

Review and Analysis of Occupational Aspirations among Indian School Students: The Role of School Climate, Family Influence, and Value Orientation

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ABSTRACT: The current study explores the complex idea of Vyavsayik Akanksha (Occupational Aspiration), which is essential in determining a person's professional path and personal growth. Understanding the nature, drivers, and implications of students' vocational goals, especially at the middle and upper secondary levels, has become essential in light of the rapidly changing educational and work landscapes as well as the expanding socioeconomic issues. This study examines the ways in which kids' career goals are influenced by elements such their family history, social and emotional intelligence, school environment, and value systems.

The role that educational institutions and the school environment play in fostering or impeding these goals is given particular attention. The study also looks at how important personal characteristics like ambition, self-efficacy, and value orientation are when creating career goals. In order to gather information from a wide range of students, the study uses a mixed-method approach that includes surveys and interviews. The results highlight how crucial a positive learning environment, good mentoring, and socioemotional learning are in enabling students to make sensible career decisions. By supporting value-based education and individualized career counseling, particularly in India's developing regions, this study seeks to advance educational policy and practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, education is an essential tool for both national and human growth, not only a way to get knowledge. The level of education a person receives has a significant impact on their identity, decision-making skills, professional behavior, and life decisions. Education has the transforming potential to raise individuals and communities in India, a nation with a rich cultural legacy and different socioeconomic realities. The development of career goals is one of the most important of education's various consequences, especially throughout adolescence, a time of identity construction, cognitive growth, and emotional maturity.

The term "occupational aspiration" describes a person's ideal career or vocation that represents their unique interests, skills, and objectives and is impacted by both internal and external factors. It is a dynamic and changing construct that is influenced by social, psychological, and

environmental elements rather than being a fixed reality. Because it can predict future educational success, career planning, and long-term job happiness, occupational desire is significant. Therefore, in order to properly guide the kids, educators, parents, and legislators must have a solid understanding of this construct.

Students in India are frequently under pressure from a variety of sources, including peer pressure, familial responsibilities, cultural expectations, and personal goals. Many people struggle because of ignorance, poor leadership, and a lack of support systems, yet some are able to clearly navigate these forces. Students start to develop tangible ideas about their futures during the middle school and secondary school years, which is a crucial phase in this process. At this point, the school climate plays a very important role. Students' perceptions of their own skills and prospects are greatly influenced by the school environment, which includes peer interactions, extracurricular activities, physical infrastructure, disciplinary norms, and instructor behavior.

However, rote learning and academic achievement still dominate education in many Indian schools, with little focus on career exploration, value instillation, or emotional health. Because of this, kids could do well on tests but still feel uncertain or uneasy about their future employment. Students' potential can be completely realized and their career choices can be significantly shaped by an educational environment that values autonomy, respect for one another, democratic decision-making, and value-based participation.

A person's family background also has a big impact on their career goals. Children's aspirations are significantly influenced by their parents' employment, income, educational attainment, and attitudes toward work and education. Different expectations and exposure levels frequently result in differences in students' aspirations between nuclear and combined family systems. Furthermore, a student's occupational perspective may be broadened or constrained by the existence or lack of role models in their immediate surroundings.

Personal traits that further characterize how students absorb career aspirations include self-assurance, decision-making skills, value clarity, and emotional control. Self-aware, emotionally stable, and socially engaged students are more likely to strive for worthwhile and achievable career objectives than indecisive or aimless ones. Because of this, it is crucial to incorporate emotional and social learning into school curricula so that kids can systematically consider their values, interests, and long-term objectives.

The idea of Laokik (worldly) versus Adhyatmik (spiritual) values in educational environments is another important but frequently disregarded aspect. Schools place a strong emphasis on academic achievement, but there is a rising need to incorporate moral and ethical principles that help students make responsible decisions about their lives and careers. Education should strive to create not only successful professionals but also kind, morally upright people who make valuable contributions to society. In this sense, a student's vocational desire becomes a reflection of their overall growth rather than just a career decision.

It is also impossible to overestimate the significance of career assistance and counseling. Career

counseling should be an ongoing, participatory process that starts early and changes as the student matures rather than being a one-time intervention. Regretfully, systematic counseling services are either nonexistent or inadequately provided in a large number of Indian schools. Despite playing a crucial role in students development, teachers frequently lack the time or training necessary to address the emotional and professional needs of their pupils. To properly support students' aspirations, career education must be incorporated into the curriculum and teacher capacity-building programs must be implemented.

