



## Exploring Educational Stress: An Exploration of Pressure and Coping Strategies in Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*

<sup>1</sup>Loganathan G\*, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Meena Devi M

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar\*

Research Centre in English, Department of English

VHNSNC (Autonomous), Virudhunagar 626001

Email: loganathansk.g.ma@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor

Department of English,

VHNSNC (Autonomous), Virudhunagar 626001

### Abstract

This article explores the widespread issue of academic stress as depicted in Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*, providing a detailed challenges encountered by the main character and the coping techniques they adopt. The discussion highlights how India's intensely in esteemed institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), amplifies stress level among learners. By analysing the experiences of the three primary characters Hari, Ryan and Alok the research evaluates the mental and emotional effects of academic pressure and critically examines their methods of coping the results highlight the pressing to mental well-being and encourage a more balanced method of academic success.

**Keywords:** Academic stress, mental impacts, educational system, balanced approaches

### 1. Introduction

The Indian educational system is marked by intense challenges and significant stress it imposes on students particularly those who are pursuing their studies at premier institutions like IITs. These institutions often perceived as stepping stones to prosperous careers, apply heavy academic burdens on students. Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* presents a story that deeply aligns with the experiences of students navigating these high-stress academic settings. Bhagat himself warns readers early in novel by stating, "it is not a guide on how to live through college. On the contrary, it is probably an example of how screwed up your college years can get if you don't think straight" (1). The novel not only depicts the severity of academic pressure but also examines its mental and social impacts on the youth. This report aims to investigate the various ways of academic stress is reflected in the lives of the main



characters in *Five Point Someone*, and how they either manage or fail to manage such pressures. Through an analysis of their coping methods the study seeks to highlight broader concerns such as student mental health, the influence of educational institutions in intensifying stress, and possible strategies to each such burdens.

## 2. Literature Review

Many studies have looked at the problems of academic pressure in different educational setting. They often find that students in competitive environment face a lot of burden. This anxiety can harm their mental health make it harder for them to do well in their studies and affect their overall welfare.

In India, academic stress is often made worse by expectations from society and family. Research shows that Indian students deal with specific challenges such as the need to get high marks, place in top colleges and fulfil their family's hopes. Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* gives a fictional but realistic view if these challenges, making it a useful story for understanding how academic anxiety affects students' mental health in the Indian education system.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained about the theory stress and coping how people understand and deal with stress. Stress happens when people feel they can't handle the problems they are facing. Their theory says that how we think about the situation affects how stressed we feel they also said people use two main ways to cope: problem – focused coping, where they try to fix the problem, and emotional – focused coping where they try to feel better about it.

Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* has involved the researchers' attention to their lively portrayal of educational pressure and the sexual strategies that students have adopted in India's competing education system. Researchers have analysed how the history of Bhagat understands the psychological, emotional and social dimensions of educational stress among Indian youth.

Biswas (2013) discovered young culture in *Five Point Someone*, which highlights the students' concerns and ambitions within the IIT system. He argues that the novel captures the suffocating environment created by pressure to act and shows how character riots, friendships and escapes through the escape moments. It is consistent with the understanding that the academic pressure is off runway, which affects identity formation and emotional welfare.

Babu emphasizes in his review the struggles associated with the hero's career, explains how academic stress is associated with social and parents' expectations. Their analysis suggests that the imitation mechanisms of the characters, such as humor and mutual support, become the necessary tools to survive in an incompetent system that prefers the character of personality. Babu's perspective emphasizes psychological stresses that shape the educational journey to Indian students.



The comparative study of Ali's book and its filmisation has emphasized the conflict between creativity and strict Indian education system. Ali argues that history has criticized the rote learning culture that improves stress and suppresses the creative outlet and causes emotional burnout for the students. This analysis confirms the notion that the lack of space for creative expression in the system increases the stress that students are experiencing and pushing them toward optional.

### **3. Methodology**

The research uses a character analysis of *Five Point Someone* to study the experiences of the three main characters Hari, Ryan and Alok as they deal with the academic pressure IIT. The study showcases the important parts of the novel, are academic stress, the coping methods used by the characters and the psychological effects of their experiences. The analysis is supported by psychological theories, especially Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The study also uses secondary sources, such as research articles on academic stress and coping of earlier studies on *Five Point Someone* to place the findings with larger academic discussions.

