

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

Dr. Ritu Dangwal^{1*}, Dr. Sushmita Mitra²

ABSTRACT

The present study is an exploratory study attempting to examine career aspirations, self-esteem, and the relationship between the two if any, of undergraduate students studying in a Private University in Neemrana, Rajasthan, India. In this study, a total of 118 students participated. 69 of these students were from 3rd year B Tech programme and 49 were from 1st year B Tech programme. The revised version of the Career Aspirations Scale (CAS) developed by Gregor and O'Brien which consists of three subscales, including achievement aspirations (8 items), leadership aspirations (8 items), and educational aspirations (8 items) was used to measure career aspirations. Rosenberg's self-esteem scale consisting of 10 self-report items was used to measure self-esteem. The literature review has mixed evidence of the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations. Several studies demonstrated that having high self-esteem would encourage students to maintain a positive outlook on career aspirations related to their present or future performance after graduation. In this study, although no relationship was found between self-esteem and career aspirations, it highlighted various results for intervention programs in higher education institutions. Gender played a role in the self-esteem and career aspirations measures for undergraduate students at different years of study. It is known that young adulthood is a period of adjustments to new patterns of life and new social expectations. In this period self-esteem is of great importance in career planning. Thus, this study proves to be fruitful in enhancing our knowledge of the development of gender role attitudes and their relationship with the dynamics of career development among youth.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Career Aspirations, Undergraduate Students, Gender*

Graduates face an increasingly competitive labor market, and many difficulties in finding employment (Tomlinson, 2012; Helyer and Lee, 2014). In this labor market, individuals have become responsible for managing their career success. However, there is a widespread concern that many undergraduate students are not engaging with their employability early enough (Tansley et al. 2007). Evidence suggests that undergraduate students often lack a clear understanding of employability and its importance until their final year of study (Tymon, 2013). The employability of graduates is consequently a strategic priority of the Higher Education sector (Tomlinson 2012) yet there is little evidence of the cognitive and behavioral reasons why some university students fare better than other students

¹Professor, NIIT University, Neemrana, India

²Independent Consultant

*Corresponding Author

Received: April 24, 2024; Revision Received: May 20, 2024; Accepted: May 24, 2024

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

at developing their employability. One of the most effective approaches to preparing students for employment is to create and develop career aspirations and career goals that motivate and inspire those students about their employability and future careers.

Among many factors that impact the success or failure of a student's learning process, the one that plays an essential role is self-esteem having consequences on motivation, and academic engagement. Self-esteem can be generally defined as an individual's overall sense of self-worth or how good they feel about themselves (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is a part of one's self-concept, that is, one's knowledge and beliefs about their attributes (Mann et al., 2004) along with other constructs. In recent years, investigators researching the concept of self-esteem have been critical about its role in development (Baumeister, et al., 2003; Neff & Vonk, 2009). They postulate that self-esteem is founded on self-evaluations that are often dependent on external sources. For example, we feel good about ourselves when others praise us for our accomplishments or when we perceive others like us. Therefore, self-esteem is unstable and can fluctuate depending on the feedback received.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career aspiration plays an important role in decisions regarding future employment and the selection of the nature of a job. It provides impetus to achieve professional goals and tends to be more long-term. Self-esteem, on the other hand, is what we think of ourselves. When positive, it provides confidence and self-respect to adapt to society and live life to its full potential. According to Super's (1963) career development theory, the selection of an occupation is an attempt by the individual to fulfill his or her sense of self. Super (1963) proposes a congruence between self-concept and vocational concept. Since self-esteem is an aspect of self-concept and since self-concept influences vocational development, high or low self-esteem may affect the progress of adolescents' crystallization process.

Empirical studies generally support the generalization that there is a relationship between certainty of vocational choice and level of self-esteem. Resnick et al., (1970) found that greater certainty of career choice was accompanied by higher self-esteem for both male and female college students. Maier and Herman (1974) also found that college students who were certain about their vocational choices had higher self-esteem than their undecided counterparts. Khan and Alvi (1983) found a positive correlation between self-esteem and career maturity as measured by the Career Maturity Inventory.

Career aspirations are critical more so for adolescents when they start to develop aspirations regarding their educational and future careers. Aspirations represent a person's orientation towards goals. Adolescence is the teenage years between 13 years to 19 years. It is a stage wherein adolescents are in the process of deciding their goals, priorities, and values. Career preparation in adolescence is an important precursor for successful career development across the lifespan and is closely related to adolescence adjustment and well-being (Skorikov, 2007). During adolescence, developing a vocational identity is a central developmental task. According to Silvia (2001), aspirations refer to an individual's expressed career-related goals or intentions and include motivational components that are not present as mere interests. The career aspirations of adolescents have been viewed as significant determinants of both short-term educational and long-term career choices (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Patton & Creed 2007). The term "aspirations" is widely used in reflecting the future lifestyle, dreams, desires, and ambitions of individuals. Studies have shown that raising aspirations can lead to higher achievement, both in careers and education.

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

According to Brien (2001), career aspirations are the desire to pursue higher education after high school, such as a four-year college, two-year college, or vocational school to increase career possibilities. VandenBos (2007), defined career aspirations as long-term individual work-related goals. Several research studies demonstrated that having high self-esteem would encourage students to maintain a positive outlook on career aspirations related to their present or future performance after graduation.

