

# We need to talk about rising suicides among the youth



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IT is alarming that between January and August this year, a total of 364 students have died by suicide in Bangladesh, according to a survey by the Aachol Foundation. Among them, 194 were school students. A large number of college and university students also died by suicide. Several reasons have been identified behind these suicides, including romantic relationships, session jams, failing in exams, study pressure, depression, death of friends, and financial problems. However, I would like to single out one simple root cause that has been driving all other causes and resulting in this sorry state of affairs: the lack of proper counselling and guidance.

Students go through a lot of issues in their daily lives, and they need guidance and counselling to cope with those issues, because it is difficult at times to deal with them alone. The first layer of guidance and counselling must come from their families, who should play a supportive role in addressing the mental health issues of the students and give them a nurturing environment where they can voice their concerns and address the issues that are bothering them. However, because of the strain on the social bond that modern life has created, it is often difficult for students to get counselling from their families, and their families often become the reason behind their stress and anxiety. In the Aachol Foundation survey, we see that family is often the driving factor behind students' suicide. In such cases, friends and education institutions must fill the gap and provide the students with the support they need.

Friends often become the first confidants of various problems that students face that drive them towards a quagmire of anxiety, stress, and depression. As such, the youth must be prepared to face these challenges of aiding their friends in times of need. There should be training programmes on



VISUAL: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

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mental health for the youth, which they can use for their benefit as well as the benefit of their friends. Various state and non-state actors that are working with mental health should create training programmes that go to educational institutions, and spread awareness about mental health and train students to tackle mental health challenges for themselves and their friends. Aside from trying to counsel a friend themselves, there is also a responsibility to advise them to seek professional support.

Then comes professional mental health counselling, which should be made easily accessible to students. In an ideal situation, all schools should have a dedicated mental health counsellor who can talk to students about their mental health challenges, and advise them accordingly to ensure their mental well-being. However, we are still a long way away from having such a system in place. There are a lot of

organisations working with mental health, but counselling services are still few and far between. Most schools do not have any sort of counselling service. At the very least, the organisations that work with mental health should train teachers at every school in the country so that they can work as counsellors to their students.

social welfare ministry and education ministry must run a joint programme to bring down the number of suicides among students. Right now, it seems as though these students are dying due to negligence from society. It seems as though we are not doing anything to help them. Modern social realities have

However, our teachers are already overworked and underpaid, and burdening them with the additional pressure of acting as mental health counsellors may just be too much. But the students sometimes already have a special bond with some of their teachers, and may open up to them in a way that they would not open up to a stranger. As such, training the teachers may be a good option.

We also need a national framework and dedicated programmes to prevent suicides so that this sorry state of affairs can change. Currently, we do not even have a national suicide prevention hotline, which is a basic necessity. There is a non-government helpline run by Kan Pete Roi, but not a lot of people know about it. The national helpline 999 should have suicide prevention services, or a new hotline may be instituted that will solely deal with suicide-related emergencies. The government's

indeed given birth to various challenges that may abet suicides. Higher expectations from students and high social pressure to succeed in various metrics exert huge pressure on young people. This is a social reality that our society needs to deal with through social enterprises – both government and private. There needs to be a concerted effort to decrease the burden on our youth and listen to their problems intently, so that their concerns may be addressed, and they can be given proper counselling to prevent any more suicides from occurring. Training students and teachers, appointing counsellors or social workers to education institutions, creating a national helpline for suicide prevention, and creating a broad national programme addressing suicide may help with bringing down the suicide rates, and we should all view that as our ultimate goal.

## How can graduates in Bangladesh become more employable?

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LOCK of graduate employability has become a critical issue among higher education providers and employers in many places around the world. There are studies that have found several factors to be significant determinants in enhancing graduate employability. However, few such studies have been conducted considering the situation in Bangladesh, where a large number of students graduate from public and private institutions every year. Recently, I along with some other researchers conducted a questionnaire survey to examine the determinants of graduate employability in Bangladesh. Using the purposive sampling technique, survey data was collected from final-year students and recent graduates. The results showed that career education, interpersonal skills, and information technology (IT) knowledge significantly enhanced graduate employability.

Graduate employability is defined as the accumulation of various abilities and skills that graduates acquire during their study lives to gain a desirable job and become successful in their careers. In general, it refers to skills and abilities that individuals can use to attain employment, find a new job, fulfil employment requirements, and be satisfied with their designated careers. Soft skills are defined as a combination of personality traits, goals, preferences, and motivations demanded and valued in the labour market, at school, and in many other fields. They are what make an

individual a good employee and a companionable co-worker.

