



## Educational Aspiration of Higher Secondary School Students in Relation to Gender and Type of School

\***Vivakee Yonzone**

\*\***Dr. Rumpa Mukherjee**

\*M.Ed. Student, Madhyamgram B.Ed. College, Kolkata

\*\*Associate Professor, Madhyamgram B.Ed. College, Kolkata

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Email: \*[vivakeeyonzone@gmail.com](mailto:vivakeeyonzone@gmail.com)

ORCID: \*\* 0009-0004-8741-9361

\*\*[rumpa.mukherjeedebnath@gmail.com](mailto:rumpa.mukherjeedebnath@gmail.com)

<p><b>Received</b> 18/06/2025</p> <p><b>Accepted</b> 22/06/2025</p> <p><b>Published</b> 09/07/2025</p>	<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>A key predictor of educational success, educational aspiration is a psychological construct that includes a person's hope, ambitions, and long-term goals regarding their future life circumstances. It influences academic choices, effort, and resilience. The article is intended to examine the educational aspirations of higher secondary school students in the Kalimpong district of West Bengal, with attention to how students' aspirations vary based on gender and school type (government or private school). The study employed a descriptive analytical survey research design to explore educational aspirations of students. A sample of 100 students from 2 government and 2 private Higher secondary schools were selected. The stratified random probability sampling technique was adopted for sampling. The data was collected using the Educational Aspiration Scale (EAS) developed by Rozia Bashir and Dr. Najmah Peerzada. Data analysis has been done with the help of statistical techniques such as the Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and t-test. The study revealed that the students overall educational aspiration was significantly low to below average. Considerably low number of students was ranked 'extremely low' or 'low' aspirations. As far as gender was concerned, a statistically significant difference in educational aspiration was found between male and female students. Females showed more educational aspirations than males. No significant difference educational aspiration was found between government and private higher secondary school students. The findings provide an overview of how individual and environmental factors shape educational goals, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to boost student aspirations. The study also suggests socio-cultural elements and societal norms may influence gender-specific aspirations more than the type of educational institution and highlight the need to target these aspirations.</p>
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**Keywords:** Educational Aspiration, Higher Secondary Students, Gender and School Type, Level of Educational Aspiration

## Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right, a powerful engine for socioeconomic transformation, and a pathway to lifelong learning, education goes far beyond simply acquiring knowledge and skills (UNESCO, 1990). It is the foundation upon which people will build their identities, develop the ability to think critically to make choices that will determine their paths and add to their wellbeing and development of their communities (Sen, 2014). However, simply providing educational access does not ensure these outcomes. An equally essential element, often closely connected with educational participation and achievement, is aspiration.

Aspirations are what you hope to achieve in your life. It is a desire to do something important for your dreams, ambitions, and long-term goals for the future. Aspiration is a psychological construct that encompasses an individual's hope ambitions and enduring goals concerning their future life circumstances (Yadav, 2024). It represents a forward-looking orientation, or mental projection of desired future states that motivates present actions and shifts long term planning (Markus & Nurius, 1986). These aspirations considerably impact motivation, as well as engagement and educational choices.

Educational aspiration is more than just setting goals. It is an important element for the prediction of educational success and it can be seen to be part of academic achievement motivation, focusing on a desire for success and on a formation of academic goals in order to excel in education, specific subjects, and to obtain a particular qualification. Educational aspirations are dynamic forces that impact students' academic choices, level of effort in their studies, participation in school activities, and resilience in the face of academic challenges. They are not just passive desires (Nauta & Epperson, 2013). Therefore, educational aspirations are not static entities; they are dynamic constructs that evolve over time, influenced by a collection of factors as well as academic experiences, interactions with peers and teachers, exposure to different career paths, plus the broader socio-economic context in which students are embedded.

