

Research Paper

## Analysing Level of Aspirations Among Scheduled Caste, Other Backward class, And Minority Students in Bundelkhand Region

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### ABSTRACT

Aspirations are the dreams and goals individuals aim to achieve, influenced by personal interests, family expectations, peer influence, social background, and educational environment. This study examines the aspirations of Scheduled Caste (SC), Other Backward Class (OBC) and minority intermediate students in the socio-economically disadvantaged Bundelkhand region of India. The research investigation reveals that socio-cultural and economic backgrounds have an influence on the formation and level of educational and career aspirations among these communities, which are underrepresented. A standardized aspiration scale to test the level of aspiration was the Level of Aspiration developed by Dr. Mahesh Bhargava and the late Prof. M.A. Shah, was used to collect data from a stratified sample of 670 intermediate students in three important districts of Bundelkhand namely Jhansi, Mahoba and Lalitpur using a descriptive survey methodology. According to the findings, there are notable differences in the level of aspiration across caste and community lines, with minority and SC students generally having lower aspirations than their OBC counterparts. The results of this research investigation are significant for educators, legislators and social workers who wish to promote advancement among socially disadvantaged youth in the Bundelkhand region in India.

**Keywords:** *Aspiration, Scheduled Caste, Other Backward Class, Minority, Bundelkhand Region*

The educational and occupational choices of youth are significantly influenced by their aspirations. This represents not only the individual aspirations of a student, but also the larger socio-cultural and financial context in which they are situated. To promote social equity and inclusive growth in a stratified society like India, where caste, class and religion have a major impact on access to resources and opportunities, the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh is known for its socio-economic backwardness and regional disparities. Despite various government initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive education, there still exists a large gap in access, participation and performance between different social categories. This gap is often more pronounced at the intermediate level (Classes XI and XII), which provides a relevant context for examining aspirations among students from disadvantaged groups.

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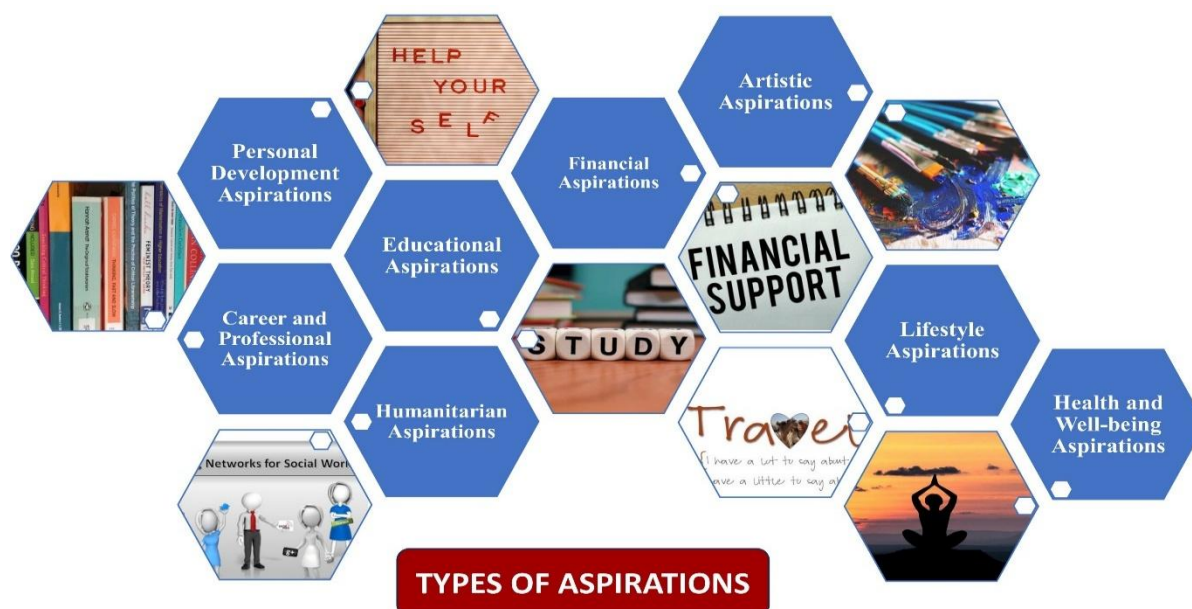
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The future of every child depends on his aspirations. It is the discrepancy between the goal he has already achieved and the goal he hopes to reach. It can be unrealistically high or very low. Aspiration means making a great effort to be something higher than oneself or one's present state, (Hart, 2016). There are many factors around us that have positive and negative effects on the aspirations of adolescent children. There are different types of students in the classroom, and they differ in their interest, attitude, achievement etc.

