



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**A Comparative Investigation into the Career Aspirations of Male and Female Secondary School Students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan**

**<sup>1</sup>Dr. Alam Zeb \*, <sup>2</sup>Prof. Dr. Arshad Ali and <sup>3</sup>Mian Said Hussain**

1. Assistant Professor Center for Education and Staff Training, University of Swat, KP, Pakistan

2. Professor Institute of Education & Research, University of Peshawar, KP, Pakistan

3. M. Phil Scholar Center for Education and Staff Training, University of Swat, KP, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author**

[hmainsaid@gmail.com](mailto:hmainsaid@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

Career aspiration is a key predictor in determining the career of students at secondary level. It affects both male and female students. This study aimed at comparative investigation of career aspirations among male and female secondary level students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Objectives of the study were to find out the career aspirations of male and female students in secondary schools and to develop strategies for effective career planning of students at secondary level. Study's design was quantitative. Its population was 30439 students. A sample of 380 was selected with stratified random sampling. A questionnaire was developed, validated and pilot tested for collecting data.. Data were gathered with self-administered questionnaires and analyzed with using mean scores, standard deviations and the chi-square test. Career aspirations of males were medical, engineering, computer and information technology. Career aspirations of females were teaching and medical. Both genders were having career aspirations of traditional careers. The study recommended strategies of career guidance in schools. Assistance of teachers and parents in selection of school subjects and career orientation sessions for effective career planning and aspirations of students.

**Keywords:** Comparative, Investigation, Career Aspirations, Secondary School Students, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

**Introduction**

Career aspiration is the desire of an individual to join a vocation in future and it is a striving force behind the educational activities of students. Secondary education is a stage of life that brings the foundation of future career for the students and hence career aspirations of students are at the highest level during this stage (Salami, 2013). Every society has different expectations for the future careers of its male and female children, therefore; male children mostly have career aspirations for the investigative careers like medicine and engineering and traditional for the females that may help in the family matters like health and teaching (Elizabeth, 2012). Development of appropriate career aspiration at the level of secondary school is an important obligation both for male and female secondary school students, as students are unaware and have no skills to make appropriate career aspirations, therefore; there is the need of assistance for both the genders to make appropriate selection of subjects that may lead to successful future careers for them (Olamide & Salami, 2013).

About the career aspirations in secondary schools, Ohiwerei and Nwosu (2009) reported that the majority of students in secondary schools aspired for prestigious careers like medical, engineering and law though they did not have aptitudes for success in such challenging careers. The majority of students are unaware of the skills and abilities required for such challenging and competitive careers. That is the main reason that many secondary school graduates are not in a position to pursue their desired careers in the future after their graduation from schools. Salami (2008) found that the factors of personality, occupational

interests, academic achievement, socioeconomic status and extended family significantly influence the career aspirations of youth in secondary schools. These influences are more evident in the career aspirations of female students as compared to the male students.

Kiani (2010) found that the majority of male students wanted to be doctors, engineers and officers of the armed forces while female students wanted to be doctors, teachers, lawyers and nurses in secondary schools. It showed that males have broader and investigative career aspirations while females have restricted and conventional career aspirations as they expect different future roles in the society. Kiani, Hassan and Irfan (2013) studied the vocational aspirations of secondary schools' students and found that the vocational aspirations of secondary school students for the professions of doctor, engineer, army, teacher, and lawyer. Gender differences in career aspirations and match between vocational aspirations and occupational interests were identified. Moderate match for the occupational aspirations of doctor and teacher and no match for army, lawyer and engineer were found with the occupational interests. The career aspirations of males were more conventional and investigative while the aspirations of females were more social and artistic. Therefore, the study aimed at comparative investigation of career inspirations among male and female secondary school students.

