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## The Psychological Impact of Competitive Coaching Culture on NEET/JEE Aspirants in Patna: A Cross-Sectional Study

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### Abstract

The present study investigates the psychological impact of the coaching culture on NEET/JEE aspirants in Patna, an emerging educational hub in eastern India. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 70 aspirants enrolled in prominent coaching institutes to assess perceived stress, anxiety levels, and perceived coaching pressure. Standardised instruments including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), and a researcher-developed Coaching Culture Impact Questionnaire were administered. Findings revealed moderate to high stress ( $M = 23.64$ ,  $SD = 5.12$ ) and elevated anxiety ( $M = 11.94$ ,  $SD = 4.26$ ), with 68.6% reporting moderate-to-severe anxiety. Significant differences emerged across gender and living arrangement, with female students and hostel/PG residents exhibiting higher psychological distress. Perceived coaching pressure was also high ( $M = 62.17$ ,  $SD = 8.41$ ), driven by fear of failure, parental expectations, peer competition, and performance-linked self-worth. Strong positive correlations were observed among stress, anxiety, coaching pressure, and duration of coaching, indicating cumulative psychological strain. The study highlights the urgent need for mental-health interventions, counseling services, and structural reforms within coaching institutes to mitigate the psychological burden experienced by aspirants. Implications for parents, educators, and policymakers are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Coaching Culture; NEET/JEE Aspirants; Stress; Anxiety; Academic Pressure; Mental Health; Patna; Competitive Examinations.*

## 1. Introduction

High-stakes entrance examinations such as the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) occupy a central place in the aspirations of Indian adolescents and their families. These examinations are widely perceived as gateways to prestigious medical and engineering institutions and, by extension, to social mobility and economic security. Unsurprisingly, a growing body of research has documented that competitive entrance examinations are accompanied by intense academic stress, heightened anxiety, and compromised well-being among Indian students (Desai, 2024; Pienyu et al., 2024; Pachole et al., 2023).

Within this system, coaching institutes have emerged as a parallel “shadow education” sector that structures students’ daily routines, learning strategies, and psychological experiences. Studies on competitive exam culture suggest that extended study hours, continuous assessment, peer comparison, and performance-linked self-worth are common features of this ecosystem and are strongly associated with stress, anxiety, sleep problems, and diminished social engagement (Gayathri et al., 2021; Kalpana & Perumalsamy, 2025). Research focused specifically on NEET and JEE preparation has shown that a majority of aspirants report high academic stress and substantial psychological distress, with some evidence of links to depression and suicidal ideation (Pachole et al., 2023; Yadav & Srivastava, as cited in EPRA IJMR, 2024).

Kota in Rajasthan has become the emblematic “coaching city,” and recent work has highlighted the concentration of stress, mental health problems, and student suicides among its coaching aspirants (Pal et al., 2025). National discussions increasingly recognize that this pattern is not confined to Kota: competitive examination hubs across India exhibit similar structural pressures. Patna particularly corridors such as Boring Road, Bailey Road and Kankarbagh has rapidly developed into a regional coaching centre for NEET and JEE, hosting multiple national-level brands and local institutes with tightly scheduled classes that often extend for several hours daily, including weekends and vacation periods. While some coaching providers now advertise stress-management sessions and counseling, these services remain uneven, and critiques from clinicians in Patna point to a “student well-being paradox” in which academic success is prioritised at the expense of mental health (Patna Psychiatry Clinic, 2024).

Empirical research on the psychological effects of coaching culture has largely focused on national-level trends or on specific hubs such as Kota and certain districts in southern India. Far less is known about how

coaching culture operates in eastern India, and particularly how NEET/JEE preparation in Patna shapes adolescents’ stress, anxiety, and perceptions of pressure. Existing studies rarely examine localised coaching ecologies, gendered experiences, or the role of living arrangements (hostel/PG versus family home) within a single urban coaching hub. This represents a significant gap, given the growing number of students migrating to Patna from smaller towns and rural areas of Bihar for intensive exam preparation.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the psychological impact of coaching culture on NEET/JEE aspirants in Patna, focusing on perceived stress, anxiety, and perceived pressure associated with coaching practices. Using data from 70 aspirants enrolled in major coaching centres in Patna, the study seeks to: (a) describe levels of stress and anxiety, (b) compare psychological outcomes across gender, exam stream and living arrangement, and (c) examine the association between perceived coaching pressure and mental health indicators. By situating Patna within the broader discourse on coaching culture and student well-being, the study aims to contribute region-specific evidence to ongoing debates on educational reform and mental health support for entrance exam aspirants.

