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AN ANALYSIS OF LEVEL OF ASPIRATION AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The concept of level of aspiration is an important psychological concept, as it shows an individual's future aspirations, goal setting behaviors and motivational state. The present study intends to examine the level of aspiration among the higher secondary students of Chennai district, Tamilnadu in respect of three parameters like Goal Discrepancy Score (GDS), Attainment Discrepancy Score (ADS) and the number of times the Goal Reached Score (NTRS). The method of survey used was normative method with a number of samples of 800 students at grade 11 and 12. Dr. Mahesh Bhargava and Dr. M. A. Shah (2012) developed a Level of Aspiration tool which was administered and data were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentage analysis. The study findings indicate that the students' goal behaviours are realistic but there is a need for specific educational initiatives to support students to move beyond a "moderate" comfort zone to higher but attainable levels of aspiration. Schools are encouraged to establish systematic goal-setting training, career counseling and mentorship programs to help build a strong and intrinsic "aspiration" mindset among adolescents.

Key words: Level of aspiration, Goal Discrepancy Score (GDS), Attainment Discrepancy Score (ADS), Number of Times Goal Reached Score (NTRS) and Higher Secondary Students.

INTRODUCTION

Education is as old as the human race and has been accepted as a primary need of every civilized person (Nussbaum, 2010). It humanizes humanity by externalizing a child's innate capacities (Piaget, 1950). Like a diamond, education appears differently when viewed from various perspectives (Dewey, 1938). It provides the social environment necessary for physical, mental, and emotional development to fulfill social obligations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Education is the most powerful instrument requiring willpower, dedication, and sacrifice (Freire, 1970). Teachers, as its implementers, must embody these qualities to cultivate habits, skills, and attitudes that shape good citizens (National Education Policy [NEP], 2020). As Radhakrishnan (1948) noted, *"Education develops desirable habits, skills, and attitudes which make an individual a good citizen"* (p. 112).

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The level of aspiration is an important factor in determining academic success and psychological health, especially during the adolescent period of higher secondary education when there is a lot of pressure on schools

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and critical career choices. With the rigor of board exams and entrance tests like NEET and JEE, where success and failure can make a world of difference in the competitive education system of Chennai, Tamil Nadu, students face a constant balancing act between their aspirations and performance. It is crucial that educators and psychologists are aware of how students set themselves goals (GDS), how they measure their progress to those goals (ADS), and how they go on to reach those goals (NTRS). A realistic level of aspiration creates healthy motivation; otherwise, setting a very high or very low aspiration level can result in significant frustration, anxiety, and/or academic disengagement. The study is highly significant because it is a micro-level study on identification of dynamics of goal-setting (GDS, ADS, NTRS) among higher secondary students beyond the general level of measurement of aspiration. The results of this localized study will get empirical data to school administrator/policy makers in Tamilnadu for designing targeted intervention like life skills training and career guidance program. In addition, it will help school counselors better understand who is under-aspiring and who is over-aspiring students who are struggling with chronic under-aspiration or over-aspiration, which will help them set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals that are aligned with their actual potential and thus contribute to a healthier academic ecosystem.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Singh and Padhan (2023) conducted a comparative study of Level of Aspiration among adolescents attending Navodaya Vidyalayas, government schools, and private schools in India. A stratified random sample of senior secondary students aged 15–18 years was used. The major findings were: While goal discrepancy (aspiration vs attainment) and frequency of goal engagement didn't vary significantly across school types, students from Navodaya Vidyalayas exhibited significantly higher attainment discrepancy scores than their government-school peers.

Gohain (2023) examined educational aspirations of adolescent learners (classes XI–XII) in Assam, comparing based on gender, locality, teacher involvement, and parental encouragement. A descriptive survey was conducted on 200 students selected via stratified random sampling. The major findings were: No significant differences in aspiration levels were found by gender, locality, or teacher involvement. However, parental encouragement had a significant positive effect ($p < .01$) on their level of educational aspiration.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the Level of Level of Aspiration of Higher Secondary Students based on GDS.
2. To find out the Level of Level of Aspiration of Higher Secondary Students based on ADS.
3. To find out the Frequency for NTRS Scores of Higher Secondary Students.

METHOD FOR THE STUDY

The investigator has used survey method to study '**An Analysis of Level of Aspiration among Higher Secondary Students**'.

