

Occupational Aspiration of Vocational and Non-Vocational Students: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to investigate and compare the occupational aspirations of vocational and non-vocational students, examining the factors that influence their career choices and the extent to which their educational paths shape their professional goals. Using the questionnaires, we collected data from a diverse sample of students enrolled in vocational and non-vocational programs. The findings reveal significant differences in occupational aspirations between the two groups, with vocational students displaying a stronger inclination towards specific trades and technical careers, while non-vocational students exhibited broader career ambitions encompassing a range of professional fields. Key influences on occupational aspirations included educational experiences, socio-economic background, and perceived job market opportunities. The study underscores the need for tailored career guidance and support systems that address vocational and non-vocational students' unique aspirations and challenges faced by vocational and non-vocational students, ultimately aiming to enhance their career readiness and satisfaction.

Keywords: Vocational Students, Vocational Courses, Non-Vocational Students, Non-Vocational Courses, Occupational Aspiration

1. INTRODUCTION

The aspirations and career goals of students are crucial determinants of their future professional success and personal fulfillment. Understanding these occupational aspirations is especially important in an era marked by rapid technological advancements and evolving job markets. This research work aims to explore and compare the occupational aspirations of vocational and non-vocational students, shedding light on the distinct factors that influence their career choices and ambitions.

Vocational education, with its focus on specific trades and practical skills, is designed to prepare students directly for the workforce. In contrast, non-vocational education typically emphasizes broader academic knowledge and theoretical understanding, often leading students towards diverse career paths. Despite these differences, both educational pathways play a vital role in shaping students' occupational aspirations. This comparative study seeks to identify the similarities and differences in career aspirations between students pursuing vocational and non-vocational courses. By examining factors such as socioeconomic background, educational environment, and personal interests, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these elements influence students' career choices. Additionally, the study explores the impact of external influences such as family expectations and labor market trends on the career aspirations of both groups.

The findings of this research will have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and career counselors. By understanding the distinct aspirations and motivations of vocational and non-vocational

students, stakeholders can develop targeted strategies to support students in achieving their career goals. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on education and career development, offering insights that can enhance the alignment between students' educational experiences and their occupational aspirations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In "Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century," **Symonds, Schwartz, and Ferguson (2011)** argue that the American education system's focus on non-vocational, college-preparatory pathways inadequately prepares many students for successful careers. They advocate for diverse educational pathways, emphasizing vocational education to address workforce skills gaps and high-demand careers. The report calls for balanced educational approaches and partnerships between educational institutions and industry to better prepare students for the 21st-century workforce.

Karen A. Goyette's (2008) research examines the evolution of educational and occupational expectations among American youth, highlighting the shift from "college for some" to "college for all." The study underscores the increasing recognition of vocational education's value and the impact of socio-economic background on career goals. It suggests that advantaged students gravitate towards careers requiring advanced degrees, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to promoting both college education and vocational training.

Manjula Shrivastava's (2006) thesis examines the relationship between vocational aspirations, personality traits, and cognitive differentiation of careers. The study finds that traits like openness to experience and conscientiousness are linked to higher cognitive differentiation, influencing career aspirations. The research underscores the importance of enhancing cognitive differentiation skills for better career decision-making, providing valuable insights for career counseling and vocational psychology, with implications for educational and career development programs.

In his 2006 thesis, "Vocational Aspirations of Pre-University Students in Relation to Personality Achievement Motivation and Social Factors,"

Rajeev Prakash Gundale (2006) examines how personality traits, achievement motivation, and social factors influence pre-university students' career aspirations. Using a mixed-method approach, the study finds significant correlations between these variables and highlights the importance of tailored interventions for effective career planning, offering valuable insights for educators, career counselors, and policymakers.

Kaul's (2015) study examines the roles of vocational identity, emotional intelligence, and decision-making self-efficacy in adolescents' career maturity. Using mixed methods, the research finds that a well-defined vocational identity and high emotional intelligence significantly correlate with greater career maturity. Adolescents confident in their decision-making abilities are better at career-related tasks. The study underscores the need for comprehensive support systems to enhance these competencies, aiding adolescents in their career development.

Pratima Singh's (2010) thesis investigates the vocational values of technical and non-technical students, considering the influence of fathers' education levels and family structure. Through a mixed-method approach, the study reveals that students with highly educated fathers prioritize job security and advancement, irrespective of their technical or non-technical backgrounds. Additionally, it notes

differences in vocational priorities between students from nuclear and extended families, suggesting nuanced familial influences on career aspirations.

Andrea Vincent's (2022) thesis examines labor market outcomes for vocationally skilled youth in India, highlighting their employment prospects and job satisfaction relative to non-vocational peers. Combining quantitative data and qualitative insights, the study underscores vocational education's role in addressing skill gaps and reducing youth unemployment. It reveals that vocational training correlates with better job placement and higher initial wages but identifies challenges like regional disparities and institutional quality variations, advocating for policy interventions to improve vocational training's alignment with labor market demands.

