



Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Scheduled Caste Students at Under-Graduate Level - A Sociological Study

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Abstract: The present study is concerned with Scheduled Caste students at under-graduate level and it is based on two major objectives i.e. their socio-economic status and educational and occupational aspirations. A sample size of 100 students studying in SRT campus, H.N.B. Garhwal University, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand was selected by purposive and snowball sampling method. The study revealed that educational aspirations of all the students are qualitatively high because they are studying in higher education. The study also revealed that majority of the students' families belong to agricultural background they are economically poor, owning little land, with low level of literacy. The study concludes that the educational and occupational aspirations have direct association with their families' socio-economic status as well as educational background.

Key Word: Scheduled caste, Educational aspiration, Occupational aspiration, Under-graduate level.

Introduction

The present study is concerned with Scheduled Caste students at under-graduate level and it is based on two major objectives i.e. their socio-economic status and educational and occupational aspirations. A sample size of 100 students studying in SRT campus, H.N.B. Garhwal University (A Central University), Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand was taken. The sample size has been selected by purposive and snowball sampling method. The primary data is collected through personal interviews by using an interview schedule.

Caste is a powerful organization in Indian society. It provided a structure for arranging and organizing social groups in terms of their statuses and positions in the social and economic system. It predetermined individuals into the structure of social hierarchy on the basis of their birth. Andre Beteille, who describes a caste as „a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system, based on concepts of purity and pollution“ (John S. Scott & G. Marshal (2012), Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, pg no. 64). The Scheduled Castes occupy a peculiar position in our social and political systems. Socially, these castes occupy the lowest rungs of the hierarchical ladder. Because of the strategic position of the Scheduled Castes in the country, the Central and the State governments have, from time to time, made various efforts to defuse this potentially dangerous problem by providing them with various incentives including the abolishing of untouchability by law. The laws under protective discrimination provide for special educational facilities, the reservation of seats in educational institutions, Parliament and State legislatures, the reservation in government jobs and a host of other welfare measures. However, the educational measures are the most important among these provisions; not only do they appropriate the major portion of the budget allocation under the welfare of Scheduled Castes, but also they are regarded as constituting the crucial mechanism for



bringing about social mobility among the persons belonging to these castes. The educational progress of the Scheduled Castes, therefore, can be regarded as the most important index of their general growth and development.

The topic of educational and occupational aspiration is studied by sociologists and psychologists. There are different theoretical perspectives on the interpretation of educational aspirations and their significance for the future behaviour. The dominant model is the sociological theory of status attainment, which stresses aspirations as a cognitive state that motivates or drives young people to strive for academic success. They portray educational aspiration as a purely rational assessment of student's economic and social circumstances. Students may aspire to continue in the past, compulsory education as a result of a realistic evaluation of both push factors as the avoidance of unemployment and pull factors such as higher expected earnings in the long term. In this frame work educational aspiration have no motivational overtones. There are rational judgments based on currents economic circumstances. The education itself creates better economic perspectives and is a necessity in today's world. Education is also important for the economic and social position of a person. Aspirations are determined by the economic and social position of the family and by social and economic surroundings usually parents expect that their children at least retain the same socio economic status.

Review of Litreature

Suma Chitnis (1972) probed inequalities in enrolment in higher education among college students in Bombay city and the problems encountered by them. Victor D Souza (1977) traced the pattern of disparity between the education of the SCs and of others in Punjab and pointed out how the structure of caste system, caste behaviour, economic factors and the form and operation of welfare programmes influence the pattern.

Baker (1973) studied the aspirations of female students with a view to understanding the problems they encounter in making use of educational facilities.

Suneila Malik (1979) investigated the relative impacts of changing educational and occupational levels on the life-pattern of the Scheduled Castes by highlighting the effectiveness of developmental measures taken so far. He found that the developmental measures have aided social mobility among the Scheduled Castes to some extent. Still a large majority of the Scheduled Castes are not able to benefit to the fullest extent from these developmental measures due to loopholes in the implementation mechanism.

Noor Mohammad (2006) in his study analyzed the socio-economic transformation of Scheduled Castes. He found that there are rural-urban variations in the educational level of the Scheduled Castes. The rural Scheduled Castes are less educated than that of urban counterparts. Various programmes and policies of rural development in general and agricultural development in particular have resulted into economic prosperity of the masses including the Scheduled Castes. Further, he found that Scheduled Castes have adopted more than one occupation.

