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The Pressure Paradox: How Coaching Centres Simultaneously Enhance and Undermine Students' Well-being and Academic Performance in District Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh (2025–2026)

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Abstract

The present study titled "The Pressure Paradox: How Coaching Centers Simultaneously Enhance and Undermine Student Well-being and Academic Performance" investigates the dual impact of coaching institutions on secondary and senior secondary students in Saharanpur district, Uttar Pradesh, during the academic period 2025–2026. In recent years, coaching centers have become an essential component of the Indian education system, particularly for competitive academic preparation. While they are widely recognized for improving academic outcomes, their influence on student mental health and motivation remains a growing concern. The growing dependence on coaching centers among secondary and senior secondary students has significantly reshaped the educational landscape in India. The study is based on primary data collected from a sample of 150 students, drawn from both urban and rural areas to ensure balanced representation. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on academic performance, stress levels, motivation, and study environment. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including percentage analysis and comparative assessment. The findings reveal that coaching centers significantly contribute to academic improvement, However, this academic benefit is accompanied by considerable psychological pressure, Interestingly, despite elevated stress, a large proportion of students demonstrated moderate to high motivation, indicating a complex relationship between pressure and performance. The findings reveal that while coaching centers enhance academic motivation and goal orientation, they simultaneously contribute to increased stress levels, creating a "pressure paradox." A positive correlation between stress and motivation was observed, indicating that increased motivation often accompanies heightened stress. The study highlights the need for integrating mental health support within coaching environments to ensure holistic student development.

Keywords: coaching centers, academic stress, motivation, students, Saharanpur, education system, mental health

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of education, private coaching centers have emerged as a dominant supplementary system alongside formal schooling in India. Their presence has become

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especially prominent among students in secondary and senior secondary levels, where academic performance plays a crucial role in shaping future opportunities. In regions such as Saharanpur, the increasing reliance on coaching institutes reflects the growing pressure to excel academically and secure competitive advantages.

Coaching centers are often regarded as structured platforms that provide focused guidance, regular practice, and exam-oriented preparation. These institutions aim to enhance students' academic performance by offering systematic teaching methods and continuous evaluation. Prior studies indicate that such environments can improve students' learning discipline, clarity of concepts, and goal orientation (Kumar, 2020; Sharma, 2019). As a result, many students perceive coaching as an essential component of their academic journey.

However, the expanding coaching culture has also raised concerns regarding its psychological impact on students. The demanding schedules, frequent testing, and high expectations associated with coaching centers can contribute to increased levels of stress and anxiety. Students often struggle to balance school responsibilities with coaching requirements, leading to mental fatigue and reduced leisure time. Research has shown that prolonged academic pressure may negatively affect students' emotional well-being and overall development (Singh, 2021).

This situation presents a complex dynamic in which coaching centers simultaneously act as sources of motivation and stress. On one hand, they encourage students to set higher academic goals and maintain consistent study habits; on the other hand, they expose students to intense competition and performance pressure. This dual effect can be conceptualized as a "pressure paradox," where the same system that promotes achievement also contributes to psychological strain.

Although several studies have examined academic stress and motivation, there is a noticeable lack of research focusing on smaller districts and semi-urban settings. The experiences of students in such areas may differ significantly due to variations in resources, educational infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions. Therefore, it becomes important to explore how coaching centers influence students at the local level.

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between stress and motivation among students attending coaching centers in Saharanpur district. By utilizing primary data collected directly from students, this research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how coaching environments shape both academic behavior and mental well-being. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more balanced educational approaches that support both performance and psychological health.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative and descriptive research design to examine the relationship between stress and motivation among students attending coaching centers.

3.1 Study Area

The research was conducted in Saharanpur, covering both urban and rural areas to ensure

diversity in responses.

3.2 Sample Size and Participants

A total of **150 students** from classes XI and XII participated in the study. The respondents belonged to different academic streams, including Science, Commerce, and Arts, and were selected using a random sampling method.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of:

- Demographic details (age, gender, stream, location)
- Stress-related statements
- Motivation-related statements

3.4 Variables of the Study

- **Independent Variable**: Coaching centre environment
- **Dependent Variables**:
    - Stress level
    - Motivation level

3.5 Data Analysis Tools

The collected data was analyzed using:

- **Mean and percentage analysis** to measure overall stress and motivation levels
- **Correlation analysis** to examine the relationship between stress and motivation

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents' information was kept confidential. The data was used strictly for academic purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of the Data

The present study is based on responses collected from 150 students of classes XI and XII from various schools and coaching centres in Saharanpur. The data was analyzed using mean scores, percentages, and correlation analysis to examine stress and motivation levels among students.

