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## ANXIETY LEVEL OF UNDER GRADUATE AND POST GRADUATE STUDENTS LIVING IN WEST BENGAL DURING COVID-19 INDUCED LOCK DOWN IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract:

With other countries of the world, India has passed through unrivalled difficult times due to the pandemic of COVID-19. The national lockdown was started on 25 March, 2020. In fact, the economy of India has largely been disordered due to that lockdown. All Higher Educational Institutions had also been completely closed from 16 March, to 10 June, 2020, without taking any bold strategy for immediate future education. Hence, the teaching-learning process, including research activities of all higher educational institutions, had been hampered with uncertainty at that time. Under that situation, students had also compelled to stay at home and had continued their academic works from/at home with or without digital accessibilities. Co-curricular activities, direct face-to-face interactions with teachers and friends had been stopped totally due to sudden lockdown. In reality, they had anxieties about their syllabus, examinations, results, and future. Under that sudden lockdown situation due to pandemic, the study wanted to address students' opinion to run their college/university, to measure the anxiety level regarding their syllabus, examinations & results, and placements, and finally to find out a suitable way to run the academic activities under the situation.

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### 1.0 Introduction:

Like other parts of the world, India has passed through very unmatched difficult times due to the pandemic of COVID-19. The Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, had announced the first 21 days of India's lockdown on 24 March, 2020. During this announcement, for giving spirit to fight against COVID-19, he addressed to the nation - "*Jaan hai toh jahaan hai*" that means "only if there is life there will be livelihood" (Khanna, Bhaskar, & Anuja, 2020) (Padmanabhan, 2020). On 11 April, 2020, in a meeting with the Chief Ministers of India, the Prime Minister again said - "Our mantra earlier was - '*jaan hai toh jahaan hai*' but now it is - '*jaan bhi jahaan bhi*' i.e. both, lives and

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livelihood matter equally” (Khanna, Bhaskar, & Anuja, 2020) (Varma & Anuja, 2020). On 14 April, 2020, in another address to the nation, Mr. Modi had extended the lockdown with some adjustments to 03 May, 2020 (Yadav, 2020). There after phase 3 lockdown was started from 04 May, 2020 to 17 May, 2020. In the Prime Minister’s fifth meeting with the Chief Ministers on 11 May, 2020, the Prime Minister said that Indians must prepare for the post coronavirus pandemic world, just as the world changed after the world wars (Outlook India, 2020) (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2020). During that meeting Mr. Modi said “*Jan se lekar jag tak*” i.e., “from an individual to the whole of humanity,” would be the new principle and way of life (Outlook India, 2020) (Gupta, 2020). Phase 4 lockdown had been started with new restrictions and styles from 18 May, 2020 to 31 May, 2020. In fact, it is a very difficult task to balance between life and livelihood under this pandemic condition.

Globally, in an opinion poll by the ‘Edelman Trust Barometer’, total 13,200+ people had been asked. Where 67% of people agreed that “The government’s highest priority should be saving as many lives as possible even if it means the economy will recover more slowly”; that is, life should come before livelihood (John, 2020). In the case of India also, the opinion poll showed that 64% of the people agreed that saving as many lives as possible was a priority, and remaining 36% agreed that saving jobs and restarting the economy was the priority.

The economic impact of the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic in India has been largely worrying (The Indian Express, 2020)(The Hindu, PTI, 2020). On 12 April 2020, a World Bank had reported focusing on South Asia said that India’s economy is expected to grow 1.5% to 2.8% for the financial year 2021 (The Hindu, PTI, 2020). This will be the lowest growth for India in 30 years (The Times of India, 2020)(Kumar, 2020)(India Today, 2020). Moreover, within a month, unemployment rose from 6.7% on 15 March to 26% on 19 April (Vyas, 2020). More than 45% of households across the nation have reported an income drop as compared to the previous year (Centre for Policy Research, 2020). Up to 53% of businesses in the country were projected to be significantly affected (Mukherji, 2020). A large number of farmers around the country who grow perishables have also faced uncertainty (Chaudhry, 2020). Various businesses, such as hotels and airlines have cut salaries and laid off employees (Goyal, 2020). Young start-ups have been impacted as funding has fallen ( Outlook India, 2020) (Singh, 2020). MSME sector, which contributes to over 30 percent of India’s GDP, due to this lockdown they have faced a lack of trade. From the third week of March, Amazon, Flipkart, BigBasket, and Grofers have faced disruptions in services due to the lockdown (The Indian Express, 2020). Swiggy and Zomato have not to be allowed to function during this extension period (The India Express, 2020). During the lockdown, an estimated 14 crore (140 million) people have lost employment (Vyas, 2020).

