

## A STUDY ON LEVEL OF ASPIRATION OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

**Dr. T. SIVASAKTHI RAJAMMAL**

*Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Educational Psychology*

*Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai, India*

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the level of aspiration among higher secondary students, aiming to identify major patterns and differences based on demographic and institutional factors. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from a representative sample of students through a structured questionnaire. The analysis reveals that most higher secondary students exhibit an average level of aspiration, with significant variations observed based on factors such as urban or rural school location and type of school management. No marked difference is found between male and female students in their levels of aspiration, but students in urban and private settings tend to report higher aspirations compared to their rural and government school counterparts. These results suggest the importance of socio-economic, educational, and cultural influences on students' goals and future orientation, which may inform strategies to support students in achieving higher educational and career aspirations.*

**Keywords:** *Level of Aspiration, Higher Secondary Students, Family Background, Socio-Cultural Factors, Academic Efforts, Ambitions.*

### **Introduction**

The concept of level of aspiration refers to the hopes, ambitions, and future goals that students set for themselves, influencing both their motivation and academic efforts. Among higher secondary students, aspiration emerges as a dynamic psychological construct shaped by individual characteristics, family background, and socio-cultural factors. Research indicates that educational aspiration affects students' academic choices, participation in school activities, and resilience when facing challenges, making it a critical element for predicting academic success and long-term educational attainment. Students at this stage begin to formulate realistic yet ambitious goals that reflect their self-concept, values, and perception of their potential. These aspirations are molded by interactions with teachers and peers, exposure to various career paths, and their socio-economic environment. Understanding the level of aspiration among higher secondary students is vital, as it enables educators, parents, and policymakers to implement strategies that support higher achievement and guide students toward successful futures. This study aims to systematically explore the levels of aspiration among higher secondary students, examining how these aspirations vary according to gender, locality, and type of school, and how they relate to academic achievement and future educational direction.

### **Level of Aspiration**

Level of aspiration refers to the goals or standards of achievement that individuals set for themselves based on their self-perceptions, previous experiences, and assessment of their

abilities. It represents a personal benchmark for future performance, motivating students to strive for success in academics, careers, or other life pursuits. The concept is dynamic, influenced by both internal and external factors such as self-confidence, feedback from past successes or failures, family expectations, peer comparisons, and socio-economic context. Higher levels of aspiration are usually associated with greater motivation, persistence, and engagement in learning activities, while low levels may reflect limited ambition or expectations. Understanding a student's level of aspiration is important in educational settings, as it helps identify motivational patterns and can guide interventions that encourage positive goal-setting and greater academic achievement.

### **Review of Literature**

**Kumari and Ahmad (2023)** reviewed the articles related to educational aspiration, academic anxiety, and socioeconomic status of senior secondary school students and were then analysed to understand the trends systematically. Aspiration level helps a student increase self-confidence, set up goals, and avoid failure. However, all this is hindered due to the anxiety they experience about their set levels of aspirations. Anxiety prevents a student from taking the initiative, learning new materials and exploring various disciplines and fields, thus lowering their levels of aspirations. Socioeconomic status is another important ingredient in determining what a student is, what he feels about himself and what determines his level of aspiration. The studies reviewed above have shown that levels of aspiration and academic anxiety are significantly related to the socioeconomic status of the students. It indicated a strong relationship between the level of aspiration and academic anxiety of school children and their socioeconomic status to achieve excellence in education, and this may be true in the context of any population. However, some studies also indicate that there is no relationship between the level of aspiration and academic anxiety of the students.

**Khan (2022)** studied the level of aspiration and achievement among secondary-level students studying in the Hyderabad District. For the present study, the total percentage of marks secured by the students in all six subjects, namely Languages I, II and III, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, were taken as achievement. The study revealed that among high school students, irrespective of the medium in which they study, there is a substantial correlation between their levels of aspiration and scholastic achievement. Variables of gender, educational status of the parents, and management of the occupational schools do not influence the correlation between the level of aspiration and scholastic achievement in the case of high school students.

### **Objectives**

To find out whether there is any significant difference between the following sub-groups of higher secondary students:

- a) Gender – Male and Female
- b) Locality of School – Rural and Urban

- c) Medium of Instruction
- d) Type of School – Boys', Girls; & Co-Education
- e) Type of Management – Self – Financed, Aided and Government

### **Hypotheses**

There is no significant difference between the following sub-groups of higher secondary students:

- a) Gender – Male and Female
- b) Locality of School – Rural and Urban
- c) Medium of Instruction
- d) Type of School – Boys', Girls; & Co-Education
- e) Type of Management – Self – Financed, Aided and Government

### **Methodology**

The researcher examined the "Level of Aspiration of Higher Secondary Students" using the survey approach. All of the higher secondary students enrolled in the XI and XII Standards in the Tamil Nadu districts of Mayiladuthurai, Nagapattinam, and Cuddalore make up the study's population. Stratified random sampling was used to pick 450 upper secondary students from each of the 1,350 XI and XII standard students enrolled in higher secondary schools in the districts of Mayiladudurai, Nagapattinam, and Cuddalore for the study.