4.2 Stress Level Analysis

A substantial proportion of students (68%) from Table 1.1 fall within the high stress category, indicating that coaching centres significantly contribute to academic pressure. This finding is

consistent with previous studies which highlight that students engaged in supplementary coaching often experience higher stress due to increased academic demands and expectations.

Research by Deb et al. (2015) found that Indian students frequently experience academic stress due to parental expectations, competitive environments, and examination pressure, which aligns with the current findings. Similarly, Putwain (2007) reported that test anxiety and performance pressure are major contributors to elevated stress levels among secondary school students.

The major causes of stress identified in this study further support existing literature. The intense competition among students in coaching centres creates a performance-oriented environment, which increases anxiety and stress levels. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress arises when individuals perceive academic demands as exceeding their coping abilities, which is particularly relevant in highly competitive educational settings.

Additionally, the pressure to perform well in frequent tests and assessments contributes significantly to student stress. This is supported by Kaplan and Sadock, who emphasized that continuous evaluation systems can heighten psychological strain among students.

The issue of overloaded schedules and limited leisure time also plays a critical role. Studies by Misra and McKean (2000) indicate that excessive academic workload and lack of relaxation time are strongly associated with higher stress levels and reduced well-being.

Furthermore, the fear of missing coaching classes reflects a sense of academic dependency and pressure. This finding aligns with research by Kaur (2013), which suggests that coaching institutes often create an environment where students feel compelled to attend regularly due to fear of falling behind.

Overall, the findings of this study are in strong agreement with existing literature, demonstrating that coaching centres, while beneficial for academic improvement, also contribute to significantly increased stress levels among students, which may have implications for their mental health and overall development.

Table 1: Distribution of Stress Levels (N = 150)

Stress Level	Score Range	Percentage of Students
High	4 – 5	68%
Moderate	3 – 4	24%
Low	< 3	8%

Major Causes of Stress

- Intense competition among students
- Pressure to perform in tests and exams
- Overloaded schedules and limited leisure time

- Fear of missing coaching classes

4.3 Motivation Level Analysis

The findings from 150 students in Saharanpur indicate that coaching centres exert a moderate positive influence on student motivation. The distribution of motivation levels is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Motivation Levels (N = 150)

Motivation Level	Score Range	Percentage of Students
High	4 – 5	32%
Moderate	3 – 4	49%
Low	< 3	19%

The results show that nearly half of the students (49%) fall within the moderate motivation category, while only 32% exhibit high motivation. A notable proportion (19%) demonstrates low motivation, indicating that the motivational impact of coaching centres is present but not uniformly strong across all students.

These findings align with established theories of motivation. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), motivation can be broadly categorized into intrinsic motivation (driven by internal interest and enjoyment) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards and pressures). Coaching centres often emphasize structured learning, performance outcomes, and competition, which primarily enhance extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic interest in learning.

The moderate levels of motivation observed in this study suggest that while coaching centres help students stay focused and goal-oriented, they may not fully foster deep, self-driven engagement with learning. This is supported by research conducted by Eccles and Wigfield (2002), who found that external academic pressures can improve performance-related behaviors but may not significantly increase long-term intrinsic motivation.

Additionally, the role of teachers and structured environments in coaching centres contributes positively to motivation. Studies by Wentzel (1998) highlight that teacher support, clear goals, and organized learning environments enhance student motivation, which explains the moderate-to-high motivation levels observed among some students in this study.

However, the presence of 19% of students with low motivation indicates that excessive academic pressure and stress may negatively affect motivation. This observation is consistent with findings by Ryan and Deci (2000), who emphasized that high-pressure environments can undermine intrinsic motivation, especially when students feel controlled rather than supported.

Overall, the results suggest that coaching centres play a dual role—they enhance academic motivation through structure, competition, and guidance, but may simultaneously limit

intrinsic motivation due to pressure-driven learning. This reinforces the idea that motivation in coaching environments is often externally regulated rather than internally sustained.

4.4 Relationship Between Stress and Motivation

To examine the association between stress and motivation levels among students, a correlation analysis was conducted using data collected from 150 respondents in Saharanpur.

The analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation ($r = +0.50$) between stress and motivation. This indicates that students who report higher levels of motivation also tend to experience increased stress levels.

This finding supports the concept of the "Pressure Paradox," where academic pressure simultaneously acts as a motivating force and a source of psychological strain. In competitive academic environments such as coaching centres, students are often driven to perform better, which enhances motivation; however, this same pressure contributes to elevated stress levels.