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POPULATION

The population for the present study comprises of higher secondary school students, who are studying in Standard XI and XII Higher Secondary Schools in Chennai district of Tamil Nadu. The data was gathered from higher secondary schools in Chennai.

SAMPLE

The sample consists of 800 higher secondary school students from 30 higher secondary schools in Chennai district.

TOOL USED

The level of aspiration tool was adopted from Dr. Mahesh Bhargava and Lt. Prof. M. A. Shah Bhargava (1995). It is a test on level of aspiration for the school students. The performance sheet has 50 circles (each of 1 c.m in diameter) which are arranged in 5 rows, 10 in each row. Above and below of these rows, there are 2 boxes on the right side. The upper box is for writing the expected score (except in Practice Trial) whereas the lower box is for putting the number of actual score or completed performance. Thus, 10 trials are needed for each subject except practice trial. Stop watch or stop clock is also required for the test.

Goal Discrepancy Score (GDS)

The extent and direction of the difference between actual score on the previous trial is known as Goal Discrepancy Score or G.D score, which is obtained by subtracting the actual score on a trial from the aspiration score for the next trial.

Attainment Discrepancy Score (ADS)

The extent and direction of the difference between the expected score (aspiration) and the actual score on the same trial is known as the Attainment Discrepancy Score or A.D. score, which is obtained by subtracting the expected score (aspiration) for a trial from the actual score obtained in that same trial.

Establishing the Validity

The validity of the tool has been found in different methods. For the present study, the investigator established the face validity for the LOA.

Establishing the Reliability

In the present study, the investigator employed test-retest method for establishing reliability of the LOA tool. The investigator has given the tool to 50 students. Then the time taken for completing the tool was noted and then the responses of the students were collected. It was scored using the scoring key. After 15 days, the same tool was re-administered to the same set of 50 students. Again, the investigator scored their responses and tool is found co-efficient was obtained for the two sets of scores. The correlation co-efficient of the tool was found to be 0.83. Thus, the reliability of LOA was established.

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Statistical Techniques Used

- Mean, S.D.
- Percentage Analysis

Analysis

Level of Level of Aspiration among Higher Secondary Students

1. To find out the Level of Level of Aspiration of Higher Secondary Students

Table 1

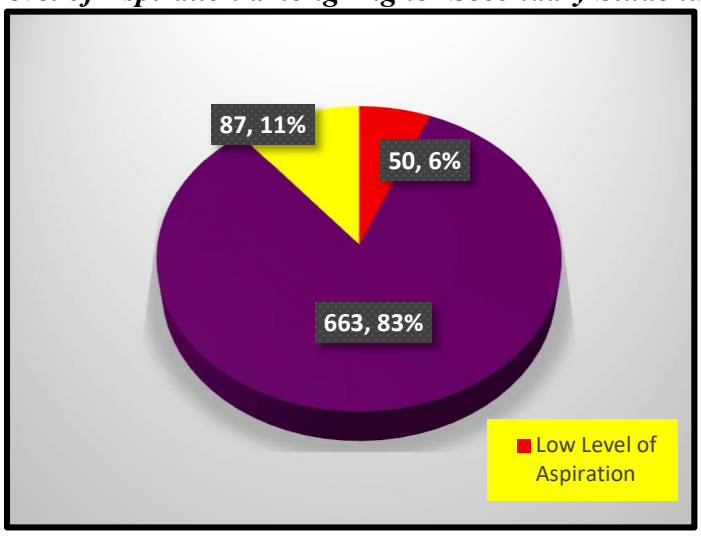
Level of Aspiration based on GDS score among Higher Secondary Students

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low Level of Aspiration	50	6.3
Moderate Level of Aspiration	663	82.9
High Level of Aspiration	87	10.9
Total	**800**	**100.0**

The above table revealed that the level of level of aspiration based on GDS score of higher secondary students. Among the sample, 6.3% of them are low level of aspiration, 82.9% of them are moderate level of aspiration and 10.9% of them are high level of aspiration. This indicates that higher secondary students have different type of level of aspiration it can be graphically represented by Graph.