How graduates are employed these days seems to have changed globally. Studies show that a university degree alone is no longer sufficient for young people to get employed in a competitive job market. On the other hand, employers are slimming down their workforces due to unstable and unpredictable business situations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and other external factors. Employers decide to recruit graduates based on their abilities and qualities, in addition to knowledge and skills relevant to a particular discipline. Graduate employability is no longer a concept that includes only the skills and attributes gained during the study period in higher educational institutions. It also includes the university's academic reputation, communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and so on.

In these circumstances, universities have begun integrating employability traits in their courses and programmes. This initiative has led researchers to explore the employability qualities sought by employers in a particular context. Employers generally tend to emphasise generic and practical skills in the recruitment process instead of academic results and technical expertise.

However, Bangladeshi graduates appear to be inadequately equipped with such knowledge and skills. Many students don't think about their potential career paths, nor seek assistance, until graduation. In this situation, higher education institutions should undertake strategies to affirm students' involvement with career education at the beginning of their university experience.

The findings of our study strengthen the arguments regarding the significance of interpersonal skills, IT skills and career education for graduate employability. Interpersonal skills exhibit the tendency and qualities to respond and deal with challenging situations with a better communication process. And IT skills are time-demanding skills. Recruiters expect all graduates to have basic and advanced IT skills that can be useful in every aspect

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of their careers. Added to that is career education, which posits a significant relationship with graduate employability. Therefore, a career-related course can be introduced in all programmes for final-year students.

Basic literacy is expected to be a common phenomenon for graduates, but this has not been found as a significant factor in the context of Bangladesh. In this regard, it can be argued that recruiters might not put basic literacy as an important factor

during the recruitment process and students find it common for all university students. Therefore, basic literacy was not found as a significant attribute in enhancing graduate employability.

The findings of our study advance our understanding of some under-research antecedents of graduate employability, such as basic literature, career education, IT skills, and interpersonal skills. This study also suggests that both current students and graduates of higher education institutions must improve their IT, career-related knowledge or education, and interpersonal skills so that they can be more employable. In this competitive world, technological skills or IT skills are essential to adapt to the rapidly changing work environment.

The findings of our study may enable the authorities of higher education institutions in Bangladesh to re-evaluate their curricula to gauge gaps for further improvement. Meanwhile, undergraduate students will be expected to make conscious efforts to seek ways of utilising their learning within and outside of the university system. Thus, they can develop and acquire employability skills necessary to gather competitive advantage and fulfil the current job market requirements.

However, the study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. First of all, data was gathered online only, and it wasn't possible to get in contact with a large number of students in different locations. The Covid-19 restrictions did not allow the collection of physical survey responses. We hope there will be future studies which will not face such limitations, and will get data in large volumes.

## CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

### ACROSS

- 1 Yoda's creator
- 6 Boosts
- 11 Sluggish
- 12 Skate-boarding jump
- 13 Evade
- 14 First American in orbit
- 15 Theater units
- 17 Small statue
- 18 Quarter, e.g.
- 20 Brace
- 22 Bow's shape
- 23 Bill stamp
- 26 Tennis star Rafael
- 28 Wails
- 29 Deli machines
- 31 Pert talk
- 32 Overcast

### 33 Singer Perry

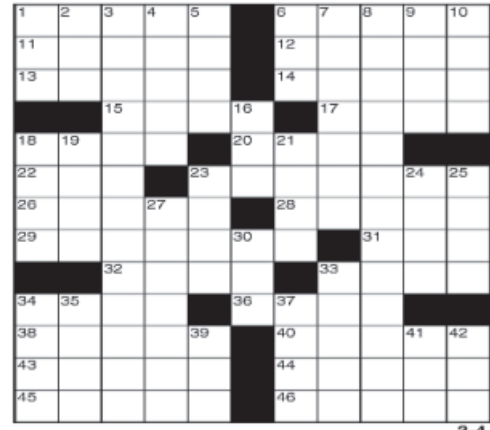
- 34 Bobsled's kin
- 36 Sweeping tale
- 38 Cheering wildly
- 40 How tuna may be packed
- 43 September sign
- 44 Draw out
- 45 To date
- 46 Took a risk