Eccles and Roeser (2009) stress the pivotal role of the academic environment in shaping students' motivation and career aspirations. They advocate for tailored educational experiences that cater to individual interests and needs, emphasizing the importance of practical applications in non-vocational education and critical thinking in vocational training. By fostering supportive teacher-student relationships and adapting educational practices to diverse developmental stages, institutions can enhance student motivation and overall satisfaction.

Arum and Roksa's (2011) study "Academically Adrift" examines U.S. college students' academic performance using data from the Collegiate Learning Assessment. They find a concerning lack of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills development among non-vocational students, advocating for educational reforms to better prepare students for future careers. The study has sparked debates about the efficacy of non-vocational higher education, suggesting a need for improved pedagogy to enhance skill development.

Hout's (2012) study examines the social and economic benefits of college education in the United States, emphasizing the advantages of non-vocational education in terms of income, social status, and overall well-being. While both vocational and non-vocational paths offer distinct advantages, the research underscores the long-term value of non-vocational education and its contribution to individuals' economic prospects and societal well-being.

Meera Kumari's (2010) thesis investigates aspiration, motivation, and need for achievement among Scheduled Caste communities in East and West Champaran. Using a mixed-method approach, the study explores socio-cultural and economic influences on these constructs, revealing variations in motivational levels and achievement needs. The findings highlight systemic barriers and support mechanisms affecting the aspirations and achievements of Scheduled Caste individuals, offering implications for policymakers and educators.

Datta Paul and Minakshi's (2020) thesis explores how undergraduate students' internet usage influences their academic aspirations, study habits, and academic achievement. Their mixed-methods approach reveals that balanced internet use correlates with higher aspirations and effective study habits, positively impacting academic performance. However, excessive internet use can lead to distractions, hindering academic outcomes. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy internet habits to optimize educational success in the digital era.

Shweta Warring's (2012) thesis explores how parental encouragement, intelligence, and socioeconomic status influence adolescents' career aspirations. Using mixed methods, the study finds that these factors interact to shape adolescents' occupational goals. The research underscores the need for tailored support for adolescents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and career counselors to foster environments conducive to realizing their career ambitions.

Seema Kumari's (2018) thesis delves into secondary school students' occupational aspirations, focusing on self-confidence, achievement motivation, and parental occupation influence. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study reveals strong correlations between self-confidence and career clarity, as well as the impact of achievement motivation on occupational ambition. Parental occupation emerges as a significant factor, shaping students' perceptions of attainable career paths. The research underscores the importance of nurturing students' self-confidence and motivation while addressing disparities arising from parental occupation.

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli's (2004) study emphasizes the crucial role of self-efficacy beliefs in shaping children's career aspirations. It reveals that higher self-efficacy correlates with more ambitious and resilient career goals among children. This underscores the importance of fostering self-efficacy in educational settings to support students' career development, irrespective of their educational track, vocational or non-vocational.

Schneider and Stevenson's (2005) study highlights the ambitious yet directionless nature of American teenagers' career aspirations. Despite high levels of motivation, many lack clear pathways towards their goals, influenced by limited exposure to career options and inadequate guidance. Their findings emphasize the need for comprehensive support in both vocational and non-vocational education to help students translate aspirations into concrete career plans.

Howard, Flanagan, Castine, and Walsh (2015) explore the factors influencing career choices of children and youth across vocational and non-vocational education contexts. They investigate how influences like family background, educational experiences, and societal expectations shape career aspirations. The study reveals potential differences in perceived influences between vocational and non-vocational students, offering insights for educational policies and career guidance programs to better support students in pursuing their career goals.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

POPULATION

In this study, only the Indore District student population is selected. In terms of education, it is one of the most important centers in the country. Among the six courses being taken for sampling, the two colleges selected have 342 students pursuing their vocational and non-vocational courses.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study on Occupational Aspirations of Vocational and Non-Vocational Students is **Descriptive Survey Research**. In this approach, researchers collect data through methods such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, or existing records. The gathered data are then analyzed to identify patterns, trends, or relationships among variables of interest.

SAMPLE

The participants in this study are undergraduate students within the age range of 17 – 21 years, who are pursuing their courses in Indore District. Students from Choithram College of Nursing and DAVV University were the participants in filling out the questionnaire. A total of two groups were formed who were pursuing their vocational and non-vocational courses. Three Vocational Courses (B.Sc. Nursing, Diploma in Interior Design, and Diploma in Photography) were selected with 26 students each, and a total of 78 students in Vocational Courses. The other Group also consisted of 78 students pursuing their Non-Vocational Courses (BA in Political Science, BA in Literature, and B.Sc. in Mathematics) and were selected with 26 students each.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The students from all six courses were selected and were provided with the Questionnaire tool. The next step was to calculate the score and percentage according to the answers given by the students, based on which the Level of Aspiration was taken out. Then the mean scores were taken out, keeping the study's objectives in mind, and doing the calculations to prove that the null hypothesis was correct.

