

## **CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND CAREER OPTION AWARENESS IN EARLY ADOLESCENTS: ANALYZING GENDER AND SCHOOL TYPE VARIATIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Adolescence is a critical period for shaping educational and career aspirations, which significantly influence future outcomes. The present study aimed to examine the level of career option awareness among adolescent students concerning their level of career aspiration. A random sample of 100 adolescent students, aged 12 to 15, enrolled in 9th and 10th grade, was selected from private, government, and government-aided schools in Aligarh. The study employed the career aspiration scale developed by Daljeet Rani (2017) and the career option awareness scale created by Sarita Anand (2018). The data underwent analysis employing a variety of statistical methodologies such as mean, standard deviation, T-test, ANOVA, and Pearson's product-moment correlation in SPSS software version 25. Findings indicate that the majority of students have strong career aspirations, with government schools showing better results than other types of schools. Additionally, it was discovered that the majority of students possess a restricted understanding of career options, with students from private schools generally exhibiting greater awareness. Gender differences exist, with females having higher aspirations and awareness of career options. Moreover, the study revealed a moderate correlation between career aspirations and awareness among early adolescents.*

**Keywords-** Career Aspiration, Career Option Awareness, Adolescents, Gender, School Type

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a crucial stage of development where initial choices initiate a sequence of subsequent possibilities, resulting in either expanded prospects or limited trajectories. Ecological career development models acknowledge that these choices are shaped by

sociocultural limitations and opportunities, as well as perceptions of feasible options within these limitations (Schoon & Eccles, 2014). During this stage, adolescents gain a sense of purpose and focus on their future, with those having strong career ambitions more likely to succeed as adults (Gottfredson, 1981).

Gender stereotypes significantly impact career choices, with girls often gravitating towards traditionally feminine professions (HEED) and boys towards STEM fields. Studies indicate that girls now aspire to high-status occupations at rates similar to boys, although actual achievement may differ (Rani, 2017;Tazien et al., 2020).

Adolescents' goals reliably predict future career success, with aspirations holding significant psychological importance despite social and environmental constraints (Kim et al., 2019; Mello; Ashby & Schoon, 2010; Beal & Crockett, 2010; Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Career education and vocational counseling are essential in helping students make informed career choices (Gottfredson, 2016).

## **Career**

## **Aspirations**

Career aspirations refer to an individual's current expression of their educational and career objectives. They serve as a crucial measure for comprehending an individual's self-concept, professional conduct, and prospective career decisions and accomplishments. Ideal aspirations pertain to academic goals in desirable circumstances, whereas realistic career aspirations are based on the expected likelihood of pursuing a specific education or occupation. In adolescence, individuals modify their idealistic standards to align with realistic and attainable expectations (Lee & Rojewski, 2012).

Throughout adolescence, the process of establishing a career identity is a key aspect of personal development that extends beyond basic pursuits. As stated by Silvia (2001), aspirations are the career-related goals or intentions that individuals express clearly, encompassing motivational elements. Career aspirations significantly influence young individuals' educational choices and future career paths, aiming to pursue higher education in order to expand their professional prospects. (Brien, 2001; Mau & Bikos, 2000; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Patton & Creed, 2007).

Vanden Bos (2007) further provides a more specific definition of career aspirations as enduring personal objectives pertaining to one's work.

Therefore, the educational aspirations of an adolescent can be assessed by inquiring about their anticipated achievement in a test, their intentions for further education, and their attitude towards higher education.

### **Career Option Awareness**

Developing an extensive awareness of career options is particularly crucial in the initial phases of one's career adventure. In their study, Eliason and Patrick (2008) offered a comprehensive explanation of career awareness. They defined it as an individual's recognition and comprehension of the various job opportunities that exist, along with the specific qualifications and skills needed for those professions.

Career awareness encompasses essential details such as educational prerequisites, skill prerequisites, viable career options, employment conditions, and regulations and standards within a specific field or business. Hence, the creation of student awareness programs should encompass the compilation of precise data regarding various professions, methodical pursuit of career-related information, and strategies for effectively employing the acquired knowledge.

