

Gender-Based Education and Differentiation in Aspirations at the University Level: A Sociological Investigation

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Abstract

Higher education helps to fulfill students' aspirations. The academic environment and performance in higher education play a key role in shaping their future careers. The primary aim of this study is to investigate gender-based differences in the aspirations of university students. Data were collected and analyzed from students in the 2020 - 2021 academic session in the Department of Sociology at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The total number of students was 101, comprising 38 male students and 63 female students. A questionnaire, as part of the social survey method, was used to collect data. It included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Additionally, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)-one with male students and one with female students were conducted to gather qualitative data. The results revealed that the education, occupation, and income of the fathers of female students were higher compared to those of male students, which positively influenced the female students' educational attainment and future career aspirations. Satisfaction with admission to the Department of Sociology was higher among female students than among male students. Before admission, the number of aspirations was higher among male students; however, after admission, aspirations were higher among the female students. The role of family, friends, and institutions in fulfilling aspirations was more significant for the female students than for the male students. Although the respondents identified diverse aspirations, they also encountered obstacles that often led to frustration. Nevertheless, steps taken for student development will help fulfill these aspirations and support career planning.

Keywords

Gender, Education, Aim, Aspiration, Career

1. Introduction

Education is a process that should bring positive changes in human life. It is expected to bring an all-round development in a child (Maiti & Bhattacharyya, 2020). Education aims at harmonious development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains (Sharath & Praveena, 2022). Education is a vital force in promoting and sustaining growth and development of human life and society at large (Gantait & Baxi, 2023). Education is one of the most important aspects in the lives of the people of Bangladesh as they try to incorporate themselves into the larger world (Mustary, 2021). Education is widely recognized as a powerful tool for social mobility (Gaite, 2025). Education has long been recognized as a critical pathway for achieving social mobility, empowering individuals to rise above inherited socioeconomic limitations and pursue improved life opportunities (Abbas, 2025). Higher education is critical success of young adults. Higher education can provide a gateway for social mobility (Othmana et al., 2013). Since the late 20th century, the role of higher education in promoting social mobility has become a central global issue in the field of postsecondary education (Gong & Toutkoushian, 2024). Sakib-Bin-Amin and Ferdaus (2010) said that higher education is also responsible for higher income. The amount of education of an individual has an important impact on labor market experience. According to Saleh and AlAli (2024), university education is crucial for fostering higher-order thinking, talent development, and abilities that equip students to navigate the negative impacts of globalization.

Educational aspirations and expectations are individuals' beliefs regarding educational future plans (Chen & Hesketh, 2021). Educational aspirations can be important because they can motivate and energize students to achieve their goals. There are three important factors of educational aspiration: Background factor, Personal factor and Environmental factor (Mane & Suryavanshi, 2024). Educational aspirations refer to the desire to continue education or training. Career aspirations and their facets play important roles in shaping students' career patterns (Nwanna, 2025). The concept of aspiration is seductive. In relation to education it is hard to argue against the desirability for all young people to have high aspirations for their future, including educational and related life goals (Bowers-Brown et al., 2019). Career aspirations reflect an individual's long-term goals and ambitions, influenced by personal experiences, values, and education (Obias et al., 2025). Career development is crucial for university students to achieve their aspirations and imminent desired goals (Rifat & Sony, 2025). A significant portion of students are uncertain about their career plans, which is linked to poorer employment outcomes later in life (OECD, 2025). Aspirations include intrinsic motivators, extrinsic motivators, and person-organization fit. Career resources include people, knowledge and signaling (Donald et al., 2025).

In higher education, female students are outperforming their male counterparts. As a result, clear gender-based differences are evident in attitudes toward education and career aspirations. Gender is the distinction between males and females according to anatomical sex (Jary & Jary, 1995). Similarly, Simonds and

Brush (2005) said, gender has been employed by social theorists to denote a distinction between the biological categories of female and male and the socially constructed categories of woman and man (or girl and boy).

2. Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to investigate gender-based differences in the selection of aspirations among university students. In addition, the following specific objectives were addressed: i) to examine the education, occupation, and income of the respondents' fathers; ii) to assess the respondents' opinions regarding their academic results; iii) to identify the aspirations of the respondents before and after admission to the department; iv) to investigate the role of various factors in fulfilling the respondents' aspirations; and v) to explore the obstacles and prospects related to fulfilling the respondents' aspirations.