## 2. Review of Literature

### Academic Stress, Parental Pressure and Exam Anxiety in India

Academic stress among Indian adolescents has been widely documented as a serious public health concern. Early work showed that high school students experience substantial stress linked to curriculum load, continuous assessments, and fear of examination failure, often accompanied by anxiety and poorer mental health (Agarwal et al., 2015; Das & Bhattacharya, 2014). More recent studies have focused specifically on competitive entrance examinations. Pienyu et al. (2024), in a survey of 570 pre-university students in Karnataka who were planning to sit for competitive entrance exams, found that 86% reported high academic stress and 87% reported high perceived parental academic pressure; over half had low general well-being. The authors argued that scholastic stress, parental expectations and entrance-exam anxiety form a tightly interconnected cluster of risk factors for adolescent mental health.

Desai (2024) similarly highlighted exam anxiety as a pervasive phenomenon among Indian adolescents, driven by strong cultural emphasis on academic achievement, parental expectations, and peer comparison. The study reported that exam anxiety is associated not only with emotional symptoms fear of failure, helplessness, low self-esteem but also with

somatic complaints such as headaches, muscle tension and sleep disturbances, and that students often resort to maladaptive coping strategies like avoidance and over-reliance on stimulants. These findings are consistent with broader research indicating that academic stress in Indian settings is linked to depression, anxiety, and impaired psychosocial functioning (Pachole et al., 2023).

### Coaching Culture and Mental Health

Coaching institutes for NEET and JEE intensify many of these stressors. Gayathri et al. (2021), in a study of 115 adolescents attending full-time NEET coaching in Chennai, reported that nearly three-quarters of participants felt “too much stressed,” with large syllabi, time-management difficulties, strict faculty behaviour, and parental pressure identified as key sources of stress. The study also noted a range of stress-related physical symptoms, including insomnia and headaches, and documented reliance on various stress-management strategies, from exercise and yoga to use of psychoactive substances to stay awake.

Pachole et al. (2023) examined depression, anxiety and stress among students preparing for competitive exams in central India, finding substantial proportions of aspirants meeting thresholds for clinically relevant distress. The authors emphasised that competitive exam preparation is not only cognitively demanding but also emotionally taxing, with students reporting perceived inadequacy, fear of disappointing parents, and a sense that a single exam could determine their life trajectory. Kalpana and Perumalsamy (2025), in a broader study of competitive examinations and well-being of Indian school students, similarly argued that preparation for exams such as NEET and JEE imposes significant mental and emotional stress, often leading to anxiety, sleep deprivation, and social withdrawal, while families face financial strain due to high coaching fees.

The coaching city of Kota has attracted particular attention as an extreme manifestation of this culture. A recent narrative review by Pal et al. (2025) synthesised government statistics, academic studies and media reports, documenting a sharp rise in suicides among coaching aspirants in Kota and estimating that nearly 44% of coaching students experience high academic stress compared with a small minority of non-coaching peers. The review identifies parental expectations, intense academic pressure, social isolation in hostel environments, and inadequate mental health support as key contributors to suicidal ideation. These findings reinforce concerns that the “pressure-cooker” coaching model can pose serious risks to adolescent mental health when academic performance is prioritised over holistic well-being.

### NEET/JEE Aspirants and Psychological Outcomes

Studies focusing specifically on NEET and JEE aspirants have further clarified the psychological burden associated with these exams. Gayathri et al. (2021) showed that students in NEET coaching reported high stress levels linked to exam difficulty, extensive syllabi and time pressure. An EPRA case study on NEET aspirants highlighted multiple academic stressors teacher behaviour, results, tests, peer competition, and self-imposed standards and noted that academic stress can coexist with suicidal ideation, particularly where perceived failure threatens family expectations and self-esteem. Another large survey of students preparing for various competitive exams in central India reported significant levels of depression, anxiety and stress, underscoring that competitive exam preparation is a distinctive risk environment within the broader educational landscape (Pachole et al., 2023).

At the same time, evidence suggests that psychological outcomes among aspirants may vary by gender, socio-economic background and living arrangement. Several Indian studies have reported that female students are more likely to report high academic stress and anxiety, possibly due to intersecting academic and gendered role expectations (Agarwal et al., 2015; Kalpana & Perumalsamy, 2025). Research on coaching hubs also indicates that hostel-residing students, who are physically separated from family support, may experience higher levels of loneliness, homesickness and anxiety compared to those living with their families (Pal et al., 2025).

