Systematic Review of the Experiences and Mental Health Outcomes of Ethnic Minority (BAME) Academics in Non-Traditional Higher Education

Kennedy Oberhiri Obohwemu, PhD
Senior Lecturer, Department of Health & Social Care, Scholars School System, Leeds Trinity University Partnership, Birmingham Campus, United Kingdom; and PENKUP Research Institute, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Christian Atabong Nchindia, PhD
Faculty of Business Management, University of Suffolk, GBS Partnership, Manchester Campus, United Kingdom; and PENKUP Research Institute, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Oluwadamilola Tayo, MPH
Faculty of Health, Wellbeing & Social Care, Oxford Brookes University, GBS Partnership, Leeds Campus, United Kingdom; and PENKUP Research Institute, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Charles Leyman Kachitsa, PhD
Faculty of Business Management and Enterprise, Leeds Trinity University, GBS Partnership, Manchester Campus, United Kingdom; and PENKUP Research Institute, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Supriya Subhadarsini Sahoo, PhD
Study Skills Lecturer, Global Banking School, Canterbury Christ Church University, Manchester Campus, United Kingdom

Olusunmola Osinubi, PhD
Faculty of Health, Wellbeing & Social Care, Oxford Brookes University, GBS Partnership, Birmingham Campus, United Kingdom; and PENKUP Research Institute, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author:
Kennedy Oberhiri Obohwemu, PhD

ABSTRACT

Background

The marginalisation of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) academics within UK higher education (HE) has been well documented, with extensive research revealing structural racism, exclusionary institutional cultures, and restricted opportunities for career progression. However, little is known about how these experiences manifest within non-traditional or alternative higher education institutions (HEIs)—an increasingly significant component of the UK's widening participation landscape. This systematic review critically examines and synthesises existing literature on the experiences, challenges, and mental health outcomes of BAME academics in UK higher education. It also identifies gaps in empirical knowledge, particularly concerning non-traditional HEIs.

Methods

Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, systematic searches were conducted in six bibliographic databases—Web of Science, PubMed, Scopus, EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and CINAHL—to identify studies published between 2010 and 2025. To ensure comprehensive coverage, additional searches were performed on publisher platforms such as ScienceDirect and Google Scholar for potentially relevant studies not indexed elsewhere. Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed research exploring the experiences, challenges, or mental health of BAME academics in the UK. Sixteen studies met the inclusion criteria and were appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist to assess methodological quality and rigour.

Results

Six primary themes were identified, with the following percentage occurrence across the studies: structural racism and systemic inequality (75%), employment practices and career progression (75%), racial microaggressions (37.5%), mental health and emotional labour (31.3%), coping strategies (18.8%), and job satisfaction (18.8%). Collectively, the evidence highlights entrenched institutional racism, precarious employment conditions, limited career advancement, and considerable psychological strain among BAME academics—often compounded by a lack of mentorship and leadership opportunities. While some studies documented resilience and collective coping strategies, the absence of institutional accountability continues to sustain racial inequities across the sector. Notably, no studies were identified that specifically addressed BAME academics within non-traditional or alternative HEIs, underscoring a critical gap in current scholarship.

Conclusion

This review demonstrates a persistent lack of empirical insight into the experiences of BAME academics outside traditional universities. Future research should adopt a comparative approach to examine whether non-traditional HEIs foster more inclusive environments or replicate existing hierarchies of exclusion. Addressing these gaps is essential to promoting equitable career pathways, supporting mental wellbeing, and realising the UK higher education sector's commitment to genuine diversity and inclusion.

Keywords: BAME academics; higher education; structural racism; career progression; mental health; job satisfaction; systematic review

INTRODUCTION

The marginalisation and systemic exclusion of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) academics within UK higher education (HE) have been persistent concerns for more than two decades. Despite successive initiatives designed to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), evidence continues to show that BAME academics face significant barriers to career progression, hostile institutional cultures, and disproportionate mental health challenges (Bhopal, 2016; Rollock, 2019). These inequalities are not isolated incidents but are embedded within the structures and cultures of UK academia. While a growing body of research has documented these experiences in traditional universities, relatively little attention has been paid to the experiences of BAME academics in non-traditional or alternative HEIs—a sector that is expanding rapidly as part of the UK's widening participation agenda. Understanding how institutional contexts shape lived experiences, wellbeing, and career development is essential to ensuring that equity ambitions extend across the full higher education landscape.

In conventional universities, systemic barriers remain entrenched. Research consistently shows that BAME academics are less likely to be promoted, more likely to be employed on casual or fixed-term contracts and often expected to undertake pastoral or diversity-related work that is undervalued in promotion

frameworks (Bhopal & Jackson, 2013; Myers, 2022). Many report exposure to racial microaggressions, tokenism, and institutional cultures that normalise or silence racism (Rollock, 2011). These inequalities operate across recruitment systems, research funding opportunities, and informal networks that determine access to leadership and recognition. The cumulative effect is a professional environment where BAME academics must continually negotiate "racial battle fatigue" while striving for legitimacy and stability in their careers.

Although qualitative studies have illuminated these structural inequities, empirical understanding of how they intersect with mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and burnout remains limited. Recent studies (Hawkins, 2021; Arday, 2022; Obohwemu et al., 2025) point to the psychological toll of sustained discrimination and exclusion, yet large-scale, comparative evidence remains scarce. This is particularly concerning given the attrition of talented BAME scholars from UK academia and the potential global loss of intellectual capital that follows (Nchindia, 2020).

Alongside this established picture of inequity in conventional universities, the UK higher education sector has witnessed the growth of alternative or non-traditional providers—including private colleges, pathway institutions, and teaching-focused HEIs—created to widen access and increase flexibility in learning provision. As of 2017, there were 458 active higher education providers in the UK, a figure that continues to grow as part of national strategies for widening participation (Hunt and Boliver, 2020). These institutions could, in theory, offer new opportunities for inclusion: smaller organisational structures may allow for greater agility, closer staff–student engagement, and potentially flatter hierarchies that recognise diverse contributions. Given their focus on accessibility and community engagement, alternative HEIs might be expected to value BAME academics' roles in mentoring diverse learners, addressing attainment gaps, and advancing culturally responsive pedagogy.

Yet the potential of these institutions to provide genuinely inclusive environments remains largely untested. Alternative providers often face their own challenges—precarious employment, limited research funding, and underdeveloped EDI infrastructures—that

may reproduce the same inequities found in traditional universities (Nchindia et al., 2025a; Nchindia et al., 2025b). In such contexts, BAME academics may confront not only racialised disadvantage but also the precarity associated with teaching-intensive workloads and minimal institutional support. Without systematic evidence, it is unclear whether these settings represent spaces of opportunity or merely mirror the exclusionary hierarchies of the broader HE system.

Investigating the experiences of BAME academics in these institutions is therefore both timely and necessary. As the UK's higher education landscape continues to diversify, comparative evidence is required to understand whether alternative HEIs provide more equitable career pathways or perpetuate existing disparities. A systematic review offers a rigorous means of consolidating fragmented knowledge, identifying recurring patterns, and highlighting critical gaps that warrant further empirical investigation (Newmann & Gough, 2020). By synthesising what is currently known, such a review can guide policy development, inform institutional strategies, and support meaningful reform across the sector.

The present review addresses this gap by examining the experiences, challenges, and mental health outcomes of BAME academics within UK higher education, with a specific focus on the under-explored context of alternative HEIs. It seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. What systemic barriers do BAME academics face in conventional universities?

2. How do alternative HEIs provide inclusive and supportive environments for BAME academics?

3. How do career progression, job satisfaction, and mental health outcomes differ between BAME academics in alternative and conventional HEIs?

4. What unique challenges and opportunities emerge for BAME academics working in non-traditional higher education settings?