At first, all Higher Educational Institutions had been closed on 16 March 2020 up to 3 March 2020 in West Bengal (Indo Asian News Service, 2020). But again, it was extended up to 15 April 2020, after the announcement of the first 21 days of India’s lockdown on 24 March, 2020 by our Prime Minister (vide G.O. no. 07-Pr. Secy-HED/2020 dated 17/03/2020, Department of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal). Again, it was extended up to 10 June 2020 after meeting with the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers of India on 11 April (vide G.O. no. 08-Pr. Secy-HED/2020 dated 16/04/2020, Department of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal).

A classroom is a seamless dais for collaborative learning with other classmates. Classroom teaching for educating students is advantageous for the longer-term, which creates a significant

impression on the students as well as on the teachers. But due to this national lockdown, the teaching-learning process, including research activities of all universities as well as colleges, have been disturbed. In this situation, students have also compelled to stay at home. They have been trying to continue their academic works at home without any guidance of their teachers, as they are financially and digitally weaker. Few, who have partial digital accessibilities, have been taking academic facilities from their institutions. But benefits of Classroom teaching, which includes enhancement of co-curricular activities; direct face to face interactions with teachers as well as friends; amalgamation of social experiences; development of students' critical thinking skills, organizational skills, conflict resolving skills, presentation skills and so many, have been stopped due to this lockdown.

Moreover, they are under anxieties about examinations, results and even about future job opportunities. Though the UGC has given guidelines (UGC, April 2020) to the higher education institutions about their activities during this lockdown situation and all stakeholders of the higher education sector careful to do their works under this pandemic situation, this sector has also hampered largely. Thus, the opinions and expectations of students about their regular academic activities under this pandemic situation have been analyzed in this study. This study has also measured the anxiety level of students in this situation about their regular classes, examinations, results, and placements.

## **2.0 Material and Methods:**

Objectives of the Study is to address students' opinions to run their college/university in this pandemic situation, to measure the anxiety level regarding their regular academic activities, examinations, results as well as placements, and to find out suitable way, based on students' opinion, for running the academic activities under this pandemic situation.

Though secondary data has been used, the study is mainly based on primary data. The <sup>a</sup>Snowball sampling technique has been applied here to collect the primary data under this lockdown situation. A structured questionnaire has made under "google forms" and forwarded through WhatsApp to few known students. These few students have made a big snowball as they have filled up the form, and then they have forwarded the link of "google forms" to their friends. Besides the general questions, in that questionnaire the main question is - In this lockdown situation due to COVID 19, what do you want? They have given three options - a) College/university has to be opened immediately with maintaining social distancing norms, b) College/university has to be closed until new medicine will come, think first about life then education and c) All college/university activities should run through electronically. To measure the anxiety level regarding completion of syllabus, exams & results within due time and placement opportunities, the students have been requested to put value 1 to 10 considering 1 = low anxiety and 10 = high anxiety. The study has been conducted from 12 May 2020 to 16 May 2020. Simple statistical tools like weighted mean, bar charts, pie charts etc. have been applied to analyze the data.

Only Under Graduate and Post Graduate Students living in West Bengal have taken into account. Three phases of lockdown have been considered here. Phases are different from general lockdown for this education sector, as the government had declared lockdown separately at beginning. But lockdown decelerations by the government have affected the

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<sup>a</sup> Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method. This sampling method involves primary data sources nominating another potential primary data sources to be used in the research. Therefore, when applying this sampling method members of the sample group are recruited via chain referral.

education sectors' lockdown phases. The phases are - Phase I lockdown (16th March to 24th March), Phase II lockdown (25th March to 11th April) and Phase III lockdown (12th April to 10th June). To measure the anxiety level only three aspects have been taken into account – a) completion of syllabus, b) exams & results within due time and c) placement opportunities.