Career aspirations are considered one of the most important motivation variables connected to an individual's career-related goals, intentions, or options. Aspects of career aspirations include an orientation toward future educational and occupational goals which are associated with an individual's future life. Furthermore, there are several other variables associated with career aspirations, e.g., age, gender, family background, socioeconomic status, social capital, school attainment, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Ahmed & Mudrey, 2019). Castro and Armitage Chan (2016) investigated the relationship between gender, self-esteem, year of study, and career aspirations of veterinary students in the United Kingdom. Their study indicated that self-esteem, year of study, confidence, and previously holding a position in the students' society were significant predictors of career aspirations. Conversely, Rojewski and Yang (1996) found that in general, self-esteem had little effect on the career aspirations of American adolescents. Interestingly, the results of several studies indicated that rural students possessed lower educational and career aspirations than their urban peers (Bajema et al., 2002).

Although several interesting influences on career aspirations have been identified, to better understand students' career development, further studies regarding their quality of life and future employment are still necessary.

Research confirms that self-esteem is a stable predictor of an individual's behavior (Habib and Hashemi, 2014), which is in line with several previous studies concerned with the role and importance of self-esteem in human and career development (Burton & Parks [1994]; Patton, Bartrum & Creed [2004]). Self-esteem is an attribute which increases the power of a person's self or beliefs and may be associated with an individual's ability to achieve their goals and be successful in their career (Park et.al 2018).

Mau, Domnick, & Ellsworth (1995), found that female students aspiring for non-traditional careers like science or engineering tend to be high on self-esteem, as well as educational aspirations, academic achievement, internal locus of control, perceived parental expectations, and socioeconomic status. Self-esteem is identified as one of the factors that facilitate the career development of women. Mau (2003) found that students who persist in science and engineering careers are high on academic proficiency and math self-efficacy, both of which may be argued to be associated with one's academic, if not global, self-esteem.

Need for the study

Adolescence is a critical time for forming aspirations for the future, especially career aspirations (Vondracek et al., 1983). Career aspirations take a firm shape during adolescent years. Many contextual variables can affect a student's career aspirations such as gender, socioeconomic status, better academic performance, parents' occupation and education level, and parental expectations (Abdullah Al-Bahrani et al. (2020), Domenico & Jones, 2006). These factors influence the norms against which adolescents compare themselves and the context within which goals are pursued. Not many studies have been undertaken to see if career aspirations and self-esteem are related and if yes, then it is also dependent on the level

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

of completion of studies. Intuitively, a 3rd-year undergraduate student will be considered as having more career aspirations as compared to a 1st-year undergraduate student. And, if this holds then maybe self-esteem will also vary and vice versa. A review of the existing literature shows one's career aspirations to be influenced by several factors such as self-concept, self-efficacy, gender, and background. Considering this, the current study attempts to explore the career aspirations and self-esteem of undergraduate students at a private Indian University keeping the following objectives in mind.

Objectives of the study

The study seeks to:

- Explore the level of career aspirations and the level of self-esteem, respectively among undergraduate students.
- Investigate the difference of career aspirations and self-esteem based on gender.
- Examine the relationship between self-esteem and dimensions of career aspirations among undergraduate students.

Hypothesis

Hence, the hypothesis formulated are as follows:

- **H1:** There is no significant difference in self-esteem of undergraduate students at different levels of study year.
- **H2:** There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the dimensions of career aspirations (i.e. Achievement aspirations, Leadership aspirations, and Educational aspirations respectively) between undergraduate students at different levels of study year.
- **H3:** There is no statistically significant difference between the self-esteem of the undergraduate students based on their gender.
- **H4:** There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of career aspirations (i.e. Achievement aspirations, Leadership aspirations, and Educational aspirations respectively) of the undergraduate students based on gender at different levels of study.
- **H5:** There is no statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and the dimensions of career aspirations (i.e., Achievement aspirations, Leadership aspirations, and Educational aspirations respectively) of undergraduate students.

METHOD

Sample

The sample comprised 69 undergraduate students from 3rd year B Tech programme and 49 undergraduate students from 1st year B Tech programme. These students had voluntarily participated in the study. They were given two online tests and requested to take them when free. Before sharing the online tests, an e-mail was sent explaining to the students about the research study.

Measuring Instruments

The measuring instruments used in the study are as follows:

1. **Career Aspirations Scale:** The revised version of the career aspirations scale (CAS) developed by Gregor and O'Brien [2015], was used which consisted of three subscales, namely achievement (8 items), leadership (8 items), and educational (8 items). Participants used a Likert-type scale that ranged from 0 (not at all true for me) to 4 (very true for me) to rate their level of career aspirations in each area. Scores in

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

each subscale, therefore, ranged from 0 to 32. The response of each CAS subscale was summed to obtain its total score; higher scores reflected stronger CAS. Examples of items in the subscales are as follows: in the achievement aspirations subscales, “I want to be among the very best in my field”; in the leadership aspirations subscales, “I hope to become a leader in my career field”; and in educational aspirations subscales, “I plan to reach the highest level of education in my field”. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the three subscales showed an acceptable level of reliability, ranging between 0.81 and 0.92.

- Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale** [1965]: This is a tool for assessing global self-worth, consisting of 10 self-report items. It was used as an indicator of the observed “self-esteem” variable in this study. The statements were rated along a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). Respondents rated from 1 to 4. The scale was found to have adequate reliability ($\alpha = 0.73$).

RESULTS

The data was analyzed using independent samples T-Test in SPSS. The independent samples T-Test in SPSS generates a “Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances” column as part of the output. In this study, the results from the test showed that the variances are equal in all cases except one that is indicated in Table 3 below where the p-value (0.02) is smaller than the alpha level 0.05 indicating that the variances are unequal.

