. The rise in social media and internet usage has led to a notable increase in cyberbullying, which exacerbates mental health problems among students. Adolescent social pressures are challenging for many students to handle, and bullying makes already vulnerable people more likely to self-harm or commit suicide. Students encounter a completely different set of difficulties in rural and economically underprivileged areas. Students may resort to drastic measures; because of poverty, lack of access to high-quality education, and pressure to support their families. Desperation frequently results from the incapacity to manage the demands of school with monetary or familial responsibilities. The socio-economic gap is a reflection of unequal access to education, as the majority of students struggle with underfunded public education systems, while only a small minority can afford private tuition and coaching. The current study aims to provide an overview of variations in suicidal cases in India and support the findings with explanations from extensive literature conducted by prior academicians.

Data and Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to understand the pattern, trend, and issues of student suicide in India. The data source used for this study is from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) during 2002-2022. The author has tried to measure the trend, and pattern of student suicides. In addition, the rate of student suicides has been estimated at 1 million population. The authors also tried to look at the degree of concentration of suicide cases to state and national averages for the top ten states. Further, the state-wise distribution of student suicide cases has been presented through bar diagrams for the period 2002-2020.

Findings

Figure 1: Student suicide cases in India over last two decades (2002-2022)

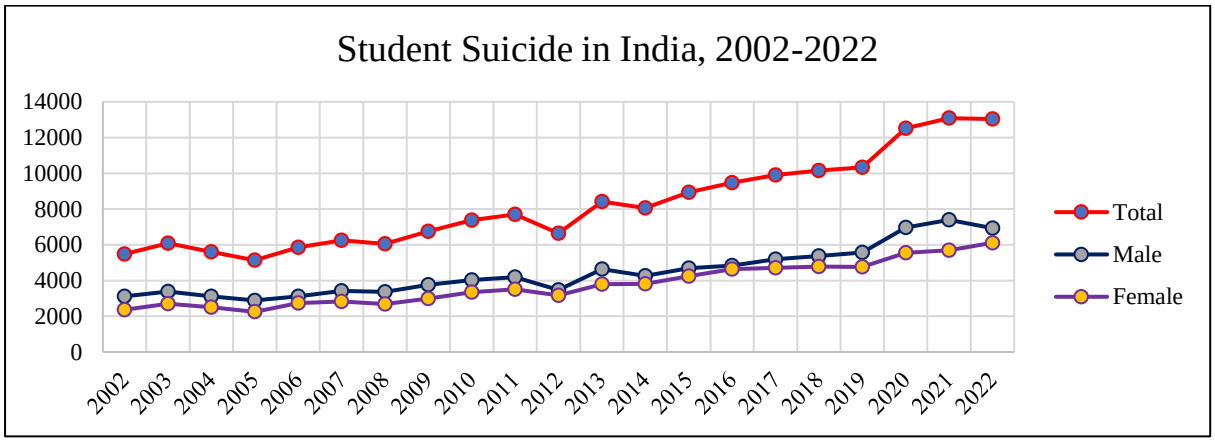


Table 1: Trends of student suicide cases in India over the last two decades (2002-2022)

Year	Population	Rate per 1 million
2002	1098313039	4.98
2003	1117415123	5.45
2004	1136264583	4.94
2005	1154638713	4.45
2006	1172373788	5.00
2007	1189691809	5.25
2008	1206734806	5.02
2009	1223640160	5.53
2010	1240613620	5.95
2011	1257621191	6.12
2012	1274487215	5.22
2013	1291132063	6.52
2014	1307246509	6.17
2015	1322866505	6.75
2016	1338636340	7.08
2017	1354195680	7.31
2018	1369003306	7.42
2019	1383112050	7.47
2020	1396387127	8.97
2021	1407563842	9.30
2022	1417173173	9.20

Table 2: Degree of concentration of Suicide cases in top ten states (In three-time frames)

States	2002		2012		2022	
	Student suicide	LQ*	Student suicide	LQ*	Student suicide	LQ*
Andhra Pradesh	470	1.16	9	0.05	575	1.14
Assam	191	1.35	13	0.12	412	1.23
Chhattisgarh	229	2.07	64	0.74	693	2.44
Karnataka	512	1.82	388	1.88	734	1.15
Madhya Pradesh	305	0.95	47	0.19	1340	1.65
Maharashtra	789	1.53	62	0.16	1764	1.48
Odisha	268	1.37	595	4.23	106	0.25
Tamil Nadu	404	1.22	7	0.03	1416	1.94
Uttar Pradesh	211	0.24	423	0.62	1060	0.48
West Bengal	814	1.90	57	0.19	354	0.38

LQ*: Student suicide cases, in a total population of a particular state.