The primary objective is to systematically analyse and synthesise existing evidence on the experiences of BAME academics in alternative HEIs, focusing on recruitment, retention, progression, job satisfaction, inclusivity, and mental health outcomes. The secondary objective is to compare these experiences with those reported in conventional universities, identifying factors

that either mitigate or exacerbate inequalities. Clarifying these dynamics, this review aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to promote racial equity, enhance wellbeing, and strengthen diversity and inclusion across all tiers of UK higher education.

METHODOLOGY

Protocol and Registration

This review followed the PRISMA 2020 reporting guideline (Page et al., 2021). The protocol was developed a priori; however, it was not prospectively registered (e.g., in PROSPERO) due to practical time constraints associated with project deadlines. Any post-hoc refinements—such as clarification of outcome labels and the addition of a mop-up search—are transparently documented in the Search Strategy and Synthesis Methods sections.

Study Design

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to synthesise evidence on the experiences and mental health outcomes of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) academics within UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and higher education providers (HEPs). The review followed a transparent and replicable process based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure methodological rigour and relevance.

Eligibility Criteria

Studies were eligible for inclusion if they met the following criteria:

1. Publication type: Peer-reviewed empirical articles published in English.

2. Time frame: Studies published between 2010 and 2025 were included to reflect the most recent 15 years of research on diversity and equity in higher education. This timeframe was chosen to capture a developing evidence base.

3. Population and context: Studies focusing on BAME academics working in the United Kingdom, including both traditional universities and alternative or non-traditional HEIs.

4. Focus: Research examining experiences related to recruitment, retention, progression, job satisfaction, inclusivity, and mental health outcomes (e.g., stress, burnout, anxiety, depression).

Studies were excluded if they were conducted outside the UK higher education context, focused solely on students or non-academic staff, or did not explicitly address BAME academics. The inclusion of a wider publication range was justified by the limited volume of empirical research available in this area.

Information Sources

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across six major databases: Web of Science, PubMed, Scopus, EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and CINAHL, covering the period April to June 2025. A supplementary (mop-up) search was also undertaken on Science Direct and Google Scholar to identify additional grey or recent literature not indexed in the main databases. Reference lists of included studies were hand-searched to identify additional records.

Search Strategy

Searches were structured using the Population, Exposure, and Outcome (PEO) framework, incorporating both controlled vocabulary and free-text terms. The strategy combined keywords and synonyms using Boolean operators ("AND", "OR") to ensure comprehensive coverage (Table 1). Truncation and phrase searching were applied to maximise coverage.

Table 1: Search strategy informed by PEO Framework

	KEYWORDS	SYNONYMS
P – POPULATION	BAME academics	Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic lecturers, BME academics
E – EXPOSURE	Higher education	Universities, alternative providers

O – OUTCOME	Experiences, mental health	Recruitment progression, diversity, inclusivity, job satisfaction

The following search string was used for PubMed:

("BAME academics" OR "Black Asian Minority Ethnic lecturers" OR "BME academics") AND ("higher education" OR "universities" OR "alternative providers") AND ("experiences" OR "mental health" OR "recruitment" OR "progression" OR "diversity" OR "inclusivity" OR "job satisfaction").

The initial PubMed search returned 188,715 records, which were subsequently filtered by publication date (2010–2025), peer-reviewed status, and UK affiliation. The same procedure was replicated across the other databases, with minor adjustments in syntax according to database requirements.

Data Management and Deduplication

All records were exported to a reference manager for de-duplication before screening. A master log recorded the database name, date, and number of hits.

Study Selection

The study selection followed a two-stage screening process.

1. Stage One – Title and Abstract Screening: All retrieved records were reviewed manually for relevance to the review objectives. Studies clearly unrelated to BAME academics or the UK higher education sector were excluded.

2. Stage Two – Full-Text Review: The remaining studies were examined in full, with reviewers assessing their aims, methods, findings, and conclusions for relevance and methodological adequacy.

Disagreements regarding study inclusion were discussed during consultative meetings between reviewers until consensus was reached. After full-text screening, sixteen studies met the final inclusion criteria from an initial pool of thirty-three articles that had passed the abstract screening stage.

Data Extraction Process

Data extraction was carried out manually and independently by multiple reviewers to ensure accuracy and consistency. Each included article was assigned to a reviewer for detailed examination. Extracted information was organised into a structured table under the following headings:

- Author(s) and year of publication
- Location and institutional context
- Aims and objectives of the research
- Methodological design and sample characteristics
- Focal domains
- Key findings
- Strengths and limitations

Extracted data were tabulated for comparison, and discrepancies were reconciled through verification by a second reviewer.

Risk of Bias (Quality Appraisal)

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists, which evaluate the clarity, validity, and relevance of qualitative and quantitative research (Smith, Smith & Carroll, 2025). The CASP tool enabled systematic evaluation across ten criteria, including research aims, methodology, data analysis, and the credibility of findings.

Each study was rated as high, moderate, or low quality based on the overall assessment. No studies were excluded on the basis of quality alone; instead, quality ratings were used to inform interpretation during synthesis, ensuring that findings were weighted according to methodological robustness.

Data Synthesis

A narrative thematic synthesis was performed due to heterogeneity in study designs. Extracted findings were coded inductively and by a priori domains, grouped into descriptive and analytical themes linking structural factors to outcomes. Quantitative pooling was not attempted.

Ethics and Reflexivity

Ethical approval was not required as the review used published data. Reviewers reflected on positionality and potential bias throughout, resolving disagreements by deliberation.

RESULTS

Study Selection

The initial database search across Web of Science, PubMed, Scopus, EBSCOhost, PsycINFO, and CINAHL yielded a total of 44 records. Due to the limited availability of studies focusing specifically on BAME academics within both traditional and alternative UK higher education institutions, a supplementary ("mop-up") search was conducted in ScienceDirect and Google Scholar, which resulted in additional 38 eligible records. After the removal of duplicates, 76 unique articles remained for screening.

Following title and abstract screening, 28 studies were selected for full-text review. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 16 peer-reviewed journal articles met the final eligibility criteria and were included in the synthesis. The full study selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Figure 1).
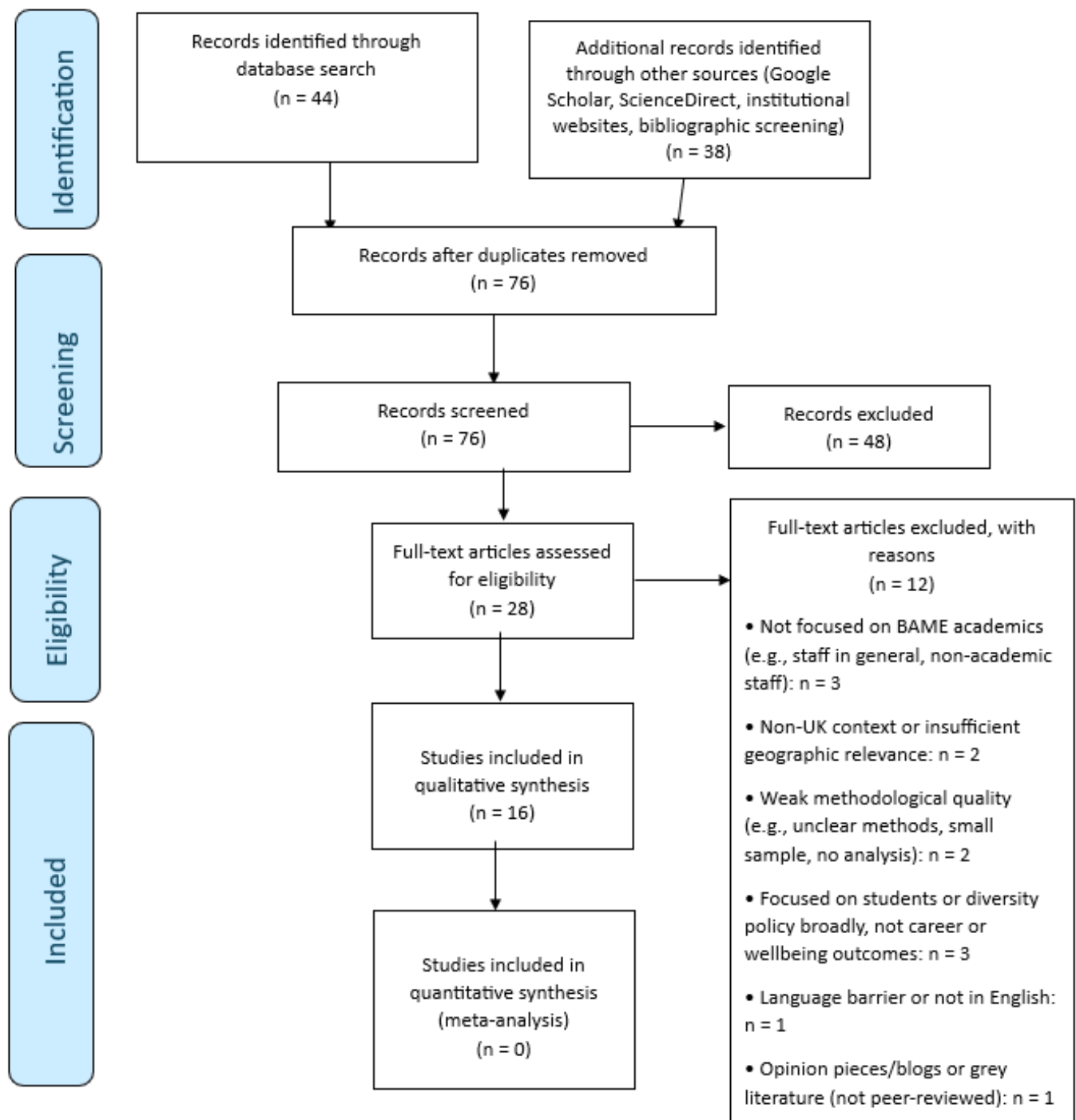
Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram illustrating the study selection process.

