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**A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESERVATION POLICIES IN  
INDIA'S EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SECTORS**

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**Abstract**

India's reservation policy, rooted in the Constitution, aims to address historical injustices and socio-economic disparities faced by marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). SCs constitute 16.6% of India's population, while STs, often referred to as India's indigenous population, make up 8.6%.<sup>4</sup> Despite India's development through the decades, SCs and STs continue to experience significant discrimination and exclusion. SCs are hindered by social discrimination based on the entrenched caste hierarchy, thus, limiting their access to economic and social benefits. On the other hand, the ST population remains isolated due to their geographic remoteness and distinct cultural, dialectal, and linguistic characteristics, preventing them from integrating into mainstream society. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law<sup>5</sup>, and reservations are a tool to ensure substantive equality. Reservation policies, or affirmative action<sup>6</sup>, were instituted to mitigate these disparities by ensuring reserved seats in educational institutions and the employment sector for SCs, STs, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This

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<sup>4</sup> Government of India, "Census of India, 2011" (Ministry of Home Affairs, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> The Constitution of India, art. 14.

<sup>6</sup> "Affirmative action" refers to the use of policies, legislation, programs, and procedures to improve the educational or employment opportunities of members of certain demographic groups (such as minority groups, women, and older people) as a remedy to the effects of long-standing discrimination against such groups (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affirmative%20action>. Accessed 19 May. 2024).

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research paper aims to analyze the effectiveness of reservation policies in uplifting the position of these groups in society.

**Keywords:** SCs, STs, OBCs, Reservations, Article 14, Equality, Education, Employment

## Introduction

In the bedrock of India's society, a nation rich in cultures, languages, and traditions, diversity plays a defining role. The Preamble of our Constitution reflects the nation's commitment to the principles of equality. At the core of India's democratic ethos lies Article 14 of the Constitution, a guiding principle that upholds the ideal of equality before the law. This principle, enshrined within the framework of India's governance, embodies the vision of a society where every individual is treated with fairness and dignity, regardless of their background or circumstances. However, the journey towards achieving this noble ideal has been fraught with challenges, particularly in addressing historical injustices and inequalities that have plagued marginalized communities for generations.

These include Scheduled Castes (SCs)<sup>7</sup>, Scheduled Tribes (STs)<sup>8</sup>, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). These groups have been denied access to education, employment, and social privileges in the past, leading to entrenched socio-economic disparities. Untouchability was a common practice among upper-caste Hindus against the lowest Varna of their social hierarchy, i.e. Shudras. Leaders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar advocated affirmative action to uplift the "untouchables" and marginalized groups.<sup>9</sup> The makers of the Constitution thus abolished untouchability and made the practice punishable.<sup>10</sup> To further mitigate these inequalities, the Government of India introduced the reservation policy to ensure representation and opportunities for these underprivileged communities in educational institutions, government employment, and legislatures.

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<sup>7</sup>The Constitution of India, art. 366 cl.(24).

<sup>8</sup>The Constitution of India, art. 366 cl.(25).

<sup>9</sup>Raj, M. S. Y. S., and Mr. P. Gokulraja, "An Analysis of Reservation System in India," International Journal of Research 2348–6848 (2015).

<sup>10</sup>The Constitution of India, art. 17.

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The reservation provided to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) is 15%, 7.5%, and 27%<sup>11</sup>, respectively in Central government educational institutions, the Parliament and Government Jobs.

Yet, the implementation of the reservation system is not without its challenges and complexities. Numerous amendments and significant debates mark the evolution of reservation policy. While it is intended to uplift the marginalized and promote social cohesion, critics argue that it may inadvertently perpetuate caste-based identities and create divisions within society. However, supporters of the reservation system maintain that it is necessary to address entrenched inequalities.

Despite the policy's successes, disparities remain, particularly at higher government and educational institutions. For instance, reservations have significantly increased literacy rates among SCs and STs, but their representation in premier educational institutions and senior government positions remains disproportionately low.