Perry and Van Zandt (2006) asserted that career awareness should serve as the foundation for individuals to explore their career possibilities. Consequently, it is crucial for students to maintain an open mindset toward the diverse career choices and prospects available in the job market during the early stages of their career development.

According to McMahon and Watson (2007), the knowledge provided to a youngster regarding different career options will have a long-lasting impact on their career choices as well as the interests and personal qualities related to their chosen career path.

### **Concept of School**

A school is an educational institution specifically designed to offer students a structured environment where they can acquire knowledge and skills under the guidance of teachers.

The education system in India encompasses a range of school types including private schools, government schools, and government-aided schools. These institutions have a strong connection with education boards at the national or state levels and play a crucial role in imparting education to children and young adults. Government schools are funded and operated by the government. There are three categories of government schools: central government schools, state government schools, and local government schools. Conversely, private schools are possessed by individuals, organizations, or trusts and function autonomously without government regulation. These schools typically have higher fees compared to government schools. Government-aided schools, commonly known as semi-government schools, receive consistent financial assistance from the central or state government but are not under direct government control. These schools are overseen by authorized committees and adhere to government rules and regulations.

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Secondary school students are required to select a course of study that will serve as preparation for their career choices in the future, a decision that significantly impacts their professional trajectory and overall quality of life. Traditionally, professions such as medicine, law, engineering, military, policing, commerce, and piloting have been viewed as prestigious and desirable due to their potential to transform lives and provide financial security. As a result, many students aspire to these conventional careers. However, the dynamic nature of globalization has introduced a plethora of new, high-profile, and lucrative career opportunities worldwide, which offer promising futures for young individuals. Despite this, a notable number of students remain focused on traditional professions, indicating a lack of awareness about these emerging career options.

This study seeks to investigate the level of awareness early adolescents have about various career possibilities and how this awareness correlates with their career aspirations. By employing quantitative data, the research aims to identify gaps in career awareness among students, thereby contributing to a better understanding of how to guide young individuals in making informed decisions about their professional futures.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To assess the levels of career aspirations of early adolescents attending different school types.
- To assess the levels of career option awareness of early adolescents attending different school types.
- To identify significant gender differences among early adolescents regarding their career aspiration and career option awareness level.
- To identify significant school-based differences among early adolescents regarding their career aspiration and career option awareness level.
- To analyze the correlation between career aspirations and awareness of career options among adolescent students.

## **HYPOTHESES**

- There are no significant gender differences among adolescents regarding their career aspirations and career option awareness.
- There are no significant school-based differences among adolescents regarding their career aspirations and career option awareness.
- There exists no significant relationship between career aspirations and career option awareness in adolescents.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

Data was collected from a total of 100 adolescent students of classes 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in the age range of 12-15 years from various private, government-aided, and government schools in Aligarh affiliated with different academic boards like ICSE, UP, CBSE, and AMU.

The sample consisted of 44 males and 56 females for gender, with 37 students from private schools, 41 students from government-aided schools, and 22 students from central gov. schools. Simple random sampling has been employed for data collection.

### **Measures**

Career aspiration scale developed by Daljeet Rani and Sanjeev Kumar (2017). The Scale is a 3-point Likert scale consisting of 26 items. These items are categorized into different dimensions, such as Supervision Aspirations, Academic Attainment Aspirations, Educational

Aspirations, and Occupational Aspirations. The items are further divided into positive and negative items, each with their serial number.

Career option awareness scale Developed by Sarita Anand (2018). The scale helps to understand students about their career exploration and career cluster. In this, students can identify the different sub-career options with specific and related occupations.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

