

# A study on attitude towards life skills and its relationship with educational and vocational aspirations of higher secondary school students in Meghalaya

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**Abstract:** The current study examined the relationship between students' attitudes toward life skills and their educational and vocational aspirations. This is a correlational research study. Using a disproportionate stratified random sampling, the researcher has selected a total of 1242 samples, with 489 males (39.4%) and 753 females (60.6%) from 11 blocks of East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were computed; while inferential statistics such as Pearson's coefficient of correlation matrices were utilized to analyze the obtained information. Findings revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between students' attitudes towards life skills and their educational aspirations,  $r(1242) = .113$ ,  $p = .004$  and vocational aspirations,  $r(1242) = .126$ ,  $p = .000$ , and between their educational aspirations and vocational aspirations,  $r(1242) = .109$ ,  $p = .007$ , respectively. The study was concluded with educational implications and provided suggestions for future research on students' attitudes toward life skills, educational aspirations, and vocational aspirations in institutional settings.

**Keywords:** secondary school students, educational aspirations, vocational aspirations, attitude towards life skills, northeast India, secondary education, and psychometric measurements

## I. INTRODUCTION

The current study investigated three variables, such as students' attitudes toward life skills, and their educational and vocational aspirations. These variables reportedly have a significant association with students' self-esteem, positive health, study engagement, academic achievements, goal-directed activity-oriented outcomes, self-efficacy, self-esteem, drug abuse prevention behaviors, problem-solving, and career choices (Seal, 2006; Salami, 2008; Maryam et al., 2011; Tali, 2012; Moshki et al., 2014; Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015; Ahuja, 2016; Akhouri, 2018; Hooda & Devi, 2018; Kumari, 2022). Several studies confirmed that among the most important predictors of students' academic motivation, study engagement, learning outcomes, academic achievements, and network building are their life skills, educational aspirations, and their vocational aspirations (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Marini, 1978; Otto & Haller, 1979; Gottfredson, 1981; Marjoribanks, 1985; Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Tali, 2012; Ahuja, 2016; Bashir & Kaur, 2017; Ali, 2018; Hooda & Devi, 2018; Kumari, 2022).

Research on students' life skills has been an emerging trend in the field of education. Life skills include students' abilities to manage their learning outcomes, maintain relationships, and balance emotions, and physical health. In a study, Khera and Khosla (2012) conceived life skills with ten core dimensions, such as self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress, and coping with emotions. Similarly, Chan et al. (2011) included five core aspects of students' life skills development, such as academic, personal, social, career, and talent development. Mofrad et al. (2013) endeavored to understand young students' life skills in Malaysia and included four domains, such as interpersonal communication, decision-making, health maintenance, and identity development. Salah et al. (2021) investigated the possession of life skills of kindergarten students, and considered five four dimensions, i.e., learning skills, social skills, environmental communicational skills, and hygienic skills as the dimensions. Similarly, Botvin et al. (2003) considered social resistance skills, general personal and social competence skills as dimensions of school students' life skills, while Robinson and Zajicek (2005) identified six core dimensions of students' life skills, i.e., teamwork, self-understanding, leadership, decision-making skills, communication skills, and volunteerism. Thus, it can be inferred that there are different dimensions of life skills identified in earlier studies. Figure 1 showed the different dimensions of students' life skills.

