Conclusions

From the discussion of the above results of the present study it is concluded that there is alarmingly high prevalence and level of suicidal ideation among adolescents and particularly boys are at very high risk. Moreover, the results of the study support the role of stress as a risk factor for adolescents’ suicidal ideation irrespective of age and gender. It is also observed that optimism and perceived support from family protect them from suicidal ideation supporting the direct effect hypothesis. As far as buffering effect mechanism is concerned, both the variables were found to mitigate the deleterious effect of stress. When gender and age were taken into consideration the role of optimism as a moderator was significant for both age groups as well as for boys group. Whereas, perceived support from family was potentially significant moderator of stress only for senior secondary students. One peculiar finding that is obtained in the present study is that though stress accounted for the largest variance in suicidal ideation for girls and that optimism and perceived support from family emerged as protective factors for them, the stress buffering mechanism of these variables was not supported by the results. There might be some other factors that would have helped them in coping with their stress and protecting them from being trapped in negative thinking about life. Further research may give an insight into these factors.

Apart from these psychosocial factors some of the demographic variables are also important in the understanding of adolescents suicidal ideation. It is clearly revealed from the study that low performance in the preceding examination may lead to negative ideas about life. This concern of academic performance in previous examination has an equal
impact on boys and girls. Father’s education has negative impact on suicidal ideation, indicating high risk for those whose father’s educational level is low.

Implications

Research and explorations are continuous process and they always open the ways for future endeavors. Therefore, research has a developmental nature where, one after the other, new things are likely to emerge. The present study is an humble effort in the same direction. As the results of the present investigation advocate the relationship of three important psychological variables- i.e. stress, optimism, and social support of students with suicidal ideation, the study will have the following implications:

1. As there is scarcity of research in the field of suicidal ideation in India, the present study will make a notable contribution in the repertory of Indian researches. As the current results concur with and are supported by previous research in suicidal ideation, the study will also be a logical and informative extension of the body of research literature in this area.

2. The present study would help the health-care professionals, counsellors, teachers, and parents in understanding the dynamics of suicidal ideation among adolescents, i.e. how high stress which is peculiar to the stage of adolescence particularly students may have serious consequences in the form of suicidal ideas and that optimistic thinking and support from family would be helpful in coping with the stresses of this stage so as to avoid its harmful effects.

3. The results also have implications for clinical psychologists, counsellors, and helpline personnel who can develop intervention strategies for preventing suicidal
behavior among adolescents. Reducing level of stress and helping the adolescents to develop more optimistic view would be expected to decrease suicidal ideation. Dispositional optimism as measured by LOT-R is assumed to be stable and trait-like but it may also be a malleable and trainable attribute. Similarly, family therapy focused on increasing family support and improving relationship within the family would be helpful.

4. The present study also have implications for policy makers in the field of education. At SSC level, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has introduced the massive change from the marks-based evaluation with a Grade-based one and its impact is seen in the form of reduced distress calls on helplines and no suicide instances being reported. With the shift of Grades, students are able to escape needless and nerve-racking competitive pressures.

   Similar steps may be taken at Senior Secondary School level to reduce the undue pressure on students and providing counselling services for the students as well as for the parents.

5. One strength of the study was the use of data from a random sample of secondary and senior secondary-school students rather than clinical settings. Thus, the results are important in the understanding of suicidal ideation of normal adolescent population. As suicidal ideation is the precursor of suicide attempts and actual suicides, understanding the risk as well as the protective factors would be helpful in preventing such negative ideas among adolescent population. The results, however, might not be generalizable to a clinical sample.
Limitations

Any investigation in spite of sincere efforts on the part of the investigator, has certain limitations. The present investigation also suffers from some shortcomings or loopholes.

1. Since the present study employed school students from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh as subjects, the findings of the present study cannot be generalized to other populations. Moreover, a larger sample from other school comprising of different religious background, different socio-economic strata is also desirable. But “individual research ventures, even when confined to a particular segment of society are irreplaceable in their own way. Through them the direct ways for more broad based and meaningful research becomes clear” (Ahmad, 1989).

2. Secondly, the findings of the present study cannot be generalized to the clinical population as the findings are obtained from the students who are relatively healthy and adjusted normal adolescents.

3. There is also methodological and measurement limitation as all the data collected in this study were based on self-reports, which enable participants to respond inaccurately due to social desirability bias. Although students were repeatedly told that their responses in the survey would be kept confidential, there might have been pressure on the participants to answer the questions in a way that they felt would be perceived as socially acceptable. This socially desirable responding might be seen more frequently
in the current study due to the personal nature of survey questions regarding suicide and social support.

**Suggestions for the future research**

The results of this study warrant the need for further research examining the association between suicidal ideation and protective and risk factors. Present investigation has the following implications for the future researches in this area:

1. A more diverse sample is needed to conduct a more thorough analysis of the association between all of the variables. This diverse sample should include adolescent from different socio-economic strata, religious affiliations, and educational backgrounds. Age comparisons should be appropriately explored in future research. Additionally, future research should explore the prevalence of suicidal ideation among other groups of adolescents in India, such as adolescents not enrolled or dropouts in school, to determine the magnitude of such problems and to compare the prevalence with that found in this study.

2. Future work is also needed to sincerely explore the gender differences in this area and empirically investigate the reasons why boys are more susceptible to suicidal ideation. In a broader sense, it is an alarming signal to parents and educators that teenagers’ (both boys and girls) level of suicidal ideation seemed to gradually rise through the period of early adolescence. Future longitudinal research following participants for a relatively longer period of time may reveal a clearer picture about the protective and risk factors of the development of suicidal thinking in Indian adolescent boys and girls.
3. Other personal and social factors should be explored in order to understand more about the risk and protective factors of student suicidal ideation.

4. Future research should identify the moderators and mediators of suicidal ideation as well as to identify more protective behaviours such as coping strategies to overcome suicidal thinking.

5. This study examines only suicide ideation as the criterion. Perhaps future research should examine other variables, such as suicide behavior, which could encompass lifetime suicide ideation and attempts. Suicide behavior might serve as a better criterion, because it measures both suicide ideation and suicide attempts, both of which have an important role in the suicide process. Such future research would provide clearer picture of risk and protective factors of suicidal behavior, including suicide ideation and suicide attempts.

6. Future studies may consider using a community sample with a larger sample size, a community sample by oversampling of the high-risk population, or a clinical sample.

7. Furthermore, another future research may combine the qualitative information with the quantitative information to reach at more meaningful conclusions. In other words, in addition to self-report data, further studies should use clinical interviews to obtain qualitative data of participants suicidal ideation. A lot of complex information underneath what may appear numerically, can only be captured qualitatively. Thus, qualitative analyses will best add the rich information to the study.