

Awareness Intervention Against Modern Slavery in India: Influence of Caste Prejudice

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Author Note

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### Abstract

Research indicates that lower caste Dalits and Adivasis make up the overwhelming majority of Indians living in exploitative work conditions termed modern or contemporary slavery. This thesis set out to evaluate if an awareness intervention could increase Indians' opposition toward modern slavery and collective action against it. Moreover, it tested whether the effect of such an intervention would be moderated by caste prejudice, status and identification. In a pre-registered experiment, 323 Indian participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk read either a short text explaining the extent of modern slavery or, in the control condition, a text on penguins in the Antarctic region. It was found that the intervention led to a significant increase in the acknowledgement of modern slavery within India. However, contrary to hypotheses, it did not lead to a change in opposition to modern slavery, support for increased government action, or support for status quo. Also contrary to predictions, no moderation was observed. Nonetheless, exploratory analyses showed that caste prejudice was a significant predictor of weaker opposition to modern slavery and greater support for the status quo. Moreover, social status predicted greater support for both increased government action and status quo, while identification with one's social status group predicted greater support for the status quo. The findings of the present research are discussed in light of future research and societal implications.

*Keywords:* modern, contemporary, slavery, caste, prejudice, India, awareness

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**Awareness Intervention Against Modern Slavery in India: Influence of Caste Prejudice**

Modern slavery (also called contemporary or global slavery) is hard to define since it shows itself in many different forms across the world and is highly influenced by local socio-political and economic contexts. Thus, it has been challenging to find the underlying features of slavery across different forms, timelines and contexts. The legal definition of slavery or slavery-like practices is focussed on the concept of ownership of fellow humans (Bales, 2005). However, most social science researchers agree that this view of slavery is too narrow and does not include all the forms of slavery that have existed and continue to exist (Davidson, 2015). Bales, one of the pioneers in researching modern slavery, calls it as modern slavery when an individual is controlled “through violence, the threat of violence, or psychological coercion, has lost free will and free movement, is exploited economically, and paid nothing beyond subsistence” (Davidson, 2015, p. 37). Thus, slavery is defined by “loss of free will, the appropriation of labour power, and the use or threat of violence” (Bales, 2005, p. 57). Modern slavery takes forms such as human trafficking, forced labour, bonded labour, child slavery, child and forced marriage, organ harvesting, and domestic slavery (Anti-Slavery International, 2019).

Since slavery is illegal almost everywhere in the world, it is difficult to calculate the number of people living in modern slavery. However, most recent estimates range from 31 million (Kara, 2017) to 40 million (International Labour Office & Walk Free Foundation, 2017). According to the Global Slavery Index (Walk Free Foundation, 2018), India is the country with the largest absolute number of individuals living in modern slavery on any day. Nearly eight million Indians are deprived of basic human rights and exploited through threat, manipulation or coercion. Modern slavery in India mainly takes the form of bonded labour, organ trafficking, domestic servitude, commercial sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and forced recruitment into armed services.

Why is modern slavery so prevalent in India? Poverty is regarded as the most powerful indicator of vulnerability to modern slavery (Davidson, 2015; Kara, 2017). Thus, poorer, developing countries around the world are often much more likely to have their citizens living in modern slavery. For instance, one in five Indians live on less than \$1.90 a day (The World Bank Group, 2019), and this adds up to nearly 300 million poor people in India alone. Moreover, numerous studies and reports found that a vast majority of Indians living in modern slavery are from lower castes (Basu et al., 2019; Kara, 2017; Shah et al., 2018; Shahinian, 2009; Walk Free Foundation, 2018). In this study, I wanted to examine the high prevalence of modern slavery in India through the lens of caste inequality, since these studies emphasized the link between poverty and low caste status. I evaluated if an intervention to raise awareness of modern slavery would increase opposition to modern slavery and support for government action. Given the historical and contemporaneous importance of caste system to the persistence of modern slavery in India, I also investigated the role of caste status, prejudice and identification.

Many scholars think that modern slavery in contemporary India is deeply connected to the socio-economic structures that have existed for centuries and continue to exist today (Gausman, Chernoff, Duger, Bhabha, & Chu, 2016; Shahinian, 2009). Even though financial status of an individual is an important indicator for vulnerability to modern slavery across the world, an Indian person's economic vulnerability is intimately tied to their caste and gender (Basu et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2018; Vaid, 2014). As Shah et al. (2018) put it, "social discrimination, that is, discrimination based on identity, marks the contours of poverty" (p. xiii). While India has many millions of poor people, Dalits (previously known as Untouchables), Adivasis (indigenous people) and low-status Muslims are the most marginalized in nearly all regions of the country. For instance, 82% of all Dalits and Adivasis, 79% of Muslims, 71% of Other Backward Castes (OBCs) were below the International

Poverty Line of less than \$2 purchasing power parity compared to only 45% of “socially advantaged” others.

Similarly a recent report by Oxfam India (Basu et al., 2019) found that employment opportunities are very much influenced by caste and gender group memberships. In fact, the caste-based earnings gap was even larger than the gender wage gap. Data from 2015 shows that Dalits and Adivasis earned only 56% of upper-caste earnings, while women earned 66%, on average, of what men earned for similarly-qualified jobs (Basu et al., 2019). Recent work by sociologists, anthropologists and economists (Bales, 2005; Basu et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2018) demonstrates that Dalits and Adivasis are at a much higher risk of being poor and that they are more likely to be engaged in precarious contract-based work in the informal sector, which is characteristic of modern slavery. Analyses show that there is a clear link between poverty and informal work status (Kannan, 2018). Hence, it becomes important to understand the history of the caste system in India, with special attention to their economic exploitation and social exclusion over the past centuries.

### **History of Caste System in India**

Even though it is controversial to estimate the age of caste system, many scholars assess it to be around 3000 years old (Srinivas, 2003). One of the important characteristics of the Indian caste system is that one is born into the caste of one’s parents, and there is limited opportunity for mobility throughout one’s lifetime (Thapar, 1996). The caste system originally had four varnas or classes of people – the priestly Brahmins, the warrior Kshatriyas, the merchant Vaisyas, and the peasant Shudras. While these formed the *Savarna* castes, two main social groups of Indians were excluded from the varna (class) system. First, Dalits, which literally means “oppressed” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019b), are the individuals considered “untouchable” because of their presumed impurity. Second, Adivasis, literally “ancient inhabitants” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019a), are indigenous people of India who

belonged to remote tribes. Together, Dalits and Adivasis form the outcast *Avarna*, or varna-less, castes. It is important to note that this simplistic varna system is historical, and that a complex and contested hierarchy based on many hundreds of *jatis* (subcastes derived from hereditary, interdependent professions) is more reflective of reality (Jogdand, Khan, Mishra, & Mishra, 2016). Nonetheless there is scholarly consensus on the stigmatization and marginalization of different *jatis* within Dalit and Adivasi caste categories (Jaspal, 2011; Shah et al., 2018). Thus, this thesis will use upper-caste Savarna and lower-caste Avarna groups as meaningful divisions of the caste system in India.

Dalits have been bonded to agricultural landlords from Savarna castes as agrestic slaves. Dalits worked for no pay, except for meagre subsistence, in the lands owned by Savarna castes for generation after generation. Norms in the Hindu society forbade them from owning and cultivating in their own agricultural land for centuries. Instead, Dalits were forced to perform the “impure” occupations such as removing human waste and dead animals, and consequently, were themselves designated as “impure” (Jaspal, 2011). Though the Indian government banned untouchability as early as 1950, these ideas continue to permeate contemporary life in India where Dalits face discrimination and harassment on the basis of their presumed “impurity” (Bhattacharjee, 2014; Kunnath, 2012). In fact, modern stereotypes characterise Dalits as “dirty, ill-educated and dishonest” (Shah et al., 2018, p. 25). In a country that depended predominantly on agriculture, not being able to own land has put Dalits at a severe disadvantage for centuries.

