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## ACADEMIC STRESS AND SUICIDAL IDEATION CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH AMONG COACHING STUDENTS

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### Abstract

Suicide and academic stress are one of the leading causes of death in coaching students, making it a notable public health concern on coaching centers. Mental health stigma entrenched risk factors for engaging in suicidal thoughts and suicidal behaviors. Adolescents entering a competitive world are confronted with multiple challenges. Our education system has loaded the students with a variety of pressures such as broad curriculum, examination fear, neck-to-neck competitions, etc. through which Peer pressure, parent expectations, and constraints add up in abundance to their problems. Thousands of adolescents typically in the 16-20 age group live in rented homes in various cities with virtually no contact with parents in faraway towns. By which they are overwhelmed and stress themselves, which affects their performance, and then they look for easy ways to escape their problems; thus, suicidal ideations come to their mind. Nowadays, coaching classes have become ubiquitous in the lives of students. It is impossible to imagine students' lives without them. After school over, students straight away head to the coaching classes, where an already fatigued mind learns less than its ability. The present study aimed to assist the impact of academic stress and suicidal ideation on mental health among adolescents. The samples of 140 students were chosen from the Coaching Institute in Aligarh for whom the academic stress, suicidal ideation, and mental health scales were administered. The prevalence of suicidal ideation was higher in coaching students, and their effects on mental health were visible in the result. Regulations must be put in place to address the issues of the current education system, anxieties over qualifying competitive exams, children with suicidal ideation should be given more priority by the parents, teachers, coaching and public health authorities.

**Keywords:** Suicidal Ideation, Stress, Mental Health

Academic stress involves mental distress regarding upcoming academic challenges, failures, or even an anticipated academic failure. During the school years, academic stressors and suicidal ideation may show in many aspects of the child's environment: home, school, neighborhood, or friendships. In Indian culture, the family unit has both a positive and a negative impact on suicide. The family serves as a protective factor that provides strong support for the individual. Still, some Indian families don't believe it to be a real problem in the child's life, which furthermore complicates the situation. Due to the stigma, Indians families typically perceive having a mental illness as shameful and thus undermine their child's mental health. The major problems being that the suicides are underreported and misdiagnosed; in India, it is known that the highest rates are among those <30 years old. Banerjee's report (2001) that every year about 25,000 students in a large group of 18 to 20 years commit suicide during the examination month (i.e., March to June). Toero, Nagy, Sawaguchi, and Sotonyi (2001) argued that there is a secure link between the pressure to excel in school and suicidal behaviors among adolescents. Worldwide, nearly one million deaths each year are caused by suicide (World Health Organization WHO, 2012). Young people are more vulnerable to suicidal behaviors (WHO, 2012). The latest data in India (National Crime Records Bureau-NCRB, 2015) report that more than one lakh persons (1,33,623) in the country lost their lives by committing suicide during the year 2015 and around 32.8% suicide victims were youths in the age group of 18 to below 30 years. About 7% of suicide victims were below 18 years. Among the specified causes, 'family problems' (307), 'Illness' (163), and 'failure in examination' (162) were the leading causes of suicides among children (below 14 years of age). 'Family Problems' was the primary cause of suicides, which accounted for 27.6% of total suicides during 2015.

Expectations of parents, peer pressure, interpersonal problems, academic anxiety, concern for the future, and home environment are some of the stressful issues faced by adolescents, which affects their mental health and leads to suicidal



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ideation. Students feel the effects of academic stress in a harsh and probably harmful way. Some effects include a low marks, depression, general fatigue, and aggression. Studies show that academic stress and anxiety during adolescence may even harm mental health, too. Academic stress affects the human body physically. It can also damage a person's emotional well-being, as well. Even academic stress level affects the students academically and changes the way the person thinks and acts during school or while studying. Close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year, which is one person every 40 seconds. Suicide is a global phenomenon and occurs throughout the lifespan and is the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year old's globally. The coaching institutes advertise to aim for the government's run institute based on their successful track record of previous students. However, what they don't tell that for every successful student, a thousand others did not cut. As many people now move towards secondary to higher education, they faced stiff competitions and less availability of seats in a government-run institute, which drives the force behind a toxic atmosphere at the coaching institute. The fear of letting their parent's expectations, peer pressure, and low self-esteem drive students to suicide.