## Research Methodology

This paper is of a descriptive nature and is based on doctrinal and analytical research methods. The data has been collected exclusively from secondary sources including legal texts, scholarly articles, books, government reports, and case laws.

## Review of Literature

The literature review covers the existing body of research on affirmative action and reservation policies in India. The author has established the research gaps that the current study aims to fill.

1. *Borooah, V.K., Dubey, A. and Iyer, S., The Effectiveness of Jobs Reservation: Caste, Religion, and Economic Status in India*<sup>12</sup>- The paper examines the effectiveness of job reservation policies in improving economic opportunities for Scheduled Castes (SC) and

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<sup>11</sup>Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, "Reservation Policy" (13 FEB 2019).

<sup>12</sup>Borooah, Vani K., Amaresh Dubey, and Sriya Iyer "The effectiveness of jobs reservation: caste, religion and economic status in India." 38.3 *Development and Change*, pp. 423-445 (2007).

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Scheduled Tribes (ST) in India. Using employment data from the 55th NSS round, the authors analyze the probabilities of different social groups securing various types of employment. The study finds that job reservations have provided a modest boost (around five percentage points) to the employment rates of SC/ST individuals in regular salaried positions. The authors have suggested adopting alternative measures to improve the employment-related attributes of these groups would be more effective. The study focuses on data from 2007 and earlier, focusing on employment outcomes without discussing educational outcomes or more recent data trends.

2. *Thorat, A. Caste Quotas in India*:<sup>13</sup>Thorat has discussed the motivation behind bringing the reservation policy and examines its effectiveness for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) through a variety of reports and statistical analyses. The study utilizes the Lancet Commission Report on Reparations, Census of India 2011 data, the India Human Development Survey, the Social Attitudes Research in India, employment data from Indian Railways, and the Thorat Committee Report (2007). The author has evaluated the impact of quotas in state-run educational institutions, government employment, and the legislature. The findings suggest that while quotas have provided representation to marginalized groups, significant limitations remain in achieving true economic and social parity. While comprehensive, the paper lacks statistical analysis of recent data related to education and employment impacts.
3. *Sampurna Basu, An Economic Analysis of the Reservation Policy in India*<sup>14</sup>: This paper assesses the reservation policy's impact on providing better opportunities for SC and ST groups from an economic perspective. It identifies persistent issues like ambiguous data, child labour, and rent-seeking behaviors and suggests better screening methods to ensure equitable distribution of benefits. However, the study lacks analysis of the latest statistical data to understand the role of the caste system and the importance of reservation policy.

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<sup>13</sup>Amit Thorat, "Caste Quotas in India." Handbook on Economics of Discrimination and Affirmative Action, pp. 1–17 (Springer, 2023).

<sup>14</sup>Sampurna Basu "An Economic Analysis of the Reservation Policy in India." 28 *Pol'yPersp.* 1 (2021).

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4. *Soma Mandal, Caste and Reservation in India*<sup>15</sup>: This paper discusses the constitutional and political challenges the reservation system faces, including vacancies in reserved positions and the underrepresentation of SC/ST groups in various sectors. The author has also examined the impact of recent judicial decisions by the Uttarakhand High Court on reservations. However, the paper lacks quantitative analysis of the data and does not discuss the impact on the literacy level of the reserved categories.
5. *Dr. G. Yoganandham et al., An Evaluation of the Reservation System in India*<sup>16</sup>: The authors have descriptively evaluated the reservation system in India. The paper's primary focus is on the lack of scholarly focus on sub-quota systems within the broader reservation framework. The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the theories and dynamics of social and political mobilization, focusing on the current reservation system in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, while discussing the Supreme Court's rejection of the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act, 2018. The study is aimed at analyzing the need for reviewing the reservation policy within one state only.
6. *Thomas E. Weisskopf, Impact of Reservation on Admissions to Higher Education in India*<sup>17</sup>: This work analyzes empirical evidence on the consequences of reservation policies for admissions to higher educational institutions in India, highlighting the impact on SC and ST groups. The analysis is, however, primarily confined to higher education and does not extend to employment outcomes.
7. *Dinesha P.T., Reservation and Higher Education in India: An Overview*<sup>18</sup>: This paper reviews the status of reservation policies in higher education and their effect on the SC

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<sup>15</sup>Soma Mandal "Caste and Reservation in India." 6.2 *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* (2021).

