CHAPTER II
Specific studies related to the problem

A review of the literature on Level of Aspiration reveals certain personal, social and environmental factors which influence the evaluation of one's own ability in a given situation. As indicated in many studies a large number of variables like sex, Socio Economic Status, scholastic performance, age, I.Q. and various other personality variables are supposed to be related to level of aspiration.

Recently some interesting and illuminating investigations have been conducted on sex, Socio Economic factors and class performance as influencing the aspiration level of the individual. An analysis of the results of these studies would reveal the results and conclusions obtained by previous investigators.

In many of the studies it has not been possible to control all the variables except one so as to reach at any reliable conclusion. Therefore the findings of many studies have been very conflicting.

Sex and Level of Aspiration

Sex differences in goal setting behaviour has been reported by Frank (1937) Anderson and Brandt (1939) Gould and Lewis (1940) Rotter (1943) Himmelweit (1947)

Frank (1937) Anderson and Brandt (1939) suggested from incidental findings that there is a possible difference in the direction of a lower difference score for women.

But in these studies neither were the number of subjects large enough nor the performance levels controlled so that any definite conclusions can be reached.

Gould and Lewis (1940) concluded that the Goal Discrepancy Score of the women was consistently less than that for men.

Bruner and Rotter (1952) found that Ramah Navaho males showed significantly higher level of aspiration than females and had a significantly higher number of shifts than the women. But contrary to the above findings Rotter (1943) found that female subjects appeared to make significantly more shifts or changes in estimates than men. Rotter justifies this by hypothesizing that girls receive less training in making decision than men in problem situation and hence show more shifts.

According to Holt (1946) Difference scores of the male and female students differed statistically. It was further observed that girls were superior to boys in several trials.

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Himmelweit (1947) concluded that the Goal Discrepancy scores of the women were significantly smaller than those of men. The women over estimated their subsequent scores to a lesser degree while at the same time they under estimated their past performance to a marked degree than the men. In addition to this, normal and neurotic women had a higher index of flexibility i.e., they adjusted more readily to changes in performance by showing more shifts. Their goals were placed slightly above the performance scores. According to Himmelweit (1947) considerably larger under estimation of the past performance may account for it.

In an interesting study of sex differences by Eysenck and Himmelweit (1946) men showed higher Goal Discrepancy Score than the women and they under estimated their past performance less. To explain this Eysenck opines that the question remains whether the nature of the task may have conditioned these differences or whether regardless of the nature of the task similar differences may be customary in the culture pattern of the subjects.

Results of the study by Sumner and Johnson (1949) indicate that in every case goal discrepancy and aspiration discrepancy scores are lower in case of the women than in case of the men through the difference is not statistically significant in case of the aspiration discrepancies. The most
striking fact revealed by the above study is that women tended to show lower discrepancies and frequently underestimated. They appeared more restrained and were reality-oriented in their aspirations than the men. Men with higher discrepancies and overvaluations showed a greater tendency for expansiveness, daringness and irreality at both high and low levels of performance.

Cassel and Vanvors (1955) made efforts to determine the effects of such uncontrolled variables as age, sex, intelligence and education. In sex differences, the mean and S.D. values were greater in Goal Discrepancy Score for boys than for girls. They are also statistically significant. From this study he concluded that in general boys tended to have higher unstructured first goals than the girls and with greater variability or spread.

Himelstein (1956) studied 55 middle class American males and 57 females in level of aspiration experiments and found that the differences between the sex groups did not however reach statistical significance in either task. The results fail to support the hypothesis that white males' and females from the American culture differ in the number of shifts made in the level of aspiration experiments. The discrepancy between this study and that of Bruner and Rotter perhaps represents a cultural difference. Failure to
obtain sex difference similar to that obtained by Bruner and Rotter may also be the result of two important differences between the two studies - (a) the nature of the task—throwing darts V.S. Maze and digit symbol task and (b) uncontrolled performance V.S. prearranged sequence of scores.

Bried (1957) from a study on a group of 51 male student teacher, 59 female student teacher and 53 convicts found differences of level of aspiration and reaction to supposed performance between scores.