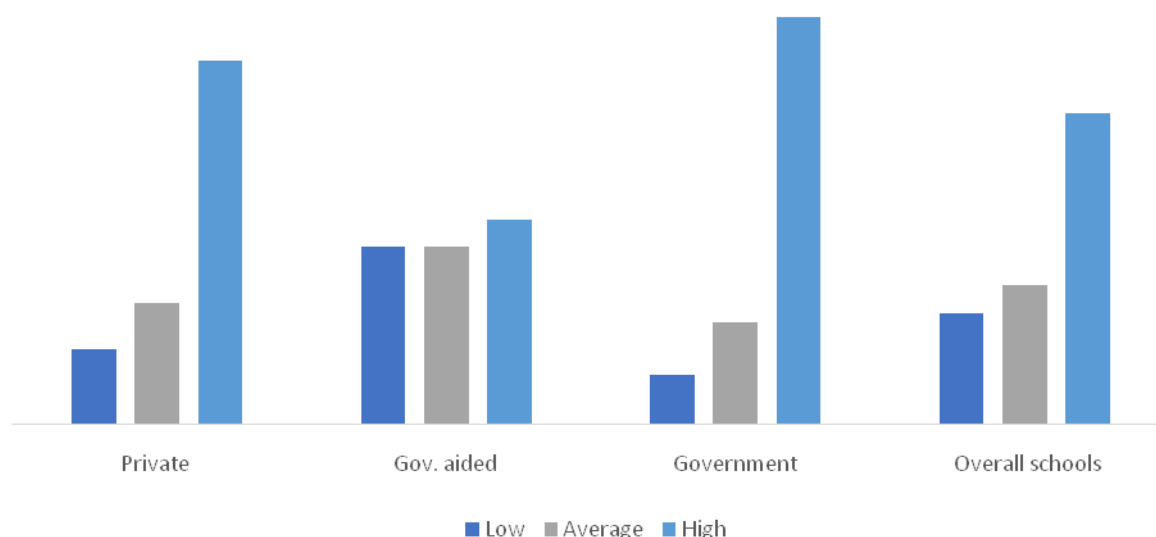
The statistical analysis employed various measures including the mean, standard deviation, T-Test, ANOVA, and Pearson's product-moment correlation. These analyses were conducted using SPSS software version 20.

## RESULTS

**Table 1:** *LEVEL OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN DIFFERENT SCHOOL TYPES.*

School type	Categories of career aspiration						Total	
	Low		Average		High			
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Private</b>	5	13.5	8	21.6	24	64.9	37	100
<b>Gov. Aided</b>	13	31.7	13	31.7	15	36.6	41	100
<b>Gov.</b>	2	9.1	4	18.2	16	72.7	22	100
<b>Overall Schools</b>	20	20.0	25	25	55	55	100	100

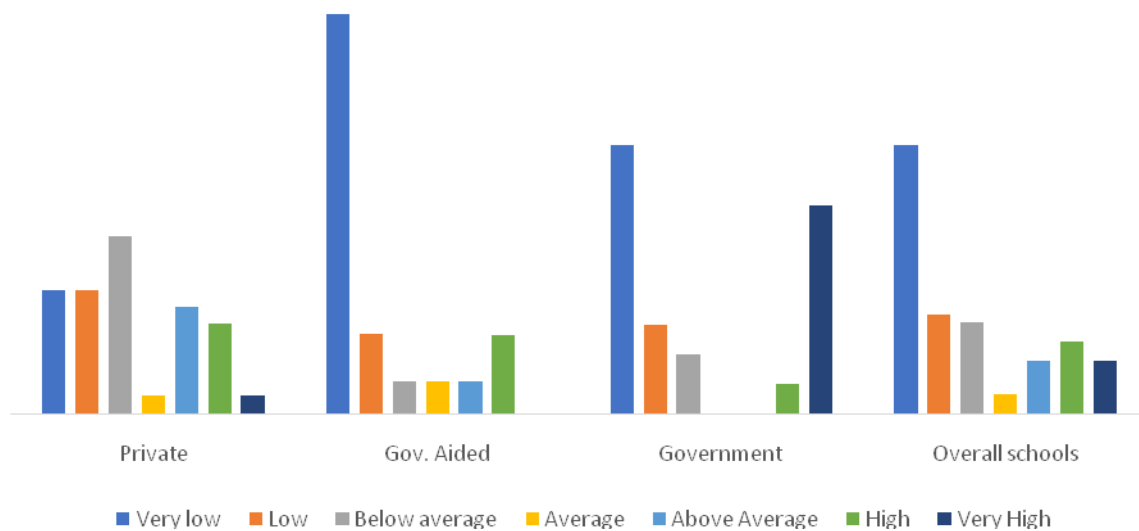
**Figure 1: LEVEL OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN DIFFERENT SCHOOL TYPES**



