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### **When Failure Becomes a Crime**

I write in response to the horrific suicide of S. Subashini when she allegedly hung herself at her home. The “Year Six pupil found hanged” (*The Star*, Nov 19) article stated that she held high expectations of her UPSR results, of which she only received 4Bs, 2Cs and 1D.

What has become of our society nowadays? Why is it that a 12-year-old primary school child was driven to tighten a blanket around her neck? How do we rationalize about the party that is to receive blame and responsibility when tragedies as such come into play?

It is never about one person, or one couple to be exact. The deceased’s parents may be at fault; perhaps for exerting a little too much pressure on her academic achievements, but it is never just about two people. I strongly state that it is always about the society, as a whole.

It begins with the traditional Asian sentiment that places unhealthy, unrealistic and simply unreasonable academic expectations on the young. The commanding has always been, and still is, that the better your grades are, the better YOU are.

“You hold full responsibility for determining your grades; therefore your grades are nothing less than a mirror reflection of who you are, and how you shall be perceived by members of the greater society. If you fail, then you are, with concrete evidence, a failure”.

These were the despicable words of a teacher overtly eager to share his remarks with me after I have delivered a motivational talk at a secondary level government school. The talk emphasized on confidence-building through activities that excluded the classroom as a venue; thus encouraging the above reaction.

If the society insisted on our children being meticulously perfect in their studies, why is there not a single good example that demonstrates that perfection that they aggressively demand for? How could the society expect our children to live up to expectations that they themselves could not, in the first place? Is this, in actuality, a diversion that shields it all from the glare of the spotlight?

To quote a student, “You cannot blame the child either for being ridiculously depressed or the parents for placing too much pressure on their child. This is partly due to the embarrassment of these parents because their child didn't perform well, which stems from the insane expectations of the society. Some has said the catastrophe would begin in the distant future. I'm afraid it has already begun”.

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A caring corporate citizen

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