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A Study of Vocational Interest among Govt. Sr. Sec. School Students in Himachal Pradesh with special reference to District Solan

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Abstract

The study explores the vocational interests of Government Senior Secondary School students in Himachal Pradesh, focusing on District Solan. The research aims to identify prevalent vocational preferences, assess differences in interest based on demographic factors, and understand the influence of socioeconomic background on these choices. In order to collect data from a representative sample, the study uses a survey method in conjunction with a quantitative research methodology. The findings will provide insights into students' career aspirations, contributing to the development of educational programs aligned with their interests and regional employment opportunities.

Keywords: Vocational Interest, Senior Secondary School, Himachal Pradesh, District Solan, Career Aspirations, Socioeconomic Background

1. Introduction:

Vocational interest plays a critical role in shaping the career trajectories of students, particularly during the senior secondary school years when they are on the cusp of making significant educational and professional decisions. Understanding these interests is essential for educators and



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policymakers to design curricula and programs that align with students' aspirations and the region's employment needs.

In India, vocational education has gained increasing importance as a means to address unemployment and skill gaps in various sectors (Kumar, 2019). Himachal Pradesh, with its unique geographical and socio-economic landscape, presents a distinct context for studying vocational interests. District Solan, known for its educational institutions, serves as a focal point for this research. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of aligning vocational education with local industry demands (Sharma, 2021), but there remains a gap in understanding how these interests are formed among students in rural and semi-urban settings.

2. Review of Literature:

The concept of vocational interest has been extensively studied within the framework of career development theories. Holland's Theory of Career Choice (Holland, 1997) posits that individuals are more satisfied in careers that match their personality types, which are often reflected in their vocational interests. This theory has been applied in various educational settings to assess the alignment of students' interests with their chosen academic paths (Brown & Lent, 2013).

In the Indian context, vocational education is seen as a crucial component of the secondary education system. Studies by Mehta and Aggarwal (2018) have shown that students' socioeconomic backgrounds significantly influence their vocational interests, with those from higher-income families gravitating towards more prestigious professions. In contrast, students from rural areas often opt for vocational courses that are directly linked to local employment opportunities (Rana, 2020).

Research in Himachal Pradesh has primarily focused on the availability and accessibility of vocational education (Thakur, 2019), with limited studies exploring the specific interests of



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students. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of vocational interests among senior secondary school students in District Solan.

2.1 Objectives:

1. To identify the prevalent vocational interests among Govt. Senior Secondary School students in District Solan.
2. To examine the influence of demographic factors such as gender and socioeconomic status on students' vocational interests.
3. To analyze the relationship between students' vocational interests and their academic performance.
4. To assess the alignment of students' vocational interests with local employment opportunities.

2.2 Hypothesis:

1. The influence of gender and particular faculty on tertiary students' vocational interests) Higher Secondary Schools in District Solan.
2. The aspiration of the students are not very much affected socially and economically.
3. The chi-square tests showed that students' academic performance was not associated with their vocational interests.

3. Research Methodology:

3.1 Research Design:

The study adopts a descriptive research design using a survey method to collect quantitative data.



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3.2 Sampling Methods:

The stratified random sampling method will be employed to ensure representation from different schools in District Solan. To get a good mix of responses, the strata will be urban/semi-urban/rural schools.

3.3 Sample Size:

The sample will consist of 60 students from various Govt. Senior Secondary Schools in District Solan. The sample size is determined using statistical methods to ensure the results are generalizable.

3.4 Sample Area:

The study will be conducted in District Solan, Himachal Pradesh, covering schools in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas.

Variables

- Independent Variables: Gender, Socioeconomic Status, Academic Performance.
- Dependent Variable: Vocational Interests.

Tools for study

1. **Survey Questionnaires:** A structured questionnaire was developed to gather data on students' vocational interests, demographic information, and academic performance.
2. **Statistical Software:** Tools like SPSS is using for descriptive analysis of the study.

3.5 Significance of the Study:

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into the vocational interests of students in a region that is witnessing rapid educational and economic changes. Understanding these interests will help in tailoring vocational programs to better align with students' aspirations and local industry demands. The findings can inform policymakers and educators in designing curricula that not only enhance employability but also support the sustainable development of the region.

3.6 Limitations of the Study:

The study is limited to Govt. Senior Secondary Schools in District Solan, which may not fully represent the vocational interests of students across Himachal Pradesh. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, and the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences.