Some of the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups in Indian society are Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and minority communities. The situation is even worse in the Bundelkhand region. In the context of SC, OBC, and Minority students in the Bundelkhand region, understanding this relationship becomes even more important. The region has been classified as a 'backward area' and 'backward in human development' by the Government of India and the Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog). The economy of the region is much below the national average (Human Development Report, Bundelkhand; 2012). These groups regularly face social barriers that negatively impact their academic motivation and future planning, including poverty, discrimination, limited access to high-quality education and a lack of positive role models, Das, M., Das, A. & Mandal, A. (2021), Dr. M.R.K. Prasad and Andryusha Pinho (2015). Barman (2009) highlights that approximately 75% to 80% of India's Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations fall under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, and collectively, the backward castes constitute nearly 52% of the nation's total population. Therefore, it is necessary for studying the aspirations and factors influencing them of SC, OBC, and minority students, especially in semi-urban and rural areas like Bundelkhand where traditional social hierarchies are still firmly established.



**Figure:** A wide range of personal, academic, and career-related aspirations among adolescents are represented in the figure.

This research seeks to analyse the aspirational levels of intermediate (Class 11 and 12) students belonging to SC, OBC, and Minority groups in the Bundelkhand region. and how students' educational goals are influenced by things like caste identity, parental education, family income, and exposure to career counselling.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of literature serves as a guide for selecting appropriate research methods, tools, and techniques. It helps to avoid duplication by ensuring that the research questions are original or offer a new angle on an existing issue. It helps to refine the research problem, shape the objectives, and develop a suitable framework for analysis. Educational aspirations and expectations form another crucial theme. Studies by Yan and Cai (2022), Bittmann (2022), Zava et al. (2022), and Poudel and Maharjan (2018) confirm that students' and parents' educational aspirations significantly influence academic performance and long-term educational goals. However, factors such as social class, rural-urban divide, parental education, and socioeconomic status strongly mediate these aspirations. When there is a mismatch between aspirations and realistic expectations, negative psychological effects like low self-esteem and depression often occur, as reported by Chen and Hesketh (2021) and Huang et al. (2023). Gender and cultural disparities are also notable. Wicht et al. (2022) found that girls are more likely to aspire to socially prestigious careers, while boys tend to prefer practical, lower-status roles. Systemic biases and culturally unresponsive teaching practices, particularly affecting indigenous and minority students, further suppress aspirations and engagement, as discussed by Hynds et al. (2016) and Wong (2015). These disparities often intersect with community and caste-based inequalities, where tribal and scheduled caste students, as shown in studies by Pal and Sarkar (2022), Ranjan (2020), and Rai (2019), often exhibit lower educational aspirations due to social marginalization and economic disadvantage. Interestingly, some research (Bara, 2018; Singh, 2016) reveals that these students may possess high levels of intelligence despite their constrained aspirations.

The role of gender is complex. While several studies, such as those by Shah and Shah (2023) and Saika (2015), highlight that girls often have higher educational aspirations and better emotional and social adjustment, others, including Kaur (2012) and Saket Bihari (2023), report negligible differences between genders. Rural and conservative environments tend to restrict girls' aspirations, yet many still navigate their goals strategically, as Ruthven et al. (2024) illustrates. Dropout rates are intricately linked to broader social and economic challenges. Kumar et al. (2023) highlight factors such as low parental education, early marriages, substance abuse among boys, and lack of awareness as critical contributors to student dropouts, especially in rural settings. These barriers prevent students from setting or achieving meaningful educational goals.

The reviewed articles provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing adolescents' goals, achievements and related psychological and social aspects, especially in India and other countries as well. The findings examine a number of factors such as gender, caste, emotional intelligence, family history, socio-economic status and school environment.

### ***Objectives***

- To study the difference between the level of aspiration of other backward class students and scheduled caste students of Bundelkhand region.
- To study the difference between the level of aspiration of other backward class students and Minority students of Bundelkhand region.
- To study the difference between the level of aspiration of scheduled caste students and minority students of Bundelkhand region.