### **Literature Review**

Male and Female students are under the influence of different factors in shaping the career aspirations for future careers. Among these factors gender is a dominant one that significantly affects the career aspirations of male and female students in secondary schools. Under the influence of gender, Obinu and Ebunu (2010) found that personality, interest and self-esteem of male and female students significantly different and male aspire more for the careers of medical and engineering while females aspire more for the careers of medical and nursing. Gotfredson (2005) found that during the age of adolescence, students develop their self-concepts and future occupational perceptions which affects their career choices. Howard et al. (2009) identified family as a strong support for the career development of both boys and girls. Alfaro, Umana-Taylor and Bamaca (2006) found that male students were influenced by fathers and teachers and female students were influenced by mothers and teachers in their career choice decisions and aspirations. Female students were found much under the influence of their mothers in their career choice decisions.

Kimani and Kombo (2012) identified parents, family members and sibling's influences on the career determination of students. Females were more influenced by their mothers and older sisters. They were also influenced from the role models, families, teachers, peers and community. Domenico and Jones (2007) reported the influence of socio-cultural factors, i.e. gender, socioeconomic status and cultural patterns affecting the career choices and aspirations of secondary schools' students. Singaravelu et al. (2005) identified the influence of gender and ethnicity that affect the career patterns of students. Chovwen (2003) identified that in majority cases, females are rarely employed in science and technology related careers, but they are commonly employed in low profile careers with low salaries such as social work, nursing, teaching, care taking and marketing. The causes for this, is females under representation in education because of socio-cultural factors, norms, values and traditions, the influence of peers and lack of female role models in such careers (Ogunkola & Olatoye, 2005).

Benet and Aygun (2003) found that gender stereotype beliefs play a significant role in the career determination of female students. Salami (2001) reported that cultural and societal beliefs, traditions and expectations affect the career aspirations of females and shape their minds that they need not to be too much serious about their future career choice decisions. They are discouraged from making the career choice decisions and are usually employed in traditional female stereotyped, lower status occupations with low salaries. They are influenced to aspire for helping their husbands and rear their children while

making career choice decisions of males are considered as serious as they would become the future bread winners of the family. Yowell (2000) found that the career aspirations of female are more influenced by the ethnicity and that of males are more influenced by the future career concerns. Watson et al. (2010) identified that male students aspired more for investigative careers while female students were more aspired for social careers.

Salami, (2000) found that gender stereotypes affect the career roles of both male and females, therefore, there is stereotyping in female dominated careers, like, nursing and male dominated careers like engineering because career choices are made under the umbrella of sociocultural influences. Migunde, Agak and Odiwuor (2011) identified that both males and females preferred investigative careers which deals with abstract concepts and intellectual problems like Medical and Engineering and enterprising careers dealing with leading and managing, while realistic careers which needed masculinity were preferred by males and social careers like art and literature were preferred by females. This was due to their socio-cultural factors and expected future gender roles. Adolescents' future career goals are influenced by the norms and values of society (Nurmi, 2004). Mutekwe, Modiba and Maphosa (2011) identified the role of gender as a significant influence on the career choice decisions of female students because students at the level of secondary school perceive and identify their future roles on the basis of their genders, therefore, they try to adjust themselves in their expected futures, through their gender appropriate career choice decisions. Micallef and Gatt (2004) identified that female students were not encouraged to select male dominated careers, such as, Engineering and Medicine. Oyebade (2003) highlighted that females were little prepared for career planning and development at the level of secondary schools because of their limited future career scope in the society.

Aguele and Agwa (2007) identified that the interest of females diminishes in science and technology related careers because of religious and sociocultural beliefs about their gender roles in the society. They also noted the inequality of opportunity at the secondary level, weak physique, order of birth, marriages and teachers' attitude towards females, which adversely affect their aspirations for science and technology related careers, therefore, they stressed on the creation of more employment opportunities for females in order to create more role models for them in science related careers and may encourage more females to adopt science and technology as their careers. Gotfredson (2005) found that during adolescence, students shape their career planning based on the type of their gender and prestige level associated with the occupation. Therefore, females tend to aspire for a narrow range of career choices as compared with males, who aspire for a broader range of careers. In adolescence, career choices are influenced by the socio-cultural factors to which one is exposed.