**Table 2: LEVEL OF CAREER OPTION AWARENESS AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN DIFFERENT SCHOOL TYPES.**

School Type	Categories of career option awareness														Total	
	Very low		Low		Below average		Average		Above average		High		Very high			
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Private	7	18.9	7	18.9	10	27.0	1	2.7	6	16.2	5	13.5	1	2.7	37	100.0
Gov. Aided	25	61.0	5	12.2	2	4.9	2	4.9	2	4.9	5	12.2	0	0.0	41	100.0
Gov.	9	40.9	3	13.6	2	9.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.5	7	31.8	22	100.0
Overall Schools	41	41.0	15	15.0	14	14.0	3	3.0	8	8.0	11	11.0	8	8.0	100	100.0

**Figure 2:** *LEVEL OF CAREER OPTION AWARENESS AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN DIFFERENT SCHOOL TYPES*

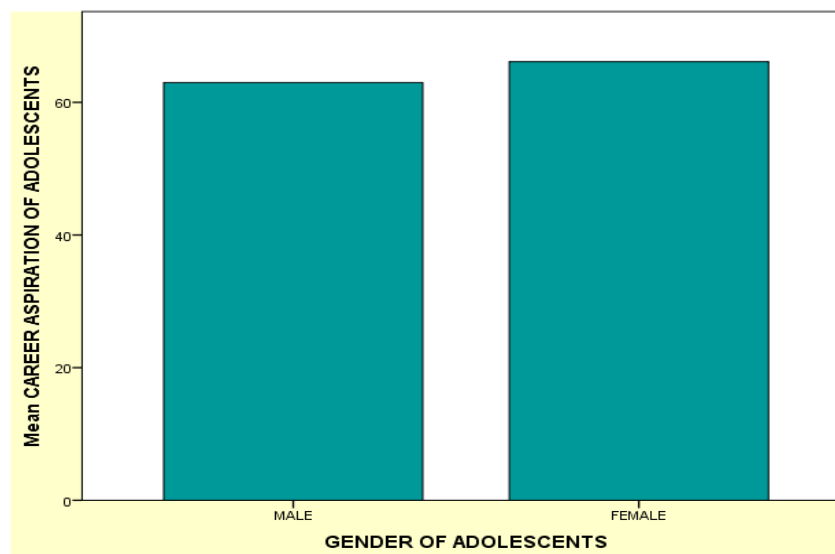


**Table 3:** *GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER ASPIRATION LEVEL*

Group	Pair of comparison	N	Mean	SD	St. error mean	Df	T Value	F	P Value (Sig.2 Tailed)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	44	62.98	7.681	1.158	98	-2.035	.252	0.045
	Female	56	66.13	7.675	1.026				