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### METHODOLOGY

The effective sample for the study consisted of 670 students belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minority communities. A random sampling method was employed for data collection. The participants, aged between 15 and 18 years, were students of Class XI and XII. The sample was drawn from various senior secondary schools located in the districts of Jhansi, Lalitpur and Mahoba in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh.

#### *Tool Used*

To assess the level of aspiration among secondary school students, the standardized Level of Aspiration Test developed by Dr. Mahesh Bhargava and Prof. M.A. Shah was utilized. The tool was administered to collect data from Class XI and XII students across various higher secondary schools in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh.

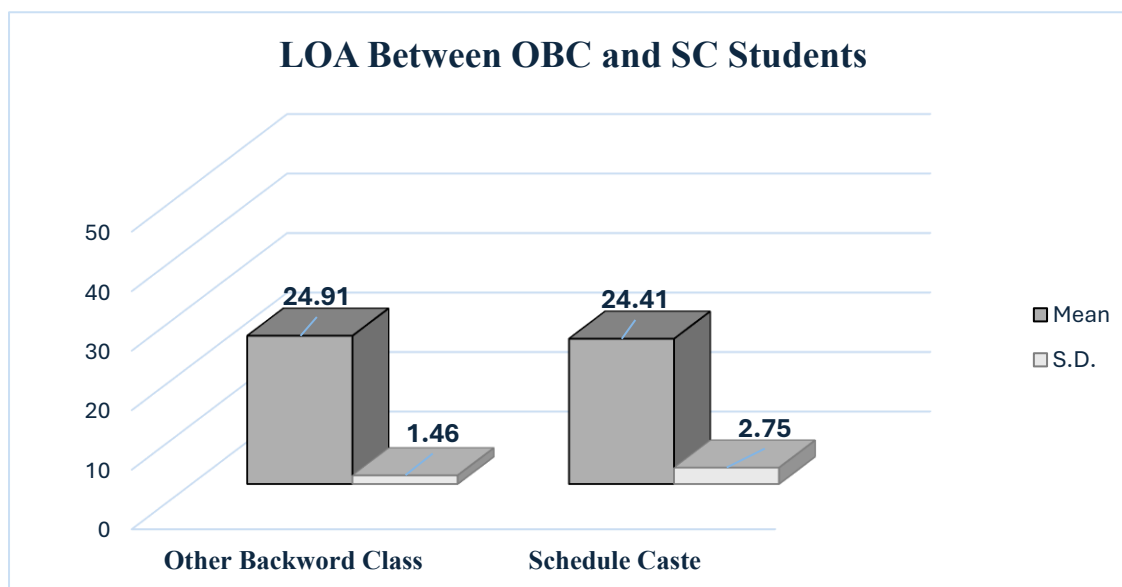
#### *Data Analysis and Interpretation*

Analysis of the present study is done in accordance with the objectives of the study.

**Objective 1.** To study the difference between the level of aspiration of other backward class students and scheduled caste students of Bundelkhand region.

**Table-1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Aspiration Levels Among Higher Secondary Students Belonging to Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes**

Category	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
Other Backward class	260	24.91	1.46	2.589	significant at 0.01 level
Schedule Caste	260	24.41	2.75		



**Graph 1: Comparative Analysis of Aspiration Levels of OBC and SC Higher Secondary Students.**

An independent t-test was conducted to examine the difference in the level of aspiration between Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Castes (SC) students.

