Studying Solidarity Between Dalit Mathematics Faculty and Dalit Students: A Literature Exploration

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African American students and teachers in the USA and Dalit students and teachers in India share similar sociopolitical struggles in education, despite different historical trajectories (Goodnight, 2017). Dalits are historically positioned as the lowest group of caste communities in the caste hierarchy. They have been subjected to severe forms of segregation by "upper" castes, with Brahmins on top of the hierarchy, controlling educational access. Brahmanical ways of knowledge production have entrenched harmful stereotypes in mathematics (Subramanian, 2025) and higher education, while negating Dalit intellectuality (Kawade, 2019). I am investigating how Dalit mathematics faculty support their students in and out of the classroom, drawing parallels with existing mathematics education research that center Black teachers' contributions in supporting mathematics and affective needs of their students (e.g. Ortiz, 2024). In this poster, I share a literature review describing the state of research on the experiences of Dalit students and teachers in mathematics and higher education to inform my investigation.

My review started with a few publications recommended by Dr. Jayasree Subramanian, a mathematics education scholar working in anti-caste work. I used a snowballing method and general Google scholar search to identify other publications that are focused on the experiences of mathematics Dalit students and faculty in and out of the classroom. I found a limited number of published works in the area. So, I expanded my search to include works in higher education generally, and K-12 mathematics education. In my review, I identified two primary themes that play significant roles in shaping experiences of Dalit individuals in educational spaces: classroom pedagogy and curriculum, and institutional norms and practices.

In K-12 mathematics settings, some work is done to understand the impact of classroom pedagogy and curriculum on Dalit students. Subramanian and Visawanathan (2024) studied how mathematics is inaccessible for Dalit students by studying 'purity' of language in mathematics textbooks, while Sadafule and Berntsen (2017) studied how differential classroom practices negatively impact mathematical learning of Dalit students. In non-mathematics higher education research, Chand (2025) found that dominant caste teachers hypervisibilized and stigmatized Dalit students, segregated them during group work, and excluded Dalit icons from the curriculum. Campus climate pressurizes Dalit students to be discreet, impacting their "internal solidarity" resulting in isolation (Lum, 2019). When this aspect of being discreet is snatched by professors in instances like oral exams, there is hardly any support for Dalit students nor scrutiny for the discriminatory practices on an institutional level (Chand, 2023). At the same time, Dalit professors in universities are subjected to scrutiny by non-Dalit peers and students and are often the last option to collaborate (Ovichegan, 2015). In this literature review, I found that there has been no work done so far on building solidarity amongst Dalit teachers and students in higher education. There is hardly any work that discusses the caste questions in mathematics, and no work that discusses Dalit mathematics teachers' practices in and out of the classrooms that support Dalit students across grades. I aim to bridge this gap by studying how Dalit university mathematics teachers and students build solidarity and support each other in and out of the classroom to counter the brahmanical supremacy in mathematics spaces (Stinson et al., 2024).

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