3. Ideas on Aspiration

Students' academic and nonacademic (or extracurricular) accomplishments seem to have a pronounced impact on students' aspirations. The term 'aspiration' is used synonymous with educational choice and educational plans. A plan is defined as a person's perception of what he will be doing or will have accomplished at some future date (Pasumathi, 2017). Aspirations are assessed in terms of occupational certainty, occupational choice, occupational prestige, and occupational justification (Gore et al., 2015). Similarly, Quaglia (1989) said, the term aspiration has been defined in a number of ways. Words such as goals, dreams, ambitions, and drives have all been used interchangeably when discussing student aspirations. According to Quaglia and Cobb (1996), aspirations can be defined as a student's ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals. This construct of aspirations has two major underpinnings: inspiration and ambitions. Nishad and Fatima (2017) mentioned that aspiration means "to wish" or "to desire". The word aspiration refers to ambition or desire which has yet not been fulfilled. The aspirations are more important than the abilities with which one is born or acquires through environment and education (Eble & Escueta, 2021). Students with higher aspirations exhibit greater receptivity to e-learning, underscoring the significance of nurturing ambitious goals and aspirations that harmonize with sustainability objectives (Bes-sadok & Bardesi, 2023). In this study aspiration means educational and career aspiration which is related to occupation.

The notion of career is taken to include both educational and occupational attainments (Saha, 1997). Career aspiration is the process of shaping and developing individuals toward the workforce. It involves setting goals, making choices, planning, and having expectations for their long-term lives (Aziz et al., 2025). Career aspirations encompass the professional objectives individuals establish for themselves, which subsequently inform their decision-making processes and delineate their professional trajectories (Riad et al., 2025). Career development and preparation are

critical aspects of the student experience in higher education. The university years represent a major transitional period during which students begin to shape their career aspirations and identify the necessary skills and capabilities required for their chosen professions (Rifat & Sony, 2025). A significant relationship between the level of acquiring digital skills and the academic and professional aspiration levels among students, meaning that the more their digital skills developed, the more their professional academic aspiration levels increased (Abueita & Eitah, 2024). Technological change, geo-economic fragmentation, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts and the green transition individually and in combination are among the major drivers expected to shape and transform the global labor market by 2030 (Battista et al., 2025). In this study aspiration is meant educational and career aspirations.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

It is a prominent framework in vocational psychology that explains the processes of career interest development, educational and occupational choice, and performance attainment/persistence. This theory developed primarily by Lent et al. (1994). SCCT has evolved into a multifaceted model with five interrelated sub-models, addressing not only interest, choice, and performance but also satisfaction/well-being and career self-management across the lifespan. Interest Development Model includes self-efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations. Choice Model includes choice goals/intentions, self-efficacy and outcome expectations, contextual influences, Performance Model includes ability/competence inputs, self-efficacy, outcome expectations goal-directed behavior. Satisfaction/Well-Being Model includes links to need satisfaction, goal progress, and environmental supports to domain-specific (e.g., job) and overall life satisfaction. Career Self-Management/Self-Regulation Model includes addresses adaptive career behaviors across the lifespan. The process of observational learning was governed by four key aspects: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Attention is a process in which people selectively observe and extract information from the ongoing modeled activities (Wood & Bandura, 1989). The above-mentioned models' impact on differentiations among the tertiary students.

4.2. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

This is a comprehensive macro-theory of human motivation, personality development, and well-being, primarily developed by Ryan and Deci (2020). It includes autonomy, competence and relatedness. When a student determines his or her aspirations independently, it is referred to as autonomy. Competing with others and developing oneself to become competent is known as competence, and sharing with friends, family, or others is referred to as relatedness.

4.3. Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

This theory is one of the most influential frameworks in modern social sciences,

particularly in sociology. It posits that individuals make decisions by rationally weighing costs and benefits to maximize their personal utility. It includes rationality, self-interest or utility maximization, cost-benefit calculation, and individualism or methodological individualism. Coleman (1990) said that rational choice theories share with exchange theories a view of the actor as a rational, purposive agent motivated by maximizing rewards or realizing his interests. Ogu (2013) said, the rational choice theory, also known as choice theory or rational action theory, is a theory for understanding and often modelling social and economic as well as individual behaviour. Coleman (1973) said, in rational choice theories, individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their 'preferences'. The idea of 'rational action' has generally been taken to imply a conscious social actor engaging in deliberate calculative strategies. Students at tertiary level are very much calculative to choose their aspirations, which makes a difference to them.

