Conclusion

This study is a revelation to educationists and parents about the ravaging effects of academic pressure on adolescents in secondary schools.

The study identified four perceptions of pressure – PPPD, PPPE, CPPD and CPPE. It also identified beliefs of parents about the aims of education to be status, knowledge, money and all-round mental development. The study found that parental beliefs about aims of education did not affect the pressure exerted by them on their children on a daily basis as well as during examination time. In particular, parents exert most pressure on their children on a daily basis if they believe in knowledge to be the aim of education. This is perhaps, because most parents feel that knowledge is the real outcome of education and it could be their conviction that a knowledgeable person is most revered in society and is able to meet with success in life. At examination time the priority for parental pressure changes. Parents who believe in status exert most pressure. This fact seems obvious when we look at the newspapers portraying photographs and academic results of successful candidates who have secured high marks and who hold a higher aspiration of getting into institutions of higher education of their choice- a matter of greater pride and status not only for themselves but even for their parents. Even in the lower classes, good academic results are a great reason for parents to boast about their children’s success and ability thus enhancing their status. Not only this, good results also mean better opportunities for good jobs. Therefore, it is only too evident why parents who believe in status to be the main aim of education exert most pressure at examination time. But, both on a daily basis and during examination time, parents who believe in all-round mental development as the aim of education seem to exert minimum pressure on their children. This seems logical because there are parents who do not pressurize children only for academic attainments but who believe that education should develop all aspects of a child – physical, mental, social, emotional and the like. They believe that apart from academics, their child should also participate in co-curricular activities and even excel in these activities like sports, dance, drama, literary activities, art and craft etc. Such parents will not exert pressure on their
children for study alone. For them education means gaining wisdom and developing in a balanced fashion.

However, parents’ perception of pressure both on a daily basis and during examination time does vary significantly according to their belief about the aim of education. But according to the child’s perception of parental pressure, both on a daily basis and during examination time, parental pressure does not vary significantly according to parental belief about aims of education. Perhaps, the reason could be that a child fails to understand what his or her parents’ desire about the aim of education.

When referring to the psycho-social aspects of development, it was found that girls’ social maturity, achievement motivation and moral judgement mean scores are higher than that of boys. It is not only parental pressure but even according to the law of nature, a girl matures faster than a boy. This fact is revealed by this study. Girls have to handle family members, in-laws and even as a mother she has a mentor role for her children. Therefore, higher social maturity and morality develop — they are even more attached to their parents and hence more obedient. Boys, by nature, are more carefree, they have to face the society and the world at large more than the girls and therefore, perhaps, they believe in moulding their behaviour according to the situation they face. High moral values do not seem to pay all the time and therefore, their values change accordingly.

While pressure has been conceived of in four different ways — PPPD, PPPE, CPPD and CPPE, it was found by factor analysis that they could together account for a single variable which may be called Academic Pressure. The investigation further found out that Academic Pressure does affect certain psycho-social aspects of development significantly. It was found that Academic Pressure adversely affects the moral judgement and social maturity (with its constituent parts — Personal Adequacy, Inter-personal Adequacy and Social Adequacy). However, Academic Pressure does have a beneficial effect on academic motivation.
On a daily basis, according to the parents' perception, the pressure exerted by them affects the personal and inter-personal adequacy of their wards adversely, i.e. the more the pressure, the less the personal and inter-personal adequacy. Hence, the total social maturity of the child is adversely affected by parental pressure on a daily basis. Even during examination time, according to the parents' perception of pressure, personal adequacy is affected, i.e. the more the pressure, the less is the personal adequacy.

According to the child's perception of pressure on a daily basis, it has been found that more the pressure, the less is the personal, inter-personal and social adequacy which means less of social maturity. These findings hold good because the more the parents exert pressure and get involved, the child becomes more dependent. Parents have ways and means of exerting pressure on their children – they make them do their homework, make notes for them, employ tutors and even accompany them to the examination hall and stay on in the school. Therefore, the child is not given the freedom to think for himself and his maturity level is arrested.

The above findings were also revealed for the development of moral judgement - i.e. the more the pressure; the less is the moral judgement. This may be a very common reason as to why students cheat during examination time. They want to please their parents and if they fail to do so, several end up in suicide. The same results were revealed according to the child's perception of pressure during examination time – i.e. with more pressure, there is less of moral judgement.

However, according to the child's perception, achievement motivation is positively affected, i.e. the more the pressure, the higher is the achievement motivation. This holds good for both, i.e. pressure on a daily basis and pressure during examination time. It is quite reasonable that if parents pressurize their children for high academic attainment, the child would like to live up to parental expectation, he/she would like to please the parents and as a result aspire high. Children who do not face parental pressure do seem to be less bothered with their studies.
This study helps to conclude that there is a very significant association between academic pressure and the other psycho-social aspects of development – viz. social maturity, achievement motivation and moral judgement.

Therefore, it is to be expected that the optimum amount of academic pressure exerted by parents on their children is beneficial to the latter’s growth, and excessive pressure may be a deterrent to their children’s growth. Parents need to know what they expect from their children’s education and they have to help their wards to achieve their goals. High pressure may not always be beneficial. Children also need their own time to unwind, relax and pursue their hobbies. As they grow older, they need to think for themselves without too much of external pressure. So this finding can be treated as a cautionary note to parents to desist from exerting too much pressure on adolescents regarding their studies. The child’s love and respect for the parents and the latter’s expectation for them makes the child concede to pressure regarding studies. This pressure makes the student believe that academic excellence by way of good examination results is the ultimate goal in life. This belief overwhelms other developmental aspects like positive forms of social maturity and moral development. The adolescent therefore desires to get high marks at any cost, even by unfair means. The adolescent feels that he or she has to bury his or her nose in books, and socializing, honesty, helpfulness, independence etc. are not so important. The psycho-social aspects of development studied in this investigation, therefore, become stunted with too much pressure from the parents.

It is quite obvious that an optimum pressure is needed to nurture well-rounded personalities. Parents require being cautious so that they do not give so much academic pressure that their children’s essential aspects of development are neglected. At the same time, too little pressure will not imbue children with much needed motivation to get ahead in life.

At the same time, educationists need to be aware of any beneficial or destructive outcomes of non-optimal pressurizing of children in secondary schools. Whether
it is the pressure of a heavy syllabus, or examination, the amounted stress can have a negative effect on the child’s psycho-social aspects of development. In school too, children need to have time to stretch out – by way of co-curricular activities. Education should be a joyful experience and not a burden to the child as it usually is. Teachers also require being observant of their students so that they can discover any case where the child is under too much pressure. At the same time they require to follow up cases where children are under too little pressure resulting in under-performance.

If parents and educationists understand the effects of optimum and non-optimal pressure, the whole society will be benefited. We will have a more stable social set-up with truly educated and well-developed, refined individuals who can make their contribution ten times more than what we see at present. Failures, unemployment, crime, suicide and superstitions will be negligible and we can hope to see a picture of a progressive and better social order.

A logical sequence to this investigation is to find out what may be the optimum academic pressure that a parent can apply on his or her child. At present there is a need to realize the need for instilling wisdom in children rather than cramming them with information or even knowledge.