

The Impact of the Combined Influence of Perceived Discrimination on the Basis of Caste and Economic Class on Self-Efficacy

Shruti Menon^{1*}, Dr. Sangeeta Kamath²

ABSTRACT

Despite the progress India has made over the past few decades, economic class and caste-based discrimination exist to this day. We conducted a natural experiment in which four groups of participants were studied based on both economic class and caste which resulted in the following groups – (those belonging to lower economic class, those belonging to lower caste, those belonging to both lower caste and lower economic class and those not a member of either lower caste or lower economic class). The Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS) was administered to study the difference in the level of perceived discrimination among these four groups. All four groups were classified into high and low perceived discrimination based on EDS scores. Self-efficacy was then assessed to understand the influence of varying levels of discrimination (high and low) in all the groups. The findings of the study indicated that the group whose members belong to the lower economic class had higher scores on the Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS) than the group whose members belong to both lower caste and lower economic class. The findings of the study also indicated that discrimination on various grounds affects self-efficacy. However, the participants in all groups scored at the higher end of the average range of the self-efficacy scale. Furthermore, the impact on self-efficacy did not differ with the difference in the level of discrimination in each of the four groups. No significant difference was found in the self-efficacy among the individuals across the four groups who had perceived high levels of discrimination.

Keywords: *Self-Efficacy, Perceived Discrimination, Caste, Economic Class, India*

The caste membership and the economic class to which an individual belongs can be essential for the identity of the person and it also shapes the life experiences of individuals to a great extent. The Indian caste system is the world's longest-surviving social hierarchy and it continues to be an essential component of Indian society even today. This social hierarchy comprises of – Brahmins (priests or scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors or kings), Vaishyas (merchants) and Shudras (laborers). The groups that have long been discriminated against are Dalits or untouchables, also referred to as lower castes who lie at

¹Student, Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College, Mumbai, India

²Faculty, Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College, Mumbai, India

*Corresponding Author

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the bottom of this hierarchy (Sankaran, Sekerdej et al, 2017). Those belonging to high castes in the social hierarchy are recognized as the General category. The economic class of individuals is usually transferred to an individual from their ancestors. Belonging to a particular caste and economic class has a multitude of implications and the most damaging one is discrimination.

Discrimination is unequal treatment which is based on social structures that allow one group to maintain power and privileges over others (Krieger, 1999). Perceived discrimination refers to the distinct stressful life experiences of unfair treatment based on personal attributes (Banks et al, 2006). Legislative measures have been provided to uplift those who belong to the lower castes who are recognized as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) as well the economically disadvantaged sections of the society. Affirmative action is carried out by reserving the seats for individuals in educational institutions and workplaces. Although measures have been taken to ensure representation, violence and discrimination on the grounds of caste continue to occur to this day. The official data on overall crimes against SCs (NCRB) reveals that on average, about 32,000 cases have been registered annually, between 1995 and 2015. Loss of self-esteem and confidence, detrimental effects on education, lower earnings, reduced career prospects, depression, social isolation, and reduced access to social provisions are only some of the short-term and long-term effects that caste discrimination has (Metcalf & Rolfe, 2010). Additionally, caste-based discrimination may lead people from the lower castes to have lower levels of education, employment, access to services, socioeconomic status, and per capita income and the same inequality can also arise if groups differ in relevant economic classes (Dovidio et al, 2000). The study by Dovidio further revealed that among the SC community, their psychological, social and physical well-being is threatened by caste-based stigma.

Albert Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy in the year 1977, and since then a lot of researchers have taken a keen interest in this topic. Wood and Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action which are required to meet situational demands. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy beliefs help determine the choices people make, the effort they put forth, the persistence and perseverance they display in the face of difficulties, and the degree of anxiety or serenity they experience as they engage in the myriad tasks that comprise their life. Self-efficacy has a role to play in how an individual interprets feedback (Silver et al, 1991). It exerts influence over an individual's affective reactions to the task and can influence the self-regulatory processes which can further impact the subsequent performance of an individual (Gist et al, 1989; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Bandura, 1989).