Sheenan (1968) in a study of sex differences in goal setting behaviour found that within the normal group there was no significant sex differences in Level of Aspiration of Males and females. But among male and female stutters significant sex differences were found. As he pointed out female stutters showed low level of aspiration than male stutters because (a) being a stutter, (b) being a female the feeling of inferiority led to low level of aspiration. This supports the findings of Himmelweit (1947).

Muthayya (1968) got results contrary to the findings of other investigators on sex differences in Level of Aspiration behaviour, of course none of these mean differences were statistically significant. But compared to girls boys seemed to have their level of aspiration markedly...
for above their real achievement in performance task. This investigation further revealed that boys and girls are alike in the matter of shifting level of aspiration in both the tasks. These findings support Himel Stein's (1956) finding but they go against the conclusions of Bruner and Rotter (1952).

Jabbar (1968) found coeducational boys have significantly higher height of aspiration, performance and typical shifts than girls reading in coeducational institutions. He further observed that girls of the coeducational schools have significantly higher goal discrepancy score, goal tenacity score, atypical shifts and rigidity than coeducational boys.

In a recent study Das (1965) observed that compared to girls boys seem to set their level of aspiration markedly far above their real achievement in performance task perhaps because they are less practical in their approach. He also got sufficient proof from the above study to conclude that boys and girls are alike in the matter of shifting level of aspiration in both the tasks.

A critical analysis of the above findings on height of aspiration, Goal Discrepancy Score and shifts in Level of Aspiration as a function of sex leads one to conclude that most of these studies support the effect of sex on
goal striving behaviour. But the results of a few studies refute the above statements and suggest that there exists no true difference between sex groups in relation to level of aspiration behaviour. These controversial findings lead us to a cross road and wide varieties of conflicts in deducing any hypothesis on the effect of sex on Level of Aspiration.

But it is equally justified to hold that some of the above studies where there have been controversial results are not actually comparable in view of the difference in methods followed, tests used or subjects on whom studies have been conducted.

Besides these, in all investigations there are usually many uncontrolled variables. Some of the obvious ones might be age, I.Q. Scholastic achievement, Socio Economic Status and Educational level etc. which might not have been controlled in these studies. For example, the discrepancy in the results of Bruner and Rotter (1952) and Himelstein (1956) as has been pointed out previously, might be due to (a) subjects taken from two different cultures i.e., (Navaho and Americans) (b) Nature of the task (dart throwing V.S. Maze and digit symbol) as has been mentioned by the investigator himself.
Similarly Muthayya's (1968) results might be due to the effect of such uncontrolled variables as age (14-17) number of subjects from the female groups, Socio Economic Status etc. The six (6) tasks used by him were also different from the other studies. Moreover, scholastic performance of the subjects were also not controlled. If the above factors would have been controlled perhaps there would have been difference in the level of aspiration of the sex groups like the other studies.

In view of the above analysis, there is the urgent necessity for a careful and comprehensive study of sex differences in level of aspiration situation. For this, selection of the cases with the purpose specifically in mind and control of variables are urgent.

From the above standpoint in the present study the investigator has tried to partial out the effect of all other variables like age, I.Q. educational level, Socio Economic Status and class performance etc on level of aspiration while studying the effect of sex on it.
(b) **Level of Aspiration and Socio Economic Factors.**

As previously discussed there is ample evidence to show that the level of aspiration behaviour of an individual is influenced by his Socio Economic Status.

From very early life, the home, Social and Economic standard and general cultural background etc. are most important to the emotional, motivational and intellectual development and the development of self concept of the child. It is supposed that one's self concept which determines one's level of aspiration depends upon the Socio Economic Status of the child. Very high or very low goal setting can be related to self-rejection caused by feeling of inferiority due to poor Socio Economic Status.

Good Socio Economic conditions of the parents provide better educational opportunity, and thus help to develop intellectual capacity, potentialities and an adequate self concept.

