

Assessment of Educational Aspiration in Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Students of Class X

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Abstract:

India is a country of vast social, cultural, and geographical diversity, with numerous castes, cultures, and languages. However, within this diversity, certain sections of society have been historically deprived socially, economically, and educationally. Two major such groups are the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Indian Constitution has granted special status to these groups under various Articles to promote their social, educational, and economic development. The aim of this study is to assess the level of educational aspiration in scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students of class X. To measure educational aspiration, the Educational Aspiration Inventory developed by Pradeep Kumar (2012) was used. Results reveal that out of the total 600 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students, 63 students (10.5%) showed a high level of educational aspiration, 213 students (35.5%) showed a moderate level, and 324 students (54%) showed a low level of educational aspiration. To examine the differences among the levels of educational aspiration, a chi-square value of 174.90 was calculated, which was found significant at the 0.05 level. It was concluded that a large proportion of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students possess a low level of educational aspiration. This reflects the influence of socio-economic constraints restrict students' future academic goals.

Keywords: Educational aspiration, Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribe, Class X

INTRODUCTION

India is a country of vast social, cultural, and geographical diversity, with numerous castes, cultures, and languages. However, within this diversity, certain sections of society have been historically deprived socially, economically, and educationally. Two major such groups are the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Indian Constitution has granted special status to these groups under various Articles to promote their social, educational, and economic development. Scheduled Castes are recognized under Article 341, based on which the President, in consultation with state governments, determines the list of SC communities. They are also provided special protection under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Scheduled Tribes traditionally reside in remote hills and forest areas and are known for their distinct languages, cultures, and traditions. Despite this, they remain socially and economically backward. Scheduled Tribes are recognized under Article 342, and special provisions for their welfare are included in the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. Articles 366(24) and 366(25) define Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, respectively. According to the 2011 Census, Scheduled Castes constitute about 16.6% and Scheduled Tribes about 8.6% of India's total population. As per the 2001 Census, the total population of Chhattisgarh was 25.545 million, of which 7.822 million were Scheduled Tribes and 3.247 million were Scheduled Castes. In Chhattisgarh, Scheduled Tribes comprise approximately 30.62% of the population, while Scheduled Castes account for about 12.82%.

Educational aspiration refers to the level of education students hope and plan to achieve in the future. At this stage, students stand at a crucial transition point where they begin to think seriously about their academic stream (Arts, Science, Commerce), career goals, and higher studies. It reflects: their future educational goals (e.g., becoming a doctor, engineer, teacher, etc.), motivation to continue studies beyond secondary school, awareness of career and academic opportunities and confidence in their abilities and academic planning. Educational aspiration at this level is influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, parental support, school environment, peer influence, and access to guidance. High educational aspiration motivates students to work harder and set clear academic targets, while low aspiration may limit their academic progress and career development. Efforts are made to enhance the learning, academic excellence and motivation in students of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students, and it is necessary to have scientific data regarding their educational aspirations so that these programs can be made more effective. Hence this study was planned.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present study is to assess the level of educational aspiration among scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students enrolled in class X.

HYPOTHESIS

H_{01} The majority of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students of class X will show a moderate level of educational aspiration.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Kulkarni and Pawar (2024) studied the educational interests of 60 tribal and non-tribal adolescents (14–17 years) in Sangli using Kulshrestha's EIR. Analysis with mean, SD, and t-test showed significant differences, with non-tribal students displaying higher interests across agriculture, commerce, fine arts, home science, humanities, science, and technology. **Krishan et al. (2024)** assessed 760 SC students (Classes 9–10) and found mostly average, realistic educational aspirations, with no significant gender differences using Khan's standardized scale and t-tests. Saha and Sarkar (2024) found that many tribal secondary students in Alipurduar face challenges in teaching, environment, administration, and cultural factors, and expressed needs for better schooling, societal support, and family involvement to ensure equitable education. **Ajagar (2023)** used a mixed-method approach to examine factors influencing tribal students' higher-education aspirations. Gender differences were significant, while academic stream (science/humanities) and college type (government/private) showed no differences in aspirations. **Senthil Kumar and Selvakumar (2018)** studied 1,066 Class IX students using a 22-item tool. Gender showed no effect; rural and private-school students reported higher educational aspirations, and the medium of instruction significantly influenced learning. **Kaur and Gupta (2020)** studied 200 secondary students and found no gender differences in educational aspiration or intelligence, but identified a significant positive correlation between students' intelligence and their educational aspirations. **Tiwari and Sattar (2018)** compared educational interests of 1,000 higher secondary students (500 boys, 500 girls) in tribal-dominated Gariaband, Chhattisgarh, using Kulshrestha's EIR. Gender differences appeared in fine arts, home science, humanities, and science (higher among girls), while interests in agriculture, commerce, and technology showed no significant gender difference.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

From the Janjgir-Champa district, 600 Class 10 students belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were selected for the study. Participants were drawn from both government and non-government schools to ensure representation across varied socio-economic backgrounds. The sample was selected through a purposive sampling technique.

Tools:

Educational Aspiration Inventory:

Educational aspiration was assessed using Pradeep Kumar's (2012) Educational Aspiration Inventory. The tool contains 20 items, each with four response options scored from 1 to 4 (A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4), yielding total scores between 20 and 80. The inventory demonstrates high reliability with a test-retest coefficient of 0.96. As per its norms, scores above 60 indicate high aspiration, 47–59 indicate moderate aspiration, and scores below 47 indicate low educational aspiration.

Procedure:

From the Janjgir-Champa district, 600 Class 10 students belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were selected, and the educational aspiration inventory was administered. The responses were numerically coded, and subjects were placed in different levels of educational aspiration as per the manual. Chi-square was used for data analysis. Result given in Table 1.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Distribution of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Students Based on their Educational Aspiration

Level of Educational Aspiration	(Frequency)	(%)
High (60 or more)	63	10.5%

Moderate (47-59)	213	35.5%
Low (Below 47)	324	54.0%
Total	600	100.0%

$\chi^2(df=2) = 174.90, p < .05$

According to Table 1, out of 600 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students, 63 (10.5%) showed high educational aspiration, 213 (35.5%) showed moderate aspiration, and 324 (54%) showed low educational aspiration. The calculated chi-square value of 174.90 was significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the majority of SC and ST students have a low level of educational aspiration.

The predominance of low educational aspiration among many Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students can be attributed to a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors. Limited family income, low parental education, and lack of academic support at home often restrict students' awareness of higher educational opportunities. Many students grow up in environments where immediate livelihood needs take priority over long-term educational goals, which narrows their future outlook.

In addition, inadequate school facilities, a shortage of guidance and counselling services, and limited exposure to role models reduce students' motivation to aim for higher studies. Social isolation, language barriers, and cultural differences may also create adjustment problems within mainstream schooling. A lack of career awareness, minimal access to learning resources, and fewer opportunities for enrichment activities further weaken their confidence and aspirations. Together, these conditions contribute to the development of comparatively lower educational aspirations among a large number of SC and ST students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the low level of educational aspiration observed among many Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students is a challenge that can be enhanced through targeted guidance, improved school support, parental involvement, and better access to resources.

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