

Level of Aspiration among High School Students: A Demographic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the aspirations of 104 high school students, concentrating on three demographic variables: gender, kind of school (government versus private), and medium of instruction (English versus Tamil). Aspiration was examined through three dimensions: Dedication, Motivation, and Realization, providing a thorough framework to evaluate students' ambition and determination in attaining their objectives. The results demonstrate considerable demographic effects on ambition levels. Gender disparities were apparent, with one gender consistently demonstrating elevated levels of aspiration across all three categories. Students enrolled in private schools exhibited greater levels of aspiration than their counterparts in public institutions. This gap may be ascribed to variables such as enhanced infrastructure, resources, and instructional quality in private institutions. Moreover, the language of instruction proved to be a significant determinant, as pupils in English medium schools had greater aspiration levels compared to their counterparts in Tamil medium schools. This may be connected to the extensive opportunities and exposure generally related to English medium education. These findings underscore the necessity of addressing demographic inequities in schooling. They offer significant insights for educators and policymakers to formulate focused interventions that foster fair student development. By understanding the factors influencing aspiration, educational institutions can implement strategies to cultivate a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This study highlights the importance of measures aimed at bridging the gap between different demographic groups, ensuring that all students can reach their full potential.

KEYWORDS: Level of aspiration, high school students, gender, medium of instruction, school type, demographic factors

INTRODUCTION

The level of aspiration denotes the objectives individuals establish for themselves based on intrinsic motives and extrinsic possibilities. It embodies the aspiration and determination to attain specific goals, shaped by individual aspirations and societal norms. Aspirations are essential among adolescents, serving as significant predictors of academic achievement, job decisions, and general personal growth. Adolescence is a pivotal phase for establishing long-term objectives, characterised by substantial physical, emotional, and cognitive transformations. During this period, teenagers commence identity formation and cultivate a sense of purpose, which influences their aspirations and future paths. This study investigates the aspiration levels of high school pupils, concentrating on three primary demographic variables: gender, school type and medium of instruction. The study seeks to elucidate how demographic features affect the ambitions of young individuals through the analysis of these aspects. This investigation is crucial for educators, policymakers, and parents to effectively assist and direct teenagers in their academic and personal development.

GENDER AND ASPIRATIONS

Gender significantly influences the aspirations of adolescents. Societal norms and expectations frequently determine the roles and opportunities accessible to certain genders, hence impacting the objectives individuals establish for themselves. In numerous places, guys are urged to engage in STEM occupations, whereas girls are directed towards carer duties or professions in the arts and humanities. Gendered expectations can

influence the aspirations of high school pupils, so altering their academic achievement, career decisions, and personal growth. The study indicates significant gender disparities in aspiration levels among high school students. Boys often establish elevated aspirations regarding academic success and professional progression, likely influenced by society's expectations of them as major earners. Conversely, girls frequently demonstrate ambitions centred on personal growth and societal contributions, such as pursuing careers as educators, healthcare practitioners, or community leaders. These disparities underscore the necessity for gender-sensitive educational policies and initiatives that foster equitable opportunities and contest conventional gender norms.

SCHOOL TYPE AND ASPIRATIONS

The kind of educational institution that students enrol in significantly influences their ambitions. Numerous countries exhibit a distinct disparity between public and private educational institutions regarding funding, infrastructure, and instructional quality. Private schools frequently provide superior facilities, more qualified educators, and a more favourable learning atmosphere, which can significantly impact students' ambitions. Conversely, government schools, sometimes underfunded and overcrowded, may find it challenging to offer equivalent assistance and encouragement to their students. The study's findings reveal that kids from private schools have greater levels of aspiration than their counterparts at government schools. This disparity is due to the superior academic resources, extracurricular activities, and career coaching offered by private institutions. Students attending private schools are more inclined to establish ambitious objectives, including the pursuit of higher education at esteemed institutions and the aspiration for lucrative, prominent employment. Conversely, students from government schools may possess more limited ambitions, frequently prioritising stable jobs above pursuing prestigious careers. To rectify this inequality, it is imperative to invest in enhancing the quality of education in public institutions. This encompasses enhancing infrastructure, training educators, and providing career counselling services to assist pupils in establishing elevated aspirations. Moreover, policies that foster equity and access to high-quality education for all kids, irrespective of their demographic factors, are essential for diminishing the disparity in aspirational levels between government and private school pupils.