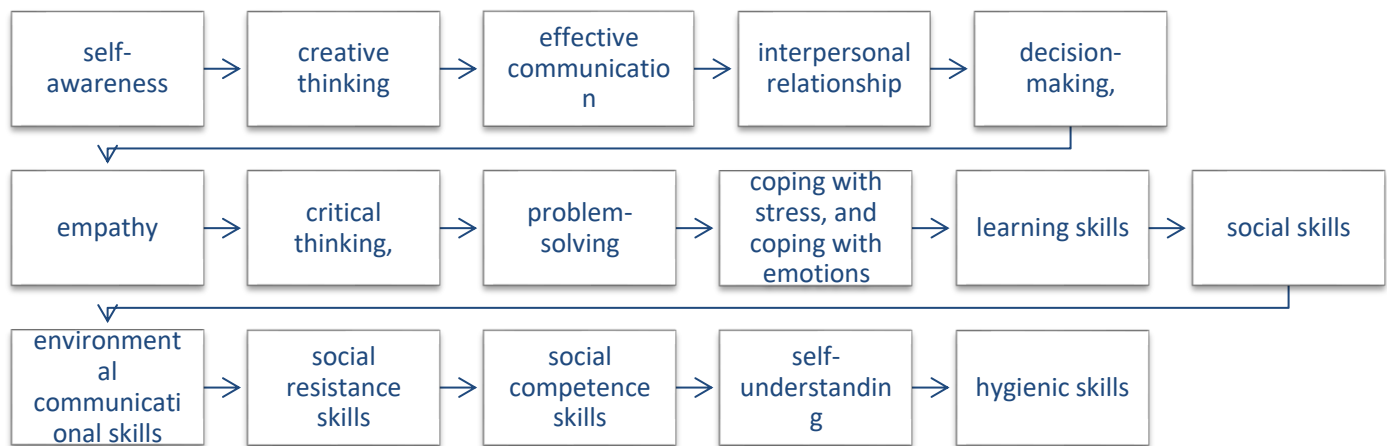


Figure 1. Dimensions of Students' Life Skills

Further, studies were conducted on different correlated factors of students' life skills. It was noted from those pertinent studies that students' life skills were significantly associated with different individual-related aspects, such as school students' self-esteem and mental health (Maryam et al., 2011), learning achievement (Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015), psychological distress (Ghasemian & Kumar, 2017), life skills training (LST)-based school health intervention program and reducing high school students' tobacco and drug use (Seal, 2006), and students' life skills training on the promotion of drug abuse prevention behaviors (Moshki et al., 2014).

Educational aspiration is another study variable of the present research, which may be defined as a preliminary step in the process of actualizing individuals' learning pathways. This is the students' expectations and goal-directed plan for educational attainment. There have been several studies providing shreds of evidence on the implications and correlates of students' educational aspirations in academics. In a study, Boxer et al. (2011) with a sample of 761 students, identified that students who aimed higher than they anticipate being able to attain were more likely to come from economically disadvantaged households and perform worse in school. Using a descriptive research, Bashir and Kaur (2017) with a sample of 400 students evidenced a strong association between students' educational aspirations and their school environment. With 106 males and 104 females, Ahuja (2016) revealed that as compared to boys, girls exhibited significantly higher levels educational aspiration. Also, a significant positive association was reported between students' educational aspirations and their academic achievement, and their self-efficacy.

Gupta and Bashir (2017), with a sample of 200 rural and 200 urban school students, brought out that 18, 55, and 27 percent secondary school students exhibited a high, average, and low level of educational aspiration, respectively. Further, the study evidenced a meaningful positive relationship between students' educational aspirations, their parental encouragement, and school environment, together predicted a 15.1 percent variance in students' educational aspirations. Bashir and Bashir (2016) with a sample of 400 pupils revealed a strong positive correlation between students' educational aspirations and their parents' support. Hooda and Devi (2018) carried out a study, with a sample of 400 students to understand how secondary school students' educational aspirations can improve their mathematical achievement, and found that students' educational aspirations had a substantial impact on their mathematical achievements. In another study, Akhouri (2018) with a sample of 200 students (100 males & 100 females) identified a significant difference in students' educational aspirations in relation to their gender. A significant relationship was also observed between parent-child relationship and educational aspiration. Wu (2012) using a case study research design, a total of 24 students were selected for the semi-structured interview. The results showed the students schooling experience significantly contributed to the educational aspirations of students. The study also underlined the additional support system that affected students' educational aspirations.