Graph 1

Level of Aspiration among Higher Secondary Students



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2. To find out the Level of Aspiration based on ADS score among Higher Secondary Students

Table 2

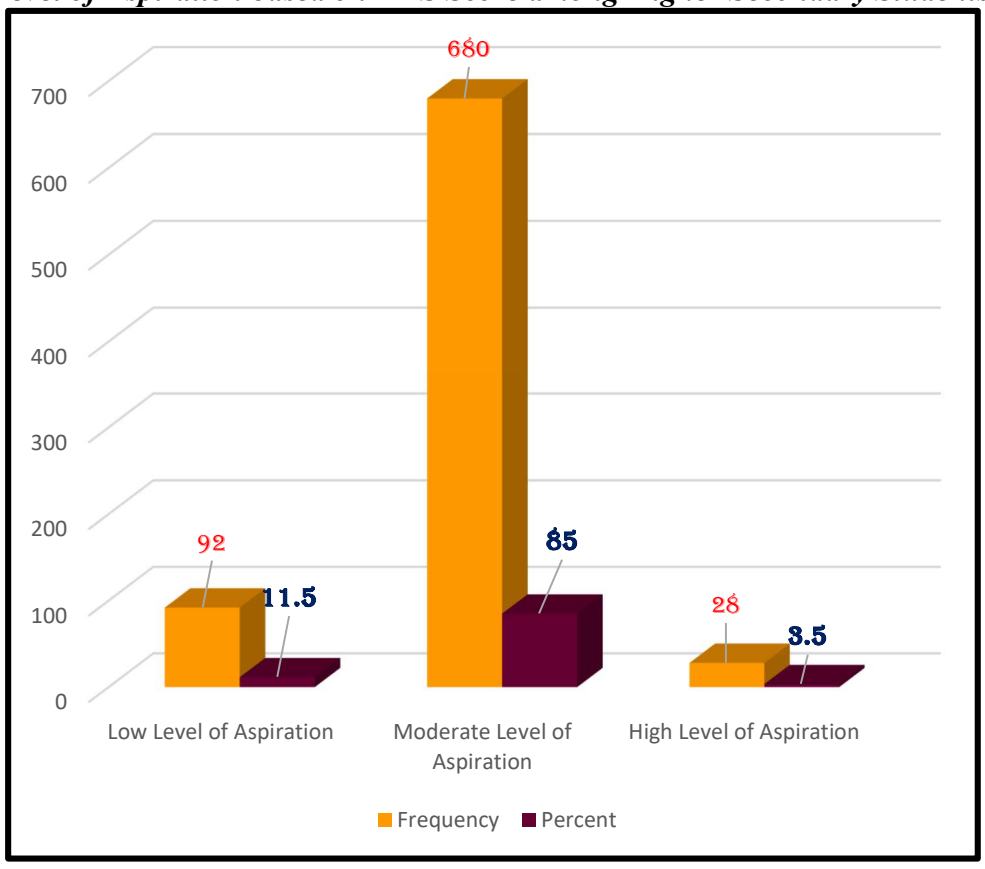
Level of Aspiration based on ADS score among Higher Secondary Students

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low Level of Aspiration	92	11.5
Moderate Level of Aspiration	680	85.0
High Level of Aspiration	28	3.5
Total	**800**	**100.0**

The above table revealed that the level of level of aspiration based on ADS score of higher secondary students. Among the sample, 11.5% of them are low level of aspiration, 85.0% of them are moderate level of aspiration and 3.5% of them are high level of aspiration. This indicates that higher secondary students have different type of level of aspiration based on ADS score it can be graphically represented by Graph.

Graph 2

Level of Aspiration based on ADS Score among Higher Secondary Students



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3. Frequency for NTRS Scores of Higher Secondary Students