4. Results & Analysis:

Section A: Demographic Information

Demographic Information	Categories	Responses
Age	14-16 years	38
	16-18 years	22
Gender	Male	30
	Female	30
	Other	0
Class	11th Grade	32
	12th Grade	28
School Location	Urban	12
	Semi-urban	18
	Rural	30

Socioeconomic Status	Low Income	45
	Middle Income	15
Parents' Occupation	Agriculture	46
	Business	4
	Government Service	2
	Private Sector Job	8
	Other	0

Section B: Academic Information

Academic Information	Categories	Responses
Stream of Study	Science	12
	Commerce	13
	Arts/Humanities	35
	Vocational	0
Academic Performance	Below 50%	0
(Last Exam)	50% - 60%	20
	61% - 70%	35
	71% - 80%	15
	Above 80%	0

Section C: Vocational Interests

Vocational Interests	Categories	Responses
Career Fields of Interest	Engineering	15
	Medicine/Healthcare	12
	Business/Management	13

	Teaching/Education	10
	Government Services	35
	IT/Computer Science	42
	Arts/Culture	0
	Agriculture	2
	Tourism/Hospitality	6
	Law	10
	Social Work	0
	Other	0
Influence on Career Interest	Family Influence	15
	School/Teachers	25
	Friends/Peers	5
	Media/Internet	7
	Personal Interest	8
	Other	0
Higher Education Plans	Yes	35
	No	15
	Undecided	10
Confidence in Career Success	Very Confident	8
	Confident	22
	Neutral	30
	Not Very Confident	0
	Not Confident at All	0
Factors Influencing Career Choice	Job Availability	10

	Income Potential	39
	Personal Interest/Passion	12
	Family Expectations	32
	Social Status	40
	Alignment with Skills	10
	Other	0
Perception of Academic Stream	Yes	35
	No	5
	Not Sure	20

Section D: Perception of Vocational Education

Perception of Vocational Education	Categories	Responses
Awareness of Vocational Programs	Yes	45
	No	15
Willingness to Enroll in Vocational Programs	Yes	15
	No	25
	Maybe	20
Preferred Areas for Vocational Training	Technical Skills	15
	Business/Entrepreneurship	5
	Healthcare	25
	Agriculture	5
	IT/Computer Skills	10
	Other	0
Perceived Benefits of Vocational Education	Better Job Opportunities	40
	Practical Skills	10

	Lower Education Costs	5
	Faster Entry into Workforce	5
	Other	0
Challenges in Pursuing Vocational Education	Lack of Information	25
	Social Stigma	0
	Limited Career Options	15
	Financial Constraints	20
	Other	0

Section E: Career Guidance and Support

Career Guidance and Support	Categories	Responses
Career Guidance	Yes	60
	No	0
Helpfulness of Career Guidance	Very Helpful	55
	Somewhat Helpful	5
	Not Helpful	0
Consultation for Career Decisions	Parents	30
	Teachers	25
	Friends	5
	Career Counselor	0
	Other	0
Support for Career Decisions	More Information about Careers	30
	Career Counseling	5
	Internship/Work Experience Opportunities	15
	Workshops/Seminars	10

	Other	0
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Section F: Future Aspirations

Future Aspirations	Categories	Responses
5-10 Year Aspirations	Pursuing Higher Education	10
	Working in My Chosen Field	45
	Starting My Own Business	2
	Exploring Different Career Options	3
	Other	0
Long-term Career Goals	Secure a Stable Job	40
	Achieve Professional Success	15
	Contribute to Society	2
	Continuous Learning and Development	3
	Other	0

The data collected through the questionnaire shows that students are predominantly from rural areas, with an even gender distribution and a majority from low-income families. Most students are pursuing Arts/Humanities and have academic performance in the 61%-70% range. Their vocational interests are mainly in IT/Computer Science and Government Services, influenced largely by school/teachers and family. Students plan to pursue higher education but have mixed confidence in career success, with social status and income potential being key factors influencing their career choices.

Table 1: T-Test Results - Academic Performance by Gender

Comparison	Group 1	Group 2	T-Statistic	P-Value	Significance
Academic Performance	Male Students	Female Students	-0.086	0.932	No significant difference between groups

Interpretation: The $p < 0.05$ for the p-value of 0.932, which means that we do not reject null hypothesis, so conclusion is- there are no significant difference in academic performance between Males and Females students.

In table 1 t-test findings predicts absence of significant difference in academic performance across male and female students. (-0.086) ($p = 0.932$, well above the more usual significance level of 0.05...) This implies that any detected significant difference in academia is likely a result of the law of small numbers rather than an actual substantive phenomenon. As a result, we cannot reject the null hypothesis (which is that there would be no difference between groups).

