

Project Report

The Experiences of Students from the Black Asian Minority Ethnic Community at University Campus Oldham

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Abstract

Objective: To explore the academic experiences of students from the BAME community at UCO.

Methods: Students from the BAME community were included in this study. Participants were interviewed through a task-based focus group where they were required to respond to the interview questions based on a case-study scenario and then share their academic experiences at UCO. Data was analysed using thematic and descriptive analyses where participants' responses to each question were described and given a theme. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from UCO's Ethics Committee and all participants consented to taking part in the study.

Results: A total of 25 students participated in this study. Some participants reported that there is need to further develop communication between students and lecturers so that their perceived needs can be better understood. Some of the participants gave recommendations based on their academic experiences at UCO such as: wanting to be more involved in activities than they already are and for lecturers to enhance their current understanding of BAME students. Some of the participants reported having learning related difficulties due to language barriers. The majority of the participants reported that they would recommend UCO to someone who was considering studying in the future.

Discussion: Organisations such as UCO are to be aware of the findings of this study so that appropriate support can be put in place to enhance the academic experience of students from a BAME background.

Take Home Messages

- Participants reported that their academic experiences were impacted due to the language barrier, which resulted in learning related difficulties
- The participants suggested the following: lecturers need to further develop their current knowledge to fully understand BAME students; develop effective communication between students and lecturers; and students would like to be involved more in extra-curricular activities than they already are.
- The Principal Investigator (PI) of the current study reported the findings to UCO's stakeholders and proposed measures are being put in place to issues identified in the study. These include:
 - The Academic Development Lecturers to promote existing drop-in sessions to address learning related needs and evaluate the requirement for further specialist sessions as a way of removing barriers to learning
 - 'International Day' to be promoted across campus to celebrate students from the all backgrounds, including the BAME community

- To organise activities on decolonisation of curriculum for staff members so as to understand the needs of BAME students better and as a way of developing their current knowledge
- A survey is to be carried out to establish the effectiveness of the proposed measures put in place to address BAME students' needs.

Introduction

The United Kingdom (UK) is reported to be known and proud of its opportunity to providing the best University education in the world and attracting global talents including students from the BAME community. Many students from the BAME community have been reported to have overcome the barriers to studying in Higher Education (HE) in the UK, however, many of them have reportedly not had an equal chance at succeeding once they have been accepted onto a HE course (Barefoot & Sousa, 2019; Bunce et al., 2021).

In England, it was reported that BAME students have a higher chance of studying in HE but they are less likely to have high entry grades, gain entrance into 'prestigious' universities or graduate into a 'highly skilled' job. They are also unlikely to study further or have career satisfaction (House of Commons library, 2020). The attainment gap between BAME students and their White counterparts is well documented. It has been reported that the cause of this gap is multifactorial making it difficult to address. There is a need to understand the factors that are contributing to this in order to devise a meaningful approach to reduce the inequity (Rana et al., 2022). There are many terms used that relate to the academic experiences of BAME students and their White counterparts, which often refer to the students' experience and academic output. The attainment gap tends to categorise students from the BAME community as underachievers compared with White students (Barefoot & Sousa 2019).

According to Gov.UK (2022), 72.6% of people starting undergraduate study in 2019 to 2020 academic year were White; 12.2% were Asian; 8.7% were Black; 4.5% had mixed ethnicity, and 2.0% were from another ethnic group. Students from a minority ethnic group accounted for 27% of all UK students studying for first degree in 2019/20.

For those studying at Master's Level, 24% of them were BAME students and, lastly, for PhD study there were 19%. Interestingly, 41% of all students studying medicine and dentistry are from the BAME background (HASA, 2021). The Officeforstudent.org.uk (2019) reported that

there is a decrease in the number of enrolments for undergraduate courses of White students from year to year (79.9% in 2010-2011 to 71.9% in 2017-2018.) This suggests that there is an increase in the number of students from the BAME community going to universities to study at undergraduate level. Hence, suggesting the importance of exploring the academic experiences of undergraduate students from the BAME community.