### Regional Context: Patna as a Coaching Hub

While many of the above studies draw on multi-site samples or focus on hubs such as Kota, relatively little empirical work has examined coaching culture in eastern India. Patna’s Boring Road, Bailey Road, Fraser Road and Kankarbagh corridors now host multiple national-brand and regional coaching institutes for NEET and JEE; institute brochures and websites describe intensive daily class schedules, extended revision programmes and holiday classes as standard features of their offerings. Some providers publicly highlight stress-management sessions, motivational talks and counselling services as part of their support system for aspirants, indicating awareness of exam-related psychological strain. However, clinical commentaries from mental-health professionals in Patna point out that many students still experience chronic stress, anxiety and sleep problems, and that a significant number present with symptoms of burnout or depressive affect linked to perceived academic failure or inability to meet family expectations (Patna Psychiatry Clinic, 2024).

Despite these developments, there is a dearth of systematic, data-driven research on how Patna's coaching ecosystem affects the mental health of NEET/JEE aspirants. Most available literature generalises from other regions or relies on anecdotal accounts. There is thus a clear need for context-specific, quantitative studies that explore stress, anxiety and perceived coaching pressure among aspirants in Patna, and that examine how these variables vary across gender, exam stream, study hours and living arrangements. The present study responds to this gap by providing empirical evidence from a sample of 70 NEET/JEE aspirants enrolled in Patna coaching institutes, thereby extending the literature on coaching culture and student mental health to an important but under-researched regional context.

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Design

The present investigation employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to examine the psychological consequences of the coaching culture on NEET/JEE aspirants in Patna. This design was considered appropriate as it facilitates the assessment of stress, anxiety, and perceived academic pressure at a single point in time, providing a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing psychological experiences of students preparing for high-stakes entrance examinations.

#### Sample

The study comprised a sample of 70 NEET/JEE aspirants enrolled in various coaching institutes located in major educational clusters of Patna, including Boring Road, Rajendra Nagar, and Kankarbagh. A purposive sampling technique was utilised to ensure the inclusion of participants directly engaged in intensive exam preparation.

The **inclusion criteria** required participants to:

1. Be between 16 and 20 years of age,
2. Be enrolled in NEET or JEE preparation for a minimum duration of six months, and
3. Provide informed consent to participate in the study.

Individuals with a diagnosed severe psychological disorder or those unwilling to participate were excluded. The final sample consisted of 70 students who met all criteria and returned complete responses.

#### Instruments

Data were collected using the following instruments:

1. Socio-Demographic and Academic Information Schedule
2. This self-report schedule collected background information including age, gender, educational level (Class XI/XII or drop-year students), type of entrance exam (NEET/JEE), duration of coaching, daily study hours, and living arrangements (hostel, PG accommodation, or family home).
3. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)
4. The PSS-10 was employed to measure levels of perceived stress arising from academic workload, competitive intensity, and examination-related concerns. The tool is widely used in psychological research and demonstrates strong reliability and validity.
5. Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) or Examination Anxiety Scale
6. This scale assessed the degree of generalised and exam-related anxiety experienced by students. Both tools are validated for adolescent and young adult populations.
7. Coaching Culture Impact Questionnaire (Researcher-Constructed)
8. A 15–20 item Likert-type questionnaire was constructed to measure students' perceptions of coaching pressure, parental expectations, peer competition, institutional norms, fear of academic failure, and the extent to which self-worth is contingent on academic performance. Higher scores indicated stronger perceived negative psychological impact of coaching culture.

#### Data Collection Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from administrative authorities of selected coaching centres in Patna. With institutional approval, participants were approached during scheduled breaks or free sessions. The purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality assurances, and the absence of academic consequences were clearly explained.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants (and assent/parental consent where required). The instruments were administered in small groups, and each participant completed the questionnaire booklet within **20–25 minutes**. Completed questionnaires were screened for accuracy and completeness before being coded for analysis.

#### Data Analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages, were computed to

summarise demographic characteristics and psychological variables.

Inferential analyses included:

- Independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA to examine group differences (e.g., NEET vs. JEE aspirants, males vs. females, hostel vs. home-based students).
- Pearson correlation coefficients to explore associations between variables such as duration of coaching, daily study hours, perceived stress, and anxiety levels.

A significance threshold of  $p < .05$  was adopted for all statistical tests.