Oyebade (2003) highlighted that females were little prepared for career planning and development at the level of secondary schools because of their limited future career scope in the society. Aguele and Agwa (2007) identified that the interest of females diminishes in science and technology related careers because of religious and sociocultural beliefs about their gender roles in the society. They also noted the inequality of opportunity at the secondary level, weak physique, order of birth, marriages and teachers' attitude towards females, which adversely affect their aspirations for science and technology related careers, therefore, they stressed on the creation of more employment opportunities for females in order to create more role models for them in science related careers and may encourage more females to adopt science and technology as their careers. Gotfredson (2005) found that during adolescence, students shape their career planning based on the type of their gender and prestige level associated with the occupation. Therefore, females tend to aspire for a narrow range of career choices as compared with males, who aspire for a broader range of careers.

It is concluded that gender plays a significant role in the formulation of career aspirations among male and female students at secondary level. For the development of

appropriate career planning and formulation of suitable career aspiration there is the need to investigate the comparative analyses of the role of gender in the career aspirations of male and female students at secondary level, therefore; the study aimed at a comparative investigation into the career aspirations of male and female secondary school students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

### Material and Methods

The research study used quantitative survey design the comparative investigation of career aspirations among male and female students. The population of the study was 30439 secondary school students from district Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The sample of the study was 380 (190 male and 190 female students) which was determined with Raosoft online calculator for the determination of the sample for research studies. The sample was selected with using stratified random sampling procedure. A questionnaire containing the career aspirations for secondary school students was developed, validated with expert opinion of experts in the field of career guidance and pilot tested for the reliability. The reliability of the tool was 0.83. According to Law (2004) if the coefficient of reliability is 0.80 then it is excellent and if it is from 0.60 to 0.79 then it is adequate. The data were collected with using self-administered questionnaires and analyzed with mean scores standard deviation and the chi-square test of significance. Ethical principles for conduction of the study, participants and reporting the findings of research were followed.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
**Comparative Analyses of Career Aspirations for Male and Female Students**

Statements	Male	Female	S. D	$\chi^2$	P
Medical	4.24	4.29	.27	43.89	.000
Engineering	4.09	2.47	.55	56.45	.000
Computer and IT	3.77	3.32	.49	34.59	.000
Teaching	3.45	4.53	.43	67.41	.000
Business	3.21	2.23	.52	89.63	.000
Civil Service	2.76	1.89	.89	45.75	.000
Law	2.55	1.76	.74	87.36	.000
Agriculture	2.05	1.53	.23	52.92	.000
Armed Forces	1.84	1.04	.46	26.39	.000
Sports	1.67	1.01	.21	46.14	.000
Any Other	1.49	0.23	.67	38.06	.000

Table 1 demonstrates the comparative analyses of career aspirations for male and female students. The mean scores of 4.24, 4.09 and 3.77 highlights that male respondent students agreed that their career aspirations were medical, engineering and computer and information technology. On the other side the mean scores of 4.53 and 4.29 provides that female respondent students were agreed that their career aspirations were teaching and medical. On application of the Chi-square test, the findings were found statistically significant. It demonstrated the career aspirations of medical, engineering and computer and Information technology for male secondary school students and teaching and medical for the female secondary school students.

### Discussions

The comparative analyses of the career aspirations among male and female secondary school students provided that male students have the career aspirations of medical, engineering and computer and Information technology for male secondary school students and teaching and medical for the female secondary school students. It identified that male students aspired for the investigative careers while females were aspired for the

