



Socio Economic Conditions Occupational Preference and Level of Aspiration of the Students of Higher Secondary Schools Belong to SC Community

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Abstract: Education, knowledge, culture, and religion are integral aspects of human development, shaping individuals' growth and social integration. Guiding the younger generation is essential for their success, as it facilitates the practical application of knowledge acquired through education. Education, encompassing discipline and cultural learning, distinguishes humans from animals by refining instincts into civilized behaviour. Unlike mere instructors, tutors provide comprehensive guidance for lifelong learning. As individuals mature, they form aspirations within their sphere of experience, both professionally and educationally. This article examines the aspiration development of 10th and 12th standard students in government schools, highlighting the challenges they encounter in realizing their aspirations.

Keywords: Education, Aspirations, Guidance, Development, Higher Secondary School Students.

Introduction: India's societal fabric is woven with diverse variations such as rural-urban disparities, gender divides, and caste hierarchies. In this intricate tapestry, securing dignified employment and work opportunities is imperative for societal cohesion. Education emerges as a crucial tool in attaining a respected and dignified livelihood. (Joshi, 1986) Despite seven decades of independence and various welfare initiatives aimed at marginalized sections like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, it's crucial to evaluate educational achievements.

Scheduled Castes, historically marginalized, often face formidable obstacles in accessing quality education and achieving desired educational outcomes. Economic challenges, including low income, productivity, and wages, coupled with precarious employment conditions, contribute to their educational hurdles. (Avadh, 1987) Furthermore, the standard of living among this demographic remains dismal, characterized by underemployment and a high dependency ratio. Limited opportunities for entrepreneurship exacerbate their economic plight.

From a political standpoint, representation remains lacking for Scheduled Castes, impeding their access to leadership roles. Socially, the caste system continues to repress aspirations, hindering the development of a positive attitude towards progress. (Baruah, 1987) Consequently, students from these backgrounds often find themselves unable to pursue their desired educational goals, compelled instead to contribute to their families' sustenance through menial occupations.

Childhood aspirations, fueled by enthusiasm, are often shaped by the immediate environment. This journey towards achieving aspirations demands dedication, punctuality, and crucial support systems such as timely guidance, counseling, and familial encouragement. (Bhatia, 2009) The role of the family, beginning from a

child's early developmental stages, is paramount in shaping educational aspirations. The Right to Education Act of 2010 aimed to ensure compulsory education for children aged 6-14, leading to increased enrollment rates. However, challenges persist in ensuring educational quality.

Despite impressive enrollment figures, concerns linger regarding the diversion of educational focus and the quality of education imparted. Government-funded schools, in particular, grapple with issues such as examination pressure, inadequate resources, and disciplinary policies, which contribute to student dropout rates. Factors such as financial constraints, out-of-school employment, family obligations, illness, and caste discrimination further exacerbate dropout rates. (Kullu, 2013)

The prevailing educational system, marked by inherent inequalities, fails to address the diverse needs of marginalized communities, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. The rate of unemployment, particularly among Scheduled Castes, continues to rise, underscoring the urgency of addressing systemic barriers to educational attainment. (Buch, 1991) Proper guidance for students from Hindi-medium backgrounds remains lacking, further widening educational disparities.

Understanding the generational factors influencing aspirations and educational outcomes is crucial for devising effective interventions to address the educational challenges faced by marginalized communities in India. By prioritizing educational equity and fostering an inclusive learning environment, India can pave the way towards realizing the aspirations of all its citizens, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. (Anand M., 2014)

Objectives of the study:

- a. To study the educational aspirations among students from Scheduled Caste backgrounds.
- b. To understand various factors that affect educational aspirations among students from this category.
- c. To provide suggestive social work responses for improving the quality of education and skills to achieve aspirations.

Research Methodology:

Due to constraints on primary data collection, this research relied on secondary data sources to investigate the educational aspirations of Scheduled Caste (SC) students. The researcher utilized a variety of sources, including academic papers, reports, and online resources, to gather relevant information. Additionally, observational experiences and interviews conducted at various higher secondary schools provided valuable insights into the subject matter. The research employed descriptive and qualitative methods to analyse the collected data and generate meaningful findings.