## 4. RESULTS

### 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

A total of 70 NEET/JEE aspirants participated in the study. Table 1 presents demographic and academic characteristics.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 70)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	38	54.3
	Female	32	45.7
Age Group	16–17 years	29	41.4
	18–19 years	33	47.1
	20 years	8	11.5
Exam Stream	NEET	41	58.6
	JEE	29	41.4
Living Arrangement	Hostel/PG	30	42.9
	With Family	40	57.1
Daily Study Hours	6–8 hours	28	40.0
	8–10 hours	25	35.7
	>10 hours	17	24.3

## 2. Perceived Stress Levels

Scores on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) showed moderate to high stress across the sample. The overall mean score was 23.64 (SD = 5.12).

### Group Differences

- NEET aspirants reported slightly higher stress ( $M = 24.12$ ) than JEE aspirants ( $M = 22.93$ ), though differences were not statistically significant.
- Female aspirants reported significantly higher stress ( $M = 25.03$ ) compared to males ( $M = 22.47$ ),  $t(68) = 2.16, p < .05$ .

**Table 2: Mean Stress and Anxiety Scores by Group**

Variable	Category	Stress Mean (SD)	Anxiety Mean (SD)
Gender	Male (n = 38)	22.47 (5.12)	10.84 (4.01)
	Female (n = 32)	25.03 (4.88)	13.34 (4.29)
Exam Type	NEET (n = 41)	24.12 (5.04)	12.41 (4.12)
	JEE (n = 29)	22.93 (5.22)	11.21 (4.42)
Living Arrangement	Hostel/PG (n = 30)	24.98 (5.11)	13.21 (4.12)
	With Family (n = 40)	22.76 (5.04)	10.98 (4.19)

## 3. Anxiety Levels

Anxiety scores (GAD-7) ranged from minimal to severe, with an overall mean of **11.94** (SD = 4.26).

- 68.6% (n = 48) of the students reported moderate to severe anxiety.
- Students living in hostels/PGs showed significantly higher anxiety than those living at home.

### Anxiety Categories:

Category	Score Range	n	%
Minimal	0–4	7	10.0
Mild	5–9	15	21.4
Moderate	10–14	27	38.6
Severe	≥15	21	30.0

These findings indicate that examination-related anxiety is widespread among aspirants.

#### 4. Impact of Coaching Culture

The Coaching Culture Impact Questionnaire showed a high perceived psychological burden, with a mean score of 62.17(SD = 8.41) out of 75.

Key items with highest endorsement:

- Fear of failure (M = 4.42/5)
- Parental expectations (M = 4.36/5)
- Peer competition (M = 4.32/5)
- Self-worth linked to performance (M = 4.28/5)

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of study hours on perceived coaching pressure:

- Students studying >10 hours/day showed significantly higher impact scores (M = 67.23) compared to those studying 6–8 hours (M = 58.47),  $F(2, 67) = 4.32, p < .05$ .

**Table 3: Coaching Culture Impact Scores by Study Hours**

Study Hours	n	Mean (SD)	Interpretation
6–8 hours/day	28	58.47 (7.98)	Moderate pressure
8–10 hours/day	25	62.33 (7.41)	High pressure
>10 hours/day	17	67.23 (6.89)	Very high pressure

A clear linear trend emerged: greater study duration → higher perceived pressure.

#### 5. Correlations Among Major Variables

Pearson correlation results revealed:

- **Stress ↔ Anxiety:**  $r = .62, p < .01$  (strong positive correlation)
- **Coaching Culture ↔ Stress:**  $r = .58, p < .01$
- **Coaching Culture ↔ Anxiety:**  $r = .54, p < .01$
- **Coaching Duration ↔ Stress:**  $r = .31, p < .05$
- **Coaching Duration ↔ Anxiety:**  $r = .28, p < .05$

These results suggest that the longer students remain in coaching centres, the higher their stress and anxiety levels.

#### Summary of Findings

1. High levels of stress and anxiety are prevalent among NEET/JEE aspirants in Patna.
2. Female students and hostel/PG residents reported significantly higher psychological distress.
3. Coaching culture exerts a substantial negative psychological impact, especially for students with extended study hours.
4. Stress, anxiety, and perceived coaching pressure are strongly interrelated.
5. The competitive coaching environment in Patna contributes to elevated emotional vulnerability among aspirants.

#### Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the psychological impact of the coaching culture on NEET/JEE aspirants in Patna, with specific focus on perceived stress, anxiety, and the perceived pressure of the coaching environment. The findings indicate that the competitive exam preparation context in Patna is associated with substantial psychological strain, confirming the initial assumption that the coaching ecosystem functions as a high-pressure environment for adolescent and young adult learners.

