

# Introducing Privilege and Oppression in Classrooms

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## Abstract

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*Education is a powerful tool that can be used to deepen the understanding of systemic privileges and institutionalised oppression present in our society. This paper focuses on a classroom intervention module that seeks to provide an understanding of the concept of privilege and oppression and how it manifests in the Indian context. This module, titled "Privilege and Oppression" is part of a larger intervention addressing intersectional social inequalities arising out of hierarchies of gender, caste, religion and class. The module discusses the concept of privilege and oppression, it forms a base for further discussions on other systemic oppressions. The module uses constructive activities to create an understanding of the concept and uses discussions to build upon the foundation that the students have about privilege and oppression. The reflections of the students are analysed to understand the outcome of the intervention. The analysis of outcomes shows that the module is successful in imparting knowledge about privilege and oppression.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Horace Mann, an American educational reformer stated that education is the "great equaliser of the conditions of men" (Massachusetts, 1848). The education system could indeed make a level ground where individuals from different socio-economic strata could assemble

and have access to free and quality public education. Unfortunately, the inverse could also be true. The same education system could be used to invigorate the existing biases and prejudices thus normalise disequilibrium prevailing in the society. Education could provide the opportunity to recognise the systems

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of privilege and systematic oppression that is embedded in the society they live in.

This module of privilege and oppression is the first module of an intersectional pedagogy that addresses the intersectional nature of social inequalities in the Indian context. The intersectional pedagogy seeks to create a platform for discussing the intersectional nature of the oppressive structures in our society. The intervention opens with the concept of privilege and oppression since it is viewed as the best way to set up a base from which discussion on various other social systems can take place.

Privilege and oppression are passed down through a combination of several factors such as social capital, cultural capital, dominant myths, prejudices and bias. A classroom is a dwelling place of various types of privilege that comes along the lines of gender, caste, religion, class and disability. The intervention aims to examine the student's level of understanding of the concept of privilege and oppression. Examining privilege is a tough task since the participants have varied responses to the concept of privilege. Participants who have the privilege could feel attacked or blamed for having the privilege. Those who don't have the privilege could feel out of sorts due to lack of privilege. The objective of the intervention is to make the participants understand the concept of privilege, how it subsists in the society they exist. Understanding

of the issue better would aid the participants to move towards the dialogue, advocacy and acceptance.

### **THEORISING OPPRESSION AND PRIVILEGE**

Social oppression is a situation in which a single group in the society is in a situation to exercise power over and take advantage of another group using dominance and subordination. The situation is created as a result of a complex interplay between power, inequality, multiple oppressions arising out the established order (Glasberg and Shannon, 2011). The situation enables a socially sanctioned exploitation and humiliation of the oppressed group by a group who holds relative power than the oppressed (Wormer and Besthorn, 2017).

Social oppression sorts people into hierarchies based on gender, caste, class, sexuality, and ability. The hierarchical system benefits a dominant group by oppressing the other. The dominant group has greater access to resources and power and gains this access and power at the expense of the oppressed. The oppressed also face systematic humiliation, exploitation, and abuse from the dominant groups. Social oppression is permeated through the societal values, assumptions, practices. It can be seen in societal interactions, social structures and ideologies. It is very difficult to perceive because its eternal presence makes it difficult to see.

The concept of privilege—that some people have unearned

special advantages that are mostly unacknowledged— has a long history. W. E. B. Du Bois, coined the term “psychological wage” to illustrate the difference in treatment that was dished out to poor whites and poor blacks. Psychological wage refers to special statuses granted exclusively to poor white people. They had unrestricted access to public functions and public places. Better schooling and job prospects were made available to them. Public officials, legislation and law enforcement cajoled them. The newspapers were empathetic to the causes behind their poverty. At the same time, poor blacks were ignored, ridiculed and treated with disgust (Du Bois, 1935). Noel Ignatin (1967) and Theodore W. Allen (1969) build on this foundation and analysed white skin privileges which manifest in forms such as the white monopoly over skilled jobs, better housing and standard of living, among others.

The concept came on to its own after in the 90s when Peggy McIntosh defined privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets” (McIntosh, 1988). McIntosh identifies and illustrates how the unacknowledged privileges through a series of examples which describes how race and gender positions affect the feelings of belongingness, security and self-worth. Apart from this, privileges also favour some through better representation and provisions for access to social resources. McIntosh compares the white privilege to an “invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps,

passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks”. These privileges are an elusive and fugitive topic. These race privileges favour one group and enable them to be confident, comfortable, and oblivious at the cost of oppressing other groups by forcing them to be unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated.

The understanding of oppression and privilege and its effects on the learning outcomes of those who were left behind gave rise to social justice education. Social justice education is aimed at creating awareness and perceptions about the systems of oppression, privilege and diversity. This awareness and perceptions are expected to create a more just, inclusive and democratic environment. (Bell, 1997) observed that social justice is, simultaneously, a process and a goal. It envisions a safe and secure society which is equitable to all the citizens. To achieve this goal, the actors of the society have to be aware of the injustices around them and work with all concerned parties— victims, bystanders and perpetrators— to dismantle the unjust conditions. Self-determination and interdependence are key terms in this process. The awareness about the inequalities of the society requires one to see the details that are hidden in the plain sight. This is where self-determination comes into the forefront. It requires effort from the part of an individual as it is easy to be blind about one’s own privileges. To accept their role (knowingly or unknowingly) in perpetuating the unjust hierarchical

order is even more difficult. To change this unjust order, collective action is needed which is only possible through interdependence. It's imperative that an educational intervention that pursues social justice would incorporate the self-determination and interdependence into its framework. The pedagogy then should be enlightening, inclusive and participatory if it is to create a change.