### DOWN

- 1 Pot part
- 2 First numero
- 3 Goblet of Fire competitor
- 4 Noble gas
- 5 Hearty entree
- 6 Lumber unit
- 7 "Could regret this, but tell me"

- 8 Goblet of Fire competitor
- 9 Mint containers
- 10 Dispatched
- 16 Sauna site
- 18 Fires
- 19 Test type
- 21 Sets the price at
- 23 Entreaty
- 24 Mile or meter
- 25 Spot
- 27 Farm measure
- 30 Reuben base
- 33 In a way, informally
- 34 Hot flow
- 35 "Trinity" author
- 37 Multi-colored
- 39 Nonsense
- 41 Motel freebie
- 42 Went ahead

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### MONDAY'S ANSWERS

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২০ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২২

### নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলা একাডেমির রাজস্ব খাতভুক্ত ৯ম গ্রেডের ১২টি (রিসার্চ অফিসার, ট্রান্সলেটর, প্রোগ্রাম অফিসার, ফটোগ্রাফার, অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট এডিটর, আর্টিস্ট, সুপারিনটেন্ডেন্ট অফ প্রিন্টিং/রিটাচার, পাবলিক রিলেশন অফিসার, পার্চেস, সেল্ফ এন্ড স্টোর অফিসার, অ্যডমিনিস্ট্রেটিভ অফিসার, ক্লিন্ড মেকানিক) পদ, ১০ম গ্রেডের ১৯টি (সিকিউরিটি অফিসার/কেয়ারটেকার, অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ট্রান্সলেটর, প্রুফ এডিটর, অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট প্রোগ্রাম অফিসার, অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ম্যানুস্ক্রিপ্ট এডিটর (কমপাইলেশন), অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ম্যানুস্ক্রিপ্ট এডিটর (শোশাল সায়েন্স, ল' এন্ড ট্রান্সলেশন), অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ম্যানুস্ক্রিপ্ট এডিটর (সায়েন্স এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং), অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ম্যানুস্ক্রিপ্ট এডিটর (বায়োলজিক্যাল এন্ড মেডিকেল সায়েন্স), অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট স্কুটিনার, অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট লাইব্রেরিয়ান, সাব-অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার, মেকানিক) পদ, ১১তম গ্রেডের ৩টি (অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট মেকানিক, স্টোর কিপার) পদ, ১৩তম গ্রেডের ৯টি (অ্যাকাউন্ট্যান্ট, প্রিন্টার, স্টেনোগ্রাফার) পদ, ১৪তম গ্রেডের ২০টি (স্টেনোগ্রাফিষ্ট, জমাদার, সিনিয়র মেশিনম্যান, সিনিয়র কম্পোজিটর, ক্লিন্ড লাইনো অপারেটর, লাইনো অপারেটর, সুদক্ষ মনো অপারেটর, অপারেটর, ক্লিন্ড বাইভার (মেকানিক), ক্লিন্ড বাইভার) পদ, ১৬তম গ্রেডের ৩৯টি (কম্পোজিটর, জুনিয়র লাইনো অপারেটর, অপারেটর কার্টার এন্ড স্টিচার, এলডিএ-কাম-টাাইপিষ্ট, রেকর্ড কিপার, ল্যাব অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট, অ্যাকাউন্ট অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট (প্রেস), ডাইভার, মেশিনম্যান) পদ, ১৭তম গ্রেডের ১টি (অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট মেশিনম্যান) পদ, ১৮তম গ্রেডের ৭টি (অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট অপারেটর, প্রেস অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট, ডেসপ্যাচ রাইভার, প্যাকার, প্রাইভার) পদ, ১৯তম গ্রেডের ৩১টি (ডিস্ট্রিবিউটর, জয়েন্টম্যান, প্রুফ বর, মেটাল কাস্টার, লাইনো অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট, জুনিয়র মনোকাষ্টার, মনো অ্যাসিস্টেন্ট, কাটিং অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট, বাইভার, জুনিয়র বাইভার, বাইভিং অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট) পদ এবং ২০তম গ্রেডের ৩৯টি (এমএলএসএস, নাইটগার্ড/দারোয়ান, সিকিউরিটি গার্ড, সুইপার) পদসহ মোট ১৮০টি স্থায়ী শূন্য পদে জনবল নিয়োগের নিমিত্ত বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

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