



**Relationship between Perceived Parental Expectations and the Stress Levels of Students  
appearing for the Xth and XIIth Board Examinations**

By

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**Abstract**

*The young minds are in a fragile state. The number of suicides and attempted suicides is on the rise. With 940 cases of suicides by students in the state in 2008, West Bengal has earned the dubious distinction of being the suicide capital of the country. Maharashtra comes next with 757 cases. The latest news in Mumbai Upset and frightened over the parents reaction over poor results in the Math's, two sixth standard girls eloped from their home. A 17-year-old student hung herself, a suicide note was found stating that it was no use living as she had failed to meet the expectations of her parents. The following paper is an attempt to find out if parental expectations are one of the causes of the increasing stress levels in the adolescence which is driving them to take such drastic steps.*

**Keywords:- Parental Expectations, Stress, Adolescence, Suicides**

## **Introduction**

Education means that process of development in which consists the passage of human being from infancy to maturity, the process whereby he gradually adapts himself in various ways to his physical, social and spiritual environment.

The young minds are in a fragile state. The number of suicides and attempted suicides is on the rise. With 940 cases of suicides by students in the state in 2008, West Bengal has earned the dubious distinction of being the suicide capital of the country. Maharashtra comes next with 757 cases. The latest news in Mumbai Upset and frightened over the parents reaction over poor results in the Math's, two sixth standard girls eloped from their home. A 17-year-old student hung herself, a suicide note was found stating that it was no use living as she had failed to meet the expectations of her parents .Exam stress, parental expectations, peer competition; pressures attributed to driving school children overboard has become a reason for concern amongst parents, doctors and school authorities. Few parents get to understand the problem their children go through and take them for professional counseling; others realize it only after losing their children.

## **Concept of Stress**

Children's' life today is no lesser than living on the edge. They scamper through the year with unit tests, assignments, tuitions and projects. Extra-curricular activities, sports, dance, drawing, acting and other classes occupy their weekends. And competition follows them there too. A busy academic year offers them hardly any breathing space and during exams, the stress levels touch their zenith. Vacations seldom provide any respite, as some workshop or seminar is already planned by the parents especially the working parents. Excellence is the only yardstick they are measured with. Recent teenagers' suicides throw up many questions about this demanding educational system as well as parents.Exam and stress go hand-in-hand, and the number of students taking to extreme measures to evade this stress is alarming!

## **CONCEPT OF PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS**

Parental expectations are on a constant rise. It is often seen that parental pressure to figure amongst the star list leads to disastrous effects on their children. Many cases of extreme depression and suicidal attempts amongst children before or after their board examination have been brought into light in the recent past. Adding competitive edge to everything has made things worse, Sports,

drawing, swimming and dance are not anymore recreational activities. For example, if a kid is a good signer or a dancer, parents want to watch their ward on a TV show or participate in some contest. A child also starts expecting more from self. And when things don't fall into place, the child cannot take pressure.

## **PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AND STRESS**

In an urge to fulfill their own dreams, parents often choose to ignore the aptitude of the child, and force them to attain academic excellence, thus leaving them with unreasonable stress.

Most parents come to counselors with complaints that their children are not concentrating on studies. Ironically, during counseling, it is often found that such pressure puts children under a lot of stress and anxiety, leading them to fare even worse in exams. Such conditions lead to depression if not treated on time. Many end up developing suicidal tendencies.

### **Need of the research**

Teenager suicide is one of the dangerous trends the society is witnessing. A Union Health Ministry survey says that depression, anxiety and stress are higher during board exams. There are a number of stressors children come in contact with. Be it competition which is at its peak, exposure to television or the internet, but Parental pressure seems to be one of the major reasons. Parents have unrealistic expectations from their wards. Also parents do not try to understand the true inclinations of their children. This study will help to identify the components of parental expectations that cause stress in students appearing for the Xth and XIIth board exams. Consequently, effective measures can be suggested to the parents to help them to reduce stress in their children.

### **Statement of the Problem :**

The effect of perceived parental expectations on the stress levels of students appearing for the Xth and XIIth board examinations.

### **Operational Definitions**

**Parental Expectations :**In the present study Parental Expectation is defined as the anticipation that the parents make about their children's academic performance.

**Perceived Parental Expectation:** In the present study Perceived Parental Expectation is defined as the interpretation of the Parental Expectation by the student.