### **RELEVANCE IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

Indian society is inherently discriminative. Since an education system does not function in isolation from society, it's only normal that the system is also suffering from the same inequalities prevailing in the society. The fact that hierarchies of caste, economic status and gender relations deeply influence the access to education and participation of children in school have been already recognised (NCERT, 2005) and attempts to abolish this had been also made. Since its inception, the Indian state has tried to dismantle the axis of stratification through various policies and programs. Despite these initiatives, substantial inequalities that manifests itself in education, employment, healthcare, and other socio-economic indices persists in our country. Since blocking access to education is one key component that aided in the persistence of these discriminations, the constitution has attempted to rectify this situation in particular. Ambedkar, the harbinger of hope to the oppressed sections, had

a huge role in shaping the educational philosophy of India. The constitution drafted under his supervision lays special emphasis on the promotion of educational interests of scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other weaker sections. Various committees and commissions were constituted to address the issues of discrimination in the educational system. National Policy of Education, 1986, Programme of Action, 1992, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Shiksha Karmi Yojana, Non-formal Education Programme, Education Guarantee Scheme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya were all measures taken to address the above-mentioned hierarchies.

Despite the efforts to tackle caste discrimination, the Dalits of India continue to experience low enrolment rates and a lack of access to primary education. Poor infrastructural facilities, lack of effective pedagogic supports to acquire linguistic, numerical and cognitive competencies adversely affect the schooling of Dalit children. Other important spheres within the school where exclusionary practices continue to flourish are those that are concerned with water and food, which have been traditionally powerful sites of caste-based discrimination. Dalit students experience unfair treatment and are denied equal participation in programs, functions and ceremonies where food is cooked, served and eaten. Apart from this, there is also a tendency to restrict the Dalit children

from taking part in co-curricular activities (Nambissan, 2009). This caste-based discrimination persists in higher education also. Examples of caste prejudice and discrimination could be visible from practices such as asking Dalit students by asking their surnames to decode their caste affiliation, ignoring them and showing differential treatment towards them by faculty and peers (Maurya, 2018)

Inequalities related to gender plague all stages of education and can be seen in terms of gross enrollment ratio, differentiation in terms of educational literacy, the gender gap in enrollment of girls in higher education, dropout rates and gender bias in curriculum (Bordoloi, 2015). Findings of the Indian human development survey also substantiates that persistent learning gaps operating along social background lines despite improvements in educational access (White, Ruther, and Kahn, 2016).

This intervention attempts to address the issues related to privilege and oppression that remains invisible. The objective is to create awareness about the systems of privilege and oppression and the various dimensions through which it affects the lives of the people.

### **POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE**

A total of 103 students from four institutions from two districts of Kerala participated in the intervention. The rationale of the sample size selection is as follows. The classroom intervention module was carried out in two graduate-level institutions each from

Kottayam and Kasaragod, two districts with distinct characteristic features. Kerala is a high performing state in India when it comes to the human development index. These two districts from within Kerala were particularly selected due to their stark contrast in performance in Human Development Index. Kasaragod is a district which is considered to have a less developed educational system was ranked at 11th in Human Development Index, while Kottayam with a huge number of educational institutions was ranked 2nd. From each district two colleges were selected, one government college and one aided college, this has helped to capture the diverse experiences of participants from different socio-economic conditions. The universe of the study is the total students in the selected college and the population is the undergraduate students in their second year. Thirty-three students from Government college of Kottayam, twenty-one students from St Berchmans College from Kottayam and twenty-five students from Government college of Kasaragod and twenty-four from Nehru College from Kasaragod participated in the study.

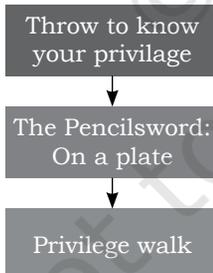
### **METHODOLOGY**

Each activity of the module was followed with a focus group discussion to capture the thoughts of the participants during their engagement in that activity. These focus group discussions on specific research questions were useful on gathering collective views of the respondents and also the meanings

attached to their views. These discussions served as the qualitative data that is used to analyse the impact of the intervention. These discussions were guided, monitored and recorded by the facilitator and transcribed into verbatim afterwards. These transcribed records were analysed using Atlas.ti, a software used for qualitative analysis of data. The analysis using Atlas.ti brought many patterns into the light which are discussed in the analysis part.

The participants are coded using abbreviations based on the educational institutions they are enrolled in. The acronym PSB stands for Participant SB college. Others are as follows. PNC stands for Participant Nehru College, PGK for Participant Government college Kottayam and PGQ for Participant Government college Kasaragod.