5. Research Methodology

Data were collected from the Department of Sociology, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The respondents were students admitted to the department in the 2020 - 2021 academic session. They have completed seven out of eight semesters of the four-year program and were studying in the eighth semester at the time of data collection. All students in this semester were purposively selected to understand the scenario of gender-based differentiation in aspirations. The total number of respondents was 101, comprising 38 male students and 63 female students.

This study was exploratory in nature. Data were collected using social survey and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methods, based on the study objectives. A structured questionnaire containing both open-ended and close-ended questions was used for the social survey. A checklist guided the FGDs, and the qualitative data from the FGDs were used to support the interpretation of tables and figures. Percentages in the tables were calculated by gender. Two separate FGDs were conducted one for male students and one for female students with eight participants in each group. Although this research is not sufficient to generalize findings to the entire university population in the country, it can help students, new researchers, and policymakers to understand gender-based differentiation in aspirations at the tertiary level.

6. Review of the Related Literature

Education is crucial in forming students' aspirations, as it plays a significant role in shaping their careers. Both the students' self-education and their fathers' education influence the development of students' educational and career aspirations. For this reason, a literature review was conducted focusing on academic issues, aspirations, and career-related issues.

6.1. Academic Issues

The academic factors influencing students' academic aspirations are compounded

by family, school and personal factors including social support, academic self-concept and perceptions of the university environment (Othmana et al., 2013). Ampofo and Osei-Owusu (2015) established a positive relationship between parents' education, the child's academic ambition, the child's effort and academic performance. Adzido et al. (2016) opined that strong financial status of families helps to improve students' motivation, learning process and hence better academic performance. Nishad and Fatima (2017) said that occupational aspirations are "expressed career-related goals or choices" that provide important motivational momentum for career-related behaviors and future educational and career success. There are no gender disparities in occupational aspiration levels and academic performance of adolescent. Bek (2018) mentioned that there is a significant positive correlation between aim in life and attendance to lesson. Chen and Hesketh (2021) showed that parental migration, academic performance, mother's educational aspirations for children, and close friends' educational aspirations were the main factors associated with students' educational aspiration-expectation discrepancies.

Ahmed and Hossain (2023) mentioned that family members and teachers were the most influential factors in choosing academic subjects. Saleh and AlAli (2024) revealed that male students scored higher in psychological dimensions like self-esteem and socialization, while female students performed better in cultural preparation. Blankenship (2024) said that higher education is challenged to properly serve students of various backgrounds, academic levels, and current needs. The relevance of evidence-based practices to support student success comes into focus, particularly for those with recent academic struggles. Mhule et al. (2024) highlighted the need for academic support services to enhance student performance and career goals, emphasizing career aspirations as critical for academic success and a central concern for educational policy. Education policy is important for ensuring quality education and reducing brain drain.

Navin et al. (2024) opined that brain drain among undergraduate students in Bangladesh has emerged as a phenomenon causing concerns over the capacity of the country to keep skilled talent. Identifying the motivations behind students choosing to study abroad will provide insights into the problems at hand. Hasan et al. (2024) mentioned that educational institutions demonstrate a significant protagonist in students' employability. From the standpoint of Bangladesh, it appears that Bangladesh's educational institutions have a noteworthy gap in ensuring its student's employment. Espino-Díaz et al. (2025) indicated that the intervention strategy effectively improved, albeit partially, students' understanding and perception of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study advocates the integration of SDGs into higher education curricula to prepare better students for future challenges. Yendi et al. (2025) revealed that academic self-efficacy was found to have a direct positive effect on students' aspirations, while problem-solving and self-awareness moderated this relationship by strengthening students' confidence, self-regulation, and goal clarity. Mwaibingila (2025) said that adult learners enroll in basic education programs with the aspiration to enhance

their academic qualifications and unlock better opportunities, the disappointing outcomes point to systemic issues within the education framework.