**Stress:** In the present study Stress is defined as the presence of the Psychological Symptoms such as Anxiety, Depression, Behavioural and Emotional Patterns.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To ascertain the relationship between the perceived parental expectations and the stress levels among the students appearing for the Xth and XIIth board examinations.

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

There is no significant relationship between the perceived parental expectations and the stress levels of the students appearing for the Xth and XIIth board examinations.

### **Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

In the present study the researcher is studying the effect of the perceived parental expectation on stress level of the students appearing for X & XII Board exams in English medium schools in Greater Mumbai. The present study is restricted to the perceived parental expectation only of the students. The researcher has not interacted with the parents to determine whether the perceived parental expectations are real or not.

### **Method of the study**

For the present investigation the survey and correlational method of research has been used.

### **Sample**

For the present study the research has studied 145 students of std. X & XII of English medium schools in Greater Mumbai.

### **Sampling Technique**

Stratified sampling was used to select the sample.

### **Tools for the Data Collection**

The following tools were prepared by the researcher for the present study:

### **TOOL TO MEASURE PERCEIVED PARENTAL EXPECTATION.**

The tool measures the perceived parental expectations by the presence or absence and the analysis of the following components of parental expectations from the perspective of student:

Decision about the coaching classes, choice of profession, attitude towards extracurricular & recreational activities, parental satisfaction of students performance, parental behaviour during exams, kind of communication between students and parents.

The tool contains 18 items. Of these, 9 are positively worded items and 6 are negatively worded items. It also contains 3 open – ended questions.

### **TOOL TO MEASURE STRESS LEVEL.**

The tool was adapted from the “Brief Stress & Coping Inventory” prepared by Richard Rahe in 1998. The tool measures the following components of stress among the students:

Psychological Symptoms related to stress such as :

Anxiety, Depression, Behavioural and Emotional Patterns related to stress such as :Work behaviours, Speed, Outlook, Assertion and Emotions. The tool contains 20 items. There are all positively worded.

### **Scoring Patterns**

The scoring pattern for the tool to measure Perceived Parental Expectation are as follows :

For the positively worded items :

'Yes' response = 1

'No' response = 0

For the negatively worded items :

'Yes' response = 0

'No' response = 1

The scoring pattern for the tool to measure Stress Levels among students are as follows :

For the positively worded items :

'Yes' response = 1

'No' response = 0

Analysis of data consists of :

Inferential analysis:-The Co-efficient of correlation 'r' was used for the inferential analysis.

**Major Findings:-**

***Hypothesis :***

There is no significant relationship between the perceived parental expectations and the stress levels of the students appearing for the Xth and XIIth board examinations.

The statistical technique used to test this hypothesis was the Pearson's Product Moment Co-efficient of correlation.

The following table shows the significance of the 'r' for the Perceived Parental Expectation and Stress Levels of the total sample.

**Table No. 1.1**

Significance of the 'r' for the Perceived Parental Expectation and Stress Levels of the total sample.

N	Df	r	Los
45	43	0.38	0.05

From the above table we can see the tabulated 'r' is lesser than the obtained 'r'. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship in the Perceived Parental Expectations and the Stress Levels among the Students appearing for the Xth and XIIth board examinations. The obtained 'r' value is positive, which indicates that there is a direct relationship in the Perceived Parental Expectations and the Stress Levels of the total sample. The value of the obtained 'r' is '0.38', which indicates that the relationship is low in magnitude.

**Discussion and Suggestions :**

Exam and stress go hand-in-hand, and the number of students taking to extreme measures to evade this stress is alarming! Parents and members of the family play a pivotal role in the success and smooth sailing of the students during the examination period. Parents can help their children strike the right balance. Here are some suggestions for the parents.

**Exploring other options**

In a highly competitive atmosphere, the need for certain number of marks is inevitable. But what parents need to realize is that unlike what it was earlier, a whole new world of career options has opened up. While earlier the options were limited to a few fields like medicine, engineering and law, but today there are plenty of options ranging from VJ to a hairstylist, to an RJ - all these are equally fulfilling and successful careers.

### **Provide a Congenial and accepting environment**

Parental expectations and their attempt to achieve their dreams through their children is one of the greatest source of tension. It's important to provide children with a congenial environment that encourages them to speak up frankly. The parents must set the example of a positive attitude themselves. Family must provide the strong assurance of the 'safety net', irrespective of any failure or poor performance. Avoid counting success only in terms of marks, parents need to acknowledge the sincere efforts the child puts in than the marks scored.