### 3.0 Results:

Since the Snowball sampling technique has been applied here to collect the primary data under this lockdown situation, a structured questionnaire has been made under “google forms” and forwarded through WhatsApp to 2 known male UG students, 2 known female UG students, 2 known male PG students and 2 known female PG students. These few students have made a big snowball as they have filled up the form, and then they have forwarded the link of “google forms” to their friends. They are 123 in total. Out of the total 123 respondents (Fig. 1) 59 are UG level and 64 are PG level in which 95 are female, and 28 are male. Out of the above respondents, 41 students are from the rural areas, 34 students are from the urban area, and 48 students from the city area. If respondents are categorized by their age, it has been noticed that 4, 11, 19, 28, 29, 21, 6, 3, and 2 student respondents are of 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 years respectively (Fig. 1).

Opinions have been received about the expectations of students in this lockdown situation for the opening of their colleges or universities. For getting weighted average, the given “a” option – “College/University has to be opened immediately with maintaining social distancing norms” has been allotted by 1; the “b” option – “College/University has to be closed until new medicine will come, think first about life then education” has been allotted by 2 and the “c” option – “All College/University activities should run through electronically” has been allotted by 3 value. In Fig. 2 it has been found that except Age group of 26 years all age categories mean values are between 2.00 to below 2.50. It means the average students in all age groups are with option “b”. Average of them have wanted – “College/University has to be closed until new medicine will come, think first about life then education”. Only Age 26 category wants to opt “c” option – “All College/University activities should run through electronically”. In the category there are only two student respondents; both are female. One resides in a rural area, who is a PG student, and the other resides in the city area, is a UG student. Age may be one of the reasons to select this option. It can be thought that the above UG student may have good digital accessibility as she resides in the city area. But it is found that with compare to rural (weighted mean 2.24) and urban (weighted mean 2.29) areas' students, the weighted mean of city area's student (2.15) is the lowest regarding opinions for the opening of their colleges or universities. Students of all areas want that “College/University has to be closed until new medicine will come, think first about life then education”.

Fig. 3 shows male-female mean anxiety level about completion of syllabus, examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities during three different phases of lockdown. It is found that both male and female students have to mean anxiety levels in all aspects in all phases are above 5. That means the average male and average female students have anxiety which is above the moderate anxiety level. It is interesting that average females are more worried than the average male in all phases in all aspects (Fig. 3). Out of a 10-point scale, females have felt the lowest mean anxiety (6.71) during phase I on completion of syllabus and have felt the highest mean anxiety (7.53) during phase III on placement opportunities, among their all mean anxieties in different situations. In the same way, out of the 10-point scale, males have felt the lowest mean anxiety (5.04) during phase I on placement opportunities and have felt the highest mean anxiety (6.64) during phase III on completion of syllabus, among their all mean anxieties in different situations.