### **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



#### **Throw to know your privilege**

The first activity is a microcosmic representation to shed light over the intricacies of social and personal exposure and experiences associated with the existence of privilege.

#### **The Pencilsword: On a plate**

The second activity involves the discussion around a comic book which portrays the lives of two individuals born into different family setups. The one born into a wealthier family goes on to get a better quality of education, work experience and social connections which helped the person to succeed in his life. The other, born into relative poverty, don't have those opportunities. The comic shows how privileges that an individual is born into could affect the kind of life they lead throughout their lifetime.

#### **Privilege walk**

Privilege walk is an activity conducted to understand the various types and intricacies of privilege and how it works in society. The participants are asked to stand in a horizontal line and are asked to take a step forward or backwards based on their responses. Twenty questions that deals with privileges related to gender, class, caste and religion will be read aloud by the facilitator. The movement generated in the group as a result of a statement can make the participants aware of the privilege or oppression that is happening to them.

#### **Analysis**

##### *1. Throw to know your privilege*

The first activity was titled 'Throw to know your privilege' and it introduces the concept of privilege to the participants. This activity is taken from empowering education model. The activity involves a recycle bin which

are placed in front of the entire class in a way that the bin is very close to those who are sitting at the front and far from those who are at the back. Tell the students that they represent the population of the country and to attain prosperity, they need to take a piece of paper, crumble it into a ball and throw into the bin. However, it should be made clear that they can't change their positions. Since it is relatively easy for the students in the front row to throw a paper ball in the bin, but difficult for the students in the back row to do so, the students at the back row will raise voice concerns over fairness. Don't engage or concern with the raised concerns, instead simply reiterate the directions.

After the ball throwing activity is completed, ask the students managed to put the paper into the bin to raise their hands. Prompt the students to look around and notice the patterns about who made it and who missed it. The pattern would be in a certain way that a great number of participants seated at the front row would have

made it while those at the back would be lesser in number. Facilitate a group reflection on the activity. Rely on reflections, paraphrasing and open-ended questions to keep the discussion moving. The following questions are useful for this. What pattern did you notice about those who were successful and those who were not?

Was there an equality of opportunity? Is the activity fair?

During this reflective discussion, convey the message that privilege is the condition which is similar to a seat in the front row. The closer you are to the bin, the better your odds are. Also refer to the concerns raised earlier and point out that the concerns were mostly raised by participants at the back row. Connect it to how privilege is unseen to those who have it. Tell the students that they will know the types of privileges through the following activities.

Given below is the network analysis conducted using the responses that participants have expressed during the focus group discussions.

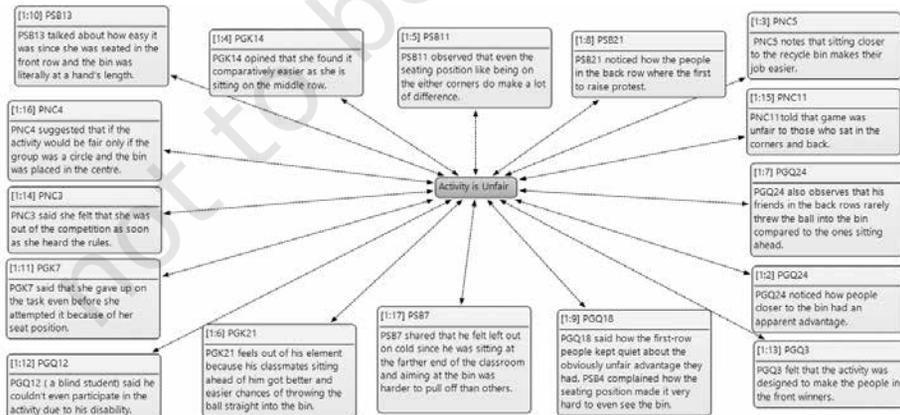


Fig. 1: Throw the ball activity analysis.

As the analysis shows, the participants univocally noted that the success of ball throwing activity was depended on the individual’s seating position. The people who were sitting close to the recycle bin had a better aim which made their job easier. People in the back rows rarely threw the ball into the bin. The facilitator guided the discussion and introduced the concept of geographical privilege, i.e. how people close to the recycle bin where privileged in terms of were their seating positions. A discussion about privilege ensued and the facilitator informed that not only geographical privilege people also enjoy other privileges based on their individual identities such as their economic status, gender, religion, caste etc with this he was able to introduce the concept of privilege and its sociological history as mentioned in the review part.

2. The Pencilsword: On a plate

‘The Pencilsword: On a plate’ (Morris) is a comic strip about privilege and inequality. It is created by an illustrator named Toby Morris. In the

comic strip, he illustrates how people have unearned advantages over others for any number of reasons that are beyond individual control. The comic simultaneously follows two kids from their birth to middle age and portrays how privilege plays an important part in their lives. The comic compares the life of two individuals born into different households. Their life is depicted and compared side by side and it shows how financial security and the lack of it affect the kind of life they live. The life of the individuals is perpetually affected by their socio-economic conditions in which they grew up.

Participants across groups have connected the activity to the nepotism prevalent in India. They were all against this tendency to exploit the legacy of one’s parents and relatives in furthering one’s profession and career. Nepotism prevalent in the film industry and politics were widely discussed. The trend of connecting this activity to nepotism that was rife in politics and film industry was consistent in all intervention groups.