Thus, from the above analysis, it can be inferred that students' educational aspiration was studied in relation to the different associative factors, such as students' learning environment (Bashir & Kaur, 2017), their self-efficacy and academic achievement (Ahuja, 2016), parental encouragement and school environment (Bashir & Bashir, 2016; Gupta & Bashir, 2017), mathematical achievement (Hooda & Devi, 2018), academic achievement (Ali, 2018), and health, socio-economic status, school-related factors, social support, sense of coherence (MadarasovaGeckova et al., 2010). Figure 2 showed the overall different correlated factors of students' educational aspirations.

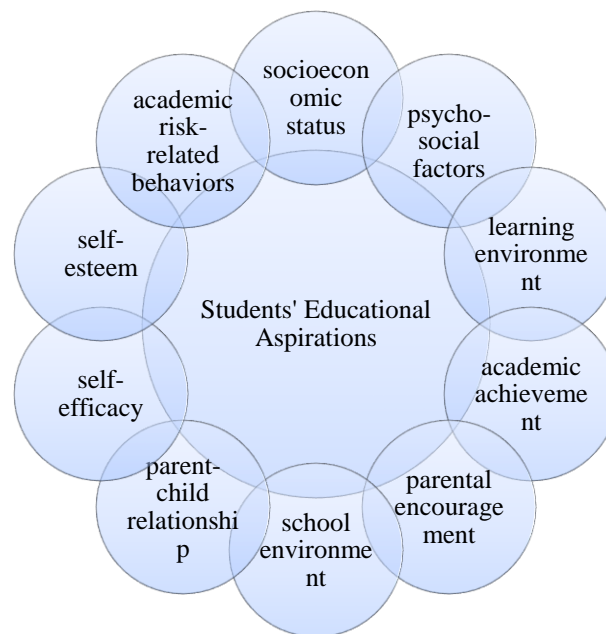


Figure 2. Associative Factors of Students' Educational Aspirations

The vocational aspiration is the third study variable of the current research, which denotes students' choice of the right profession in accordance with their interests, abilities, and creativity. It is the traits of individuals' behaviors determining selected choices in careers. It reflects students' goal-directed behaviors and action-oriented activities. Earlier studies provided empirical pieces of evidence on the various aspects of students' vocational aspirations. In a study, Kiani et al. (2021) with a sample of 700 high school students evidenced that most of the students mentioned doctor, army, teacher, lawyer, and engineer as their most vocational aspirations and preference. The study also evidenced a gender difference in their career preference indicating females differed from males in terms of their career choices, besides indicating a significant difference in career choices in terms of their personality types. Further, in a study, Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2012) evidenced a significant influence of vocational guidance on students' vocational aspirations. Besides, gender, prestige, economic, and social values were also identified as significant factors that affected students' vocational behaviors. Kumari (2022) with a sample of 100 students showed that students' vocational aspirations significantly contributed to predicting their problem-solving competence. With a sample of 430 students, Salami (2008) reported that specific personality, vocational interests, academic achievement, socioeconomic status, and family expectations were significantly related to students' vocational aspirations.

Thus, from the above analysis, it can be inferred that students' vocational aspiration was investigated in association with their different related factors, such as parental vocational expectations (Hou & Leung, 2011), relationship between the reference group; parents, teachers, and peers (Punch & Sheridan, 1978), educational aspirations (Cobb, 1989), parental socio-economic status (Jamabo, 2014), school environment (Bashir & Kaur, 2017), academic motivation and demographic variables, i.e., gender, academic stream, and type of schools (Tali, 2012), and self-esteem and academic achievement (Kumari, 2022). Figure 3 showed different correlated factors of students' vocational aspirations.