Pamela S. Macbra Yne (1987) in her, 'Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Rural Youth: A Review of Literature' mentions that aspirations of youth have long been of interest to educational researchers and practitioners. In exploring educational or occupational aspirations, researchers generally examine variables such as sex, community size, place of residence, race, socio-economic status, effect of time (age), determinants of and influences



on aspiration development or a combination of these. This literature review focuses on studies which examined the aspirations of rural, non-farm youth in the United States.

Educational Aspirations of Minority Youth Study by Grace Kao, University of Pennsylvania and Marta Tienda Princeton University (1988) : Using the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988, they analyze how educational aspirations are formed and maintained from eighth to twelfth grades among a single cohort of youth. Guided by research in the status-attainment literature, which focuses on how aspirations are shaped, and the blocked-opportunities framework, which considers the structural obstacles that bound or level aspirations, we find that the relative shares of minority youth who have high educational aspirations are high from eighth to twelfth grades. However, ethnic groups differ in the extent to which high educational aspirations are maintained such that black and Hispanic youth have less stable aspirations. Their results suggest that family's socio-economic status not only contributes to ambitious aspirations in eighth grade but, more important, to the maintenance of high aspirations throughout the high school years. Because Black and Hispanic students are less likely to maintain their high aspirations throughout high school, owing to their lower family socio-economic background, they argue that their early aspirations are less concrete than those of white and especially Asian students. Focus-group discussions with adolescents support quantitative findings that compared to whites and Asians, Black and Hispanic youth are relatively uninformed about college, thus dampening their odds of reaching their educational goals.

Conceptual Clarification

Scheduled Caste is a politico-legal term. Scheduled Castes have been called as Shudras, Panchamas, Antyajas, Chandalas and a few other names were frequently used. Gandhiji popularized the Harijan¹ meaning, people of God. During the colonial period, the term „Exterior Caste“ and „Untouchables“ were commonly used for them. Dr Ambedkar termed them as Depressed Class, which referred to those classes or categories of persons who were poor and exploited, and socially and ritually degraded. The term “Scheduled Caste “was first coined by the Simon Commission (1927), after the recommendations of Simon Commission the term „Scheduled Caste „was adopted in the Government of India, Act, 1935. In April 1936, the British Government issued the Government of India order, specifying certain castes in the list of depressed classes as Scheduled Castes. „Scheduled Castes“ means such castes, races or tribes, parts or group within such castes, race or tribes as are deemed to be the Scheduled Caste under article 341 of the Constitution of India.

Aspirations are defined as an individual's desire to obtain a status, object or goal such as a particular occupation or level of education. Expectations are the individual's estimation of the likelihood of attaining those goals, plans, ambitions or dreams. A strong desire, longing, or aim, ambition or a goal or objective that is strongly desired. Educational aspirations have been studied intensively by different disciplines to explain educational disparities, including psychological, social-psychological, sociological and economic perspectives (Domina et al. 2011; Rojewski 2005). Yet, despite the frequent use of the term „educational aspirations“, which is generally used to refer to the educational goals students set for themselves, there is no single and universally accepted definition or common agreement as to what the term means (Lent et al. 1994; Quaglia and Cobb 1996; Rojewski 2005). A variety of terms like plans, decisions or preferences are commonly used - sometimes interchangeably - as they are all essentially viewed as goal terms that primarily differ along dimensions such as the degree of specificity and proximity to the choice implementation (Lent et al. 1994; Rojewski 2005).



Occupational aspirations are the the thoughts, feelings, fantasies and goals that people have about their work, that affect their motivation and decision making in respect of their occupational choice and subsequent participation in their occupation. The conceptualization of these terms is credited to Kuvlesky and Bealer [33] in their attempt to define occupational choice which they consider to be a reflection of an individual's aspirations or preferences concerning work statuses.

Analysis

Family is the important institution in the society. The type of family an individual lives in determines his personality and other qualities. Joint family and nuclear family are the most common forms of family found in India. So, the respondents were asked to which family they belonged. Majority i.e. 60 percent of the respondents said that they lived in joint families whereas remaining 40 percent said they belonged to the nuclear families. Since of the respondents came from rural areas that is why majority of them have said that they hailed from joint families.

Table 1: Occupation of Respondents' Father

S. No.	Types of Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Agriculture	48	48%
2	Government Service	10	10%
3	Private Service	17	17%
4	Self Employee	25	25%
	Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows the occupation of respondents' father. As is evident a good number of respondents' father's occupation is agriculture (48%) because they belong to rural areas and hence their main occupation is agriculture, 10 percent of respondents' father's are in government service, 25 percent are self employed and 17 percent are in private service.

