

Breaking the Mould: Vocational Interest of Secondary School Students across Gender and Socio- Economic Status

Abstract

The researcher has tried to know and acknowledge the vocational interests of secondary school students of Dakshin Dinajpur District in West Bengal. The objectives of this study are; 1. To study the relationship between vocational interest and social economic status of Secondary school students; 2. To compare the vocational interest of male and female secondary school students; 3. To compare the socio economic status among male and female secondary school students; 4. To compare the vocational interest of rural and urban secondary school students; 5. To compare the vocational interest of General and SC/ST/OBC Secondary school students. This study investigated the vocational interest across gender and socio-economic status among a random sample of 300 secondary school students. The researcher used; the Vocational Interest Record developed by Dr. S.P. Kulshrestha, (2017) to measure the Vocational Interest and the socio-economic status scale developed by Prof. Ashok k. Kalla & Mr. Sudhir Sahu (2012) to measure the socio economic status. The data were analyzed with the help of Mean, S.D. and t-test to study the vocational interest of secondary school students of Dakshin Dinajpur District in relation socio-economic status. The study revealed that there is a significant difference between the Vocational Interests of urban and rural students and Gender variations are not evident in Vocational Interests among secondary school students. Vocational Interests and socioeconomic status are negatively correlated. The findings from this study have implications for the teachers or educators to acquire knowledge of the Vocational interests of urban and rural students. It also exaggerates the necessity of educational and vocational guidance and counselling at the stage of secondary school.

Keywords: Vocational Interest, Gender, Socio-economic Status, Secondary School Students.

Introduction

“Individuals tend to prefer a vocation in order to reach their targets such as leading a life, nutrition, housing, being safe, having a good position in society etc” (Deniz et al., 2014). The most crucial decision a teen will make is selecting a future Vocation (Hamilton & Krumboltz, 1969; Martončík et al., 2020; Vondracek & Porfeli, 2003). Choosing a Vocation means deciding a way of life (Deniz et al., 2014). The course of their lives could be affected by this decision (Martončík et al., 2020). Interest is an individual's willingness to pay attention to something without exerting any special effort, maintain that attention for a long time, and be aware of it, as well as their readiness to turn that feeling into a reaction and action (Deniz et al., 2014). Moreover, interest is the feeling of a person's attention, concern, or curiosity being mainly engaged by something. Vocational interests are dispositions and

traits that explain the types of professional and occupational activities and environments that individuals prefer. These interests play a significant role in one's life, as they decide what they will do and how well one will do it (Akram, 2021). Understanding an individual's vocational interests can be helpful in career planning and job satisfaction. It can also aid in identifying potential areas of strengths and weaknesses, as well as provide insight into how to best motivate and engage employees in the workplace. Vocational interests are defined as a relatively stable “pattern of likes, dislikes, and indifferences regarding career-relevant activities and occupations” (Lent et al., 1994). Holland (1973) defined vocational interests as “the expression of personality in work, hobbies, recreational activities, and preferences”. Therefore, in the context of careers, 'interest' can be considered an agreeable state of mind that leads an individual towards a certain set of activities and ultimately, a vocation. Holland (1997) further described “the vocational interests as a part of personality and indicates that it is the sign of the personality at work, lectures at school, hobbies, leisure time activities and preferences”.

“Vocational interests are affected by characteristics like identity formation; cognitive, social and emotional evolution, hormonal, psychological and physical changes so much as it is affected by family, school and peers during the adolescence” (Deniz et al., 2014; Low & Rounds, 2007). Understanding the impact of these factors on vocational interests can help individuals make informed decisions about their career paths and increase their overall satisfaction and success in the workforce. It is important for parents, educators, and counselors to recognize and support the unique interests and needs of adolescents during this critical period of development.