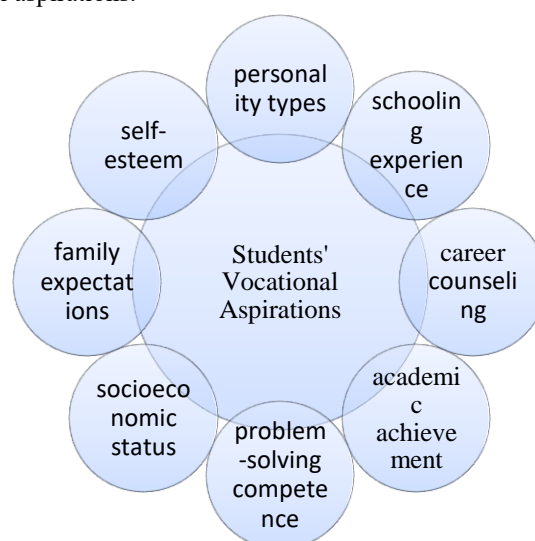


Figure 3. Associative Factors of Students' Vocational Aspirations

## II. CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Earlier studies provided evidence on various aspects of students' life skills in general, including status and its levels amongst students (Ahuja, 2016; Akhouri, 2018; Kumari, 2022). It also found that there have been studies on students' life skills with their demographic characteristics, such as gender, locale, and school types (Botvin et al., 2003; Robinson & Zajicek, 2005). Studies have

also established the associations between students' life skills and their self-esteem, academic achievement, socioeconomic status, parental engagement, and teacher support (Maryam et al., 2011; Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015).

Further, while understanding the earlier studies on students' educational aspirations it was noted that educational aspiration is a well-developed research construct and has implications for students across age groups. Studies sufficed shreds of evidence on the status quo and levels of students' educational aspirations. It revealed that student's educational aspiration was investigated with respect to their demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, school types, locale, race, parental education, parental occupation, parental support, school environment, parent-child relationship, parental engagement, and socioeconomic status (MadarasovaGeckova et al., 2010; Boxer et al., 2011; Ahuja, 2016; Bashir & Bashir, 2016; Gupta & Bashir, 2017; Bashir & Kaur, 2017; Akhouri, 2018). Further, studies have also been conducted to investigate students' educational aspirations with their self-esteem, self-concept, academic achievements, career choice, and vocational aspirations (Ali, 2018; Hooda & Devi, 2018).

While understanding the literature on students' vocational aspirations, adequate empirical shreds of evidence on the various aspects of students' vocational aspirations were reported in several studies. There have been studies on students' status quo and levels of vocational aspirations amongst students across different ages in different institutional settings. Students' vocational aspiration was also investigated in accordance with their demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, family type, school type, locale, study streams, parental education, parental occupation, and socioeconomic status (Salami, 2008; Ogunlade and Akeredolu, 2012; Tali, 2012; Kiani et al., 2021). Further, studies have also been conducted on the association between students' vocational aspirations and their self-esteem, educational attainments, academic engagement, school environment, study habits, problem-solving competence and classroom participation (Salami, 2008; Bashir & Kaur, 2017; Kumari, 2022). However, there was no study on students' attitudes toward life skills, and their educational and vocational aspirations in Meghalaya, a northeastern state.

Henceforth, from the analysis of backdrop studies, it may be inferred that although the research on high school students' attitudes towards life skills, and their educational and vocational aspirations have been substantial, however, there has been no study available on the association of these factors amongst school students. Therefore, a research endeavor towards determining the relationship between students' attitudes toward life skills, and their educational aspirational and vocational aspirations, would be beneficial for responsible stakeholders to understand as well as to foster these factors for students' better learning and career-related outcomes.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In the present study, the researcher has formulated the following objectives:

1. To study the relationship between attitude towards life skills and educational aspirations of higher secondary students.
2. To find out the relationship between attitude towards life skills and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students.
3. To examine the relationship between educational aspirations and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students.
4. To determine the relationship between attitude towards life skills and two variables, viz. educational aspirations and vocational aspirations taken together.

### IV. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

To accomplish the constructed objectives of the study, and thereby test the conceived notions about the association between the students' attitudes toward life skills and their educational and vocational aspirations, the researcher has formulated the following null hypotheses-

1.  $H_{01}$  there is no significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and educational aspirations of higher secondary students.
2.  $H_{02}$  there is no significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students.
3.  $H_{03}$  there is no significant relationship between educational and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students.
4.  $H_{04}$  there is no significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and two variables, viz. educational aspirations and vocational aspirations taken together.