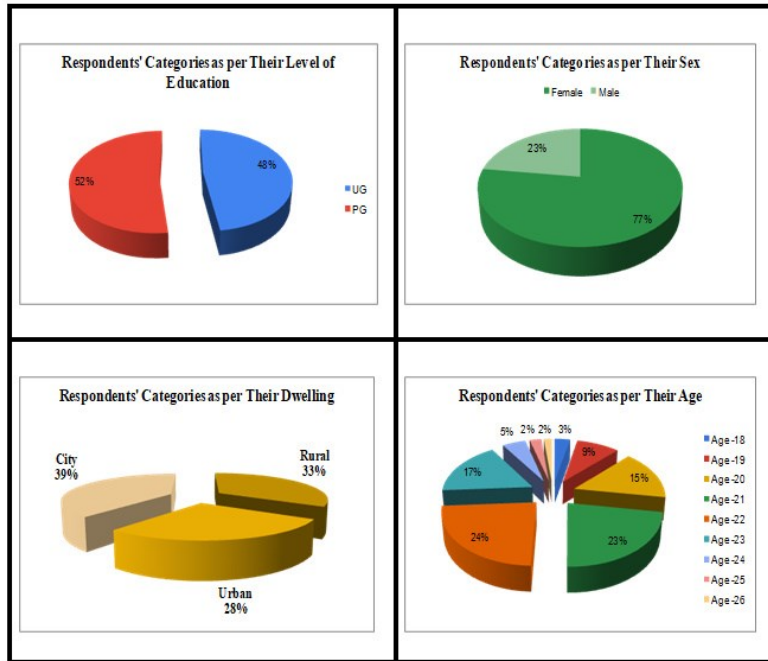


Fig. 1: Respondents' categories as per their level of education, sex, dwelling, and age (Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey)

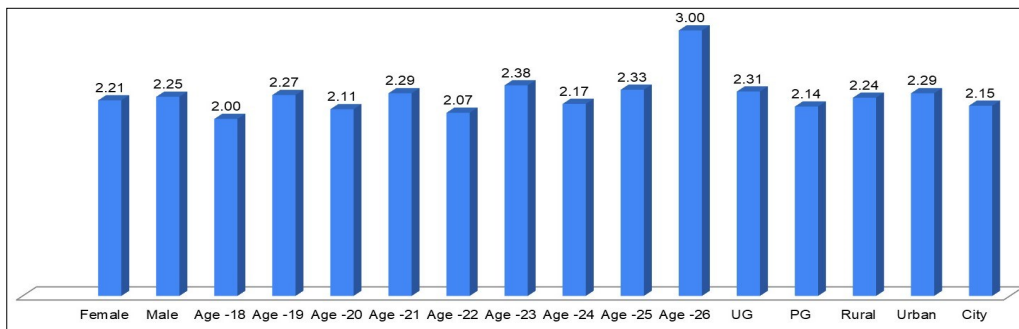


Fig. 2: Category-wise mean opinions about opening of their institutions (Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey)

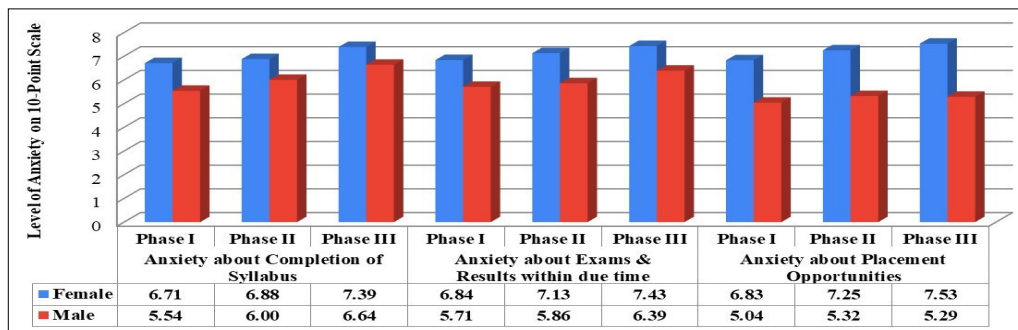
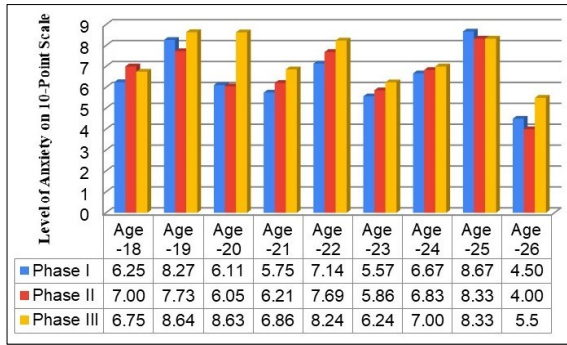
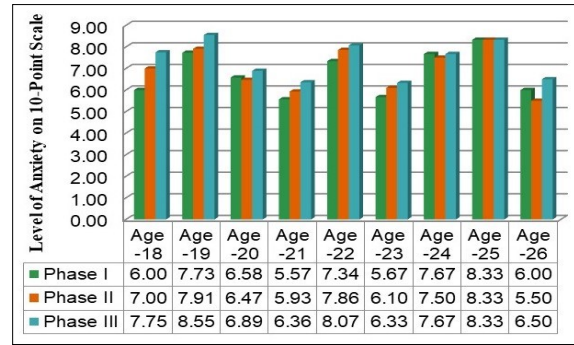