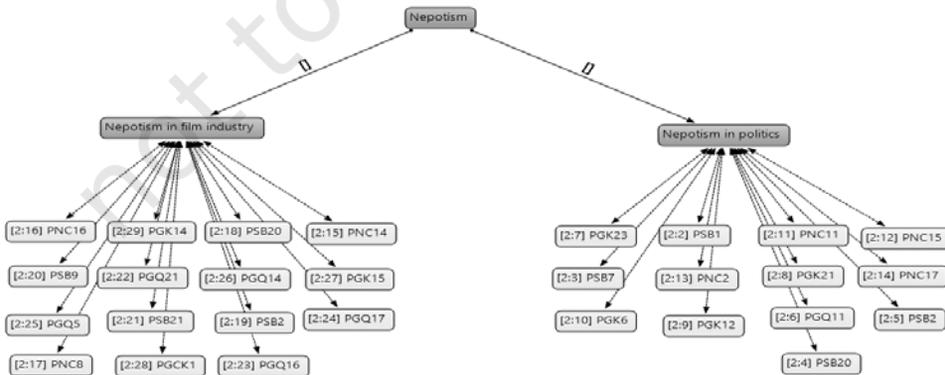


Fig. 2: Nepotism network analysis

**Nepotism in politics**

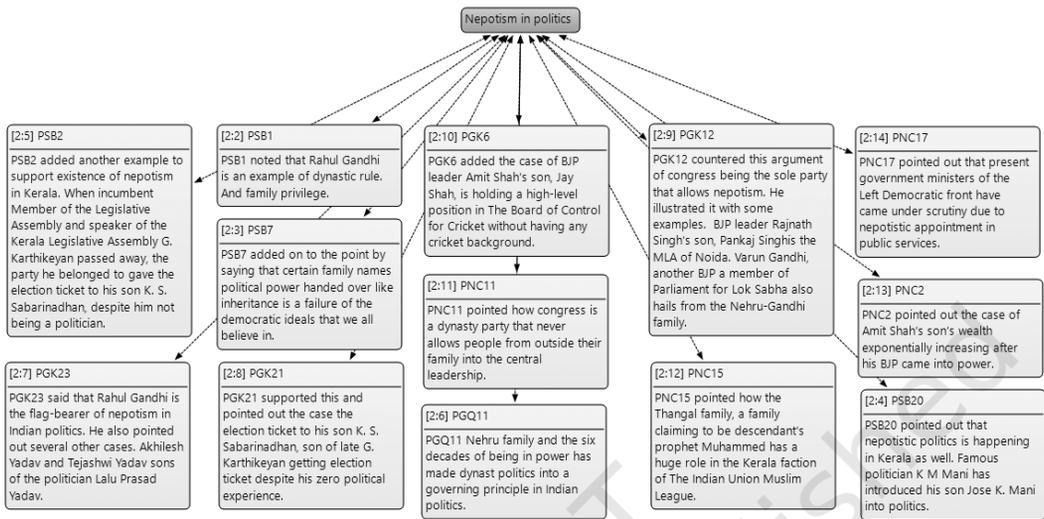


Fig. 3: Nepotism in politics network analysis

While pointing out nepotism in politics, at times it turned into a debate with people taking sides. Facilitator tried to defuse the situation before it turning into a full-blown political debate. The facilitator did this by asking the learners to focus and analyse the issue on hand, i.e., nepotism. Nepotism is a form of favouritism that is based on kinship. Nepotism places personal loyalties and obligations in favours relatives and friends for positions of influence or employment. This practice is blatant corruption as the nepotistically appointed people might come at the expense of people who are legitimately qualified for work. It would a detrimental effect on the development of the country or sector.

The facilitator moved away from referring to examples from

the Indian scenario and introduced examples from the international scenario to prove that nepotism is a global challenge. American President Donald Trump has appointed his daughter Ivanka Trump as the adviser to the president in matters related to education and economic empowerment of women and their families. She has represented the United States of America in several international summits such as G20, without having any sufficient qualification expected out of a diplomat. Her awkward exchanges in some these summits have triggered a slew of parodies online, under the hashtag #unwantedivanka (Rourke, 2019). Her husband, Jared Kushner was appointed as senior advisor to his father-in-law.

Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani politician who served as Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1988 to 1990 and again from 1993 to 1996 was referred. She represented Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), which was founded by her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was also the 9th Prime Minister of Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto’s term in charge as prime minister was punctured by allegations of corruption, economic mismanagement, and a decline of law and order. She imposed a self-exile away from Pakistan to escape having to attend the trial for her alleged corruption cases. In 2007, she returned to Pakistan after being granted amnesty by dictatorial President Pervez Musharraf. The Supreme Court challenged Musharraf’s right to grant the amnesty, however,

criticising it as unconstitutional; nevertheless, in October 2007 she returned back with the intention to contest in elections. Bhutto was assassinated in December 2007 while campaigning for upcoming parliamentary elections (Britannica, 2007). After her assassination in 2007, her husband Asif Ali Zardari became the president of Pakistan.