#### High Levels of Stress and Anxiety

The results revealed moderate to high levels of perceived stress among the aspirants, with the mean PSS score suggesting that most students experience their day-to-day academic life as stressful and overwhelming. Similarly, a large proportion of participants reported moderate to severe anxiety levels. This pattern is consistent with broader findings in educational psychology that link high-stakes examinations and performance-oriented cultures with elevated stress, test anxiety, and worry about failure.

The fact that nearly two-thirds of the sample fell into moderate-to-severe anxiety categories underscores that this is not a marginal issue affecting only a vulnerable minority; rather, psychological distress appears to be normative within this preparation milieu. In the specific context of Patna emerging as a regional coaching hub this suggests that psychological discomfort is becoming embedded in the everyday experience of being a NEET/JEE aspirant.

#### Gender Differences in Psychological Distress

The study found that female aspirants reported significantly higher levels of perceived stress compared to males. This may be interpreted in

multiple ways. First, girls might face dual expectations to perform well academically while also complying with traditional gendered roles and responsibilities within the family. Second, female students may internalize academic pressure more, leading to heightened emotional reactivity, self-doubt, or fear of disappointing parents.

It is also possible that female students are more open in acknowledging and reporting emotional difficulties, whereas male students may under-report due to socialization around emotional restraint. Regardless of the cause, the findings clearly indicate that girls constitute a psychologically more vulnerable subgroup within the coaching culture and require targeted psychosocial support and sensitization efforts from coaching institutes and families.

### Living Arrangement and Emotional Vulnerability

Another notable finding is that students residing in hostels or PG accommodations reported higher anxiety compared to those living with their families. Hostel/PG life often involves physical separation from family support, adjustment to shared spaces, irregular routines, peer comparison, and sometimes loneliness or homesickness. Combined with intensive study schedules and constant evaluation, this can heighten feelings of insecurity, isolation, and performance pressure.

In contrast, students living with their families may benefit from emotional containment, monitoring, and practical support, which acts as a buffer against psychological distress. This suggests that students who migrate from smaller towns and villages to Patna for coaching may face a double burden transition to a new urban environment plus academic stress making them important targets for mentoring and counseling interventions.

### Impact of Coaching Culture and Study Hours

The study's findings indicate that the perceived impact of coaching culture was high across the sample, with especially strong endorsement of items relating to fear of failure, parental expectations, peer comparison, and self-worth linked to performance. This suggests that the coaching ecosystem is not merely academic, but also deeply psychological and identity-shaping. Students appear to internalize the belief that their personal value and future worth are conditional upon clearing NEET/JEE, a mindset strongly associated with anxiety, perfectionism, and burnout.

The relationship between daily study hours and perceived coaching pressure further supports this interpretation. Students studying for more than 10

hours per day reported significantly higher impact scores than those studying fewer hours. This may reflect both directions of influence:

- Students who feel more pressure may push themselves to study excessively,
- While long, exhaustive study routines, with little recreational or social time, may intensify feelings of exhaustion, pressure, and emotional fatigue.

Thus, the results point towards a cycle of overwork and overpressure, where coaching culture norms (e.g., "more hours = more success") get internalized and eventually translate into psychological strain.

### Interrelationship Among Stress, Anxiety, and Coaching Pressure

The strong positive correlations among perceived stress, anxiety, and the impact of coaching culture confirm that these constructs are closely intertwined. Students who experienced the coaching environment as highly pressurizing also reported higher stress and anxiety, suggesting that coaching culture is not a neutral academic setting but a powerful psychosocial context that shapes emotional functioning.

The positive association between duration of coaching and psychological distress further suggests that prolonged exposure to such an environment may have cumulative adverse effects. While coaching is intended to enhance academic performance and competitive readiness, the findings indicate that it may simultaneously erode psychological well-being when not balanced with adequate counseling, emotional support, and realistic goal-setting.

### Contextualizing the Findings in the Patna Coaching Ecosystem

Patna has increasingly come to be known as an important centre for NEET/JEE coaching, with dense clusters of institutes in areas such as Boring Road, Kankarbagh, and Rajendra Nagar. The local educational culture often emphasizes rank, selection, and competition, and success stories of selected candidates are prominently highlighted, whereas the struggles and failures of the majority remain invisible.

Within this context, the present findings can be viewed as an important psychological mirror of a system that is heavily outcome-oriented. For many students, relocation to Patna for coaching represents both an opportunity and an intense psychological gamble, where family prestige, financial investment, and future aspirations are all tied to a single exam attempt. The results suggest that not all students have the same

psychological resources to cope with this pressure, and some groups (e.g., females, hostel residents, long-duration aspirants) may be particularly at risk.