Aspiration of the students of higher secondary schools belong to sc community:

The traditional patterns of generational profession choices have evolved, providing children with more opportunities for decision-making regarding their career paths. In the past, parents often lacked the educational and economic means to guide their children effectively or offer them choices. Higher education attainment within families was limited, leading to a lack of reference points for guidance.

Moreover, the advent of the internet and information technology has brought about significant changes in society, leading to increased competition in the job market. However, children from Scheduled Caste (SC) backgrounds often lag behind in leveraging these opportunities, with only families holding government jobs being equipped to provide proper guidance.

Schools play a crucial role in providing guidance to students, with class teachers responsible for addressing students' doubts and clarifications regarding academics. However, students from SC backgrounds may not fully utilize these opportunities, resulting in lower levels of classroom participation and engagement.

To address these challenges, it is essential to provide pre-counseling and guidance to students at the 10th and 12th grade levels regarding stream selection and future prospects. Additionally, efforts should be made to bridge socio-economic disparities and provide models conducive to enabling social functioning.

Government policies aimed at developing marginalized and disadvantaged social groups, such as Scheduled Tribes, have been implemented to promote educational and social development. However, literacy rates among these groups remain low. Academic achievement is crucial for social inclusion and individual development, and socio-economic status plays a significant role in academic performance.

Research indicates that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to perform better academically, as their parents' socio-economic status influences their academic achievement. Better socio-economic status serves as an incentive for students, while low socio-economic status can have a negative impact on academic performance. Additionally, parental attitudes towards education and interactions with children are more positive among parents with higher socio-economic status.

In conclusion, addressing socio-economic disparities and providing adequate guidance and support are essential for promoting educational attainment and academic achievement among marginalized communities like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. By addressing these factors, policymakers and educators can create a more inclusive and equitable educational system that empowers all students to reach their full potential.

The Role of the School:

In the school context, teachers should undertake the following responsibilities to support the aspirations of children from Scheduled Caste (SC) backgrounds:

1. **Ensure Inclusive Environment:** Teachers should ensure that all children, especially those from Scheduled Caste backgrounds, feel safe and accepted in the classroom without discrimination. This includes implementing non-discriminatory seating arrangements and actively promoting participation in group tasks and presentations.
2. **Encourage Active Participation:** Teachers should encourage SC students to actively participate in classroom discussions by creating a supportive environment where all questions are welcomed and listened to attentively.
3. **Identify and Support Interests:** Teachers should evaluate individual students to identify their areas of interest and guide them towards future course options accordingly. This helps in nurturing students' passions and talents beyond their academic requirements.
4. **Promote Extracurricular Participation:** Schools should ensure the participation of SC students in extracurricular activities and motivate them to take part. Participation in extracurriculars helps in holistic development and boosts self-confidence.
5. **Support Special Needs:** Teachers should identify students with special needs, including those from SC backgrounds, and provide continuous support through class tests and other evaluative methods. This ensures that all students receive the necessary assistance to succeed academically.
6. **Sensitize Teachers:** It is crucial to sensitize teachers about the harmful effects of discrimination and exclusion. Teachers should be educated about various forms of discrimination and encouraged to actively intervene to stop such behavior in the classroom.

7. Foster Awareness of Rights: Teachers should make SC students aware of their rights and encourage them to express themselves freely. Additionally, teachers should promote skill development beyond the syllabus to empower SC students to achieve their aspirations.

In addition to the responsibilities of teachers, social work interventions in schools can play a significant role in promoting inclusivity and fairness. Social workers can act as agents of change within the school community by advocating for the distribution of resources needed to support SC students' aspirations. They can also work towards promoting a fairer and more equitable educational environment by challenging discriminatory practices and promoting cultural sensitivity among students, teachers, and parents alike.