With India moving away from agriculture to industrialization over the last few decades, the exact jobs held by Dalits have changed. However, the nature of jobs – low-status and low-paying – has remained contiguous with the past. Dalits often occupy the lowest rung of workers in modern factories. As Shah et al. (2018) showed in their extensive ethnographic work among Dalits and Adivasis across different regions in India, “the entrenchment of social

difference in the expansion of capitalism takes place through at least three interrelated processes: inherited inequalities of power; super-exploitation based on casual migrant labour; and conjugated oppression (that is the intertwined multiple oppressions based on caste, tribe, class, gender and region)” (p. 2).

Meanwhile, Adivasis who lived in remote mountains and forests away from the mainstream Hindu society have had their land and livelihood encroached upon by Savarna caste people, first for agricultural purpose and later for industrial development projects (Shah et al., 2018). These displaced Adivasis also end up as casual, seasonal, contract labourers in brick factories, garment factories, chemical industries, and construction sites. While these jobs are known for their low skill level and meagre pay, they also tend to be physically demanding, dangerous and sometimes even “dirty”. Since India liberalized its economy in the 1980s, the proportion of precarious jobs with minimum security has become increasingly common (Goldar & Aggarwal, 2012; Sanchez, 2012).

When local Dalits and Adivasis have organized politically to demand for their rights, the employers have responded by hiring even poorer Dalits and Adivasis from less developed regions of India. These migrant labourers are paid even cheaper wages and fewer benefits like medical and housing benefits, insurance, pensions, etc. (Parry, 2013). Given the immense linguistic diversity within India, such migrant labourers do not usually speak the local language and do not have the resources to organize themselves politically. Strict labour laws exist in India but are not implemented for employees in the informal sector. However, nearly 92% of the country’s work force is employed in the informal sector (Shah et al., 2018). These combined factors ensure the perpetuation of exploitation of significant numbers of citizens even though India has become more globalized and urbanized over the last few decades.



**Modern Slavery and its Legitimation: A Psychological Perspective**

Even though slavery was abolished by the British in India as early as 1843 (Shah et al., 2018), Dalits and Adivasis in India often continue to live and work under slave-like conditions even today. For instance, a study of manual scavenging (the banned practice of manually carrying human excreta for a living) in the state of Maharashtra found that nearly 90% of the manual scavengers were lower-caste Dalits and Adivasis (Beck & Darokar, 2005). Such inhumane treatment is possible because this system is seen as legitimate by the public. A previous study (Cotterill, Sidanius, Bhardwaj, & Kumar, 2014) on Indian caste system found that karmic belief (or “the belief that the degree of privilege a person enjoys in her present life directly derives from vestiges of her conduct in former lives”) was found to explain the variance in support for hierarchy-enhancing social policies, over and above the influence of previously established factors such as social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, and generalized prejudice. Another study by Furnham and Rajamanickam (1992) showed that Indians endorsed just-world beliefs and protestant work ethic more than Britons in a cross-cultural study. Finally, evidence suggests that upper-caste Brahmins are more likely to essentialize caste identity than lower-caste Dalits (Mahalingam, 2007). Mahalingam asserts that “upper-caste members are more likely to believe that caste identity is inherited at birth, whereas Dalits are more likely to believe that caste identity is acquired through social learning” (2007, p. 242). Thus, it is likely that societal beliefs about social hierarchy and their legitimacy are important in explaining attitudes to various social groups and modern slavery.

There is evidence that Indians, on average, tend to score higher on social dominance orientation than other nationals in cross-cultural studies (Fischer, Hanke, & Sibley, 2012). Thus, Indians may be more supportive of the high status enjoyed by privileged groups and the low status afforded to stigmatized groups. Similarly, multi-country studies by Hofstede and

Schwartz also provide evidence to this effect. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Indians score highly on power distance, a measure of the extent of the society's acceptance of social inequality (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2005). According to Schwartz, Indians place high value on hierarchy which is in opposition to egalitarianism (Schwartz, 1994). Thus, it appears that Dalits and Adivasis are perceived as less than human by the majority upper-caste individuals, who control and shape the public opinion. This is enforced through the long history of caste system, through ancient rituals of purity and pollution, and through modern stereotypes of these lower-caste individuals as "barbaric and uncivilised" (Bharti, 2017, p. 37). Kara (2017) concludes that, "hence, their exploitation is oftentimes (and perversely) seen as a beneficial outcome for them, as well as a condition natural to them" (p. 30). Slave-owners have been recorded saying things such as "We give them a good life", "We are doing them a service", "Their alternative would be worse" (Kara, 2017, p. 181), and "...I am like a father to these workers" (Bales, 2005, p. 33). Such paternalistic attitudes of the slave-owners have been reported widely (Shah et al., 2018).

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the mere categorization of individuals into groups leads to social categorization, social identification and social comparison. Individuals use social comparison in such a way as to make their own social group appear superior and, through this, achieve self-esteem for themselves. Since the caste system is the most important social stratification system in the Indian society, it is likely that Indians, especially those belonging to upper castes, derive self-esteem from their caste identities (Jaspal, 2011). It is also likely that upper-caste members will strive to maintain caste boundaries and to stigmatize lower-caste Dalits in an effort to maintain positive distinctiveness of their ingroups. In fact, a study by Sankaran, Sekerdej and von Hecker (2017) shows that higher caste members engaged in derogation of ingroup members who violated caste norms and that caste identity predicted this relationship.

When these findings are applied to modern slavery which is strongly associated with low castes, it is likely that lower-caste individuals may have stronger motivation to oppose modern slavery in order to boost their self-esteem. This would be especially true for those lower-caste individuals who strongly identify with their caste. On the other hand, upper-caste individuals may have less motivation to oppose modern slavery. This is because the low status of lower-caste individuals living in modern slavery helps elevate the high status of the upper castes even more. Further, upper-caste individuals who strongly identify with their caste would have even less motivation to oppose modern slavery than those who weakly identify with their caste.

Even though researchers on modern slavery have long hypothesized that caste discrimination plays a role in the unfortunate persistence of modern slavery (Campbell, 2008), to the best of my knowledge, there is no social psychological research that links caste discrimination to attitudes toward modern slavery. Since I could not find a scale on attitude toward modern slavery, I decided to measure the opposition of Indians to modern slavery as a first step.

### **Awareness as a Way to Counter Modern Slavery**

One of the important tools against modern slavery is knowledge of modern slavery among the public, since this questions the implicit, societal and institutional support of modern slavery (Bales, 2005; Kara, 2017). According to Kara, it is especially important that awareness campaigns convey the “realities of the oppressive and dehumanizing nature of slavery” (2017, p. 261). Since there is very low awareness of the term “modern slavery” among Indians, I designed an intervention using a text passage that describes the nature and prevalence of modern slavery in India.

Since modern slavery is an umbrella term that includes a range of different exploitative practices, I could not find previous interventions designed to increase awareness

of modern slavery as a whole. However, there were awareness interventions that targeted human trafficking and sweatshops in the apparel industry. Though many anti-trafficking programmes included awareness-raising as an essential component, systematic reviews have found that there was a lack of rigorousness in the evaluations that prevented inferences (Davy, 2016; van der Laan, Smit, Busschers, & Aarten, 2011). Nonetheless, some of these programmes showed some evidence of the effectiveness of intervention in raising awareness (Allan & Capello, 2014; Centre for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities, 2003; Grace et al., 2014; International Organization for Migration, 2006; Skuse & Downman, 2012). Further, a study of consumers found that greater knowledge of apparel industry led to an increase in concern for industry workers, and subsequently, an increase in support for socially responsible businesses (Dickson, 2000). Similarly another study found that both knowledge and attitudes towards social responsibility in the clothing industry predicted purchase behaviour (Kozar & Connell, 2013).

A number of scholars have emphasized the need for awareness programmes against the practice of manual scavenging (Beck & Darokar, 2005; Gupta, 2016; Pradhan & Mittal, 2019) and bonded labour (Androff, 2010; Plant, 2007; Upadhyaya, 2004). However, I was unable to find evaluations of such programmes even though local and international non-profit organizations have been campaigning to raise awareness for decades now (Boateng, 2017). It is relevant to note that both manual scavenging and bonded labour are typically geographically restricted to South Asia, which lacks resources for running and evaluating intervention programmes. Thus, I decided to employ a small-scale intervention intended to raise awareness against modern slavery in India in this study.

