



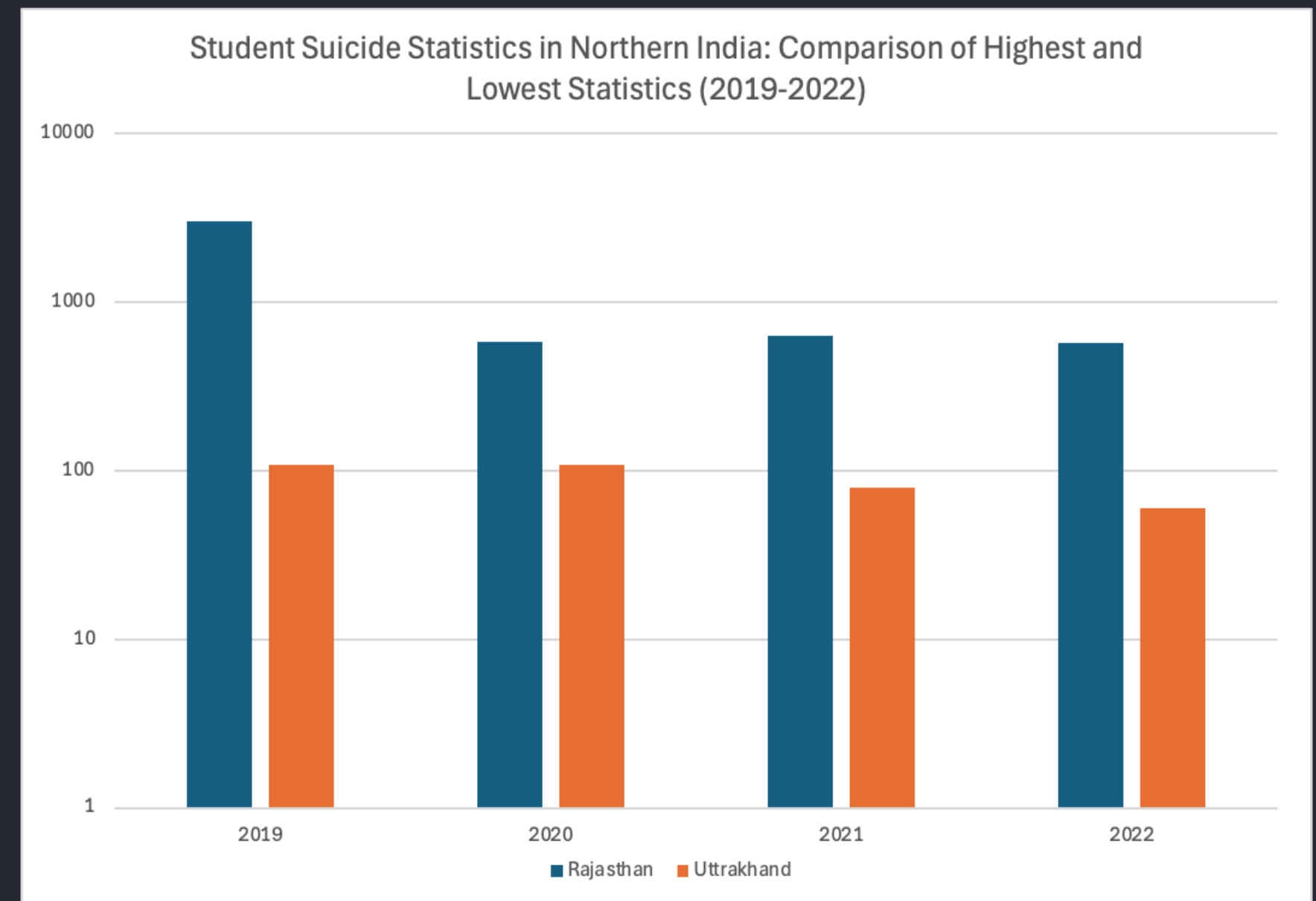
Student Suicides in India: *A Dive Into The Data- Edition II*

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State-wise Student Suicides Statistics

As depicted by the graph, Rajasthan has higher cases than Uttarakhand in the North-western zone, with Rajasthan seeing consistently high numbers and Uttarakhand's cases dropping to 60 in 2022. This reflects distinct social, cultural, and institutional differences. While both states face pressures on students, they handle them differently, impacting mental health outcomes for young people.