### **4. Findings and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Sources of Academic Pressure**

In the *Five Point Someone*, the academic pressure comes from many mutual factors. The stiff grading system in IIT creates constant fear of failure and combines the self-value of character. Parents and social expectations combine emotional stress, as students feel pressure to maintain the family's pride through academic success. The rote learning method limits creativity, forcing students to remember rather than understanding, leading to confusion and stress. Peer competition increases the anxiety, compares character and placement with students and promotes rivalry on collaboration. In addition, the fear of an uncertain future accelerates and pushes for high deviant jobs, accelerating the pressure to fit the social standards of success. Together, in Bhagat's novel, these factors depict the regular nature of education pressure in India's education system, which students face emotional and mental challenges.

##### **4.1.1 Grading System**

One of the main resources for the academic pressure in *Five Point Someone* is the strict grading system followed by the IITs. The title of the novel itself refers to low grade point average of the main characters, reflecting their academic struggles. The grading system at IITs is not just a measure of academic results but also a key factor in future success. As professor Dubey clearly tells the students, "You get bad grades, and I assure you - you get no job, no school and no future" (11). This understanding causes a constant feeling of worry and fear of setbacks. The novel shows how the stress to maintain a high GPA affects the characters confidence and mental health Hari, Ryan and Alok all feel a sense of not being



good enough as they try to cope with a heavy workload. The grading system, which focuses on numbers, leading to a loss of identity and direction. This dehumanising part of grading system is a major reason for their anxiety.

#### **4.1.2 Parental expectations**

Another significant origin of pressure for the characters is the demands imposed by their parents. In Indian culture, academic achievement is frequently viewed as a way to secure a brighter future-not only for the individual but also for their entire household. The cultural expectation places intense pressure on students to perform well in academics often at the expense of their psychological and emotional health. Alok's circumstances clearly reflects their burden. As he describes in the novel, "I was taking care of him for the past two years.... every day after school I was nursing him and reading my books" (16). His academic outcomes are closely linked to his family's aspirations for financial security, which heightens his stress. The novel emphasises how such pressure can create a feeling of being trapped, as learners feel compelled to fulfil their parent's hopes, even if it requires giving up their own ambitions and contentment.

#### **4.1.3 Peer Competition**

The highly competitive setting of IIT is another notable factor contributing to the characters stress. The narrative illustrates a culture of constant rivalry where students habitually compare their achievement with those of their classmates. This environment cultivates a feeling of insufficiency and apprehension about lagging behind, particularly for those who are not among the academic top performer. Ryan as an example, is depicted as a talented yet defiant student who opposes IITs culture of intense competition. His unwillingness to adhere to the institutions norms serves as a form of protect, but it also reflects his internal fear of underachievement. The demand to consistently outdo peers can provoke harmful self-evaluations and a decline in self-assurance, as students begin to equals their personal value with the accomplishments of others.

#### **4.2 Coping Mechanisms**

In *Five Point Someone*, the characters take different mechanisms to handle educational stress. Friendship and colleague support appear as primary strategies and gives a sense of solidarity between emotional relief and pressure. Humor and satire are used by characters such as Hari and Alo to relieve stress, and moments -oriented are saved from their worries. Rebellion against strict rules, such as leaving classes or asking the system, acts as a way of reconstructing the agency in a restrictive environment. Some characters engage in distraction through leisure activities, including interaction between late at night and random excursions, temporarily forget the academic burden. However, the



novel also shows unhealthy coping, such as adjournment and ignoring studies, which often lead to further problems. Through these varied strategies, Bhagat exemplifies how students traverse the extreme pressure of the IIT system, revealing both the resilience and weaknesses of youth under academic stress.

#### **4.2.1 Humor and Friendship**

One of the main ways the character in *Fine Point Someone* deal with stress is through humour and friendship. The friendship between Hari, Ryan and Alok is very important in the story. It gives them a feeling of belonging and emotional support during tough academic times. Their friendship helps them escape the pressure of IIT and share their problems with each other. As Hair says, “Ryan’s heroics were enough to make us all bonds faster than fevicol” (7). The fun and friendly connection help them handle their academic struggles, even if it doesn’t solve everything. Humour is also a key way the characters’ cope. The novel has many funny moments, which help rescue tension and give them a break from stress. The humour shows that the characters are trying to keep things normal and stay in control in a tough environment. By laughing at their problems and the strange things they go through, the time.

