

Career Aspirations Across Streams: An Empirical Study on Higher Secondary Students of Tripura

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to explore career aspiration level among higher secondary students from the schools of Tripura, highlighting the three streams: Science, Commerce and Arts. The purpose behind this study is to understand whether the specific streams have any decisive role to play on students' career ambitions. The standardized scale of Sarita Anand (2014) is utilized to examine the levels and gaps in students' career aspirations within the limits of Tripura. The results of this research shows that there is a noticeable difference found in career aspirations in terms of gender. However, the results also shows that academic streams have no decisive role to play in influencing the aspirations of students. The research further suggests that parents, educators, counsellors alongside a career guided- curriculum can play a vital role in preparing students for career if worked in collaboration.

Keywords: *Career Aspirations, Higher Secondary Students, Academic Streams*

The present scenario of job market and with the increasing influence of artificial intelligence it has become very difficult for young minds to pursue career of their choice and to be sure about what they aspire for. Career aspirations act as the foundational stone in one's life journey which shapes their long-term goals and the life they dream of. The minute a student steps into the higher secondary stage; he or she steps onto the path where decisions had to be taken regarding their future career paths or occupation. Now the question is whether the streams they have chosen have any defining role to play in shaping their aspirations or not and whether gender disparities are there. This research seeks to answer these questions so that on the basis of this understanding supports can be provided to the students at this phase where they had to take a crucial step in making informed decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many studies conducted on career aspirations which shows the importance of the same for the personal development of the child and development in terms of career (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Career Aspiration is something which comes from within, and individual approach in nature which is further influenced by external factors (Baruch, 2004). Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (Bandura, 1986) throws light on the role of self-confidence, belief and one's set goals in learning and behaviour modification. In addition, Super's (1990)

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theory on career development has many stages including the exploration stage which defines that in this phase an individual is likely to explore his areas of interest which is followed by planning to attain those objectives set before to achieve the goal desired. There are many studies done where some claiming that those of science and commerce have more structured or systematic way of learning in contrast to arts stream students who prefer different intellectual strategies to achieve success in desired fields.

Dimensions proposed by Anand (2014) serves as the framework to study and examine the gap in career aspirations among higher secondary students in Tripura.

Rationale of the Study

It's a matter of fact that everyone dreams of something or the other. These dreams eventually take the form of goals which one wishes to achieve. The dreams motivate one to work in a specific direction to get the desired outcome. Career aspirations also act as a motivation for the students to plan a future they aspire for.

Tripura one of the states of North East India is stated to be as one among the other literate states which deserves an attention in this context. It is imperative to explore whether students of schools of Tripura have high or low level of career aspirations in the context of streams and gender. The findings of this study aim to suggest recommendations for parents, counsellors and other stake holders so that proper guidance can help in enlightening the students to identify their strengths and visualize their ambitions in particular.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the higher secondary students' career aspiration level across different streams in Tripura.
2. To examine statistically significant difference in career aspirations of higher secondary students across different streams in Tripura.
3. To examine statistically significant gender-based difference in career aspirations of higher secondary students across different streams in Tripura.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant mean difference considering career aspiration across different academic streams in schools of Tripura.

H₀₂: There is no significant mean difference considering career aspirations across different academic streams based on gender in schools of Tripura.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative approach and a descriptive survey research design is preferred for the present study where two higher secondary school students of three different streams were taken as the sample for data collection.

Population and Sampling

Higher secondary students of West District, Tripura were considered as the population out of which a number of 306 students were chosen as the sample by using random sampling techniques.

Research Instrument

Career Aspiration tool developed by Dr. Sarita Anand (2014) is adopted to collect quantitative data from the students.