- **Coaching Industry Influence:** Rajasthan, especially Kota, is a hub for competitive exam preparation, drawing students nationwide. The intense environment and high expectations contribute to stress and mental health struggles. Uttarakhand, without such concentrated coaching hubs, experiences less academic pressure on its students.



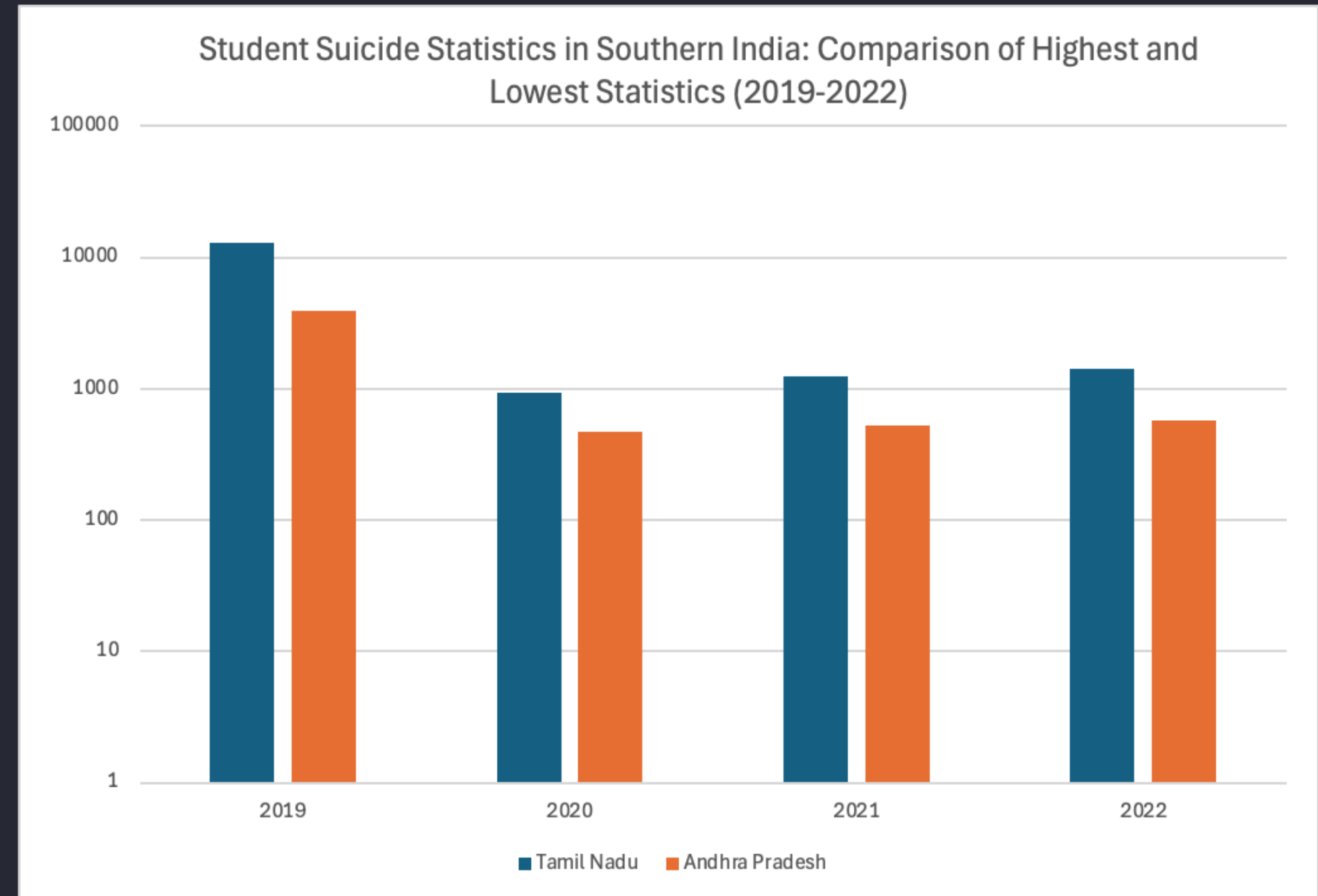
Source: NCRB ADSI Reports

- **Parental and Social Expectations:** In Rajasthan, many families have high academic expectations, particularly for entrance into prestigious careers, adding pressure on students. Conversely, Uttarakhand has seen more family-oriented approaches to education, focusing on vocational training and varied career paths, which may reduce academic stress.
- **Access to Mental Health Resources:** Rajasthan has fewer mental health services accessible to students, with a limited number of counselors in schools, which hinders early intervention. Uttarakhand has made strides in increasing counseling and mental health resources, likely aiding in the reduction of suicide cases.