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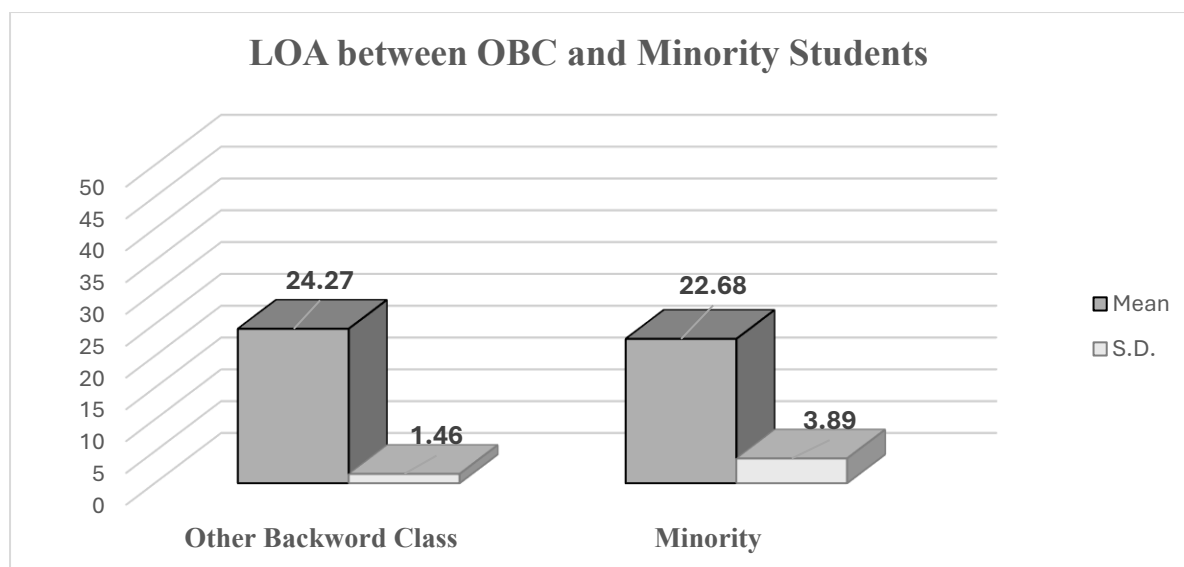
Each group included 260 students in the sample. While the mean aspiration level for SC students was 24.41 with a standard deviation of 2.75, the mean for OBC students was 24.91 with a standard deviation of 1.46. And 2.589 was the computed t-ratio. The two groups' levels of aspiration differed significantly, as indicated by the t-value (2.589), which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ). In particular, OBC students indicated a marginally higher degree of aspiration than SC students.

According to the findings, OBC students in the sampled population have noticeably higher educational aspirations than their SC counterparts. Despite the small mean difference, it is statistically significant and suggests that caste-related aspirations may be influenced by social situations, learning opportunities, or contextual variables

**Objective 2.** To study the difference between the level of aspiration of other backward class students and Minority students of Bundelkhand region.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Aspiration Levels Among Higher Secondary Students Belonging to Other Backward Classes and Minority**

Category	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
Other Backward class	260	24.91	1.46	6.752	significant at 0.01 level
Minority	150	22.68	3.89		



**Graph 2: Comparative Analysis of Aspiration Levels of OBC and Minority Higher Secondary Students.**

An independent t-test was conducted to examine the difference in the level of aspiration between Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Minority students.

The study included 150 minority students and 260 OBC students in the sample. OBC students had an average aspiration level of 24.91 with a standard deviation of 1.46, whereas minority students had an average aspiration level of 22.68 with a standard deviation of 3.89. 6.752 was the estimated t-ratio. The result of the study is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ) based on the degrees of freedom and the t-value.

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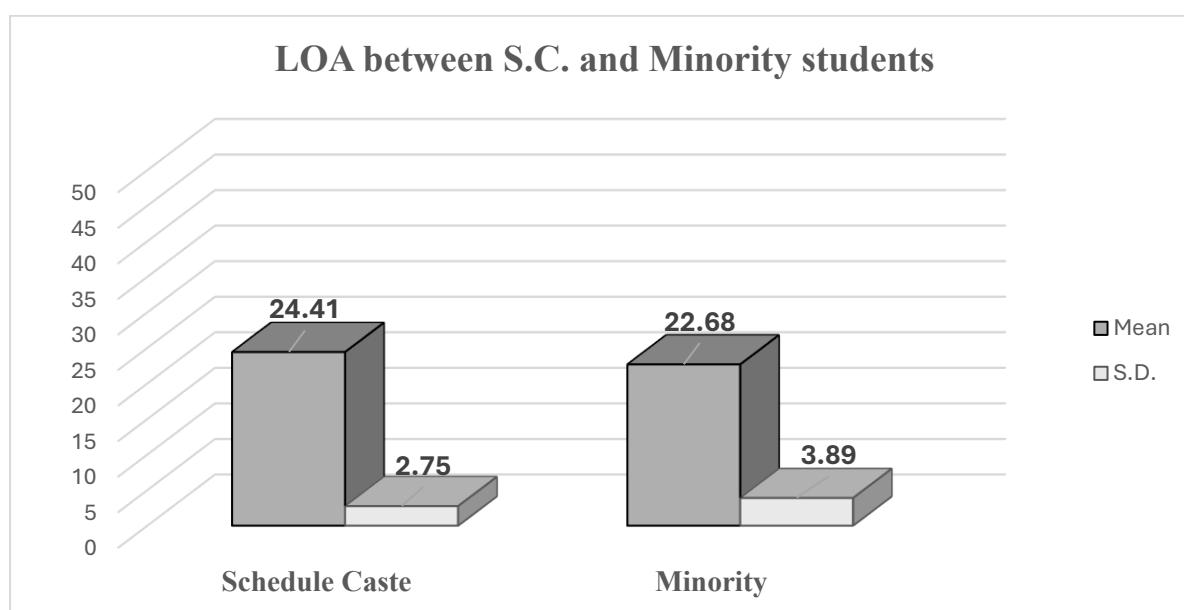
The aspirational levels of OBC and minority students differ significantly. OBC students' higher mean score indicates that, in comparison to their peers from minority communities, they usually have higher aspirations over their education or professions.