The observed relationship is consistent with the Yerkes-Dodson Law, proposed by Yerkes and Dodson (1908), which suggests that moderate levels of stress (or arousal) can enhance performance and motivation, but excessive stress may lead to a decline in performance and well-being. The moderate positive correlation in this study indicates that many students are operating within this optimal or slightly elevated stress zone.

Furthermore, research by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasizes that stress is closely linked to an individual's perception of demands and their ability to cope. In the context of coaching centres, students who are highly motivated may take on greater academic challenges, thereby experiencing higher stress.

Similarly, Putwain (2007) found that performance-oriented environments increase both motivation and anxiety, particularly in examination settings. This aligns with the present findings, where motivation driven by achievement goals is associated with increased psychological pressure.

However, it is important to note that while moderate stress can be beneficial, sustained high stress may negatively impact mental health. Studies by Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that excessive external pressure can reduce intrinsic motivation over time and lead to burnout.

Overall, the results indicate that stress and motivation are interconnected rather than independent constructs. Coaching centres appear to create an environment where motivation is enhanced through pressure, but this comes at the cost of increased stress, reinforcing the need for a balanced academic approach.

Table 3: Correlation Between Stress and Motivation

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Stress vs Motivation	+0.50 (Moderate Positive)

The results show a moderate positive correlation, indicating that students with higher motivation also tend to experience higher stress levels. This supports the concept of a "Pressure Paradox."

4.5 Gender-Based Analysis: A gender-based comparison was conducted to examine differences in stress and motivation levels among students from Saharanpur.

Table 4: Gender-wise Comparison

Gender	Stress Level	Motivation Level
Female	Higher	Moderate
Male	High	Moderate

The analysis indicates that female students tend to experience slightly higher levels of stress compared to their male counterparts, while both groups demonstrate moderate levels of motivation. This suggests that although motivation remains relatively consistent across genders, the nature and intensity of stress differ.

Female students appear to experience more emotional and psychological stress, which may be linked to higher sensitivity to academic expectations and self-imposed pressure. This observation is supported by research conducted by Misra and McKean (2000), which found that female students often report higher stress levels and greater emotional responses to academic challenges.

Similarly, Matud (2004) reported that women tend to experience higher perceived stress and emotional strain, particularly in academic and performance-related contexts. This aligns with the present findings, where female students show slightly elevated stress levels.

On the other hand, male students' stress appears to be more closely associated with competition and performance pressure. Studies by Putwain (2007) suggest that male students are more likely to experience stress related to achievement, rankings, and external evaluation, especially in competitive environments such as coaching centres.

Despite these differences in stress patterns, the motivation levels for both genders remain moderate. According to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), motivation is influenced by both personal beliefs and environmental factors, and may not vary significantly across gender when students are exposed to similar academic settings.

Overall, the findings highlight that while coaching centres impact both male and female students, female students may be more vulnerable to emotional stress, whereas male students experience stress more in terms of competition and performance demands. These differences underline the importance of adopting gender-sensitive strategies to manage stress and support student well-being.

Female students tend to experience slightly higher emotional stress, whereas male students' stress is more related to competition and performance pressure.

4.6 Urban–Rural Comparison

A comparative analysis was conducted to examine differences in stress and motivation levels between students from urban and rural areas in Saharanpur.

The results indicate that urban students experience higher levels of stress as well as higher motivation, whereas rural students exhibit moderate stress and comparatively lower motivation levels.

The elevated stress levels among urban students can be attributed to the intense competition, higher academic expectations, and greater exposure to performance-oriented environments, particularly in coaching centres. This observation is supported by Deb et al. (2015), who found that students in urban settings often face greater academic pressure due to competitive educational systems and parental expectations.

At the same time, urban students also demonstrate higher motivation levels, which may be due to better access to educational resources, quality coaching institutes, and career awareness opportunities. According to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), motivation is strongly influenced by environmental factors such as access to learning support, goal-setting opportunities, and exposure to academic competition.

In contrast, rural students show moderate stress levels, which may be due to relatively lower academic pressure and competition. However, their lower motivation levels could be linked to limited access to quality educational resources, fewer coaching facilities, and reduced exposure to competitive academic environments. This finding aligns with research by Kumar (2014), which highlights disparities in educational opportunities between rural and urban areas in India.

Additionally, Singh (2011) noted that rural students often face challenges such as lack of infrastructure, limited guidance, and fewer role models, which can negatively impact their academic motivation.

Overall, the findings suggest that location plays a significant role in shaping both stress and motivation levels. While urban students benefit from higher motivation, they also face increased stress, whereas rural students experience relatively lower stress but may lack sufficient motivational support.