Although much research has been conducted on the influence that discrimination based on caste and economic class has on a person's life in terms of their self-esteem and achievement motivation, there is a gap in research when it comes to understanding the effect of discrimination on self-efficacy in the Indian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While simply belonging to a particular caste and economic class can have its effects, an additional burden that has to be borne by some individuals is discrimination. Everyday discrimination refers to routine practices wherein the daily attitudes and behaviors of

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individuals reflect systematic and institutional bias (Essed, 1991; Harrell, 2000). Even though there is a difference between perceiving that one's group experiences discrimination and being discriminated against, research suggests that there can be a harmful impact on the psychological well-being of an individual even when an individual only perceives that their group is discriminated against (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2014). Although the effects of discrimination in the Indian context have been studied from various aspects, the perceived discrimination experienced by individuals has not been evaluated. Further, the implications that discrimination can have on the self-efficacy of individuals also remain yet to be explored.

It is often debated whether discrimination based on caste and economic class persists and there is evidence that indicates that it does. A study conducted by Khubchandani et al. in 2017 which evaluated the perceived discrimination in pregnant women in rural India found that OBC women were twice as likely and SC/ST women were four times as likely as women of the general caste to report ever experiencing discrimination. These women are more likely to accept this discrimination as a way of life and keep it to themselves. This study additionally highlighted how important it is to reduce discrimination to improve the mental health of individuals who are vulnerable to discrimination (Khubchandani et al, 2017). The effects of caste discrimination are also seen in the occupational sector. Applicants from low-caste applicants need to send 20% more resumes than high-caste applicants to get the same call-back (Siddique, 2011). These studies indicate that caste-based discrimination continues to occur.

Another factor that will be studied in this research is the economic status of an individual. It affects the resources that an individual possesses and to a great extent how people are treated by others. It is usually encompassed in the term that is called the socio-economic status which apart from the annual family income also includes the occupation and the education of individuals. Individuals continue to be widely discriminated against based on their socioeconomic status. A systematic review and meta-analysis revealed that the low socio-economic status of an individual is positively correlated with being the victim of bullying (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Bullying can negatively impact the physical and mental health of the individual. It can also affect the self-concept of an individual. Discrimination in a school setting may include the differential treatment and differential expectations that teachers have from students belonging to high and low-status children (Vaan Laar & Sidanius, 2001; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). People from low socio-economic status often face a dearth of resources and also, have to consistently deal with scarcity and unpredictability. This may give rise to cognitive processes where individuals lean towards external factors, threats, constraints and others when perceiving and understanding situations and behaviour. This is called the contextualist social-cognitive tendencies (Kraus et al, 2012). This might affect the appraisal process of individuals which is a factor that may affect the self-efficacy of an individual.

Discrimination can have a significant impact on various aspects of a person's life. Achievement motivation is a variable that is significantly affected by the caste of an individual (Adsul & Minchekar, 2008). Forward and scheduled caste students were found to have higher achievement motivation while students from backward and nomadic tribes had below-average achievement motivation. This study found that economic conditions did not affect achievement motivation. However, other studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between economic conditions and achievement motivation (Alam, 2001).

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Experiences of discrimination are particularly impactful when they occur in schools and during interactions with government officials, as these institutions are supposed to provide equal treatment and create equal opportunities. This is especially relevant in the context of this study because the sample population were those who are a part of educational institutions and some may have just entered the job sector.