<sup>16</sup>Dr. G. Yoganandham et al., "An Evaluation of the Reservation System in India" 11.3 *International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods* (2023).

<sup>17</sup>Thomas E. Weisskopf "Impact of Reservation on Admissions to Higher Education in India" *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp.4339-4349 (2004).

<sup>18</sup>Dinesha, P.T., Reservation and Higher Education in India: An Overview. 2.11 *Bulletin of Indian Society and Culture*, pp.28-40 (2015).

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and ST communities. It notes that while literacy rates have improved, enrolment in premier higher educational institutions like IITs, IISc, and IIMs remains low. The study again focuses mainly on education and does not discuss subsequent employment outcomes for SC/ST individuals.

## Research Objective

Existing research often concentrates on either educational or employment outcomes without giving an analysis of both areas. Many studies are based on data that is several years old.

Thus, they lack an analysis based on the latest available information. Also, there is a scarcity of detailed statistical analysis in some studies, especially concerning the recent effectiveness of reservation policies. This paper aims:

1. To study the background of the reservation system in India.
2. To analyse the impact of reservation in the education and employment sector.

## Ancient Origins and Caste System

The caste system in India originated around 2500 years ago, initially as a function-based social stratification known as 'Chaturvarna,' comprising Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Over time, this evolved into a rigid, hereditary-based system that placed Brahmins at the apex and Shudras at the lowest rung of the social ladder. This transformation led to the marginalization and exploitation of the lower castes, depriving them of intellectual, physical, and monetary powers and confining them to menial jobs.

## British Era Reforms

During British rule, initial efforts to address caste-based oppression began. Social reformers like Jyotirao Phule advocated for representing all classes in local bodies and services. The first government circular reserving posts for backward castes was issued by the Mysore government in 1895. Subsequently, states like Madras and Mysore introduced educational and employment reservations for backward communities. Notably, the

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Justice Party's policy in 1926 implemented caste-wise reservations in public appointments.

### **Post-Independence Constitutional Provisions**

After India gained independence in 1947, the Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, enshrined several provisions to promote social justice and equality. Articles such as 15(4), 16(3), 16(4), and 17 specifically targeted the upliftment of SCs, STs, and OBCs. Article 15(4) empowered the state to make special provisions for advancing socially and educationally backward classes, while Article 16(4) allowed reservations in public employment for these groups.

Article 17 abolished untouchability, a significant step towards eradicating caste-based discrimination.

### **Mandal Commission and Subsequent Developments**

In 1978, the Indian government appointed the Mandal Commission to identify and recommend measures for advancing OBCs. The commission's report, submitted in 1980, proposed a 27% reservation for OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions, in addition to the existing reservations for SCs and STs. Despite initial resistance, the recommendations were implemented in 1990, significantly impacting the reservation landscape.

The Mandal Commission's recommendations were based on the 1931 census, which led to debates about the criteria for backwardness and the need for updated data. Nonetheless, the implementation increased the reservation quota to 49.5%, accommodating OBCs alongside SCs and STs.