## **The Present Research**

I hypothesized that reading a text on modern slavery (against a control text) would lead to greater acknowledgement of modern slavery in India, more opposition to modern slavery, and more support for government action against modern slavery.

I expected this main intervention effect to be further moderated by three variables: caste prejudice, caste status, and caste identification.

- a) I hypothesized that the intervention would have a stronger effect on participants with lower caste prejudice (two-way interaction), since caste prejudice could serve to legitimize the exploitation of Dalits and Adivasis within modern slavery.
- b) I predicted that the intervention would have a stronger effect on participants with lower-caste status (two-way interaction), since participants from upper castes gain self-esteem from the stigmatization of Dalits and Adivasis within modern slavery.
- c) I hypothesized that upper-caste participants with high caste identification will be influenced least by the intervention, while lower caste participants with high caste identification will be influenced most by the intervention (three-way interaction). This is plausible since highly identified upper-caste individuals are more likely to be motivated to maintain strict caste boundaries.

## **Method**

The study, including all materials, methods and hypotheses, was preregistered with the Open Science Framework and can be found at <https://osf.io/u7tm8>.

## **Participants**

Since India has the second largest share of participants on the online data collection portal, Amazon Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), I decided to run the

study on MTurk. However, since the quality of data of MTurk Indian workers has been found to be lower than that of MTurk American workers (Litman, Robinson, & Rosenzweig, 2015), I took four steps to address this during data collection. First, since there was a possibility that the low quality of data was due to a lack of English proficiency (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016), participants were offered the choice to take the surveys in English or Hindi, the language with the highest number of speakers in India. The questionnaire was translated using the forward-back translation process with the help of two bilingual Hindi-speakers. Second, I conducted a short, screening survey to eliminate both bots (“artificial intelligence systems”) and humans who were not paying enough attention. In this screening survey, I asked participants to fill out some demographic details (such as age, gender, religion, education, etc.). I also asked them to choose the last response option for one of the items and to write two sentences about their latest shopping experience. Only participants who passed this instructional manipulation check while providing an appropriate response to the shopping question were qualified to take part in the main study. Third, in the main study, I embedded two more attention check questions. First, I asked participants to choose the last response option for an item. Second, I asked participants to choose the topic of the text (experimental or control) they had read earlier in the questionnaire. As preregistered, the analysis below was performed only on the data of those participants who passed both the attention check items in the main study. Fourth, the payment for the participants was set above minimum wage to ensure that they were optimally compensated (Litman et al., 2015).

The main survey was completed in March and April 2019 by 451 participants who were identified as being located in India through the service of Amazon Mechanical Turk. Based on a power analysis for Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), 320 participants were needed to obtain a 90% chance to observe a small to medium effects ( $f = .20$ ) at a .05 significance criterion. The power analysis was performed using the GPower software version 3.1.9.2

When I eliminated those participants who failed one or both of the attention checks, there were 323 participants ( $M_{age} = 33.58$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.21$ ; gender: 64.7% men, 35.0% women, 0.3% other). All of the data analysis was performed on data from these 323 participants.

In my sample, 93.8% of the participants belonged to upper Savarna castes while only 6.2% belonged to lower Avarna castes (Dalits and Adivasis). This is different from the 2011 national census data where 74.8% of Indians belong to upper Savarna castes and 25.2% belong to lower Avarna castes (Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, 2019). A total of 77.1% of the participants were Hindus, while 14.6% were Christians and 5.9% were Muslims. Other religions made up less than 3% of the participants. This religious distribution in my sample is reasonably similar to the national census data. The main difference was that Christians were overrepresented and Muslims were underrepresented in my sample. Importantly, I found that 95.4% of the participants in my sample had at least a graduate degree. However, only 4.5% of all Indians have a graduate degree or higher. In this way, my sample seems skewed towards upper-caste and more educated individuals. This can be explained by the fact that my study was conducted online.

### **Procedure**

The study employed a one-factorial between-group experimental design where participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention or the control condition. Before being assigned to the conditions, participants completed a set of potential moderating variables (described below). Next, participants in the experimental condition read a short text describing the nature and prevalence of modern slavery in India, as seen in Figure 1. Those assigned to the control condition read a short text on penguins in the Antarctic region, as seen in Figure 2. (Please note that “crore” is an Indian English word that is equal to ten million.)

As can be seen, the texts were matched in length, complexity, and format. Once the participants were exposed to the intervention or the control text, there was a manipulation

check to assess whether participants in the manipulation condition acknowledged the presence of modern slavery in India more than participants in the control condition. The primary outcome variable measured opposition towards various forms of modern slavery prevalent in India. The secondary outcome variable measured attitude towards government action against modern slavery. The questionnaire concluded with some demographic questions, attention check measures and a debriefing with more information and contact details of the researchers.

**Please read the text below. You might be asked some general questions on this later.**

When people think of slavery, what usually comes to mind are African slaves in the United States of America in the 19th century. However, slavery continues to exist even today. According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index, over 4 crore people are currently held like slaves around the world on given day.

People in modern slavery are usually

- underpaid
- overworked for more than 10 hours per day
- physically and/or sexually abused
- threatened, manipulated and cheated
- work in unsafe working conditions
- unable to quit work if they want to

You may have heard of some of these practices before.

**Human trafficking:** People are kidnapped and sold off into forced labour or prostitution.

**Bonded labour:** Poor people take loans at extremely high interest rates. When they are unable to pay the loan, they are forced to work for long hours without pay for many years.

**Manual scavenging:** People are forced to manually clean dry toilets.

**Domestic servitude:** Maids and servants are underpaid, overworked, physically and/or sexually abused.

**Sweatshop or garment factory workers:** People are underpaid, overworked, physically/or sexually abused.

**Child labour:** Children under 14 years old are not allowed to go to school and are forced to work.

*Figure 1.* Captured image of the manipulation text on modern slavery.



**Please read the text below. You might be asked some general questions on this later.**

When people think of birds, what usually come to mind are birds that can fly, like crows, pigeons and sparrows. However, there are 17 species of penguins which are flightless birds. According to the 2017 State of Antarctic Penguins Report, over 2 crore penguins live in the Antarctic region.

Penguins in the Antarctic usually

- cannot fly
- are able to walk on ice or hop on rocks
- have a striking black and white coat
- have short flippers that help them swim in the ocean
- have a thick layer of fat to keep warm
- are sociable creatures that live in large colonies

You may have heard of some of the types of penguins before.

**Emperor penguins:** These are the largest penguins, about half as tall as adult humans.

**Chinstrap penguins:** They have a black band of feathers under their chins, hence their name.

**King penguins:** These are the second-largest penguins, but they live in warmer regions above the Antarctic region.

**Macaroni penguins:** They are the most numerous of all penguins.

**Gentoo penguins:** These penguins have a prominent tail that sweeps from side to side when walking.

**Adelie penguins:** These are small penguins that live for about 20 years.

*Figure 2.* Captured image of the control text on penguins in the Antarctic.

## **Instruments**

Unless stated otherwise, all measures were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Thus, higher scores indicated stronger agreement to the measure.

### **Moderators.**

**Caste status.** Participants were asked to report their caste name and the community that this caste group belonged to. I provided categories such as Forward, Backward, Most Backward, Scheduled Caste, and Schedule Tribe communities which are the legal categories

used by the Indian government across the country. Based on this information and as pre-registered, I classified those in forward, backward and most backward categories as belonging to Savarna castes (i.e., upper castes), and those in scheduled caste (Dalits) and scheduled tribe (Adivasis) categories as belonging to Avarna castes (i.e., lower castes). This is a meaningful division since there is ample evidence that a majority of the Indians living in modern slavery are from Avarna castes while those benefitting from modern slavery are from Savarna castes (Basu et al., 2019; Kapoor, 2018; Shah et al., 2018; Shahinian, 2009).