### V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Design*

Since the present study purported to examine the relationships between students' attitudes toward life skills and their educational aspirations and vocational aspirations, therefore the researcher has adopted a correlational research design to accomplish the constructed objectives.

#### *Sampling Techniques and Sample Size*

Using a disproportionate stratified random sampling, the researcher has collected the data from the target population in East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya. Keeping in mind the sample requirement, the researcher also endeavored to have representative samples in terms of Sex. A total of 1242 samples were collected, wherein 489 males (39.4%) and 753 females (60.6%). Table 1 showed the distribution of the obtained samples in relation to their sex.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	489	39.4
Female	753	60.6
Total	1242	100

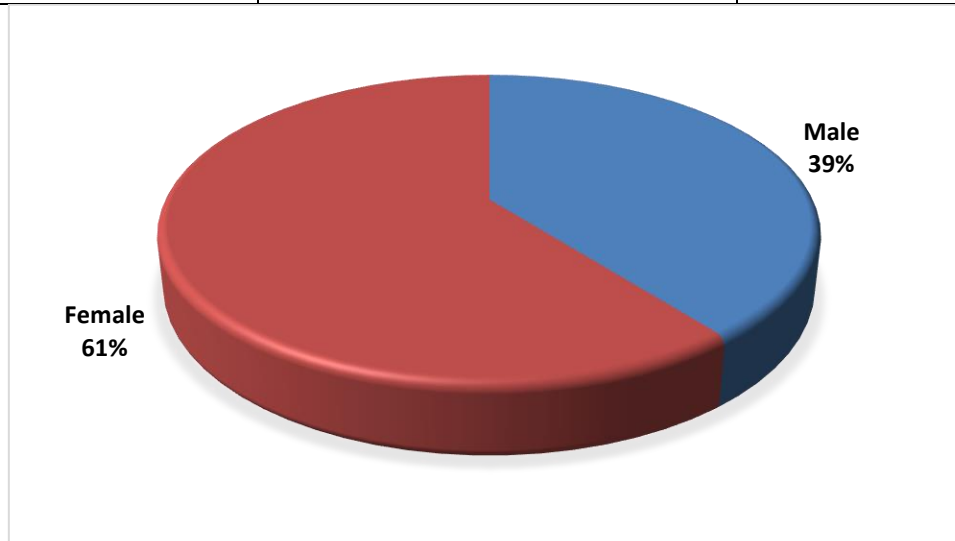


Figure 4. Sample Distribution in Relation to Sex

#### Data Collection Procedures

To obtain the required information, the researcher has obtained consent from the head of each of the selected institutions of the study. The purpose of the study was communicated to all respondents during the administration of the tools. The execution of the tools was completed during class hours in presence of class teachers. The respondents were given adequate time to fill the three tools, and their query was answered. The filled tools were collected on the same day from each of the respondents.

#### Measurements

In the present study, three tools were used to collect the required data. These tools were used to establish the relationships between students' attitudes toward life skills and their educational and vocational aspirations. There were as follows:

##### Attitude towards Life Skills Scale (ATLS)

This scale was developed by the researcher. It included dimensions, such as self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress, and coping with emotions. The scale has a total of 50 items. The response anchor to each statement was based on a five-point Likert scale namely, ranged from "strongly agree" (SA), "agree" (A), and "undecided" (UD) to "disagree" (D), and "strongly disagree." (SD). The summative score was computed, indicating the favorable statements carry a weightage of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and the unfavorable statements were reversed that is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The split-half method was used and the obtained reliability of the attitude scale towards life skills was found to be .786. Also, using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the scale was found to be .845 indicating relatively high consistency. The validity of the scale was confirmed with the shreds of evidence from face, content, and construct validity.

