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AN ATTEMPT TO SUICIDE: ACADEMIC DISTRESS OF UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

-Harshita Singh Patel¹

Introduction

In the bustling corridors of educational institutions, a silent struggle unfolds. It's a battle fought not with swords or shields, but with pens, textbooks, and sleepless nights. The battleground? The minds of students are burdened by academic distress and the weight of unrealistic expectations. The pressure to perform excellently at school can at times become too much for some students to bear as they engage in their academic pursuits. Such distress may result into one of the most tragic outcomes being suicidal thoughts or even suicide attempts. In this blog, we delve into this crisis, its causes, and the urgent need for acknowledgement and change.

The Alarming Reality

In trendy society, the strain to attain academic excellence begins early. From a young age, children are conditioned to trust that their worth is without delay tied to their instructional overall performance. As they progress through school, this notion best intensifies, fuelled by societal norms, familial expectancies, and the aggressive nature of contemporary schooling systems. The expectation to continuously excel academically can create a massive burden on college students. They are forced to preserve high grades, take part in several extracurricular activities, and excel in standardized tests. This relentless pursuit of perfection leaves little room for failure or even the slightest deviation from the expected path.

India's youth population, comprising those below the age of 25, accounts for a staggering **53.7%** of the total population. Yet, despite this demographic dominance, a significant portion

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of our youth faces a grim reality. They grapple with academic pressures, lack employable skills, and often find themselves caught in a web of despair. According to the **National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB)**, in **2020**, a student took their own life every **42 minutes**². That's more than **34 students** per day. Shockingly, this crisis remains largely unrecognised. While farmers' suicides receive widespread attention, students' suicides are swept under the rug.

The Unseen Crisis

1. **Individualization of Suicide:** Society tends to individualize suicide, attributing it solely to personal struggles. However, suicide is a multidimensional issue, intricately linked to economic, social, cultural, psychological, and biological factors. It's time to recognise it as a public health crisis.
2. **Educational Structure under Scrutiny:** Just as farmers' suicides reflect India's agrarian crisis, students' suicides mirror a deeper malaise within our educational system. We must examine institutional structures, curricula, and the immense pressure placed on students.
3. **The Alarming Graph:** A glance at the graph below reveals the alarming rate at which students are pushed to the brink. Note that the NCRB's data on student suicides only began in **1997**, likely underreporting the true numbers due to stigma and legal consequences.

Unrealistic Expectations: The Culprit

Unrealistic expectancies play an enormous function in exacerbating these feelings of distress. Students' sense monstrous pressure to satisfy no longer their personal expectancies but also the ones imposed upon them by using others. Whether it's the preference to satisfy their mother and father's goals, stable a prestigious scholarship, or definitely maintain a perfect instructional file, the worry of falling quick looms big.

The primary underlying cause of high suicide rates among students is undoubtedly the burden of expectations. Students face immense pressure, starting with the anticipation surrounding

² Sipoy Sarveswar and Johns Thomas, *Academic Distress' and Student Suicides in India: A Crisis That Needs to be Acknowledged*, THE WIRE (June 02, 2022), [Academic Distress' and Student Suicides in India: A Crisis That Needs to be Acknowledged \(thewire.in\)](https://thewire.in/academic-distress-and-student-suicides-in-india-a-crisis-that-needs-to-be-acknowledged)

entrance exams even before their academic journey begins,” Dr Satish Kumar C.R., Consultant - Clinical Psychology, Manipal Hospital, Bengaluru. He also blamed the skyrocketing cost of education; the pervasive influence of peer pressure and the need to meet social norms. Some students also suffer from suicidal tendency due to past traumatic events.³

1. **Parental and Teacher Pressure:** Parents and teachers, with the best intentions, often heap unrealistic expectations on students. The pursuit of top grades, prestigious colleges, and lucrative careers becomes an unrelenting burden.
2. **Lack of Coping Mechanisms:** Students face intense competition, gruelling schedules, and a constant fear of failure. When coping mechanisms are lacking, despair sets in.
3. **Normalization of Distress:** The unchecked societal pressure normalizes distress. Anxiety becomes a constant companion, and hopelessness seeps into young hearts.

Today’s world places a great deal of emphasis on educational achievement. Children, from an early age, are brought up with a mentality that is dependent on their success in school. As they ascend from one grade to another, this perception becomes stronger propelled by societal expectations, family pressure and the current competitive education systems. This burden of always been at the top academically could be very heavy on students. They have to maintain high grades, participate in extracurricular activities and do well in standardized tests all while having personal relationships, part-time jobs and other responsibilities to take care of.

Social Media in heightening expectations

Moreover, the pervasive have an effect on of social media similarly amplifies these unrealistic expectancies. Platforms like Instagram and Tik-Tok exhibit curated photographs of instructional success, portraying a skewed fact wherein anybody appears to be effortlessly excelling. This consistent contrast can be detrimental to students' mental fitness, fostering emotions of inadequacy and self-doubt.⁴

In the face of such overwhelming stress, some college students might also see suicide as the most effective manner out. They may additionally feel trapped in a continuing cycle of instructional strain and accept as true that finishing their lifestyles is the simplest method of

³ Ians, *Societal Pressure, Unrealistic Family Expectations Major Reasons Behind Student’s Suicide: Study*, ZEE NEWS (Aug 19, 2023, 20:01 IST), <https://zeenews.india.com/health/societal-pressure-unrealistic-family-expectations-major-reasons-behind-student-s-suicide-study-2650995/amp>

getting away. However, it's crucial to recognize that suicidal thoughts and behaviours are not a rational reaction to academic misery. However, alternatively a manifestation of deep psychological pain and suffering.

The Way Forward: A call to collective action

Furthermore, we need to create safe and supportive environments where college students feel snug searching for help whilst they are suffering. This includes decreasing the stigma surrounding intellectual health problems and offering handy sources which include counselling services, help groups, and crisis hotlines. Educators, parents, and peers alike need to be vigilant in spotting the warning signs and symptoms of misery and providing help to those in want.

1. **Holistic Approach:** Let's address this crisis holistically. Mental health support, skill development, and a flexible education system are essential.
2. **Parental Awareness:** Parents must understand that success isn't solely defined by grades. Emotional well-being matters too.
3. **Educational Reforms:** Institutions should foster creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Unrealistic expectations must yield a balanced approach.

Conclusion

As we pen down this blog, let's remember that behind every statistic lies a human story—a student grappling with despair, dreams crushed under the weight of expectations. It's time to lift the veil of silence, acknowledge the crisis, and create a nurturing environment where young minds can flourish without fear. Ultimately, addressing the academic misery of unrealistic expectations requires a collective effort from all stakeholders worried. It's now not enough to honestly renowned the trouble; we have to actively work closer to growing a way of life wherein college students experience value, supported, and empowered to thrive. By doing so, we are able to help prevent destiny tragedies and make sure that every student has the possibility to reach their full potential, each academically and for my part. Remember, empathy and understanding can save lives. Let's be the change our students desperately need.

Keywords: Academic excellence, peer pressure, suicide, family expectations, depression, mental distress.