***Caste identification.*** Participants' caste identification was measured with the following three items adopted from Thomsen, Green & Sidanius (2008): "How strongly do you identify with other (social group) people?," "How close do you feel to other (social group) people?," and "How often do you think of yourself in terms of being (social group)?" For each item, "social group" was replaced with the caste participants filled in at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants indicated their degree of their agreement or disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very weakly*) to 7 (*very strongly*) for the first item, 1 (*not close at all*) to 7 (*very close*) for the second item, and 1 (*never*) to 7 (*often*) for the third item respectively. Thus, higher scores indicated greater identification with one's caste. This caste identification scale was highly reliable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ).

***MacArthur's scale of subjective social status.*** Since data on caste representation of Indian participants on Amazon Mechanical Turk was not available, I could not predict the caste representation in my study until the data was collected. So, I decided to include an alternative measure for caste status in case of less than expected variation in caste distribution in my sample. Thus, my study also included the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000). Participants were asked to choose their relative position on a 10-point ladder which represented rungs in the Indian society. Higher scores on this scale represented upper social status. Moreover, participants' sense of identification with

their social status group was measured with the same 3-item social identification scale as was used for caste identification (Thomsen et al., 2008). Higher scores on the 7-point Likert scale indicated greater identification with one's social status group. The reliability for this 3-item scale was high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ ).

**Modern casteism scale.** I modified the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) to be applicable to caste in India. Thus, the item on desegregation ("*Blacks have more influence upon school desegregation plans than they ought to have*") that did not apply to the Indian socio-political context was removed. The adapted six-item scale included the following items: (1) "*Discrimination against Dalits is no longer a problem in India;*" (2) "*It is easy to understand the anger of Dalits in India;*" (3) "*Dalits are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights;*" (4) "*Dalits should not push themselves where they are not wanted;*" (5) "*Over the past few years, Dalits have gotten more economically than they deserve;*" and (6) "*Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to Dalits than they deserve.*" However, when the scale excluded one of the items ("*It is easy to understand the anger of Dalits in India*"), the reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) improved considerably from .71 to .83. Thus, I decided to remove this item since it did not apply so well to the Indian context. The new five-item scale was used for the analyses.

### **Dependent Variables.**

**Manipulation check.** I wanted to check if the manipulation caused a difference in the level of acknowledgement of modern slavery in India between the participants in the control and experimental groups. This measure asked participants to rate their agreement or disagreement with four statements: (1) "*It happens that many workers are exploited like slaves in India;*" (2) "*There are people who are treated like slaves in India;*" (3) "*There are no slaves in India;*" and (4) "*Many people in India live under inhumane, slave-like conditions.*" Reliability of the scale was high ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

***Opposition to modern slavery.*** To the best of my knowledge, there was no available measure on attitude toward modern slavery. Hence, I created a scale where participants rated their agreement or disagreement with eight statements on various practices of modern slavery. I chose to include human and sex trafficking, bonded and forced labour within brick kilns and garment factories respectively, manual scavenging, domestic servitude, and child labour because these are some of the most prevalent forms of modern slavery within India (Walk Free Foundation, 2018). Half the items in the scale were reversed to prevent acquiescence bias. The scale included the following items: (1) *“It is unfair that garment factory workers are forced to work for more than 10 hours every day;”* (2) *“Forced prostitution is a necessary evil;”* (3) *“Maids and servants should get at least one day off every week;”* (4) *“We should not allow manual scavenging anymore;”* (5) *“Maids and servants should have separate plates, cups, etc.,”* (6) *“An employer can withhold their employee’s certificates or passport so they cannot leave work;”* (7) *“It is acceptable to withhold wages of brick kiln workers for many months;”* and (8) *“Bonded labour is unacceptable even when someone has borrowed money.”* The reliability of this scale was somewhat acceptable ( $\alpha = .67$ ).

***Support for government action.*** On top of measuring the opposition of participants to modern slavery, I wanted to study how willing or unwilling they would be to support government action against modern slavery. Thus, this five-item scale included the following items: (1) *“The Indian government should regulate informal labour to prevent exploitation of workers;”* (2) *“The Indian government already spends enough resources on fighting modern slavery;”* (3) *“There should be minimum wages for informal workers like maids, cooks, cleaners, gardeners, etc.,”* (4) *“It is not the government’s responsibility to ensure that child labour is abolished;”* and (5) *“The government should organize domestic workers.”* This scale

had a poor reliability ( $\alpha = .54$ ). Thus, I ran exploratory analysis on this scale to find out if there were multiple factors.

I conducted a principal axis factor analysis (FA) on the five items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = 0.59, and all KMO values for individual items were equal to or greater than 0.5, which is the acceptable limit. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Two factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1, and in combination, explained 42.22% of the variance. Since the scree plot also justified the retention of two factors, I retained both. Table 1 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents support for increased government action ( $\alpha = .63$ ), while factor 2 represents support for status quo ( $\alpha = .63$ ). Given that the attitude toward government action items loaded on two scales, the analyses were conducted separately for support for increased government action and support for status quo.

Table 1

*Summary of Exploratory Factor analysis with Oblimin Rotation Results for the Attitude to Government Action Scale*

Item	Rotated factor loadings	
	Support for increased government action	Support for status quo
The Indian government should regulate informal labour to prevent exploitation of workers.	<b>.71</b>	-.01
The government should organize domestic workers.	<b>.61</b>	-.06
There should be minimum wages for informal workers like maids, cooks, cleaners, gardeners, etc.	<b>.50</b>	.07
The Indian government already spends enough resources on fighting modern slavery.	-.08	<b>.72</b>
It is not the government's responsibility to ensure that child labour is abolished.	.09	<b>.66</b>
Eigenvalues	1.83	1.40
% of variance explained	24.80	17.42
$\alpha$	.63	.63

*Note:* Factor loadings over .40 appear in bold.

**Other Variables.**

**Demographic questions.** Participants answered questions on general demographic questions such as age, gender, religion, education, income, state and political orientation.

**Attention check measures.** The study included two attention check items presented at the end of the questionnaire. The first item was an instructional manipulation check: “*Please choose the last option for this question to show that you are paying attention*”. The response options were “*never*”, “*sometimes*”, “*about half the time*”, “*most of the time*” and “*always*”. Participants had to select the option “*always*” to be considered as passed. The second item was a content attention check: “*We asked you to read a passage earlier in this questionnaire. What did you read about?*” The response options were “*modern slavery*”, “*penguins*”, “*Christmas*”, “*the Himalayas*”, and “*ancient history*”. Participants in the intervention condition had to choose “*modern slavery*” since they would have read a text on modern slavery, and those in control condition had to choose “*penguins*” since they would have read about penguins in the Antarctic region. Only the data from those participants who passed both these items were included in the final analysis.

**Analysis**

The following analyses were preregistered. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to investigate the main effect of the intervention on opposition to modern slavery, support for increased government action, and support for the status quo. Regression models were used to test whether the main effect was moderated by caste status (two-way interaction), caste prejudice (two-way interaction) and caste status\*caste identification (three-way interaction). During the analysis, as pre-registered, the moderator variable caste status was split into two categories: Savarna category (upper castes; including Forward Caste, Backward Caste and Most Backward Caste) and Avarna category (lower castes; including Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes). However, given the lack of variation on caste status

in my sample (only 6.2% of lower-caste participants compared to the 25.2% of lower-caste Indians in the population), the analysis used social status (as assessed by MacArthur Ladder of Subjective Social Status) and identification instead of caste status and caste identification. This was also preregistered before the data analysis.

## Results

### Attention Check Measures

The failure rate for the two attention checks was 28% with 323 participants out of 451 passing both the attention check measures. Previous studies comparing attentiveness of MTurk workers to subject pool participants have found mixed results (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). However, studies comparing Indian and American MTurk workers have shown that data provided by Indian MTurk workers is typically of lower quality and that they especially have trouble with instructional manipulation checks and reverse-coded items (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016; Litman et al., 2015). Since it was suspected that this could be due to difficulties in language comprehension, my study offered participants the opportunity to answer the questionnaire in English or Hindi, the language that is spoken by more than 500 million speakers in India (Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, 2019). However, only 10 of the 451 participants chose to take the study in Hindi.