With the introduction of the Equality Act (2010), we have witnessed a great improvement in the level of support available for people from a minority ethnic group, also leading to the growth of minority rights and movements. It is obvious that the younger generation, including those in higher education, are generally deemed to be more open-minded and liberal in their approaches than the older generation adopted (Milkman. 2017 cited in Wong et al., 2021). Some universities and their students suggested that Student Unions are looking into how to reduce the inequalities that is in existence between students from the BAME community and white students (Wong et al., 2021).

The movement '*why is my curriculum white?*' highlights the need to decolonise the curriculum and was founded by students from the University College London, with the aim of tackling the whiteness that exists within the University curricular (Peters, 2015). Despite this, students from a BAME background continue to experience inequality at colleges and universities from undergraduate level to post-graduate level (Truong et al., 2016). According to Chang et al., (2011) exhibiting a negative atmosphere and attitude towards students from the BAME community has a way of impacting the way they feel and having a negative impact on their academic performance thereby reinforcing a wider inequality.

Students from the BAME community are known to face additional challenges compared to white students. These may include barriers caused by cultural difference, societal, institutional racism and discrimination (Bunce et al., 2021). Another problem experienced by BAME students is in the area of curriculum representative of diversity as this might be limited having a major impact on (BAME) students' experience. According to NUS (2011), 42% of BAME students reported that their curriculum was restrictive and did not include concepts about equality, diversity and inclusion. Students also reported frustrations around courses being taught by non-BAME staff members. Other students and staff who are not from a BAME background are likely to have an undesirable stereotype of BAME students

regarding academic abilities leading to subsequent lower expectations (Bunce et al., 2021). In order to put in place appropriate strategies to support students from the BAME community and reduce the attainment gap, it is important to explore the experiences of students from this background. This study addressed the large population of BAME students at UCO and explored their academic experience.

UCO is a widening participation institution and works with six awarding partners to deliver its HE provisions; University of Huddersfield, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Central Lancashire, Open University, CMI and Pearson. This range of partners has provided an opportunity to refresh and update the curriculum in recent years, whilst responding to employers' needs. UCO occupies a niche in the HE market, by providing small class sizes and a welcoming, supportive, inclusive learning environment for all students, UCO attracts and engages non-traditional students across the spectrums of age, ethnicity, academic qualifications and family commitments. Moreover, the excellent level of personal support attracts students who may not traditionally aspire to progress to higher level study or who choose not to travel for their education. This is particularly important in Oldham where access to HE is below the national average, with areas of extreme poverty, and where for many of the local residents English is not the primary language spoken at home.

Methods

Participants

A total of 25 participants from a BAME background participated in this study. The majority of the participants were students who were registered on the Health and Social Care (HSC) courses at UCO from Foundation Entry Level to BSc (Hons) Level 6. Out of the participants, 24 students were female while one was male. The majority of the participants reported that English language is not their first language.

Procedure

There was a meeting with the researcher and the relevant stakeholders regarding the structure of the research. Ethical approval was granted by UCO's Ethics Group. All UCO students from a BAME background were invited via email to participate in this study on a

weekly basis. The Participant Information Sheet and the background of the study were included in the email sent to the students. The method used was a focus group (task based).

In addition to the questions asked, participants were given a scenario where they are representing UCO and to focus their discussion based on their own experiences to advise a potential student about UCO. Participants consented by signing a consent form. The first session was the pilot study to ensure that the questions asked would not cause distress to any participants. A total of 4 sessions were held and the researcher had to stop after the fourth session due to saturation. Each focus group lasted approximately between 60 to 90 minutes and the participants were not given an incentive, but sweets were provided during the 4 sessions. A thematic and descriptive analysis was used to analyse the data.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Students from a BAME background who were studying at UCO at the time of the data collection were included in this study. Similarly, UCO students who are not from the BAME background were excluded in the study.

