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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Campus Distress Has Social Causes

INDIAN EXPRESS

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Campus Distress Has Social Causes

 **The Indian Express**

17 June 2026

GS1

GS2

 Source: ujyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped


INTERVIEW ANGLE

"Should universities be held legally accountable for the social conditions that drive student distress?"

 Source: [Original editorial](#)
[The Indian Express](#)
 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

A Supreme Court intervention on student suicides has reframed a recurring tragedy. Instead of treating campus deaths as isolated personal crises, the Court has pointed to structural causes: caste hierarchies, exclusion and institutional indifference. The shift matters because it moves the burden from the vulnerable student to the institution that failed to protect them.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Campus mental-health crises are commonly blamed on individual weakness. The Supreme Court's intervention on student suicides reframes them as products of structural exclusion: caste hierarchies, faculty-diversity gaps and socio-economic barriers. Framing distress as personal failure lets institutions deflect accountability. Real remedy requires inclusive environments, diverse faculty and grievance systems with teeth, not counselling cells alone.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

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ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS
Structural exclusion	Caste, class and rural disadvantage on campus	Produces isolation and a hostile climate for many students
Faculty diversity gap	Few mentors from marginalised backgrounds	Deepens alienation of students who lack role models
Institutional deflection	Blaming distress on individual fragility	Shields institutions from accountability
SC intervention	Task force and guidelines on student suicides	Recognises the problem as systemic and justiciable (https://ujivari.com/vocab/justiciable/)

THE ANALYSIS: DISTRESS AS A SOCIAL SYMPTOM

- ❶ **The cause is environmental, not just personal.** Marginalised students face discrimination and isolation that no amount of individual resilience (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/resilience/>) can fully absorb.
- ❷ **Deflection is structural too.** Framing suicides as private failures conveniently absolves universities of responsibility for the climate they create.
- ❸ **History has warned us.** The Rohith Vemula episode showed how institutional hostility can turn lethal, a lesson too often ignored.
- ❹ **The Court reframes accountability.** By treating student distress as systemic, the judiciary moves the conversation from sympathy to obligation.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

Task force and guidelines on student suicides, treating the issue as systemic.

The Rohith Vemula episode highlighting institutional discrimination.

Article 21 (right to life with dignity), Articles 15 and 17 (anti-discrimination).

Faculty diversity and inclusive grievance mechanisms.

THE DEBATE

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Argument for the social framing: Distress patterns track social disadvantage, so the remedy must be structural inclusion, not just individual counselling.

Argument for caution: Mental health is multi-causal, and over-attributing every case to caste risks oversimplifying genuine clinical complexity.

Balanced verdict: Both clinical support and structural reform are needed, but the dominant blind spot has been the structural one, which the Court rightly foregrounds.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

When a problem is repeatedly framed as individual failure, ask . Locating a systemic problem inside the victim conveniently exempts the system. The analytical move is to relocate causation from person to structure where evidence warrants.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Social inequality -> Campus exclusion -> Isolation -> Distress -> (deflection) Blame individual -> Reframe as systemic

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Implement the Court's guidelines** through enforceable institutional task forces.
- ② **Diversify faculty** so marginalised students find mentors and belonging.
- ③ **Build grievance mechanisms with teeth** to address discrimination promptly.
- ④ **Shift institutional culture** to treat inclusion and student welfare as core duties.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

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Case study for social justice, education governance and the social determinants of mental health.

“Treating distress as a private failing is itself part of the problem.”

Articles 21, 15 and 17; SC task force on student suicides.

The duty of care institutions owe to vulnerable members; accountability versus blame.

GS1 society questions and GS2 questions on vulnerable sections and education.

Social justice, mental health, higher-education reform, anti-discrimination law.

Sources: *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com/section/opinion/>), *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/>)

Source: Campus Distress Has Social Causes — Ujjyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

• KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

Campus mental-health crises are rooted in structural exclusion such as caste hierarchies, faculty-diversity gaps and socio-economic barriers, not individual weakness.

✓ SUPPORTING

- Marginalised students face discrimination, isolation and a hostile institutional climate.
- Framing distress as personal failure lets institutions deflect accountability.
- The Supreme Court’s intervention recognises distress as a systemic, justiciable problem.

⚠ COUNTER

Some argue that mental health is multi-causal and over-attributing it to caste risks oversimplifying clinical realities.

→ WAY FORWARD

Implement the Court’s task-force guidelines, diversify faculty, build inclusive support systems and treat distress as institutional responsibility.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

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QUESTION

Student suicides on Indian campuses are a social and institutional failure, not merely an individual one. Critically examine, with reference to remedial measures. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

The Supreme Court's intervention on student suicides marks a shift in how India understands campus distress: from a story of individual fragility to one of structural exclusion that institutions help create.

BODY

For too long, campus suicides have been framed as personal tragedies, isolated failures of resilience. This framing is convenient because it absolves institutions.

The evidence points elsewhere. Students from marginalised backgrounds, lower castes, rural and economically weaker families, repeatedly report discrimination, social isolation and a climate of subtle exclusion.

The historic Rohith Vemula episode crystallised how institutional hostility can become lethal. Where faculty diversity is thin, marginalised students lack mentors who understand their experience, deepening alienation.

The Supreme Court, through its task force and guidelines on student suicides, has reframed the issue as a systemic one demanding institutional accountability, not just counselling cells. Counselling matters, but it cannot fix a hostile environment.

The real intervention is structural: anti-discrimination enforcement, diverse faculty, grievance mechanisms with teeth and an institutional culture that treats inclusion as duty. Treating distress as a private failing is itself part of the problem.

CONCLUSION

Campus distress is a mirror of social inequality reproduced inside the university. The Court has named the cause; institutions must now own the remedy, building campuses where belonging is not a privilege but a right.


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