The results are as follows.

Table 1: Profile of the Sample

Age range	No of Students			%
17-18 years	33			27.97
19-20 years	71			60.17
21-22 years	14			11.86
Gender (n=118)	No of Students			%
	1 st Year	3 rd Year	Total	Total %
Females	24	22	46	38.98
Males	25	47	72	61.02

Table 1 shows that most of the students were young adults, 60.17% being in the age range of 19-20 years, and 11.86% in the age range of 21-22 years. The remaining 27.97% may be considered in their early adulthood. Gender-wise, more Male students (61.02%) participated in the study than the Females (38.98%).

In Table 2, Row1 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of self-esteems between the 1st year ($M=16.65$; $SD=5.01$) and 3rd year ($M=17.86$; $SD=5.25$) undergraduate students where $t= -1.25$, $df=116$, $p >0.05$. Hence, formulated **Hypothesis 1 is accepted**. This indicates that there is no difference in the self-esteem of 1st year and 3rd year undergraduate students.

Row 2 of Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the mean score of overall career aspirations between the 1st year ($M=24.88$; $SD=3.95$) and 3rd year ($M=23.26$; $SD=4.70$) undergraduate students where $t=1.97$, $df=116$, $p < 0.05$. In other words, the 1st year undergraduate students have higher overall career aspirations than the 3rd year undergraduate students.

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

Further, considering the dimensions of career aspirations, Rows 3 and 4 of Table 2 shows that that there are no significant differences in the mean scores of Achievement aspirations (where $t=1.59$, $df=116$, $p> 0.05$) and Leadership aspirations (where $t= 1.06$; $df= 116$, $p> .05$). But there is a significant difference in the mean scores of Educational aspirations dimension between the 1st year ($M=23.41$; $SD=5.00$) and 3rd year ($M=21.28$; $SD=6.37$) undergraduate students where $t=1.95$; $df=116$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 2: Mean, SD, and 't'- scores on Self Esteem and Overall Career Aspirations along with its dimensions, of 1st Year and 3rd Year Undergraduate students

Measure	Year	N	Mean score	SD	t value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significance Level Set	Remarks
1. Self Esteem	1 st Year	49	16.65	5.01	-1.25	116	.21	0.05	Not Significant
	3 rd year	69	17.86	5.25					
2. Overall Career Aspiration	1st Year	49	24.88	3.95	1.97	116	.052	0.05	Significant
	3rd year	69	23.26	4.70					
2.1 Achievement Aspiration	1st Year	49	26.80	4.32	1.59	116	.113	0.05	Not Significant
	3rd year	69	25.43	4.74					
2.2 Leadership Aspiration	1st Year	49	24.33	5.69	1.06	116	.29	0.05	Not Significant
	3rd year	69	23.11	6.12					
2.3 Educational Aspiration	1st Year	49	23.41	5.00	1.95	116	.053	0.05	Significant
	3rd year	69	21.28	6.37					

Hence, **Hypothesis 2**, that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Achievement aspirations and Leadership aspirations dimensions of Career aspirations between 1st Year and 3rd Year undergraduate students is considerably accepted except Educational Aspirations dimension of Career aspirations.

Table 3: Mean, SD, and 't'- scores on Self-Esteem and dimensions of Career Aspirations of 1st Year and 3rd Year Undergraduate Female and Male students

Measure	Year	N	Mean score	SD	t value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significance Level Set	Remarks
1. Self Esteem	1 st yr. Females	24	16.48	5.24	-0.26	47	.793	0.05	Not significant
	1 st yr. Males	25	16.84	4.87					
	3 rd yr. Females	22	15.68	4.26	-2.44	67	.02	0.05	Significant
	3 rd yr. Males	47	18.87	5.40					
2.1 Achievement Aspirations	1 st yr. Females	24	28.38	3.32	2.66	47	.01	0.05	Significant
	1 st yr. Males	25	25.28	4.67					
	3 rd yr. Females	22	26.09	3.99	0.79	67	.44	0.05	Not Significant

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

Measure	Year	N	Mean score	SD	t value	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Significance Level Set	Remarks
	3 rd yr. Males	47	25.13	5.05					
2.2 Leadership Aspirations	1 st yr. Females	24	25.75	3.90	1.77	38.57	0.09	0.05	**Not significant
	1 st yr. Males	25	22.96	6.79					
	3 rd yr. Females	22	23.27	5.73	0.12	67	.90	0.05	Not Significant
	3 rd yr. Males	47	23.08	6.36					
2.3 Educational Aspirations	1 st yr. Females	24	22.92	5.09	-0.67	47	.50	0.05	Not significant
	1 st yr. Males	25	23.88	4.96					
	3 rd yr. Females	22	22.14	5.96	-0.12	67	.90	0.05	Not Significant
	3 rd yr. Males	47	21.34	6.62					

*** For 1st year Females and Males, Levene's test had indicated unequal variances ($F = 10.41, p = .002$) between the groups, so degrees of freedom were adjusted from 47 to 38.57.*

In Table 3, Row 1 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of self-esteems between 1st year Females ($M=16.48; SD=5.24$) and 1st year Males ($M=16.84; SD=4.87$) where $t=-0.26, df=47, p > 0.05$. But the mean scores of Self Esteem of 3rd year Females ($M=15.68; SD=4.26$) and 3rd year Males ($M=18.87; SD=5.40$) differs significantly where $t= -2.44; df=67, p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 3 that there is no difference in Self-esteem based on Gender can be accepted substantially for 1st year undergraduate students and not for the 3rd year undergraduate students.