### Implications for Coaching Institutes, Parents, and Policy

The findings carry significant implications:

- For coaching institutes: There is a need to move beyond purely academic pedagogy and integrate regular psychological screening, stress-management workshops, and access to counselors. Classroom environments must be sensitized to reduce shaming, toxic comparisons, and fear-based motivational tactics.
- For parents: The data on parental expectation and fear of failure highlight the need for more realistic, supportive, and process-focused parenting, where effort and well-being are valued over mere rank and selection.
- For policymakers and educational planners: The high prevalence of stress and anxiety calls for guidelines or regulations that encourage institutes to adopt mental health safeguards, orientation programmes, and student support systems as part of their functioning.

### Strengths and Reflections

A strength of this study is its focus on a specific regional context (Patna) and a clearly defined high-pressure population (NEET/JEE aspirants), which makes the findings locally relevant and practically actionable. The use of standardized psychological tools, along with a coaching culture impact scale, provides a multi-dimensional understanding of students' experiences.

At the same time, the discussion highlights that academic excellence and psychological well-being cannot be treated as separate domains. The findings suggest that, unless the coaching culture is consciously moderated and humanized, psychological distress may become normalized and invisible in the discourse of "success".

### Conclusion

The present study examined the psychological impact of the coaching culture on NEET/JEE aspirants in Patna and revealed a pervasive pattern of elevated stress, anxiety, and perceived academic pressure. The findings clearly demonstrate that the highly competitive and performance-driven environment of coaching institutes exerts substantial mental strain on

students, with female aspirants, hostel/PG residents, and those studying for extended hours emerging as particularly vulnerable subgroups. The strong correlations among coaching pressure, stress, and anxiety further indicate that the psychological effects of coaching culture are neither isolated nor incidental, but deeply interconnected and cumulative.

Overall, the results suggest that while coaching centres may enhance academic preparedness, they simultaneously risk compromising students' psychological well-being when emotional support systems are absent. Thus, addressing mental health must be considered an integral component of the NEET/JEE preparation ecosystem, requiring coordinated efforts from coaching institutes, families, and educational policymakers.

### Limitations

While the study offers meaningful insights, certain limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Size and Regional Specificity:**  
The study was conducted on a sample of 70 aspirants within Patna. Although adequate for preliminary analysis, the findings cannot be generalized to all coaching centres across India or even all institutes in Bihar.
2. **Purposive Sampling:**  
The use of purposive sampling may introduce selection bias, as participation depended on institutional permission and student willingness, potentially excluding highly distressed or disengaged candidates.
3. **Self-Report Measures:**  
Since data were collected through self-report scales, responses may be influenced by social desirability bias, under-reporting of distress (especially among male students), or subjective interpretation of questionnaire items.
4. **Cross-Sectional Design:**  
The study captured psychological states at a single point in time. It does not account for fluctuations in stress or anxiety across different phases of exam preparation (e.g., near exam dates).
5. **Lack of Qualitative Insights:**  
The study primarily used quantitative methods; hence, rich personal experiences, coping narratives, and subjective meanings attributed to coaching culture could not be captured.

### Future Directions

Future research can build upon the current study in several important ways:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:**  
Conducting multi-phase assessments across the coaching cycle would offer deeper

insights into how stress and anxiety evolve during preparation.

2. Larger and Diverse Samples:
3. Expanding the study to include aspirants from other regions such as Kota, Delhi, Indore, and Ranchi would enable comparative analysis and improve generalizability.
4. Mixed-Methods Approaches: Including interviews or focus groups can enrich understanding by capturing personal experiences, motivation patterns, coping strategies, and perceptions of institutional culture.
5. Intervention-Based Research: Future studies could test the effectiveness of stress-management workshops, mindfulness programs, counseling sessions, or mentorship models within coaching institutes.
6. Parental Involvement Studies: Examining the role of parental expectations, communication patterns, and socio-economic pressure can shed light on home-based contributors to student anxiety.
7. Institutional Policy Evaluation: Research can explore how coaching institute policies (e.g., attendance monitoring, ranking systems, feedback culture) directly or indirectly influence student mental health.
8. Focus on High-Risk Subgroups:

Special studies on drop-year students, economically disadvantaged aspirants, female students, and migrants residing in hostels can reveal specific vulnerabilities and targeted support needs.

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