The studies about nepotism in the industry show that by hindering competition and innovation, it results in bias in decision-making, unfair treatment and overall losses in the long term. Besides these, it makes people who are hardworking feel demotivated and alienated. Ultimately nepotism adversely affects organisational development and jeopardise the country’s social and economic development (Safina, 2015).

**Nepotism in the film industry**

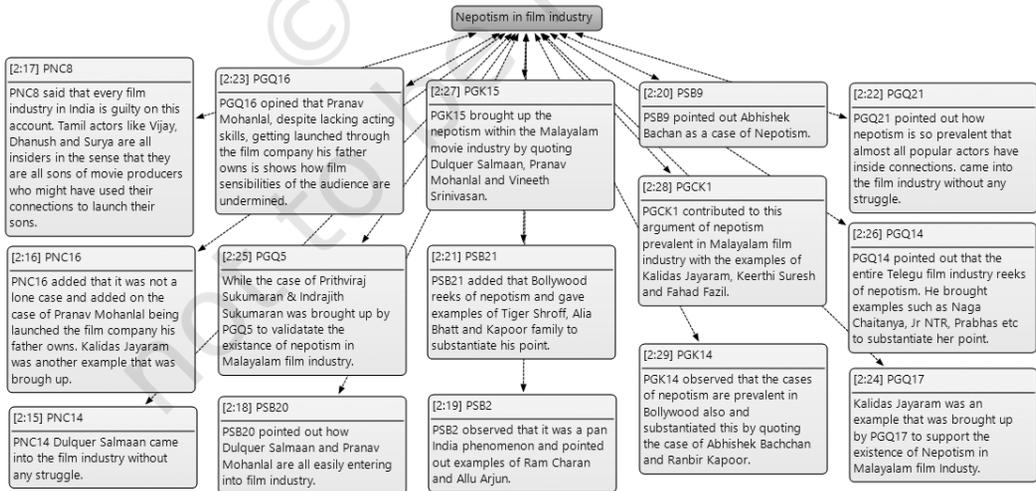


Fig. 4: Nepotism in film industry

In comparison to the discussion of Nepotism in politics, nepotism in the film Industry was a tamed affair. The tendency of film stars to follow their fathers was widely mentioned with a lot of examples.

PSB2, PSB9, PSB20, PSB21, PNC8, PNC16, PNC14, PGQ5 PGQ21, PGQ17, PGQ16, PGQ14, PGK15, PGK14, PGK11, all thought that actors coming into film field with no effort while others have to struggle is an example of this privilege offered on a silver plate as shown in the comics. The facilitator was overwhelmed by examples quoted from different language-based film industries.

Apart from Malayalam film industry, examples from Hindi, Telugu and Tamil industry were mentioned.

Other interesting observations made are as follows. PGK12 opined that it baffles his mind when people who criticise affirmative action arguing that it subverts meritocracy doesn't have a problem with the opportunities handed over to them by recommendation. PNC13 opined 'The Pencil sword: On a plate' was a huge blow to his feeling that he was a self-made person. Many participants have agreed to this. PSB19 said that the comic strip helped her to realise how every accomplishment he achieved was because of several other factors that were unknown to her. PGQ22 talked about how comic aptly portrays how our material factors affect things such as personal goals. PGQ13 said that comic gave her new perspectives about how to look at people's lives.

There were instances where participants argued against the logic of the comic. PGK21 criticised this comic by pointing out that the rich character in the comics also works hard to reach the position that he got to. The point he was stressing that Richard, the rich person, despite all of his privileges still did have to work at some point. But, the reader is supposed to look down on his accomplishments the same way he looks down on Paula's. PGK13 replied to this by pointing that recognising the luck one person doesn't mean that they are looking down on the person. PGK17 tried to find a common ground between them by pointing out that we can recognise privilege and still not look down on a person if we decide to respect everyone without looking at material possession and life status.

PSB5 argued about how everyone has privileges when compared to the other. PSB8 countered it by saying that the world is made up of oppressive and regressive structures and it is normal for some people to be on top. Facilitator added that recognising privileges and oppressive as coins of two sides and how one is intrinsically connected to the other. Historical narratives about oppressive structures like monarchy, imperialism and capitalism and how these systems exploited a majority in favor of a minority, was brought in to substantiate the point. PSB17 pointed out an interesting observation. The comic uses the example of hard-working poor vs a hard-working rich. She prompted others to think about

poor people who couldn't even afford to be hard working due to the absence of basic resources. The reason she brought it up is that she believed that a poor person who does not seem to work hard is still deserving of help, they are still products of their environment. PSB11 agreed to this and added that prejudice that poor people stay poor is a prejudiced notion that is continuously reinforced in society. PSB20 talked about how she heard about the notions about how the poor remain poor because of their laziness.

### 3. Privilege walk

The third activity is the privilege walk. This activity is modelled after the privilege walk activity used by Penn University. Privilege walk is conducted to confront the various types and intricacies of privileges and how it works in society. The participants are asked to stand in a horizontal line and are asked to take a step forward or backwards based on their responses. Twenty questions that deals with privileges related

to gender, class, caste and religion will be read aloud by the facilitator. Privilege Walk helps to promote understanding and acknowledgement of privileges and marginalisation.

Some examples of statements used for privilege walk is given below.