When it comes to differentiating interests, gender is the most obvious factor (Deniz et al., 2014; Erdil, 2006; R. Lippa, 1998; R. A. Lippa, 2005; Low & Rounds, 2007; Rounds, 1995; Su et al., 2009). Low & Rounds, (2007) states gender and interests are consistent. These studies show that both men and women have a propensity to be interested in activities and careers that conform to gender stereotypes. According to Low et al. (2005), women and men differ in terms of how easily their interests can change. Their research revealed that men's interests are more consistent than women's. An other element in determining one's career interests is socioeconomic status. Lent (2005), an individual's career is influenced by both the role they play in their life and their socioeconomic status, and they build their career lives in accordance with how they lived in the past. According to Lent, besides ethnicity, genetics, and physical health, SES is a significant factor in determining a person's career interests (*Social Cognitive Career Theory and Subjective Well-Being in the Context of Work - Robert W. Lent, Steve D. Brown, 2008,*

n.d.). Studies suggest that Socio-Economic status is a determinant of vocational interest of secondary school students (A. Kumar, 2022).

Purpose and significance of the present study

Unemployment is one of the biggest and most serious problems facing our nation right now. This may be because secondary schools do not offer vocational courses in addition to general education. The educational system does not offer any resources to advise students on the best vocations and careers based on their individual preferences, interests, aptitudes, and skills. The goal of the current study was to examine and explore gender differences in aspects or areas of vocational interest among secondary school students. This study focuses on the importance of vocational guidance among secondary school students to help them meet the desired level of vocational interest and get the possible guidance to develop their future professional life and attain their socio-economic efficiency. It also aims to facilitate innovation, productivity, adaptability, and mobility through vocational education. The study highlights the need for vocational guidance to bridge the gap between education and employment, which can lead to reduced unemployment rates and improved economic growth. It also emphasizes the significance of vocational education in promoting lifelong learning and enhancing individuals' employability skills.

Statement of the problem

The problem selected for the purpose of the present investigation is “Vocational interest of secondary school students in relation to their socio- economic status”

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the relationship between vocational interest and social economic status of Secondary school students.
2. To compare the vocational interest of male and female secondary school students.
3. To compare the socio economic status among male and female secondary school students.
4. To compare the vocational interest of rural and urban secondary school students.
5. To compare the vocational interest of General and SC/ST/OBC Secondary school students.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significance relationship between vocational interest and socio-economic status of secondary school students.
2. There is no significance difference between vocational interest of male and female secondary school students.
3. There is no significance difference in socio economic status among male and female secondary school student.
4. There is no significance difference between vocational interest of rural and urban secondary school students.
5. There is no significance difference between vocational interest of General and SC/ST/OBC secondary school students.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the secondary school students of Dakshin Dinajpur District in West Bengal State.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The present study used descriptive Survey research design to investigate the Vocational Interest of Secondary School Students in relation to their Socio-economic Status.

Population of the Study

Secondary School Students in Dakshin Dinajpur District of West Bengal have been considered as a population of this study.

Sampling Techniques & Sample Size

a) Sampling Techniques

The sample was selected through simple Random sampling technique for this study. Sample was selected from five Urban and five Rural Secondary school from Dakshin Dinajpur District in West Bengal.

b) Sample Size

The sample size of the study was composed of 300 Secondary students from 10 secondary school of Dakshin Dinajpur District in West Bengal.

Table No. 1: Showing the Sample Size

SL. NO.	No. of Secondary School	No. of Secondary Students (Gender Wise)		No. of Secondary Students (Location Wise)		No. of Secondary Students (Category Wise)		Total
1	10	Male	150	Urban	150	General	100	300
2		Female	150	Rural	150	SC/ST/OBC	200	

Instrument

Vocational Interest Record (VIR) developed by Kulshrestha (2017) was used for assessing the vocational interest of school adolescent students. The test consisted of 200 vocations belonging to the 10 different vocational areas named as literary (L), scientific (Sc), executive (E), commercial (C), artistic (A), constructive (Co), agriculture (Ag), persuasive (P), social (S) and household (H) interest. Each of these areas has 20 vocations on the record, 10 horizontally and 10 on vertically. The responses of the subjects on vocational interest record inventory were obtained on tick (✓) in the box against the vocation of his or her choice. Statistically, one mark was given for each tick (✓) response on both horizontally and vertically. The test retest reliability coefficient was obtained as 0.69.

Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESS) constructed and standardized by Prof. Ashok K. Kalia & Mr. Sudhir Sahu (2012) was used to assess SES of adolescents. The Scale comprised of 40 questions in all based on five different dimensions of SES i.e. Socio-Cultural, Economic, Possession of goods and Services, Health and Education. The Scale according to authors is highly reliable and valid having reliability co-efficient through split half method .68 and test-retest method .86.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative analysis was done through different statistical techniques. The data were analyzed with the help of Mean, S.D. and t-test. The significance of 't' value was tested at 0.05 of significance.

Result**Objectives Wise Analysis of Data**

Objective No-1: To study the relationship between vocational interest and socio-economic status of Secondary school students

Ho-1: There is no significance relationship between vocational interest and socio-economic status of secondary school students.

Table No. 2: Showing the Variables, 'R' Value and their Significance

		Socio-economic Status	Vocational Interest
Socio-economic Status	Pearson Correlation	1	-.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Vocational Interest	Pearson Correlation	-.752**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the obtained value is -0.752 is significant and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The rejection of null hypothesis has made the researcher to formulate the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant negative correlation between the vocational interest and socio-economic status of secondary school students.

This significant negative relationship reveals that the Vocational interests are inversely proportional to the socio-economic status of secondary school students. Moreover, it may be inferred from the findings that the secondary school students who have high socio-economic status have less Vocational interest and the students with low socio-economic status have high Vocational interest. In other words, Vocational interest and socio-economic status are negatively correlated.

Objective No-2: To compare the vocational interest of male and Female secondary school students.

Ho-2: There is no significance difference between vocational Interest of male and female secondary school students.

Table No. 3: Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Male and Female Secondary School Students on Vocational Interest

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocational Interest	Male	150	40.87	6.655	.543
	Female	150	70.74	6.703	.547

Figure No.1: Graph Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Vocational Interest Gender Wise

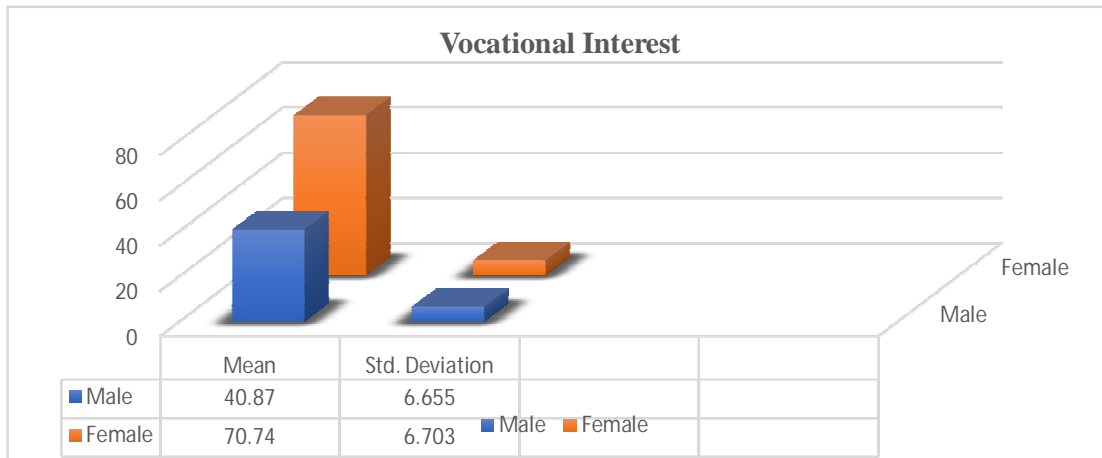


Table No. 4: Showing the Group Statistic of Vocational Interest Among Male and Female Secondary School Students

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Vocational Interest	Equal variances assumed	1.346	.247	-38.734	298	.000	-29.873	.771	-31.391	-28.356
	Equal variances not assumed			-38.734	297.985	.000	-29.873	.771	-31.391	-28.356

Interpretation:

From the above table, it is revealed that the obtained 'T' value is -38.734 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance and hence the null hypotheses is accepted. This shows that boys do not significantly differ from the girls in respect of their vocational interests. Gender variations are not evident in Vocational Interests among secondary school students.

