

# **Outlive Chat – A Chat-Based Peer Support Program for Urban Youth Suicide Prevention in India**

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## **Introduction**

Suicide is the single leading cause of death in young people aged 15-29 years in India. There are multiple triggers for suicide among youth in India, some of which include academic stress, discrimination based on caste, gender and sexuality, breakdown of intimate relationships, unemployment and financial distress. Young people also experience barriers in seeking support such as stigma, high-costs, lack of awareness, lack of acceptable support resources, and confidentiality. Currently, there are few suicide prevention programs in India which specifically address the needs of a diverse youth population. This abstract presents Outlive – a suicide prevention program which engages with urban youth aged 18-24 years in India by leveraging technology to provide chat-based peer support to youth in distress or having thoughts of ending their life.

## **Experiences**

Existing evidence points towards youth preferences for anonymous and chat-based modalities while receiving emotional support. Drawing from this evidence, the Outlive team engaged with 48 youth from diverse backgrounds through co-design workshops to identify the essential ingredients of a tech-based peer support program for youth suicide prevention. The team also consulted with youth peer supporters, suicide prevention helplines, data privacy and technology experts.

Outlive Chat is a free and anonymous web application providing a safe space for young people experiencing distress or suicidal thoughts. The platform connects users with trained peer supporters

aged 18-24, who offer emotional support, assess suicide risk, de-escalate crises, and provide linkages to psychosocial services. Peer supporters undergo rigorous training and receive ongoing mentoring and supervision to ensure service quality and safeguard both users and volunteers. The program is monitored through pre and post training assessments, fidelity checklist for peer support skills, qualitative feedback from volunteers, traffic on the web-app, voluntary 4-point rating on chat support received, and qualitative feedback provided by young people receiving support.

## **Conclusion**

Between August 2023 to December 2024, 152 young people trained in providing chat-based peer support have accepted over 1500 requests for support, including young people who had thoughts of attempting suicide or have attempted suicide. Young people have shared that Outlive Chat helped them feel better, heard and supported. Young people trained as peer supporters appreciated the “inclusive and practical nature of the training”, and the impact of the training and practice chat sessions on strengthening their competencies to provide chat-based emotional support. By combining elements of technology and peer support, Outlive Chat seeks to address stigma around help-seeking, anonymity, and providing a youth-centric service for suicide prevention support. Chat-based peer support seems to be an acceptable model of support for youth in distress and may be considered among the strategies needed to address growing concerns around youth distress and suicide prevention, globally.