Favourable heredity and stimulating environmental conditions promote intellectual, social and personal growth which should influence the development of level of aspiration. Studies conducted on the effect of Socio Economic status on level of aspiration indicate its importance in influencing goal striving behaviour. Gould (1941) observed...
that those in more favourable Socio Economic position score relatively low positive or negative goal discrepancy score in level of aspiration tests. According to him subjects having lower Socio Economic status have higher aspiration score because of their sense of insecurity. Gould (1941) and Klugman (1959) view that children from the higher Socio Economic level are more realistic in their goal setting behaviour. This is probably the result of the greater feeling of security and more adequate self concepts of the higher as compared to the lower class children.

Barnelt et al (in Gruen, 1958) say that occupation level scores may be hypothesized as reflecting an individual's socio economic goal in life. Steffire (1958) observed that duller the Social level, down ward is the aspiration mobility.

In a questionnaire study Simpson (1962) found that boys aspired for high occupations whose parents trained them to do so than the low aspirers. This indicated that parental influence is a factor in the upward mobility of middle class as well as lower class boys. But no simple relationship between social position and level of aspiration

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was found in a study of adult males. This may be due to lack of control of age, past achievement and reference groups.

Lambert and Klineberg (1963) in a study compared the aspiration of each boy to his father's actual occupation. The results reflected a tendency where aspiration indices were found to be significantly correlated with an independent measure of cultural attitude towards achievement. The investigators thus concluded that level of aspiration reflects the cultural differences.

Results of the study by Smelser (1963) on 93 families indicate that adolescents and adult personality variables are a function of Socio Economic history of the family during the developmental years of children. It showed that sons from high status were most aspiring as adolescents.

The findings of a study on Social class and aspiration of Wisconsin boys by Shah (1966) offer conclusion that lower boys tend to restrict their aspiration more than the higher class boys with equal ability and that low social class boys do not have the same lofty occupational aspirations as those from the upper strata. Shah contd...
views that whatever may be the standard for determining level of aspiration there was a positive relationship between social class and aspiration of youths.

The findings of Shah's study go against Gould's view who holds that subjects having lower Socio Economic status have higher aspiration scores because of their sense of insecurity.

Studies by Muthayya (1968) and Jabbar (1968) reveal that education as an important determinant of Socio Economic status of an individual influences one's level of aspiration. Results of these studies indicate that in all the tasks the subjects of college educated parents tend to be more realistic in their aspiration and maintain their aspiration just above their performance and make an adjustment between their aspiration and achievement. Jabbar further found that middle school educated parents have higher height of aspiration than college educated parents. This goes against the previous findings which may be due to some uncontrolled factors like age, tests used etc. He also found that the low income group has higher height of aspiration than the middle income group, the difference being significant at .05 level.

Muthayya (1968) in the light of his findings also view that parent's social standing is an important factor
in the child's aspiration. He suggests that the subjects of professional fathers are more realistic in setting their aspiration than the other groups. Very high and very low economic groups may have the same level of aspiration behaviours as they aspire just above their performance, but not far beyond. So on the basis of his findings, he concluded that subjects of the lower Socio Economic status have a higher Mean goal discrepancy score than the subjects of higher Socio Economic Status.

In a similar study, Stubbins (1950) found a significant correlation between father's occupation and son's aspiration. He concludes on the basis of his low but insignificant correlation that the parent's Social standing is an important factor in the son's level of aspiration.

Muthayya tried to find out the effect of parent's income on aspiration of children which is one of the important determinants of socio economic status of an individual. In most of the task the high economic group had a lower Mean goal discrepancy score than the lower economic group.

Reissman (1953) of course found no simple relationship between social class position and one's level of aspiration in a study of adult males selected from among policemen, members of a chamber of commerce and residents
of Chicago suburb. But factors like age, past achievement and reference groups could not be controlled in this study which might have been responsible for such insignificant relationship between socio economic status and level of aspiration.

Some of the variables which could not be controlled in the previous studies have been controlled in the present study as far as practicable.
Level of Aspiration and class performance

In recent years there have been many experiments to demonstrate how habitual success and failure operate as a determinant of level of aspiration.

Habitual success and failure mainly refers to school or college performances, the evidence of which was obtained by Jucknat. The problem of failure in school work creates frustration which threatens the child's mental development and adjustment. Jucknat's (in Lewin, K et al, 1944) findings indicate that good students set an initial level of aspiration which is rather high, average students in the middle and poor students tend to set their aspiration which is quite erratic, i.e., sometimes high and sometimes low.