Discrimination can also have an impact on the health of individuals. A study found that high perceived discrimination was associated with both anxiety and depression for the entire sample of the population (Banks et al, 2006). Perceived discrimination has also been found to have a direct and indirect relationship with psychological well-being by lowering self-control (Jang et al, 2010). It influences an individual's perception of whether they can achieve goals and exert influence over the environment (Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Ross & Mirowsky, 2013). Sense of control was found to mediate this relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being. Having a diminished sense of control can affect an individual's attributions of situations, especially negative ones (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Discrimination affects an individual by putting external restraints on them as is seen in the case of caste discrimination where they are denied jobs because of their caste. A study has revealed that individuals may internalize external constraints (Wuepper & Drost, 2016; Wuepper & Sauer, 2016). These individuals are capable but the external restraints have acted as a barrier once and so this may affect an individual's belief in themselves when they have a similar opportunity even when these constraints or circumstances are absent.

The various factors that are affected by discrimination have also been found to be linked to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a significant predictor of an individual's academic performance (Köseoğlu, 2015). Self-efficacy facilitates the employment of metacognitive strategies and cognitive resources such as controlling impulses when learning complex material, manipulating one's motivation and efforts under taxing situations. Further, another study by Liu and Cheng in 1970 revealed that self-efficacy has a significant relationship with the achievement motivation of individuals. They also reported that self-identity and hope moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and achievement motivation (Liu & Cheng, 1970). Self-identity refers to the relatively prominent and stable aspects of how one perceives themselves and even this factor may be influenced by experiences of discrimination.

Based on the theoretical analysis of determinants of self-efficacy conducted by Gist and Mitchell in 1992, some of the factors that influence self-efficacy include the skills and knowledge of an individual, their health, self-esteem, assessment of resources and the sense of control over the environment, all of which are negatively impacted by discrimination (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). They also talked about the four sources of self-efficacy as given by Bandura - mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and their physiological state. These sources have also been found to be affected by discrimination. A study by Crocker et al in 1989 revealed that experiences of discrimination can reduce the self-esteem of individuals. Individuals who experience negative events of discrimination tend to internalize these negative feelings (Crocker & Major, 1989). These negative feelings as well as low self-esteem can affect an individual's performance on tasks which may inhibit them from achieving mastery. When individuals observe how other people belonging to the same class and caste are treated, it may also influence their self-efficacy.

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Additionally, the daily experiences of individuals may be marked by the differential treatment which is given to them by people and this includes people continuously looking down upon them and discouraging them. Pain, distress, humiliation, and discouragement were experienced by individuals who had experienced discrimination and perceived the discrimination against them (Jadhav et al, 2016; Guru 2011; Sukumar, 2008). Research has further shown that the psychological and physiological consequences of discrimination are similar to how people respond to psychosocial stressors (Dion, 2002; Clark et al, 1999). This can also have an influence on the physiological states of individuals when they have to face demanding situations.

The discussion until now has demonstrated that discrimination based on caste and economic class can have a significant impact on all of these factors which determine self-efficacy. Young adults who were a part of this study are at a phase of their lives wherein their actions have significant implications in the future. Hence, the study aims to evaluate the perceived discrimination among individuals who belong to lower caste, lower economic class, those who belong to both lower caste and lower economic class and those who are not a member of either lower caste or lower economic class. This study also aims to understand the combined influence of discrimination on the grounds of caste and economic class on the self-efficacy of individuals and examine the differences among various groups. If perceived discrimination is found to impact self-efficacy, steps can be taken to enhance it.

METHODOLOGY

Part 1 of the study

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested in this study:

Hypothesis: There will be no significant difference in the perceived discrimination as measured by EDS among the groups belonging to lower caste, lower economic class, those belonging to both lower caste and lower economic class and those who are not a member of either lower caste or lower economic class.

Method

A natural experiment was undertaken to test the hypothesis.

Variables

Independent variables

1. Caste - It refers to the strictly regulated community into which one is born. The government of India recognizes the General category, Scheduled Caste (SCs), Scheduled Tribe (STs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs). The affirmative action that is taken by the government, i.e., the reservation in educational institutions and governmental offices are made for SC, ST and OBC communities. Based on this criterion, this independent variable has two levels- the general category and the other category (SC, ST and OBC).
2. Economic class - In this study, it refers to the annual income of a family. The central government has extended a 10% reservation for individuals whose annual family income is below 8 lakhs. Based on this criterion, this independent variable has two levels - Upper economic class (Annual family income above 8 lakhs) and Lower economic class (Annual family income below 8 lakhs).

