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## Career Aspirations among Adolescents in Tamil Nadu

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### Abstract

Adolescence, particularly the age group of 17 to 19 years, is a crucial stage in human development when individuals begin to form clear ideas about their future careers. Career aspiration, defined as the goals and ambitions adolescents hold for their professional lives, plays a central role in shaping their transition into adulthood. This study focuses on adolescents in Tamil Nadu, examining the nature and level of their career aspirations during late adolescence. A structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was administered to collect data from students aged 17 to 19. The findings reveal that adolescents at this stage often aspire to careers influenced by personal interests, parental expectations, societal pressures, and educational opportunities. Many students demonstrate ambitious goals, though the clarity and realism of these aspirations vary across gender, locality, and medium of instruction. The study highlights the importance of providing career guidance and counseling to adolescents, ensuring that their aspirations are both achievable and aligned with their abilities. Teachers, parents, and policymakers play a vital role in nurturing students' confidence, exposing them to diverse career options, and supporting informed decision-making. By strengthening career awareness and guidance, adolescents can be better prepared to pursue their aspirations and transition successfully into higher education or employment.

**Key Words:** Career Aspirations, Adolescents (17–19 years), Tamil Nadu, Education and Guidance and Youth Development

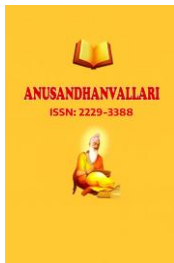
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### Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. In India, adolescence is defined as the age group of 10 to 19 years, with late adolescence covering ages 17 to 19. This period is especially significant because students are completing secondary education and preparing for higher studies or entering the workforce. At this stage, career-related decisions become more concrete, and career aspirations begin to take shape.

Career aspiration refers to the goals and ambitions adolescents hold about their future professions. It reflects not only their personal interests and talents but also the influence of family expectations, peer groups, and societal pressures. For adolescents in Tamil Nadu, where education plays a central role in shaping opportunities, career aspirations are often linked to competitive examinations, cultural values, and access to guidance.

Understanding the career aspirations of adolescents aged 17 to 19 is crucial, as this age group is at a decisive point in their academic journey. Exploring their aspirations provides valuable insights into how young people envision their future careers and the factors that influence their choices.



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This study aims to examine the career aspirations of late adolescents in Tamil Nadu, highlighting the importance of educational guidance, parental support, and policy interventions in helping students make informed and realistic career decisions.

### Need for the study

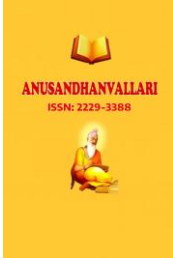
- ❖ Late adolescence (17–19 years) is a decisive stage in life when students complete secondary education and prepare for higher studies or employment. At this age, career aspirations become clearer, and the ability to make realistic decisions is strongly influenced by self-efficacy and career maturity. In Tamil Nadu, where education plays a central role in shaping opportunities, adolescents often face competitive examinations, parental expectations, and societal pressures while choosing their career paths.
- ❖ Despite the importance of this stage, many adolescents struggle with limited awareness of career options, lack of confidence in their abilities, and insufficient guidance. This gap can lead to unrealistic aspirations or underachievement. Studying the relationship between career aspiration, self-efficacy, and career maturity among adolescents aged 17–19 provides valuable insights into how confidence and readiness affect career planning.
- ❖ The findings of this study are significant for teachers, parents, and policymakers. By understanding how self-belief and career maturity shape aspirations, stakeholders can design effective career guidance programs, counseling sessions, and educational interventions. This will help adolescents make informed choices, reduce anxiety about the future, and prepare them for a successful transition into adulthood.
- ❖ Thus, the study is needed to highlight the psychological and educational factors that influence career development among late adolescents in Tamil Nadu, ensuring that their aspirations are both ambitious and achievable.

### Background of the Problem

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development, marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. In India, adolescence is defined as the age group of 10–19 years, with late adolescence (17–19 years) being especially significant. During this period, students complete secondary education and face crucial decisions regarding higher studies, vocational training, or entry into the workforce. These decisions are strongly shaped by their career aspirations.

Career aspiration refers to the professional goals and ambitions adolescents hold for their future. However, aspirations alone may not guarantee success unless supported by confidence in one's abilities and readiness to make realistic choices. In Tamil Nadu, where education is highly valued and competitive examinations play a central role, adolescents often experience pressure from parents, peers, and society to choose specific career paths. This can lead to confusion, unrealistic expectations, or anxiety if students lack proper guidance and awareness of opportunities.

Existing studies highlight that many adolescents struggle with limited career counseling, insufficient exposure to diverse career options, and varying levels of clarity in their aspirations. Without structured support, their goals may remain unfulfilled or misaligned with their abilities. Therefore, examining career aspirations among adolescents aged 17–19 in Tamil Nadu is essential. Such research can provide insights into how young people envision their future careers and help educators, parents, and policymakers design effective interventions to guide adolescents toward achievable and fulfilling futures.



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### Statement of the problem

*“Career Aspirations among Adolescents in Tamilnadu”*

### Objective of the study

1. To find out whether there is any significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents (17–19 years) with respect to gender.
2. To examine whether there is any significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to medium of instruction (Tamil vs. English).
3. To analyze whether there is any significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to locality (urban vs. rural).
4. To study the influence of parental expectations and societal pressures on the career aspirations of adolescents.
5. To explore the role of educational guidance and counseling in shaping the career aspirations of adolescents.

### Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents (17–19 years) with respect to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to medium of instruction (Tamil vs. English).
3. There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to locality (urban vs. rural).
4. There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to parental expectations.
5. There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to the availability of career guidance and counseling.

### Methodology

**Methods:** In the present study Normative Survey method of investigation was employed

**Sample:** For the purpose of the study a sample of 250 students were selected in Virudhunagar District.

**Tool:** Career Aspiration Scale developed by Mrs.R.Muthu Eswari and Dr.V.Vasudevan

**Statistics used:** Mean SD, t-test and Anova were used to analysis of the data

### Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

**Hypothesis – 1 :** There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents (17–19 years) with respect to gender

**Table 1 :** Means and Standard Deviations of Boys and Girls on Overall Career Aspirations, and Results of the ‘t’ Test for Gender Differences

Gender	N	M	SD	‘t’ - Value	Significance at 0.05 level
Boys	125	191.19	32.22		
Girls	25	197.13	72.42	0.40	Not Significant

The mean score of boys on overall career aspirations is 191.19 with a standard deviation of 32.22, while the mean score of girls is 197.13 with a standard deviation of 72.42. The calculated t-value is –0.40, which is not significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that there is no significant difference in career aspirations between boys and girls.

**Hypothesis 2 :** There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to medium of instruction (Tamil vs. English).

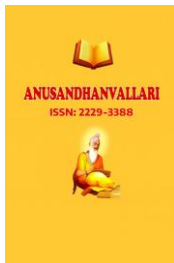
Medium of Instruction	N	M	SD	‘t’ - Value	Significance at 0.05 level
Tamil	125	193.16	21.40		
English	125	195.16	61.35	0.34	Not Significant

**Hypothesis 3 :** There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to locality (urban vs. rural).

Locality	N	M	SD	‘t’ - Value	Significance at 0.05 level
Urban	125	186.22	23.47		
Rural	125	207.10	59.55	3.65	Significant

The mean score of urban adolescents on overall career aspirations is 186.22 with a standard deviation of 23.47, while the mean score of rural adolescents is 207.10 with a standard deviation of 59.55. The calculated t-value is –3.64, which is significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that there is a significant difference in career aspirations between urban and rural adolescents, with rural students showing higher levels of career aspiration compared to their urban counterparts.

**Hypothesis 4 :** There is no significant difference in career aspirations of adolescents with respect to parental expectations.



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Parental Expectations	N	M	SD	't' - Value	Significance at 0.05 level
High	125	182.72	49.04	4.06	Significant
Low	125	205.6	39.45		

**Interpretation:** There is a significant difference in career aspirations between adolescents with high parental expectations and those with low parental expectations. Adolescents with low parental expectations scored higher in career aspirations compared to those with high expectations.

### Conclusion

The present study examined career aspirations of adolescents aged 17–19 years in Tamil Nadu with respect to gender, medium of instruction, locality, and parental expectations. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference in career aspirations between boys and girls, and between Tamil and English medium students. However, a significant difference was found with respect to locality, where rural adolescents reported higher career aspirations compared to their urban counterparts. Similarly, parental expectations showed a significant influence, with adolescents experiencing low parental expectations scoring higher in career aspirations than those facing high expectations.

Overall, the results highlight that while gender and medium of instruction do not play a major role, locality and parental expectations are important factors shaping career aspirations among late adolescents. These findings emphasize the need for balanced parental guidance and equitable career counseling opportunities across urban and rural settings to support adolescents in making realistic and fulfilling career choices.

### Educational Implications of the Study

#### Career Guidance Programs

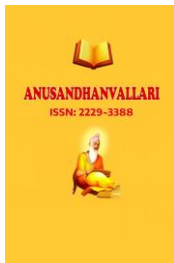
Since gender and medium of instruction did not show significant differences, schools can design uniform career guidance programs that cater to all students, ensuring equal access to information about diverse career opportunities.

#### Focus on Rural Students

Rural adolescents reported higher career aspirations compared to urban students. This suggests that urban schools may need to strengthen motivational and counseling strategies, while rural schools should be supported with resources to help students translate their aspirations into achievable career paths.

#### Parental Involvement

The finding that adolescents with low parental expectations scored higher in career aspirations highlights the importance of balanced parental involvement. Schools can organize workshops for parents to encourage supportive guidance rather than imposing rigid expectations.



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### **Equitable Counseling Services**

Career counseling should be made available across both urban and rural settings, with special emphasis on awareness of diverse career options beyond traditional paths, helping adolescents align aspirations with realistic opportunities.

### **Policy and Curriculum Integration**

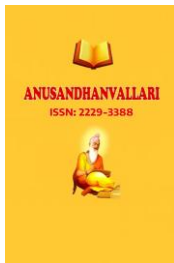
Policymakers and educators can integrate career education modules into the secondary school curriculum, focusing on self-exploration, decision-making skills, and exposure to vocational and higher education opportunities.

### **Reducing Anxiety and Pressure**

By addressing parental expectations and societal pressures, schools can create a supportive environment that reduces stress and anxiety, allowing adolescents to pursue careers aligned with their interests and abilities.

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