6.2. Aspiration

Geckova (2010) found that statistically significant associations with educational aspirations for the factors parental educational level, father's unemployment, doubts about the affordability of future study, school atmosphere, attitude towards school, social support from the father and a sense of coherence. David-Kacso et al. (2014) said that among the demographic characteristics used, educational level of the parents had the strongest effect on the students' aspirations. Conversations with parents and aspirations of friends also influenced the respondents' own future plans. Khattab (2015) showed that complete alignment between high aspirations, high expectations and high achievement is the most important predictor for future educational behaviour among students. Kumari (2015) mentioned that the significant role played by the home in shaping students' level of aspiration, no matter what the income level or background of the family is. It becomes the foremost duty of parents to make every effort to create a conducive and healthy atmosphere in the home so as to sustain high educational aspirations in children.

Maiti and Bhattacharyya (2020) opined that educational aspiration is an important factor that motivates students for better academic success and also directs them in a better way that reflects the individual's goals. Rahman et al. (2021) mentioned that Malaysia's aspiration of becoming a hub of higher education is the distinctive driving force for them welcoming and implementing English medium instruction (EMI), while such spirit is absent in Bangladesh. Eble and Escueta (2021) said that the relationship between aspirations, investment, and later outcomes is more complicated in the contexts where aspirations potentially outstrip an individual's or family's ability to reach them. Owusu et al. (2021) indicated that teachers do not significantly influence the career aspirations of students, parental influence is a major determinant in the career aspirations of students, peers influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently, the influence of peers on career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age and programme of study. Peers and parents determine to a large extent the decisions that students make concerning the careers they may want to pursue. Kumari and Ahmad (2023) mentioned that aspiration level helps a student to increase self-confidence, helps in setting up goals, and avoid failure; however, all this is hindered due to the anxiety they experience about their set levels of aspirations. Gantait and Baxi (2023) showed significant positive correlation between educational aspiration and socio-economic status. Mhule et al. (2024) revealed that a significant association between undergraduate students' career aspirations and academic achievement. They also found that there is no significant difference in career aspiration among students by gender. However, male and female students differed in academic achievement, with male students ranked higher than female students.

Singh and Dubey (2025) mentioned that in the today era students are bound to

face more pressure to do better in their education and as they are facing such problems in their day to day life, the concept of self and level of aspiration become more important. Hsieh (2025) emphasized that the effectiveness of learning specialized subjects during the junior year serves as a critical juncture influencing students' willingness to pursue careers relevant to their majors and their level of career aspirations. Abbas (2025) revealed that students' aspirations are strongly influenced by their socioeconomic status, parental education, and perceptions of social mobility. Students from higher-income families generally exhibit stronger educational aspirations, while those from lower-income backgrounds may face barriers that prevent them from realizing their full academic potential. Yendi et al. (2025) opined that students with high aspiration goals tend to set more ambitious educational targets, pursue higher levels of academic achievement, and actively plan their career paths. In contrast, low aspirations can limit students' academic engagement and reduce their future career opportunities. Sakaki et al. (2025) found that parents' aspirations are only weakly linked to achievement emotions, once parents' expectations are controlled for. However, when parents' aspirations exceeded their own expectations, this over-aspiration was predictive of greater anxiety and lower levels of pride in the same year. Price et al. (2025) provided detailed insights into the differentiated impacts of gender, commitment to schooling, and academic self-concept on Higher Education (HE) aspirations, and the potential impact of close role models. Khan (2025) mentioned that households play an essential role in shaping a child's educational journey and future aspirations.

6.3. Career Issues

Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) said that career choice is one of the biggest dilemma and challenge in any student's life. It involves interplay of many factors which are intricately intertwined. It is not a straightforward task and involves a difficult process of decision making. Arif et al. (2019) opined that social and family factors are the strongest factors influencing students' choices of their academic careers. Al-Bahrani et al. (2020) said that females have higher scores on career aspiration than males. Suhi et al. (2022) mentioned that government policy makers should consider various aspects, including personal and socioeconomic background and specialization of knowledge and skills, when planning employment opportunities for the university students, given that these issues substantially influence career choices in Bangladesh. Dhawale (2023) indicated a strong, significant relationship between Socio-Economic Status (SES) and academic success and a moderate relationship between SES and aspirations. High-SES students regularly outperformed their peers and were motivated to aim for professional careers, whereas low-SES students in low-SES households were generally inclined to follow vocational paths because of economic and social limitations.

