

# 'Student suicides a systemic failure': SC issues directions on 'mental health crisis'

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 Student suicides a systemic failure': SC issues directions on 'mental health crisis'

NEW DELHI: Observing that the very soul of education stands distorted with students being forced into a rat race and subjected to relentless psychological pressure resulting in increasing number of suicide cases, Supreme Court directed all educational institutions, including coaching centres, to ensure mental health safeguards.

The court passed a slew of directions to institutions, including appointing counsellors or psychologists, avoiding batch segregation based on academic performance and mandatorily training staff twice a year by certified mental health professionals.

Lamenting the degradation of the education system to a high-stakes race with narrowly defined goals of achievement, status and economic security, a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said that a system has to put in place to protect the life of students who take the extreme step due to various reasons.

To stop student suicides, SC asks states to notify coaching centre rules in 2 mths

"The joy of learning has been replaced by anxiety over rankings, results and relentless performance metrics. Students, especially those preparing for competitive examinations, are often caught in a web that rewards conformity over curiosity, output over understanding, and endurance over well-being," said Justice Mehta, who

penned the judgement for the bench, emphasising that multi-sectoral approach towards suicide prevention with a specific focus on youth was needed.

It said education is meant to liberate, not burden the learner, and that its true success lies not in grades or rankings but in the holistic growth of a human being capable of living with dignity, confidence and purpose.

The court passed the order on a plea filed by parents of a medical aspirant who committed suicide and ordered a CBI probe in the case after noting loopholes in investigations done by Andhra Pradesh police.

The apex court said continued loss of young lives due to unattended psychological distress, academic overburden and institutional insensitivity reflect a systemic failure that cannot be ignored.

It directed states and UTs to notify rules within two months mandating registration, student protection norms, and grievance redressal mechanisms for all private coaching centres. As per NCRB, India recorded 1,70,924 reported suicide cases in 2022 of which 7.6%, approx 13,044, were student suicides. Notably, 2,248 of these deaths were attributed directly to failure in exams. As per NCRB data, the number of suicides among students in the last two decades has increased from 5,425 in 2001 to 13,044 in 2022.

"In recent past, reports have emerged of student suicides in premier institutions and, particularly, coaching centres, pointing to a pattern of despair that demands collective introspection. These young individuals, often far away from home, isolated in demanding academic environments, find themselves without adequate emotional or institutional support. The culture of silence around mental health exacerbates their vulnerability. The gravity of this crisis cannot be overstated, and any incident involving the death of a student under such circumstances warrants the utmost seriousness, not just as an isolated tragedy but as part of a larger systemic malaise that threatens the future of the young generation," SC said.