However, the mean value of the female students is more than male students and it can be inferred that the female students have higher vocational interests than male secondary students.

Objective No-3: To study the difference in socio economic status among male and female secondary school students.

Ho-3: There is no significance difference in socio economic status among male and female secondary school students.

Table No. 5: Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Male and Female Secondary School Students on Socio-Economic Status

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Socio- economic Status	Male	150	58.653	6.3879	.5216
	Female	150	58.393	6.3636	.5196

Figure No. 2: Graph Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Socio-Economic Status Gender Wise

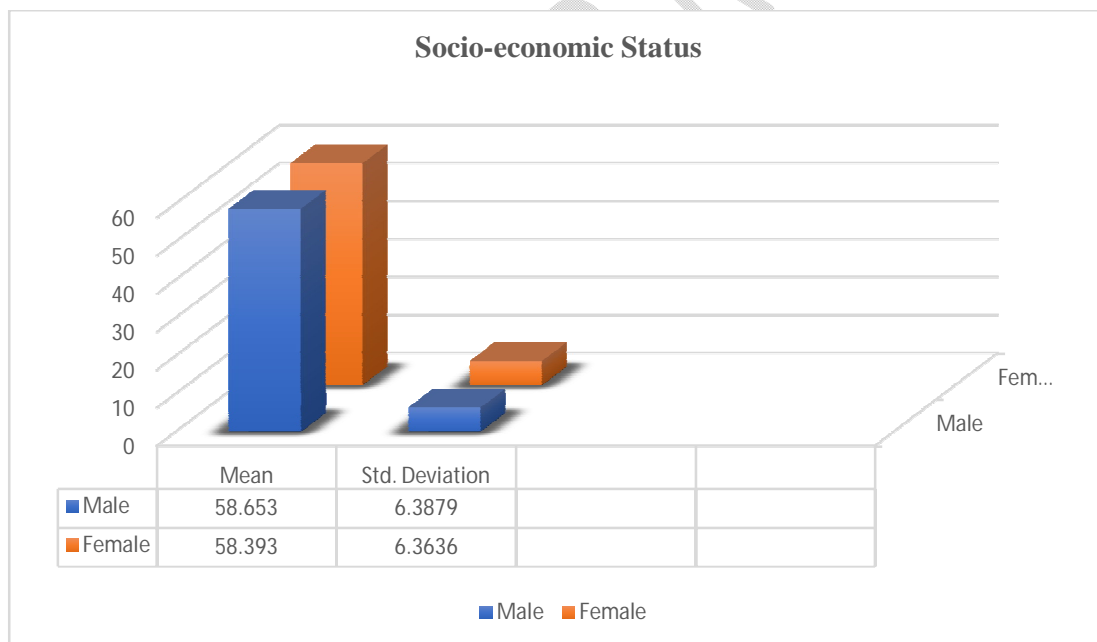


Table No.6: Showing the Group Statistic of Socio-Economic Status Among Male and Female Secondary School Students.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
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		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Socio Economic Status	Equal variances assumed	.286	.593	.353	298	.724	.2600	.7362	-1.1888	1.7088
	Equal variances not assumed			.353	297.996	.724	.2600	.7362	-1.1888	1.7088

Interpretation:

From the above tables revealed that the mean scores of male and female secondary students on the variable of socio-economic status are 58.653 and 58.393 respectively. The computed t value between their mean differences is .353. This reveals that no significant difference exists between male and female secondary students on the variable of socio-economic status. Hence, hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

Objective No-4: To compare the vocational interest of rural and urban secondary school students.

Ho-4: There is no significance difference between vocational interest of rural and urban secondary students.

