



Theme; Why Are Many University Students Committing Suicide, and What Can Be Done to Address This Crisis?

— THE PRESSURE BEHIND —

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WHY ARE MANY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS COMMITTING SUICIDE, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ADDRESS THIS CRISIS?

Breaking the Silence: Understanding and Addressing Suicide among University Students.

“I wanted to disappear—not because I wanted to die, but because I wanted the pain to stop.”

— Anonymous Tanzanian university student.

Introduction

In recent years, the university student suicide has become a serious global issue on campuses around the world, including Tanzania. These years are often seen as a time for growth, self-discovery and opportunity, but for some, these years can lead to intense psychological suffering and overwhelming tunnels of pain. When young adults are at the height of their intellectual and personal growth, decide to extinguish their lives, then we are forced to confront the unseen pressure and fragilities hence, begs the question of what stresses and vulnerability young people in higher education face. Once it was sealed behind the hushed doors, but suicide now is making a road into the national conversation because of its tragic prevalence and devastating effects on families, friendship cycles and educational system. Excessive academic demand, mounting financial burdens, deepening social isolation, emotional betrayals, and mental breakdowns have pushed many students to edge. Tragically, some have chosen to end their lives. This essay looks into the root causes of this crisis and suggests practical solutions to help restore hope and resilience among Tanzania's university youth and the world.

The suicide crisis in universities: What's causing it?

1. Academic Overload and Unrealistic Expectations

Students in higher education often face immense academic demands, especially in competitive programs where success is tied to family honor, job perspectives and scholarships. These expectations, although well-meaning, but can become unbearable. A 2023 survey by the psychological department at the University of Dar-es-salaam found that more than 62% of respondents felt they were living in a state of “chronically overwhelmed” from their coursework. (University of Dar-es-salaam, 2023), with limited access to academic counseling and mental health support, many suffer in silence.

2. Financial Struggle and Economic Insecurity.

Many of students come from low-income households and rely on government loans, seasonal and part-time jobs, or family contribution to make ends meet. However, delays in loan payment, rising tuition fees and the increasing cost of living in cities often leave students in financially stranded. A 2021 report released by the Tanzanian Commission of Universities (TCU) showed that more than 40% of student in public universities face moderate to severe financial hardship (TCU, 2021). The constant stress of not knowing on how to pay rent, buy food, or get study materials can lead to deep feelings of hopelessness that can overshadow even their best efforts in the class.

3. Social Isolation and Digital Disconnections.

Despite being around peers, many students feel profound loneliness. Due to growing reliance on digital interactions instead of real human connections has made it harder for students to build strong and supportive relationships, replacing warmth with distance. A global study by the world health organization found that excessive social media use is linked to higher anxiety and depression symptoms among youth aged 18 to 24 (WHO, 2022). The illusion of connection often hides emotional gaps.

4. Relationship Struggles and Emotional Betrayals.

During University life most of the young people start romantic relationships, sometimes their first serious ones. While these relationships can offer emotional support, they can also bring a lot of pain. Breakups, cheating, emotional manipulation, and emotional neglect can unsettle a student's mental state, especially when their identity or self-worth is tied to the relationship. The mental health Tanzania (MHT, 2023) report highlighted that emotional betrayals from close partners was one of the top five triggers of thoughts about suicide among university-aged individuals. In a society where showing vulnerability is often not accepted, these betrayals can lead students to feel isolated and doubt themselves.

5. Lack of Mental Health Awareness and Services.

In Tanzania, mental health is still stigmatized, misunderstood and poorly funded. University health centers often do not have trained psychologists, leaving students with limited options for support. Those who seek help might encounter ridicule, judgement or indifference. According to Mental

health Tanzania (MHT, 2023), more than 70% of Tanzanian higher education institutions do not have certified mental health professionals. This silence around mental health contributes to the idea that suicide is the only escape.

Proposed Solutions To Address The Suicide Crisis Among University Students.

- **Normalizing mental health conversations**

We need to create safe spaces in universities where students can talk openly about mental health without fear. Peer-led forums, awareness campaigns and including mental health in student orientation can help reduce stigma. Universities should team up with organizations like the mental health Tanzania association to train faculty and student leaders on mental health knowledge (MHT, 2023).

- **Strengthening counselling services**

Every university should at least have one full-time, licensed counselor trained to handle student mental health issues. Additionally, there should be anonymous hotlines, mobile support apps and regular mental health check-ups. The WHO (2022) highlights that investing in university mental health services significantly lowers the risk of suicide.

- **Financial aid reforms and student support systems**

Loan boards must ensure funds are distributed in time. Universities can try to set up emergence bursaries or food banks for student in crisis. Mentorship programs pairing freshmen with upper-year students can provide both academic and emotional support. These systems, as noted by TCU (2021), help strengthen student resilience.

- **National mental health policy integration**

While some reforms are in progress, we need stronger national policies that require mental health care in educational settings. This includes increasing budget allocation, staff training, and community partnerships. Policymakers must recognize that investing in youth mental health is investing in Tanzania's future workforce (ministry of health, 2023).

- **Encouraging holistic development**

Academic excellence should not be the sole measure of success. Universities need to support sports, arts. Clubs and volunteer activities, offering student diverse ways to express themselves. Studies shows that students involved in extracurricular activities experience lower stress and greater well-being (national youth council of Tanzania, 2022).

Conclusion

Suicide among university students is not just a personal tragedy; it reflects a broader failure of society to listen, care, and act. Behind every suicide statistics is a story that might have changed if someone had noticed the signs or if support systems had been stronger. It's time to move beyond condolences and commit to real change. We must build universities that are not only focused on academics but also on compassion and humanity. Let's not wait for another candlelight vigil on campus to remind us of what we should have done. The time to act is now.

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