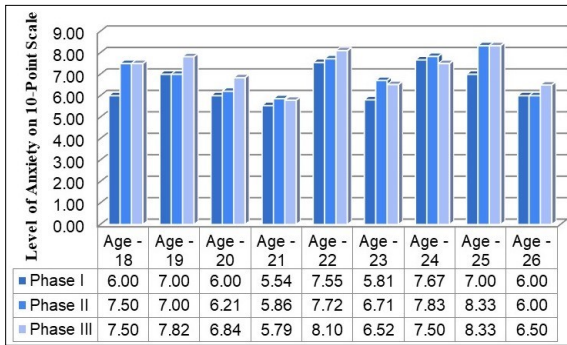
Fig. 3: Male-female mean anxiety level about completion of syllabus, examinations & results with in due time and placement opportunities during different phases of lockdown (Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey)



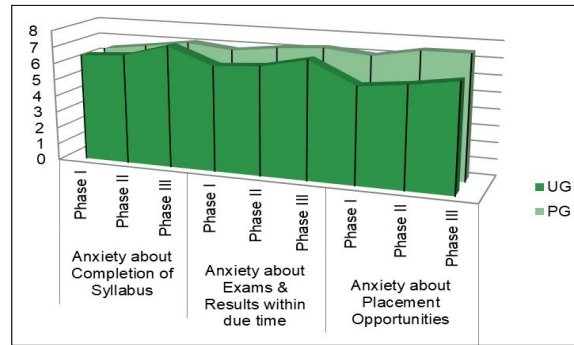
**Fig. 4: Age-wise mean anxiety level about completion of syllabus during different phases of lockdown**  
(Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey )



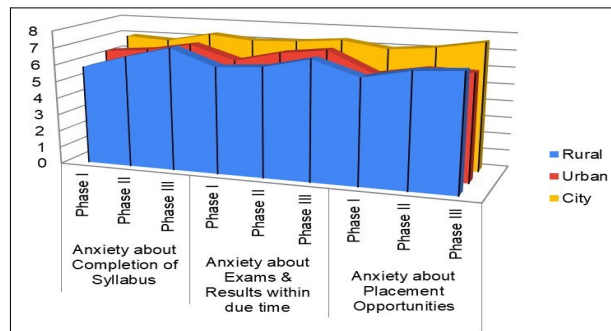
**Fig. 5: Age-wise mean anxiety level about examinations & results within due time during different phases of lockdown**  
(Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey )



**Fig. 6: Age-wise mean anxiety level about placement opportunities during different phases of lockdown**  
(Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey )



**Fig. 7: Shows education level-wise mean anxiety level about completion of syllabus, examinations & results with in due time and placement opportunities during different phases of lockdown**  
(Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey )



**Fig. 8: Shows residence-wise mean anxiety level about completion of syllabus, examinations & results with in due time and placement opportunities during different phases of lockdown**  
(Fig. Source: Online Questionnaire Survey )

It is also viewed ( Fig. 4) that about completion of syllabus, all age categories of students have anxious above moderate mean anxiety levels excepts Age 26, particularly in phase I and phase II. Age 19, 20, 22 and 25 groups have felt more restless than other age groups about completion of syllabus. During 3 phases age 25 group students have felt more nervous. They have scored above 8 out of 10 points. Almost all age groups nervousness about completion of syllabus is increasing as phases increase.

It is also viewed (Fig. 5) that about examinations and results within due time, all age categories of students have anxiety above moderate mean anxiety. Age 19, 22, 24, and 25 groups have felt more restless than other age groups on examinations and results within due time. During 3 phases, age 25 group students have felt more nervous. Their mean score is above 8 out of 10 points. Almost all age-groups' nervousness about examinations and results within due time is increasing as phases increase.