Data Analysis

A thematic and descriptive analysis was used to analyse the results of this study, this involved looking at participants' responses to some of the questions. Participants' responses to each question were given a theme and then analysed and described based on each theme. There were ten questions in total. The first two questions focused on the course and year of study and were not included in the analysis as they have been addressed via the Methods sections (participants). The remaining eight questions will be analysed under 'Results.'

Results

The results were based on the responses of the participants to each question asked. The responses have been allocated themes and the results are based on this, which have also been documented verbatim.

How do you describe your learning experience at UCO? Participants responses to this question were put under 3 themes as, positive academic experience, not having desired experience and recommendations.

The first category theme is the **positive academic experience** and some participants recorded having good academic experience at UCO:

Participant 11" My learning experience at UCO has been good so far"

Participant 12 "My learning experience has been positive academically however; I struggle with mental health so I haven't been very social"

Participant 14 "My learning experience has been great over the past two year. I received many supports and encouragement from my teachers. However, there was some times when I was let down and struggled with assessments but I managed to complete it"

Participant 15 "great"

Participant 16 "Learning experience at UCO has been great. I felt I could approach any of my tutors if I need help"

Participant 18 "My learning experience UCO is very helpful and fantastic due to good tutors and library resources, but sometimes we are facing discrimination"

Participant 19 "My learning has been good with the support of the tutors. Some students are not getting the support that they need"

Participant 23 "My experience in UCO has been very good experience, meeting people, my lecturers are very supportive"

Participant 24 "I have found a very good learning atmosphere. Lots of help from teachers"

Participant 25 "Excellent"

The second theme record a few participants **not having their desired learning experience** at UCO:

Participant 1 “Not too good due to distractions from other students & it happens all the time”

Participant 3, 4 and 5” Learning experience is discouraging as..... some students in my year are been favoured more than otherswhen answering questions in class or seeking help on the course”

Participant 6, 7 and 20 “50/50 learning has been difficult a little robotic, as well as enjoyable at times...Lack of motivation during my course...Discriminated against during class sessions”

Participant 8 “Okay, could be better. Not enough support from some staff”

Participant 9, 13 and 22” In yr. 1 I felt like the lecture was mainly focusing on the non BAME students. However, this year it felt better..... BAME students and non BAME students don’t mix properly unless it has got to do with work... due to they have different types of groups as per their backgrounds.”

Participant 17 and 21 “stressful...I think one part of the students are divided which makes the learning not suitable for other students.”

The third theme is **recommendation** as a couple of students devised ways to improve or encourage inclusive practices at UCO such as:

Participant 2” Tutors should be allowed to deliver their resources”

Participant 10 “It is good but needs to work on inclusive and try and bring people together”

What factors do you think account for why your experience is as you have described it?

The themes for this question were: commendation, better understanding and lack of awareness.

Under **commendation** some participants recorded having a good experience at UCO:

Participant 11 "I get enough help whenever I need it. Teachers are accessible and willing to listen to any concerns you have. If you communicate via email, you get response"

Participant 13 "Staff management. Academic skills lecturers lack. Teachers supportive. Not good communication between staff and students"

Participant 15 "They are supportive but sometimes very difficult to understand or work with"

Participant 16 "Tutors are friendly and approachable"

Participant 18 "Better future in life because I belief after this course I can get a better work to do in future"

Participant 19 "Good experience during my placement work well with the team"

Participant 23 "For me, my background doesn't affect my experience in school but sometimes at work you get bully but I am not really bothered about it"

Participant 24 "The teacher and support I get from the support tutors"

A few participants reported that having a **better understanding about their background** could have a positive impact on their academic experience:

Participant 6 "Lack of understanding towards students. Tutors reading from slides as we have access on its learning not much help"

Participant 8 "Lack of understanding of students"

Participant 12 "Because I am an adult learner, I am Muslim, maybe the support system does not understand my situation, or maybe they are not experienced enough"

Participant 17 "Some staff members are not understanding at times"

Lack of awareness was the third theme some participants reported about;

Participant 1 and 3 "Feeling distracted during lessons... Ignoring some people.....students distracting"

Participant 4, 7 and 22 “Discrimination which leads to lack of motivation to study.... Lack of opportunities...Colour low class”

Participant 10 “Been ignored. Group people together. Bad communication”

Participant 14 “1 to 1 support. Sometimes lack of support”

Participant 20 and 25 “May be because of my background... Because of my colour”

Have you experienced learning related difficulties or do you have study/learning related concerns? The themes for this question were: some students did experience challenges with learning and some students did not have any difficulties.