- If you can move through the world without fear of sexual assault, take one step forward.
- If you constantly feel unsafe walking alone at night, take one step back.
- If you were ever made fun of the color tone of your skin, take one step backwards.

Privilege walk helped the participants to realise that everyone experiences both privilege and marginalisation at different levels. The privilege walk started with an announcement about how this activity is about acknowledging the privileges and oppressions in front of the group. It was reiterated that the activity was completely discretionary and that participants were free to call it a day.

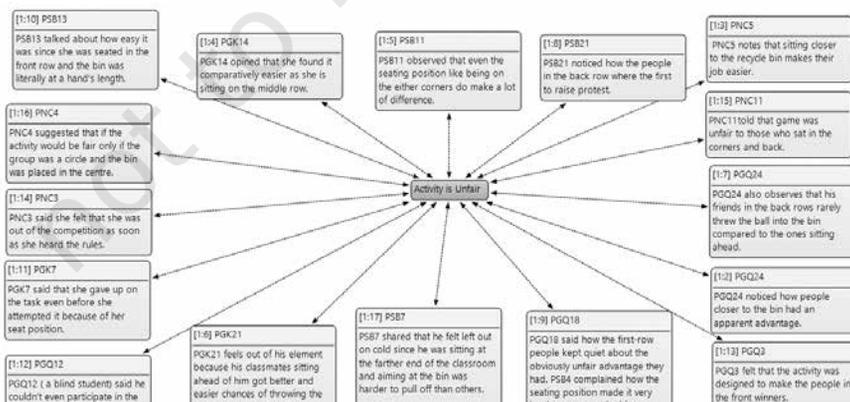


Fig. 5: Privilege walk network analysis

The facilitator asked the intervention groups to give examples of such privilege in real life. Several students came up with examples of class, gender, caste, religious and color privilege. Class privilege was the most instantly recognisable. No one contended the existence of class privilege as it was seen all around them. PGK15,

PNC15, PSB8, PNC23, PSB14, PSB8, PSB14, PGQ18, PSB11, PGQ17, PSB6 have all noted class privilege is easily visible in the way they dress, the locality they live and the things they own.

The discussions revealed how other social privileges by pointing out how class advantages lead to better social and cultural capital.

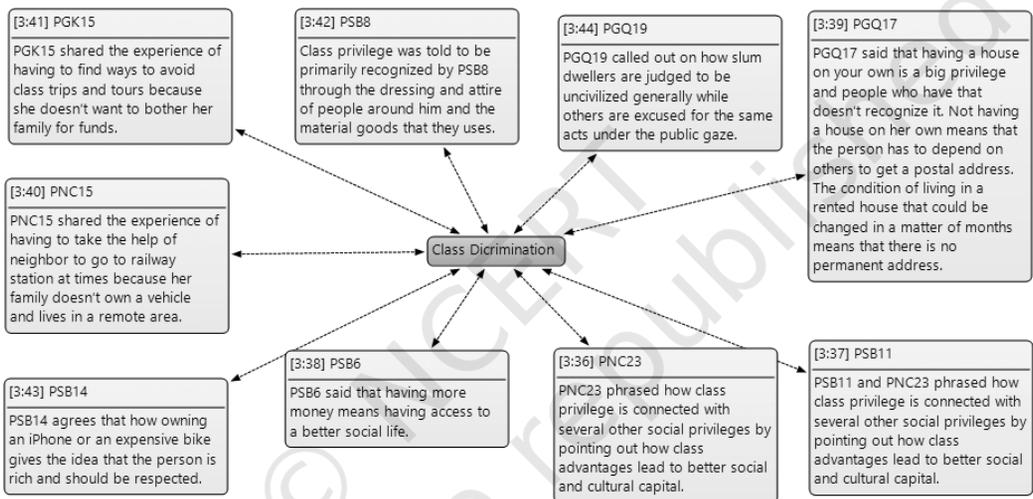


Fig. 6: Privilege walk network analysis, sub domain— class

PNC19, PNC9, PGQ16, PGQ4, PSB7, PNC15, PGQ14, PGQ4, PGK13, PGK20, PSB8, PSB21, PSB17, PGK3 talked about gender privilege. PSB8 mentioned how gender directly affects her freedom of movement, the role she is expected to do and behaviour she is expected to exhibit. The discussions revolved around the differential treatment that occurred due to gender roles.

Many women participants commented that their entire

existence is defined by her gender identity as a woman. Families have, since early childhood, reminded women that they will someday, leave the house and be part of someone else’s household. Quoting the same reason, they were taught to cook, clean and do all the odd jobs in the household whereas their two brothers never had to do any household chores. Many participants resonated to this and said how the male members of their

family are free from household burdens. Many male learners have agreed to this and pointed out how men are also bogged down by a

different set of gender expectations. Men are expected to be the default providers and decision-makers and it comes with its own problems.

