

# Predictors of Educational Aspirations among Secondary School Students

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## ABSTRACT

The present study investigated student engagement and self-confidence as predictors of educational aspirations among secondary school students. The research was conducted with the sample of 800 secondary school students from Punjab, state. Employing a descriptive research design, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation and step-wise regression analysis. The results revealed that there is a positive and significant correlation of educational aspirations with student engagement and self-confidence among secondary school students. Findings also showed that student engagement and self-confidence are significant predictors of educational aspirations. The regression analysis indicated that student engagement and self-confidence explained 11.3% and 8.6% variance respectively in educational aspirations among secondary school students. These findings showed the importance of fostering student engagement and self-confidence to enhance educational aspirations among secondary school students.

**Keywords:** Educational aspirations, student engagement and self-confidence

Education is a vital force in promoting and sustaining growth and development of human life and society at large. The outcome of education determines the level of progress and status of the people living Education is a systematic process through which a person acquires knowledge, experiences, skills and sound attitude. Its goal is to make an individual perfect. It is a continuous process. It may be formal, informal and non-formal. In formal education, teacher has played a very important role in the progress of students. Education is a pillar of developed and powerful country and it is the most important element for growth and prosperity of a nation. Education in the largest sense is any aspect or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmit its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. It

guides human to fight with failure and get progress in life. It enables individuals to achieve the best of his abilities and become valuable contributors of society. Thus, education is the key to a healthy mind and successful life.

Educational aspirations are the combination of two words i.e.- education and aspirations. Where education stands for its importance of making an individual unique by contributing in all round development of personality and aspirations refer to the goals that one wishes to fulfil with the course of his time. These can also be defined in terms of criteria of evaluation in which one can measure his or her performance or judge oneself in terms of successful or unsuccessful individual. Educational

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aspirations are the way, eagerness, inspirations and desires to achieve the target. Educational aspiration of a person depends upon his thinking ability to attain the goals of education (Beal and Crockett, 2010). In an educational hierarchy, educational aspiration is arranged as orientation towards goal and social prestige to achieve the goal (Sharma and Gupta, 2015). In the way, educational aspirations have a high influence on the academic career of a student. Educational aspirations not only empower the individual to evaluate himself but these also make him realize his own level by judging his future performance, his ability on the basis of past experiences.

Student engagement is frequently used to depict students' willingness to participate in routine school activities, such as attending class, submitting required work and following teachers' direction in the class. However, the term is also increasingly used to describe meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment including students participating curriculum design, classroom management and school climate. It refers to the student's active involvement in a learning activity. It is the degree of awareness, curiosity, interest, optimism and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught. Two key components: one is that students do or the amount of time and energy that the students spends on educationally purposive activities and Secondly, what institutions do or the ways in which the institutions employ resources for effective educational practices are included in the concept of student engagement (Strydom and Mentz, 2010). Student engagement as the students' active participation in academic and co-curricular or school-related activities and commitment to educational goals and learning (Christenson *et al.* 2012). Students those are engaged find learning meaningful and are interested in their learning and future. Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. It is predicted on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested or inspired and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected or otherwise "disengaged." It shows how intrinsically motivated students are in their

learning process.

Life is full of difficulties and surprises. Self-confidence plays a vital role in helping us face these challenges and accept unexpected situations as effectively as possible. In psychology, self-confidence refers to a person's overall emotional evaluation of their own worth. It is considered an important personality trait. Self-confidence as a personality trait made up of a person's thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears and view of their own worth (Goel and Aggarwal, 2012). Self-confidence as a person's belief in their ability to achieve a goal in a given situation, which plays a crucial role in reaching their potential (Anierobi and Ezennaka, 2019). Self-confidence is an individual trait that helps a person have a positive or realistic view of themselves and their circumstances. It is an essential part of life. Every person has unique skills, abilities and interests, but without confidence, they may struggle to achieve their goals. A person with self-confidence is more likely to be successful. Self-esteem and confidence influence inclusion and achievement. Raised self-esteem and confidence are linked to academic success, as recognised in educational policies. Self-confidence is defined as trust in one's abilities and judgement. It develops from past successes, while negative experiences can create fear and hesitation. Psychologists suggest that confidence grows through life experiences, where positive experiences strengthen confidence and negative experiences cause worry about repeating past mistakes.

### **A thorough review of related literature highlighted following points**

There was a positive and significant correlation between educational aspirations and student engagement (Fatma, 2017; Hooda & Devi, 2018; Lei *et al.* 2018; Nooren *et al.* 2018; Padmakala, 2018; Delfino, 2019; Glapaththi *et al.* 2019; Jha & Rathore 2023 and Kewal *et al.* 2024). There was a positive and significant relationship between educational aspirations and self-confidence (Hooda & Devi, 2018; Gangber *et al.* 2021; Tran & Aspiras 2022 and Shyamkul 2025). Student engagement and self-confidence were significant predictors of educational aspirations of secondary school students (Hooda & Devi, 2018; Delfino 2019; Gangber *et al.* 2021; Tran & Aspiras 2022 and Shyamkul 2025).