Table 5: Location-wise Comparison

Location	Stress Level	Motivation Level
Urban	Higher	Higher
Rural	Moderate	Lower

Urban students face higher stress due to intense competition, while rural students show comparatively lower motivation, possibly due to limited exposure and resources.

4.7 Academic Performance and Stress

An analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' academic performance, stress levels, and motivation among respondents from Saharanpur.

The results indicate a clear pattern linking academic performance with both stress and motivation. Students with high academic performance (>80%) tend to exhibit high levels of stress as well as high motivation. This suggests that high-achieving students are often driven by strong academic goals but simultaneously experience increased pressure to maintain their performance.

This finding aligns with the Yerkes-Dodson Law, proposed by Yerkes and Dodson (1908), which states that moderate levels of stress can enhance performance and motivation, while excessive stress may become detrimental. In this context, high-performing students may be operating near the optimal level of stress that enhances productivity and focus.

Students with moderate academic performance (60–80%) demonstrate moderate levels of both stress and motivation, indicating a balanced academic state where pressure and engagement are relatively stable. This group may not experience extreme pressure but also may not be maximally driven toward high achievement.

In contrast, students with low academic performance (<60%) show moderate stress but low motivation. This suggests that while these students do experience academic pressure, it does not effectively translate into motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), when students perceive academic demands as overwhelming or beyond their capabilities, their intrinsic motivation tends to decrease, leading to disengagement.

Additionally, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) emphasized that students' motivation is strongly influenced by their expectancy of success and perceived competence. Lower-performing students may lack confidence in their abilities, which reduces their motivation despite experiencing stress.

Overall, the findings suggest that stress and motivation are closely linked with academic performance, but their effects vary across performance levels. While stress can act as a motivating factor for high achievers, it may become ineffective or even discouraging for lower-performing students.

Table 6: Performance vs Stress and Motivation

Academic Performance	Stress Level	Motivation Level
High (>80%)	High	High
Moderate (60–80%)	Moderate	Moderate
Low (<60%)	Moderate	Low

Students with higher academic performance tend to experience higher stress along with higher motivation, suggesting that pressure may act as a motivating factor up to a certain level.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate that coaching centres play a dual role in shaping students' academic experiences. On one hand, they enhance motivation by providing structured learning environments, regular assessments, and clear academic goals. On the other hand, they contribute significantly to stress due to intense competition, high expectations, and time constraints.

The high percentage of students experiencing stress (68%) indicates that academic pressure has become a dominant feature of the coaching environment. This aligns with previous studies, which suggest that excessive academic demands can negatively affect students' mental health and well-being (Kumar, 2020; Singh, 2021).

At the same time, the presence of moderate motivation among students suggests that coaching centres are effective in improving academic focus and discipline. However, the relatively lower percentage of highly motivated students indicates that motivation may be externally driven rather than internally sustained.

The most important finding of this study is the positive correlation between stress and motivation. This relationship confirms the existence of the "pressure paradox," where increased motivation is accompanied by increased stress. While a certain level of stress may enhance performance, excessive stress can lead to burnout, anxiety, and reduced academic satisfaction.

Furthermore, gender and location-based differences highlight the need for more personalized approaches in coaching environments. Female students require better emotional support, while rural students may benefit from increased academic guidance and exposure.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between stress and motivation among students attending coaching centres in Saharanpur, based on responses from 150 students. The findings clearly indicate that coaching centres play a significant yet complex role in shaping students' academic experiences.

The results reveal that a majority of students experience high levels of stress, primarily due to academic pressure, competition, and time constraints. At the same time, coaching centres contribute positively to academic motivation by providing structured learning environments, goal-oriented preparation, and continuous guidance. However, the level of motivation observed is mostly moderate, suggesting that while students are driven to perform, their engagement may not always be internally sustained.

A key outcome of the study is the identification of a positive relationship between stress and motivation, supporting the concept of the "pressure paradox." This indicates that as students become more motivated to achieve academic success, their stress levels also tend to increase. While moderate stress may enhance performance and focus, excessive stress can negatively impact students' mental well-being and overall development.

The study also highlights variations based on gender and location, suggesting that different groups of students experience and respond to academic pressure differently. These findings emphasize the need for a more balanced approach within coaching environments.

In conclusion, coaching centres are effective in promoting academic discipline and performance, but their impact on students' mental health cannot be overlooked. There is a pressing need to integrate supportive measures such as stress management, counseling, and balanced scheduling to ensure that students achieve academic success without compromising their well-being.

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