The relationship of aspiration to achievement in the educational field is well-documented by (Ahuja, 2016). Numerous studies indicate a strong, positive correlation between students' educational aspirations and their academic achievement. The level of aspiration represents the standard of educational attainment that a person strives for. Hoppe introduced the concept of level of aspiration to the field of experimental psychology. (Gardner, 1940) describes aspirations as reflecting student ambition. Students who set higher educational goals tend to perform better academically. Some students might develop average aspiration levels and stop striving for any noticeable distinction, "good enough" for most, as long as these expectations enable them to meet societal. According to (Frank, 1935, 1941) it is the degree or intensity of an individual's desire or ambition to achieve specific educational goals. High educational aspirations link consistently to greater academic effort and to higher levels of academic achievement and also increases the likelihood of pursuing higher education.

Aspiration unlocks the potential, while education provides it. Aspiration is what propels a person to learn, develop, overcome obstacles, and eventually realize their potential in both life and their academic endeavours, whereas education offers the framework and the means. The

advantages of education are less likely to be fully realized in the absence of that inner desire and the objectives it motivates. These aspirations, acting as internal compasses, guide students' academic choices, influence their motivation to learn, and ultimately shape the pathways they pursue beyond the confines of secondary education (Bandura et al., 2001)

The Indian education system is a vast and diverse system serving a huge and heterogeneous population of students having a multi-level system or tiers of education including primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary (Ministry of Education, 2020; NCERT, 2005). The varied context of higher secondary schooling in India encompasses government schools, privately managed schools, and government assisted schools with the possibility of creating different environments for learning, resources, and socio-cultural contexts that may influence students' aspirations in several ways. The socio-political contexts in which students are born and raised also play an important role in influencing aspirations. (Soy, 2014) highlights the importance of considering these factors when examining students' education aspirations. The choices students make at this point, often sourced from a combination of academic performance, school engagement, personal interests, parent expectations and resources available, can enable or limit students' aspiration and can have a significant impact on accessing higher education. Similarly, gender has continuously been recognized as a powerful determinant of educational goals around the world.

(Kingdon, G.G. 2007) argues that government schools in the India are among the cheapest and most poorly funded centres, whereas private schools tend to have more resources, infrastructure, and teaching methodologies, which results in better student outcomes. Along with these differences, private schools also tend to have better qualified teachers, more motivating peers, and parents who are more involved in the child's education which increases the student's preparedness academically and qualitatively which shifts their goals towards more favourable outcomes—like attending prestigious institutions of higher learning. (Jeynes, 2010). Ignoring these factors can result in unsuccessful attempts to boost academic performance and a failure to assist students in achieving their educational aims.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Academic pursuit and career choice is influenced by students' educational aspiration. The structure of it is shaped by a complex interplay of individual and contextual factors. The research intends to explore the educational aspiration of higher secondary students in Kalimpong district of West Bengal, with a particular approach to understanding how these aspirations differ based on gender and type of school (private or government) they attend. For these reasons, the study may be stated as: "Educational Aspiration of Higher Secondary School Students in Relation to Gender and Type of School".

### **Review of Literature**

Senthilselvam and Subramonian (2015) investigated the level of aspiration among Higher Secondary School Students of Coimbatore District with the objective to find out the significant difference in the mean scores of aspirations among higher secondary students with respect to the demographic variables. The results show that boys, students from urban areas, joint families, Arts discipline NCC students and those with college level educated parents have a better level of

aspiration. Hooda and Devi (2018) explored the educational aspiration among secondary school students in relation to type of school, locality and gender to compare the educational aspiration among school students with respect to type of school, locality and gender. Findings revealed that female students have high educational aspiration as compared to male students. Rural students and private school students have high educational aspiration than their counterparts. Selvakumari and Tamizhselvan (2019) and Basu and Khurshee (2023) in their studies revealed that the High school students exhibit above-average aspirations. The level of educational aspiration of the male high school students is slightly above those of female students. It was further revealed that students from private schools and English medium schools have comparatively higher education aspirations as compared to the students from government schools and Hindi medium schools. The data suggests that socio-economic and cultural factors play a pivotal role in shaping educational aspirations among high school students. Kurbah (2024) explored the educational aspiration of higher secondary school students in East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya to find out the differences in the level of Educational Aspiration. The study found no significant difference in the level of Educational Aspiration between Male and Female students. However, a significant difference was revealed in the level of Educational Aspiration between Tribal and Non-Tribal students, with Tribal students showing higher aspirations. The study found no significant difference in the level of Educational Aspiration between Urban and Rural students.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To estimate the level of educational aspiration among students of higher secondary level.
2. To compare educational aspiration between female and male students of higher secondary level.
3. To compare the educational aspiration between government and private school students of higher secondary level.