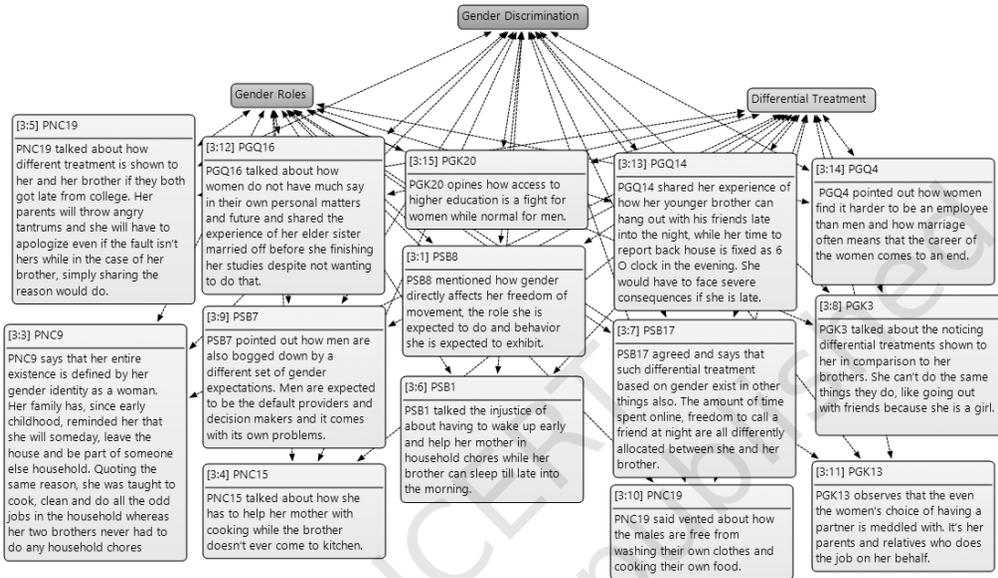


Fig. 7: Privilege walk network analysis, sub domain—gender

Discussions also threw light on how women have no agency in their own life. The autonomy of women in making even the basic decisions about being in love and getting married are robbed from them. Facilitator, while conducting the discussion introduced the terms such as heteronormativity and toxic masculinity. It's important to notice that the participants were giving out the examples of these concepts without knowing the terms, the facilitator merely had to inform them about the concepts at the appropriate time. Facilitator intervened at in the group discussions to make them

aware that even the discussion they are having is following the gender binary model by mentioning only the issues that affect either men or women. These discussions were taking no notice of transgender issues. Absence of LGBT issues was a clear indicator of how privilege is a difficult thing to see. Intervention groups were relatively unaware of the issues of LGBT communities. The human right violations that the community faces due to their sexual orientation and subsequent violation of human rights hurled upon them where new information for many of the participants.

PNC5, PGK23, PGQ24, PGQ17, PSB11, PGK11, PGQ7 talked about caste discrimination. Differential treatment is shown on the basis of caste identity, jokes made in reference to caste identity, prejudice is shown towards who are recipients of affirmative action and usage of caste names as a privilege were the thematic areas that came up during the focus group discussions. PGQ24 opined that the upper caste name used as the last name comes with default social acceptance. PNC5 noted that people openly flaunting caste names is a sign that the caste

system is still strong. PSB19 talked about how caste names are a fashion in the 21st century is a sign that our society is still casteist. PGK23 talked about how ridiculous it is when people think that it is okay to add casteist surnames. PGQ17 shares that Dalits and Adivasis struggle with economic status also because they are forced to overcome generational disparities of wealth. PGK11 shared how she is constantly mocked for being a recipient of a scholarship she is getting on the basis of caste. PGQ7 shared his experience of being mocked for getting SC grant.

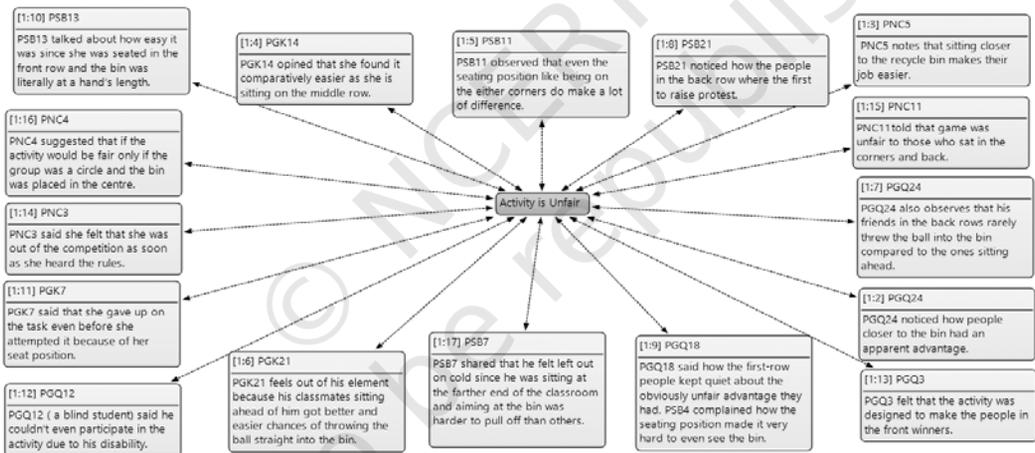


Fig. 8: Privilege walk network analysis, sub domain— caste

PNC7, PGQ7, PNC3, PGQ4, PGQ10, PNC19, PNC9, PGQ8, PNC17, PSB23, PNC14, PSB19 made observations about religious discrimination. PNC3 pointed out how the riots that happened in Gujarat doesn't reflect upon all

Hindus, while the violence caused by an individual Muslim comes back to haunt the entire group. PNC7 felt that Muslims are always put under a magnifying glass due to their religious identity. PNC9 talked about how she got repeated warnings from

her community about needing to be careful when being friendly with Muslim boys because they are the proponents of love jihad. PGQ7 also talked about how she was asked by her community members to be wary

of Muslim boys because they are the proponents of love jihad. Discussions about how mass media always propagate Islam religion as terrorists and a national threat by portraying them in negative light happened in all groups.