Role of Parents:

To support the aspirations of children from Scheduled Caste backgrounds, the following strategies are proposed:

- ✓ Teaching Specific Cognitive Skills: Teachers should focus on teaching specific cognitive skills such as reading and writing, and ensure that students actively participate in school activities, including completing homework and participating in extracurricular activities.
- ✓ Regular Communication and School Visits: Parents should maintain regular contact with the class teacher and visit the school to engage with their child's education. This helps in understanding the child's progress and peer group dynamics within the school environment.
- ✓ Providing Guidance and Creating a Conducive Study Atmosphere: Parents should provide proper guidance to their child regarding their career options and create a peaceful atmosphere for studying at home. They should collaborate with their child to plan their academic and career trajectory.
- ✓ Avoiding Early Pressure to Earn: Parents should refrain from pressuring their child to earn at an early age, allowing them to focus on their education and personal development.
- ✓ Awareness of Available Programs and Policies: Parents should stay informed about available programs and policies aimed at the development of children from Scheduled Caste backgrounds, ensuring that they can access relevant opportunities for their child's advancement.

Additionally, the researcher has analyzed information gathered from respondents, including parents' perspectives on their child's aspirations within the family context. Interviews with school principals and government officials have also provided valuable insights. Based on these findings, the researcher has developed a model to support the aspirations of children, especially those from Scheduled Caste backgrounds.

The proposed model encompasses four key components: Child Needs, Protective Needs, Learning Outcomes, and Attaining Aspirations. By addressing these aspects comprehensively, children from Scheduled Caste backgrounds can potentially achieve their desired goals within a limited timeframe. This model serves as a guide for parents, educators, and policymakers in supporting the educational and aspirational journey of SC children.

The Child Needs:

Children thrive in environments that are safe, equitable, and supportive, allowing them to grow fearlessly and develop socially, psychologically, and environmentally. Prime institutions such as family play a crucial role in providing handholding support to encourage positive thinking and offer economic, social, and psychological assistance as needed. Additionally, access to resources from family, institutions, and government is essential for children to achieve their desired goals and live with dignity.

Proper guidance and counseling are integral in shaping a child's world and preparing them to navigate the competitive landscape. By enabling individuals, families, and schools to perform effectively and providing timely access to resources, children can expect positive outcomes in today's competitive world. It is crucial to provide relevant information about available resources to empower children to aspire for realistic goals and pursue their dreams with confidence.

Findings and Discussion:

The primary aim of the study was to investigate the educational aspirations among students from Scheduled Caste backgrounds. While previous studies have explored the educational landscape for Scheduled Caste students, there remains a need for further examination, particularly in light of the present educational scenario and the rising trend of educated unemployment. The chapter discussed various factors influencing the development and attainment of aspirations, highlighting the challenges outweighing the opportunities for individuals from Scheduled Caste backgrounds.

Professional aspirations are pivotal in guiding students towards their desired professions based on their interests and desires. However, if parents lack the capability to provide guidance, teachers often step into the parental role. Unfortunately, parental and student involvement in choosing educational and professional careers is limited. Many parents are unaware of available courses related to their child's chosen stream, indicating that economic support alone may not suffice in fulfilling aspirations.

The study also uncovered gender biases within the Scheduled Caste community, with girls receiving less support and opportunities compared to boys. Girls' aspirations were often conditional and dependent on external factors, such as parental and teacher influence. Local role models were identified as significant influencers in shaping aspirations, but their presence was lacking.

Moreover, the phenomenon of educated unemployment has impacted professional aspirations, starting from educational aspirations themselves. The prevalence of unemployed youth struggling to secure dignified employment underscores the need for change in the current landscape. Overall, the study highlights the complex interplay of factors influencing educational and professional aspirations among Scheduled Caste students and underscores the importance of addressing these challenges to foster meaningful socio-economic development.

Conclusion:

The education system often overlooks the existence of conflicts related to clan interests and class relations, and tends to detach itself from the realities of the world. In India, there is a growing demand for privatization of schools, coupled with a decrease in public funding. While there is a rapid expansion of education through various programs, the focus on quality education for those in need is often overlooked.

In areas where schools are unavailable or of poor quality, it becomes a social issue, particularly affecting marginalized communities. The perspectives of these unreached communities should be taken into account when addressing educational disparities. Education should not merely aim to increase literacy rates but should also strive to provide dignified employment opportunities for sustainable development.

It is crucial for education systems to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world challenges, ensuring that education is inclusive, equitable, and addresses the needs of all segments of society. This requires a concerted effort to prioritize quality education and allocate resources effectively to ensure that every individual has access to opportunities for personal and socio-economic advancement.

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