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND ASPIRATIONS

The medium of instruction significantly impacts the aspirations of secondary school pupils. In multilingual communities, the medium of teaching can profoundly influence pupils' academic achievement, job opportunities, and overarching ambitions. English, as a worldwide lingua franca, is frequently linked to enhanced prospects and elevated social standing. Students attending English language schools are frequently regarded as having an edge regarding access to higher education and employment prospects. The study reveals that children in English medium schools have higher levels of aspiration compared to those in Tamil language schools. This might be ascribed to the extensive opportunities and exposure linked to English medium education. Students educated in English are more inclined to establish ambitious objectives, such as seeking higher education overseas, aspiring to positions in global corporations, or entering professions necessitating English fluency. Conversely, pupils at Tamil medium schools may possess more localised ambitions, concentrating on careers that are more attainable within their communities. To address this disparity, it is essential to advocate for bilingual education and allow pupils to learn in both their home language and English. This aids children from Tamil medium schools in cultivating the linguistic competencies required to thrive in a globalised environment, while simultaneously safeguarding their cultural identity. Furthermore, offering language support programs and resources can assist students from non-English medium backgrounds in surmounting linguistic obstacles and realising their ambitions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The level of aspiration, characterised as the desire or objectives individuals establish for themselves, is a pivotal factor influencing academic and career performance among high school students. Recent research (2019-2025) has examined the impact of demographic characteristics, including gender, school type, and medium of instruction, on students' goals. These elements combine with societal expectations, resource availability, and cultural contexts to influence students' aspirations and self-conceptions. This study consolidates findings from studies published between 2019 and 2025, offering insights into the interaction of

various demographic variables.

Gender and Aspirations

Research indicates that boys are more predisposed to pursue employment in STEM fields, whereas girls generally prefer professions in healthcare, education, and social sciences. Singh and Sharma (2020) discovered that gender stereotypes substantially affect students' profession selections, with boys exhibiting more ambitions in competitive and technical domains. In contrast, girls frequently encounter cultural pressure to prioritise roles deemed "nurturing," potentially constraining their employment ambitions. Gender disparities in self-efficacy also exert influence. Khan et al. (2022) demonstrated that boys frequently overrate their capabilities, resulting in elevated expectations, while girls, despite superior academic performance, commonly undervalue their potential. This discrepancy in self-evaluation affects aspiration levels, as girls establish lesser objectives despite their potential. The convergence of gender with additional demographic elements, including socioeconomic class and geographic location, further complicates expectations. Rural female students have multiple obstacles, such as restricted access to quality education and societal expectations, resulting in diminished goals relative to their urban peers.

School Type and Aspirations

The sort of school—public or private—profoundly affects pupils' goals. Private schools frequently offer superior facilities, resources, and exposure, cultivating elevated aspirations among pupils. Private schools are recognised for providing superior facilities, extracurricular programs, and career guidance, which foster elevated aspirations. Patel and Gupta (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of the aspirations of public and private school students, revealing that private school students possess markedly higher professional and intellectual objectives. This disparity arises from enhanced teacher-student ratios, availability of technology, and exposure to diverse employment opportunities in private schools. Students in public schools, especially in poor regions, have difficulties like overcrowded classrooms, insufficient qualified educators, and restricted extracurricular opportunities. These factors lead to diminished aspirations among kids. Rao et al. (2019) emphasised that public school pupils frequently experience diminished motivation due to insufficient academic and career advice, which obstructs their objectives. The variation in ambitions according to school type highlights the necessity for policy measures to enhance public school facilities and ensure equitable chances for all children. Public-private partnerships and targeted support for disadvantaged schools can effectively address this disparity.

Medium of Instruction and Aspirations

The medium of instruction—whether English or regional languages—significantly influences students' goals. English, as the global lingua franca, is frequently linked to enhanced employment chances and superior educational opportunities. Students enrolled in English-medium institutions generally possess elevated aspirations owing to the projected benefits of English proficiency in higher education and work opportunities. Ahmed and Rahman (2023) discovered that pupils attending English-medium schools exhibited elevated professional goals in comparison to their counterparts in regional-medium schools. The research ascribes this phenomenon to the worldwide demand for English-speaking professionals and the esteem linked to English-medium education. Students from regional-medium schools frequently encounter obstacles in attaining further education and entering competitive labour markets due to insufficient English competence. Banerjee and Roy (2020) emphasised that regional-medium students seek local employment and conventional careers, illustrating the impact of language on their aspirations. The study indicated that regional-medium children receiving English language training demonstrate enhanced aspirations, highlighting the significance of language proficiency. The medium of education influences pupils' cultural and linguistic identity. Das (2024) examined the identity conflict experienced by regional-medium students, who strive to maintain their home language while also acquiring English for enhanced chances. This contradiction may affect their ambitions since students could feel conflicted between local and global career trajectories.