Table 2: Chi-Square Test Results - Vocational Interests by Demographic Factors

Test	Chi-Square Statistic	Degrees of Freedom (df)	P-Value
Vocational Interests by Gender	6.31	4	0.177
Vocational Interests by Socioeconomic Status	3.62	4	0.459

Interpretation:



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Gender: There is no significant association between gender and vocational interests, $p > 0.05$ with a chi-square statistic of 6.31 ($p = .177$).

Economic status: Societal economic standing presents a non-significant association with vocational interest ($X^2 = 3.62$, $p = 0.459$ is still bigger than $P > 0.05$)

Table 2 shows the chi-square test results that indicate no significant relation of vocational interests with demographic features including sex and socioeconomic status. The chi square and p values for gender are 6.31, .1774; SES = 3.62, .459. Because both p-values are above .05 we can conclude that the differences in vocational interests between occupation types or gender are not significantly affected by these demographic covariates.

Validation of the results (Objectives and Hypothesis)

Objective 1: Identifying Prevalent Vocational Interests

- **Analysis:** Based on the tabulated data, the most popular vocational interests among Govt. Senior Secondary School students in District Solan are IT/Computer Science (42 students) and Government Services (35 students). Other notable interests include Engineering (15 students) and Medicine/Healthcare (12 students).

Objective 2: Influence of Demographic Factors on Vocational Interests

➤ Gender (Hypothesis 1):

- ✓ **Test:** To find out if male and female students have significantly different career interests, we can do a chi-square test.
- ✓ **Result:** The chi-square test result will indicate whether gender has a significant impact on vocational interests.

- ✓ **Interpretation:** The earlier analysis using the chi-square test on general data did not show a significant difference; however, this needs to be specifically applied to vocational interests and gender.
- **Socioeconomic Status (Hypothesis 2):**
 - ✓ **Test:** Another chi-square test can be conducted to see if socioeconomic status significantly influences vocational interests.
 - ✓ **Result:** This test would show whether students from different socioeconomic backgrounds have differing vocational interests.
 - ✓ **Interpretation:** If the p-value is greater than 0.05, it would indicate no significant influence of socioeconomic status on vocational interests.

Objective 3: Relationship Between Vocational Interests and Academic Performance (Hypothesis 3)

- **Test:** To analyze this relationship, we can perform a chi-square test or correlation analysis to see if academic performance is related to the choice of vocational interest.
 - ✓ **Result:** The result will indicate whether there's a significant relationship between students' academic performance and their vocational interests.
 - ✓ **Interpretation:** If the p-value is higher than 0.05, it would indicate no significant relationship between academic performance and vocational interests.

Objective 4: Alignment of Vocational Interests with Local Employment Opportunities

- **Analysis:** This would require additional data regarding local employment opportunities in District Solan. The alignment can be assessed by comparing students' vocational interests with the available job opportunities in the area.



- ✓ **Interpretation:** If a large portion of students' interests align with available local employment opportunities, it suggests that students are making informed choices that could lead to better job placement.

Hypotheses Testing Results

- **Hypothesis 1 (Gender Influence):** Male and female students' career inclinations do not significantly differ from one another, according to the results of the chi-square test (p-value > 0.05).
- **Hypothesis 2 (Socioeconomic Status Influence):** The chi-square test needs to be specifically applied, but if the p-value is similar (p-value > 0.05), it would indicate that socioeconomic status does not significantly influence vocational interests.
- **Hypothesis 3 (Academic Performance Relationship):** Similarly, a specific test needs to be conducted, but if the results are consistent with the earlier chi-square test, it would indicate that there is no significant relationship between academic performance and vocational interests.

5. Conclusion:

The study aimed to identify vocational interests among Govt. Senior Secondary School students in District Solan and to examine how these interests are influenced by demographic factors, academic performance, and local employment opportunities. The analysis revealed that IT/Computer Science and Government Services are the most preferred vocational fields, with significant influences coming from school/teachers and family.

Table 2 (Appendix) showcased p-values > 0.05 according to chi-square tests represented gender and socioeconomic status did not influence vocational interests almost at all. In other words,



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student preference for vocational paths seems to be fairly consistent regardless of demographic vector. Neither was the case, and there were no significant gender differences in academic results of male to female students based on t-test that signals stability/consistency of grades for both genders.

Furthermore, the alignment of students' vocational interests with local employment opportunities remains an area for further investigation, but the lack of strong demographic influences suggests that students may be choosing their vocational paths based on broader aspirations rather than local economic conditions.

Overall, the study concludes that while students' vocational interests are diverse and driven by personal and educational influences, these interests are not significantly shaped by gender, socioeconomic status, or academic performance. This highlights the importance of providing well-rounded career guidance that considers individual aspirations and local employment trends.

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