### Manipulation Check

There was a significant but weak effect of intervention on the manipulation check (acknowledgement of modern slavery in India),  $F(1, 313.41) = 12.46, p < .001, d = 0.36$ . Participants in the intervention condition,  $M = 5.21, 95\% \text{ CI } [5.03, 5.39]$ , acknowledged the presence of modern slavery in India more than the participants in the control condition,  $M = 4.71, 95\% \text{ CI } [4.50, 4.93]$ . Figure 3 shows the mean difference in scores on all the outcome variables between the intervention and control groups.

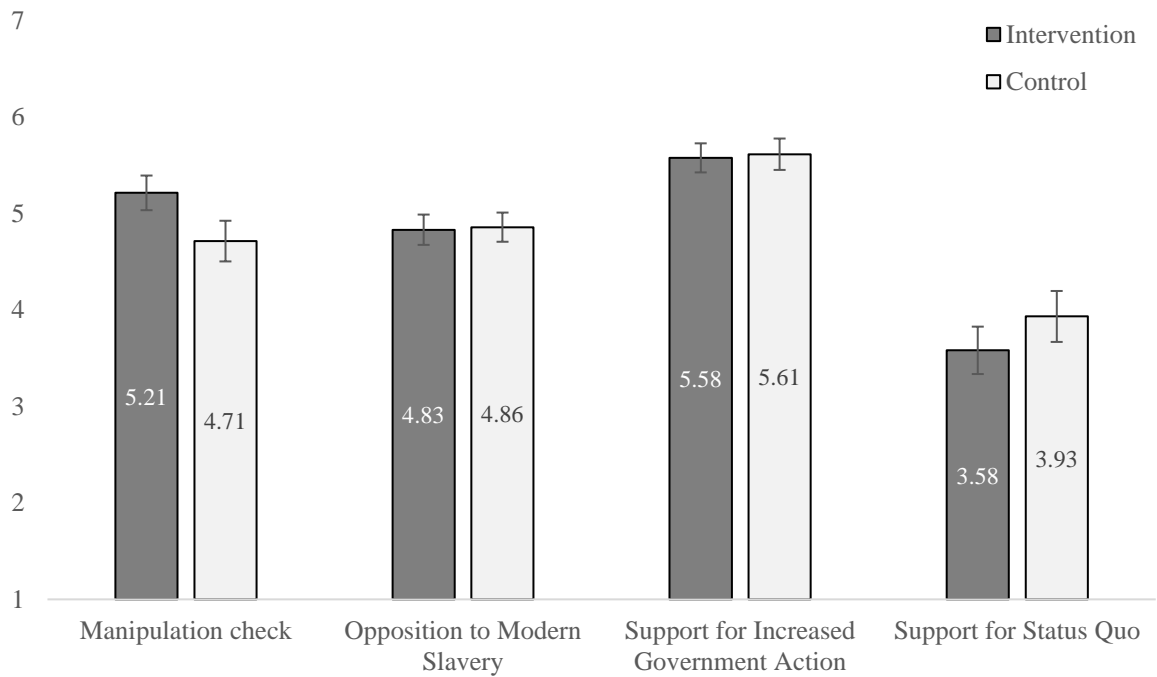


Figure 3. Mean scores of outcome variables across intervention and control conditions.

Standard errors represent 95% confidence intervals.

### Hypothesis 1: Opposition to Modern Slavery

Contrary to predictions, there was no significant effect of intervention on opposition to modern slavery,  $F(1, 320.45) = 0.06, p = .812, d = -0.03$ . Participants in the intervention condition,  $M = 4.83, 95\% \text{ CI } [4.67, 4.99]$ , did not differ significantly in their attitude to modern slavery from participants in the control condition,  $M = 4.86, 95\% \text{ CI } [4.70, 5.01]$ . The distributions for the participants in the control condition (skewness = 0.47,  $SE = 0.19$ ; kurtosis = -0.92,  $SE = 0.38$ ), and in the intervention condition (skewness = 0.45,  $SE = 0.19$ ; kurtosis = -0.90,  $SE = 0.38$ ) was somewhat non-normal. Since most scores are above the midpoint of the scale, it appears that most participants oppose modern slavery.

### Hypothesis 2: Support for Increased Government Action

There was no significant effect of the experimental manipulation on the subscale for support for increased government action,  $F(1, 319.28) = 0.11, p = .740, d = -0.03$ . Support for



increased government action among participants in the intervention condition,  $M = 5.58$ , 95% CI [5.42, 5.73], did not differ significantly from those in the control condition,  $M = 5.61$ , 95% CI [5.45, 5.78].

### **Hypothesis 3: Support for Status Quo**

There was no significant difference in the support for status quo between participants in the intervention condition,  $M = 3.58$ , 95% CI [3.33, 3.83], and those in the control condition,  $M = 3.93$ , 95% CI [3.67, 4.20],  $F(1, 319.47) = 3.63$ ,  $p = .058$ ,  $d = -0.20$ .

### **Hypothesis 4: Moderation Effects**

The serious underrepresentation of individuals from the lower Avarna castes in my sample led to highly unequally sized groups on the moderator variable caste status ( $n = 276$  for upper Savarna caste,  $n = 20$  for lower Avarna caste). Thus, as preregistered, I ran the moderation analysis with subjective social status and identification of participants with their social status group instead of caste status and caste identification. Thus, the hypotheses tested whether caste prejudice (as measured by modern casteism scale), subjective social status (as measured by the 10-point MacArthur ladder of Subjective Social Status), and identification with social status group (as measured by social identification scale) would moderate the effect of the intervention on each of the three outcome variables.

I ran hierarchical regression analyses for each of the outcome variables progressively in three models: a) The first model regressed the outcome variables on the predictor variables without any interaction; b) The second model added the two-way interactions (manipulation\*caste prejudice, manipulation\*social status, and manipulation\*social status identification); and finally c) The third model included the moderated moderation interaction (social status\*social status identification) and the three-way interaction (manipulation\*social status\*social status identification). The results of these interactions for each of the outcome

variables are presented consecutively. All model statistics and estimates for each of the outcome variables are in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2

*Summary of Regression Model with Opposition to Modern Slavery as Dependent Variable*

Step 1: Model without interaction: $R^2(\text{adj}) = .14$ ; $F(4, 317) = 13.71$ , $p < .001$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	6.62	[5.94, 7.29]	0.35		19.17	321	< .001
Manipulation	-0.08	[-0.28, 0.13]	0.10	-.04	-0.72	321	.471
Caste prejudice	-0.33	[-0.43, -0.23]	0.05	-.36	-6.70	321	< .001
Social status	-0.04	[-0.11, 0.04]	0.04	-.06	-1.01	321	.314
Social status identification	-0.02	[-0.13, 0.10]	0.06	-.01	-0.24	321	.808
Step 2: Model with two-way interactions: $R^2(\text{adj}) = .13$ ; $F(7, 314) = 8.02$ , $p < .001$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	6.80	[5.80, 7.79]	0.51		13.41	321	< .001
Manipulation	-0.08	[-0.28, 0.13]	0.11	-.04	-0.72	321	.469
Caste prejudice	-0.32	[-0.46, -0.19]	0.07	-.35	-4.61	321	< .001
Social status	-0.08	[-0.19, 0.02]	0.05	-.13	-1.58	321	.116
Social status identification	0.00	[-0.19, 0.19]	0.10	.00	0.02	321	.986
Manipulation*caste prejudice	-0.02	[-0.22, 0.18]	0.10	-.02	-0.20	321	.842
Manipulation*social status	0.09	[-0.06, 0.24]	0.08	.10	1.23	321	.220
Manipulation*social status identification	-0.04	[-0.28, 0.21]	0.12	-.03	-0.28	321	.777
Step 3: Model with three-way interaction, $R^2(\text{adj}) = .13$ ; $F(9, 312) = 6.43$ , $p < .001$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	6.92	[5.90, 7.95]	0.52		13.30	321	< .001
Manipulation	-0.02	[-0.24, 0.21]	0.11	-.01	-0.14	321	.887
Caste prejudice	-0.34	[-0.48, -0.20]	0.07	-.37	-4.72	321	< .001
Social status	-0.10	[-0.22, 0.01]	0.06	-.16	-1.85	321	.066
Social status identification	0.01	[-0.18, 0.20]	0.10	.01	0.10	321	.923
Manipulation*caste prejudice	0.00	[-0.20, 0.20]	0.10	.00	0.03	321	.975
Manipulation*social status	0.11	[-0.04, 0.26]	0.08	.12	1.42	321	.157
Manipulation*social status identification	0.07	[-0.31, 0.18]	0.13	-.05	-0.52	321	.607
Social status*social status identification	0.07	[-0.06, 0.20]	0.07	.11	1.06	321	.290
Manipulation*social status*social status identification	0.11	[-0.27, 0.05]	0.08	-.14	-1.33	321	.183