- **Addressing the intense academic and societal pressures in Rajasthan through greater mental health support and realistic expectations could provide students with more balanced and supportive learning environments.**

South-eastern zone

The disparity in student suicide rates between Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, especially around 2019 and beyond, may stem from various social, educational, and economic factors that uniquely impact students in each state. Tamil Nadu, known for its intense academic competition, has often reported higher student suicide rates, attributed to factors such as educational pressure and economic challenges. There were 13006 suicides in Tamil Nadu compared to 3935 in Andhra in 2019. Here are some key aspects contributing to this contrast:

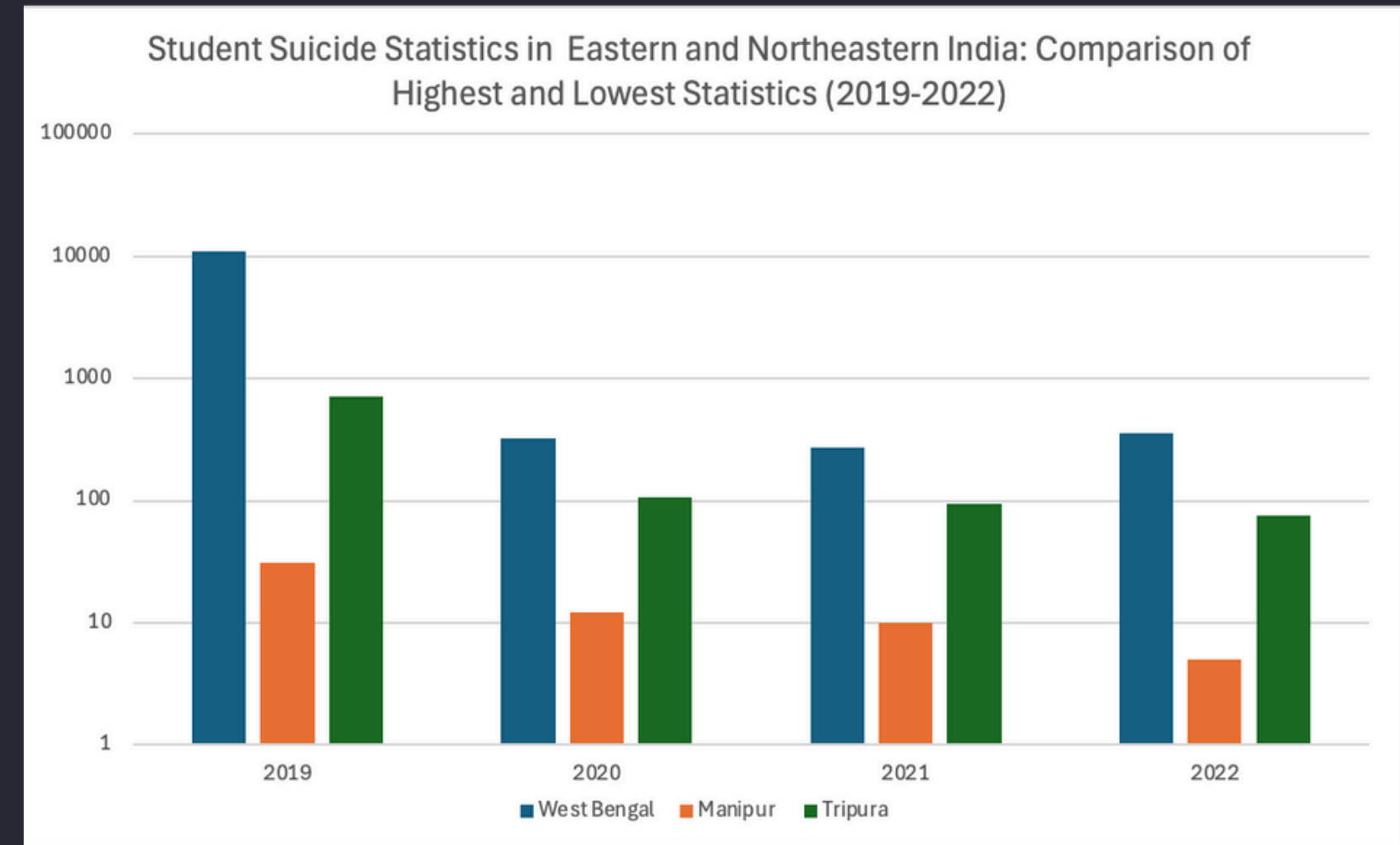
- **Academic Pressure:** Tamil Nadu's competitive education environment, particularly in engineering and medicine, has led to high stress among students. The state has consistently had one of the highest student suicide rates, with a 2019 report showing over 12% of national student suicides occurred there, compared to under 5% in Andhra Pradesh.