### **Set realistic expectations**

One of the most important ways to prepare is having realistic expectations. Parents should know their child's abilities and accordingly set goals for their children.

### **Stay calm**

Children see how their parents react to setbacks and disappointments. If they see the parent getting wound up, unable to cope, exaggerating horrors of a failure, then there is a high likelihood that children also react in a similar fashion. It is important to make children realize that career is only a part of life, and does not constitute their entire life. When the child sees that the parent means what he/she says, the likelihood of him/her remaining calm during exams increases.

### **Don't hesitate to Take help if need be**

If a child shows signs of depression like stays alone, doesn't go out to play and lacks interest in things they earlier enjoyed or if there is persistent anxiety which does not ebb in spite of reassurance of the parents, they must seek professional help.

### **Avoid comparisons :**



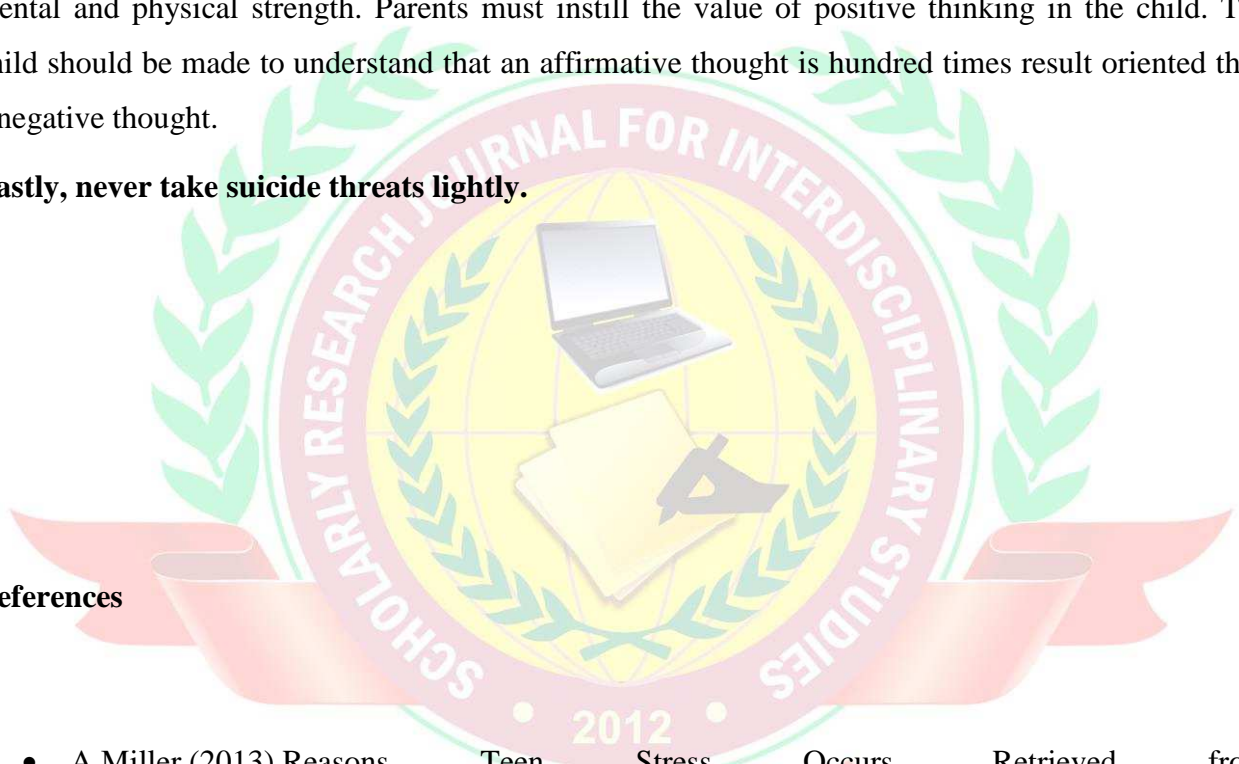
Parents need to be more sympathetic towards their children. They must throw away the role model picture of the perfect child. Parents need to understand that every child is an unique individual and should not be compared or rated. They should be valued according to and for their strengths.

### **Be there for the child**

Build a good rapport with your child such that the child looks at you as a friend is not afraid to share anything with you be it good or bad. The child should be encouraged and given immense moral, mental and physical strength. Parents must instill the value of positive thinking in the child. The child should be made to understand that an affirmative thought is hundred times result oriented than a negative thought.

**Lastly, never take suicide threats lightly.**

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