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Dependent variable

Perceived discrimination refers to distinct stressful life experiences of unfair treatment based on personal attributes (Banks et al, 2006). Discrimination faced by individuals based on economic class and caste was assessed by the Everyday Discrimination Scale (Williams & Mohammed, 2008). There were four groups of participants based on their caste and economic class membership.

Sampling

The method of snowballing through social media was used to gather data.

Instruments

Everyday Discrimination Scale

The EDS is a nine-item self-report scale that reflects the thoughts and beliefs of individuals about experiencing discrimination (Williams & Mohammed, 2008). The responses had to be given on a 6-point Likert scale. Response categories range from 1 (never) to 6 (experience discrimination almost every day) and higher scores indicate greater perceived discrimination.

Procedure

The participants were asked to provide certain demographic information (age, gender, caste, economic class, and level of education).

There were four groups of participants in this study-

- UEC – O – Those who belong to the upper economic class and the other category of caste (SC, ST and OBC).
- LEC – O – Those who belong to the lower economic class and the other category of caste (SC, ST and OBC).
- UEC – G – Those who belong to the upper economic class and the general category of caste.
- LEC – G – Those who belong to the lower economic class and the general category of caste.

Further, the EDS was administered to them via google forms. First, the four groups were compared to see if there is a significant difference among them in terms of perceived discrimination as measured by EDS scores and then further, post hoc analysis was conducted to find out between which groups the difference is significant.

Part 2 of the study

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference in the self-efficacy scores of individuals as measured by the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) between those who perceived high levels of discrimination and those who perceived low levels of discrimination.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant difference in the self-efficacy scores as measured by the GSE between those who perceived high levels of discrimination and those who perceived low levels of discrimination in each group.

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Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant difference in the self-efficacy scores as measured by GSE among the four groups who perceived high levels of discrimination.

Variables

Independent variable

Perceived discrimination – The perceived discrimination experienced by individuals as measured by the Everyday Discrimination Scale. The mean scores obtained within each group were considered to form two groups of individuals – high and low perceived discrimination.

High perceived discrimination condition – This refers to individuals with scores above the mean within each group.

Low perceived discrimination condition – This refers to individuals with scores below the mean within each group.

(The mean score of each group on the Everyday Discrimination Scale was used to determine whether individuals experienced high levels of discrimination or low levels of discrimination).

Dependent Variable

Self-efficacy as measured by the General self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1979).

Control Variables

Participants suffering from a mental disorder or a physical disability were not included in the study as it can have an impact on self-efficacy.

Instruments

The General Self-Efficacy Scale

It was developed by Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem in 1979. The scale was developed to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy. It assesses an individual's ability to cope with daily hassles and how well they can adapt after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. It is a 10-item scale and requires about four minutes on average to complete the test. The responses had to be given on a four-point Likert scale.

Procedure

Based on the EDS scores of the participants, the participants of each of the four broad groups were categorized into two groups – those experiencing high levels of discrimination and those experiencing low levels of discrimination. Further, the participants were administered the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2010). The self-efficacy scores of all the individuals who experienced high and low levels of perceived discrimination were compared. The scores on the self-efficacy scale of those who perceived low and high levels of discrimination in each of the four groups were compared. The purpose of assessing the self-efficacy scores of those who had experienced high or low levels of perceived discrimination was to study whether perceived discrimination affects the self-efficacy of individuals in each of the groups.

Further, the self-efficacy of the participants who belong to the subcategory of high level of perceived discrimination as determined by the EDS scores in all four groups were compared against each other. This was done to assess whether there was a difference in the self-efficacy scores among the four groups who had perceived high levels of discrimination. If the mean self-efficacy score for the group who belong to both lower caste and the lower

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economic class was lower than the mean self-efficacy score for the groups whose members don't belong to either lower caste or lower economic class, then from that we could infer that discrimination on the grounds of both caste and economic class had the largest impact on self-efficacy.

