

# Academic stress and teen suicide

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*Suicide among young people is a serious problem. According to the Malaysian Psychiatric Association, seven people kill themselves daily, with young adults making up the majority.*

Just last week, 21-year-old Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman student, Corson Lim, jumped from the 14th floor of an apartment in Wangsa Maju.

He was pursuing a bachelor degree in public relations. According to his friends, as reported in the Chinese-language news media, Corson was jovial and cheerful. However, he became depressed just few months before he decided to end his life. It was widely speculated that Corson suffered academic stress and went into depression before examination. It was also reported that he had in many occasions voiced out his intention to quit studies.

Last year, an accounting student from the same college as Corson's committed suicide after having to re-sit exam papers. He too was believed to have suffered from depression.

In Dubai, a 16-year-old boy committed suicide on the day of his exam. His body was found hanging from the terrace of his apartment.

Also, 16-year-old student doused himself with gasoline and set himself ablaze in the street in South Korea. He left a note indicating that he had performed badly in exams and felt bad to let his parents down.

Teen suicide is a universal problem, and occurs in different ways. Dozens of students killed themselves every year. One of the reasons is academic stress.

Teenagers go through a confusing period. It is common to have suicidal thoughts during this age. While some would manage to get over their disappointment over exam results and moved on, there are some who decided to end their life.

In this transition period, teenagers also face tremendous stress in adapting and adjusting, to establish their own personality and identity.

This group of young people face intolerable pressure from an education system that focuses heavily on academic grading. From an early age, they face immense pressure, be it from the parents or from their peers, to perform well in their examinations.

For instance, there are many Malaysian students who think their SPM results as the key to their career. There is then the pressure on them to do well in this public examination. Many are disappointed for not being able to fulfill their parents' expectations.

Teen suicide is, however, preventable.

In a research conducted by Flouri and Buchanan (2002), it is found that parental involvement plays a role in preventing suicide attempts.

Parents can help prevent suicide by recognising warning signs and most importantly, knowing how to communicate with their children.

Children are not examination machines. They need emotional support and understanding from their parents.

While academic grading is important, parents must realise that performing well academically does not promise a bright future. Success is not about scoring all As in the examinations, it is about having skills and good values. – April 14, 2014.

*\* This is the personal opinion of the writer or publication and does not necessarily represent the views of The Malaysian Insider.*

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