**Figure 3:** *GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER ASPIRATION LEVEL*

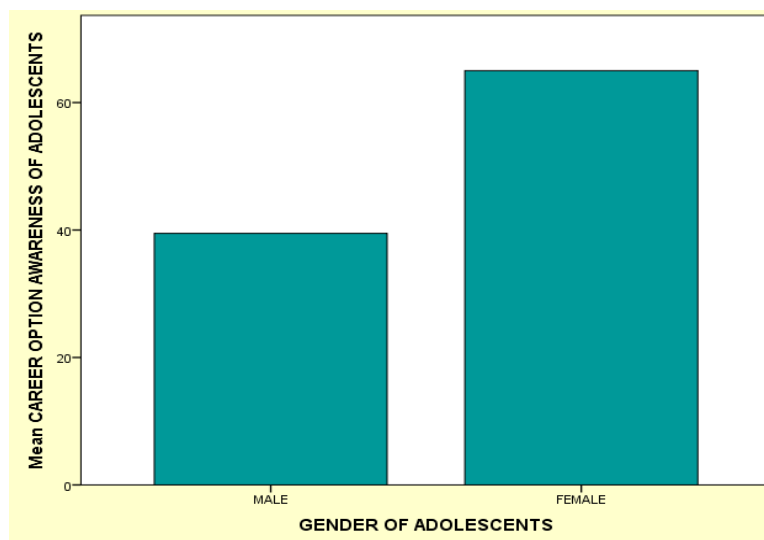


*Note.*Based on the provided table and graph, the data indicates that the career aspiration levels of 56 female adolescents ( $M=66.13$ ,  $SD=7.675$ ) were somewhat higher compared to those of 44 male adolescents ( $M=62.98$ ,  $SD=19.983$ ). Hence, there are significant differences in career aspirations between genders among early adolescents, as evidenced by statistical analysis ( $t(98) = -2.035$ ,  $p=0.04$ ).

**Table 4:** *GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER OPTION AWARENESS LEVEL*

Group	Pair of comparison	N	Mean	SD	St. error mean	Df	T Value	F	P Value (Sig.2 Tailed)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	44	39.48	19.983	3.013	98	-3.840	22.515	0.000
	Female	56	65.02	40.368	5.394				

**Figure 4:** *GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER OPTION AWARENESS LEVEL*



*Note.* Based on the provided table and graph, the data indicates that the career aspiration levels of 56 female adolescents ( $M=65.02$ ,  $SD=40.368$ ) were notably higher compared to those of 44 male adolescents ( $M=39.48$ ,  $SD=19.983$ ). Hence, there are significant differences in career option awareness between genders among early adolescents, as evidenced by statistical analysis ( $t(98) = -3.840$ ,  $p=0.00$ ).

**Table 5:** *SCHOOL-BASED DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER ASPIRATION LEVEL*

**Descriptive**

	N	Mean
Private	37	65.68
Gov. Aided	41	62.29
Gov.	22	67.73
Total	100	64.74

### Anova

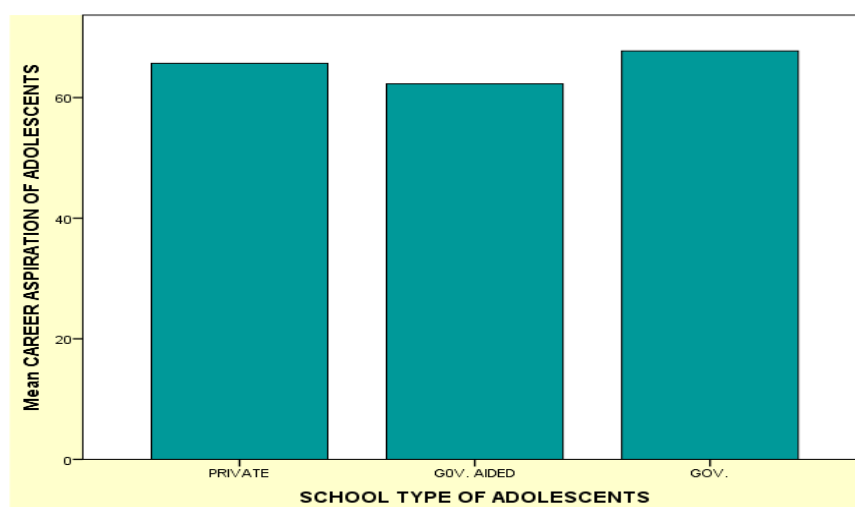
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	474.280	2	237.140	4.147	.019
Within Groups	5546.960	97	57.185		
Total	6021.240	99			

### Post Hoc test

(I) School Type of Adolescents	(J) School Type of Adolescents	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Private	Gov. Aided	3.383	1.715	.124
	Gov.	-2.052	2.036	.574
Gov. Aided	Private	-3.383	1.715	.124
	Gov.	-5.435*	1.999	.021
Gov.	Private	2.052	2.036	.574
	Gov. Aided	5.435*	1.999	.021

\*. The Mean Difference is significant at the 0.05 Level.

**FIGURE 5: SCHOOL-BASED DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER ASPIRATION LEVEL**



*Note.*Based on the provided tables and graph, the One-way ANOVA analysis indicated the mean career aspirations of at least two schools were significantly different ( $F(2,97)=4.147$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). The Post Hoc test for multiple comparisons revealed a significant difference in the

mean value of career aspiration scores between Gov. aided and Gov. schools. ( $p=0.021$ , 95% C.I.= [-10.19,-.68]) with students from government schools achieving higher scores. There was no significant difference observed between private and gov. aided schools ( $p=0.12$ ) or between private and gov. schools ( $p=0.57$ ).