The education system in India is highly vast and competitive because of a lack of an adequate number of government-run institutions to accommodate the ever-expanding population of youth. Students are pressured to perform well in their 10<sup>th</sup>-grade board examination as they are told their academic future depends upon it, and so is the case with 12<sup>th</sup>-grade board examination as well, which results in anxiety and depression—thus affecting their performance, especially when compared to other students who have faced less stressing situations and at our stage of better mental health. India is a hub of engineering and medicine coaching centers nearly 1.5 lakh aspirants from all over India each year come to attend various courses in coaching institutions and face stiff competitions. Still, in their youth, the students leave behind their families, friends, and relatives for a better future. In India there's a dark side to this maniacal aspiration of putting adolescents in a competition which is far beyond their capacity and ability. Ashok Misra committee submitted a report to the HRD ministry in 2015. In this report, they proposed to set up a regulatory mechanism of secondary education. The responsibility of evolving such a device also falls upon the states. The government's efforts aside, students must realize that not getting admission in a renowned institute should not be the reason to end one's life and is not worth it.

## Review of Literature

Studies on academic stress and suicidal ideation have great importance in the present era and have become an essential topic in academic circles. In 2012, Kota there were more than 60 suicides of students enrolled in various coaching centers. O'Carroll et al. (1996) defined suicidal ideation as one's wish, thoughts, and a desire to end his/her own life. Jena and Siddharta (2004) reviewed articles on non-fatal suicidal attempts of adolescents in both Indian and international literature. They concluded that effective management and proper evolution is required in non-fatal suicides cases to avoid there rise in numbers and can be avoided to a great extent. Juon et al. examined factors contributing to suicidal behaviors in 9,886 high school Korean adolescents and found that students who reported a high level of academic pressure and stress were more vulnerable to suicidal thoughts than the ones who showed little or no such influence. Kaur (2014) revealed that girls are affected when under academic pressure and share poor mental health status as compared to that their counterparts. Deb (2015) indicated that there is a positive correlation among students' academic stress, parental pressure, and psychiatric problems, especially in the Indian context. Tata Institute of Social Sciences revealed surprising report for parents guiding them, to deal with their children facing Self-harm, substance abuse, bullying, sexual experimentation and the possibility of pregnancy, sleep-related issues, loneliness, weight loss, acidity, and anxiety which are most likely to be found among students in Kota. According to the report, there were 49 deaths alone in Navodaya Vidyalaya schools in the last five years, and of three students preparing for IIT entrance exam in four days, brings the issue of youth suicides to the fore again. More adolescents are taking their lives due to the fear and pressure of failing in examinations.

## Objectives

- To investigate the significant difference between means of academic stress, suicidal ideation concerning mental health among boys and girls.



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- To determine the significant difference between means of academic stress, suicidal ideation to the mental health of NEET and IIT students.
- To highlight and determine the relationship between academic stress, suicidal ideation concerning the mental health of adolescents

## Hypotheses

Ho: There will be no significant difference in academic stress and suicidal ideation concerning mental health among boys and girls.

Ho: There will be no significant difference in academic stress and suicidal ideation concerning mental health among NEET and IIT coaching students.

Ho: There will be no significant difference in academic stress and suicidal ideation among adolescents.

## METHOD

**Study settings and duration:** This study was conducted in a coaching institute based cross-sectional study conducted in Aligarh.

**Research design:** The present research study used quantitative research method and used primary data. Complex regression research design visualizes to examine the association and relationship among variables.