In her most illuminating study of academically successful and unsuccessful students, Sears (1940) divided her subjects into two major groups, success and failure, based on their past performance on academic tasks. She found that subjects with past academic success were more self-confident and set realistic goals whereas the groups which have failed in the previous years lacked self-confidence and set unrealistic goals.

There was so wide variability among the subjects of the failure group that the range of discrepancies were

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from very high positive to negative scores. The goal discrepancy score of the success group was very low and positive, more realistically oriented compared to the failure group which showed a high positive goal discrepancy score lacking in self confidence.

Rotter (1943) Himmelweit (1947), Worell (1959), Byers (1962) and Muthayya (1968) from the findings of their investigations conclude that failure experiences in class is associated with high negative or high positive goal discrepancy score while the success group shows low positive goal discrepancy score. These studies thus support the findings of Jucknat (1937) and Sears (1940). Lewin (1944) views that successful and practical-minded person typically sets his next goal somewhat not too much above his last achievement. But the low achievers set their goals either very high or very low.

Worell (1959) observed that individuals with large discrepancy scores were considered unrealistic and were expected to perform poorly in academic situations since they would be more likely to employ unrealistic behaviour. Freer (1961) concluded that level of aspiration and actual grades of both success and failure groups are not related. However, the results indicated a very slight degree of
relationship between predicted grades and actual grades of successful persons while showing no such relationship for the failure ones.

Jabbar (1968) found low positive but insignificant relationship between scholastic achievement and goal discrepancy score of two samples. The co-educational sample had higher correlation than the non co-educational sample.

Ricciuti and Schultz (1953) from the results of a study on "Development of Group Measures of level of Aspiration" find some indication that college achievement may possibly be negatively correlated with G.D. Scores based upon course examination.

Though Muthayya's study (1963) indicated that high achievers had a low goal discrepancy score than the low achievers, yet the mean difference is not significant.

Lewin (1944) Child and Whitening (1949) Cronbach (1963) view that level of aspiration is raised with success experience and failure tends to lower it. In other words, high achievers have a greater mean height of aspiration than low achievers.

Experimental results recently reported by Gruen (1945) show more varied shifts in level of aspiration after...
failure than after success. But the data of Jucknat and Festinger do not indicate any such tendency.

Chaplin (1966) obtained significant positive relationship between level of aspiration and academic achievement i.e., children having higher academic achievement had higher level of aspiration.

Himmelweit (1947) observed that high achievers in the class showed a high percentage of flexibility in their level of aspiration according to the success and failure performance. This indicates a realistic attitude of the high achievers.

McClelland (1957) opines that confident children prefer fairly difficult task and set high level of aspiration.

Gould and Kaplan (1940) Holt (1946) Schultz and Ricciuti (1954) and recently Muthayya (1962) found little if any correlation between goal discrepancy score and scholastic achievement. Schultz and Ricciuti (1954) however view that the lack of significant relationship between goal discrepancy score and academic achievement may be due to the small sample taken, use of other tasks and variations in the technique.

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Thus it seems reasonable to presume that such insignificant negative relationship between academic achievement and measures of aspiration might have taken place because the goal discrepancy score derived in connection with the techniques used do not reflect any meaningful motivational characteristics. Even if meaningful motivational characteristics are being measured, the characteristics do not operate in the process of succeeding in college courses. Moreover, when the subject is not ego-involved in the level of aspiration task either because of its artificial nature or defective technique, the study may not reveal valid findings.

In the present study attempts have been made to avoid as far as practicable all the defects mentioned above. Rotter's level of Aspiration Board and symbol digit test which are suitable tests of goal striving behaviour from the standpoint of creating motivation and interest in the subject are applied in the present research.

Since the tests are to be conducted by the investigator herself who is a teacher in the same college the students are likely to be very much ego-involved in the tasks.

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In the present research variables like age I.Q. and educational level of the subjects are kept constant as far as practicable so that the level of aspiration of the subjects would not be influenced by these factors.
Besides the important variables influencing level of aspiration discussed previously, certain incidental factors like age, educational level and I.Q. have also some effect upon goal striving behaviour in artificial as well as life like situations.