Source: NCRB ADSI Reports

- **Economic and Social Factors:** Financial pressures among lower-income families in Tamil Nadu may add to students' stress, as parents often take loans for education. In contrast, Andhra Pradesh has implemented more accessible educational funding, potentially easing economic strain on students.
- **Mental Health Awareness and Support:** Tamil Nadu has been slower to implement widespread mental health resources in schools. Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh has begun initiatives to improve student mental health support systems, contributing to lower rates of suicide.
- These combined factors highlight the need for targeted mental health interventions, particularly in regions with intense academic and economic pressures.

- In 2019, West Bengal had the highest number of reported student suicides at 10,965, while Manipur recorded the lowest at just 31, reflecting contrasting social, educational, and economic landscapes across these states. By 2022, West Bengal saw a significant drop to 354 cases, although this was an increase from 272 in 2021. Manipur's numbers fell even further to only 5 cases in 2022. Several factors may explain these differences:
- Urban vs. Rural Educational Pressures: In West Bengal, cities like Kolkata have high student populations facing rigorous competition for entrance into top colleges, leading to significant academic stress. For instance, around 40% of students in urban areas report feeling overwhelmed by their studies. In contrast, Manipur's education system, which is predominantly rural, may involve less competitive environments, contributing to a lower incidence of suicides.