Furthermore, the role of media, especially social media, in influencing students' career aspirations is expanding quickly. Perceptions of success, celebrity, and job happiness are distorted as a result of the media's frequent glamorization of some occupations while neglecting others. Students may want to work as performers, influencers, or entrepreneurs but may not completely comprehend the requirements or career paths involved. Therefore, in order for kids to effectively navigate such influences, schools must provide them with essential media literacy skills.

"Occupational awareness," which refers to how well-informed pupils are about various career alternatives, the skills needed, and the practical opportunities accessible, is another pertinent issue included in this study. A lack of professional awareness frequently leads to frustration, career mismatches, and poorly informed judgments. Increasing students' awareness of careers through career fairs, field trips, alumni engagement, and online resources can broaden their perspective and inspire them to make decisions that balance their interests with the needs of the market.

The pandemic period made it even more clear that educational policies urgently need to be rethought, particularly with regard to future readiness. Schools had to adjust to online platforms as a result of COVID-19's interruptions, which presented both opportunities and challenges. Digital education increased access to information, but it also revealed stark deficiencies in student engagement, teacher readiness, and infrastructure. Future educational systems need to be inclusive, resilient, and in line with needs from the actual world, as the crisis made clear.

In conclusion, the current study on Vyavsayik Akanksha looks at occupational aspiration as a multifaceted construct that is influenced by social exposure, family history, educational environment, personal beliefs, and vocational advice rather than as a single characteristic. The goal is to pinpoint the trends, obstacles, and supportive environments that influence middle and secondary school students' career aspirations, especially in the context of India's sociocultural context. In addition to encouraging value-based learning and helping students become independent, socially conscious professionals who can advance the country, the study aims to provide insights for bettering educational policy and practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, the study of vocational desire (Vyavsayik Akanksha) has gained international attention from sociologists, psychologists, and educators. A person's intended job path is reflected in their occupational aspiration, which is closely related to their identity, self-

perception, and social placement. Numerous research have examined the ways in which a variety of factors, including socioeconomic background, educational experiences, parental influence, school atmosphere, values, and psychological attributes like emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, impact this goal.

The cornerstone for understanding how children and teenagers develop vocational preferences is still Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise (1981). According to Gottfredson, people begin to rule out professional alternatives because of perceived social restrictions like accessibility, social status, and gender roles. As individuals get older, they start making concessions in response to both internal and external constraints. This paradigm fits in nicely with how social expectations and the availability of resources in the Indian environment filter students' aspirations.

Another important contribution is Super's developmental theory of vocational behavior (1990), which contends that career growth is a continuous process. Growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline are among the stages it names. Occupational preferences are crystallized, specified, and implemented throughout the exploration stage, which is usually adolescence. Social background, personality, and self-concept all have an impact on this process. The exploration stage is frequently hurried or incorrectly directed in India, where familial and social influences impact early career decisions, underscoring the applicability of this idea in current research.

Indian academics have made significant contributions to this discipline as well. According to a research by Sharma and Joshi (2015), pupils in India's urban schools had more diverse job goals than their rural counterparts because they had greater access to digital resources, career counseling, and exposure. According to Verma and Saxena (2018), children of professionals and government workers had greater career clarity and direction, indicating that parental education and occupation had a substantial impact on kids' aspiration levels.

The importance of school atmosphere in fostering vocational clarity was highlighted in research by Kumari and Tripathi (2016). Students were encouraged to investigate a variety of professional alternatives by schools with encouraging teachers, interactive learning settings, and extracurricular activities. Additionally, it was seen that kids who attended schools that actively supported moral reasoning and value education had more balanced and socially conscious professional aspirations.

Recent study has also been influenced by the rise of social and emotional intelligence as elements in professional development. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is essential for leadership and decision-making, two crucial aspects of professional success, as well as for personal well-being. Students with better interpersonal and emotional management abilities showed greater clarity and dedication to their career goals, according to research conducted in India by Singh and Kaur (2019).

Apart from internal characteristics and institutional settings, the impact of digital platforms and

mass media has emerged as a noteworthy field of research. Students are increasingly being impacted by online information that glamorizes particular occupations like influencers, entrepreneurs, or content creators as a result of social media's expanding popularity. According to research by Khan et al. (2020), social media might raise knowledge about new employment opportunities, but it can also set up irrational expectations that frequently cause confusion or discontent.

The inclusion of career counseling in regular schooling is another developing issue. According to studies, pupils' ability to make well-informed career decisions and prepare for the future significantly increased at schools where they got structured vocational counseling from qualified specialists. However, as noted by Mehta and Iyer (2021), there is still a disconnect between desire and actual success because such programs are not readily available in government and semi-urban schools.