It is also viewed (Fig. 6) that all age categories of students have more anxiety about future placement opportunities. They have scored above moderate mean anxiety, i.e., above 5. Students in the age of 18, 19, 22, 24, and 25 years have felt twitchier than other age groups on placement opportunities. During 3 phases, students in the age of 19, 22, 24, and 25 years have felt more nervous. Their mean score is above 7 out of 10 points. Almost all age groups' nervousness about the scope of placement in the future is increasing as phases increase.

Fig. 7 shows UG and PG level-wise mean anxiety level about completion of syllabus, examinations & results with due time and placement opportunities during different lockdown phases. It is found that both UG and PG students have to mean anxiety levels in all aspects during all phases are above 5. That means the average of them is above the moderate anxiety level. It is revealed that PG students are more worried than UG students in all phases about examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities. In both UG and PG students, their nervousness about completion of syllabus, examinations & results within due time, and placement opportunities are increasing as phases increase.

Fig. 8 shows the mean anxiety level of students dwelling in rural, urban, and city areas in West Bengal, about completion of syllabus, examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities during different phases of lockdown. It is found that both students of all areas have mean anxiety levels in all aspects during all phases are above 5. That means, the average of them is above the moderate anxiety level. It is also revealed that city students are more worried than rural and urban students in all phases about all aspects. In case of anxiety about placement, urban students are less anxious than others.

#### **4.0 Discussion:**

Snowball sampling technique has been applied in this study to collect the primary data, under that sudden lockdown situation by reason of pandemic, for addressing students' opinion to run their institutions, for measuring the anxiety level regarding their syllabus, examinations & results and placements, and finally for finding out a suitable way to run the academic activities under the situation. In this snowball sample, 123 student respondents in total have participated. The major findings from this study are -

- The main motive of the study to get the students' opinions for the opening of their institutions under this pandemic situation. It has been found that except age group of 26 years, all categories' mean values are between 2.00 to below 2.50. That means the average of them have wanted that their institutions have to be closed until new medicine will come. They have thought first about life than education. Though students of city area have demanded lesser than students of other areas in this issue, all students have wanted their Colleges / Universities to be closed until new medicine will come.
- In case of male-female mean anxiety level on the issues of completion of syllabus, examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities during three different phases of lockdown, it is found that the average male and the average female students have anxieties which are above the moderate anxiety level; and females are more anxious than male in all phases in all issues.
- According to age categories, it is also viewed that students aged 19, 20, 22 and 25 years have felt more restless than other age groups about completion of syllabus. During 3 phases, students aged 25 years have felt more nervous.
- Though during all phases, students aged 25 have felt the highest anxiety, it is also viewed that students aged 19, 22, 24 and 25 years have felt more restless than other age groups on examinations and results with in due time.
- During 3 phases, students aged 19, 22, 24 and 25 years have felt more nervousness about their placement.
- It is found that both UG and PG students have mean anxiety which is above the moderate level, and at the same time, PG students are more anxious than UG students in all phases about examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities.
- It is also found that both students of all areas have mean anxiety levels in all aspects during all phases are above the moderate anxiety level. It is also revealed that city students are more worried than rural and urban students in all phases about all issues. In case of anxiety about placement, urban students are less anxious than others.
- Almost all age groups' nervousness about completion of syllabus, examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities have been increased phase-wise.

### **5.0 Conclusion:**

It is very difficult to give suitable suggestions under this situation. Here also has arisen the same debate - life versus livelihood. That means option "b" i.e. "College has to be closed until new medicine will come, think first about life then education" versus "reduction of anxieties on completion of syllabus, examinations & results within due time and placement opportunities". All stakeholders of the higher education sector have to adopt such policies that can remove their beloved students' anxieties, particularly for those who are digitally, economically, and socially weak. Some of the measures maybe

- For completing their syllabus to involve mass students, from city to rural area, from economically backward class to upper class, television and radio may be a media in future
- A teacher should become a teacher for his local surroundings where he lives in lieu of a teacher of a particular college or university



- Motivate the general students to admit themselves in nearer colleges or universities so that they can avail laboratory and library facilities
- Give subsidy to the weaker students to remove social, economic, and digital weaknesses.
- If possible, transfer the teachers to a place nearer to their residence.
- Make yourself “vocal for local.”

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