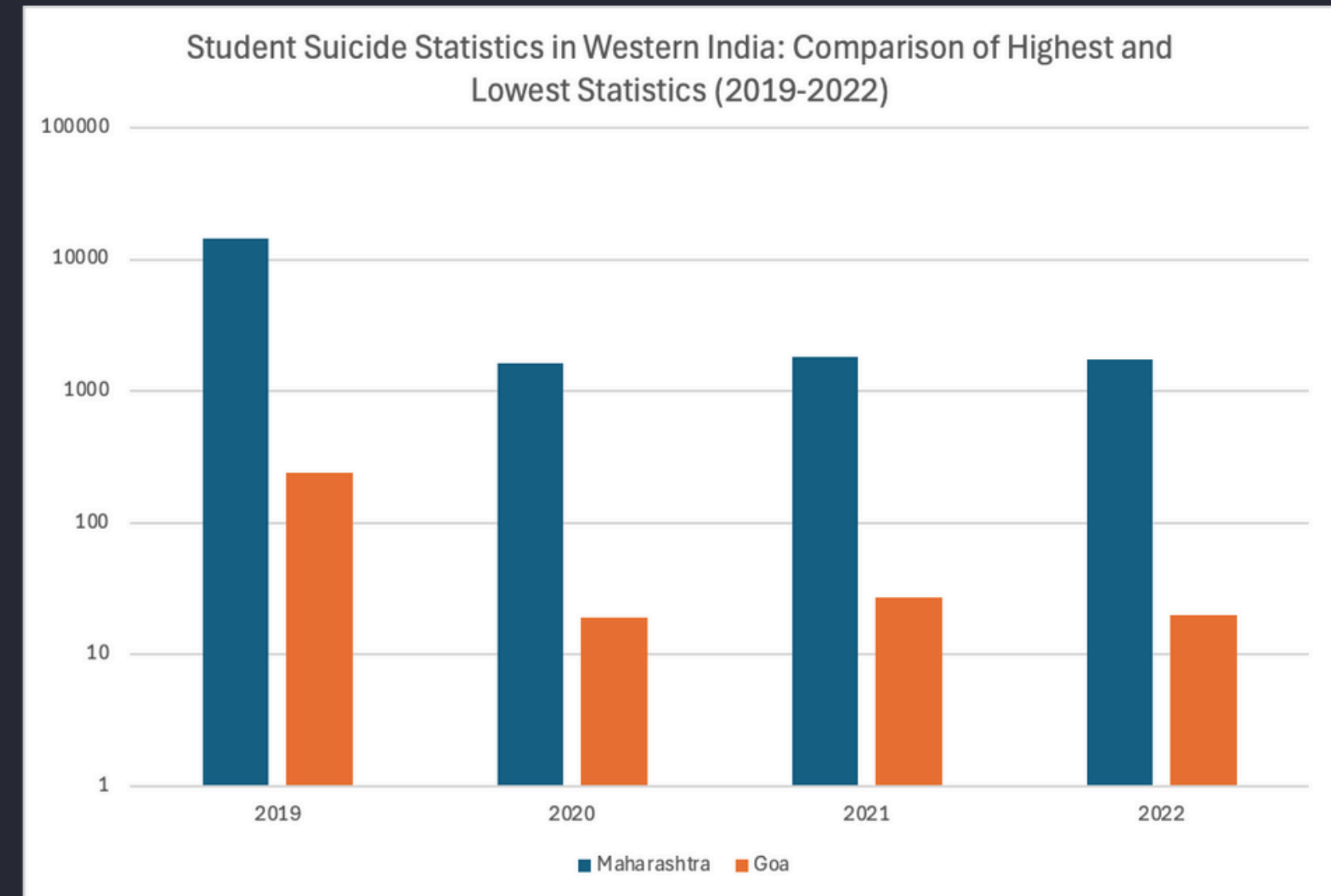


Source: NCRB ADSI Reports

- **Socioeconomic Factors:** Economic challenges play a crucial role in student stress. In West Bengal, 32% of families reported financial difficulties related to education in a recent survey, impacting students' mental health. Meanwhile, in Manipur, the cost of living remains relatively low, and only about 10% of families indicated financial strain due to education, reducing the stress on students.
- **Mental Health and Support Services:** Access to mental health resources significantly influences student well-being. In West Bengal, studies show that only 25% of schools have mental health professionals on staff, limiting support for students in crisis. Conversely, Manipur has focused on community mental health initiatives, with a reported 70% of schools now incorporating mental health education, contributing to the notable reduction in suicide rates.
- By addressing the intense educational and financial pressures, especially in urban areas of West Bengal, and expanding mental health resources, further improvements in student well-being may be achieved.

The stark differences in student suicide rates between Maharashtra and Goa highlight the complex interplay of various societal and educational factors affecting mental health among youth. In 2019, Maharashtra reported a staggering 14,352 student suicides, the highest in the nation, while Goa had a significantly lower number at 238. By 2022, Maharashtra saw a marked reduction to 1,764 cases, but Goa achieved an impressive drop to just 20. This divergence in trends reveals important underlying reasons that deserve closer examination:

- **Cultural Attitudes Towards Education:** Maharashtra's cultural emphasis on academic success can create an environment where students feel immense pressure to perform. A survey indicated that about 70% of students felt societal expectations influenced their academic choices. In contrast, Goa's more laid-back culture places less emphasis on academic achievement, with only 35% of students reporting similar societal pressures.



Source: NCRB ADSI Reports

- **Availability of Alternative Pathways:** Maharashtra has a highly competitive academic landscape with limited alternative career pathways, leading many students to pursue traditional routes like engineering and medicine, intensifying stress. Approximately 50% of students reported feeling trapped in a specific career path due to family expectations. Goa, on the other hand, offers a wider variety of vocational training options and a tourism-driven economy, allowing students to explore different career avenues, which can alleviate stress.
- **Supportive Community Networks:** In Goa, strong community ties and support systems play a crucial role in student mental health. Approximately 80% of students in Goa reported having access to familial and community support during stressful times. In Maharashtra, however, the large urban population often leads to a sense of isolation among students, with only 40% reporting strong support networks available to them.
- These factors underscore the need for Maharashtra to foster a more supportive educational environment that values mental health and diverse career pathways while highlighting Goa's success in maintaining a balanced approach to education and student well-being.