Nwanna (2025) opined that the career choices of students are profoundly shaped by societal beliefs and conceptions about gender roles, often overshadowing their individual potentials, interests, values, and special abilities. Obias et al. (2025) re-

vealed that there are significant correlations among self-efficacy, academic motivation, and career aspirations. Students with higher self-efficacy exhibited stronger career aspirations, while those with greater academic motivation tended to have clearer career goals. [Fitzgerald et al. \(2025\)](#) opined that there is a decline in students pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) careers, and this has raised global concern. Despite these issues, no unstructured, broad, parsimonious and unambiguous quantitative instrument exists to probe student career aspirations. [Rifat and Sony \(2025\)](#) mentioned that students have diverse career interests, but public sector jobs are most preferred. Parents and personal interests primarily influence career choices, with financial motivations also playing a key role. However, external figures like teachers have little impact. [Riad et al. \(2025\)](#) opined that structured career planning programs can significantly enhance students' ability to make informed decisions about their future. The differences in career aspirations based on income level and geographic region underline the need for more personalized career planning training, particularly in low-income areas where students may have fewer resources and less support. [Böhle et al. \(2025\)](#) mentioned that both peer and parental social contexts are related to students' career aspirations, with descriptive peer norms and injunctive peer and parent norms being the most relevant. [Sulistiani and Untari \(2025\)](#) showed that most of the students had career aspirations in the medium-to-high category. Students are seriously concerned about their current career choices. Students feel proud and have a positive view of their chosen career. The results of the study also found that male students have higher career aspirations than female students.

A review of the existing literature reveals that there is very limited research on gender-based differentiation in aspiration at the tertiary education level in Bangladesh. Furthermore, previous studies have not adequately examined respondents' fathers' education, occupation, and income; students' perceptions of their academic performance; their aspirations before and after university admission; the different factors affecting aspiration fulfillment; or the obstacles and prospects in realizing those aspirations. The current study aims to fill these research gaps by thoroughly investigating these areas.

7. Students' Differentiation in Aspirations

7.1. Fathers' Education of the Respondents

The [Table 1](#) shows that the literacy rate was much higher among the fathers of female students than among those of male students. Illiteracy, primary education, and secondary education levels were higher among the fathers of the male students, while higher secondary and above education levels were more common among the fathers of the female students. Educated fathers tend to prioritize their daughters' education for their future careers and to ensure a financially stable life. Male students can often manage or survive in various ways during their student life, but it is generally more challenging for the female students, especially those from rural or less supportive backgrounds. Without strong family support and

awareness, success is quite difficult for the female students. These factors make them more aspirational and motivate them to achieve their goals.

Table 1. Fathers' education of the respondents.

Education	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Illiterate	8	21.05	9	14.28
Primary	11	28.95	6	9.52
Secondary	13	34.21	14	22.23
Higher Secondary	3	7.89	12	19.05
Undergraduate	2	5.27	9	14.28
Graduate	1	2.63	12	19.05
PhD	-	-	1	1.59
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

7.2. Fathers' Occupation of the Respondents

The data indicate that fathers' occupations were generally better among the female students than among the male students, reflecting differences in academic background and opportunities. Not only primary but also secondary occupations were more common among the fathers of the female students. They appear to provide the necessary financial support to their daughters, as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Fathers' occupations of the respondents.

Occupations	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
No more	6	15.79	8	12.70
Agriculture	20	52.64	17	26.98
Retired	2	5.26	3	4.76
Service	4	10.53	18	28.57
Caretaker	1	2.63	-	-
Vanpooler	1	2.63	-	-
Business	2	5.26	11	17.46
Blacksmith	1	2.63	-	-
Expatriate	1	2.63	1	1.59
Lawyer	-	-	1	1.59
Contractor	-	-	1	1.59
Fisherman	-	-	2	3.17
Day laborer	-	-	1	1.59
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

Continued

Secondary	None	35	92.11	42	66.67
	Business	1	2.63	4	6.35
	Agriculture	1	2.63	13	20.63
	Masson	1	2.63	-	-
	Fishing	-	-	2	3.17
	Head of shipping port	-	-	1	1.59
	Day laborer	-	-	1	1.59
	Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

7.3. Fathers' Monthly Income of the Respondents

From the **Table 3**, it is evident that fathers' monthly income was generally lower among the male students compared to the female students, largely due to differences in fathers' education and occupation. The average monthly income of fathers of the male students was 10921.05 taka, while that of fathers of the female students was 22539.68 taka. Most of the respondents came from rural areas, where fathers have fewer opportunities than those in urban areas.