### **103rd Amendment**

In recent years, the reservation policy has continued to evolve. The Constitutional (103rd Amendment) Act of 2019 introduced a 10% reservation for economically weaker sections in the unreserved category, further expanding the scope of affirmative action. This

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Amendment aimed to address economic disparities while maintaining the existing reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs.<sup>19</sup>

## Important Judgements

### Indra Sawhney Vs. Union of India (The Mandal Case)<sup>20</sup>

This landmark judgement by the Supreme Court upheld the Union Government's decision to reserve 27% of government jobs for backward classes, excluding the creamy layer among them. The reservation was confined to initial appointments and not promotions, and the total reservation was capped at 50%. The decision validated two government orders while striking down the one reserving 10% of jobs for economically backward classes among higher castes. This case led to the addition of Articles 16(4-A) and 16(4-B) to the Constitution, allowing for reservation in promotions for S.C.s/S.T.s and exempting backlog vacancies from the 50% ceiling.

### M.R. Balaji and Ors. v. State of Mysore<sup>21</sup>

In this case, the State of Mysore's order to reserve 75% of seats in educational institutions for socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs) and S.C.s/S.T.s was challenged. The order was challenged on grounds of excessive reservation and the definition of backwardness. The Supreme Court struck down the reservation order, emphasizing that backwardness should be both social and educational, not solely based on caste. The Court also stressed that reservations should generally be less than 50% to maintain a balance.

### State of Madras v. Smt. ChampakanDorairajan<sup>22</sup>

The Madras government issued an order enforcing communal reservations in medical colleges, reserving seats based on caste. The Supreme Court struck down the reservation

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<sup>19</sup>Archana Srivastava, "Reservation in India: An overview," 2 ANVESH-A Multidisciplinary E-Journal for all Researches 1 (2021).

<sup>20</sup>AIR 1993 SC 477

<sup>21</sup>AIR 1963 SC 649

<sup>22</sup>[1951] S.C.R. 525



order, deeming it unconstitutional under Articles 15(1) and 29(2) of the Constitution, which prohibit discrimination based on caste, religion, sex, race, or place of birth.<sup>23</sup>

Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh v. Faculty Association<sup>24</sup>

In this case, reservation for a specific post in a medical institution was challenged, arguing that it amounted to 100% reservation. The Supreme Court ruled that reservation for a particular post is unconstitutional if it leads to 100% reservation, emphasizing the need to maintain a balance.

## Reservation in Education

Since independence, the Government of India has undertaken numerous measures to promote educational opportunities for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). These efforts are rooted in several constitutional provisions, including Articles 15(4), 29, 30, 45-46, and 350(A),<sup>25</sup> which aim to boost educational development and uplift marginalized communities.<sup>26</sup>

Article 15(4) of the Constitution empowers the State to make special provisions for advancing socially and educationally backward classes, including SCs and STs.<sup>27</sup>

The importance of education as a tool for advancing SCs is well-recognized. In line with this, the Indian government currently reserves 15 per cent of seats for SCs in universities and colleges, as stipulated by Article 15(4) of the Constitution. Further, State governments also observe different rates of reservation based on the size of their SC populations. These measures aim to provide equitable access to education for historically marginalized groups.

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<sup>23</sup>Neelabh Keshav Sinha, "All About Reservation Policy in India," available at: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/reservation-policy-india/> (last visited on May 19, 2024).

<sup>24</sup>AIR 1998 SC 1767

<sup>25</sup>The Constitution of India.