Participants 1 and 2 and 8 “Language barriers.... Lack of motivation” “Not to give too much information.”

Participant 5 “Not having enough support this year comparing to last year”

Participant 7 “Yes, lack of motivation during study or giving information”

Participant 10 “Yes, however there was understanding”

Participant 12 “I have a chronic illness; it is classed as a disability. However, I do not feel very supported”

Participant 13 “Not enough confidence. Communication between staff and students”

Participant 14 “There were some learning difficulties over the past 2 years however, it has now improved and there is less discrimination”

Participants 15 “Yes, I have experienced some difficulties mostly when close to submission of essay”

Participant 16 “I need the support due to my dyslexia”

Participant 18 “Yes, especially when we are writing our essay and search for the good journal to use and how to reference my essay”

Participant 19 “Yes, structuring the assignments is very difficult for one and learning was not easy combining work & family is hard to do assignment”

Participant 24 “I didn’t have much confidence but enrolling and doing my course gave me confidence in myself”

Participant 25 “Yes, in paraphrasing”

A few participants reported not having learning related difficulties.

Participant 11 “because of the support I get from teachers and other people like people in the library I do not have difficulty so far”

Participants 17 “No”

Participant 23 “N/A I don’t think it affected my academic performance”

How do you think your learning experience is affecting your academic progress and performance? The themes for this question were academic experience was positively impacted and negatively impacted by the participants’ learning experiences.

Some participants reported having a **positive** impact:

Participant 11 “My learning experience has helped me to gain confidence. When I have just joined UCO, I was shy, I didn’t know whether I will be able to do it but as I progress, I feel more confident and I am enjoying my studies”

Participant 16 “I have performed better than I expected”

Participant 18 “Yes, because it helps me to gain more experience and awareness of what to do”

Participant 19 “No”

Participant 20 “Not too bad”

Participant 23 “No”

Participant 25 “I am passionate about my degree; I am working hard out of my comfort zone to overcome them”

Some participants reported that their learning experience has been **negatively** impacted on

Participant 1, 2 and 22 “Distractions... Tutor not finishing lecture delivery or completing the slides.... Due to distraction from other students.”

Participant 3 and 4 “Lack of understanding... Too much information at a time.... Disturbing during lectures and it is setting me back.”

Participant 5 and 17 “The students getting distracted and.. not being motivated”

Participant 6 and 7 “Confusion - which consumes time and time is wasted... Long hrs of study on the same topic. Some staff members are been more supportive than others.”

Participant 8 “Not feeling confidence with studies and thinking I will fail”

Participant 9 “Lecture been interrupted - loss of concentration. Other conversation”

Participant 10 “Not asking for help confidently”

Participant 12 and 21 “I do not have sympathy in regards to my disability. ...Sometimes I feel that tutors favour certain students over others”

Participant 13 “For the past 2 years, I have been looking forward to getting more help from teachers, more collaboration of students from different backgrounds, more communication during the lecture so that everyone can get equal chance to express what they have to say during that moment. I found myself in a position where if I get quiet no one cares what I have to say, and likely to give me opportunity for others to talk and collaborate”

Participant 14 “I had some poor practice when I was attending my placement in first year. I didn’t receive/gain any experience but my 2nd year was very good and I had so many new experiences”

Participant 15 “Yes, it affected my academic progress but right now I have a better understanding of my course and my future. This I would say I have a better understanding of what I really want to go into in the next future as a health care person”

Do you desire changes(s) in any aspect of your learning experience? If yes, what aspects?