**Table 6: SCHOOL-BASED DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER OPTION AWARENESS LEVEL**

**Descriptive**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Private	37	58.68	25.414
Gov. Aided	41	39.10	26.915
Gov.	22	72.91	50.173
Total	100	53.78	35.229

**Anova**

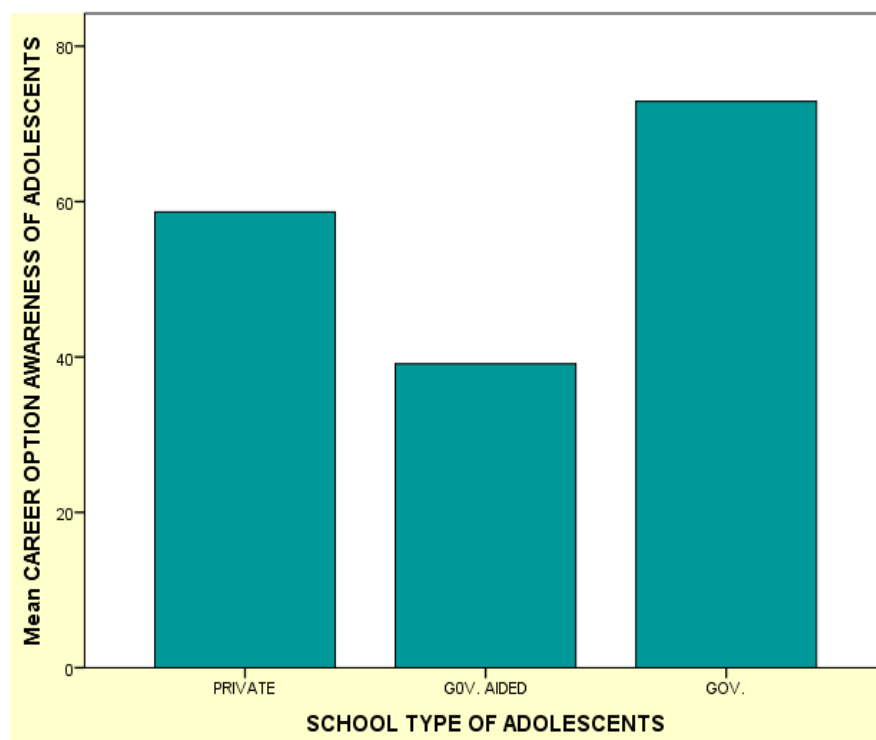
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17775.624	2	8887.812	8.203	.001
Within Groups	105093.536	97	1083.439		
Total	122869.160	99			

**Post Hoc test**

(I) School Type of Adolescents	(J) School Type of Adolescents	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Private	Gov. Aided	19.578 <sup>*</sup>	7.464	.027
	Gov.	-14.233	8.862	.248
Gov. Aided	Private	-19.578 <sup>*</sup>	7.464	.027
	Gov.	-33.812 <sup>*</sup>	8.699	.001
Gov.	Private	14.233	8.862	.248
	Gov. Aided	33.812 <sup>*</sup>	8.699	.001

\*. The Mean Difference is significant at the 0.05 Level.

**Figure 6:** *SCHOOL-BASED DIFFERENCES AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN RESPECT TO MEAN CAREER OPTION AWARENESS LEVEL*



*Note.*Based on the provided tables and figure, the One-way ANOVA analysis indicated that the mean career option awareness of at least two schools was significantly different ( $F(2,97)=8.203$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). The Post Hoc test for multiple comparisons revealed a significant difference in the mean value of career option awareness scores between Private schools and Gov. schools ( $p=0.027$ , 95% C.I.= [1.81,37.34]) as well as between Gov. aided and Gov. schools ( $p=0.00$ , 95% C.I.= [-54.52,-13.11]). Students in private schools tend to achieve higher scores compared to those in government-aided schools, while students in central government schools generally outperform students in government-aided schools. There was no significant difference observed between private and gov. schools ( $p=0.24$ ).