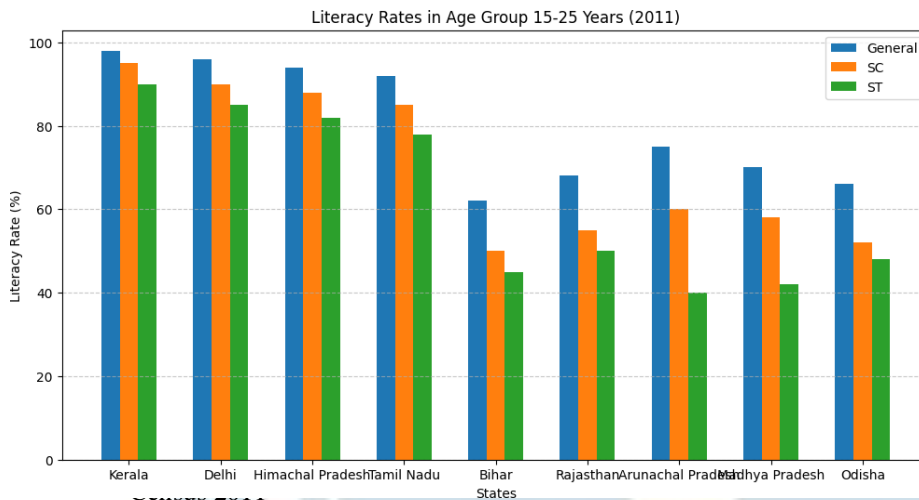
<sup>26</sup>Dr. Manosanta Biswas, "Reservation Policy in India: Urge for Social Justice and Equality in Education and Government Services," 5 International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR) 80 (2018).

<sup>27</sup>The Constitution of India, art. 15

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Article 29 of the Constitution protects the interests of minorities, ensuring that no citizen is denied admission to any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving state funds based solely on religion, caste, language, or any combination of these factors.<sup>28</sup> This provision further underscores the commitment to nondiscrimination and equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens.



The Bar diagram represented in Figure 1 clearly shows that the general population exhibits higher literacy rates across most states in the 15-25 age group. Meanwhile, the literacy rates among SCs are generally lower than those of the general population, with STs exhibiting the lowest literacy rates among the three groups.

The analysis reveals that while literacy rates among SCs and STs have improved due to reservation policies, disparities persist. The role of state-specific policies is also essential, as some states show high literacy rates while others lag.

This has been possible due to supportive initiatives implemented by both the central and State governments. These include scholarship programs, stipends, special tutoring, and the provision of books, mid-day meals, stationery, and uniforms. For example, a scheme funded entirely by the central government provides four years of special and remedial tutoring to

<sup>28</sup>The Constitution of India, art. 29 cl.2

<sup>29</sup>Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, "Population and Housing Census 2011, Table PC11\_C13a" (2011) available at: [https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/data-visualizations/Literacy\\_Heatmap-Chart](https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/data-visualizations/Literacy_Heatmap-Chart)

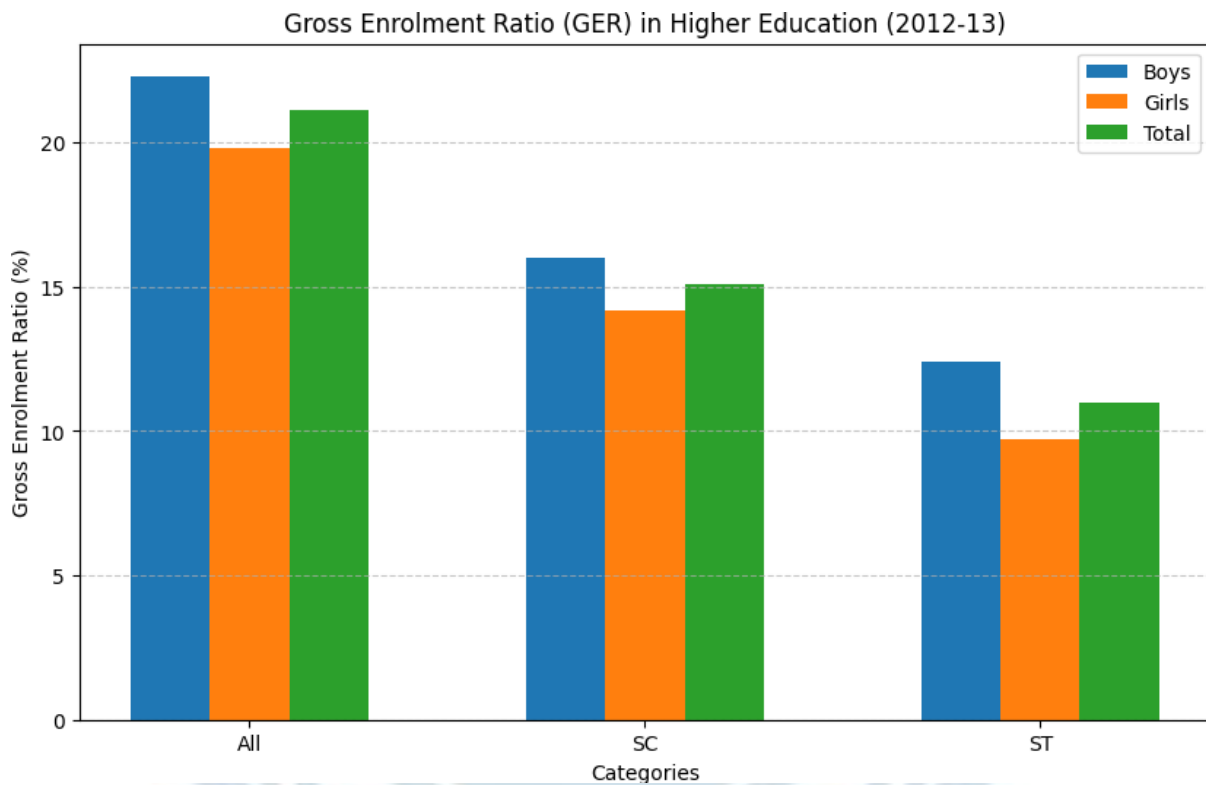
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select secondary school students, helping them gain admission to universities and technical institutions.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, if we talk about higher education, the Bar diagram represented in Figure 2 shows significant disparities in higher education enrolment rates.