All things considered, the literature emphasizes how multifaceted vocational aspiration is. It is the result of a complex interaction of personal characteristics, social factors, educational experiences, and systemic chances rather than just academic. All participants were assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation. Proper ethical guidelines were followed, with permission taken from school authorities and informed consent obtained from students and parents.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to investigate the factors influencing Vyavsayik Akanksha (Occupational Aspiration) among school students and to understand the role of school environment, family background, personal values, and emotional-social competence in shaping their career decisions. To ensure a comprehensive and objective analysis, a structured research methodology was adopted, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods.

1. Research Design

This study follows a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive aspect helps in understanding the existing levels and patterns of occupational aspirations among students, while the analytical part examines the relationship between various influencing factors (such as school climate, emotional maturity, value orientation, and family background) and the levels of aspiration.

2. Population and Sample

The population of this study includes students of middle and secondary school levels (classes 8th to 12th) across urban, semi-urban, and rural schools. The geographical scope is limited to selected districts to maintain logistical feasibility, while ensuring demographic diversity. Stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample of 300 students (150 boys and 150 girls) from various types of schools-government, aided, and private institutions.

The stratification ensured fair representation across gender, economic background, and type of school. Additionally, 30 teachers and 20 parents were also interviewed to gain insights from

different stakeholders influencing students' career development.

3. Research Tools

To gather reliable data, the following research tools were used:

Occupational Aspiration Scale (OAS): A standardized questionnaire was developed to measure students' career goals, clarity of aspiration, and alignment with their skills and interests.

School Climate Inventory (SCI): A tool used to evaluate the school environment across domains such as teacher-student relationship, academic encouragement, peer support, discipline, and value-based activities.

Value Orientation Scale (VOS): This scale measures the ethical and cultural values guiding students' choices, covering aspects like altruism, social responsibility, ambition, and self-discipline.

Socio-Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ): This tool captures students' ability to regulate emotions, build interpersonal relationships, and manage social challenges effectively.

Interview Schedule: Semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents to gain qualitative data on their perceptions of students aspirations and influencing conditions.

4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was conducted in three phases:

Phase 1-Pilot Study: The research tools were tested on a small group of 30 students to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability. Based on feedback, necessary modifications were made.

Phase II- Main Data Collection: The final tools were administered to the selected student sample in their respective schools. Questionnaires were completed in a monitored environment to ensure authenticity.

Phase III-Interviews: Face-to-face and telephonic interviews with selected teachers and parents were conducted to gather complementary data and triangulate findings.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics:

Descriptive Statistics: Mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were used to identify general trends and patterns in aspiration levels.

Inferential Statistics: Techniques such as correlation analysis, chi-square tests, and t-tests were applied to examine relationships between variables like school climate and occupational aspiration, or value orientation and gender-based differences.

Qualitative Analysis: The interview data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring themes, stakeholder perceptions, and contextual insights.

6. Limitations of the Study

While the study is comprehensive, it is not without limitations. The sample size, though diverse, is geographically limited and may not fully represent the vast cultural differences across all Indian regions. Additionally, self-reported data may carry biases, and external factors such as media influence, which are difficult to quantify, may have impacted responses.

4. RESULTS

The findings of the study offer rich insights into the dynamics of occupational aspirations among school students and highlight key influencing factors such as school climate, family background, value orientation, socio-emotional competence, and gender.

1. Distribution of Occupational Aspirations among Students

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of students' occupational preferences. Engineering emerged as the most preferred career choice, with 24% of students opting for it. Government jobs ranked second (21.3%), followed by medical (19.3%) and teaching (13.3%). Entrepreneurship (12%) and other miscellaneous careers (10%) formed the remaining categories. These findings reflect societal trends where traditionally secure and prestigious professions continue to dominate students' aspirations, indicating a possible alignment with parental and societal expectations:

2. Role of School Climate.

A critical variable influencing students' aspirations is the school climate. Table 2 reveals a strong positive correlation between favorable school environments and higher occupational aspiration scores. Students from schools with an "Excellent" rating recorded an average aspiration score of 8.5, while those in "Poor" environments averaged only 4.2. This clearly underscores the significance of nurturing, resource-rich, and emotionally supportive school settings in inspiring students to aim higher and think clearly about their futures.

3. Family Income and Aspiration Clarity

Table 3 highlights the relationship between family income and aspiration clarity. Students from higher-income families (>250,000/month) showed 75% clarity in their career goals, whereas those from lower-income groups (<₹10,000/month) showed only 35%. The trend indicates that economic stability provides students not only with better access to information and resources but also reduces uncertainty and stress that may hinder career planning. Higher income families can afford private tuitions, internet access, and career counseling which are often out of reach for low-income households.