Figure 2: Total Student suicide cases in states of India in 2022

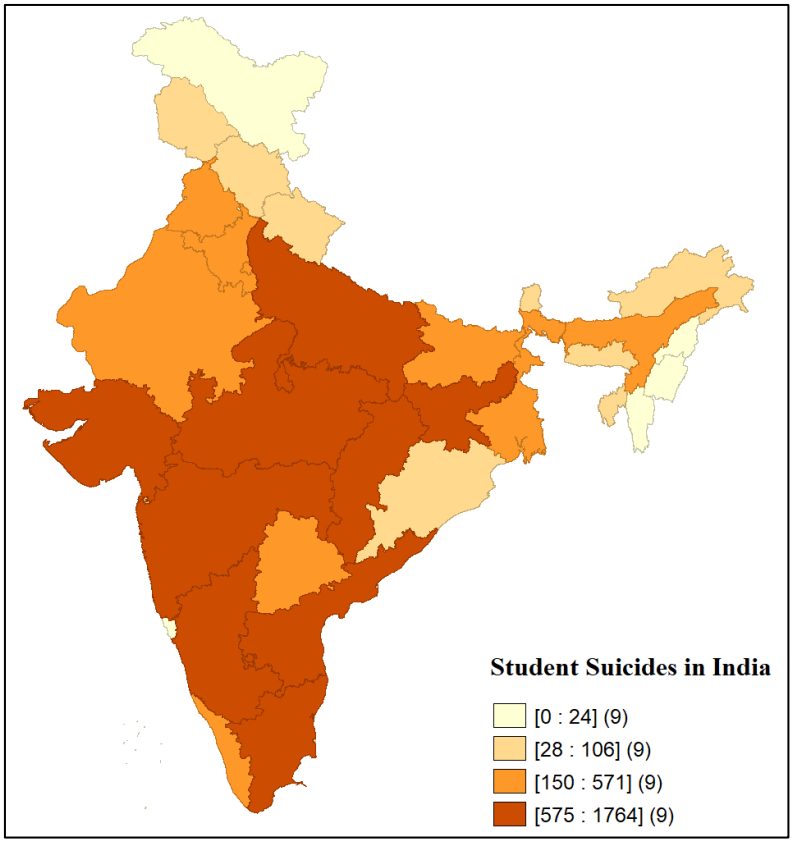


Figure 3: Male Student suicide cases in states of India over the last two decades (2002-2022)