### Significance of the study

In the globalization era, the psychological, cultural and environmental changes are affecting all aspects of social and personal life. Even the field of education did not remain untouched from the impact of these changes. The educational system bears great responsibility in identifying the aspirations of the students. The right kind of education is necessary to realize the aspirations of the students and to satisfy them to materialize their goals which they desire to achieve. The aim of education system is also to promote self-confidence and student engagement. Teachers, parents and schools who are linked with the educational system are trying to make every effort to see that students achieve more and more. The present study may help to explore the educational aspirations of secondary school students in relation to their students' engagement and self-confidence. Maximum problems in the students are to develop the understanding about educational aspirations in order to assist them in the exploration of available educational options help them seek career-related information and obtain support for their career plans. So, this research will be useful in the area of education to study new factors which are affecting the students at different levels. It will also helpful to develop new skills, new behaviors and individual personality in educational institutions. The present study will be useful for policy makers, educators, parents and students. With the help of this study, students will come to know the importance of educational aspirations towards the student engagement and self-confidence.

### Objectives

- ❑ To study relationship of educational aspirations with student engagement and self-confidence of secondary school students.
- ❑ To study student engagement and self-confidence as predictors of educational aspirations among secondary school students.

### Methodology

Descriptive method of research was used to conduct this study.

### Research Tools used

- ❑ Educational aspirations scale by Sharma and Gupta (2015). The scale consists of 45 items which includes three dimensions. These are (i) past experience in terms of marks obtained estimate of goal set, success or failure experienced (ii) amount of efforts made in the examination (iii) ability and capacity to study for the examination have a direct bearing upon setting a future goal.
- ❑ Student engagement scale by Lam *et al.* (2014). The scale consists of 34 items which includes three dimensions. These are (i) affective engagement (ii) behavioral engagement (iii) cognitive engagement.
- ❑ Self-confidence scale by Gupta and Lakhani (2018). The scale consists of 48 items which includes five dimensions. These are (i) decisiveness (ii) self-concept (iii) self-control (iv) inter-personal relations (v) parental support).

### Sample

The study was conducted a sample of 800 Government secondary school students from Punjab, state. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling technique giving due weightage to gender and locale. Out of 23 districts of Punjab, three districts-Hoshiarpur, Patiala and Mansa were selected on the basis of their literacy rate.

### Results of the study

#### Educational aspirations in relation to Student engagement and self-confidence among secondary School Students

In order to study the relationship of educational aspirations with student engagement and self-confidence of secondary school students' correlation co-efficient was computed.

**Table 1:** Educational aspirations in relation to Student engagement and self-confidence among secondary School Students

Variable	r
Student engagement	0.20**
Self-confidence	0.17**

\*\**p*<0.01.

The table 1 shows that the value of co-efficient of correlation of educational aspirations with student engagement and self-confidence came out to be 0.20 and 0.17 respectively, which is significant at 0.01 level. It reveals that there is a positive and significant correlation of educational aspirations with student engagement and self-confidence among secondary school students.

**Predictors of Student Engagement and Self-confidence as Educational Aspirations of Secondary School Students**

In order to study the predictive efficiency of independent variable i.e., student engagement and self-confidence toward dependent variable of educational aspirations of secondary school students, multiple step-up regression was applied.

**Table 2:** Predictors of Student Engagement and Self-confidence as Educational Aspirations of Secondary School Students

Predictor Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F-value	% Variance
Student engagement	0.336	0.113	0.113	101.95**	11.3
Self-confidence	0.458	0.312	0.199	128.36**	19.9

\*\*p<0.01.

The table 2 shows that the co-efficient of multiple correlations (R) for the independent variable of student engagement turned out to be 11.3% variance which showed contribution 11.3% and with the entry of self-confidence conjointly as well as separate contribution 19.9% and 8.6% respectively for educational aspirations among secondary school students.

From the results of the present study, it may be concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship of educational aspirations with student engagement and self-confidence among secondary school students. This study also confirmed that student engagement and self-confidence both were the significant predictors of educational aspirations among secondary school students, explaining for 11.3% and 8.6% variance of student engagement and self-confidence in educational aspirations.

The findings highlighted the importance of fostering attributes to enhance students' educational aspirations. The educational institutes should organize seminar, workshop, interactive session,

extension lecture and some training programs for enhancement of student engagement and self-confidence which leads to educational aspirations of secondary school students. Educators should also focus on creating engaging classroom environments that promote active participation and emotional investment in learning.

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