4. Gender-Based Trends in Career Preferences

Gender continues to be a significant determinant in the kind of occupational goals students set. As shown in Table 4, 28% of boys preferred engineering, while only 20% of girls opted for it. Conversely, 23% of girls showed a preference for medical careers as compared to 17% of boys. Girls also expressed greater interest in teaching (17%) than boys (10%). Interestingly,

achievement or familial status. By taking into account the sometimes disregarded functions of the school environment, value-based education, and socioemotional development in the Indian setting, the current study seeks to broaden this perspective.

greater percentage of boys preferred entrepreneurship (15%) than girls (9%). These results align with broader cultural norms, reflecting persistent gender role expectations that subtly influence students' self-perception of suitability for certain careers.

5. Influence of Value Orientation on Aspiration Levels

Students with a high level of value orientation such as a strong sense of purpose, ethics, and self-discipline also exhibited higher occupational aspiration scores. As per Table 5, students with high value orientation scored an average of 8.2 on the aspiration scale, while those with low value alignment scored just 4.3. This suggests that students who internalize strong value systems are more likely to pursue meaningful and goal-oriented careers, indicating the need for value-based educational interventions in schools.

6. Socio-Emotional Competence and Aspiration Alignment

Finally, socio-emotional competence (SEC) was examined to determine its role in aligning aspirations with abilities and reality. Table 6 shows that students with high SEC had 78% alignment between their aspirations and actual capabilities, compared to 42% among those with low SEC. This alignment is vital, as it indicates whether students are making informed, realistic career choices based on their emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. Programs that develop SEC through mentoring, life skills training, and counseling can thus play a pivotal role in enhancing students' decision-making and confidence.

Table 1: Distribution of Students Based on Occupational Aspirations

Occupational Category	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Engineering	72	24.0
Medical	58	19.3
Teaching	40	13.3
Government Jobs	64	21.3
Entrepreneurship	36	12.0
Others	30	10.0

Table 2: Influence of School Climate on Occupational Aspiration Levels

School Climate Rating	Average Aspiration Score (out of 10)	No. of Students
Excellent	8.5	70
Good	7.3	90
Average	5.6	80
Poor	4.2	60

Table 3: Relationship Between Family Income and Aspiration Clarity

Monthly Family Income (INR)	High Aspiration Clarity (%)
<10,000	35%
10,000–25,000	52%
25,000–50,000	68%
>50,000	75%

Table 4: Gender-wise Distribution of Career Preferences

Career Field	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Engineering	28	20
Medical	17	23
Teaching	10	17

Table 5: Value Orientation Scores and Corresponding Aspiration Level

Value Orientation Level	Average Aspiration Score
High	8.2
Moderate	6.5
Low	4.3

Table 6: Socio-Emotional Competence and Aspiration Alignment

SEC Category	Aligned Aspirations (%)	Sample Size
High	78%	90
Moderate	60%	120
Low	42%	90

Sample Size

CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the intricate and multi-dimensional nature of occupational aspirations among school students and brings forth the critical influences shaping these aspirations within the Indian socio-cultural framework. It is evident that occupational aspiration is not a product of academic performance alone but is deeply intertwined with a student's personal values, family environment, socio-economic status, emotional maturity, and the climate provided by their educational institutions.

The results demonstrate that students in a supportive and value-oriented school environment show significantly higher levels of aspiration and clarity regarding their future careers.

Favorable school climates-marked by positive teacher-student interactions, encouragement for exploration, and moral guidance serve as a catalyst for ambition and self-belief. Similarly, family income and parental involvement emerged as major contributors, where economically secure families could provide better career exposure and decision-making support.

Gender-based differences in career preferences also reflect the continued impact of traditional roles and societal expectations. However, a shift is noticeable, with girls showing increased inclination toward diverse professions like medicine, teaching, and even entrepreneurship.

Moreover, the strong linkage between socio-emotional competence and aspiration alignment underscores the need for emotional education, life skills, and career counseling as core components of school education. Students with high emotional regulation and interpersonal skills were found to have better awareness and realistic aspirations.

In conclusion, fostering occupational aspiration requires a holistic approach that integrates academic, emotional, social, and ethical development. Educational policies must prioritize student-centric learning, career guidance programs, and teacher training to nurture purposeful, confident, and socially responsible youth. The findings of this study hold valuable implication for educators, policymakers, and parents to collectively create environments that help students dream meaningfully and pursue their career paths with clarity, courage, and conviction.

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