**Sample Size:** The sample of the present study consisted of 140 adolescent students (70 males and 70 females) through purposive sampling. The age of the subjects ranged from 15 to 20 years.

**Inclusion criteria:** 1. The adolescent participants were selected from coaching institute. 2.The participants age was between 16 to 19years. 3.Those who were willing to cooperate as subjects were included.4. The participants were selected on the basis of two courses in coaching institute (NEET and IIT).

**Exclusion criteria:** 1 Students below 16 years and above 19 years of age were not included.2. Students who left at least statements blank in the scales; their responses were not considered for data analysis.

**Statistical analysis:** The data was analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. Mean and Standard Deviations (SD), t test and Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis using stepwise selection method were used.

## Measures

Apart from demographic questionnaire following measures were used:

The Scale for Suicidal Ideation (SSI): Suicidal ideation among the students was assessed with the help of a 19 item self-report Scale for Suicidal Ideation, developed by Beck et al. (1979). The SSI was designed to quantify the intensity of conscious suicidal intention by scaling various dimensions of self-harm thoughts or wishes. The items state the magnitude of suicidal thoughts, and their characteristics and desire of them want to die. Cronbach alpha was .89, which indicates the



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high reliability of SSI. The validity of SSI was also indicated by the moderate correlations with clinical ratings of suicidal risk and self-harm (Beck et al., 1979).

Academic Stress (Revised Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents. Sun, Dunne, Hou & Xu 2011) developed instrument to measure academic stress—the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA). The ESSA contains five dormant variables: "pressure from study, workload, and worry about grades, self-expectation, and despondency. “This scale comprised 16 statements measured using a 5-point range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with a higher score as 80 and lower score as 16.

### Analysis & Interpretations

**Table 1: Differences in Academic Stress and Suicidal Ideation among Males and females (N=140)**

	Male (n=70)		Females (n=70)				
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t		P-value
Academic Stress	51.55	10.1	53.41	7.94	1.20		0.05*
Suicidal Ideation	9.5	8.84	5.29	4.14	.87		0.12

- Significant at 0.05 level

From the result of table 1, the outcomes of independent sample t-test display that the Mean score of academic stress in males is 51.55, SD= 10.1, and in females is 53.41 SD= 7.94. The mean score of suicidal ideations in males is 9.5, SD=8.84, and in females is 5.29, SD=4.14. It is evident from the table that the t- value between the mean scores of males and females is significant at 0.05 levels. This shows that there is a significant difference in academic stress and suicidal ideation among males and females. So, our hypothesis stands rejected. In the above table, it reflects that academic pressure is higher among females than males. But suicidal ideation is higher among males. Both of these variables are affecting mental health.

**Table 2: Differences in Academic Stress, Suicidal Ideation Mental Health among NEET and IIT (N=140)**

	NEET n=70		IIT n=70			
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t	p-value
Academic Stress	54.80	8.004	50.17	9.63	3.02	0.05*
Suicidal ideation	10.15	3.73	8.22	5.44	0.96	0.05*

- Significant at 0.05 level

From the result of table 2, the outcomes of independent sample t-test display that the Mean score of academic Stress in NEET students is 54.80. SD= 8.004 and IIT students is 50.41 SD= 9.43. The mean score of suicidal ideations in males is



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10.15, SD=3.73, and in females is 8.22, SD=5.44. It is evident from the table that the t- value between the mean scores of NEET and IIT students is significant at 0.05 levels. It shows that there is a significant difference in academic stress and suicidal ideation of NEET and IIT. So, our hypothesis stands rejected. In the above table, it reflects that academic stress is higher among NEET than IIT students, and suicidal ideation is also higher among females. Both of these variables are affecting mental health.

**Table 3:** Showing a summary of stepwise Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for variables predicting mental health among adolescents studying in coaching.