Intersectionality of Demographic Factors

The interaction of gender, type of school, and language of instruction further influences pupils' aspirations. A

female student from a public school utilising a regional language of instruction may encounter greater obstacles than a male student from a private English-medium institution. Sharma and Verma (2022) investigated the interactive influence of gender and educational institutions on ambitions. The research indicated that female students in private institutions exhibited greater aspirations than those in public schools, underscoring the influence of resources and support structures in cultivating ambition. The medium of education exacerbates gender-based differences in ambitions. Gupta et al. (2024) demonstrated that boys attending English-medium schools exhibited the highest aspirations, whereas girls in regional-medium schools encountered considerable obstacles stemming from linguistic and societal norms. The interplay between school type and medium of instruction generates unique ambition patterns. Kumar and Singh (2023) conducted a comparison between private English-medium pupils and public regional-medium students, revealing that the former had markedly higher expectations. This disparity highlights the necessity for focused efforts to assist pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the aspiration levels of secondary school students.
2. To investigate the influence of demographic variables (gender, medium of instruction, school type) on aspiration levels.
3. To propose educational initiatives informed by the findings.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The participants were a diverse cohort of high school students from various demographic backgrounds. Statistical comparisons were conducted utilising t-tests to determine significant differences. Data were examined across three aspects of aspiration:

- Dedication: Commitment to goals
- Motivation: Drive to achieve
- Realization: Perceived likelihood of goal attainment

Comparison of Gender with Level of Aspiration

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the level of aspiration between males and females across the three dimensions (Dedication, Motivation, and Realization).

Table 1.1: Comparison of Gender with Level of Aspiration

Group Statistics						
GENDER		N	Mean	SD	t value	p-value
Dedication	MALE	60	30.00	3.97	3.680	<0.001*
	FEMALE	44	32.56	2.77		
Motivation	MALE	60	26.50	3.89	3.300	0.001*
	FEMALE	44	28.72	2.58		
Realization	MALE	60	31.36	3.48	0.010	<0.001*
	FEMALE	44	33.70	2.42		

Inference

There is a significant difference between males and females, with females consistently demonstrating higher levels of aspiration in all the three dimensions.

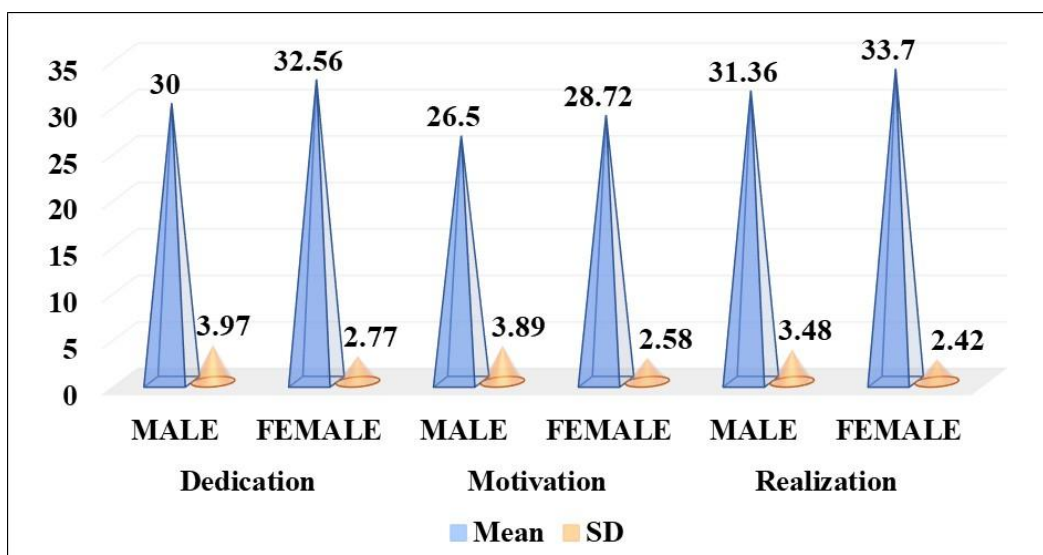


Figure 1.1: Comparison of Gender with Level of Aspiration

The chart compares gender differences in aspiration across Dedication, Motivation, and Realization. Females consistently show higher mean scores and lower standard deviations, indicating greater performance and consistency. In each category, females outperform males: Dedication (32.56 vs 30), Motivation (28.72 vs 26.5), and Realization (33.7 vs 31.36).