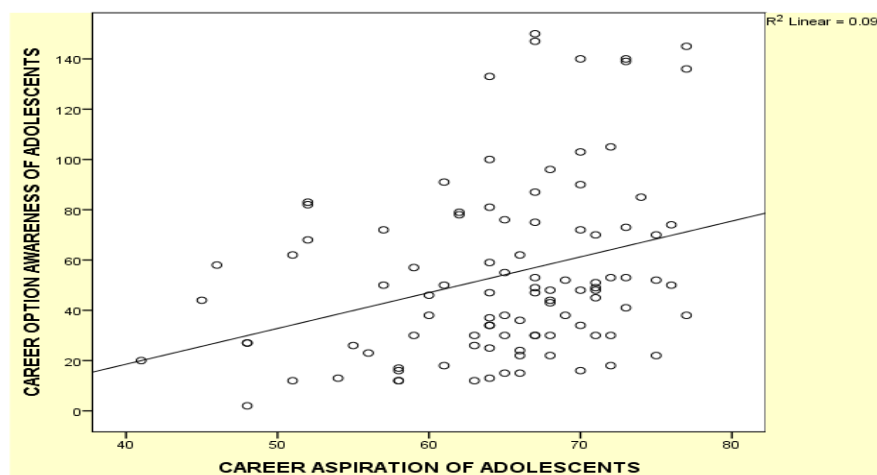
**Table 7: CORRELATION BETWEEN CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND CAREER OPTION AWARENESS**

**Correlations**

		Career Aspiration	Career Option Awareness
Career Aspiration	Pearson Correlation	1	.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	100	100
Career Option Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.315**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Figure 7: CORRELATION BETWEEN CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND CAREER OPTION AWARENESS**



*Note.* Data presented in aforesaid table and graph indicates a moderate positive linear relationship between the two variables with a few potential outliers as the correlation coefficient is 0.31 and the p-value is 0.00 ( $< 0.05$ ) which suggests this correlation is statistically significant.

## **FINDINGS**

- A majority of students exhibit high career aspirations, followed by some with average and a smaller proportion with low aspirations.
- Central government school students show significantly higher career aspirations compared to government-aided school students, with no notable differences between private schools and the other two types.
- Female students demonstrate significantly higher career aspirations than males.
- Most students exhibit very low career option awareness, with only a small proportion showing high or very high awareness.
- Private school students outperform government-aided school students in career option awareness, while central government school students also score higher than government-aided school students. No significant differences are observed between private and central government schools.
- Female students display significantly higher career option awareness than males.
- Career aspirations and career option awareness are moderately positively correlated.

## **CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION**

The present research emphasizes the importance of providing adequate support and counseling to help adolescents navigate the complexities of vocational decision-making, which can profoundly influence their future trajectories. The findings underscore the disparities in career aspirations and option awareness across different types of schools, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. Moreover, gender disparities are also observed in both career aspirations and career option awareness. The finding of a moderately significant correlation between career aspirations and awareness of career options emphasizes the interconnectedness of these factors and the need for comprehensive interventions to facilitate the career decision-making process for adolescents. The implications of these findings for career counseling in secondary schools are substantial. Counseling services must prioritize creating awareness of different career fields, ensuring students have ample opportunities to explore and pursue rewarding paths in today's world. Educators and policymakers need to prioritize initiatives aimed at

improving career guidance programs and workshops, particularly in government-aided and government schools where awareness levels are notably low. These strategies should be customized to target the particular requirements and concerns encountered by students in different school settings, thereby empowering them to make informed decisions about their future careers.

Additionally, career counselors should promote and support an engaged decision-making process. These resources could assist both male and female individuals in contemplating their goals and considering the various factors that may influence their subsequent decisions regarding education and career paths. Ultimately, it is important to recognize the significance of creating a nurturing and all-encompassing educational atmosphere. An environment of this nature not only fosters the advancement and maturation of individual students but also serves as a crucial factor in building an equitable and prosperous society as a whole.

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