**Figure 2**



Source: AISHE 2012-13<sup>31</sup>

The general population has the highest GER, with boys at 22.3%, girls at 19.8%, and a total of 21.1%.

- Scheduled Castes (SC) show lower GERs, with boys at 16%, girls at 14.2%, and a total of 15.1%.
- Scheduled Tribes (ST) have the lowest GERs, with boys at 12.4%, girls at 9.7%, and a total of 11%.

<sup>30</sup>Supra note 16

<sup>31</sup>MHRD, "Selected Educational Statistics, AISHE-2012-13 (Key Results) Report" (2012).

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The lower GER among SCs and STs indicates the ongoing challenges these communities face in accessing higher education despite affirmative action policies.

### Reservation in Government Jobs

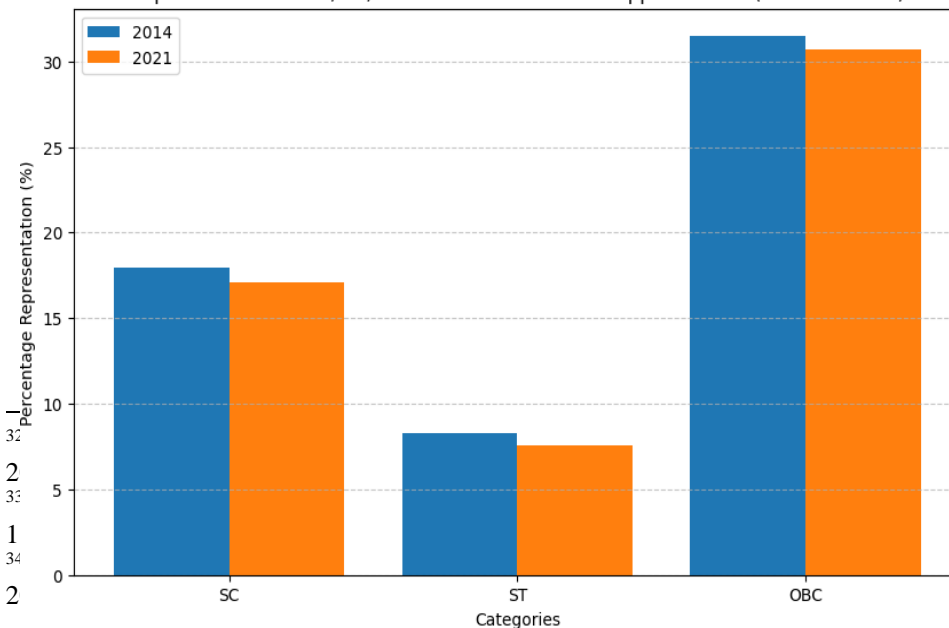
The reservation system in India goes beyond education and applies to public employment to ensure fair representation of historically marginalized communities. The constitution includes provisions in various articles related to reservation in government jobs under the umbrella of protective discrimination, such as articles 16(4), 320(4), and 335.<sup>32</sup>