Comparison of Type of School with Level of Aspiration

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the level of aspiration between govt and private across the three dimensions (Dedication, Motivation, and Realization).

Table 1.2: Comparison of Type of School with Level of Aspiration

Group Statistics					
TYPE OF SCHOOL		N	Mean	SD	
Dedication	GOVT	69	31.85	3.00	3.074
	PRIVATE	35	29.57	4.40	
					0.003*
Motivation	GOVT	69	27.86	3.10	1.735
	PRIVATE	35	26.60	4.24	
					0.086
Realization	GOVT	69	33.26	2.47	4.269
	PRIVATE	35	30.57	3.92	
					<0.001*

Inference

There is a significant difference between government and private school students in the Dedication and Realization levels of aspiration, with government school students performing better. However, there is no significant difference in the Motivation levels of aspiration between the two groups.

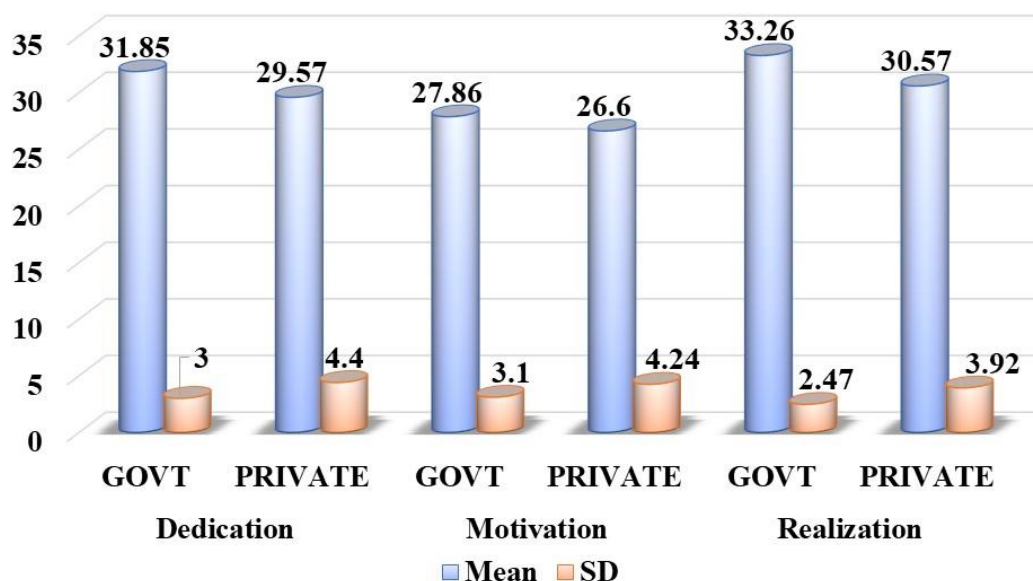


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Type of School with Level of Aspiration

The chart compares aspiration levels between government and private school students across Dedication, Motivation, and Realization. Government school students show higher mean scores but lower standard deviations in all areas, indicating better performance and more consistency. Private school students display slightly lower scores with greater variability across the three categories.

Comparison of Medium of Instruction with Level of Aspiration

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the level of aspiration between English and Tamil across the three dimensions (Dedication, Motivation, and Realization).

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in the level of aspiration between English and Tamil across the three dimensions (Dedication, Motivation, and Realization).

Table1.3: Comparison of Medium of Instruction with Level of Aspiration

Group Statistics						
MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION		N	Mean	SD	t value	p-value
Dedication	ENGLISH	69	30.46	3.48	2.452	0.016*
	TAMIL	35	32.31	3.91		
Motivation	ENGLISH	69	26.92	3.30	2.104	0.038*
	TAMIL	35	28.45	3.86		
Realization	ENGLISH	69	31.95	3.16	1.761	0.081
	TAMIL	35	33.14	3.39		

Inference

There is a significant difference between students using English and Tamil as the medium of instruction in the Dedication and Motivation levels of aspiration, with Tamil medium students performing better in both aspects. However, there is no significant difference in the Realization level of aspiration between the two groups.