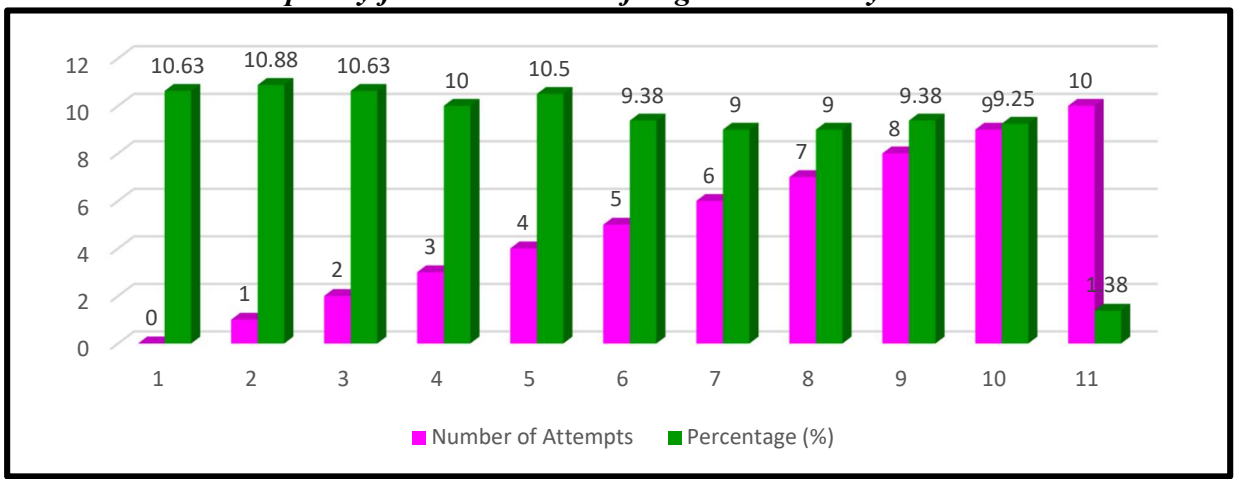
Table 3: ***Frequency for NTRS Scores of Higher Secondary Students***

Number of Attempts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0	85	10.63
1	87	10.88
2	85	10.63
3	80	10.00
4	84	10.50
5	75	9.38
6	72	9.00
7	72	9.00
8	75	9.38
9	74	9.25
10	11	1.38
Total	**800**	**100.00**

The frequency distribution of NTRS of the 800 higher secondary students shows that most of them made 1 attempt (10.88%) followed by 2 attempts (10.63%) and 0 attempts (10.63%). A significant proportion of the sample (42.13%, n = 337) are in the low range (0-3 attempts), indicating that almost half the students need few attempts. Moderate attempt levels (4 to 6 attempts) were observed in 28.88% (n = 231) of the cohort, while 29.00% (n = 232) recorded higher attempts ranging from 7 to 10. The frequency gradually decreases at the upper end, with a frequency of only 1.38% (n = 11) at 10 attempts. From the overall mean of 4.40 attempts, it can be concluded that the majority of higher secondary students show low to moderate NTRS attempt rates with high attempt rates decreasing in frequency.

Graph 3

Frequency for NTRS scores of Higher Secondary Students



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RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results, the investigator suggests some practical recommendations for the education stakeholders.

- The majority of students (82.9% based on GDS) are at a moderate level of aspiration and schools need to make a concerted effort to raise these students from their comfort zones.
- Regularly scheduled structured goal setting and career guidance sessions, especially for higher secondary students, in schools are highly recommended to help them visualize and set higher goals, but not unattainable.
- The teachers need to be trained to act as Academic Mentors and help students to find the difference between their expected score (GDS) and their actual score (ADS), instead of just concentrating on final marks.
- Additionally, because many of the NTRS scores reflect that students will need several attempts to meet their objectives, schools can foster a "Growth Mindset" culture that positively celebrates effort, persistence and learning from failure.
- There is a need to have dedicated Career Counselors in the school management or School Education Department, who can give one-on-one counseling for students who have extreme score (highly aspirant and severely aspirant) to avoid stress and burnout in students.
- Lastly, parents should be sensitized during Parent-Teacher Association meetings on the dangers of having unrealistic aspirations, thus making the students' goals set to be self-motivation and not externally imposed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, the present study gives the complete analysis of the level of aspiration of the higher secondary students in Chennai with the different parameters as GDS, ADS & NTRS. The results are unambiguous and the majority of students have a moderate level of aspiration, showing a pragmatic and self-evaluative attitude towards their academic aspirations. This realistic attitude towards setting goals is a good sign of psychological balance, but it also indicates that generally students are not inclined to go to the extreme and work for a higher excellence. This NTRS data also suggests that students can achieve their target of reading by the end of third grade within a reasonable number of attempts, but this consistency could be enhanced. Hence it is necessary for the education system in Chennai to shift the emphasis from rote learning and the academic performance of students to their aspirational drive, and ensure that these aspirations are nurtured. Comprehensive career guidance, fostering a culture of positive risk-taking, and providing strong psychological support can help empower the higher secondary students to set their goals as ambitious, realistic and meaningful. These comprehensive approaches will help them thrive academically and equip them for success in higher education and their future endeavors.

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