Table No.7: Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Urban and Rural Secondary School Students on Vocational Interest

	Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocational Interest	Urban	150	69.74	6.945	.543
	Rural	150	42.87	6.804	.547

Figure No. 3: Graph Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Vocational Interest Location Wise

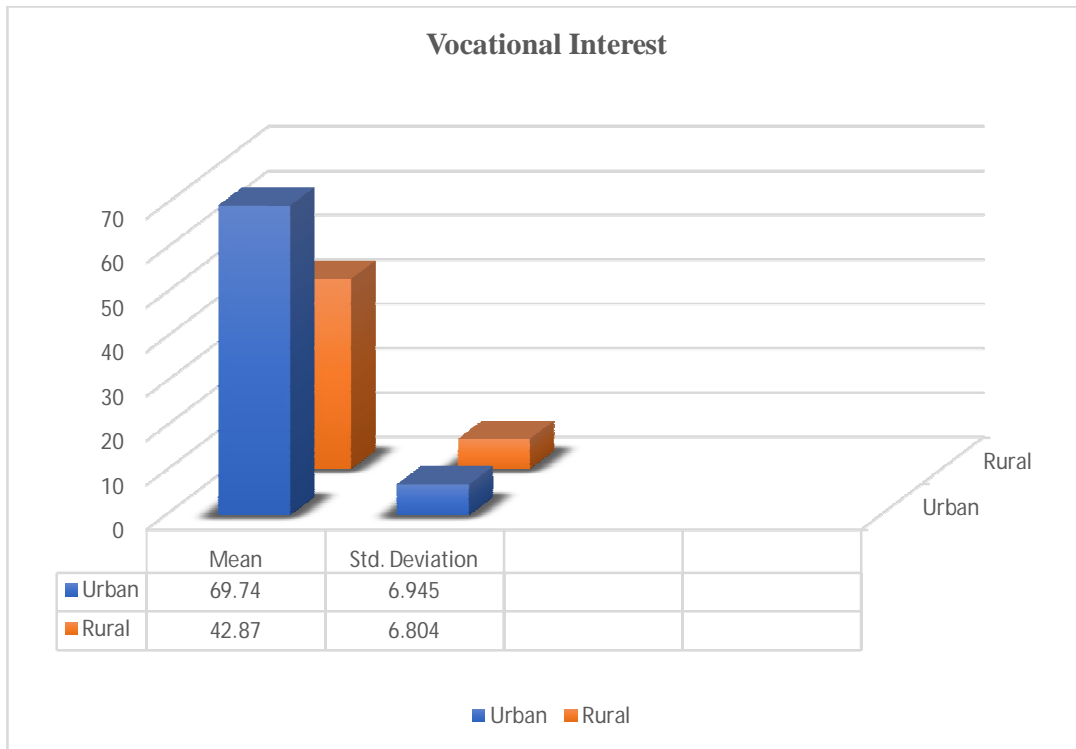


Table No. 8: Showing the Group Statistic of Vocational Interest among Urban and Rural Secondary School Students.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Vocational Interest	Equal variances assumed	1.346	.247	-34.638	298	.000	-29.873	.771	-31.391	-28.356
	Equal variances not assumed			-34.638	297.985	.000	-29.873	.771	-31.391	-28.356

Interpretation:

The above table reveals that the obtained 't' value is -34.638 which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. When the Mean values are compared, it is revealed that the mean value of urban students (69.74) is greater than that of

rural students (42.87). This means that the urban secondary students have higher Vocational Interests than the rural students.

Objective No-5: To compare the vocational interest of General and SC/ST/OBC secondary school students.

Ho-5: There is no significance difference between vocational interest of General and SC/ST/OBC secondary school students.