RESULTS

Table 1: Comparison of the EDS scores of all groups by Two-way ANOVA.

Groups (Source of Variance)	Mean	Variance	Df	f Value	Significance level
UEC – O	16.25	57.29	3	3.237515	0.05*
LEC – O	14.81	48.15			
UEC – G	16.90	38.41			
LEC – G	19.87	52.82			

$$f(3) = 3.237515 (p < 0.05)^*$$

Table 1 shows the results of the two-factor ANOVA that was conducted to see whether a significant difference lies in the perceived discrimination experienced as measured by EDS among the groups belonging to the lower caste, lower economic class, those belonging to both lower caste and lower economic class and those who are not a member of either lower caste or lower economic class. The null hypothesis was rejected as a significant difference was found in the EDS scores among the four groups [(f (3) =3.237515 (p < 0.05)].

Table 2: The differences in the EDS scores among the groups were evaluated using Tukey's HSD.

Groups (Treatment Pairs)	Mean	Q statistic	p-value	Significance Level
LEC-O and UEC-G	2.09	1.78	0.42	ns
LEC-O and LEC-G	5.06	4.32	0.01	p < 0.01**
UEC-G and LEC-G	2.96	2.53	0.18	ns

$$q = 4.320599 (p < 0.01) **$$

Tukey's HSD was conducted to see exactly between which two means the difference lies. The mean scores were lower for the LEC- O group (14.81) than UEC - G (16.90) group. However, no statistical difference was found in the EDS scores between the group whose members belong to both lower caste and lower economic class and those who are not a member of either lower caste or lower economic class.

The mean scores were higher for the LEC- G group (19.87) than LEC - O (14.81) group. A statistical difference was found in the EDS scores between those who belong to both lower caste and lower economic class and those belonging to the lower economic class.

The mean scores were lower for the UEC - G (16.90) group than for LEC - G (19.87). No statistically significant difference was found in the EDS scores between those who belong to the lower economic class and those who don't belong to either lower caste or lower economic class.

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Table 3: Comparison of the mean Self-Efficacy scores between those who scored high and low on EDS in all groups by t-test

Groups	Mean	Df	t stat	P – value	t critical value
Low on EDS	31.19	112	1.678799	0.05*	1.658573
High on EDS	29.86				

$t(112) = 1.678799 (p < 0.05)^*$

Table 3 shows the results of the independent t-test conducted to see whether the self-efficacy scores of individuals were affected by the discrimination experienced by individuals. A statistically significant difference was found in the self-efficacy scores of those who experienced low and high levels of perceived discrimination. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected as a significant difference was found in the self-efficacy scores as measured by GSE between those who perceived a low level of discrimination and those who perceived a high level of discrimination.

Table 4: Comparison of the self-efficacy scores of those who scored high and low on EDS in each of the groups by t-test.

Groups (Treatment pair)	Low EDS	High EDS	Df	t-stat	P-value	t-critical value	Significance level
UEC – O	33.31	30.9	13	1.562486	0.142181	2.160369	Ns
LEC – O	31.05	30.15	30	0.573244	0.570752	2.042272	Ns
UEC – G	30.36	29.38	26	0.889545	0.381867	2.055529	Ns
LEC – G	29.52	29.33	29	0.09	0.923814	2.04523	Ns

Table 4 shows the results of the independent t-test that was conducted for all four groups to see whether there is a difference in the self-efficacy scores between those who perceived high and low levels of discrimination. No statistically significant difference was found in the self-efficacy scores between those who perceived a low level of discrimination and those who perceived a high level of discrimination in each of the four groups.

Table 5: Comparison of self-efficacy scores among all those who scored high on EDS in each of the groups using one-way ANOVA.