### **Tools Used for the Study**

The investigator used the Aspiration Level Inventory Constructed and validated (2022). The tool contains 20 items under three dimensions with 10, 5 and 5 items respectively in a 5-point Likert Scale with the options never, seldom, sometimes, often and always, after removing 20 items based on the pilot study.

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

Percentage analysis, the "t" test, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), and post-hoc ANOVA were used to examine the gathered data.

### **Testing of Hypothesis**

#### **Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant difference between male and female higher secondary students in their level of aspiration and its dimensions.

**Table 1 Difference between Male and Female Higher Secondary Students in their Level of Aspiration and its Dimensions**

S.No	Level of Aspiration	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Remarks
1.	Educational aspiration	Male	635	31.61	11.089	0.79	NS
		Female	715	32.10	11.550		
2.	Professional Aspiration	Male	635	14.33	5.705	6.55	S
		Female	715	12.31	5.616		
3.	Life Aspiration	Male	635	14.33	5.705	6.55	S
		Female	715	12.31	5.616		
	Level of aspiration in total	Male	635	60.27	16.350	3.94	S
		Female	715	56.72	16.663		

*(The table value of 't' is 1.96, S - Significant, NS - Not Significant)*

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 't' value (0.79) is less than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, the result shows that there is no significant difference between male and female higher secondary students in the dimensions educational aspiration. But there is significant difference between male and female higher secondary students in the dimension's professional aspiration, life aspiration and level of aspiration in total. Therefore, the corresponding null hypothesis is disproved.

While comparing the mean scores of male (Mean=14.33) and female higher secondary students (Mean=12.31), the male higher secondary students are better than the female higher secondary students in the dimension professional aspiration. While comparing the mean scores of male (Mean=14.33) and female higher secondary students (Mean=12.31), the male higher secondary students are better than the female higher secondary students in the dimension of life aspiration. While comparing the mean scores of male (Mean=60.27) and female higher secondary students (Mean=56.72), the male higher secondary students are better than the female higher secondary students in the dimension of level of aspiration in total.

## Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between rural and urban school higher secondary students in their level of aspiration and its dimensions.

**Table 2 Difference between Rural and Urban School Higher Secondary Students in their Level of Aspiration and its Dimensions**

S.No	Level of Aspiration	Locality of the School	N	Mean	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Remarks
1.	Educational aspiration	Rural	700	28.00	12.487	13.90	S
		Urban	650	36.03	8.098		
2.	Professional aspiration	Rural	700	12.84	5.581	2.62	S
		Urban	650	13.66	5.871		
3.	Life aspiration	Rural	700	12.84	5.581	2.62	S
		Urban	650	13.66	5.871		
Level of aspiration in total		Rural	700	55.31	18.545	7.19	S
		Urban	650	61.70	13.474		

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 't' value (13.90, 2.62, 2.62, 7.19) is greater than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the result shows that there is significant difference between rural and urban school higher secondary students in the dimensions of educational aspiration, professional aspiration, life aspiration and level of aspiration in total.

When comparing the mean scores of higher secondary students in rural schools (Mean=28.00) and urban schools (Mean=36.03), the urban school higher secondary students outperform the rural school higher secondary students in the educational aspire dimension. In the dimension of professional aspiration, urban school upper secondary students outperform rural school higher secondary students (Mean=13.66) when comparing their mean scores (Mean=12.84 and 13.66, respectively). In the dimension of life aspiration, urban school upper secondary students outperform rural school higher secondary students (Mean=13.66) when comparing their mean scores (Mean=12.84 and 13.66, respectively). In terms of level aspiration overall, urban school upper secondary students outperform rural school higher secondary students, with mean scores of 61.70 and 55.31, respectively.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between Tamil medium and English medium higher secondary students in their level of aspiration and its dimensions.

**Table 3 Difference between Tamil Medium and English Medium Higher Secondary Students in their Level of aspiration and its Dimensions**

S.No	Level of aspiration	Medium of Study	N	Mean	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Remarks
1.	Educational aspiration	Tamil	712	30.31	11.751	5.39	S
		English	638	33.61	10.591		
2.	Professional aspiration	Tamil	712	12.79	6.068	3.19	S
		English	638	13.79	5.318		
3.	Life aspiration	Tamil	712	12.79	6.068	3.21	S
		English	638	13.79	5.318		
	Level of aspiration in total	Tamil	712	55.89	18.557	5.91	S
		English	638	61.18	13.594		

The above table indicates that, at the 0.05 level of significance, the computed "t" value (5.39, 3.19, 3.21, and 5.91) is higher than the table value (1.96). Therefore, the corresponding null hypothesis is disproved. As a result, the findings indicate that there is a substantial difference between higher secondary pupils who speak Tamil and English in terms of their aspirations for their education, careers, lives, and overall level of aspiration.