Article 16 of the Indian Constitution guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. However, clause (4) of this article provides the state with the authority to make provisions for the reservation of appointments or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens that, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state. This clause is a cornerstone of affirmative action in public employment, allowing the state to address historical imbalances in representation.

Article 335 of the Constitution further specifies that “the claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a state.”<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 3**

Representation of SC, ST, and OBC in Government Appointments (2014 vs. 2021)



ers and Distributors, New Delhi, Publication, Delhi, 1995).  
 linary E-Journal for all Researches  
 es data," Hindustan Times, Feb. 9,

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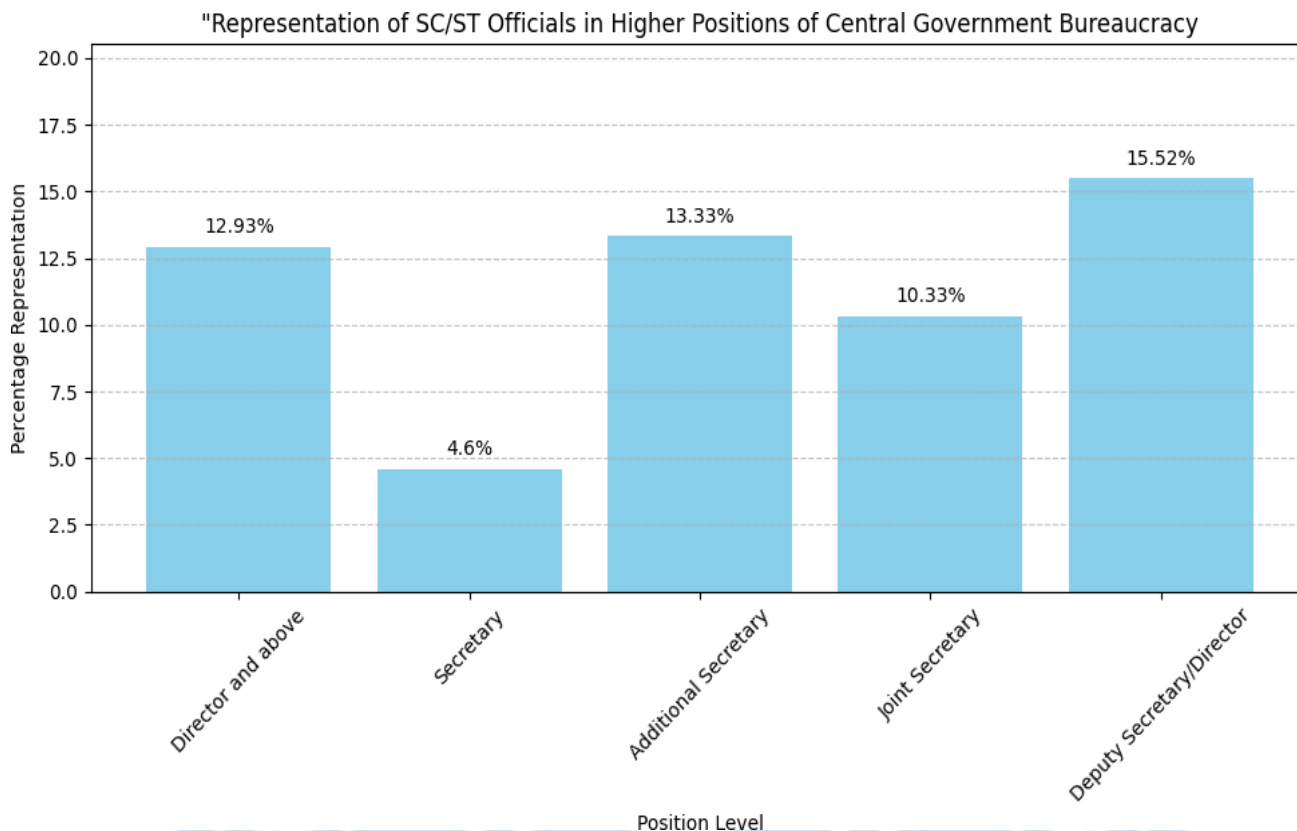
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Now, according to the data provided by the Ministry on the representation of SC, ST, and OBC in government appointments for 2014 and 2021, as shown in Figure 3, the percentages of appointments have been above the reserved percentages of 15%, 7.5%, and 27%, respectively which shows how crucial the reservation policy was in securing government jobs for these underprivileged or backward classes.