#### **4.2.2 Rebellion**

Ryan deals with stress by rebelling against the education system. He questions the rules and the way IIT focuses too much on grades. He believes the system stops students from being creative and thinking freely. He says, “This system of relative grading and overburdening the students... it kills the best fun years of your life” (35). Ryan’s rebellion is a way to protect his self-confidence and mental health, as he doesn’t want to be judged only by grades. But this rebellion also makes him feel lonely and separated from others.

#### **4.2.3 Avoidance**

Hari often avoids his problem to cope, especially by spending time with Neha, the daughter of an IIT professor. Instead of dealing with his academic issues, Hari focuses on his romantic relationship as a way to escape reality. But avoiding his problems only makes them worse. He falls behind in his studies. The story shows that avoidance can help for a short time, but in the long run, it leads to more stress and worry. Hari’s way of avoiding his responsibilities shows a bigger idea in the novel how hard it is for students to handle academic pressure.

#### **4.3 Psychological Impact**

The emotional and mental toll of academic stress on the characters in *Five Point Someone* is deep and significant. The novel presents multiple types of psychological struggle such as feeling of inferiority



sadness, and worry. There emotional stress is worsened by the characters inability to manage the stress they face effectively.

#### **4.3.1 Feelings of Inadequacy**

All three main characters go through feeling of inferiority as they strive to fulfil the academic requirement of IIT. Their poor academic results and constant need to succeed lead to sense of being unworthy, as they start to view themselves as unsuccessful. Hari 's experience highlights this well when we say, "My score was five on twenty, or twenty-five per cent; I had never in my life scored less than three times as much. Ouch, the first quiz in IIT hurt " (20). The absorption of failure as a personal belief is a consistent theme in a novel, playing a major role in intensifying the characters ' stress." The deep internalisation of failure is especially visible in Alok, who becomes increasingly hopeless, feeling that he is disappointing both himself and his family. His sense of unworthiness intensifies to the point where he contemplates ending his life a powerful sign of how dangerous academic stress can become, Ryan, on the contrary concerns his feelings of inferiority through arrogance and rebellion. His outward rejection of the system acts as a shield against his inner fears of not being good enough. Yet, this defensive stance leads to increasing isolation, as Ryan pulls away from both his peers and the institution. Though his emotional battle is less visible, it is just as damaging as he struggles with the conflict between wanting independence and dealing with the social expectations surrounding him. Hari 's sense of not being good enough is more quietly expressed. Seen through his passivity and dependence on other especially Ryan. Hari 's way of coping-mostly by avoiding difficult situations, such as in his relationship with Neha-shows his difficulty in taking control of his life. Instead of taking control of his life. Instead of facing his academic problems directly, Hari often escapes, while only makes his feelings of failures worse as his grades and academic performance continue to drop.

#### **4.3.2 Depression and Anxiety**

The novel highlights the characters ' experiences with depression and anxiety, which are typical emotional reactions to prolonged academic pressure. Alok 's depression is the most prominently shown as he struggles under the heavy burden of both scholastic and family duties. His overwhelming feeling of being stuck in an endless loop of failure and responsibility leads him to consider suicide, exposing the intensity of his emotional turmoil. Hari 's anxious state is illustrated through his persistent concern over his grades and what ties ahead. His involvement with Neha, though it offers a brief relief, further intensifies his anxiety due to the fear of being found out by her father, a stern professor at the institution. The burden of hiding this relationship, coupled with his academic difficulties, results in a continuous sense of discomfort and distress. Ryan 's anxiety, on the other hand, is less apparent, hidden behind his



defiant and rebellious exterior. His inclination to question authority and resist social norms seems to be a reaction to deeper insecurities and fears of not measuring up. The story implies that his distress goes beyond academic concerns, involving deeper struggles with his sense of identity and life's measuring, which he attempts to confront through his unconventional mindset.