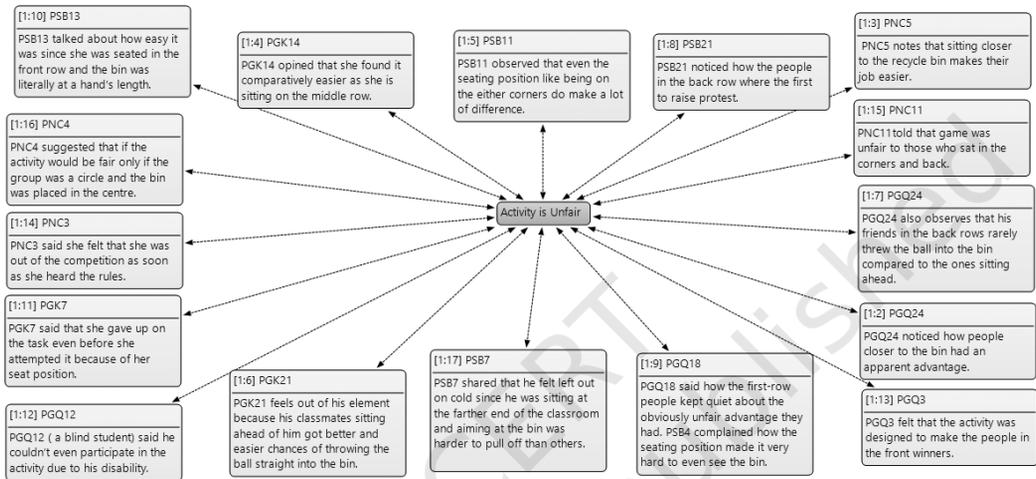


Fig. 9: Privilege walk network analysis, sub domain— religion

The fact that privilege is difficult to notice was brought up by many participants across intervention groups. PGK9 observed how she was aware of the gender privilege, due to her experiences of being a woman and but was largely unaware about privileges and oppression that arises out of factors such as age, socioeconomic status and sexual identity. PNC17 observed that the privileges have a taken for granted nature which makes it difficult to identify and acknowledge. PNC20 observed that this hidden nature

makes it more dangerous since it is easy for those who have privileges to ignore the plight of those who don't have it. PGK14 observed said that those who are privileged try to normalise their privileges by saying that it how the world is supposed to be. PGQ11 observed how gender privileges and discrimination are rationalised under the pretext of the natural order. PSB8 made an excellent observation about how its easier to notice oppression than a privilege. "Oppression is noticed because those who oppressed are quarrelling

for equality, while the privileged are busy trying to find ways to normalise their privilege so they could be free from moral shame." PGQ23 made a similar observation. "Privilege and oppression are opposite spectrums. The marginalised desperately tries to escape from their spectrum while privileged cling to theirs."

It was intriguing to see participants in different groups making similar comments. Facilitator wrapped the privileged activity by recapitulating that having privilege or not having privilege is not a fault of the participants and that the activity intended to make them aware about the diversity of the world they live in.

## **CONCLUSION**

Across intervention groups, participants agreed that seeing their own privilege is an arduous task. Acknowledging privilege is even more effortful. The biases and prejudices that participants had in them form the crux of the social norms that govern the people in society. The concept of privilege is not a widely discussed topic. The process of making people acknowledge, understand and critique about privilege is a long and winding task. This is because privilege is so deeply rooted in one's life and it is easy to normalise and look past it. On the other hand, the oppression is an easily observable and widely discussed topic since those who are oppressed by the system protest against the partisanship that they are being subjected to. It is easy to point out discrimination in a classroom, but

when the privileges corresponding to the same discrimination is not well received. For example, all the students agree on the existence of gender discrimination, largely due to the involvement of women participants, but the concept of male privilege is getting a mixed response. Many are highly defensive in accepting the male privilege. These privileges and oppressive structures are often normalised and viewed as a natural way of life. This natural way of life regards women as secondary citizens and fuels the graded inequality of caste. Discussions about privilege and oppression would allow for an increased understanding about the society they live in. Several participants have remarked that the module to analyse privilege and oppression was a humbling experience. Privilege groups resist introduces narratives that normalises their privilege. Some narratives paint men being the superior sex and goes as far as to say that women are natural caregivers. Pitching affirmative action against meritocracy is another popular dominant narrative. These narratives are part of the resistance by the privileged to make them believe that they deserve the advantages they have. Also, it is important to recognise that having privilege doesn't mean that the life of the privileged is free from the absence of hardships. It simply means that some are getting an unearned advantage at the expense of some others due to the nature of their identity and the society they live in.

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