Characteristics of Included Studies

Geographic and Institutional Scope

The 16 included studies were published between 2013 and 2025, with the majority conducted in England, and a smaller proportion in Scotland. Most studies were situated within large, research-intensive or metropolitan universities, with fewer focusing on post-1992 or teaching-focused institutions. Notably, no study focused exclusively on BAME academics employed within alternative or non-traditional higher education institutions.

Institutional Context and Relevance

Although none of the studies directly targeted alternative HEIs such as Global Banking School (GBS), the experiences documented were reflective of systemic issues that may be generalisable across institutional types. Thus, the studies provide important insights into the structural, cultural, and psychosocial factors shaping BAME academic experiences in UK higher education.

A summary table of the included studies, detailing author, year, setting, population, and methodology, is provided in *Appendix 1*.

Methodological Profile of Included Studies

Data Sources

As shown in Figure 2, 81.3% of studies employed primary data collection, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and narrative inquiries. The remaining 18.8% relied on secondary data, such as institutional policy reports or publicly available datasets.
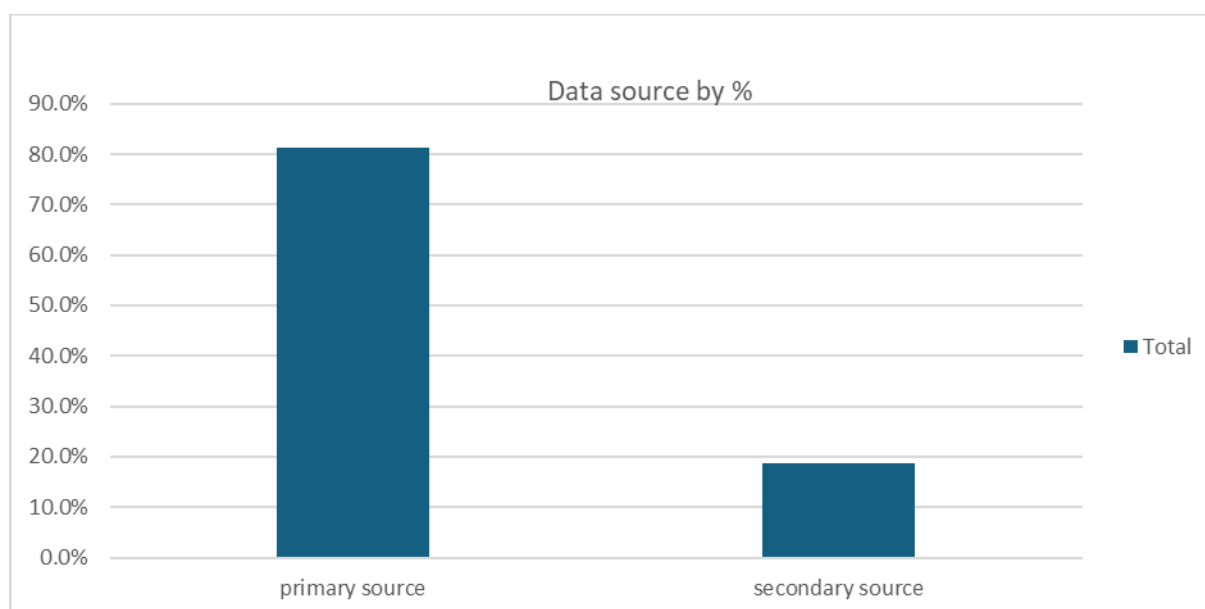

Figure 2: Types of data sources used in included studies.

Study Designs

As depicted in Figure 3, the majority of studies (87.5%) employed qualitative approaches, frequently grounded in interpretivist or critical race frameworks. These methods emphasised rich, experiential accounts of the professional lives of BAME academics. The remaining 12.5 % adopted mixed-methods designs, integrating limited quantitative elements to complement qualitative findings.
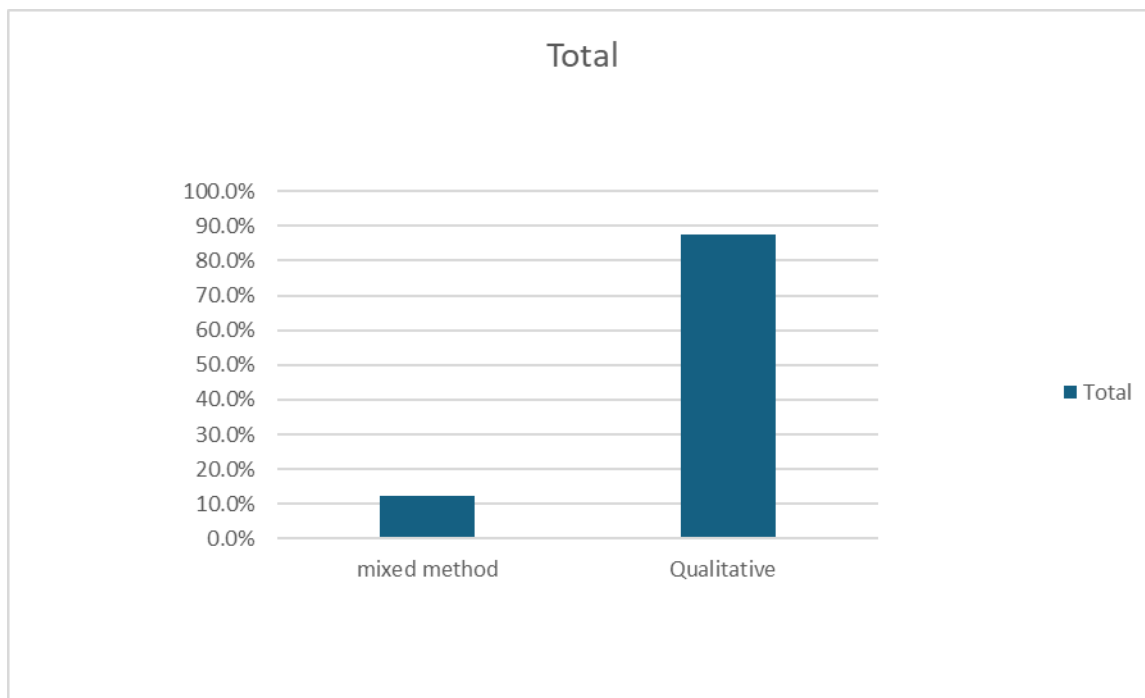
Figure 3: Methodological approaches across included studies.