The age at which the level of aspiration exists can be said to depend on a number of considerations. Observational evidence suggests the existence of a rudimentary level of aspiration among young children.

Studies by Anderson (in Lewin, K. et al, 1944) showed that maturity of level of aspiration is closely related to chronological age. But this study indicated that all components of level of aspiration observed in adults can be seen in eight year olds.

Fales (in Lewin, K. et al, 1944) found by experiments in nursery schools the existence of rudimentary level of aspiration at the 2 year old level.

According to Rao (1954), from Jucknat's findings it appears that after the age of 12 years level of aspiration behaviour can be judged by adult standard. After that differences in level of aspiration between age groups will not be a function of age, but of some other influences.
A study by Rotter (1943) revealed only insignificant differences in Mean levels of aspiration between age groups though older groups showed a slight tendency for more stability and fewer shifts.

Stubbins (1950) reports an insignificant negative correlation ( -0.30) between age and vocational aspiration.

Krugman (1959) compared the level of aspiration of two groups of male volunteers applying Rotter's Board. It was found that goal levels were similarly low for both the groups. But low flexibility in adjusting to success and failure was more characteristic of the older group. This supports Rotter's (1943) findings. The older group further manifested greater need for self protection. They were more adoptive and extreme patterns of response were exhibited by the older population.

Data obtained from a study by Cassel and van Vorst (1955) indicated that there was no significant relationship between the mean aspiration Discrepancy score and age of either of the two groups. Thus, they concluded that the difference in age in this case would not be considered as an uncontrolled variable influencing
level of aspiration. They did not make any attempt to match the age variable in the above study as they view that previous studies indicated little relationship between age and level of aspiration.

Das's (1965) study revealed that goal discrepancy score increases with age and educational level.

Muthayya in a study on "Influence of age on Level of Aspiration among adolescents" (1967) found that there is a gradual increase in the Mean goal discrepancy score from 13 years to 17 years in all tasks. This suggests an increase in Level of Aspiration with an increase in age. Thus, aspiration levels are to some extent influenced by the maturation process accompanying the increase in age.

The results of this study supports this contention as the trend of the Mean goal discrepancy score is consistent though not significant in certain cases. Since it is said that Level of Aspiration may become relatively permanent after the period of adolescence (Muthayya -1967) it may keep on changing with the increase in age during adolescence.
It is also believed that in any society different age groups are associated with different status positions (Frank-1935b). If this is true then the condition of being an adolescent would be most conducive to achieve dissatisfaction with the present. According to Muthayya (1967) adolescence is also the period where the future can be regarded as being most amenable to change and hence a greater emphasis on the future would be found in the adolescent period with an increase in age.

Muthayya further views that aspiration formulated during the adolescent period shows an upward trend. Perhaps the awareness of one's self and its relation to the groups one belongs to, comes of age and this decides the emphasis one places on the future. This suggests that the lower the age, the lesser the maturation and awareness of the self and vice versa.

Jabber (1963) in a study of level of aspiration in co-educational and non-coeducational high school students found that the sample of 14 age group is also higher than 15 age group in height of aspiration according to the findings of the above study. The 15 age

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group has also higher shifts than 16 age group. The difference is significant at .05 level.

The age at which a final decision is reached regarding various aspirations relating to occupation, career and the like, varies from individual to individual. It is influenced by such variables as the person's intelligence, Socio Economic status of the parents, sex, the availability of suitable informations and encouragement from the family etc.

Strong and others opine that the development of vocational interests is maturational in character. It may be due to the interaction of cultural and biological factors rather than to either alone. Thus stability of aspirations and interest grow stronger with age.

It also may be predicted that differences in aspiration level among different age groups may not be a function only of the chronological age itself, but it may be due to the fact that different age groups are associated with different status positions in our society.

An adolescent boy might actively be dissatisfied with the present and his aspiration level may increase putting greatest emphasis and hope on the future. Compared contd... 55.
to older age groups provided that the level of aspiration technique used in a laboratory reveals a transfer of life attitudes to a laboratory situation.