**Hypothesis 4A: Opposition to modern slavery.** I predicted that (a) stronger the caste prejudice, weaker the main effect between manipulation and opposition to modern slavery; (b) higher the social status, lower the main effect between manipulation and opposition to modern slavery; and (c) participants higher in social status and identification would be least influenced by the intervention, while those lower in social status and identification would be most influenced. All the hypotheses were disconfirmed. There was no interaction between caste prejudice and the manipulation; between social status and the manipulation; or between social status identification and the manipulation on opposition to modern slavery. Moreover, there was no three-way interaction between social status, social status identification and the manipulation. The regression results are presented in Table 2. However, it is noteworthy that caste prejudice was a predictor of opposition to modern slavery in this model. As caste prejudice increased, there was a statistically significant decrease in opposition to modern slavery.

**Hypothesis 4B: Support for increased government action.** I predicted that (a) stronger the caste prejudice, weaker the main effect between manipulation and support for increased government action; (b) higher the social status, lower the main effect between manipulation and support for increased government action; and (c) participants higher in social status and identification would be least influenced by the intervention, while those lower in social status and identification would be most influenced. However, contrary to my hypotheses, there was no interaction between caste prejudice and the manipulation; between social status and the manipulation; or between social status identification and the manipulation on support for increased government action. Further, there was no three-way interaction between social status, social status identification, and the manipulation. The regression results are presented in Table 3. However, interestingly, as social status increased, there was a small but significant increase in support for increased government action.

Table 3

*Summary of Regression Model with Support for Increased Government Action as Dependent Variable*

Step 1: Model without interaction: $R^2(\text{adj}) = .03$ ; $F(4, 317) = 3.43$ , $p = .009$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	4.65	[3.92, 5.38]	0.37		12.50	321	< .001
Manipulation	-0.00	[-0.22, 0.22]	0.11	-.00	-0.01	321	.989
Caste prejudice	-0.07	[-0.17, 0.04]	0.05	-.07	-1.23	321	.220
Social status	0.09	[0.01, 0.17]	0.04	.14	2.21	321	.028
Social status identification	0.12	[-0.00, 0.25]	0.07	.12	1.90	321	.059
Step 2: Model with two-way interactions: $R^2(\text{adj}) = .03$ ; $F(7, 314) = 2.42$ , $p = .020$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	4.30	[3.22, 5.37]	0.54		7.89	321	< .001
Manipulation	0.00	[-0.22, 0.22]	0.11	.00	0.01	321	.990
Caste prejudice	-0.14	[-0.29, 0.01]	0.08	-.15	-1.82	321	.070
Social status	0.11	[-0.01, 0.22]	0.06	.16	1.87	321	.063
Social status identification	0.23	[0.02, 0.43]	0.10	.21	2.2	321	.029
Manipulation*caste prejudice	0.13	[-0.08, 0.35]	0.11	.10	1.25	321	.211
Manipulation*social status	-0.04	[-0.20, 0.12]	0.08	-.04	-0.50	321	.621
Manipulation*social status identification	-0.16	[-0.42, 0.10]	0.13	-.11	-1.19	321	.234
Step 3: Model with three-way interaction, $R^2(\text{adj}) = .03$ ; $F(9, 312) = 2.04$ , $p = .034$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	4.45	[3.34, 5.55]	0.56		7.94	321	< .001
Manipulation	0.05	[-0.19, 0.30]	0.12	.03	0.44	321	.659
Caste prejudice	-0.16	[-0.31, 0.00]	0.08	-.17	-2.02	321	.045
Social status	0.08	[-0.04, 0.20]	0.06	.12	1.34	321	.182
Social status identification	0.23	[0.03, 0.44]	0.10	.22	2.28	321	.023
Manipulation*caste prejudice	0.16	[-0.06, 0.37]	0.11	.12	1.43	321	.153
Manipulation*social status	-0.02	[-0.18, 0.15]	0.08	-.02	-0.20	321	.845
Manipulation*social status identification	-0.18	[-0.45, 0.09]	0.14	-.13	-1.30	321	.193
Social status*social status identification	0.08	[-0.06, 0.22]	0.07	.12	1.18	321	.241
Manipulation*social status*social status identification	-0.10	[-0.27, 0.07]	0.09	-.13	-1.16	321	.247

Table 4

*Summary of Regression Model with Support for Status Quo as Dependent Variable*

Step 1: Model without interaction: $R^2(\text{adj}) = .29$ ; $F(4, 317) = 33.48$ , $p < .001$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-1.12	[-2.15, -0.10]	0.52		-2.15	321	.032
Manipulation	-0.21	[-0.52, 0.10]	0.16	-.06	-1.31	321	.193
Caste prejudice	0.65	[0.50, 0.80]	0.08	.43	8.67	321	< .001
Social status	0.13	[0.02, 0.25]	0.06	.13	2.38	321	.018
Social status identification	0.25	[0.08, 0.43]	0.09	.15	2.80	321	.005
Step 2: Model with two-way interactions: $R^2(\text{adj}) = .28$ ; $F(7, 314) = 18.98$ , $p < .001$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-1.30	[-2.81, 0.21]	0.77		-1.70	321	.090
Manipulation	-0.21	[-0.52, 0.11]	0.16	-.06	-1.29	321	.197
Caste prejudice	0.64	[0.43, 0.85]	0.11	.42	6.04	321	< .001
Social status	0.13	[-0.02, 0.29]	0.08	.12	1.66	321	.098
Social status identification	0.29	[0.01, 0.58]	0.14	.17	2.04	321	.043
Manipulation*caste prejudice	0.00	[-0.29, 0.30]	0.15	.00	0.02	321	.985
Manipulation*social status	0.00	[-0.22, 0.23]	0.11	.00	0.02	321	.982
Manipulation*social status identification	-0.06	[-0.43, 0.30]	0.19	-.03	-0.35	321	.730
Step 3: Model with three-way interaction, $R^2(\text{adj}) = .28$ ; $F(9, 312) = 14.75$ , $p < .001$							
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-1.17	[-2.73, 0.38]	0.79		-1.49	321	.138
Manipulation	-0.16	[-0.50, 0.18]	0.17	-.05	-0.95	321	.345
Caste prejudice	0.63	[0.41, 0.84]	0.11	.41	5.76	321	< .001
Social status	0.11	[-0.06, 0.28]	0.09	.10	1.30	321	.194
Social status identification	0.30	[0.02, 0.59]	0.15	.17	2.08	321	.039
Manipulation*caste prejudice	0.02	[-0.28, 0.32]	0.15	.01	0.13	321	.894
Manipulation*social status	0.02	[-0.21, 0.26]	0.12	.02	0.20	321	.842
Manipulation*social status identification	-0.08	[-0.46, 0.30]	0.19	-.03	-0.40	321	.687
Social status*social status identification	0.07	[-0.13, 0.27]	0.10	.07	0.72	321	.471
Manipulation*social status*social status identification	-0.08	[-0.32, 0.16]	0.12	-.06	-0.66	321	.509

**Hypothesis 4C: Support for status quo.** I predicted that (a) stronger the caste prejudice, weaker the main effect between manipulation and support for the status quo; (b) higher the social status, lower the main effect between manipulation and support for the status quo and (c) participants higher in social status and identification would be least influenced by the intervention, while those lower in social status and identification would be most influenced. The preregistered hypotheses on interaction effects were disconfirmed for this variable as well. There was no interaction between caste prejudice and the manipulation; between social status and the manipulation; and between social status identification and the manipulation. There was also no three-way interaction between social status, social status identification, and the manipulation. The regression results are presented in Table 4. However, caste prejudice, social status, and social status identification all significantly predicted support for the status quo. Individuals with higher caste prejudice, social status, and status identification were more likely to support the status quo.