However, if we go deeper into the analysis and look for the promotion rates of these groups in government positions, we'll find a significant lag. Figure 4 clearly shows that the representation of SC/ST officials at the higher levels of government jobs has been below 22.5%, which is the minimum percentage of reservations( 15% for SCs+ 7.5% for STs).

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**Figure 4**

Source: The Print<sup>35</sup>

### Key Analysis

Despite improvements due to reservation policies, SCs and STs still lag behind the general population in literacy rates. The disparities are more pronounced among STs. Whereas, in the employment sector, despite adequate entry-level representation, there is a significant lag in the promotion rates of SCs and STs to higher-level positions. This suggests ongoing challenges in achieving true equality within the workforce hierarchy.

### Suggestions

Firstly, reliable and up-to-date data is essential for making informed policy decisions. The government should conduct more frequent census surveys or implement smaller, census-like

<sup>35</sup>Risha Chitlangia, "House panel flags low SC/ST representation in top govt posts — ‘as low as 4.8% against 22.5% quota’," The Print, Aug. 1, 2023.

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surveys to regularly update demographic data and better understand the needs of minority communities.

Secondly, to address the disparities in literacy and higher education enrolment, existing support programs should be expanded. This includes increased funding for scholarships, special tutoring programs, and infrastructure improvements in government schools.

Furthermore, since educational outcomes vary significantly across states, targeted interventions that address each state's specific needs and challenges should be developed. States with lower literacy and enrolment rates should receive additional support and resources.

Lastly, to address the lag in promotion rates, the government should implement career development programs for SC and ST employees in government jobs. These programs should include leadership training, mentorship programs, and policies that ensure fair promotion practices.

## Conclusion

While reservation policies in India have made significant strides in improving educational and employment opportunities for SCs and STs, substantial disparities remain. In the education sector, SCs and STs still exhibit lower literacy and enrolment rates than the general population, underlining the need for improved measures. Although representation in entry-level government jobs meet the reserved quotas in the employment sector, promotion rates for these groups remain low, indicating barriers to career advancement. To address these challenges, it is crucial that continued efforts and policies are made to ensure that marginalized communities have equal access to education, employment, and social opportunities, thereby achieving the goal of our constitutional makers, i.e., a more inclusive and equitable society. Lastly, in this research paper the authors mainly focused on quantitative data to interpret the role of reservation policy, whereas in uplifting the discriminated castes, the Government has taken several other measures also, hence there is a scope for stakeholders and researchers for qualitative analysis of implementation of other policies as well.

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12. Soma Mandal "Caste and Reservation in India." 6.2 *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* (2021).

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