Row 2 of Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of Achievement aspirations between 1st year undergraduate Females ($M=28.38; SD=3.32$) and Males ($M=25.28; SD=4.67$) where $t= 2.66, df=47, p < 0.05$.

On the other hand Row 3 of Table 3, reveals that Leadership aspirations (where $t=1.77; df=38.97, p > 0.05$ for 1st year Females and Males and $t=0.12, df=67, p > 0.05$ for 3rd year Females and Males respectively) and Educational aspirations (where $t=-0.67, df= 47, p > 0.05$ for 1st year Females and Males, and $t=- 0.12, df=67, p > 0.05$ for 3rd year Females and Males respectively) has no significant differences between undergraduate Females and Males.

Hence, the formulated **Hypothesis 4** that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Leadership aspirations and Educational aspirations dimensions of career aspirations based on Gender for undergraduate students is substantially accepted except Achievement aspirations dimension.

To find out the relationship among Leadership aspirations, Achievement Aspirations, Educational Aspirations, and Self-esteem of 1st Year and 3rd Year Undergraduate students, multiple regression analysis was done. The results are as follows.

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

Table 4a: Model Summary for Regression for 1st year students

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.195 ^a	.038	-.026	5.07136

Predictors: (Constant), Educational_Aspirations_1styear, Leadership_Aspirations_1styear, Achievement_Aspirations_1styear

Table 4a presents the result of the model summary for regressors (Educational Aspirations, Leadership aspirations, and Achievement Aspirations of 1st year students). The result reveals an R-value of 0.195, which indicates that independent variables have no good level of prediction on the dependent variable (Self-esteem). Also, the R-square value of 0.038 reported in the table indicates that the independent variables (Educational Aspirations, Leadership aspirations, and Achievement Aspirations) can jointly explain about 3.8% of the variability in the dependent variable. A similar insignificant value was revealed for the adjusted R-value which is -.026. Thus, the model summary establishes that the independent variables cannot sufficiently explain variation in the dependent variable (Self-esteem) and hence, the model is not fit.

Table 4b presents the result of the Analysis of Variance (F-Ratio) for the overall regression model fitness. The result reveals $F(3, 45) = 0.593$, $p = 0.623 > 0.05$. which implies that the model is not a good fit for data.

Table 4b: Analysis of Variance (ANOVAa) for Model Fitness for Regressors (Educational Aspiration, Leadership aspiration and Achievement Aspiration of 1st year students)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	45.760	3	15.253	.593	.623 ^b
	Residual	1157.342	45	25.719		
	Total	1203.102	48			

a. Dependent Variable: Self_Esteem_1styear

b. Predictors: (Constant), Educational_Aspiration_1styear, Leadership_Aspiration_1styear, Achievement_Aspiration_1styear

Table 4c presents the results of regression analysis on the relationship among Leadership aspirations, Achievement Aspirations, Educational Aspirations, and Self-Esteem of 1st year Undergraduate students. The result shows a standardized coefficient beta (0.057), t-value of .306, the p-value of 0.761 for Leadership Aspirations. For Achievement Aspirations, the result shows a standardized coefficient beta (-.125), t-value of -.622, the p-value of 0.537, while for Educational Aspirations, the result is a standardized coefficient beta (.214), t-value of 1.289, the p-value of 0.204. Thus, the calculated p-values indicate that the independent variables (Leadership aspirations, Achievement Aspirations, Educational Aspirations) do not relate to the dependent variable (Self-esteem) for 1st year undergraduate students.

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

Table 4c: Results of Regression Analysis on Relationship among Leadership aspiration, Achievement Aspiration, Educational Aspiration, and Self Esteem of 1st Year Undergraduate students

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	14.287	4.839		2.952	.005
Leadership_Aspiration_1 st year	.050	.163	.057	.306	.761
Achievement_Aspiration_1 st year	-.145	.233	-.125	-.622	.537
Educational_Aspiration_1 st year	.215	.167	.214	1.289	.204

a. Dependent Variable: Self_Esteem_1styear

Multiple regression analysis for 3rd Year undergraduate students gave the following results as shown in Table 5c.

The results of regression analysis on the relationship among Leadership aspirations, Achievement Aspirations, Educational Aspirations, and Self-esteem of 3rd year Undergraduate students is shown in Table 5c which shows standardized coefficient beta (0.046), t-value of .319, the p-value of 0.750 for Leadership Aspiration, standardized coefficient beta (-.271), t-value of -1.622, the p-value of 0.110 for Achievement Aspiration, and standardized coefficient beta (.210), t-value of 1.340, the p-value of 0.185 for Educational Aspiration.

Table 5c: Results of Regression Analysis on the Relationship among Leadership aspiration, Achievement Aspiration, Educational Aspiration, and Self Esteem of 3rd Year students

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	20.902	3.565		5.863	.000
Leadership_Aspiration_3 rd year	.039	.122	.046	.319	.750
Achievement_Aspiration_3 rd year	-.300	.185	-.271	-1.622	.110
Educational_Aspiration_3 rd year	.173	.129	.210	1.340	.185

a. Dependent Variable: Self_Esteem_3rdyear

The calculated p-values indicate that the independent variables (Leadership aspirations, Achievement Aspirations, Educational Aspirations) do not relate with the dependent variable (Self-esteem) for the 3rd year undergraduate students.