Data Collection and Analysis

In accordance with the nature of the data collected both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyse the collected data from different groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1: To assess the higher secondary students’ career aspiration level across different streams in Tripura

Table 1: Showing frequency of higher secondary students in different levels of career aspirations across the streams

Sl. No.	Career Aspiration Level	Frequency			Percentage		
		Arts	Science	Commerce	Arts	Science	Commerce
1.	Extremely high	0	0	0	0	0	0
2.	High	0	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Above Average	5	8	1	2.99%	8.08%	2.5%
4.	Average	25	21	4	14.97%	21.21%	10%
5.	Below Average	40	19	17	23.95%	19.19%	42.5%
6.	Low	40	29	8	23.95%	29.29%	20%
7.	Extremely Low	57	22	10	34.13%	22.22%	10%

Analysis and Discussions

The findings of the study indicate that no one from any of the streams have ‘high’ or ‘extremely high’ career aspirations. Most of the students are found to have ‘low’ and ‘extremely low’ career aspirations. Especially, students of arts stream reported the highest percentage in the extremely low category i.e. 34.13%, followed by science at 22.22% and Commerce at 10%.

Although the results point out that science students have stronger aspirations but overall motivation across all academic streams indicates an urgent need for motivational interventions, especially for Arts and Commerce students.

Objective 2: To examine statistically significant difference in career aspiration of higher secondary students across different streams in Tripura.

(H₀₁: The career aspiration of higher secondary students is not significantly different across various discipline.)

Table 2: Anova summary regarding differences in career aspirations across streams

Sl. No.	STREAMS	N	Mean	SD	F	Df	REMARKS
1.	Arts	167	103.56	11.045	1.703	2303	Accepted
2.	Science	99	106.20	12.565			
3.	Commerce	40	104.85	9.15			

Analysis and Discussions

The acceptance of the null hypotheses indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the career aspirations among students of Arts, Commerce, and Science streams, $F = 1.703$, $p > 0.05$. This also suggests that the different streams don't play any significant role in shaping career aspirations of higher secondary students. Other external or personal variables may play a greater role.

Objective 3: To examine statistically significant gender-based difference in career aspirations of higher secondary students across different streams in Tripura.

H_{02} : The career aspiration of higher secondary students is not significantly different based on gender.

Table 3: t-test summary regarding gender differences in career aspirations

Sl. No.	GENDER	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	REMARKS
1.	Male	168	102.1429	11.045	-4.25	295	Rejected
2.	Female	138	107.53	10.935			

Analysis and Discussion

The null hypotheses are thus rejected as there is a statistically significant difference in career aspirations between male and female students is found. The mean scores of female students (107.54) are significantly higher than that of male students (102.14), as shown by the t-value of -4.25 ($p < 0.05$). The evidence thus shows that career aspiration is not uniform between the students and is influenced by demographic variables such as gender which therefore suggests a need for planning to fill the gap. This reflects possible differences in motivation, encouragement, or social expectations.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Career guidance services should be taken as a priority to enable the students to gain clarity on their area of interest, irrespective of the streams which they can visualise as their future profession.
- Acquainting them with the present scenario of the employment status of the state
- Parental counselling should be provided so that they can provide proper guidance to their children regarding their future aspirations and, at the same time, realise their actual potential.
- Targeted interventions for the students who show a lower level of motivation or vague goals.
- Now that results indicate that male and female have different levels of career aspirations, it is of utmost necessity to make students explore diverse career opportunities.
- A strong communication network needs to be built between parents, teachers and students to join in collaboratively to shed light on the untouched issues related to their career aspirations.
- Curriculum can also be modified in the form of including activities that build students' ability to visualise a career, and thus enabling them to set goals.
- Problem-solving and decision-making skills should be cultivated in the students so that they can have a clear lens while deciding on their career goals.

CONCLUSION

The research findings of this study indicates that while academic streams have no statistically significant impact on the career aspirations of students, gender affects and have a decisive role to play. Overall, the study points toward the immediate need for effective career guidance programmes with proper implementation of the same, motivational strategies to enhance the vision of the students so that they can imagine a future based on their interests and proper educational planning. It is possible only if educators, parents, counsellors, and policy makers collaborate and work together to make it happen which ultimately will support students to get acquainted with a clear vision to achieve desired career outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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