Effect of Caste-based Reservation in India on Employment Status of Non-reserved Category

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INTRODUCTION

Many government policy makers are concerned about the implementation of policies regarding discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race, caste, creed, gender, etc., especially if the discrimination has a historical legacy. One such historical legacy of discrimination is the CASTE SYSTEM in India in response to which an affirmative action policy was implemented in the form of reservation of seats in government jobs and educational institutions for historically disadvantaged groups. The CASTE SYSTEM in India was a social hierarchy that divided Hindus on the basis of 4 castes:

- Brahman
- Kshatriyas
- Vaishyas
- Shudras

The RESERVATION SYSTEM: The Constitution of India has recognized 3 minority disadvantaged castes, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Seats in government jobs and educational institutions are reserved for them. Currently, 15% seats are reserved for SC, 7.5% for ST and 27% for OBC.

The intent of introducing reservations was the upliftment of the disadvantaged groups by giving them the same place in society as the advantaged groups [1]. However, there has been an on-going debate on whether the reservation system is putting the non-reserved or the Open category at a disadvantage since they have to compete for seats on the basis of merit alone and reservation leaves very few seats available for them, [2].

DOES THE CASTE-BASED RESERVATION IN JOBS PUT NON-RESERVED CATEGORY AT A DISADVANTAGE?

METHODOLOGY

- The data set is obtained from Wave 4 (2001) and Wave 6 (2012) of the World Values Survey. Software STATA has been used to generate bar graphs on education levels, employment status and opinion on private and government ownership of business of participants to help examine the effect of reservation on the employment status of non-reserved (open) category individuals.
- The graphs obtained for Wave 4 and Wave 6 are compared with each other to see the effect of reservation over the years from 2001 to 2012, on the employment status of open category.

RESULTS

ABSTRACT

Before independence from the British rule in 1947, Hindus in India were divided by 4 prominent castes: Brahmins (teachers and preachers), Kshatriyas (kingship and warriors), Vaishyas (businessmen and merchants) and Shudras (laborers and servants also considered untouchables), in ascending order. The suppression of the lower castes at the hands of upper castes laid the foundation of reservation in jobs and educational institutions for disadvantaged groups in the Indian Constitution which was drafted in 1950. Initially, the primary beneficiaries of reservation were the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, however, in 1990, Other Backward Classes also started receiving the benefits of the Reservation System. Critics of this system are of the opinion that reservation puts the non-reserved (Open) category individuals at a disadvantage because they compete for seats in jobs and educational institutions based on merit alone. This study looks at the effect of caste-based reservation on the employment status of non-reserved category individuals. The findings indicate that there is no negative effect of reservation on the employment status of non-reserved category individuals.

Figure 1: Highest level of Education attained by ethnicity

Figure 2: Employment status by ethnicity

Figure 3: Opinion on Private vs. Government ownership of business and industry by ethnicity

KEY FINDINGS

- The percentage of participants who receive a university degree has increased for OBC and SC/ST categories. At the same time, there is very little change in the percentage of participants who receive a university degree for open category, indicating that the reservation system has not really affected this population negatively.
- Looking at the percentage of participants unemployed, the percentage has decreased for all 3 categories but the larger difference is for open category which indicates that reservation did not put open category participants at a very big disadvantage.
- The preference for private ownership of jobs versus government ownership of jobs has not changed much for open category. Ideally, there should have been a larger difference for open category if they were impacted negatively because of reservation.

CONCLUSION

- The findings indicate that caste-based reservation does not negatively impact the employment status of open category participants. There are instances where the reservation system is seen to benefit the disadvantaged minority categories without affecting participants of open category.
- For further research purposes, one can look at the effect of reservation on jobs in a particular industry like Information Technology (IT), manufacturing, education, agricultural, etc. This would give a deeper understanding as to how the reservation system is affecting the job industry and also throw light on the effectiveness of reservation.

REFERENCES


Picture Source: Mystery of India

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Data Source: The World Values Survey – Wave 4 and Wave 6

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