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference in educational aspiration of male and female school students of higher secondary level.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in educational aspiration of students studying in government and private higher secondary schools.

### **Methodology of the Study**

#### **Research Design**

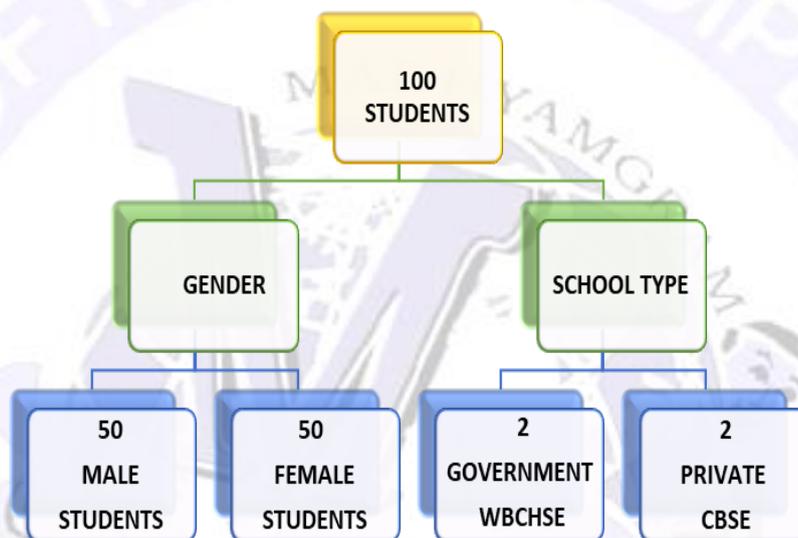
The researcher employed a Descriptive Analytical survey research method. A quantitative research approach involving survey method was used to collect data from a sample of higher secondary school students using a structured questionnaire.

#### **Variables**

The study involves the following variables: Independent Variables: Gender (male and female) Type of School (government and private) Dependent Variable: Educational Aspiration: The level of educational goals and ambitions that students have for their future learning.

### Population and Samples

The target population chosen for the study was 11th grade students currently enrolled in private and government higher secondary schools that are affiliated with WBCHSE and CBSE. A sample of 100 students has been selected for the study. The researcher has adopted stratified random probability sampling for the purpose of the present study. The sampling technique involved selecting two government Higher secondary schools and two private Higher secondary schools within the district. (50 students from government schools and 50 students from private schools) The population higher secondary students was further divided into subgroups based on gender and school type (e.g., government vs. private) Then, a random sample was drawn from each subgroup, ensuring the sample accurately reflects the proportions of these groups in the larger population.



**Fig 1:** Layout of the sample

### Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

The Educational Aspiration Scale (EAS) developed by Rozia Bashir and Dr. Najmah Peerzada has been used. The item analysis was conducted using the Kelly method (1939) The final draft of educational aspirations scale contains 47 significant items. There are 40 positive items and 7 negative items in the final draft of the scale.

Standardization of the Scale: The Educational Aspiration Scale was administered to 300 randomly selected higher secondary students (150 boys and 150 girls) from government and private schools in Pulama, Srinagar, and Baramulla districts of Kashmir. Participants included students from both urban and rural areas.

The scale's internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which was 0.86, indicating high reliability. Content validity was established through discussions with 10 experts in Education, Psychology, and Behavioural sciences, ensuring 80% agreement on item relevance. Face validity was supported by expert consensus, confirming the scale's appropriateness for assessing higher secondary students' educational aspirations.

The researcher has chosen a structured questionnaire designed to measure the educational aspirations of higher secondary school students as a primary tool for data collection. The responses

of the students were reported in the form of three-point Linkert scale: (1) Always (2) Sometimes (3) Never

The research analyzed the data using appropriate statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, calculation of mean, standard deviation, and t-test.