Income is important in one's life. Income not only determines one's life-style but also one's status in life. Through good income one is able to enjoy good things in life. In this connection, the respondent's family income was examined and it is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' Annual Family Income

S. No.	Annual Income	Frequency	Percentage
1	40000-50000	26	26%
2	50000-60000	22	22%
3	60000-70000	20	20%
4	70000-80000	6	6%
5	80000-90000	8	8%
6	90000-1 Lakh	8	8%
7	Above 1 Lakh	10	10%
	Total	100	100%

Annual income of respondents is divided into seven criteria as shown in table 2. Lowest is 40 to 50 thousand rupees which 26 percent have and highest is above one lakh rupees which 10



percent have and in middle 22 percent have 50 to 60 thousand rupees 20 percent have 60 to 70 thousand rupees, six have 70 to 80 thousand rupees and eight have 90 to one lakh rupees. The income of a good number of respondents (26%) is low because their main occupation is agriculture. It is hilly area, they have a little lands with low level of production. Therefore, they have low income at last we can say that majority (68%) of respondents have their family income with all sources from 40 to 70 thousands rupees which comes to nearly 3 to 6 thousand rupees per month.

Table 3: Educational Status of Respondents' Parents

S.No.	Education of Parents	Mother	Father
1	Illiterate	16(16%)	8(8%)
2	Primary	20(20%)	12(12%)
3	High school	32(32%)	24(24%)
4	Intermediate	24(24%)	44(44%)
5	Graduation	8(8%)	12(12%)
	Total	100	100

Education is an important determinant of one's social status. Through education, one is able to get a good job and a good job will get good income. In table 3 the educational level of the respondents' mother and father are compared. It is evident that majority (68%) of the mothers are educated upto high school and majority (56%) of the fathers are educated beyond Intermediate.

Table 4: Family Income and Educational Aspirations of the Respondents

S. No.	Annual Income	Educational Aspirations				Total
		Graduation	P.G.	Ph.D.	Competitive Exams	
1	40000-50000	20	6	-	-	26(26%)
2	50000-60000	12	10	-	-	22(22%)
3	60000-70000	10	10	-	-	20(20%)
4	70000-80000	-	-	-	6	6(6%)
5	80000-90000	-	-	-	8	8(8%)
6	90000-1 Lakh	-	-	4	4	8(8%)
7	Above 1 Lakh	-	-	6	4	10(10%)
	Total	42(42%)	26(26%)	10(10%)	22(22%)	100(100%)

In table 4 the educational aspirations of respondents was correlated with the income of the family. Result shows that 42 percent of the respondents wanted to complete their graduation, 26 percent post-graduation and 10 percent Ph. D. It is heartening note that 22 percent wanted to appear for competitive examinations. In the above we found positive correlation between family income and educational aspirations of the students.

The result shows that the respondents with high family income possess higher educational aspirations while those with low family income have got lower educational aspirations.



Table 5: Education of the Father and Employment Preferences of the Respondents

S. .No.	Education of Father	Occupational Aspirations				Total
		1	2	3	4	
1	Illiterate	-	-	4	4	8(8%)
2	Primary	-	-	10	2	12(12%)
3	High school	-	4	20	-	24(24%)
4	Intermediate	-	30	14	-	44(44%)
5	Graduation	12	-	-	-	12(12%)
	Total	12(12%)	34(34%)	48(48%)	6(6%)	100(100%)

Note: 1 = IAS, PCS, University Professor, 2 = School teacher, clerk, Nurse, 3 = Police, Army and 4 = Self Employed

It shows that father of eight students were illiterate, father of 12 students had studied up to primary, 24 had studied high school, 44 had college education and 12 were graduates. Though becoming IAS, PCS and University Professor is considered high jobs only 28 opted for that and their fathers were from illiterate to graduates and the biggest number had studied intermediate. In the case of eight students though their fathers had studied graduation, the sons had low ambition of becoming school teachers, clerks, police etc.