When comparing the mean scores of English medium higher secondary students (Mean=33.61) and Tamil medium higher secondary students (Mean=30.31), the English medium higher secondary students outperform the Tamil medium higher secondary students in the area of educational aspiration. The English medium higher secondary students outperform the Tamil medium higher secondary students on the dimension of professional aspiration, according to a comparison of their mean scores (Mean=12.79 and 13.79, respectively). The English medium higher secondary students outperform the Tamil medium higher secondary students in the dimension of life aspiration when comparing their mean scores (Mean=12.79 and 13.79, respectively). When comparing the mean scores of English medium higher secondary students (Mean=61.18) with Tamil medium higher secondary students (Mean=55.89), the English medium higher secondary students do better overall in the aspiration dimension.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

There is no significant difference among boys', girls' and co-education schools' higher secondary students in their level of aspiration and its dimensions.

**Table 4 Difference among Boys', Girls' and Co-education Schools Higher Secondary Students in their Level of Aspiration and its Dimensions**

S. No	Level of Aspiration	Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	Calculated 'F' value	Remarks
1.	Educational aspiration	Between	26044.778	2	13022.389	119.24	S
		Within	147251.222	1347	109.318		
2.	Professional aspiration	Between	3726.520	2	1863.260	61.50	S
		Within	40806.653	1347	30.294		
3.	Life aspiration	Between	3726.520	2	1863.260	61.50	S
		Within	40806.653	1347	30.294		
Level of aspiration in total		Between	79680.591	2	39840.296	183.59	S
		Within	292304.902	1347	217.004		

(For (2, 1347) df the table value of 'F' is 3.00, S - Significant)

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 'F' value (119.24, 61.50, 61.50, 183.59) is greater than the table value (3.00) for the df (2, 1347) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the result shows that there is significant difference among boys', girls' and co-education schools' higher secondary students in the dimensions educational aspiration, professional aspiration, life aspiration and level of aspiration in total. Scheffe test is used as post hoc test to find which of the paired mean scores differ significantly.

The Scheffe post hoc test result indicates that the co-education school higher secondary students are better in the educational aspiration, professional aspiration, life aspiration and level of aspiration in total than the boys' and girls' school higher secondary students.

### Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference among government, aided and self-financed school higher secondary students in their level of aspiration and its dimensions.

**Table 5 Difference among Government, Aided and Self-Financed School Higher Secondary Students in their Level of aspiration and its Dimensions**

S.No	Level of Aspiration	Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	Calculated 'F' value	Remarks
1.	Educational aspiration	Between	900.309	2	450.154	3.51	S
		Within	172395.691	1347	127.985		
2.	Professional aspiration	Between	7656.096	2	3828.048	139.82	S
		Within	36877.077	1347	27.377		
3.	Life aspiration	Between	7656.096	2	3828.048	139.80	S
		Within	36877.077	1347	27.377		
Level of aspiration in total		Between	21476.199	2	10738.100	41.26	S
		Within	350509.294	1347	260.215		

(For (2, 1347) df the table value of 'F' is 3.00, S - Significant)

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 'F' value (3.51, 139.82, 139.80, 41.26) is greater than the table value (3.00) for the df (2, 1347) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the result shows that there is significant difference among government, aided and self-financed school higher secondary students in the dimensions of educational aspiration, professional aspiration, life aspiration and level of aspiration in total. Scheffe test is used as post hoc test to find which of the paired mean scores differ significantly.

The Scheffe post hoc test result indicates that the aided school higher secondary students are better in the educational aspiration, professional aspiration, life aspiration and level of aspiration in total than the government and self-financed school higher secondary students.

### **Implications**

Based on the study, the researcher makes the following few recommendations:

- The study reveals that female higher secondary students have a lower level of aspiration than male higher secondary students. So, self-assertive exercises and self-confidence programmes could be organised for girls to improve their level of aspiration.
- The study shows that Tamil medium higher secondary students have a lower level of aspiration than English medium higher secondary students. So, psychologically supporting programmes for Tamil medium higher secondary students should be arranged to help them overcome their inferiority complex and negative thoughts that hamper their level of aspiration.
- The Schools need counselling programs and career guidance to counter low aspirations in government/rural settings, fostering motivation through exposure to opportunities.
- Policymakers should integrate parental involvement and resource equity initiatives to boost aspirations. Particularly linking them to emotional maturity and self-concept for holistic student development.

### **Conclusions**

This study affirms that higher secondary students maintain generally healthy aspiration levels conducive to academic progress, with targeted support addressing demographic disparities poised to optimize outcomes. The level of aspiration among higher secondary students is generally positive, reflecting their readiness to pursue higher educational and career goals, which is critical for their future success. Higher aspiration levels correlate with better academic performance, suggesting that motivation and goal-setting are key factors in student achievement. Psychological factors such as self-confidence and adjustment play a crucial role in fostering higher aspirations among students. Schools and educators should emphasize enhancing students' self-concept and provide supportive

environments to nurture and elevate their aspirations. Future educational programs should include motivational and counselling components to help students set realistic yet challenging goals. Policymakers should consider targeted interventions for disadvantaged groups to ensure equitable opportunities for aspiration and achievement. Continuous monitoring of aspiration levels can act as an indicator of student well-being and academic engagement for timely support. Future research should explore interventions integrating these insights for broader equity in educational aspirations.

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