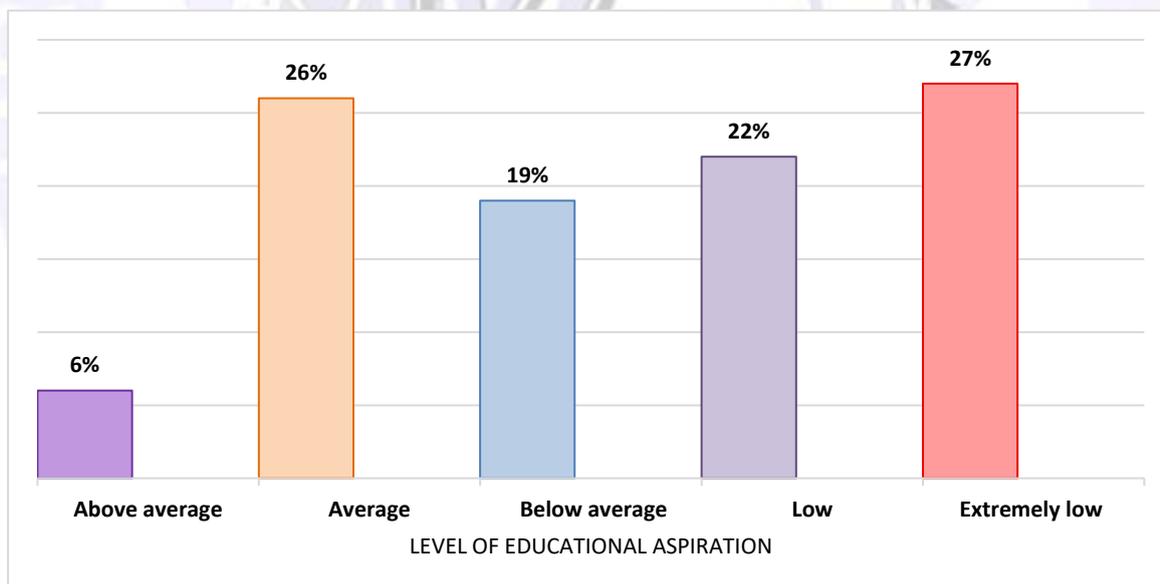
### Results and Discussion

The data collected for this study were classified, tabulated, and analyzed according to each objective in the following ways:

**Objective 1: To estimate the level of educational aspiration among students of higher secondary level**

**Table 1:** Level of Educational Aspiration of Higher Secondary Level Students

Range of Z scores	Number of students	Grade	Level	Percentage %
+2.01 and above	-	A	Extremely high	-
+ 1.26 to +2.00	-	B	High	-
+0 .51 to + 1 .25	6	C	Above average	6%
-0.50 to + 0 .50	26	D	Average	26%
-1.25 to 0.51	19	E	Below average	19%
-2.00 to -1.26	22	F	Low	22%
-2.01 and below	27	G	Extremely low	27%



**Fig 2:** Level of educational aspiration of higher secondary school students

**Interpretation:** The results indicate that the majority of students, constituting 27% fall into the 'Extremely Low' performance level. Conversely, 22% of students are classified as 'Low' performance. Furthermore, 19% of students fall into the 'Below Average' category. 26% are categorized as 'Average' and 6% fall into the 'Above Average' category. Interestingly, there are no students in the 'High' or 'Extremely High' performance levels, emphasizing that exceptional

performance is rare in this sample. This suggests a skewed distribution heavily leaning towards lower performance levels based on the Z-scores.

The overall educational aspiration among the 100 higher secondary students is low to below average, with a substantial portion falling into "extremely low" and "low" aspiration categories (average score of 2.62 out of 5).