Table No. 9: Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of General and SC/ST/OBC Secondary School Students on Vocational Interest

	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocational Interest	General	100	40.86	6.862	.686
	SC/ST/OBC	200	63.28	14.539	1.028

Figure No. 4: Graph Showing the Mean & Standard Deviation of Vocational Interest Category Wise

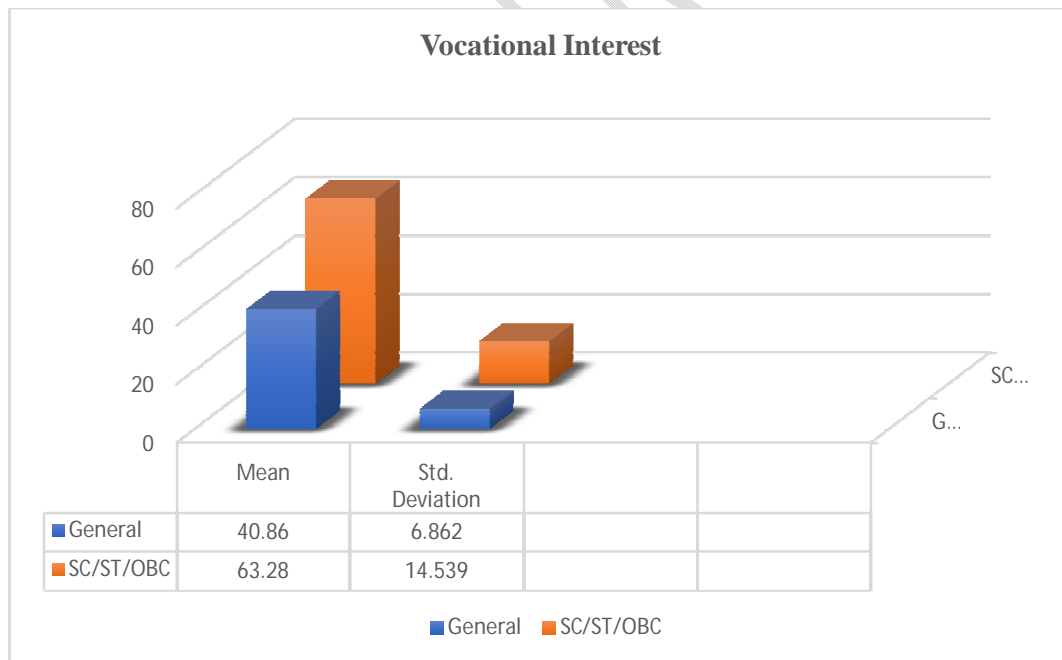


Table No. 10: Showing the Group Statistic of Vocational Interest among General and SC/ST/OBC Secondary School Students.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Vocational Interest	Equal variances assumed	47.666	.000	-14.615	298	.000	-22.415	1.534	-25.433	19.397
	Equal variances not assumed			-18.134	297.228	.000	-22.415	1.236	-24.848	19.982

Interpretation:

The above table reveals that 't' value calculated for Vocational Interests is -14.615 and it is not significant. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference between the vocational interests of the General and SC/ST/OBC category. However, the mean value of the SC/ST/OBC category is more than those of General category and it can be inferred that the SC/ST/OBC have higher vocational interests than General category.

Discussion

While to search and compare the mean of vocational interest and socio-economic status in Dakshin Dinajpur District of West Bengal under different categorical variables. It has been found that there is a significant difference between vocational interest of male and female and female students have higher vocational interest than male secondary students. This result is supported by (Bhatt & Bharvad, 2018; Gupta, 2019; Monda & Majumder, 2018; Ucheagwu et al., 2012) and contradicted by(Ahammad, 2019). It has been observed that girls nowadays are motivated to perform household tasks along with their careers. They receive equal opportunities in every sphere of life. They pursue careers at the same rate as boys and are no longer confined to the home. They want to assist their family in obtaining a living by doing so. This shift in attitude towards household tasks has been influenced by changing societal

norms and the emphasis on gender equality. It is a positive development that allows girls to have a well-rounded life, both professionally and personally.

