



## A STUDY OF VOCATIONAL INTEREST AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*Vocational interest refers to an individual's preference for particular types of work and activities, reflecting personal strengths, values, and aspirations. This study focuses on the study of vocational interests of secondary school students of Murshidabad district of West Bengal. A total of 348 respondents were selected as a sample through multiple stage sampling techniques. The researchers used Kulshrestha (2009)'s Vocational Interest Record, consisting of 200 items across ten areas like, literacy, scientific, executive, commercial, constructive, artistic, agriculture, persuasive, social, and households. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for analyzing the data that was collected. The study concludes that females and private school students have higher vocational interest levels. Further, the study found that there is a significant difference between male and female, private and government students at secondary level in the vocational interest.*

**Key Words:** Vocational Interest, Secondary School Students, Gender Difference, Type of School, Vocational Guidance

### Introduction

Vocational interest refers to an individual's preference for particular types of work, activities, or occupational domains, playing a crucial role in making informed career decisions by aligning with personal strengths, values, and aspirations. These interests reflect a person's attraction to specific tasks, roles, and working conditions associated with various occupations, shaped by factors such as personality, skills, experiences, values, and aptitudes. Holland (1997) defines vocational interest as an individual's preference for specific work or careers based on

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their skills, values, and personal characteristics. According to Tracey and Rounds (1996), vocational interest is a representation of an individual's preferences and aspirations towards particular occupational sectors, which are frequently influenced by personality traits, skills, and prior experiences. Similarly, Super (1957), it involves exploring and identifying one's occupational likes and dislikes, which guides career decision-making and facilitates alignment between personal characteristics and potential career options. Vocational interests can be categorized into six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Realistic interests involve practical tasks, investigative interests involve analytical tasks, artistic interests involve creative activities, social interests focus on helping, enterprising interests involve leadership, and conventional interests involve structured tasks. Dutt (1951) conducted a study in five girls' schools in Delhi to understand the extent to which high school girls made vocational choices, the factors influencing these choices, and the role of schools in guiding students. The results showed that while 75% of the girls had made vocational choices, many of these choices were unwise. Furthermore, 62.5% of parents had suggested a career for their daughters, with 32.5% recommending a career in medicine and 14.5% suggesting teaching. However, teachers played a minimal role in providing vocational guidance, with only 29.5% of girls receiving career suggestions from their teachers. Overall, only 2.5% of the girls seemed to have made correct vocational choices, with the findings showing notable similarities to studies conducted in the West. Otta and Williams (2012) explored the relationship between vocational Interest and self-concept among secondary school students. The study found a positive relationship between vocational interest and self-concept, with no significant differences in vocational interest between male and female students. The study by Sivashanmuganathan and Joseph (2023) concluded that the vocational interests of higher secondary students are generally average, with no significant differences across gender or academic grade. Similarly, Ahammad (2019) revealed that gender does not play a significant role in vocational interests, as no substantial difference was found between male and female students. Similarly, socio-economic status, whether high or low, does not significantly impact the vocational interests of either gender.

### **Significance of the study**

The study holds critical significance in understanding the vocational preferences of students at a formative stage in their educational journey. The present education system often neglects to cultivate students' innate capacities, resulting in a disconnect between their education and the job market. This mismatch leads to wasted human resources, rising unemployment, low

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economic productivity, and vocational maladjustment, all of which significantly hinder the progress of both individuals and society. One of the pressing issues is that many students lack awareness of employment opportunities and their own vocational aptitudes. Consequently, they often make career choices based on parental pressure or societal expectations rather than a true understanding of their own interests and strengths. This lack of alignment between personal aptitudes and career paths often results in widespread frustration, boredom, and dissatisfaction in the workforce. Youth who are misaligned in their careers may become disillusioned and unproductive, leading to a workforce that is neither fulfilled nor economically efficient.

The objectives of the study aim to examine the relative levels of vocational interest among various groups, including males, females, government school students, and private school students. By identifying these vocational interest levels, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how background factors such as gender and school type influence students' career preferences.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the relative percentages of Vocational Interest levels among the total sample and sub-samples (males, females, government school students, private school students).
2. To compare the level of vocational interest among the secondary school of male and female students.
3. To compare the level of vocational interest among the private and government secondary school students.