Table 3. Fathers' monthly income of the respondents.

Income (Taka)	X	Male Students			Female Students		
		F	%	FX	F	%	FX
0	0	9	23.69	0	11	17.46	0
>10000	5000	14	36.84	70,000	7	11.11	35,000
10,000 - 20,000	15,000	6	15.79	90,000	18	28.57	270,000
20,000 - 30,000	25,000	7	18.42	175,000	9	14.29	225,000
30,000 - 40,000	35,000	1	2.63	35,000	4	6.35	140,000
40,000 - 50,000	45,000	1	2.63	45,000	7	11.11	315,000
50,000 - 60,000	55,000	-	-	-	2	3.17	110,000
60,000+	65,000	-	-	-	5	7.94	325,000
Total		38	100.00	415,000	63	100.00	1,420,000

7.4. Opinions of the Respondents on Admission to the Department of Sociology

After admission to the Department of Sociology at the university of Rajshahi, most of the female students reported feeling happy, and most of the male students expressed good, as demonstrated in **Table 4**. Those who rated it 'very good' mentioned reasons such as its relevance to real life; its ability to broaden perspectives; help in understanding people, society, and global issues, and recognition of similarities across different stages of life. Those who rated it 'good' cited benefits such as contributing to society and culture, gaining admission to a preferred subject, learning diverse topics, finding it unexpectedly interesting, enriching insights, and

good study quality.

Table 4. Opinions of the respondents on admission to the department of sociology.

Opinions	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Very good	2	5.26	5	7.94
Good	15	39.48	31	49.20
No comments	14	36.84	19	30.16
Bad	5	13.16	7	11.11
Very bad	2	5.26	1	1.59
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

Respondents who made no comments mentioned reasons including session jams, poor marks despite good preparation, lack of prior knowledge about the department, departmental frustration, unknown aspects of the study, prior exposure to social studies in higher secondary, obligatory enrollment, or lack of interest. Those who rated it 'bad' pointed to delayed exams, irregular classes, time-consuming syllabus completion, session jams, limited job opportunities, poor results, difficulty understanding the subject, slow progress, and lack of interest. Those who rated it 'very bad' highlighted session jams.

7.5. Opinions of the Respondents on Academic Results

Table 5 shows that female students were more satisfied with their academic results than male students. However, neither group was highly satisfied with their results at the tertiary level. Those who reported being 'satisfied' mentioned achieving expected results and performing according to their understanding in exams. Those who were 'dissatisfied' cited lack of interest in studying more, dissatisfaction with script evaluation, failure to secure expected results, missed opportunities for better performance, and results falling below expectations. Those who were 'very dissatisfied' noted that the subject matter of sociology is complex and difficult to complete within the allocated exam time.

Table 5. Opinions of the respondents on academic results.

Opinions	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Very satisfied	-	-	-	-
Satisfied	10	26.32	29	46.03
No comments	11	28.95	9	14.29
Dissatisfied	15	39.47	25	39.68
Very dissatisfied	2	5.26	-	-
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

7.6. Aspirations of the Respondents before Admission to the Department of Sociology

Students' aspirations depend on multiple factors, including self-esteem, family support, socioeconomic conditions, institutional factors, and peer influence. Before admission, the male students reported 16 different types of aspirations, while female students reported 14 in numbers, as shown in **Table 6**. Many emphasized their goals due to strong aspirations and interest in their respective fields. The most common aspiration among the male students was simply to gain university admission, whereas among the female students, it was the teaching profession to learn and share important social values. Teaching is also regarded as a noble profession. Some students could not identify clear aspirations due to indecision.

Table 6. Aspirations of the respondents before admission to the department of sociology.

Aspirations	MS	FS	Aspirations	MS	FS
	%	%		%	%
Teacher	7.89	20.63	Admitted to admission	18.42	17.46
Doctor	7.89	7.94	Join in army	7.89	-
Gov. service	10.53	14.29	Secure good result	2.63	4.76
Business	-	3.17	Agriculturalist	2.63	-
Completion of study	2.63	-	Solvent life	2.63	-
Judge	5.26	-	Pilot	-	1.59
Cricketer	2.63	-	Fashion designer	-	1.59
Indefinite	13.16	4.76	Study in political science	-	1.59
Lawyer	7.89	17.46	Study in physics	-	1.59
Barrister	2.63	-	Journalist	-	1.59
Tax commissioner	2.63	-	Study in English	-	3.17
Engineer	2.63	-			

(Taken multiple answers).