### **Exploratory Analysis**

I conducted exploratory analysis on the data to investigate the relationship between caste status and outcome variables. I ran an ANOVA to check if there were any significant mean differences across caste groups using the caste categories that are employed in the Indian census (Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, 2019). The analysis included Dalits ( $n = 18$ ), Most Backward Caste ( $n = 17$ ), Backward Caste ( $n = 161$ ) and Forward Caste ( $n = 98$ ), in ascending order of social hierarchy. Since the sample size was too small for Scheduled Tribes ( $n = 2$ ), this category and the category of participants responding “other” ( $n = 27$ ) were excluded from the analysis. Since the sample sizes are too small and very unequal, I used Games-Howell

test for the post-hoc analyses to keep biases to a minimum (Field, 2018) but the results still have to be interpreted with caution.

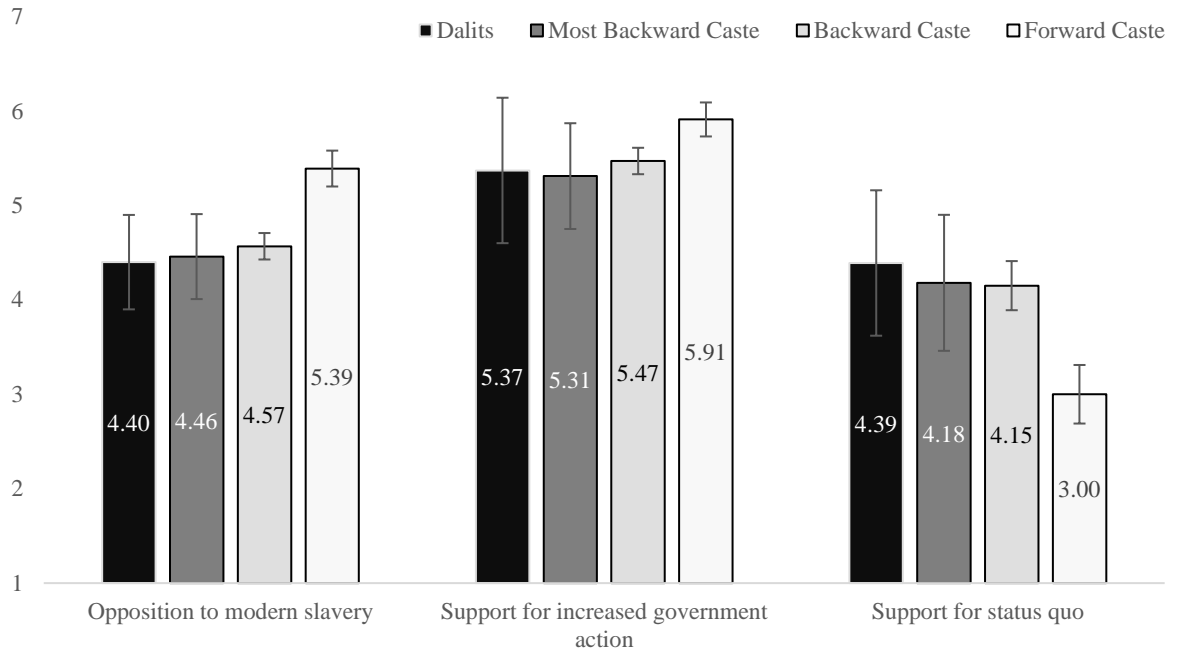


Figure 4. Mean scores of outcome variables across various caste groups. Standard errors represent 95% confidence intervals.

**Opposition to Modern Slavery.** There was a significant mean difference between caste groups on opposition to modern slavery,  $F(3, 290) = 17.00, p < .001, \omega^2 = 0.16$ . Post-hoc analysis using Games-Howell test indicated that participants who belonged to Forward Caste ( $M = 5.39, SD = 0.97$ ) reported significantly higher opposition to modern slavery than participants who belonged to Backward Caste ( $M = 4.57, SD = 0.90$ ), Most Backward Caste ( $M = 4.46, SD = 0.88$ ) or Dalits ( $M = 4.40, SD = 1.02$ ). The means and 95% confidence intervals associated with the means are presented in Figure 4.

**Support for Increased Government Action.** There was a significant mean difference between caste groups on support for increased government action,  $F(3, 42.16) = 5.13, p = .004,$

$\omega^2 = 0.05$ . Post-hoc analysis using Games-Howell test revealed that participants who belonged to Forward Caste ( $M = 5.91, SD = 0.93$ ) reported significantly higher support for increased government action than participants who belonged to Backward Caste ( $M = 5.47, SD = 0.93$ ). No other pairwise comparison was significant.

**Support for Status Quo.** There was a significant mean difference between caste groups on support for status quo,  $F(3, 290) = 11.86, p < .001, \omega^2 = 0.11$ . Post-hoc analysis using Games-Howell test showed that participants who belonged to Forward Caste ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.54$ ) scored significantly lower on support for the status quo than participants who belonged to Backward Caste ( $M = 4.15, SD = 1.66$ ), Most Backward Caste ( $M = 4.18, SD = 1.40$ ), and Dalits ( $M = 4.39, SD = 1.55$ ).

### Discussion

The study provided evidence to the hypothesis that participants exposed to a text on the prevalence of modern slavery in India would acknowledge the presence of modern slavery (as assessed by the manipulation check) more than participants exposed to a control text. However, contrary to my hypotheses, this intervention manipulation did not lead to a significant change in opposition to modern slavery, support for increased government action, or support for the status quo. Moreover, there was no evidence that the effect of the intervention was moderated by caste prejudice, social status or social status identification in the form of two-way or three-way interactions.

Though I derived the study's hypotheses from previous social psychological research on prejudice and broader social scientific research on the Indian caste system and modern slavery, my study did not provide support to most of the hypotheses. There are several factors that could explain the lack of support for these hypotheses, three of which may be most central: a) Since a



majority of participants were already opposed to modern slavery and supported government action (as reflected in relatively high mean values), the manipulation may not have been able to influence attitudes further due to ceiling effects; b) The sample on Amazon MTurk may not provide necessary caste diversity for this study, and moreover, may not have enough language ability or attentional capacity to be able to answer the questionnaire adequately; and c) The instruments used in the study may not be appropriate for investigating the phenomena.

It is conceivable that attitudes to modern slavery in India are deeply entrenched in the Indian society, given its long co-history with the oppressive caste system. There is evidence that macro-level social dominance orientation is very high in India, which explains macro-level structural inequalities, value ideologies, and institutional discrimination at the national level (Fischer et al., 2012; Kunst, Fischer, Sidanius, & Thomsen, 2017). Thus, Indians usually exhibit high support for the social hierarchy within a highly unequal society. However, in my study, a majority of the participants were opposed to modern slavery and supported government action against modern slavery. (The potential reasons for this are discussed below.) Thus, if participants were already opposed to modern slavery, due to ceiling effect, the manipulation of reading a text on modern slavery may not have been able to influence the outcome variables further.

As discussed earlier, there has been evidence of lower quality data from Indian MTurk workers (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016; Litman et al., 2015). Though I took many steps to address the attentiveness and language problems, there still remained some issues. First, only two percent of the study participants chose to take the study in Hindi, the most-commonly spoken Indian language. Post-study analysis revealed that most of the MTurk workers are from outside the Indian Hindi-belt (states where Hindi is the official or co-official language). For instance, over 50% of my sample was from the state of Tamil Nadu where people speak Tamil instead of Hindi.