### **Hypotheses:**

1. There would be no significant difference in the mean score of secondary school male and female students on vocational interest.
2. There would be no significant difference in the mean score of secondary school government and private students on vocational interest.

### **Methods and Procedures**

The descriptive survey method was used to conduct the study. The present study is delimited to only senior school students of Murshidabad district, West Bengal. The researcher used a multistage sampling strategy to select a sample from Murshidabad district, which is divided into five subdivisions, namely Barhampur, Domkol, Lalbag, Kandi, and Jangipur. The researchers selected the Jangipur subdivision and one block Samserganj through random sampling techniques. The sample of the schools was constituted of two substrata Government schools (affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education) and private schools

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(affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education). The study selected 348 secondary school students from 10 Samserganj block schools using random sampling techniques. The sample included 147 students from private schools and 201 from government schools, ensuring representation of boys and girls. The study aimed to understand the impact of school demographics on student outcomes. The investigator used the Vocational Interest Record (Kulshrestha, 2009) consisting of 200 items based on ten different areas (i.e. literacy, scientific, executive, commercial, constructive, artistic, agriculture, persuasive, social, & households). The responses were recorded as putting a tick mark for each item against the vocation. The tool's validity was assessed through parental, teacher, and friend opinions on pupils' interests, with a coefficient of validity of .81, .83, and .85 respectively, and .74 when validated with Labh Singh's Vocational Inventory. The reliability of VIR was established by the test-retest method and it was found to be .69 with a time interval of 15 days. The scores of each vocational interest area range from 0 to 20 marks. The responses of the vocational interest record are classified and interpreted into three categories that are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Interpretation of Vocational Interest Record**

Scores	Classification
15 to 20	High interest
9 to 14	Average interest
0 to 8	Low-interest

## Results and Discussion

Data collected by the above-mentioned tool was analyzed and the obtained results are presented in the two categories i.e. students and vocational interest, & differences and vocational interest.

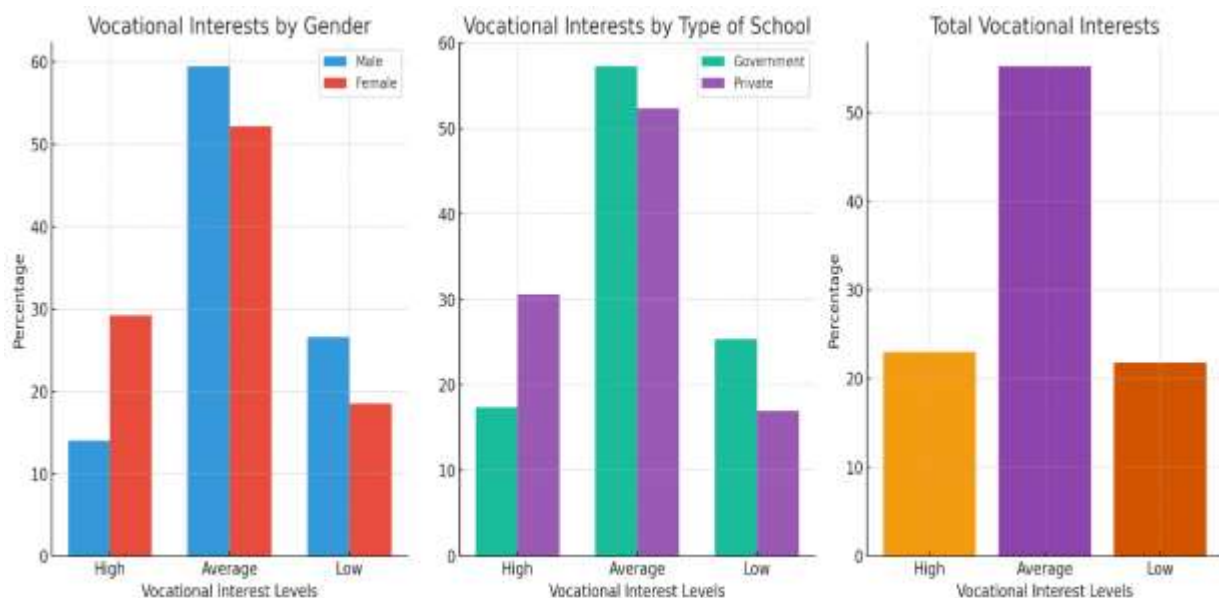
### Students and Vocational Interest

**Table 2: The relative percentage of vocational interests (in percentage)**

Level	Gender		Type of School		Total (348)
	Male	Female	Govt.	Private	
High	13.99	29.27	17.41	30.61	22.99
Average	59.44	52.20	57.21	52.38	55.17
Low	26.57	18.54	25.37	17.01	21.84