7.7. Aspirations of the Respondents after Admission to the Department of Sociology

After admission and exposure to results, male students reported 13 types of aspirations, while female students reported 18 in numbers, presented in **Table 7**. Many expressed greater confidence in achieving their goals. The most common aspiration for both male and female students was government service due to its honor, power, and job security. Most were preparing to achieve their desired careers. Notably, female students appeared more encouraged to pursue diverse aspirations, influenced by their academic performance and self-confidence.

Table 7. Aspirations of the respondents after admission to the department of sociology.

Aspirations	MS	FS	Aspirations	MS	FS
	%	%		%	%
Settled in abroad	2.63	1.59	To be a good man	5.26	7.94
Teacher	5.26	28.57	University teacher	2.63	-
Government service	57.89	38.10	Solvent life	2.63	-
Business	-	1.59	Magistrate	-	1.59
Freelancing	2.63	-	Establish in life	-	3.17
Study in abroad	2.63	1.59	Charity works	-	1.59
Indefinite	7.89	1.59	Secure good results	-	1.59
Tax commissioner	2.63	-	Analyze social problems	-	1.59
Banker	2.63	1.59	Lawyer	-	1.59
Any job	2.63	1.59	To do something good	-	1.59
Completion of study	2.63	3.17	Honest and peaceful life	-	1.59

(Taken multiple answers).

7.8. Optimism about Fulfilling Aspirations

A frustrated person is unlikely to succeed in life. It is therefore significant that both male and female students expressed optimism about fulfilling their aspirations, with female students showing higher levels of optimism, as shown in **Table 8**. Reasons for optimism included family networks and necessary skills, hard work and passion, inspiration from successful people, preparation aligned with goals, moral obligation to succeed, self-confidence, belief that nothing is impossible, regular study, self-improvement efforts, desire for independence, and the view that optimists succeed. Those who were not optimistic cited lack of self-achievement, unsettled goals, insufficient effort, frustration as a barrier to success, delayed examinations, and irregular study habits.

Table 8. Opinions of the respondents on optimism about fulfilling aspirations.

Opinions	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Yes	34	89.47	59	93.65
No	4	10.53	4	6.35
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

7.9. Role of Family in Fulfilling Aspirations

Table 9 shows that most of the families play a significant role in helping respondents fulfill their aspirations. The families of female students play a stronger and more supportive role compared to those of the male students. The educational qualifications and level of awareness among the families of the female students are

generally higher than those of the male students.

Table 9. Opinions of the respondents on the role of family in fulfilling aspirations.

Opinions	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Yes	34	89.47	62	98.41
No	4	10.53	1	1.59
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

Respondents who reported a positive role of family mentioned the following forms of support: financial assistance, inspiration and psychological encouragement, moral and ethical guidance, crucial support during difficult times, encouragement combined with a sense of security, and absence of pressure from the family. Those who gave negative opinions cited reasons such as being separated from family, not yet having selected clear aims, feeling frustrated, and lacking optimism about anything.

7.10. Role of Educational Institution in Fulfilling Aspirations

The data indicate that most of the respondents expressed a positive attitude toward the role of their educational institution in helping them fulfill their aspirations, as demonstrated in **Table 10**. This positive perception is stronger among the female students than among the male students. Those who expressed a positive view mentioned the following contributions: opportunities to develop critical thinking, help in building confidence, encouragement and guidance, provision of quality education, opportunities to gain experience through various organizations, exposure to diverse issues, inspiration from many fellow students at the university, encouragement to develop high ambitions, support from good teachers and a well-designed curriculum, development of sound decision-making ability, significant influence of ideal teachers, ability to better understand reality. Those who expressed a negative attitude cited the following: education being too time-consuming, failure to discover any clear aspirations, the institution not helping them pursue what they truly wanted.

Table 10. Opinions of the respondents on the role of institutions in fulfilling aspirations.