Methodological Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of all included studies was appraised using the CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) qualitative checklist. Most studies were of moderate to high quality, demonstrating clear aims, appropriate qualitative designs, and well-articulated findings. Minor limitations included lack of reflexivity and limited reporting on ethical considerations.

Full appraisal outcomes are provided in *Appendix 2*.

Thematic Synthesis

Overview of Emergent Themes

The synthesis identified six dominant themes across the included studies (Table 2), reflecting consistent patterns in the lived experiences of BAME academics within UK higher education institutions.

Table 2: Frequency of emergent themes across reviewed studies

Theme	Percentage of Studies Reporting Theme
Structural racism	75.0%
Career progression and employment practices	75.0%
Microaggression and tokenism	37.5%
Mental health impacts	31.3%
Job satisfaction and institutional belonging	18.8%
Coping and resilience strategies	18.8%

Theme Descriptions

Structural Racism

Three-quarters of the reviewed studies documented systemic and institutionalised forms of racism that continue to shape the professional realities of BAME academics in UK higher education. Structural barriers were evident in recruitment, promotion, and performance appraisal processes, where whiteness remained the unspoken standard for merit and leadership. Many BAME lecturers reported exclusion from informal decision-making networks and mentoring circles that often determine access to opportunities.

They were also disproportionately represented in fixed-term, part-time, or teaching-heavy roles, with limited scope for research or advancement. This structural imbalance perpetuates a cycle of underrepresentation and reinforces the perception of BAME academics as peripheral to the core intellectual community.

Career Progression and Employment Practices

Several studies highlighted opaque promotion criteria and racial bias in academic appraisal systems. Processes governing tenure, research recognition, and progression to senior positions were often described as inconsistent or exclusionary. Even when BAME academics met or exceeded performance benchmarks, their achievements were sometimes undervalued or questioned, reflecting deep-seated assumptions about competence and authority. Structural inequities extended to workload allocation, where BAME staff were frequently tasked with "diversity work," mentoring ethnic minority students, or serving on inclusion committees—roles that, while essential, were seldom acknowledged in promotion frameworks. These practices collectively limited access to leadership and research autonomy.

Microaggressions and Tokenism

Experiences of racial microaggressions and tokenism were pervasive. BAME academics recounted being stereotyped, silenced, or treated as symbolic representatives of diversity rather than valued colleagues. These subtle yet cumulative encounters—ranging from misrecognition of expertise to exclusion from informal conversations—had significant psychological effects, fostering alienation and professional exhaustion. Institutions that celebrated diversity rhetorically often failed to translate such commitments into structural inclusivity, creating environments where BAME staff felt both hyper-visible and invisible.

Mental Health Impacts

The emotional toll of navigating exclusionary academic spaces was a recurrent theme. BAME academics frequently reported stress, burnout, anxiety, and feelings of vulnerability arising from sustained exposure to marginalisation. The "emotional tax" of constantly proving one's legitimacy within predominantly white institutions compounded this strain. Several studies observed that BAME staff were reluctant to access institutional mental health services, citing stigma, mistrust, and the absence of culturally competent support.

Job Satisfaction and Institutional Belonging

Job satisfaction among BAME academics was strongly correlated with perceptions of inclusion, peer collaboration, and opportunities for meaningful pedagogical or leadership engagement. However, such experiences were inconsistently reported and largely dependent on individual departments or supportive line managers. Where belonging was fostered, it enhanced motivation and professional commitment; where absent, it reinforced attrition and disengagement.

Coping and Resistance Strategies

A minority of studies illuminated the resilience of BAME academics who cultivated coping mechanisms such as peer mentorship, community networks, faith-based practices, and engagement in activist scholarship. These strategies often served as protective buffers against systemic exclusion. However, they were largely compensatory responses to institutional failings rather than evidence of embedded structural support.

Summary of Key Findings

Taken together, the findings reveal a deeply embedded pattern of racial inequity within UK higher education, characterised by structural racism, inequitable employment practices, and limited career progression opportunities for BAME academics. Professional environments were frequently described as hostile, marginalising, or structurally indifferent, with recurring experiences of racial microaggressions, tokenism, and isolation—often contributing to diminished wellbeing and heightened emotional labour. While some studies noted instances of resilience, mentorship, and peer-support networks, these were largely framed as compensatory strategies rather than evidence of genuine institutional inclusion. Notably, the absence of targeted research on BAME academics within alternative providers (e.g., private colleges, franchise campuses, vocational HEIs) highlights a critical gap in the literature.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review examined sixteen studies exploring the experiences and mental health outcomes of BAME academics in UK higher education. Although the available evidence remains limited—particularly

concerning non-traditional or alternative (HEIs)—the findings provide a consistent and compelling picture of structural inequality within conventional universities. Six interrelated themes were identified: structural racism and systemic inequality; mental health and emotional labour; racial microaggressions and academic culture; employment practices and career progression; coping strategies and resistance; and job satisfaction.

Structural Racism and Systemic Inequality in Higher Education

Structural racism emerged as one of the most pervasive barriers, reported in 75 per cent of the studies. The literature consistently described racism as institutional rather than merely interpersonal—manifested through recruitment practices, promotion systems, workload allocation, and the cultures of governance that reproduce disadvantage for BAME staff. These mechanisms restrict access to leadership, research funding, and advancement, often in subtle yet routine ways.

Rollock (2019) found that Black female professors were compelled to exceed expectations to achieve recognition while still facing institutional resistance and the perception of being "diversity hires." Similarly, Adisa, Gbadamosi and Chang (2021) noted that non-British academics perceived significantly greater discrimination than their White British counterparts. Together, these studies reveal a higher-education system that normalises inequity through everyday practices, thereby sustaining racialised hierarchies.

Mental Health and Emotional Labour

The psychological cost of working in racialised environments was another recurring theme. Approximately one-third of the reviewed studies highlighted stress, isolation, burnout, anxiety, and "racial battle fatigue" as consequences of prolonged exposure to discrimination and the additional emotional labour required of BAME academics. This labour often includes mentoring students of colour, educating colleagues about racism, and managing microaggressions.

Although only 31.3 per cent of the studies explicitly addressed mental health, the evidence frames it as both an equity issue and an occupational health concern. Researchers have highlighted the emotional burden of navigating indifferent or hostile institutional environments, advocating for mental health support to be acknowledged as an essential component of racial justice (Osho & Alormele, 2024; Nchindia et al., 2025a; Nchindia et al., 2025b).

Racial Microaggressions and Academic Culture

Racial microaggressions were reported in 37.5 per cent of the studies and were often embedded in the everyday culture of academia. These include coded exclusions, prescriptive behavioural norms, and expectations of conformity that require BAME academics to engage in constant self-monitoring, code-switching, and self-censorship. Arday (2018) observed that BAME academics were expected to assimilate into dominant institutional norms rather than be valued for their unique perspectives. Such repeated slights erode professional belonging, impose reputational labour, and divert energy from research and career development.

Employment Practices and Career Progression

Employment practices emerged as a central determinant of inequality. Three-quarters of the reviewed studies identified precarious employment—short-term, part-time, or zero-hours contracts—as disproportionately affecting BAME academics. These practices restrict career stability, reduce voice and agency, and perpetuate racialised precarity.