Therefore, the formulated **Hypothesis 5**, which states that there is no significant relationship between Self-esteem and the dimensions of career aspirations for undergraduate students is accepted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are as follows.

a) Concerning self-esteem, the study revealed that:

- i. *There is no difference in the Self Esteem between the 1st year and 3rd year undergraduate students.*
- ii. *There is no difference in the Self Esteem between females and males for 1st year undergraduate students while for the 3rd year undergraduate students, there is a significant difference in Self-esteem between males and females.*

A person's self-esteem is connected to one's social life, which is described as time being spent doing enjoyable things with others. While on the university campus, the residential undergraduate students do get opportunities for an active social life due to which they may tend to have a higher sense of self-esteem and more positive outlook on life than others. According to Mitchel et al., (2008), a possible interpretation of the above findings could be that the students had voluntarily participated in the study and those who decided to participate in the study were students with higher levels of self-esteem. When answering questions about self-esteem, they might have answered items in the way they believed they should or in a way that makes them appear better than they feel about themselves ("fake good" bias). If students have very low self-esteem, they probably will not want to participate in such a study that focuses on how one views oneself. However, as cited by Ghezlbash et al., (2015), the findings of the study of Sasat et al., (2002) showed that self-esteem and its dimensions have no significant difference in nursing students in different study years. This substantiates the findings of this study.

Earlier studies on Self-esteem and Gender, (Swami, Maïano et.al, 2022; Naderi H et al., 2009; Aryana, 2010) revealed insignificant differences in self-esteem between male and female undergraduate students. Ravindranadan and Tom (2016) found that there exists no significant difference between 2nd and 3rd year undergraduate students. According to them, since they belong to the age group of 19-21 years, there is not much difference in their self-esteem. They may have a different perspective on the view of ideas but generally have the same level of self-esteem. This corroborates the findings that females and males of 1st year undergraduate students do not differ in self-esteem. However, in this study, 3rd year undergraduate males obtained a higher and more significant mean score than the females in self-esteem scores. This is in line with the study by Martín-Albo, J. et al., (2007). Low self-esteem is typically associated with anxiety and depression (Dumont & Provost, 1999), whereas as cited by Ciarrochi, J & Heaven, P. (2008), individuals high in self-esteem are believed to have the skills and resources that protect from stressors (Deater-Deckard, Ivy, & Smith, 2006). Females might be susceptible to conflicting messages about their role and place in society that emanate from the family, the media, and industry which might explain the observed reduction in self-esteem in 3rd year undergraduate female students.

b) Concerning Career aspirations, the study revealed:

- i) *The 1st year undergraduate students have higher overall career aspirations than the 3rd year undergraduate students.*
- ii) *Considering the dimensions of career aspirations, there is no significant difference in the Achievement aspirations and leadership aspirations dimensions between 1st Year and 3rd Year undergraduate students. However, the Educational Aspirations dimension differs significantly between 1st Year and 3rd Year undergraduate students (Table 2).*

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

- iii) The 1st year female students have a significant difference in their Achievement aspirations with 1st year undergraduate males. The mean scores of Females were higher than that of Males. However, mean scores of Achievement aspirations between 3rd year undergraduate Females and Males do not differ significantly (Table 3).*
- iv) For Leadership aspirations and Educational aspirations dimensions of career aspirations there is no significant difference in the mean scores based on Gender either for 1st year or for 3rd year undergraduate students respectively (Table 2).*

According to S. Pramod et.al (2021), most of the students admitted to the first-year engineering programme aspire to get a good job followed by admission to higher study. It appears that the student aspirations undergo a considerable change by the time they complete three years and reach the final year. Such change in aspirations might be due to a variety of reasons including changes in their priorities, knowledge gained during the period, and opportunities provided by the institute for fulfilling their aspirations. This substantiates the findings of this study. But an empirical study by Dzimiri, M. T. et al., (2019), concluded that the four-year socialization process, during the students' studies, did not cause any change in their career aspirations from the time enrolled in their respective programmes. Their findings stress the importance of internships to students in deciding their career aspirations upon graduation.

Khattab (2015) stated that educational aspirations are idealistic values that reflect the educational attainment that one hopes and desires to achieve. When a student enters a professional course like B. Tech in Computer Science at a University in the first year, their educational aspiration is strongly associated with their early attitudes to school knowledge, their parent's aspirations, and perceptions of parental assistance. Education of parents and possessions at home has an impact on educational ambitions whether the student comes from rural, urban, or suburban areas (Gupta & Bashir, 2018). However, Lin et al., (2022) cite many studies (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Gottfredson, 1981) that suggest that educational aspirations change over time, especially during adolescence to college years, and other studies (Carter, 1999; Jagesic, 2015; Pascarella, Wolniak, & Pierson, 2003; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Flowers, 2004) that highlight that students on average significantly lower their plans to obtain a graduate degree after three years in college. This elucidates the difference in the educational aspirations of 1st year undergraduate students with the 3rd year undergraduate students.

According to Rampino and Taylor (2013), gender differences, as predicted by social control and gender role socialisation theories persist. Females tend to report more positive attitudes and higher aspirations than males and this is especially true after age 13. Social control theories suggest that due to tighter parental supervision, girls on average perform better at school than boys which translates into more positive educational attitudes and aspirations. In this study, the 1st year females having joined the University after schooling seem to hence have higher achievement aspirations than male students. However, young students' educational attitudes and aspirations deteriorate with age which could be the reason for 3rd year females to have no difference in Achievement aspirations with, their counterparts, the male students.