#### **4.3.3 Strained Relationships**

The emotional pressure experienced by the characters also affects their relationships- both among themselves and with their families. Although the bond between Hari, Ryan and Alok is strong, it is tested by the various pressure they encounter. Their different ways of dealing with stress occasionally lead to disagreements and confusion, showing how difficult it can be to preserve close relationships during times of hardship. Alok's connection with his family is especially tense. His mother's high expectations and financial responsibility he carries create emotional distance, as he feels incapable of expressing his personal struggles. This breakdown in communication increases his sense of loneliness and deepens his feelings of depression. Hari's relationship with Neha also becomes complicated due to his stress. While Neha offers him emotional comfort, the need to keep their relationship hidden adds more pressure to Hari's already overwhelmed mind. The novel reflects on how balancing personal relationship and academic responsibilities can be challenging, often making them seem at odds with one another.

#### **4.3.4 Impact on Future Prospects**

The emotional consequences of academic pressure also influence the characters' outlook on concerns about how sustainable the current academic system is especially when the endless focus on marks negatively affects mental health. For Hari, Ryan, and Alok academic achievement becomes linked to their self-worth, potentially restricting their future not only in terms of careers but also personal development and satisfaction. The story indicates that without proper emotional support and healthy coping strategies, students may be unready for life beyond college. The experiences of the characters underline the importance of a more balanced approach to education- one that supports emotional and mental health along with academic success.

### **5. Conclusion**

The research indicates the present education system with its strong focus on grades and competition, implies an unsustainable load on students, contributing to serious mental health concerns. To address these issues, reforms are needed that place greater importance on student wellbeing and establish proper support structures for those grappling with academic demands. The coping strategies used by the characters. Such as humour, friendship, defiance and avoidance offer momentary comfort but ultimately



fall short intackling the deeper emotional struggles including low self-worth, depression and anxiety. It is crucial for educational institutions to acknowledge the significance of mental health and implement measures that assist students in handling stress constructively. These measure could involve offering mental health counselling, organising stress-relief programs, and adopting more adaptable methods of evaluation and assessment. Furthermore, they must be a cultural change in how academic achievement is perceived moving away from the belief that it solely defines a person 's value-and instead promoting a more well-rounded and meaningful approach to life. The novel portrays of the effects of academic pressure acts as a compelling reminder of the emotional toll taken b y a highly competitive academic environment. By cultivating a setting that nurtures both intellectual and emotional development, educational institutions can better equip students to handling academic challenges and guide them toward leading successful and enriched lives.

#### References

- [1] Ali, Abhishek. "Creativity Versus Indian Education System: A Critical Study on Chetan Bhagat 's Book, *Five Point Someone* and its Film Version." *International Journal of English and Studies (IJOES)*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2024, pp. 38-54, doi:10.47311/IJOES.2024.6.6.54.
- [2] Babu, V. Bujji. "Career and Struggles of Young Buddies: A Review of Chetan Bhagat 's Novel '*Five Point Someone* '." *International Journal of Trends in English Language and Literature (IJTELL)*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1-6.
- [3] Bhagat, Chetan. *Five Point Someone*. Rupa Publications, 2004.
- [4] Biswas, Mun Mun Das. "Depiction of Youth Culture in Chetan Bhagat 's *Five Point Someone*." *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2013, pp. 1-7.
- [5] Lazarus, Richard S., and Susan Folkman. *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. Springer, 1984.
- [6] Misra, Ranjita, and Michael McKean. "College Students ' Academic Stress and Its Relation to Their Anxiety, Time Management and Leisure Satisfaction." *American Journal of Health Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2000, p. 41.
- [7] Samraj, R. M., and M. P. Ganesan. "Chetan Bhagat 's *Five Point Someone*: An Acute Assessment on Our Indian Education System." *Journal of Rajasthan Association for Studies in English*, vol. 23, 2025, pp. 198-203.
- [8] Sharma, Ramesh. "Coping Mechanisms for Academic Stress in Higher Education: A Case Study of Indian Students." *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2018, pp. 23-30.
- [9] Singh, Aman. "Academic Pressure and Mental Health: The Experience of Indian Students." *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2016, pp. 45-50.