Arday (2018) documented the stark under-representation of BAME leaders: at the time of his study, only three BAME vice-chancellors and twenty UK-born BAME deputy or pro-vice-chancellors were recorded, compared with more than five hundred White counterparts. The lack of meaningful mentorship further compounds these barriers. Rollock's (2019) study of Black female professors revealed that effective mentoring relationships were uncommon, largely informal, and reliant on individual goodwill rather than structured institutional support. Similarly, other scholars have noted that exclusion from informal networks—the often unspoken pathways to academic advancement—significantly restricts access to leadership opportunities (Bhopal & Jackson, 2013; Nchindia et al., 2025a; Nchindia et al., 2025b).

Collectively, these findings highlight a structural failure to embed equitable mentoring and career-development frameworks within UK universities. Where mentoring does occur, it frequently centres on student welfare rather than the progression of academic staff,

reinforcing disparities in professional growth.

Coping Strategies and Resistance

Approximately 19 per cent of the studies described the coping and resistance strategies adopted by BAME academics to navigate exclusionary spaces. These strategies include over-preparation and hyper-performance, selective visibility, developing informal peer-support networks, strategic mobility (including moving abroad), and establishing mentoring circles. Rollock (2019) reported that Black female professors often over-prepared and practised self-censorship to maintain credibility, while Osho & Alormele (2024) highlighted the role of culturally competent leadership and peer mentoring in mitigating feelings of isolation.

Such strategies reflect resilience and agency but also underscore the need for individuals to compensate for systemic institutional failure. As Bhopal & Jackson (2013) argued, the burden of survival is often placed on those most marginalised, rather than on the structures that perpetuate inequity.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction emerged as a secondary but significant sub-theme. Although only a minority of studies addressed it directly, dissatisfaction was consistently linked to experiences of racism, marginalisation, and limited career mobility. Arday (2018, 2020) associated job dissatisfaction with poor promotion prospects and declining mental health, while Bhopal (2015) identified it as a "push factor" driving the emigration of BAME academics to overseas institutions perceived as more inclusive. Osho and Alormele (2024) similarly described the emotional cost of negotiating identity and legitimacy in environments where success rarely translated into genuine professional fulfilment.

Overall Synthesis

Collectively, these accounts reveal that persistent inequities undermine both the psychological wellbeing and professional satisfaction of BAME academics, reinforcing the cycle of under-representation in senior academic and leadership positions. The identified themes align closely with the wider literature on racial inequity in higher education, which attributes the marginalisation of BAME academics to entrenched systems of racism, patriarchy, and xenophobia (Coleman, 2023; Obohwemu et al., 2025). Across the reviewed studies, institutional cultures emphasised conformity and "fit" rather than diversity or cultural competence, producing environments that reward assimilation and penalise difference. The absence of research on alternative or non-traditional HEIs is itself revealing: it reflects how the mainstream academic gaze continues to centre traditional universities while neglecting emerging sectors that may reproduce—or challenge—similar inequities.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-level response. At the institutional level, universities must move beyond performative EDI commitments to implement transparent promotion frameworks, equitable mentoring systems, and culturally responsive wellbeing support. At the sectoral level, policymakers should commission comparative research across institutional types to determine whether non-traditional HEIs provide genuinely inclusive opportunities or simply replicate entrenched hierarchies.

Strengths and Limitations

This review contributes to a growing evidence base by synthesising qualitative research that captures the lived realities of BAME academics with depth and nuance. The studies analysed span more than a decade (2010–2025) and include seminal works by leading scholars in the field. Thematic consistencies across diverse methodologies lend credibility to the findings.

However, the review also exposes a clear gap in the literature: the absence of empirical research on BAME academics within alternative higher education institutions. The reliance on qualitative designs, while rich in insight, limits generalisability, and the absence of longitudinal or quantitative studies restricts understanding of change over time. Future research should therefore employ mixed-methods and comparative designs to illuminate how institutional type influences equity, inclusion, and wellbeing outcomes.

Policy Implications

This systematic review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the experiences and mental health outcomes of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) academics in UK higher education. Drawing on sixteen empirical studies, the evidence reveals a consistent pattern of racial inequality embedded within institutional structures, career pathways, and workplace cultures. Structural racism, precarious employment, and exclusion from mentoring and leadership opportunities

continue to shape the lived realities of BAME academics, while the psychological toll of such exclusion manifests as stress, anxiety, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction.

Despite national commitments to EDI, these findings demonstrate that progress remains uneven and often symbolic rather than transformative. Crucially, no study identified in this review focused specifically on BAME academics working within alternative or non-traditional HEIs, signalling a significant gap in the literature. This absence limits understanding of whether such institutions—often framed as vehicles for widening participation—represent more inclusive environments or merely reproduce systemic inequities in different organisational forms.

To address these gaps, a multi-level response is required:

1. Institutional Reform: Universities and alternative HEIs must embed anti-racist practices into their governance, recruitment, and promotion systems. This involves transparent promotion criteria, fair workload allocation, and the recognition of pastoral and diversity work as core academic labour. EDI policies must be measurable, resourced, and linked to accountability mechanisms, including leadership performance reviews.

2. Culturally Competent Support and Mentorship: Structured, equitable mentoring and leadership programmes are essential for the retention and progression of BAME academics. Institutions should establish formal mentorship networks led by trained mentors who understand the intersection of race, gender, and professional identity. Providing access to culturally competent mental health services is equally vital to mitigate the psychological burden of racialised academic environments.

3. Policy and Funding Priorities: Sectoral bodies such as the Office for Students (OfS), Advance HE, and UKRI should fund comparative and longitudinal research on BAME academics across institutional types, including alternative providers. Such research should assess how structural differences—such as contract type, funding model, and organisational culture—affect inclusion and wellbeing outcomes.

4. Research Agenda: Future studies should adopt mixed-methods and intersectional frameworks, integrating quantitative data on recruitment and progression with qualitative insights into lived experiences. Comparative analyses between traditional and alternative HEIs are needed to identify whether emerging institutions challenge or reinforce existing inequities.

5. Collective Responsibility: Finally, advancing equity for BAME academics requires collective commitment. Institutional leaders, policymakers, and academic unions must move beyond rhetoric to dismantle the systemic conditions that normalise racial inequality. Creating inclusive, mentally healthy academic environments is not only a moral imperative but also a prerequisite for academic excellence and social justice.

Recommendations for Future Research

Building on these findings, the following recommendations (Table 2) identify priority areas for future research to deepen understanding and inform effective institutional reform:

Table 2: Recommendations for Future Research

Focus Area	Rationale	Proposed Direction
Comparative Studies across Institutional Types	No studies were identified that explored BAME academics within alternative or non-traditional higher education institutions.	Future research should employ comparative designs to critically examine the extent to which alternative higher education institutions—such as private colleges, franchise campuses, and vocational HEIs—foster more inclusive and equitable environments for BAME academics, or whether they merely reproduce the structural inequalities, exclusionary practices, and racialised dynamics commonly observed in traditional

		universities. Such investigations would not only illuminate variations in institutional culture and policy but also help identify potential models of best practice or areas requiring targeted reform across the broader higher education landscape.
Intersectional and Longitudinal Approaches	Current literature is predominantly qualitative and cross-sectional, limiting understanding of how race, gender, class, and migration status interact over time.	Future research should employ mixed-method and longitudinal study designs to capture the evolving experiences of BAME academics in higher education. These approaches enable a comprehensive understanding of how racial dynamics affect mental health, career development, and long-term professional outcomes. Combining qualitative and quantitative data across time reveals patterns of resilience, exclusion, and institutional response, contributing to more informed and inclusive policy development.
Structural Interventions and Evaluation Research	Evidence of institutional reform and its impact on BAME staff wellbeing remains sparse.	Future research should prioritise evaluation studies that rigorously assess the effectiveness of EDI policies, mentoring schemes, and anti-racist training programmes within higher education institutions. While metrics such as staff retention and career progression remain important indicators of institutional impact, mental health outcomes must be recognised as a central measure of success. These initiatives should not only aim to advance professional opportunities for BAME academics but also foster environments that promote emotional wellbeing, psychological safety, and a genuine sense of belonging. Evaluating the extent to which such programmes reduce stress, anxiety, and experiences of racial trauma—while enhancing confidence, resilience, and job satisfaction—can offer critical insights into their transformative potential. Moreover, placing mental health at the heart of assessment frameworks ensures that institutional efforts move beyond performative gestures toward meaningful, sustained change in the lived experiences of BAME scholars.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review underscores the scarcity of research focusing on Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) academics within the United Kingdom's higher education system. In particular, it identifies a striking absence of empirical studies examining their experiences within non-traditional or alternative higher education institutions (HEIs). As such, it remains unclear whether the racialised dynamics evident in traditional universities are reproduced or challenged within these expanding institutional spaces. Given the continuing growth of alternative providers as

part of the UK's widening participation agenda, there is a pressing need for further research to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of BAME academics in these settings.