In contrast, Leadership aspiration and Educational aspiration dimensions of career aspirations did not show any differences concerning gender either for 1st year or for 3rd year undergraduate students. Findings of other studies have also revealed no significant gender differences in motivation to lead (Rosch et al., 2015). It appears that both females and males in this cohort

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

of undergraduate students may not be able to perceive organizational identification or visualise leadership identity. Also, in all likelihood having similar socioeconomic backgrounds (parents' education, occupation, family income) their Educational aspirations were not influenced to show any differences.

c) No relationship was found between Self-esteem and the dimensions of Career aspirations (i.e., Achievement aspiration, Leadership aspiration, and Educational aspiration) either for 1st year undergraduate students or for 3rd year undergraduate students respectively. Earlier studies (Jacob and Ravindranadan,2017; Rojewski and Yang, 1996) have also found that in general, self-esteem had little effect on the career aspirations of adolescents. However, other studies (Ningthoujam, et. al,2018; Gupta, 2019), found self-esteem to have a significant relation with career aspirations and its three dimensions along with the academic achievement of youths.

Limitations of the Study

Although the present study found considerable support for each of its hypotheses, there were some unavoidable limitations encountered in conducting the study. First, the sample size was small and comprised of male and female undergraduate students who enrolled in a typical private university. Therefore, there are drawbacks of generalizing the results obtained in this study to students studying in other educational institutions. Future studies should examine the generalizability of the results with more diverse university student samples in which investigations should be undertaken considering other variables which are likely to influence career aspirations, for example, the socioeconomic status, academic ability, learning environments, the quality of counselling, support staff, and faculty members. A longitudinal research design investigating career choices and gender role attitudes of males and females at different critical intervals of their studies in the University may be undertaken. Such studies will prove to be fruitful in enhancing our knowledge of the development of gender role attitudes and their relationship with the dynamics of career development among youth. They will also provide a stimulating insight into how career aspirations made at an earlier point in life coincide with the actual career choices the individual chooses.

CONCLUSION

Young adulthood is a period of adjustments to new patterns of life and new social expectations. In this period self-esteem is of great importance in career planning. Many earlier studies (Burgess, 1976; Ndreassen, et al 2016; Castro and Armitage, 2016) have demonstrated that having high self-esteem encourages students to maintain a positive outlook on career aspirations related to their present or future performance after graduation. Although this study found no relationship between self-esteem and career aspiration, it highlighted various results for intervention programs in higher education institutions. Universities and higher educational institutes must have guidance counsellors for students who need to check that students are in favourable conditions of general well-being to ensure that their decisions concerning their career choices are not biased.

In this study, gender had a role in the self-esteem and career aspiration measures. The university should be aware of the gender differences in the association between self-esteem and depression. Gao, W et al. (2022), cited earlier studies (Cai et al., 2009; Metalsky et al., 1993, Orth et al., 2009a) that have stated that low self-esteem in terms of students' capabilities and sense of values can exert negative influences on their psychological states, leading to depressive disorders. Khampirat (2020), cited that the resilience of the students can be strengthened through counselling processes, career courses, and workshops. Hence, the

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

environment in universities and institutions of higher learning must help students discover their passions and career aspirations, as well as develop their competence, curiosity, self-esteem, resilience, and future orientation to achieve their career goals, including long-term career development.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed W, Mudrey RR (2019). The role of motivational factors in predicting STEM career aspirations. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*.7(3):201–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2017.1401499>
- Andreassen, O. A., Bratlien, U., Romm, K. L., Møller, P., & Melle, I. (2016). The association between anomalous self-experiences, self-esteem, and depressive symptoms in first-episode schizophrenia. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 10, 557.
- Aryana, Mohammad. (2010). Relationship Between Self-esteem and Academic Achievement Amongst Pre-University Students. *Journal of Applied Sciences*, 10, 2474-2477. <https://doi.org/10.3923/jas.2010.2474.2477>
- Bajema, D. H., Miller, W. W., & Williams, D. L. (2002). Aspirations of rural youth. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 43(3), 61–71. <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2002.03061>
- Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4(1), 1-44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1529-1006.01431>
- Brien, K. O. (2001). A study of the career aspirations of eighth-grade students (Masters Dissertation, Old Dominion University, United States). http://digital.lib.odu.edu:8000/dspace/bitstream/123456789/266/1/obrien_kelley.pdf
- Burgess G.A (1976). Self-esteem and career aspiration among nurse participants of continuing education. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 7(2),7–12. <https://doi.org/10.3928/0022-0124-19760301-04> PMID: 1044624
- Burton SL, Parks AL (1994). Self-esteem, locus of control, and career aspirations of college-age siblings of individuals with disabilities. *Social Work Research*, 18(3), 178–185. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/18.3.178>
- Castro SM, Armitage-Chan E (2016). Career aspirations in UK veterinary students: The influences of gender, self-esteem, and year of study. *Veterinary Record*;179(16), 408. <https://rvc-repository.worktribe.com/output/1395187>
- Ciarrochi, J., Heaven, P. C., & Supavadeeprasit, S. (2008). The link between emotion identification skills and socio-emotional functioning in early adolescence: a 1-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 31(5), 565–582. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2007.10.004>
- coping strategies, self-esteem, and social activities on experience of stress and depression. *Journal*
- Domenico, D. M., & Jones, K. H. (2006). Career aspirations of women in the 20th century. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 22(2), 1–7. DOI: 10.21061/jcte.v22i2.430
- Dumont, M., & Provost, M. A. (1999). Resilience in adolescence: protective role of social support, Coping Strategies, Self-Esteem, and Social Activities on Experience of Stress and Depression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 343–363. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021637011732>
- Dzimiri, M. T., Mapharing, M., & Ndzinge, S. (2019). The Impact of the Four-year Learning Programme on Students' Career Aspirations: The Case of University of Botswana Accounting and Finance Students. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 6(11), 215- 231. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.611.7382>