Table 6: Family Income and Occupational Aspirations of the Respondents

S. No.	Annual Income	Occupational Aspirations				Total
		1	2	3	4	
1	40000-50000	-	-	22	4	26(26%)
2	50000-60000	-	8	12	2	22(22%)
3	60000-70000	-	10	10	-	20(20%)
4	70000-80000	-	6	-	-	6(6%)
5	80000-90000	-	4	4	-	8(8%)
6	90000-1 Lakh	2	6	-	-	8(8%)
7	Above 1 Lakh	10	-	-	-	10(10%)
	Total	12(12%)	34(34%)	48(48%)	6(6%)	100(100%)

Note: 1 = IAS, PCS, University Professor, 2 = School teacher, clerk, Nurse, 3 = Police, Army and 4 = Self Employed

In table 6 the occupational aspirations of respondents were correlated with the family income. The outcome shows that 12% respondents want to go for IAS, PCS and University Professors; 34% want to become school teacher, clerk and Nurses, 48% respondents want to join Police force and Army, 6% respondents want self employment.

The result shows that respondents with high family income possess higher occupational aspirations while those with low family income have got lower occupational aspirations.



Table – 7

Distribution of Respondents according to their Medium of Study

S.N.	Medium	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Hindi	82	82
2	English	18	18
	Total	100	100

Medium of education is important. In India, English education denotes social status which can be acquired by the rich. In this connection, the respondents' medium of study was examined. Majority i.e. 82 percent have studied in Hindi medium and remaining 18 percent have studied in English medium.

Table – 8

Distribution of Respondents according to their aim of acquiring Higher Educational

S.N.	Aim of Studying in Higher Education	Frequency	Percentage %
1	To achieve degree	16	16
2	To achieve Govt. Service	60	60
3	To achieve Ph.D. degree	24	24
	Total	100	100

They were further asked their aim of acquiring higher education. Majority (60%) said it is to achieve Government service, 16 percent to achieve a degree and 10 percent to achieve Ph.D. degree.

Table – 9

Distribution of Respondents according to their Higher Education is helpful to achieve job

S.N.	Higher Education is helpful to achieve Job	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Yes	60	60
2	No	24	24
3	Nothing to Say	16	16
	Total	100	100

The respondents were further asked whether higher education is helpful to achieve a job. Majority (60%) said that it is helpful whereas 24 percent said no and 16 percent had nothing to say about it.

Table – 10

Distribution of Respondents according to they want which type of Job

S.N.	Which Type of Job Want	Frequency	Percentage %
1	IAS, PCS, University Professor	12	12
2	School teacher, clerk, Nurse	34	34
3	Police, Army	48	48
4	Self Employee	06	06
	Total	100	100



The respondents were further asked about their employment preferences. 34 percent wanted jobs like school teacher, clerk and nurse. 12 percent of students wanted the job of IAS, PCS officer and University Professor, 48 percent preferred the jobs in the police and the army and 06 percent wanted to be self employed.

Table - 11

Distribution of Respondents according to effect of financial position on occupational aspiration

S.N.	Effect of financial position on occupational aspiration	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Yes	80	80
2	No	20	20
	Total	100	100

The respondents were further asked whether their financial position affects occupational aspiration. 80 percent of the respondents reported that their financial condition affected their occupational aspirations whereas only 20 percent did not agree to it.

Table - 12

Distribution of Respondents according to their willingness to join father occupation

S.N.	Willingness to join father occupation	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Yes	10	10
2	No	90	90
	Total	100	100

Finally, the respondents were asked whether they are willing to join father's occupation. Only 10 respondents wanted to continue in their father's occupation where the remaining 90 respondents wanted to venture into new occupations.

Conclusion

Most of the scheduled caste respondents studying at graduation level had rural background and come from nearby villages. They have mostly joint families with agriculture as main occupation and some of their parents are in government services and a few others are self employed. Due to agriculture as a source of income their annual income is insufficient. On the basis of data we may conclude that majority i.e. 68% respondents' annual family income from all sources comes about 40-70 thousand rupees which is nearly 6000 rupees per month. Mostly their mothers' educational status is not good some of them are illiterate and a few others are primary educated though some have got high school and intermediate education. Comparatively respondents' fathers' educational status is good. The majority of respondents' educational aspiration shows that they want to complete their higher education in order to prepare for government services with a thought that higher education would help them. On the one hand some students have higher occupational aspiration for „A“ grade jobs like IAS, IPS and University Professors; on the other hand some have lower ones and want to become school teacher, clerk, nurse and join army or police force.

Consequently we may state that the respondents with high family income have higher educational and occupational aspirations while with low family income they have lower educational and occupational aspiration. We may conclude that the respondents possess higher



occupational aspiration if their fathers' educational status is good and if fathers' educational status is low then it is found that their occupational aspirations are lower.

Note

- ¹ The term, 'Harijan' was coined by Narasimha Mehta, a Gujarati saint and popularised by Mahatma Gandhi.

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