##### Educational Aspiration Inventory (EAI)

The researcher has adapted, the Educational Aspiration Inventory-EAI (2012), developed by Pradeep Kumar. The inventory has a total of 20 items. The statements were selected based on the scrutiny by the experts about the intended content of educational aspirations. Thus, the content validity for the tool was presumed to be present. Each item on the scale has a stem and four alternatives. The respondent has to underline one of the alternatives. The alternatives were arranged in ascending order of aspirations. A weightage of 1, 2, 3, 4 was given to each alternative, i.e., 1 for a, 2 for b, 3 for c, and 4 for d alternative for each item. The higher the score, the higher would be the educational aspiration. The minimum and maximum score range was 20-80. The reliability of inventory was examined through the test-retest method which was found to be 0.96.

##### Occupational Aspiration Scale (OAS)

The researcher has adapted the OAS, developed by J. S. Grewal (2005). In the present study, vocational aspiration was interpreted as the score obtained in the vocational aspiration scale. A high score on the scale denoted a high level of vocational aspiration among the respondents.

#### Statistical Design

In the present study, the researcher has used different statistics for the analysis and interpretation of the obtained data. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used; while inferential statistics, such as Pearson's coefficient of correlation matrices were employed.

## VI. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analyses and interpretations have been detailed with accordance to the objectives of the present study, which were as follows-



**Relationship between Attitude towards Life Skills and Educational Aspirations of Higher Secondary Students**

In the current study, a Pearson correlation coefficient was performed to determine the relationship between students' life skills and educational aspiration. Table 2 revealed that there was a positive correlation between two variables,  $r(1242) = .113$ ,  $p = .004$ , and, the strength of the correlation coefficient was low between life skills and students' educational aspirations. Therefore, the researcher has rejected the formulated null hypothesis; "there is no significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and educational aspirations of higher secondary students", and an alternative hypothesis was accepted, "there is a significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and educational aspirations of higher secondary students".

Table 2. Correlation between Attitude towards Life Skills and Educational Aspiration

Variables	Mean	SD	Testing	Life Skills	Educational Aspiration
Life Skills	176.311	12.258	Pearson Correlation	1	.113**
			Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
			N	1242	1242
Educational Aspiration	53.188	5.176	Pearson Correlation	.113**	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
			N	1242	1242

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Relationship between Attitude towards Life Skills and Vocational Aspirations of Higher Secondary Students**

In the current study, the relationship between students' attitudes towards life skills and vocational aspiration was determined using a Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 3 showed that there was a positive correlation between two variables,  $r(1242) = .126$ ,  $p = .000$ , and, the strength of the correlation coefficient was low between life skills and students' vocational aspirations. Therefore, the researcher has rejected the null hypothesis, "there is no significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students", and an alternative hypothesis was accepted, "there is a significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students".

Table 3. Correlation between Life Skills and Vocational Aspiration of Higher Secondary Students

Variables	Mean	SD	Testing	Life Skills	Vocational Aspiration
Life Skills	176.311	12.258	Pearson Correlation	1	.126**
			Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
			N	1242	1242
Vocational Aspiration	48.488	9.720	Pearson Correlation	.126**	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
			N	1242	1242

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Relationship between Educational Aspirations and Vocational Aspirations of Higher Secondary Students**

The relationship between students' educational aspirations and vocational aspirations was examined by the researcher with a Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 4 revealed that there was a positive correlation between two variables,  $r(1242) = .109$ ,  $p = .007$ , and the strength of the correlation coefficient was low between life skills and students' vocational aspirations. Henceforth, the researcher has rejected the constructed null hypothesis, "there is no significant relationship between educational and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students", and an alternative hypothesis was accepted, "there is a significant relationship between educational and vocational aspirations of higher secondary students".