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

- Gao, W., Luo, Y., Cao, X., & Liu, X. (2022). Gender differences in the relationship between self-esteem and depression among college students: a cross-lagged study from China. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 97, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2022.104202>.
- Ghezalbash, S., Rahmani, F., Peyrovi, H., Inanloo, M., & Shekarchian, S. (2015). Comparison of Self-Esteem Among First to Fourth Year Nursing Students from Universities of Medical Sciences in Tehran. *Thrita*, Vol.4(1): e24336. <https://doi.org/10.5812/thrita.24336>.
- Gregor MA, O'Brien KM (2016). Understanding career aspirations among young women: Improving instrumentation. *Journal of Career Assessment*.;24(3):559–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072715599537>
- Gupta, S. and Bashir, L. (2017) Educational Aspiration of Secondary School Students: Influence of School Environment and Parental Encouragement. *International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research*, 15(21), (Part 2), 497-506. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333844759_Educational_Aspiration_of_Secondary_School_Students_Influence_of_School_Environment_and_Parental_Encouragement
- Gupta, Shivangi; Jaiswal, Chetna. (2019). The study of the relationship between career aspiration, self-esteem and academic achievement among school adolescents. *IAHRW International Journal of Social Sciences Review; Haryana*, Vol. 7(5), 917-921. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/study-relationship-between-career-aspiration-self/docview/2618176015/se-2>
- Habib Zade M, Hashemi A (2014). Self-esteem, willingness to communicate, and oral production: The case study of Iranian intermediate EFL students. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*;2(4);290–4 <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20140204.17>
- Heaven, P., & Ciarrochi, J. (2008). Parental styles, gender, and the development of hope and self-esteem. *European Journal of Personality*, 22(8), 707-724. <https://doi:10.1002/per.699S>.
- Helyer, R., & Lee, D. (2014). The role of work experience in the future employability of higher education graduates. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 68(3), 348-372. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12055>
- Jacob, J, & Ravindranadan, V (2018). Self-Esteem, Academic and Career Aspirations on the Basis of Socio-Economic Status of Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 6(4), 75-84. <https://ijip.in/articles/self-esteem-academic-and-career-aspirations-on-the-basis-of-socio-economic-status-of-adolescents/>
- Khampirat B. (2020). The relationship between paternal education, self-esteem, resilience, future orientation, and career aspirations. *PloS one*, 15(12), e0243283. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0243283>
- Khan, S. B., & Alvi, S. A. (1983). Educational, social, and psychological correlates of vocational maturity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 22, 357-364. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(83\)90019-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(83)90019-2)
- Khattab, N. (2015), Students' aspirations, expectations, and school achievement: what really matters? *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(5), 731-748. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3171>
- Lin, C.-H., Chen, J.-H., Lin, E. S., & Lo, C. O. (2022). The Effects of College Student Experience on Degree Aspirations for Graduate Education. *SAGE Open*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221117798>

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

- Maier, D., & Herman, A. (1974). The relationship of vocational decidedness and satisfaction with dogmatism and self-esteem. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 5(1), 95-102. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(74\)90010-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(74)90010-4).
- Mann, M., Hosman, C. M., Schaalma, H. P., & De Vries, N. K. (2004). Self-esteem in a broad-spectrum approach for mental health promotion. *Health education research*, 19(4), 357-372. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyg041>
- Marion, P. B. (1983). Relationship of self-image in high school with attendance and grade point average at post-secondary educational institutions. *College and University*, 60 (4), pp. 328-335.
- Martín-Albo, J., Núñez, J. L., Navarro, J. G., & Grijalvo, F. (2007) The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: Translation and Validation in University Students. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 10, 458-467. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5853773_The_Rosenberg_Self-Esteem_Scale_Translation_and_Validation_in_University_Students
- Mau (2003), Factors That Influence Persistence in Science and Engineering Career Aspirations. *The Career Development Quarterly* 51(3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2003.tb00604.x>
- Mau W-C, Bikos L.H. (2000). Educational and vocational aspirations of minority and female students: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*.;78(2):186–94. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02577.x>
- Mau, W. C., Domnick, M., & Ellsworth, R. A. (1995). Characteristics of female students who aspire to science and engineering or homemaking occupations. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 43(4), 323-337. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.1995.tb00437.x>
- Mitchel, Katie., Smith, Stephanie., & Simpson, Jenny. (2008). Self-Esteem and Class Standing in Liberal Arts Undergraduate College Students. *Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences, Volume 7*. <https://publications.kon.org/urc/v7/mitche1.html>
- Mitchel, Katie., Smith, Stephanie., & Simpson, Jenny. (2008). Self-Esteem and Class Standing in Liberal Arts Undergraduate College Students. *Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences, Vol.7*. <https://publications.kon.org/urc/v7/mitchel.html>
- Muna Abdullah Al-Bahrani, et.al. (2020). Career aspiration and related contextual variables, *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25:1, 703-711, DOI: 10.1080/02673843.2020.1730201
- Naderi, H., Abdullah, R., Aizah, H. T., Sharir, J., & Kumar, V. (2009). Self-esteem, gender and academic achievement of undergraduate students. *American Journal of Scientific Research* 3 (1), 26-37. <http://www.eurojournals.com/ajsr.htm>
- Neff, K. D., & Vonk, R. (2009). Self-compassion versus global self-esteem: two different ways of relating to oneself. *Journal of Personality*, 77(1), 23–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00537.x>
- Ningthoujam, Sombala., Bansa, V.M., Singh,Teena., Oinam Devi, Hemlata., & Zafar, Maria. (2018). An Exploratory Study on Career Aspirations and Self Esteem Among the Conflict Affected Youth of Manipur. *Review of Professional Management*, 16 (2). <https://www.i-scholar.in/index.php/RPMNDIM/article/viewFile/179819/166794>
- Park, I.-J.; Rie, J.; Kim, H.S.; Park, J (2018). Effects of a future time perspective-based career intervention on career decisions. *J. Career Dev.*, <https://doi.org/0894845318781043>
- Patton, W., Bartrum, D.A. & Creed, P.A. (2004). Gender differences for optimism, self-esteem, expectations, and goals in predicting career planning and exploration in adolescents. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4(2–3), 193–209. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-005-1745-z>