Opinions	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Yes	33	86.84	59	93.65
No	5	13.16	4	6.35
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

7.11. Role of Friends in Fulfilling Aspirations

The role of friends in helping fulfill aspirations is clearly evident from the re-

spondents' opinions. Female students expressed this view more frequently than the male students (**Table 11**). Those who answered 'yes' (friends play a positive role) listed the following ways friends help: assistance with studies, psychological support, academic and non-academic support, positive encouragement to study, sharing study-related information, help in understanding course content and job preparation, providing necessary guidance, helping to become a better person, financial support in some cases, information about scholarships. Those who gave a negative response mentioned: having no close friends, only classmates, friends cannot play a role similar to parents, friends do not offer suggestions about aspirations, friends are busy pursuing their own aspirations, friends only engage in gossip with no inspiration, lack of willingness to cooperate, friends are preoccupied with their own issues, some friends make fun of the topic, friends lack specific knowledge about career or aspirations.

Table 11. Opinions of the respondents on the role of friends in fulfilling aspirations.

Opinions	Male Students		Female Students	
	F	%	F	%
Yes	26	68.42	51	80.95
No	12	31.58	12	19.05
Total	38	100.00	63	100.00

7.12. Opinions of the Respondents on Obstacles to Fulfill the Aspirations

The majority of the male students identified numerous obstacles, including: financial constraints, pressure from competitive environments, lack of self-confidence, inadequate preparation for competition, idleness and homesickness, excessive use of mobile phones, challenges related to money and opportunities, poor time management, communication difficulties, frustration, lack of cooperation from others, psychological pressure, family expectations regarding money, oversleeping, personal overthinking, departmental issues, time wastage, poor academic results, lack of hard work, attraction to games and cinema, and absence of personal or family property.

In contrast, the majority of the female students listed many barriers, including: physical illness, financial crisis, irregular study habits, national socioeconomic conditions, corruption in the job market, poor time utilization, lack of proper guidance, unsatisfactory results, difficult circumstances and idleness, loss of encouragement, family problems, negative attitudes from peer groups and neighbors, homesickness, difficulty adapting to current circumstances, social barriers, lack of communication and opportunities, lack of self-confidence, time wastage, flawed academic system, departmental crises, poor planning and time management, psychological pressure related to marriage, session jams in the department, and lack of interest in studying for career establishment.

7.13. Opinions of the Respondents on Prospects for Fulfilling Aspirations

Most of the respondents expressed optimism about fulfilling their aspirations. Those who reported positive prospects mentioned: digital and networking opportunities, diligence and strong desire for knowledge, honesty and confidence, interest in humanitarian work, abundant opportunities in sociology for education and research, spiritual mindset, determination to never give up, continued optimism about improvements in educational quality and skills, ongoing family support, good reading facilities in residential halls, strong preparation for study and jobs, and increasing job opportunities.

On the contrary, most of the female students reported positive views listed: family and teacher support, pursuit of higher education, hard work to achieve goals, access to scholarships, family encouragement, proper use of time, absence of psychological pressure, passion for hard work, opportunities to study or work abroad, trust in Almighty, good study environment, teacher guidance, honesty, numerous opportunities in government and other sectors, effective use of technology, strong determination to succeed, belief that Almighty does not abandon hardworking people, absence of financial problems, building good relationships, and self-reliance in pursuing virtuous goals.

8. Conclusion

Higher education, academic achievement, aspirations, and career prospects are closely interrelated. Consistent study plays a significant role in pursuing a better career. Aspirations differ between male and female students. Awareness of career options and aspirations is much higher among the female students compared to the male students, largely due to the better education, occupation, and income of the female students' fathers, which also encourages greater optimism. Female students' express higher satisfaction than male students with their admission to the Department of Sociology. Aspirations are higher and more diverse among the female students after admission, reflecting their greater confidence. Female students feel more supported by family, friends, and educational institutions. Most of the respondents remain hopeful about fulfilling their aspirations, although they also recognize certain obstacles that cause frustration. Nevertheless, the majority are confident in achieving their desired aspirations through higher education.

9. Policy Recommendations

The following measures can be implemented to support the development of students, thereby helping them fulfill their aspirations and attain their desired careers to improve the quality of education and support student development, ensuring quality education, appointing skilled teachers, emphasizing technology-based education, providing ethical education, aligning the curriculum with job market demands, enhancing research-oriented education, strengthening linkages between knowledge and real-life applications, encouraging teamwork and career develop-

ment training, improving language skills (especially English), offering career counseling, and creating multiple career opportunities.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

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