Table 4. Correlation between Life Skills and Vocational Aspiration of Higher Secondary Students

Variables	Mean	SD	Testing	Educational Aspiration	Vocational Aspiration
Educational Aspiration	53.188	5.176	Pearson Correlation	1	.109**
			Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
			N	1242	1242
Vocational Aspiration	48.488	9.720	Pearson Correlation	.109**	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
			N	1242	1242

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Relationship between attitude towards Life Skills and two variables, viz. Educational Aspirations and Vocational Aspirations taken together**

The relationship among students' life skills, educational, and vocational aspirations was examined by the researcher with a Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 5 revealed that there was a positive correlation between vocational aspiration and life skills,  $r(1242) = .126$ ,  $p = .000$ , and between life skills and educational aspiration,  $r(1242) = .113$ ,  $p = .004$ . Further, it was found that there was a positive correlation between educational aspiration and vocational aspiration,  $r(1242) = .109$ ,  $p = .007$ . Also, it was noted that the strength of the correlation coefficient was low between life skills and students' vocational aspiration, between life skills and educational aspiration, and also between educational aspiration and vocational aspiration. So, the researcher has rejected the

formulated null hypothesis, "there is no significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and two variables, viz. educational aspirations and vocational aspirations taken together", and an alternative hypothesis was accepted, "there is a significant relationship between attitude towards life skills and two variables, viz. educational aspirations and vocational aspirations taken together".

Table 5. Correlation among Students' Life Skills and their Educational and Vocational Aspirations

Variables	Mean	SD	Testing	Life Skills	Vocational Aspiration	Educational Aspiration
Life Skills	176.311	12.258	Pearson Correlation	1	.126**	.113**
			Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.004
			N	1242	1242	1242
Vocational Aspiration	48.488	9.720	Pearson Correlation	.126**	1	.109**
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.007
			N	1242	1242	1242
Educational Aspiration	53.188	5.176	Pearson Correlation	.113**	.109**	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.007	
			N	1242	1242	1242

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

## VII. MAJOR FINDINGS

The present study evidenced a significant positive relationship between students' attitudes toward life skills and their educational aspirations,  $r(1242) = .113$ ,  $p = .004$ . Further, the current study evidenced a significant and meaningful relationship between students' attitudes towards life skills and their vocational aspirations,  $r(1242) = .126$ ,  $p = .000$ . It was also evidenced that there was a significant relationship between students' educational aspirations and their vocational aspirations,  $r(1242) = .113$ ,  $p = .004$ . Together, the present study brought out that there was a positive correlation between vocational aspiration and attitudes toward life skills,  $r(1242) = .126$ ,  $p = .000$ , and between attitudes toward life skills and educational aspiration,  $r(1242) = .113$ ,  $p = .004$ . Further, it was found that there was a positive correlation between educational aspiration and vocational aspiration,  $r(1242) = .109$ ,  $p = .007$ . To support the claims of the present study, the researcher has not come across any empirical study that exclusively considered the association of students' attitudes toward life skills, their educational aspirations, and their vocational aspirations. However, while understanding their theoretical underpinnings, the researcher has noted a significant theoretical association among the selected variables (Burke & Hoelter, 1988; Cobb, 1989; Mau & Bikos, 2000; Salami, 2008).

## VIII. DELIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study was conducted in Meghalaya, a northeastern state of India. Only one district, East Khasi Hills District was considered for the study. Therefore, the same study may be undertaken in other districts of the state, and also in other parts of India. The study was conducted amongst senior secondary students, so a study may be conducted at other levels of education, such as elementary and higher education. The present study investigated the relationship between students' attitudes towards life skills, and their educational and vocational aspirations, so other student-specific constructs, such as self-esteem, academic achievements, and self-efficacy beliefs may be considered for future study.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

The present study provided a shred of empirical evidence on the correlations between students' attitudes toward life skills, and their educational and vocational aspirations. Using a disproportionate stratified random sampling, the study supported that there were significant relationships among the selected variables. The present study's findings are likely to help responsible stakeholders to understand students' attitudes toward life skills, including its different dimensions, such as self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress and coping with emotions. The present results are also likely to help teachers to comprehend students' educational aspirations and their vocational aspirations as well. Together the findings are beneficial to foster students' favorable attitudes toward different aspects of their life skills, their educational aspirations, and vocational aspirations for appropriate careers.

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