X1=

Predictor variables	$\beta$	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	F	t	p	f <sup>2</sup>
<b>Adjustment</b>					<b>Model Y1 = a+<math>\beta</math>3X3</b>			
X <sub>1</sub>	0.176	0.176	0.031	0.031	4.417	2.102	.037	.0319
<b>Constant</b>					<b>13.246</b>			

### Academic Stress, Y= Mental Health

In Table 3, A linear regression model was developed by considering academic stress and suicidal ideation as predictors of mental health (criterion). Out of the two variables, only academic stress emerged as a significant predictor of mental health. R<sup>2</sup> = 0.031, F (1,479) =15.65, p< 0.01. The results obtained indicated that academic stress explained 3% of the variance in the mental health of adolescent students and was supported at p < 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, this result supports the hypothesis that the regression coefficient for predicting mental health through academic stress and suicidal ideation will be other than zero. It confirms that the slope of the regression line was not zero and that the changes in the predictor variable will decrease the criterion variable by  $\beta$ =.176 units. Hence, academic effort predicts the mental well-being of adolescent students. Further, Cohen's effect size value (f<sup>2</sup> = 0.0319) suggested a high strength of association of academic stress affects the mental health of adolescent students.

### Discussion

The present research was conducted to explore the relationship between Academic stresses, suicidal ideation about mental health. Furthermore, the research was intended to assess NEET and IIT courses' effect on academic stress and suicidal ideation. The hypothesis was developed before the study based on past research. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relation between academic stress and suicidal ideation among students. The results of our study showed that there exists a relationship between academic stress, suicidal ideation about mental health. In regression table academic stress is unique predictor of mental health. Even in table NEET aspirants has severe academic stress among students. From the above-obtained data, the majority of female students are under higher levels of academics' stress, mental health, and suicidal ideation than male students. The obtained results appear to agree with the conclusions drawn in several earlier studies investigating anxiety, mental health as well as suicidal ideation among students of a different group. Almeida and Kessler (1998) assessed the experience of daily stressors and psychological distress among male and female subjects. They concluded that females experienced a higher performance of high pain as compared to males. Brougham, Zail, Mendoza & Miller (2009) also found that college women reported a higher overall level of stress. Ozgan et al. reported that female students experienced more stress than male students.

But the majority of NEET students are under higher levels of academics' stress, mental health, and suicidal ideation than IIT students. The present study findings reveal that academic stress and suicidal ideation are comparatively higher among the students of professional courses. Singh and Singh (2008) had also reported that professional



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students had more stress. A cross-sectional web-based survey (2009) also reported that medical students experience depression, burn out, and mental illness at an increasing rate than the general population.

### Suggestions and Implications

The study was conducted to explore the relationship between academic stress and suicidal ideation among coaching students. This study can be beneficial in the following ways. They should take into consideration the necessary steps in developing interests and effort among students. As has been proved in the study that academic stress and suicidal ideation are negatively related to mental health among students. Teachers, a coaching institute, and parents should counsel their children during a stressful situation. Teachers' and parents' roles become more important for students. They must understand the problems of the students related to their academic stress, ability, effort, emotional and social adjustment, and other related life challenges.

### Conclusion

The youth of today are future of tomorrow. If they are not mentally fit, they will never be able to work correctly in their life. Adolescents' success in life depends much upon what they think of themselves and how much do they understand themselves. In other words, "mental balance" is the crucial factor in determining their success. The primary role of education is to develop positive thinking among students so that they can remain mentally healthy and, thus, developmental balance among themselves. So, the school teachers, coaching authorities, and parents should make an effort to concentrate on both physical health and mental health and also provide a healthy atmosphere for the children. Coaching institutions should focus on money-making rather than a duty to provide a pleasant environment in their coaching institute. This will help the students in reducing stress and make them mentally healthy. Here there is a need to develop a frequent interaction between the school and home so that it may give more positive support in helping the children to become emotionally healthy and to build self-esteem.

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