This notable discrepancy might be the result of differences in the social atmosphere, assistance with schooling, financial condition, or expectations of the community, all of which call for more qualitative and policy-based research.

**Objective 3.** To study the difference between the level of aspiration of scheduled caste students and minority students of Bundelkhand region.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Aspiration Levels Among Higher Secondary Students Belonging to Schedule Caste and Minority.**

Category	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
Schedule Caste	260	24.41	2.75	4.798	significant at 0.01 level
Minority	150	22.68	3.89		



**Graph 3: Comparative Analysis of Aspiration Levels of Schedule Caste and Minority Higher Secondary Students.**

To determine whether Scheduled Caste (SC) and minority students' levels of aspiration differ significantly, an independent samples t-test was used.

There were approximately 150 minority students and 260 SC students in the sample. Minority students achieved an aspiration level of 22.68 with a standard deviation of 3.89, while SC students were having an aspiration level of 24.41 with a standard deviation of 2.75. The t-ratio that was determined was 4.798. Based on this t-value, the difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The findings reveal that SC and minority students have significantly different levels of aspiration. While compared to minority students, SC students demonstrated a higher average

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level of aspiration. This implies that, on average, SC students might have higher aspirations for their education or professions, which could be impacted by things like exposure to education, awareness campaigns, or community support. The results highlight the significance of focused interventions and support networks in enhancing the goals of minority students.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to explore the nature of aspirations and levels of intelligence among SC, OBC, and Minority students at the intermediate level in the Bundelkhand region. The findings of the study clearly indicate that students from minority communities display significantly lower levels of aspiration than their SC and OBC counterparts. Among all three groups, OBC students recorded the highest average level of aspiration, followed by SC students.

These disparities suggest the influence of social, economic and cultural factors on educational and career aspirations. This result assumes significance as the Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh is still economically backward, rurally backward and deprived of quality educational facilities. These socio-economic challenges particularly affect students from disadvantaged backgrounds, making it difficult for them to compete equally in the academic and professional fields. The results highlight the urgent need for inclusive educational policies and support systems aimed at raising the aspirations of minority students, thereby promoting equity and opportunity across all social groups.

### ***Significance of the Study***

This study highlights significant differences in the aspiration levels of higher secondary students from different social groups OBC, SC, and minority communities. The findings show that students from minority communities display lower aspiration levels than their SC and OBC peers. Among the three groups, OBC students display the highest average aspiration levels, followed by SC students. The significance of this finding is particularly evident in the context of Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh, which is economically and educationally underdeveloped. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds in such regions often lack access to quality education and educational resources, which adversely affects their aspiration and ability to compete effectively. When students do not adequately form aspirations for their future by the time they reach the intermediate level, they face limited career opportunities and economic prospects. Caste-based discrimination continues in both overt and subtle forms, creating a hostile and demoralizing environment, particularly for SC and minority students. In classrooms, teachers may foster conscious or unconscious biases, which can negatively impact the evaluation of students' performance, their participation in academic activities, and overall motivation. Although there are many government schemes aimed at assisting SC, OBC, and minority students, the lack of proper monitoring, transparency, and accountability in the administration of these educational programs leads to inefficiency and corruption. This undermines trust in the system and prevents meaningful progress towards educational equity for marginalized communities. The research findings can help educators, policymakers, and social workers provide better targeted interventions to support these communities, improve educational outcomes, and empower students to overcome socio-economic barriers in the Bundelkhand region.

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***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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