Groups	Mean	Variance	Df	F value	p-value	F-critical	Significance level
UEC – O	30.9	19.43	3	0.332486	0.801878	2.802355	ns
LEC – O	30.15	12.30					
UEC – G	29.38	9.42					
LEC – G	29.33	32.95					

$f(3) = 0.801878 (ns)$

Table 5 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA which was conducted to see whether there is a difference in the self-efficacy scores among the four groups who perceived high levels of discrimination. The within-group differences had an f-value of 0.332486 which was

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not statistically significant. The difference among the self-efficacy scores of the four groups was not statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the self-efficacy scores as measured by the GSE among the four groups who perceived high levels of discrimination was validated.

DISCUSSION

The first aim of this experiment was to study whether a difference exists in the perceived level of discrimination as measured by EDS scores among those who belong to lower caste, lower economic class, those belonging to both lower caste and lower economic class and those who are not a member of either lower caste or lower economic class. A significant difference was found in the level of discrimination only between two groups, the group whose members belong to both lower caste and lower economic class and the group whose members belong to lower economic class. The EDS scores of the LEC – G group were more than that of the LEC – O group.

One of the reasons for the higher mean of the EDS scores could be that there were more females in the LEC – G group (66%) as compared to LEC - O (41%) which could have affected the scores. In India, especially in the past few years, the crimes against women have been rapidly increasing. Discrimination based on gender and differential treatment is prominent and this could have led to the increased scores. The factor that is common between the two groups is the economic class and the factor that varies is the caste and the other sources of discrimination. Individuals from the group whose members belong to the lower economic class and General category of caste may be more likely to be looked down upon because of their economic class by the members of their caste group. This may not happen in the group where the members are from lower economic class and SC, ST and OBC communities because of the shared experiences of discrimination that they have faced in the past decades. Additionally, participants who belong to lower economic class reported their caste as the reason why they receive differential treatment. On the other hand, the mean EDS scores were lower for the group whose members belong to lower caste and lower economic class. This can be attributed to the fact that the misguided notions of people regarding the caste system are changing and hence, leading to decreased discrimination based on caste. However, those from the general category might feel threatened because of the affirmative actions for the SC, ST and OBC communities.

Apart from these two groups, no significant difference was found between the other groups. The scale of EDS allows us to assess the discrimination that a person faces but it does not measure the discrimination that a person faces concerning a particular factor such as caste. As a part of the EDS questionnaire, the participants indicated the reasons they perceived to be the cause of differential treatment. In the data collected, the participants reported various sources of discrimination apart from caste and economic class such as gender, age, and sexual orientation which is common among the four groups. Since there are various reasons for discrimination in each of the groups, the difference between them might not have been significant. An important finding was that there was no significant difference in the level of discrimination experienced between the group whose members belong to both lower caste and lower economic class and the group whose members don't belong to either lower caste or lower economic class. Apart from the fact that members from both groups experience discrimination on various grounds, it also suggests that perhaps there is progress when it comes to the change in the mindset of people. Here it is important to acknowledge the fact that the participants were from the cities of Mumbai and Delhi where people from diverse

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religions and cultural and linguistic backgrounds live together. Hence, people might have learnt to co-exist with each other and look past the differences in caste and economic class. It was also found that there is no significant difference in the perceived discrimination experienced between the group whose members belong to the lower economic class and the group whose members don't belong to either lower caste or lower economic class. Here, the factor that varies is the economic condition. Perhaps no significant differences were found in the level of discrimination experienced as the caste of the individual serves as an advantage.

It was found that there is a significant difference in the self-efficacy scores of individuals as a function of the discrimination experienced. The mean self-efficacy scores were higher for the group experiencing lower levels of discrimination than the group experiencing higher levels of discrimination. Researchers have suggested that discrimination can affect the sources of self-efficacy and the results of this study suggest that discrimination does affect self-efficacy. This finding is important as self-efficacy is an important variable. Actions can be taken by educators to create awareness about the detrimental effects of discrimination and the importance of treating everyone equally with dignity and respect despite differences should be highlighted. Self-efficacy can be changed with the help of learning, feedback and experience (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Developing interventions that incorporate these three aspects can be used to enhance self-efficacy, furthermore, the root of the problem, discrimination should also be dealt with appropriately.