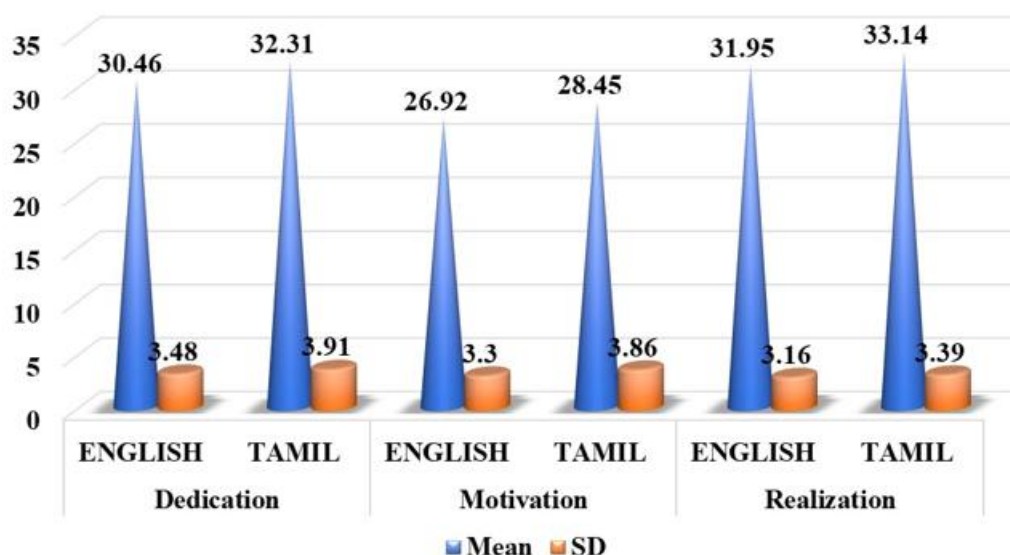


Figure 1.3: Comparison of Medium of Instruction with Level of Aspiration

The chart compares aspiration levels by study medium (English vs Tamil) across Dedication, Motivation, and Realization. Tamil medium students consistently show higher mean scores across all areas. Standard deviations are slightly higher for Tamil medium students, indicating slightly more variability in their aspiration levels compared to English medium students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 1. Gender Disparities:** Females demonstrated markedly elevated levels of aspiration in all aspects, indicating a more robust drive towards academic and personal goals.
- 2. Type of School:** Students from government schools outperformed their peers in private institutions on measures of Dedication and Realisation, contradicting the belief that private schools inherently promote greater academic desire.
- 3. Medium of Instruction:** Tamil medium students exhibited superior scores in Dedication and Motivation, suggesting heightened goals potentially influenced by cultural or contextual factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Personalised interventions to assist underperforming demographics (e.g., males, private school attendees, English medium kids).
- Gender-responsive policies to support and promote female ambitions.
- Career advice initiatives to improve self-efficacy and maturity, particularly in underperforming demographics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND POLICYMAKERS

The results of this study hold significant significance for educators and politicians. Comprehending the determinants that affect the ambitions of high school students can facilitate the creation of tailored interventions that foster equitable student development. By tackling the differences in aspirational levels related to gender, school type, and medium of instruction, educators and policymakers can foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Educators must acknowledge the varied aspirations of their students and furnish them with the requisite assistance and direction to realise their objectives. This encompasses delivering career counselling, facilitating mentorship programs, and establishing opportunities for students to investigate various career trajectories. Educators may significantly contribute to dismantling preconceptions and advancing gender equality in the classroom, motivating both male and female students to achieve their aspirations without constraints.

The report underscores the necessity for policymakers to implement strategies that foster fairness and ensure access to quality education for all pupils. This encompasses investing in infrastructure and resources for public schools, advocating for multilingual education, and offering financial assistance to kids from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, initiatives that tackle gender gaps and foster equitable chances for all pupils can mitigate the disparity in aspirational levels among various demographic groups.

CONCLUSION

The aspiration levels of high school pupils are affected by several demographic parameters, such as gender, type of school, and medium of instruction. The results highlight the significance of demographic context in influencing pupils' aspirations. Female pupils, government school attendees, and Tamil medium learners consistently exhibited elevated aspiration scores. These findings underscore the necessity for sophisticated educational practices that account for gender, institutional, and linguistic diversity. The study indicates substantial disparities in student ambitions influenced by these factors, underscoring the necessity for focused interventions to foster equitable student development. By understanding the factors shaping teenage aspirations, educators and policymakers can create an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Addressing disparities in aspirations requires a multifaceted approach, including improving public school quality, promoting gender equality, and providing linguistic support for non-English-speaking households. Such investments can establish a more equitable educational system that nurtures the hopes and ambitions of all students, regardless of their background. Supporting high school students' ambitions is vital for their academic success, career progression, and personal growth, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and prosperous society.

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