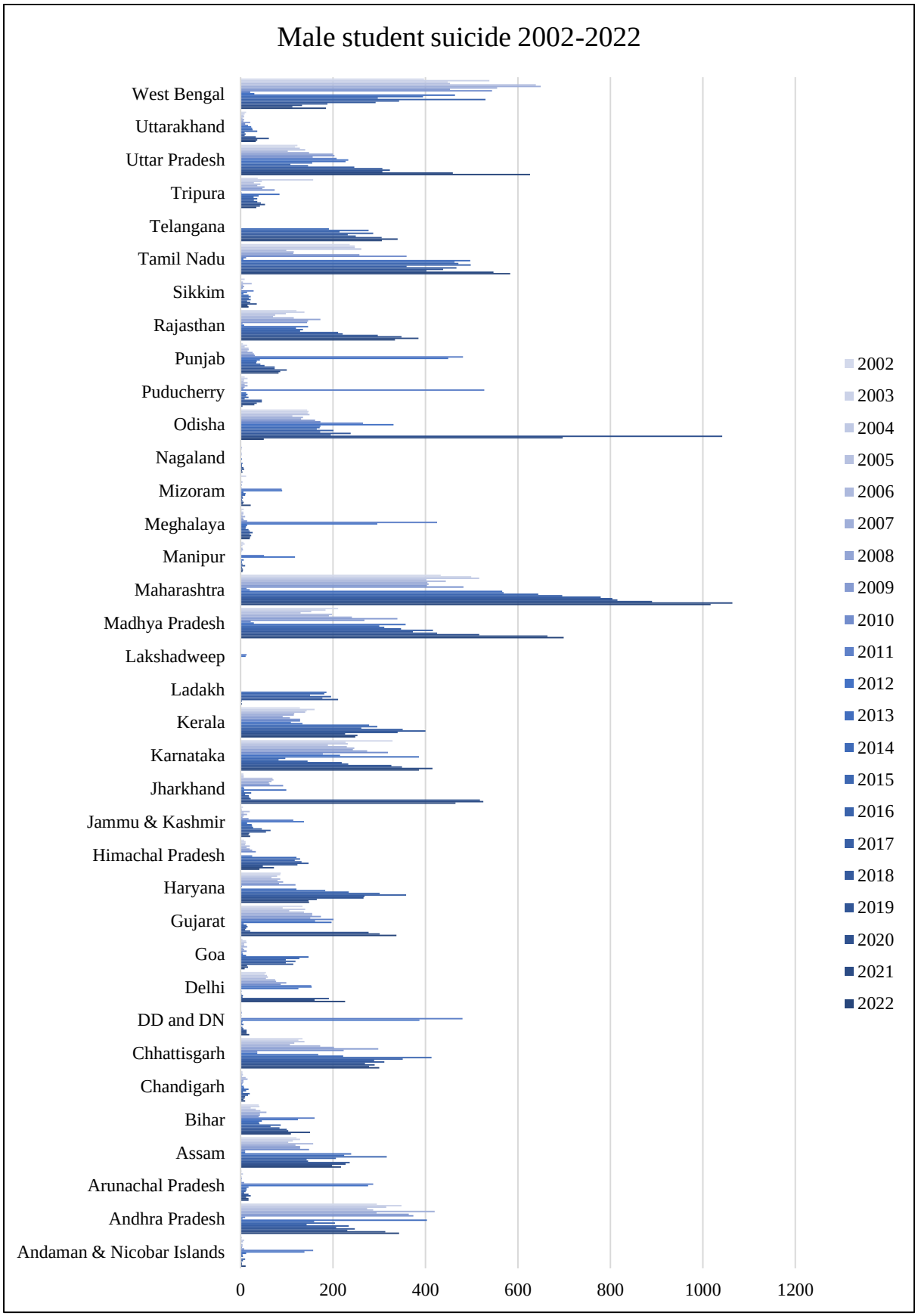
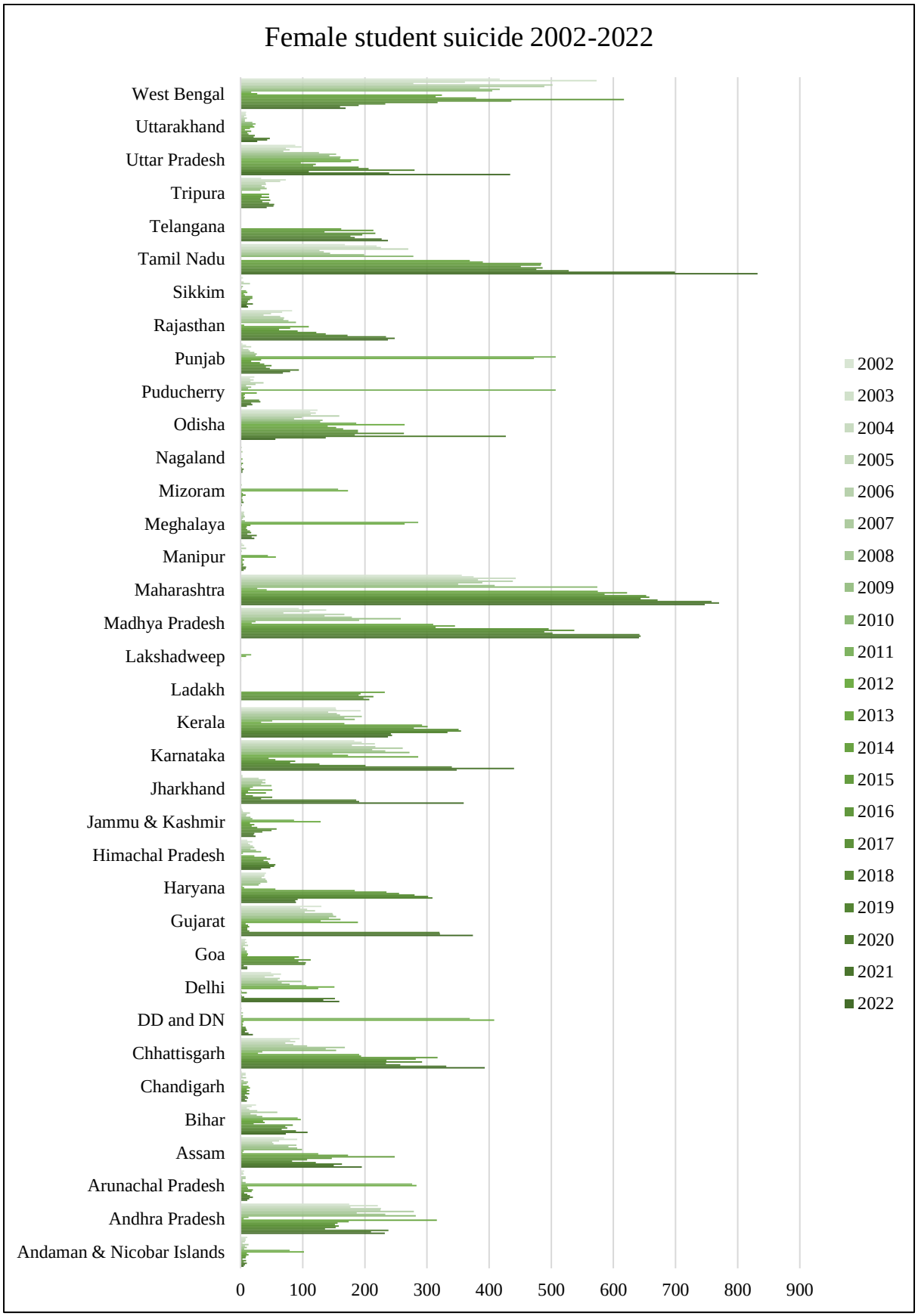


Figure 4: Female Student suicide cases in states India over the last two decades (2002-2022)



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