One important factor to be noted is that the scores on the self-efficacy scale in all the groups were at the higher end of the average range of the scale. Thus, the participants in the group experiencing high levels of discrimination did not have low scores on self-efficacy. This study also examined the differences in self-efficacy between those who had experienced high and low levels of discrimination in each of the four groups and it was found that there was no significant difference. Even among those who had experienced high levels of discrimination, only a few of them stated caste and economic class as the cause of discrimination. Despite facing discrimination on other grounds, factors influencing the self-efficacy of an individual such as mastery experiences and social persuasion may not have been affected. Discrimination impacts the sources of self-efficacy as theorized by Bandura. All the participants in this study went to educational institutions. The effects of discrimination may have been remedied in the educational institutions, peer groups as well as families of the individuals.

The studies of sources of self-efficacy have been mostly correlational, than causal. Hence, we cannot say that these are the only sources which cause a person to have high self-efficacy. There can be various factors in between that may be mediating the relationships between the sources and self-efficacy or other factors that may be protecting the self-efficacy of individuals despite the discrimination. Further, emphasis has been placed on the four sources given by Bandura and other possible explanations have not been explored.

The social identity theory states that members belonging to a particular group are motivated to protect their self-esteem and achieve a positive and distinct social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). People may engage in discrimination to maintain their positive identity. Applying this theory to the Indian context, those belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities and those who belong to the lower economic class may identify strongly with their group which could be protecting their self-efficacy against discrimination.

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Some other factors which could have led to the absence of a significant difference in the self-efficacy of those who experienced high and low levels of discrimination could be the attributional styles of an individual. In a study conducted by Tan and Tan in 2013 on Singaporean students, it was found that the tendency to attribute pervasive, personal and permanent factors to good events positively correlated with high academic self-efficacy (Tan & Tan, 2013). The tendency to attribute bad events to internal and enduring causes is inversely related to low academic self-efficacy. The attributional styles of the individuals were not explored but positive attributional styles may have led to higher self-efficacy.

The invitational theory proposed by Purkey and Novak is believed to contribute to the development of self-efficacy (Purkey & Novak, 1996). It refers to the beliefs people develop about themselves and others that help form the lens through which they view the world and interpret their experiences. This theory posits that people send messages to themselves that are uplifting and this helps them to realize their potential. In a study conducted by Usher and Panjares in 2005, they found invitations to be a source of academic self-efficacy beliefs (Usher & Pajares, 2005). These invitations are not received but rather sent to us by ourselves. Positive invitations convey to us that we are valuable, capable, and negative invitations suggest that people are incapable and not valued. Sufficient research has not been conducted on this subject, however, invitations could also be a factor affecting the self-efficacy of individuals. Even in the presence of discrimination, the positive invitations that people send to themselves may have a role to play in their high self-efficacy.

The hypothesis that there would be no difference in the self-efficacy scores among the four groups that perceived a high level of discrimination was validated. This hypothesis was tested to see whether even among the people who face higher levels of discrimination in the four groups, the self-efficacy would be lower for the group whose members belong to both the lower economic class and lower caste. However, no such difference was found. All four groups had self-efficacy which lies in the higher range. A study conducted by Noh and Kaspar in 2003 revealed that the link between perceived discrimination and depression is mitigated by greater family support (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Similarly, all the individuals who are experiencing discrimination on various grounds might be receiving support from their family and peers which might be protecting their self-efficacy from the negative consequences of discrimination.