Across the reviewed literature, one message is clear: structural and cultural inequities continue to shape the experiences of BAME academics in UK higher education. Racism is not isolated or episodic; it is systemic—embedded within recruitment, promotion, pedagogy, and everyday institutional culture. Although some progress has been made in improving representation, the deeper power structures that define legitimacy, belonging, and authority within academia remain largely unchanged.

The literature consistently highlights the need for structured and institutionalised mentorship and sponsorship programmes that explicitly recognise race and intersectionality. Without deliberate reform, mentorship risks perpetuating, rather than dismantling, existing inequalities. Scholars such as Bhopal, Rollock, Arday, and Nchindia have shown that many equality and diversity initiatives function performatively—serving institutional reputation more than redistributive justice. Their collective work calls for a decisive shift from rhetorical commitments to structural accountability through transparent progression pathways, equitable leadership representation, and the reform of precarious employment practices.

Equally, the emotional and psychological toll borne by BAME academics—manifesting as racial battle fatigue, isolation, and mental distress—must be recognised not as an individual vulnerability but as a structural outcome of racialised academic environments. Institutions must therefore extend EDI frameworks to include culturally competent mental health and wellbeing policies that address the specific burdens faced by racialised staff.

Ultimately, achieving racial equity in higher education demands more than symbolic gestures or representational diversity. It requires a fundamental reconfiguration of the values, hierarchies, and logics that sustain academic life—who is valued, whose knowledge is legitimised, and whose comfort institutions are designed to preserve. Only through sustained structural change, reflexive leadership, and the redistribution of power can UK higher education begin to embody the inclusion and justice it so often professes.

REFERENCES

1. Ajibade Adisa, T., Gbadamosi, G. and Chang, K., (2025). Unequal Academy: The Struggle and Challenges of Token Black Academics in the United Kingdom. *British Journal of Management*, *36*(3), pp.1274-1289.

2. Arday, J. (2020). Fighting the tide: Understanding the difficulties facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Doctoral Students' pursuing a career in Academia. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *53*(10), 972–979. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1777640

3. Arday, J., (2018). Understanding race and educational leadership in higher education: Exploring the Black and ethnic minority (BME) experience. *Management in Education*, *32*(4), pp.192-200.

4. Arday, J., (2022). 'More to prove and more to lose': race, racism and precarious employment in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *43*(4), pp.513-533.

5. Arday, J., (2022). No one can see me cry: Understanding mental health issues for Black and minority ethnic staff in higher education. *Higher Education*, *83*(1), pp.79-102.

6. Belkin, L., Lander, V. and McCormack, M., (2025). Impossible visibilities of Black and Global Majority staff at an ethnically diverse English university. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *38*(1), pp.111-126.

7. Bhopal, K., (2020). For whose benefit? Black and Minority Ethnic training programmes in higher education institutions in England, UK. *British educational research journal*, *46*(3), pp.500-515.

8. Bhopal, K., Brown, H. and Jackson, J., (2016). BME academic flight from UK to overseas higher education: aspects of marginalisation and exclusion. *British Educational Research Journal*, *42*(2), pp.240-257.

9. Bhopal, K., & Jackson, J. (2015). The experiences of black and minority ethnic academics: A comparative study of the unequal academy. London: Routledge (Routledge Research in Higher Education, 1st ed.).

10. Coleman, A., Crawford, M., Shin, H., Dadd, D., & Collins, B. (2023). The career prospects of migrant, female academics from minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK's higher education sector: an integrative review of peer-reviewed literature. *Educational Review*, *77*(4), 1313–1335. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2281240

11. Hunt, S. A., & Boliver, V. (2023). The private higher education provider landscape in the UK. *Studies in Higher Education*, *48*(9), 1346–1360. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2199317

12. Myers, M., (2022). Racism, zero-hours contracts and complicity in higher education. *British Journal of sociology of Education*, *43*(4), pp.584-602.

13. Nchindia, C.A., (2020). Black and ethnic minority academics' perspectives on intercultural interaction in UK universities: Beyond racialization. *International Journal of Education*, *12*(4), pp.49-72.

14. Nchindia, C.A., Obohwemu, O. K., Kachitsa, C.L., Tayo, O., Sahoo, S.S. and Osinubi, O. (2025a). Spaces of Possibility or Sites of Reproduction? B.A.M.E Academics and the Promise of Alternative Higher Education in the UK. *Journal of Studies in Education*, [online] 15(4), pp.26–26. doi: https://doi.org/10.5296/jse.v15i4.23191.

15. Nchindia, C.A., Obohwemu, O. K., Kachitsa, C.L., Tayo, O., Sahoo, S.S. and Osinubi, O. (2025b). Lost in the Metrics: The Human Cost of Performance Culture in UK Alternative Higher Education. International Research in Education, [online] 13(2), pp.88–88. doi: ·https://doi.org/10.5296/ire.v13i2.23272

16. Obohwemu, O. K., Nchindia, A. C., Kachitsa, L. C., Tayo, O., Sahoo, S. S., and Osinubi, O., (2025) Structural Inclusion or Symbolic Diversity? A Narrative Review of BAME Academic Experiences in UK Alternative Higher Education Providers. Global Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. 4(7): 10-23. DOI: 10.55640/gjhss/Volume04Issue07-02

17. Osho, Y.I. and Alormele, N., (2025). Negotiated spaces: black women academics' experiences in UK universities. *Higher Education*, *89*(5), pp.1387-1403.

18. Page, M.J.; McKenzie, J.E.; Bossuyt, P.M.; Boutron, I.; Hoffmann, T.C.; Mulrow, C.D.; Shamseer, L.; Tetzlaff, J.M.; Akl, E.A.; Brennan, S.E.; et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. J. Clin. Epidemiol. 2021, 134, 178–189

19. Rana, K.S., Bashir, A., Begum, F. and Bartlett, H., (2022), May. Bridging the BAME attainment gap: Student and staff perspectives on tackling academic bias. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 7, p. 868349). Frontiers Media SA.

20. Rollock, N. (2011). Unspoken rules of engagement: navigating racial microaggressions in the academic terrain. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *25*(5), 517–532. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.543433

21. Rollock, N. (2019). Staying power: the career experiences and strategies of UK Black female Professors. https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/27819

22. Rollock, N. (2021). "I Would Have Become

Wallpaper Had Racism Had Its Way": Black Female Professors, Racial Battle Fatigue, and Strategies for Surviving Higher Education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *96*(2), 206–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2021.1905361.

23. Rollock, N., (2012). Unspoken rules of engagement: Navigating racial microaggressions in the academic terrain. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *25*(5), pp.517-532.

24. Rollock, N., (2019). Staying power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors. Goldsmiths, University of London.

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU_Rollock_February_2019.pdf

25. Rollock, N., (2023). "I would have become wallpaper had racism had its way": Black female professors, racial battle fatigue, and strategies for surviving higher education. In *Education across the African diaspora* (pp. 90-101). Routledge.