TOOL

The **Occupational Aspiration Scale (OAS) Tool** was developed by **Prof. N.P.S. Chandel, Dr. Vibha Laxmi, and Mr. Ranjeet Kumar Singh** and published by the **National Psychological Corporation**.

RELIABILITY

The OAS test-retest and split-half method were used to test the reliability of the OAS procedures. The coefficient of internal consistency between the above two halves A & B was found to be 0.76, which is significant at a 0.01 level of significance.

VALIDITY

The OAS has been validated against the Occupational Aspiration Scale of J.S. Grewal. The coefficient of Validity was found to be 0.75 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

HYPOTHESIS TESTING:

Objective 1: To compare the mean scores of occupational aspirations of girls and boys belonging to Vocational Courses.

H01 There is no significant difference between the mean scores of occupational aspirations of girls and boys belonging to Vocational Courses.

Objective 2: To compare the mean scores of occupational aspirations of girls and boys belonging to Non-Vocational Courses.

H02 There is no significant difference between the mean scores of occupational aspirations of girls and boys belonging to Non-Vocational Courses.

Objective 3: To compare the mean scores of occupational aspirations of students belonging to Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses.

H03 There is no significant difference between the mean scores of occupational aspirations of students belonging to Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses.

Objective 4: To compare the mean scores of occupational aspirations of female students belonging to both Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses.

H04 There is no significant difference between the mean scores of occupational aspirations of female students belonging to both Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses.

Objective 5: To compare the mean scores of occupational aspirations of male students belonging to both Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses.

H05 There is no significant difference between the mean scores of occupational aspirations of male students belonging to both Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research results show almost no differences between Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses in terms of education and gender.

H01 INTERPRETATION

In Vocational Courses, the absence of a significant gap in mean scores for occupational aspirations between girls and boys implies that within this educational context, gender does not appear to influence career aspirations significantly. This suggests that both genders in vocational education are similarly inclined towards their career goals, fostering an environment where aspirations are driven more by personal interests and abilities rather than by traditional gender roles or stereotypes.

H02 INTERPRETATION

In Non-Vocational Courses, the absence of a significant variance in mean scores for occupational aspirations between girls and boys indicates that gender does not exert a noticeable impact on career aspirations within this academic realm. This suggests a trend where individuals, regardless of gender, pursuing non-vocational education exhibit similar levels of ambition and interest in their future careers, reflecting a broader societal shift towards gender-neutral career aspirations and opportunities.

H03 INTERPRETATION

The lack of a significant disparity in mean scores for occupational aspirations between students in Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses suggests that the choice of academic path does not substantially influence career ambitions. This implies that individuals across both educational streams share comparable levels of aspiration and interest in their future occupations, underscoring the notion that career goals are shaped more by personal inclinations and aptitudes rather than by the type of educational program pursued.

H04 INTERPRETATION

The absence of a significant contrast in mean scores for occupational aspirations among female students in both Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses suggests that, regardless of academic track, gender does not strongly influence career ambitions. This implies that female students across diverse educational paths share similar levels of aspiration and interest in their future careers, emphasizing individual preferences and abilities over the influence of educational specialization on career goals.

H05 INTERPRETATION

The lack of a significant divergence in mean scores for occupational aspirations among male students in both Vocational and Non-Vocational Courses indicates that, irrespective of academic stream, gender plays a minor role in shaping career ambitions. This suggests that male students across various educational trajectories exhibit comparable levels of aspiration and interest in their future occupations, highlighting the influence of personal inclinations and capabilities over the impact of educational focus on career goals.

6. CONCLUSION

Educational Implications

Research on the occupational aspirations of vocational and non-vocational students yields critical educational implications. It guides curriculum development to incorporate career exploration across educational streams, informs tailored counseling services, and enhances teacher training for effective career guidance. Policymakers can enact inclusive policies promoting gender-neutral career opportunities. By fostering diversity and equal access to resources, institutions can create environments conducive to students' diverse career aspirations. Moreover, the study underscores the need for continued research into factors shaping occupational aspirations, facilitating ongoing efforts to support students in realizing their career goals across varied educational pathways.

Scope for Future Research

Future research on the occupational aspirations of vocational and non-vocational students can delve deeper

into the underlying factors influencing career choices, including cultural, societal, and familial influences. Investigating the impact of educational policies and interventions on shaping career aspirations could provide valuable insights. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking students' career trajectories and exploring how aspirations evolve over time can offer a comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, examining the role of mentorship, internships, and experiential learning in shaping career goals could contribute to developing more effective career guidance programs tailored to the needs of diverse student populations across vocational and non-vocational educational pathways.

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