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

- Patton, W. & Creed, P. (2007). The relationship between career variables and occupational aspirations/expectations for Australian high school adolescents. *Journal of Career Development* 34 (2), 127-148. DOI:10.1177/0894845307307471
- Rampino, Tina; & Taylor, Mark P. (2013). Gender differences in educational aspirations and attitudes. *ISER Working Paper Series, No. 2013-15, University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), Colchester*. <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/91703/1/766680657.pdf>
- Ravindranadan, Dr. Vidhya., & Tom, Ansu. (2016). Gender Difference on Self Esteem among Undergraduate Students. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306106779_Gender_Difference_on_Self_Esteem_among_Undergraduate_Students
- Resnick, H., Fauble, M. L., & Osipow, S. H. (1970). Vocational crystallization and self-esteem in college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 17(5), 465–467. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0029905>
- Rojewski, J. W., & Yang, B. (1997). Longitudinal analysis of select influences on adolescents' occupational aspirations. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 51(3), 375-10. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1996.1561>
- Rosch, D. M., Collier, D., & Thompson, S. E. (2015). An exploration of students' motivation to lead: An analysis by race, gender, and student leadership behaviors. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(3), 286–291. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0031>
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE). *Acceptance and commitment therapy. Measures package*, 61(52), 18. <https://integrativehealthpartners.org/downloads/ACTmeasures.pdf#page=61>
- Schoon, I., & Parsons, S. (2002). Teenage aspirations for future careers and occupational outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 60 (2), 262-288. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1867>
- Patton, W., & Creed, P. (2007). The relationship between career variables and occupational aspirations/expectations for Australian high school adolescents. *Journal of Career Development* 34 (2), 127-148.
- Shahabaddkar, Pramod., Joshi, Ajinkya., Lele, Vaishali., & Patil, Vilas. (2021). Understanding Aspirations of First Year Undergraduate Engineering Students. *Journal of Engineering Education Transformations* 34 (Special Issue), 86-92. <https://doi.org/10.16920/jeet/2021/v34i0/157110>
- Silvia, P. J. (2001). Expressed and measured vocational interests: Distinctions and definitions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 59 (3), 382-393. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1805>
- Skorikov, V. (2007). Continuity in adolescent career preparation and its effects on adjustment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70(1), 8–24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2006.04.007>
- Super, D. E (1963). “Self-concepts in Vocational Development.” Pp. 1-16 in *Career Development: Self-concept Theory*, edited by D. E. Super, R. Starishevski, N. Matlin, and J. P. Jordaan. New York: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Super, D. E (1963). “Toward Making Self-concept Theory Operational.” Pp. 17-31 in *Career Development: Self-concept Theory*, edited by D. E. Super, R. Starishevski, N. Matlin, and J. P. Jordaan. New York: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Swami, V., Maïano, C., & Morin, A. J. (2022). The Body and Appearance Self-Conscious Emotions Scale (BASES): A comprehensive examination of its factorial validity, with recommendations for researchers. *Body Image*, 42, 173-182.: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2022.06.009>

A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students

- Tansley, C., & Newell, S. (2007). Project social capital, leadership and trust: A study of human resource information systems development. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(4), 350-368. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710745932>
- Tomlinson, J. (2012). From 'distribution of industry' to 'local Keynesianism': The growth of public sector employment in Britain. *British Politics*, 7, 204-223. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2012.10>
- Tymon, A. (2013). The student perspective on employability. *Studies in higher education*, 38(6), 841-856.
- Vondracek, F. W., Lerner, R. M., & Schulenberg, J. E. (1983). The concept of development in vocational theory and intervention. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 23(2), 179-202. [https://www.academia.edu/14358183/The concept of development in vocational theory and intervention.](https://www.academia.edu/14358183/The_concept_of_development_in_vocational_theory_and_intervention)

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank the university as well as the participants, who were undergraduate students for taking out time to fill out the questionnaire and partake in the study.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Dangwal, R. & Mitra, S. (2024). A Study of Self Esteem and Career Aspiration among Undergraduate University Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 2205-2221. DIP:18.01.190.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.190