26. Smith, V., Smith, A., and Carroll, L. (2025). Quality appraisal tools used in qualitative evidence syntheses of maternity care research: A scoping review. Elsevier, 148 p104479 Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2025.104479

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Data Extraction Table

Author, Year, and Location	Aims of the Research	Methodology/Methods	Key Findings: Strengths & Limitations
Title: "Understanding race and educational leadership in higher education." Author: Jason Arday Year: 2018 Location: London, United Kingdom	This article will utilize a collective biography of narratives from BME individuals in senior leadership positions within higher education in the UK to: - illuminate some of the challenges that saturate the sector, regarding leadership opportunities and mobilizing career pathways for BME individuals. - The issues drawn upon identify synergies between constructions of race and leadership and the interplay between these two vehicles when situated within a higher education context. - Considerations within this article also address the landscape and enduring legacy of racial inequality within the UK higher education sector. - This article argue that universities must prioritize diversifying senior leadership hierarchies within the Academy. - Concluding comments advocate that suitable interventions and mentoring opportunities must be provided to better support BME academics wishing to pursue a leadership trajectory in higher education.	Research Approach: Interpretive Qualitative methodology. Data collection: A collective biography, which was facilitated through two unstructured 60-minute focus group interviews and three 90-minute semi-structured individual interviews involving all three participants, to explore lived experiences of being a BME senior leader within higher education. Collective biographies engage with a communal narrative. The study facilitated this method by utilizing a focus group that focused on intense discussions on the particularity of lived experiences (Davies and Gannon, 2006). Sampling: Convenience sampling.	**Strengths** Provides qualitative narratives of lived experience from BAME senior academics. Provides the challenges in navigating the interplay between race and leadership within a higher education context. Discusses different perspective in light of the influence of cultural traits both for leaders and their subordinates. **Limitations** Has a small sample with only three research subjects. May be narrow in view as only three samples were involved using convenience sampling. The finding are based on subjective experiences and can be challenged as to inclusivity. Has not exclusively dealt with the issue of cultural influence on leadership.
Title: "Fighting the tide: understanding difficulties	The research aims: To explore the case for low numbers of BAME	The study employs a literature review approach, drawing from	Strengths -Examined perspectives from doctoral students desiring

facing BAME doctoral students pursuing career in academia Author: Jason Arday Year: 2020 Location: Durham, United Kingdom	academic staff in United Kingdom (UK) universities in correlation with low numbers of BAME entering universities for PhD programs. The study examines the prevalent lack of academic BAME leadership in universities and conclude that analysis shows racist tendencies in these institutions.	42 sources. Sources include extractions from official government and governance institutions such as Parliament and the Higher Education Academy. The review as indicative from the sources spans 29 years (1990 – 2019).	to enter the academic career arena. - Countered statistics suggesting lower figures of BAME admitted into PhD programs, mainly those dancing to academic careers. - Examined the notion of bad reputation in UK universities recruitment policies and culture as promoting more racist tendencies. Limitations -As desk research it may not arrive at a well-grounded representative conclusion of the findings since some of the literature reviewed would have been from projects with totally different aims. -BAME which bundles together a few minority groups in the UK, could in some cases mask the different experiences in academia which may be seen as varied with some feeling extreme discrimination while others may not be at the same level though within the same category.
Title: "More to prove and more to lose; race, racism and precarious employment in higher education." Author: Jason Arday Year: 2022 Location: Glasgow, Scotland	The research aims: To both redress the gap in literature and centre the lived experiences of staff of colour on precarious contracts, this study aims to examine the following question: what are the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff working on non-standard/precarious contracts within higher education institutions?	Research Approach: Eighteen participants across 10 universities engaged in focus groups, revealing three key themes: systemic racism, job insecurity and lack of career progression. Sampling: Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants, which was facilitated through networks and recommendations among staff of colour working within the sector. Data Collection: Each participant completed anonymous, self-administered questionnaires which were submitted virtually to the researcher. This	**Key Findings** Three themes were identified through analysis. From the first theme, systemic racism, three sub-themes emerged: exploitation, dehumanisation and gendered racism. For the second theme, job insecurity, four sub-themes emerged: financial insecurity, lack of work–life balance, mental health and transience. A third theme identified was lack of career progression. **Strengths** -Talks about the non-standard employment contracts that most impact/ affect BAME

| | | initial stage was to capture monitoring information (ethnicity, gender, age, level of education, marital status and duration of time in higher education) but also included space for comments about their experiences of racism, Participants then engaged in individual, semi-structured interviews and unstructured focus groups to further explore their lived experiences of racism and of navigating the precariat in higher education. The reported results draw primarily on excerpts from the two focus group discussions, each of which lasted for around two hours. All participant voices are therefore included in the findings.

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, with deductive methods of inquiry (Clarke & Braun 2017). | (termed in this paper "People of Colour") and women.

- study is cross cultural as it involves participants from across 10 universities engaged in focus groups.

-Approach taken highlights influence from employment governance documents such as academic staff contracts which relatively give a perspective on resultant disparities in the recruitment and conditions for varied groups of people evidently based on race/ ethnicity.

- The study used Critical Race Theory which examine the role of race, racism and power with the aim of eliminating exploitation within the labour market, particularly in higher education institutions.

- Draws the connectivity between precarious academic staff contracts in higher education and race inequality.

- One of the benefits of qualitative inquiry, and specifically CRT, is that the voices and experiences of staff of colour, which are often marginalised from discourse or debate, are centred and brought to the fore.

Limitations

Involvement of only 10 universities from around the UK may not be representative enough.

The method for data collection using focus group could be amenable |

			to group-think influence. The study has no control group; therefore, it may be harder to ascertain the influence of prevalent conditions on the participants including whether seasonality in their job could have played a part. Engaging various types of higher education staff (people of colour), could have allowed for data triangulation of data perspectives, and therefore a richer understanding. Quantitative exploration would be required to better discern causality, or to understand the interactive or mediating nature of the factors seemingly at play.
Title: "No one can see my cry: Understanding mental health issues for BAME staff in higher education." Author: Jason Arday Year: 2021 Location: Durham, United Kingdom	The research aims: To examine the impact of negotiating racial inequality and discrimination at university and the impact upon mental health. To understand mental health among BME staff within higher education. highlight the general exclusion of BME voice in the mental health research. Examine the progress made regarding greater calls for better representation and diversification within the Academy in terms of wider representation within student services becomes integral particularly in terms of building synergy and familiarity culturally among ethnic minority populations within	This study utilises the narratives of 40 BME academic and professional university staff to examine the impact of negotiating racial inequality and discrimination at university and the impact upon mental health. For this study, fourteen UK-based universities were engaged with, ranging from Russell Group to Post-92 institutions. BME academic and professional staff (n = 40) aged between 26 and 58 were recruited from a range of university faculties and professional services. Data Collection: Forty semi-structured, open-ended questionnaires were completed in addition to two unstructured focus group	**Strengths:** Examines what has led to the growing concerns regarding the mental well-being of staff within universities because of increasing pressure placed on academics within the higher education sector. Recognise the varying ways in which experiencing racism on a continual daily basis can compromise mental faculties. Suggests that BME academics and professional staff continue to experience differential mental health support and psychological interventions in helping to successfully navigate mental illness, particularly in relation to the trauma experienced when facing and navigating racism