Table-2 presents the distribution of vocational interest levels among different subgroups within a sample of 348 students, categorised by gender and type of school. It is evident from

the table that out of the total sample, 22.99 percent of students exhibited high vocational interest. When broken down by gender, a smaller percentage of males (13.99%) displayed high vocational interest compared to females (29.27%). This indicates that females are more inclined towards having higher vocational interests. In terms of school type, students from private schools had a higher percentage (30.61%) of high vocational interest compared to their counterparts from government schools (17.41%), suggesting that private school students may have better exposure or encouragement towards vocational fields. Similarly, a majority of the students, 55.17 percent fell under the average vocational interest category. Males (59.44%) and females (52.20%) had relatively similar percentages in this category, with a slight inclination towards higher average interest among males. Private school students again showed a lower percentage of average vocational interest (52.38%) compared to government school students (57.21%). As for low vocational interest, 21.84 percent of the total sample fell into this group. The gender breakdown shows that more males (26.57%) had low vocational interest compared to females (18.54%). Government school students (25.37%) exhibited a higher percentage of low vocational interest compared to private school students (17.01%). Thus, overall data suggests that gender and type of school significantly influence the vocational interests of secondary school students.



**Figure 1: The relative percentage of vocational interests (*in percentage*)**

### Differences and Vocational Interest

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, the researchers computed the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the results are presented below:

**Table 3: Differences and Vocational Interest**

Source of Variance	Mean	N	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.	
Gender	Male	14.73	143	33.687	1	33.687	6.056	.014
	Female	9.43	205					
Type of School	Govt.	9.28	201	244.831	1	244.831	44.014	.000
	Private	14.79	147					
Interaction (Gender x Type of School)				1.118	1	1.118	.201	.654
Error				1913.534	344	5.563		
Total				51428.000	348			

*N*: Number of Students, *M*: Mean, *SD*: Standard Deviation, \*Significance:  $p < .05$ , \*\*Significance:  $p < .01$

According to Table 3, for gender, the mean vocational interest score for males is 14.73, while for females, it is notably lower at 9.43. The F-value for gender is 6.056, with a significance level (p-value) of 0.014. Since the p-value is below 0.05, it indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in vocational interest between male and female students. Therefore, the null hypothesis concerning gender is rejected, revealing that gender plays a significant role in influencing vocational interest. Males, on average, demonstrate a higher vocational interest compared to females in the sample.

In terms of type of school, the analysis reveals a clear distinction between government and private school students. The mean vocational interest score for students in private schools is 14.79, whereas students in government schools have a much lower mean score of 9.28. The F-value for the type of school is 44.014, with a highly significant p-value of 0.000. Given that this p-value is far below the 0.05 threshold, it suggests a significant difference in vocational interest between students from government and private schools. Consequently, the null hypothesis for school type is rejected, demonstrating that the type of school significantly impacts vocational interest, with private school students showing considerably higher levels of vocational interest than government school students.

## Conclusion

This paper concludes that gender and type of school significantly influence the vocational interests of secondary school students. Females and private school students have higher vocational interest levels, while males and government school students are more likely to exhibit lower vocational interest. In addition, the study found that there is a significant difference in the vocational interest of students at the secondary level. The outcomes reveal

that secondary school male students and private school students show considerably higher levels of vocational interest.

### Suggestions

The findings of the present study highlight several key implications for improving career guidance and vocational education in schools. Government schools should enhance their career counselling programmes, introducing mentorship and vocational guidance to help students understand their aptitudes and career opportunities. Gender-sensitive vocational programmes are needed, with targeted interventions for males to boost engagement, while parents and teachers should play a proactive role in guiding students toward informed career decisions.

Private school students' greater exposure to diverse careers suggests government schools could benefit from partnerships with industries, career fairs, and vocational training. Furthermore, awareness campaigns should promote the importance of vocational education, aligning personal interests with career paths. Finally, addressing vocational maladjustment is essential, and schools should use tools like the Vocational Interest Record to provide personalized guidance, ensuring students pursue careers suited to their skills and interests.

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