CASE STUDY: DELHI

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data shows a troubling trend: the number of suicides committed due to examination failure in Delhi in the period 2019-22.
- The data shows an increase in the total suicide from 2019 to 2022
 - There has been a sharp increase in the total suicide from 2019 to 2022, from 49 to 81 - an indicator of growing mental health crisis among students

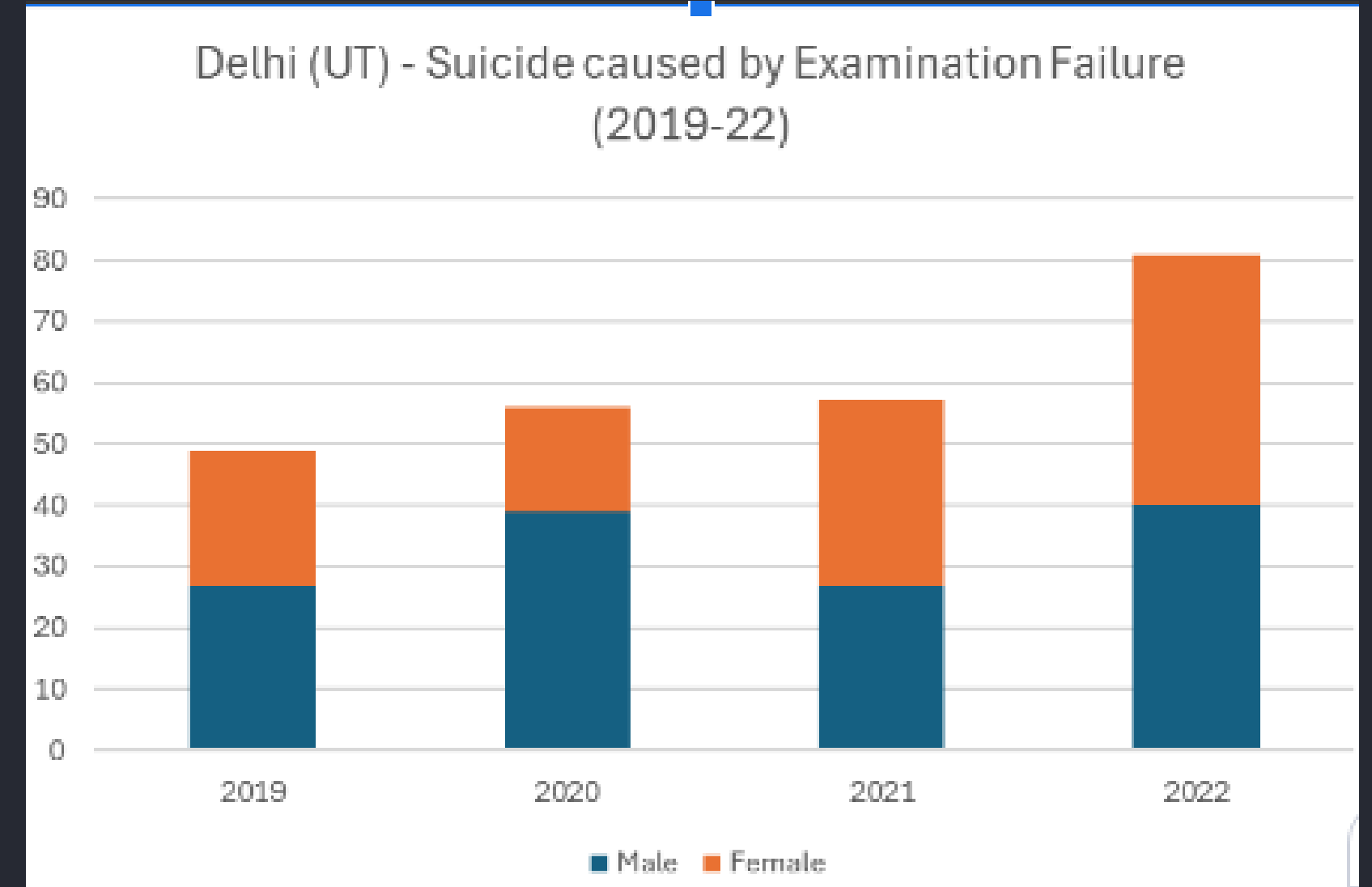


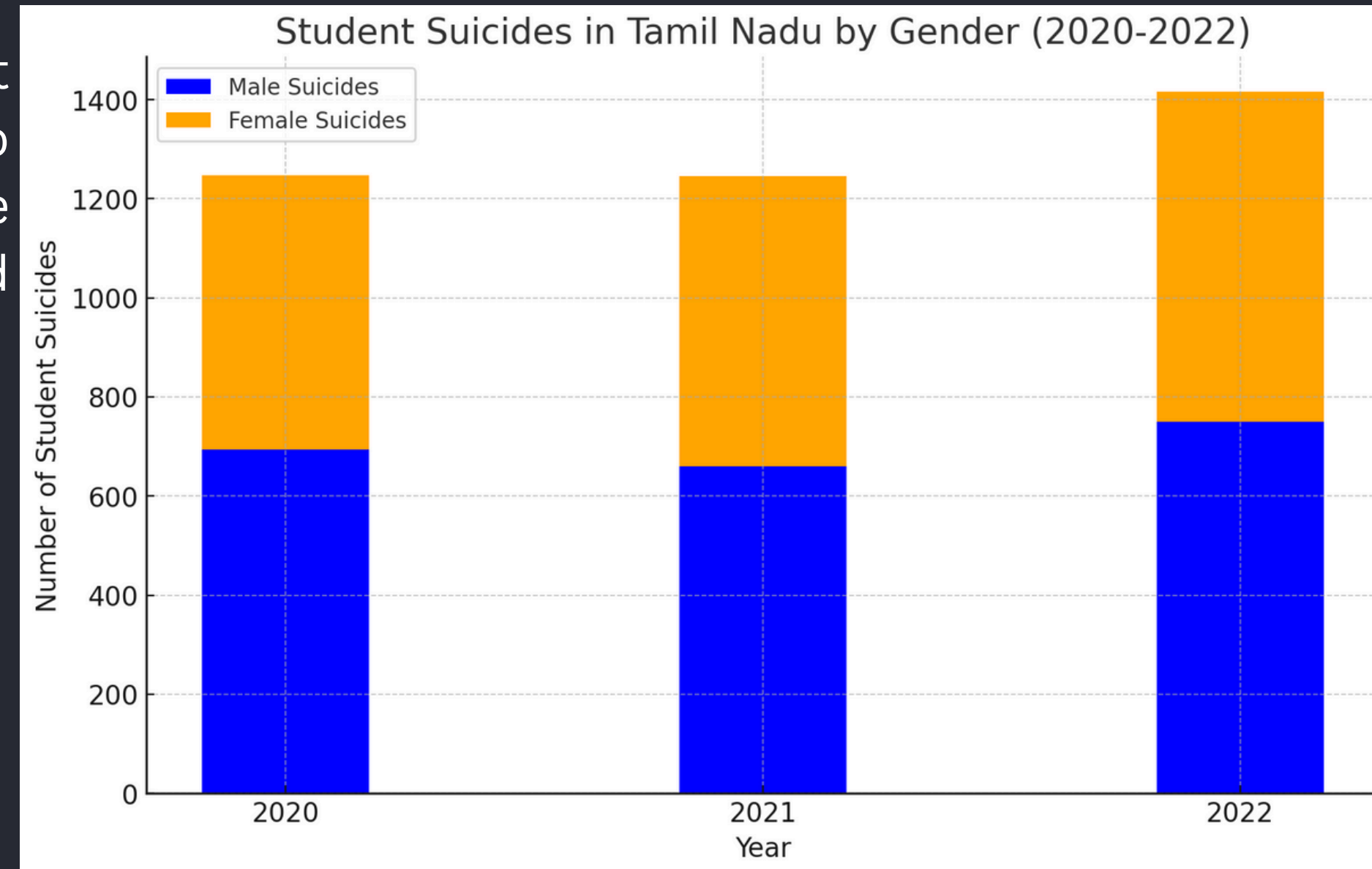
Fig 1: NCRB data

- There has been an increase in female suicides compared to male suicides which could imply that in recent years the academic and societal pressure has been burdening the females largely.
- Several incidents of student suicides have been reported in recent years, spanning various age groups and academic stages.