	universities	interviews and forty 60-min semi-structured individual interviews involving all forty participants to explore lived experiences of negotiating mental illness as BME staff within higher education. Sampling: Convenience Sampling was employed. The study comprised of 24 females and 16 males. The overwhelming majority of participants were the only Black or ethnic minority within their university. Data Analysis: Thematic analysis was implemented to identify key themes that were concurrent and commonly emerged amongst the participants, regarding perceived barriers to accessing contextually appropriate mental health services for ethnic minorities at university encountering racism in the workplace (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2014). The researcher became familiarised with the scripts and notes and developed an iterative coding scheme using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. This process involved the identification of common words and phrases expressed among the participants which were coded and subsequently grouped into themes and sub-themes to illuminate commonalities in experience. Upon identifying key themes that emerged associated with racialised encounters and presentation of psychological symptoms associated with mental	(Burnett and Peel, 2001). Attempts to recognise the varying contextual well-being needs of an ever-broadening university populous have meant a reconceptualization and adjustment in mental healthcare resource and provision throughout the sector. The centring of BME experiences regarding mental health is paramount in attempting to examine access to mental health services and comparative engagement. For ethnic minorities, these factors play a significant part in sustaining altered mental states, often exacerbating and compounding the racial oppression experienced (Glover and Evison, 2009; Palmer and Ward, 2007). **Limitations:** Research could have been enhanced with the inclusion participation of health experts to examine the stated conditions and give guidance as to their associative elements. Sample size may have been too small to be representative of all universities in the UK, and any other higher education institutions. The proposed psychological, medical and behavioural therapies for mental conditions without proper evidence of their success in treating the casualties could be problematic. Absence of comparative or control research on other ethnic groups to see

		illness.	whether there would be differences on impact.
Title: Impossible visibilities of Black and Global Majority staff at an ethnically diverse English university. Authors: Belkin, L., Lander, V., & McCormack, M. Date: 2024 Location: England	Investigates how Black and Global Majority (BGM) faculty at an English university perceive race and racism within an ethnically diverse student population.	Study type: Qualitative study Participants: 15 (consists of 6faculty members-. 5 Asians and 1 black British) Data collection: Counter – narrative storytelling based on critical race theory (CRT) and critical white framework. Interviews and transcriptions were used Analysis: Thematic analysis was used Outcomes: Five themes were identified hypervisibility/invisibility, judicious resistance, futility, organizational denial/inaction, and the pervasiveness of racial micro- and macroaggressions.	**Strengths** - The use of the CRT approach helps highlight systemic issues related to race and racism in the institution - The outcomes align with global perspectives on BAME issues in HEI - Emphasizes original experiences of faculty members being qualitative study **Limitations** - Used one institution which limits generality across UK - Small sample size which may not capture diversity of the faculty - Subjectivity and bias may affect the story telling and counter narrative
Title: BME academic flight from UK to overseas higher education: aspects of marginalisation and exclusion. Authors: Bhopal, K., Brown, H and Jackson J Date: 2015	- Outline the experience of BME academics who plan to move overseas: - Investigates the factors in UK HEI that influences this migration decision and whether there is ethnicity variation in the factors - Identify what UK HEI can do to promote retention of BME academics and attract those who have gone	- Study type: Two stage Descriptive exploratory study (mixed method) - Participants: 1201 academics participated in survey and 14 BME had in-depth interview - Data collection: Survey questionnaires. In-depth interview via Skype, telephone and face to face. Categorical and open-ended questions were used Digital recording and data transcription. Data analysis: Software used is SPSS Frequencies were calculated for the	**Strengths** - Provides both quantitative and qualitative insights into the experiences of BME academics moving overseas - The use of CRT theory highlights the pervasive nature of institutional racism - 1201 participants is quite large dataset from all ethnic backgrounds - The study has influence on UK policy bridges significant knowledge gap by highlighting the experiences of BME academics, which are often overlooked in UK

		quantitative data	HE studies.
		Descriptive statistics was used for the demographics while nonparametric inferential statistics (chi square) was used to analyse associations	**Limitations** - Element of self-introduced bias - Used a single university limiting generalization - Of the 1201 respondents 1020 were whites while 146 were BME hence the result may not be a true representation of the BME opinion
Title: For whose benefit? Black and Minority Ethnic training programmes in higher education institutions in England, UK, Author: Bhopal Year:2020 Location: England, UK	The primary aim is to explore whether specific training programmes for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in higher education institutions (HEIs) are effective in supporting their career progression to senior roles. The study also aims to examine if these programmes are more beneficial to HEIs in terms of promoting diversity and inclusion, rather than contributing to actual structural change and equity	The study employs qualitative methods, utilising thematic analysis of interviews with 30 respondents who participated in two different training programmes specifically designed for BME staff in HEIs in England. The interviews explored participants' views on the effectiveness of the programmes.	**Strengths:** The programmes helped raise awareness of BME issues and provided strategies for BME staff to engage with senior leaders and develop leadership capacities. Specific programmes can offer networking opportunities and increase visibility in institutional decision-making. **Limitations:** There is a recognition that such programmes might not address the deeper structural issues of exclusion and racism in HEIs. Additionally, they might inadvertently reinforce the notion that BME groups need to conform to existing White standards of leadership. The study also points out limitations regarding sample size and the potential benefits of a longitudinal approach to better understand the programme's effectiveness over time.
Title: Unequal Academy: The Struggle and Challenges of Token Black Academics in the United Kingdom" Authors: Ajibade Adisa,	This study investigates the systemic challenges faced by Black academics in UK universities, focusing on the concept of tokenism and its impact on their career	The research employed a mixed-methods approach, consisting of two studies: one qualitative and one quantitative. The qualitative part involved in-depth interviews with	**Strengths:** The study highlights significant systemic barriers, including tokenism, that prevent Black academics from

Gbolahan Gbadamosi & Kirk Chang Year: 2025 Location: United Kingdom	progression, experiences of discrimination, and perceptions of procedural justice.	24 Black academics from various UK universities, and the quantitative part analysed survey data from 201 Black academics.	thriving equally within UK universities. It provides comprehensive insights into covert institutional racism and epistemic injustice. Strengths of the study include its mixed-methods approach, facilitating a broad understanding of both personal narratives and general trends. **Limitations:** While the study provides valuable insights, its cross-sectional design means it cannot establish causal links between variables. Additionally, it focuses solely on UK academia, potentially limiting its generalizability to other contexts or ethnic groups
Title: Bridging the BAME Attainment Gap: Student and Staff Perspectives on Tackling Academic Bias. Authors: Karan S. Rana, Amreen Bashir, Fatehma Begum, and Hannah Bartlett. Year: 2020 Location: Birmingham, UK	The study aimed to explore student and staff perspectives on the contributing factors to the attainment gap between BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) students and their White peers. The research also sought to gather feedback on reducing this gap.	The study employs a qualitative research approach. Data was collected using interviews and focus groups. The research focuses on lived experiences and perceptions of students and staff from BAME backgrounds.	**Strengths:** The study highlighted the necessity for cultural awareness and representation within student support services and in pastoral care provisions. It identified the lack of BAME representation among staff and the resultant feeling of exclusion among BAME students. Both students and staff recognized that increased knowledge of diverse backgrounds and mandatory diversity training for staff could mitigate academic bias. **Limitations:** The research was conducted during the pandemic, which might have affected students' perceptions. Additionally, the small number of White students in the study might have impacted the comprehensiveness of

			feedback and perspective.
Title: The Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Academics: Multiple Identities and Career Progression Author: Kalwant Bhopal and June Jackson Year: 2013 Location: Southampton, United Kingdom.	The study explores the experiences of Black and minority ethnic (BME) academics in the UK, highlighting the benefits of an ethnically diverse staff body and the factors that affect the career progression and inclusion of BME academics.	The research employed a qualitative methodology involving semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of 35 BME academics from diverse backgrounds and academic disciplines within the UK. Interviewees were selected using a strategic approach to ensure a variety of perspectives and experiences.	**Strengths:** The study emphasises the unrecognised value of BME staff in providing support to BME students and serving as role models, which can attract more diverse student populations. The research also highlights the need for mentoring and support networks, which have shown positive impact on career progression. **Limitations:** Despite policies promoting equality, limited evidence exists that these policies effectively address discrimination. BME staff face higher thresholds for promotion and experience subtle forms of discrimination, such as exclusion from informal networks.

Appendix 2: CASP Checklist Appraisal for Included Studies

The quality appraisal of the 16 studies was conducted using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative research, providing a structured evaluation of methodological rigor, credibility, and relevance. Each criterion was assessed based on established CASP guidance. The detailed assessment is presented here.