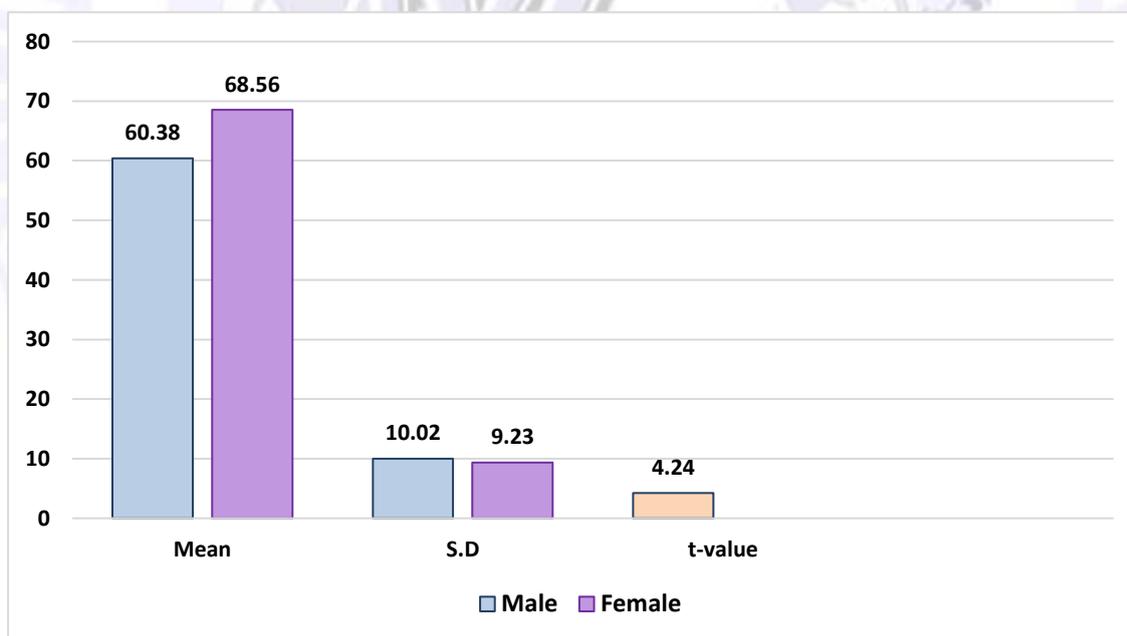
**Objective 2:** To compare educational aspiration between female and male students of higher secondary level

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference in educational aspiration of male and female school students of higher secondary level

**Table 2:** Difference in educational aspiration of male and female school students of higher secondary level

Male School Students			Female School Students			MD	df	SE <sub>D</sub>	t-value	Significance
n <sub>1</sub>	Mean	SD	n <sub>2</sub>	Mean	SD					
50	60.38	10.02	50	68.56	9.23	8.18	98	1.93	4.24*	Sig. at 0.01 level

\*t-criterion value at 0.01 level is 2.63 for df 98



**Fig 3:** Comparison between the score of educational aspiration of high school students with respect to gender

**Interpretation:** There is significant difference in educational aspiration of male and female school students of higher secondary level as the t-value of 4.24 is greater than the t-criterion value of 2.63 at 0.01 levels for df 98. Hence the null hypothesis Ho<sub>1</sub> is rejected. The female school students are better since their mean score being 68.56 is higher than that of male school students being 60.38.