conventional or traditional careers. It also showed the broader career opportunities for the male students in future while limited career opportunities for the female students who could hardly join the professions of engineering and Information technology in future. It may be due the possible role of male and female students in society and keeping in view this they aspire for such careers. The findings of the study are in conformity with the Elizabeth (2012) who found that every society has different expectations for the future careers of its male and female children, therefore; male children mostly have career aspirations for the investigative careers like medicine and engineering and traditional for the females that may help in the family matters like health and teaching. Similarly, Kiani (2010) found that the majority of male students wanted to be doctors, engineers and officers of the armed forces while female students wanted to be doctors, teachers, lawyers and nurses in secondary schools. In the same vein, Kiani, Hassan and Irfan (2013) who found that the career aspirations of males were more conventional and investigative while the aspirations of females were more social and artistic. Similarly, Kimani and Kombo (2012) identified that females were more influenced by their mothers and older sisters. In the similar fashion, Chovwen (2003) identified that in majority cases, females are rarely employed in science and technology related careers, but they are commonly employed in low profile careers with low salaries such as social work, nursing, teaching, care taking and marketing. Similarly, Benet and Aygun (2003) found that gender stereotype beliefs play a significant role in the career determination of female students. In the similar vein, Migunde, Agak and Odiwuor (2011) identified that both males and females preferred investigative careers which deals with abstract concepts and intellectual problems like Medical and Engineering and enterprising careers dealing with leading and managing, while realistic careers which needed masculinity were preferred by males and social careers like art and literature were preferred by females. Mutekwe, Modiba and Maphosa (2011) identified the role of gender as a significant influence on the career choice decisions of female students because students at the level of secondary school perceive and identify their future roles on the basis of their genders, therefore, they try to adjust themselves in their expected futures, through their gender appropriate career choice decisions. Like the findings of the study, Aguele and Agwa (2007) identified that the interest of females diminishes in science and technology related careers because of religious and sociocultural beliefs about their gender roles in the society. They also noted the inequality of opportunity at the secondary level, weak physique, order of birth, marriages and teachers' attitude towards females, which adversely affect their aspirations for science and technology related careers, therefore, they stressed on the creation of more employment opportunities for females in order to create more role models for them in science related careers and may encourage more females to adopt science and technology as their careers. This provides significant implications in theory and in practical shape for the arrangement of career orientations to develop proper career aspirations among male and female secondary school students.

## **Conclusion**

The comparative analyses of the career aspirations among male and female secondary school students provided that male students have the career aspirations of medical, engineering and computer and Information technology for male secondary school students and teaching and medical for the female secondary school students. It identified that male students aspired for the investigative careers while females were aspired for the conventional or traditional careers. It also showed the broader career opportunities for the male students in future while limited career opportunities for the female students who could hardly join the professions of engineering and Information technology in future. It may be due the possible role of male and female students in society and keeping in view this they aspire for such careers. This provides for the career guidance interventions for male and female students to achieve proper career aspirations at the level of secondary schools.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the objectives of the study, following recommendations were developed as effective strategies for the appropriate career motivations of male and female students in secondary schools.

- The study recommends the provision of career guidance facilities for the effective career planning of the students in secondary schools. As the career guidance facilities are not available in secondary schools, therefore, it is very difficult for the students of secondary schools to have appropriate career aspirations and select appropriate subjects of their study at this level, which are based on their interests, aptitudes and knowledge of the career opportunities.
- There must be collaboration between parents, teachers and schools' authorities for the support of students in career choice decisions. As a friendly relation between home and school is compulsory for making conducive environment regarding career choice decisions of students, therefore, it will help the teachers and parents to know the interests and abilities of the students for making proper subjects selection that may lead them to their desired future destinations.
- The information about career outcomes and career opportunities is an essential element for the better career aspirations of male and female students; therefore, the study recommends career orientations, workshops and career days for the students and their parents at secondary schools, for awareness and to know information regarding the career opportunities and job market.
- For the effective career guidance of the students, there is the need to know the interests and aptitudes of the students in secondary schools. Therefore, the study recommends the establishment of assessment mechanisms for identification of students, interests and aptitudes and the integration of these with the career choice decisions of students.
- The study recommends the incorporation of career guidance subjects in the schools' curricula for the provision of career information and knowing the requirements for the entry into the professional colleges.

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