- Cases include a 16-year-old who was unable to secure a seat in the science stream, a 25-year-old MBA student at Delhi's IP University and a 30-year-old medical student.
- These incidents highlight the immense pressure along different academic levels
- **Delhi as a Hub for Competitive Exams:** Being a hub for UPSC preparation several students come from different parts of the country and often face immense mental and emotional strains
 - It was recently reported that a UPSC aspirant committed suicide due to academic pressure and also the exploitative practices of hostels and PG accommodations that exacerbated the situation.
- **Judicial Intervention:** In one of the recent judgements, the Delhi High Court called upon the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) to encourage counselling students and make them aware that good academic performance is not the most important thing in life. This came to the attention with the incident of the alleged suicide last year of the two IIT-Delhi students belonging to an SC community
- The rise in exam-related suicides highlights the urgent need for better mental health support and reduced academic pressure, with institutions, families, and policymakers redefining success beyond grades.

CASE STUDY: TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu has seen a concerning rise in student suicides, with cases increasing from 1,247 in 2020 to 1,416 in 2022. This steady upward trend highlights the growing pressures on students amidst academic and societal stress nationwide.
- Exam-related stress, especially around highly competitive exams like NEET, has become a significant contributing factor to student suicides in Tamil Nadu. This intense academic pressure has positioned Tamil Nadu among the states with the highest student suicide rates.

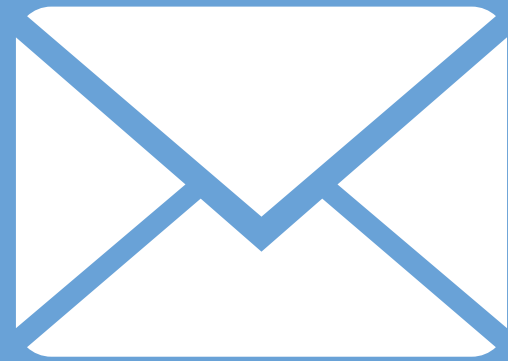


Unlike Delhi, Tamil Nadu reflects a different pattern in gender breakdown for student suicides, with female students reportedly accounting for a higher percentage. This contrast underscores how regional differences may play a role in influencing the pressures and challenges faced by male and female students, potentially shaped by distinct societal and academic expectations in each area.

- The tragic case of Anitha, a high-achieving student who took her life due to academic pressures, brought widespread attention to the alarming rates of student suicides in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the need for systemic changes to reduce such incidents.
- In response to the growing mental health crisis among students, Tamil Nadu has implemented counseling centers, helplines, and awareness campaigns in schools, aiming to provide support for students coping with exam-related stress and emotional challenges.
- The state has also introduced bridge courses to help students bridge knowledge gaps and better manage academic expectations, especially in preparation for national-level competitive exams.
- Tamil Nadu has made several legislative efforts focused on easing academic pressures and advocating for more student-friendly policies, though not all have succeeded on a national level.
- Anitha's story and similar cases have fueled a broader conversation on student mental health, emphasizing the urgent need for a supportive environment that prioritizes well-being alongside academic achievement.

Policy Suggestions

- **Supplementary Exams to Reduce Exam Stress:** Helplines have been initiated to increase student support. There also have been policies implemented like the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS) which has launched supplementary exams at all levels to reduce examination stress in Tamil Nadu. Other states should also consider adopting this.
- **Promoting Resilience and Coping Skills:** It is important to be self-sufficient when handling stressful emotions, so it is necessary to help them form resilience and coping skills by providing workshops in educational institutions to help themselves when things go out of control.
- **Incorporate Mental Health and Life Skills into the School Curriculum:** This curriculum would include emotional regulation, stress management, peer support skills, and practical knowledge on handling academic and non-academic challenges. It would create a culture that normalizes seeking help and builds long-term coping skills.
- **Parental and Educator Mental Health Training Program:** Governments could fund and mandate training programs for parents and educators that focus on understanding mental health indicators, effective communication strategies, and ways to foster a supportive environment.
- **Implement Confidential Reporting and Support Systems:** The government can create a secure platform that allows students to seek help anonymously, with immediate access to mental health professionals and guidance on local resources.



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