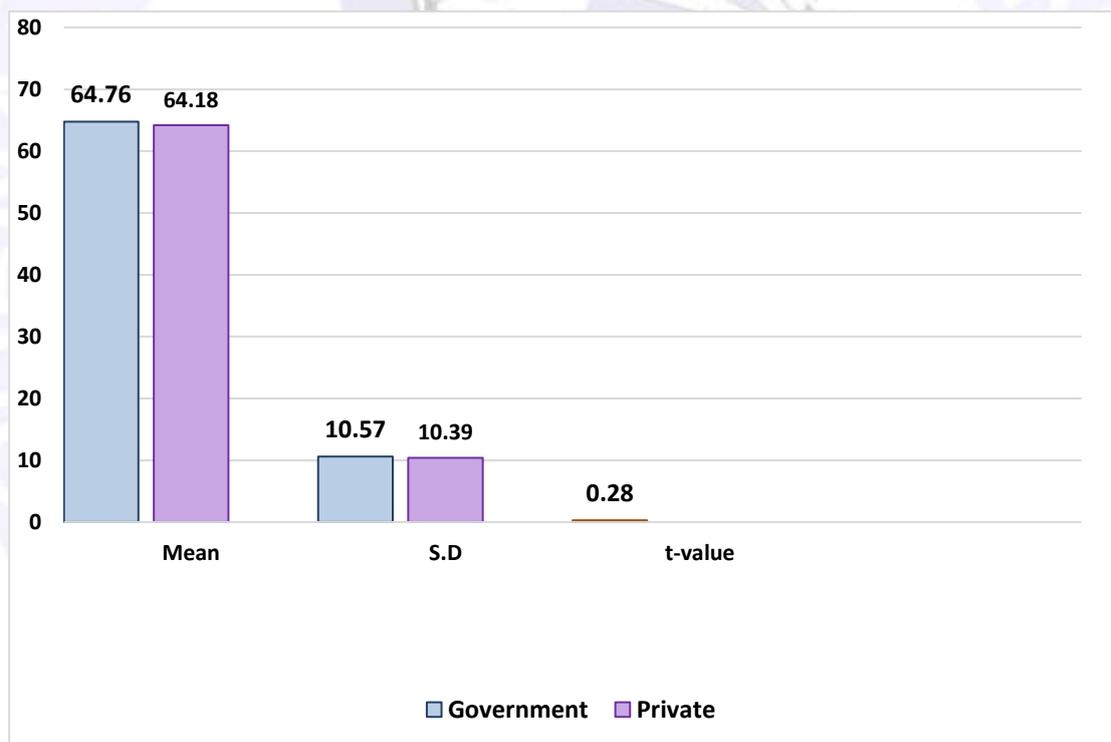
**Objective 3:** To compare education aspiration between government and private school students of higher secondary level

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in educational aspiration of students studying in government and private higher secondary schools

**Table 3:** Difference in educational aspiration of students studying in government and private higher secondary schools

Govt. School Students			Private School Students			MD	df	SE <sub>D</sub>	t-value	Significance
n <sub>1</sub>	Mean	SD	n <sub>2</sub>	Mean	SD					
50	64.76	10.57	50	64.18	10.39	0.58	98	2.10	0.28*	Not Sig. at 0.05 level

\*t-criterion value at 0.05 level is 1.98 for df 98.



**Fig 4:** Comparison between the score of educational aspiration of high school students with respect to type of school

**Interpretation:** There is no significant difference in educational aspiration of students studying in government and private higher secondary schools as the t-value of 0.28 is less than the t-criterion value of 1.98 at 0.05 levels for df 98. Hence the null hypothesis Ho<sub>2</sub> is accepted.

**Findings/Discussion**

1. The findings of the study reveal that the higher secondary school students possess low to below average level of educational aspiration.

2. There is a statistically significant difference in educational aspiration between male and female higher secondary school students. Female students exhibit higher educational aspiration compared to male students.
3. There is no statistically significant difference in educational aspiration between students attending government and private higher secondary schools, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) of no difference based on school type.

## Conclusion

The present study demonstrates the intricate interactions between community, gender-specific, and socioeconomic factors that shape educational goals in the Kalimpong district of West Bengal. The general lack of ambition among students highlights the existence of underlying systemic problems that deter students from pursuing higher education, such as a lack of perceived opportunities, motivation and inadequate guidance. Notably, the gender gap that has been noted where female typically have higher aspirations than male indicates that socio cultural elements and societal norms have varying effects on male and female. Furthermore, it appears that external community and societal factors have a greater impact on students' aspirations than the particular educational institution or curriculum, as evidenced by the lack of significant variation in aspirations based on board affiliation or school management.

The scope of the study is inherently limited by certain methodological constraints. The restricted sample size and focused demographic parameters mean that the findings may not be readily generalizable to broader populations or different environments. Furthermore, by concentrating solely on specific elements of gender and not exploring other influential variables such as self-efficacy or intersecting socio demographic factors, the research offers a somewhat narrow perspective. Future studies incorporating a larger, more diverse sample and examining additional variables could yield a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics influencing student experiences across varied settings. This, in turn can inform the design for more effective and equitable interventions, ensuring all that students have the opportunity to pursue their academic potential regardless of their background or circumstances.

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