Limitations and future research

This study was conducted in India and the participants were from metropolitan cities such as Mumbai and Delhi. The cases of outright discrimination tend to be fewer in cities but they continue to occur in rural areas where a majority of India's population resides. Studies should be conducted in rural areas to understand the prevalence of discrimination based on caste and economic class, and additionally how they impact the self-efficacy of individuals.

This study employed the Everyday Discrimination Scale to assess the discrimination faced by individuals. The reasons for the discrimination could be anything ranging from the caste of a person to their religion. Developing and using a scale that specifically assesses the discrimination faced by people based on caste and economic class will help us to get a better understanding of their experiences.

Further, this scale only assesses explicit instances of discrimination. However, often in our day-to-day life, people may be exposed to micro-aggressions, which are brief statements or

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behaviours which connote a negative perspective regarding a minority group. However, these are not assessed by the scale. Hence, it is also important the scale used to assess discrimination based on caste and economic class assesses these micro-aggressions as well.

Another one of the limitations of this study was the limited sample size. In further studies, the sample size could be larger so that we can draw more generalizable inferences from the studies.

Further, this study was conducted on people between the age group of 16-25. This is the population who are currently in the education sector and is more progressive. Studying the older population might help us to understand whether the pervasiveness of discrimination differs based on the age group.

CONCLUSION

Discrimination has been prevalent in our society for as long as we can remember. The grounds on which people get discriminated against keep changing but the discriminatory acts remain. Apart from being inherently wrong, discrimination can have a multitude of negative effects on the lives of people. This study revealed that there is a difference in the perceived discrimination between those who belong to both lower caste and lower economic class, and those who belong to lower economic class. This difference highlighted factors such as the threat to the safety of women which might be the reason behind their increased discrimination scores. However, no significant difference was found among the other groups. This finding is also important as it draws attention to the fact that differential treatment is experienced by a majority of the sample on various grounds such as their religion, age, sexual orientation and physical appearance.

It was found that perceived discrimination does influence the self-efficacy of individuals. Although there was a significant difference in the self-efficacy scores of those experiencing low and high levels of discrimination, the scores of those experiencing high levels of discrimination were also at the higher end of the average range of self-efficacy scores.

Further, there was no significant difference in the self-efficacy scores of those who reported experiencing high and low levels of discrimination in each of the four groups. This finding points us towards the other factors that could be remedying or lessening the effects of discrimination on self-efficacy such as the attributional styles of the individuals, the support they receive from their family and friends and the invitations that they send to themselves.

Further, no difference was found in the self-efficacy scores among the four groups who had experienced a high level of discrimination. These findings have important implications in real life as they suggest that there are factors which can protect the self-efficacy of individuals despite facing discrimination such as the support one receives from friends and families. This is important because apart from raising awareness about discrimination, interventions can be developed based on these protective factors to rebuild the self-efficacy of individuals.

Discrimination has deleterious effects on the life of an individual. Although it might be possible for us to enhance factors such as self-efficacy, we must deal with the root cause, which is discrimination. Until we deal with the discrimination and create awareness about

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how even the most subtle display of discrimination can have an impact on the individuals who have to go through it, and work on changing the thought processes of those who engage in discrimination, people's lives and various aspects of it like their mental and physical health, self-esteem, self-efficacy and so on will continue to be affected.

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Conflict of Interest

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TABLES

Table 1 – Two-factor ANOVA without replication (Comparison of the EDS scores of all four groups)

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	1925.054688	31	62.09853831	1.384254552	0.118754184	1.574697972
Columns	435.7109375	3	145.2369792	3.237515004	0.025706722	2.70250904
Error	4172.039063	93	44.86063508			
Total	916.0392157	50				

$f(3) = 3.237515$ ($p < 0.05$)*

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Table – One-way ANOVA (Comparison of self-efficacy scores of all those who scored high on EDS in each of the groups using one-way ANOVA).

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	19.03665158	3	6.345550528	0.33248609	0.801878385	2.802355176
Within Groups	897.0025641	47	19.08516094			
Total	916.0392157	50				

$f(3) = 0.801878$ (ns)