The themes for this question are **presence** and **no change required**. Some of the participants requested more presence at UCO.

Participants 1 and 2 “More motivation. More module should be delivered and well understood by the students....Tutors should stop favouring some students”

Participant 3 “Not spending too much hrs on one module. Online learning would be preferable”

Participant 4 “Yes, the way lectures are delivered and interactivities in class”

Participant 5 “The way of teaching”

Participant 7 and 8 “More workshop over each session. Giving more motivation to students so that they cannot drop off.... Equality when dealing with different types of students... despite their ethnic background”

Participant 9 “There should be no questions until the end of the slide or after a few slide”

Participants 10 and 20 “More inclusive, better communication.... and equality”

Participant 11 “I would suggest more help should be in place like in the library you find only one staff and the one staff can’t help everyone who needs support. I still struggle with using computers so enough support is needed to help me with my work”

Participant 12 “Equal opportunities, better support without putting them at more risk. More awareness needs to be put in place to support BAME students”

Participant 13 “Yes, effective communication. More good behaviour between staff and students. More listening and giving opportunities to other. A good recommendation from previous students to recommend placements”

Participant 14 “More support from teacher and bit more encouragement as a student we get discouraged and loose hope”

Participant 15 “Yes, in the area of assignment guide, because giving students an assignment guide and you coming back saying a different thing is not really good and that means starting all over again”

Participant 17 “More support and staff to be more understanding”

Participant 18 “Yes, because I was facing a lot during my academic and my tutor”

Participants 19, 21 and 22 “Yes, more equal opportunity to every student at UCO...equality... not looking at our colour or background and not been judgemental”

Participant 23 “Yes, positive”

Participant 25 “Change in the way lectures is being delivered. Too much distraction during lectures about personal stuff which I get distracted”

A few participants (2) reported that they desired no change

Participants 16 and 24 “No”

Do you think coming from a BAME background influences your experience at UCO. If yes how (either positively or negatively). The themes for this question were ***negatively*** and ***positively***. Some of the participants reported that coming from a BAME background has led to a positive learning experience at UCO.

Participant 1 “Yes, due to language barriers & colour. Library and academic team members are supportive”

Participant 7 “Yes, positively; people or staff from different background they understand more and prioritise to listen your voice. Negatively, there is lack of support as compared to others”

Participant 11 “I feel welcome at UCO as there are students from different background”

Participant 16 “I felt I would get the help and support I need due to English not being my first language”

Participant 24 “Yes, lots of my friends and family and community I come from did not come in education. I encourage them to come into education”

Other participants reported a negative experience because of their background

Participant 3 “Yes, very difficult to cope with language barrier”

Participant 4, 8 and 9 “Yes, negatively due to the fact that I am not favoured.... Discriminated against.... They treat others better than me”

Participant 10 and 17 “Yes, there are a lot of people but we need to create a community and bring us together to share culture etc.... It can sometimes feel as if staff members prioritise other students”

Participant 12 and 15 “Yes, Negative”

Participant 18 “Yes, it is through my academic and my grades”

Participant 20 “Negatively”

Participant 22 “Yes, because English is not our first language and they looked down on us”

What would you tell someone who was considering attending UCO in the future?

The themes for responses to this question are **positive recommendation**, **negative recommendation** and **neutral stance**.