Thus, my study was not able to address potential language difficulties of a majority of the participants, which may have resulted in more people failing the attention checks. Second, evidence indicated that Indians use MTurk as a main source of income more than Americans do (Litman et al., 2015). Thus, they may have been in a greater hurry to get through the tasks as quickly as possible and this might also have increased the possibility of acquiescence or other types of response biases.

Though I used Amazon MTurk to gain access to a larger population, the sample in my study was not nationally representative. Most important for the scope of my study, there was not enough variation in the caste distribution. Upper-caste Savarna members were overrepresented and lower-caste Avarna members were severely underrepresented. Though there has been large-scale expansion of cheap and fast internet connectivity in the recent past, there are still hundreds of millions without internet connectivity in India (Press Trust of India, 2019). Evidence shows that upper-caste individuals are twice as likely to have exposure to social media compared to lower-caste Dalits and Adivasis (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2019; Sreekumar, 2007). This limited social caste variation may have reduced the chances to observe moderation effects for instance.

Further, an overwhelming majority of my participants had a graduate degree or higher educational qualification. Since there is strong evidence that higher education is correlated with lower ethnic prejudice (Hello, Scheepers, & Gijbbergs, 2002; Wagner & Zick, 1995), it is conceivable that this correlation might also extend to caste prejudice and the associated opposition to modern slavery (Pettigrew et al., 1997). This high level of education among the participants might have meant that most participants were already more aware of modern slavery

and lower in caste prejudice than the general population such that an awareness manipulation might have had little effect on them.

Finally, my study adapted the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) to measure caste prejudice among Indian participants. Though there is significant social scientific research on the caste system within India, there is a lack of social psychological research on the subject (Jogdand et al., 2016). To the best of my knowledge, there is no scale that has been designed to measure prejudice against Dalits within India. Hence, I decided to adapt the Modern Racism Scale developed in the USA to measure the modern racist attitudes of Americans. However, Dalit anger, while studied, is less documented and widespread compared to Black anger (Contursi, 2018; Jaoul, 2013), and the socio-political situation in contemporary India is quite different from racial attitudes in the 1980s America. Furthermore, there have been criticisms of modern racism for its conceptual clarity and representation as an adequate measure of prejudice in contemporary times (Bobo, 1988; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). While I also considered the use of scales to measure traditional prejudice, caste stereotypes, or blatant dehumanization (Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015), I decided against this due to ethical concerns. Caste prejudice is highly controversial and adding to the participants' derogation of lower-caste individuals seemed detrimental and unethical. In addition, I created two scales to measure opposition to modern slavery and support for governmental action, but neither of these were validated and had less than ideal Cronbach's alpha score (Kline, 1999).

Despite absence of evidence for the pre-registered predictions, some exploratory findings are worthy of discussion. Caste prejudice emerged as a predictor of less opposition to modern slavery and more support for the status quo. The higher the caste prejudice was, the less opposition to modern slavery there was. Similarly, the higher the caste prejudice was, the more

support for the status quo there was. To the best of my knowledge, these two findings lend some of the first empirical support to the relationship between caste prejudice and attitude to modern slavery. This association is plausible since the overwhelming majority of people living in modern slavery today are Dalits and Adivasis (Kara, 2017; Shah et al., 2018; Shahinian, 2009). Due to the strong association that exists between lower caste individuals and modern slavery, it can be expected that individuals who are more prejudiced may legitimize modern slavery more easily, thus reducing their opposition to modern slavery. The modern casteism measure (similar to symbolic racism) used to assess caste prejudice in this study enabled participants to deny the caste bias that exists in Indian society (Costa-Lopes, Dovidio, Pereira, & Jost, 2013), thus legitimizing the dehumanization and exploitation of lower-caste Dalits and Adivasis in modern slavery.

Since this sample had low representation from lower-caste Avarna members, I decided to use MacArthur's scale of subjective social status as a proxy to measure caste status. This social status measure emerged as a predictor of higher support for both increased government action and the status quo. That is, individuals higher in social status reported greater support for both more government action and government inaction. Since these two scales measured opposite attitudes to government action against modern slavery, this is surprising but there is evidence for both findings. While social identity theory predicts that individuals with high social (and caste) status would aim to preserve their ingroup's positive distinctness by stigmatizing lower castes through the association with modern slavery (Jaspal, 2011), previous research also shows that individuals from upper class tend to be less prejudiced than individuals from lower class (Carvalho et al., 2013). However, there is reason to be cautious since both effects are small. It is possible that this finding could also be reflection of acquiescence bias among the participants. Indeed,

previous studies on Indian MTurk participants have reported that Indian participants had difficulties with reverse-coded items (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016; Litman et al., 2015).

Further exploratory analysis on mean differences between caste groups indicated that participants belonging to Forward Caste (upper caste) group were significantly more likely to oppose modern slavery, more likely to support government action, and less likely to support the status quo. This result is unexpected given that my hypothesis predicted that people with higher caste status would be less likely to oppose modern slavery, less likely to support government action, and more likely to support the status quo. It is possible that Forward Caste members in the population may oppose modern slavery and favour government action against modern slavery more than other caste members. System Justification Theory (Jost & van der Toorn, 2012) may help explain this finding, especially as it predicts that individuals who are more dependent on the social system and those who perceive the current system as inescapable are more likely to support the status quo. It follows then that lower caste individuals who lack control over their fate due to their birth lottery maybe more likely than upper caste individuals to “buy into the system” and support the status quo (Costa-Lopes et al., 2013). However, it is worth keeping in mind that some studies have shown weak or no support for the status-legitimacy hypothesis of the system justification theory (Brandt, 2013).

Moreover, the greater opposition of modern slavery among upper caste individuals could also be attributable to sampling bias. It could be that the upper-caste individuals who work on MTurk are not representative of upper-caste individuals in the population. Given the low pay for tasks on MTurk, it is conceivable that those upper-caste individuals who choose to work on MTurk have a lower socioeconomic status than their counterparts who choose not to work on MTurk. There are also technical reasons to be cautious about these results. First, the sample sizes

are highly unequal between the caste groups and are also somewhat small, which can bias the results and prevent generalization. Second, the effect sizes for all three outcomes are rather small. Even though the mean difference is significant, the size of the difference is relatively low. It is thus not possible to make assertive statements either way given the limited evidence.

Finally, social status identification predicted greater support for the status quo. This is in line with previous studies on social identification which found that individuals higher in social identification are more protective of their ingroup identity (Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). Thus, individuals who identify more with their social status group should show greater support to the hierarchical status quo in order to preserve their current social status.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The chief limitations of this study include the non-representative sample and use of non-native, non-validated instruments. However, given that there is a severe dearth of scholarship on modern slavery (Bales, 2005), this study still provides potentially valuable information on modern slavery in India. As mentioned earlier, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first quantitative study to investigate the impact of an awareness intervention and the specific role of caste prejudice on attitude to modern slavery. Hopefully, its limitations can inform future research.

Besides the factors mentioned in the discussion section, this study did not explore the relevance of gender on attitude to modern slavery, even though women are more likely to be poor, vulnerable and living in modern slavery (Shahinian, 2009). It would also be useful to investigate the paternalistic aspect of modern slavery because many owners of modern slaves have expressed that the victims benefit from modern slavery (Bales, 2005; Kara, 2017). In addition, future studies could investigate the commonalities and differences between various

forms of modern slavery to design more specific awareness interventions. Finally, more research on different regional populations would also help clarify the role of caste status and prejudice since the caste hierarchy is complex and nuanced, given the high diversity within India.

### **Conclusion**

The present pre-registered experiment tested the effects of an awareness manipulation on attitude toward modern slavery. Participants exposed to the text on modern slavery acknowledged the presence of modern slavery significantly more than participants in the control group. Though there was no significant difference between participants in the experimental and control conditions, it is important to note that most participants were opposed to modern slavery and supported increased government action. Caste prejudice was significantly associated with lower opposition to modern slavery and greater support for the status quo. Social status was positively associated with greater support for increased government action and greater support for the status quo. Finally, social status identification predicted higher support for the status quo. Although most predictions were not supported, some of these exploratory results may add to the gap in social psychological literature on modern slavery and the caste system in India.

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