It is found that locality has a significant impact on vocational interest of secondary school students and urban secondary school students have higher Vocational Interests than the rural students. This result is supported by (Bharati, 2015; Bit, 2021; R. Kumar, 2017). Urban students show a higher level of interest in the study because they reside in a more intellectual environment and frequently interact with people who pursue these types of careers. On the other hand, students in rural areas have fewer opportunities to pursue a career. This disparity in opportunities can lead to a lack of motivation and interest in academic pursuits among rural students. It is important for educational institutions to address this issue and provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of their geographical location.

SC/ST/OBC category students have higher vocational interests than General category students. This may be due to the well-known extreme wealth and income disparity between Indian households belonging to various castes. Therefore, students from the SC, ST, or OBC groups are more concerned about their future careers because they want to earn money for a better standard of living. This disparity has led to a significant gap in educational opportunities and outcomes, with students from lower castes often facing discrimination and limited access to quality education. As a result, many students from these groups feel a greater sense of urgency to succeed academically and secure well-paying jobs.

There is no difference in the male secondary school students' vocational interests based on their socioeconomic status. Both boys with high socioeconomic status and those with low socioeconomic status are almost equally interested in pursuing vocational education. Socioeconomic status has very little impact on students' attitudes towards any profession. A student from a low socioeconomic background may have more career options, and a student from a high socioeconomic background does not necessarily need to have more career options. They are capable of expressing interest in any field, regardless of their socioeconomic situation. Additionally, it was discovered that there is no discernible difference in the vocational aspirations of women and men. This suggests that students' attitudes towards professions are shaped by factors beyond their socioeconomic status or gender, such as personal interests, values, and experiences. Therefore, it is important to provide students with a wide range of career exploration opportunities and resources to help them make informed decisions about their future.

The artistic field has garnered the most interest from participating students, followed by the social, literary, domestic, and scientific fields. Their interest in social, executive, household, and literary topics was on par. They expressed the least interest in the fields of construction and commerce. It is important to note that the students' interest in certain fields may change over time as they gain more exposure and experience. Additionally, providing opportunities for students to explore and learn about a variety of fields can help broaden their interests and career possibilities.

Conclusion and recommendations

The conclusion of the current study can be expressed in light of its findings after comprehensive investigation and analysis of the data that the investigator collected: Male and female secondary school students' vocational interests do not differ significantly, according to the study's initial finding. Both demonstrate an equal interest in the field of vocation and have similar positive attitudes toward vocational preferences and choices. This result may be due to the vigorous campaigns of women empowerment throughout the country. As a result, females are taking their studies and future more seriously. They therefore show the same level of interest in the vocational programs as do the boys. So, there is no gap in vocational interest among male and female students of Dakshin Dinajpur District. Secondly, no difference in vocational interest is found among the male secondary school students in relation to their Socio- economic status. Boys from both high and low Socio-economic status show almost equal interest in choosing vocational courses. Socio-economic status does not have any influence on the attitude of students towards any vocation. A student from a poor economic background may have a higher order of vocational choice and it is also not necessary that a student of high socio- economic background must have a higher order of vocational choice. They may show their interest in any field without considering their Socio-economic status. It is also found that among the females also there is no significant difference in vocational interest in term of their different Socio-economic status. Girls from both high and low Socio-economic status show their interest in similar occupational choice. There is no certainty of having a higher of vocational choice of girls belonging from high Socio-economic status rather they may choose any type of vocation without considering their Socio-economic status. Girls from low Socio-economic status may show their interest in engineering, surgeon and radiologist. So, it is clear that Socio-economic status has nothing to do with the choice of vocation and occupation.

Vocational success is the relationship between satisfaction in life and success in life. It is human nature to want to live a happy and prosperous life, so it is important to choose a vocation that meets one's desire and potential at the same time. Education is a dynamic process that changes with the actions of a pupil, increasing vocational awareness and allowing the youth to adopt a practical attitude toward the world of work. Therefore, educational institutions must provide a comprehensive curriculum that not only imparts theoretical knowledge but also equips students with practical skills and experience to succeed in their chosen vocation. This will not only benefit the individual but also contribute to the overall growth and development of society.

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