The majority of the participants had positive recommendations about UCO;

Participant 2 “A great place to learn”

Participant 5 “It’s a good place to get a degree but the support needs to improve”

Participant 7 “Be positive, although there is lack of motivation. Don’t throw the towel, because you will find at least one person to support you with your studies. Mental health issues and listen”

Participant 9 “Don’t let my experience affect as it won’t be the same”

Participant 10 “Everyone has different experience don’t let it change your opinion”

Participant 11 “UCO is the place to do your further studies as it welcomes all people from different backgrounds. All help and resources are there, available to you when you need them. But you have to put a lot of effort to achieve what you want”

Participant 12 “You will be fine, but make sure you have support when you need it”

Participant 13 “it is really good institution to study because there is lots of support from teachers. Don’t feel lonely because of our background, you have mental health support to talk. As per grades make sure that you attend and get help from others or staff Try to engage yourself”

Participant 14 “Try to get good grades to attend a Uni which meets your needs other than that its nice place to learn”

Participant 15 “I would say just be focus. Know why you are their at UCO, no matter what is happening around you don’t look at it but just remember that you have a goal and that is why you are here”

Participant 16 “I would encourage them to join as there is a lot of support in place”

Participant 17 “Seek support if needed, ask for help”

Participant 24 “I would say to come in as lots of support & help are given to us. It’s like family. The teachers break the work down so everyone can understand”

Participant 25 “Yes, but the lecturers need to work on bias in classroom as all of us are the same”

A few participants gave negative recommendations:

Participants 3, 4 and 23 said “No”

Participant 18 “As for me I would tell my friends not to attend because of what I have been though during my academic”

Some participants were neutral:

Participant 1 “Students should come and experience it on their own”

Participant 8 “Speak up and ask for help or if you are not happy”

Participant 21 “Have a good think”

Participant 22 “Well, the person can come and experience UCO it might be different experience from mine”

Is there anything else you would like to say that you haven't already had a chance to? The themes for this question were **lack of insight** and **recommendations**:

Some students reported lack of insight about students from BAME background

Participant 3, 4 and 18 "Discrimination towards BAME... and UCO will be a better place to study and excel."

Participant 5 and 22 "Treat everybody equally"

Participant 7 "Last year was a bit better, rather than year 2 because there is no communication or support"

Participant 19 "UCO have an excellent tutor but more focused on white background"

Participant 25 "Inclusive to all students, some of the BAME students feel left out during lectures as some lectures put us off"

A few participants made **recommendations** based on their experience at UCO.

Participant 6 "Tutors to book a minimum of 2 one to one sessions. Students need to book a compulsory 2 sessions themselves"

Participant 12 "Adult learners should not be treated like children. If someone has broken English does not mean they are not intelligent"

Participant 15 "About the marks or grade"

Discussion

The study explored the experiences of students from a BAME background at UCO. The study revealed that students from a BAME background wanted to receive additional, targeted support while studying at UCO, so their needs can be understood better via targeted interventions. These findings may be based on several factors including cultural differences, student engagement and awareness of existing support on offer at UCO. This supports a few studies (Kausar, 2021; Spalding, 2019) where students from the BAME background perceived they were treated differently from students from the white background leading to a poorer academic experience and outcome.

The study also revealed that there is need to better understand students from a BAME background as a number of students attributed their experiences to lack of understanding of their learning needs within the classroom. Wong (2021) reported a gradual but unacceptable advancement on ethnic and racial equality ranging from housing, health and education. The interpretation of this finding could be staff members working with this population ought to be better equipped in terms of their knowledge. One way of addressing this could be through providing developmental opportunities around working with students from a BAME background. This could be alongside implementing bespoke support sessions to meet lecturers' development needs with a focus on including support around teaching BAME students who have additional learning needs and the most effective ways to communicate with them. This finding is in line with a study by NUS (2011) regarding the academic experiences of students from the BAME background.

In response to the question about what would the participants tell someone who was considering attending UCO in the future? The majority of the students gave a positive recommendation, which suggests that the participants would recommend UCO to other potential students from a similar BAME background. The majority of the participants (96%) in this study were from the Health and Social Care Department hence, this might not be a true reflection of the experiences of students from BAME backgrounds across all Faculties at UCO. Further studies to explore the experiences of UCO students across all Faculties has been discussed and agreed in a bid to obtain further information to inform bespoke development opportunities for teaching staff.

Strengths

This is the first study at UCO to explore academic experiences of students from a BAME background. This study has provided a meaningful opportunity to garner first hand experiences from the participants. The principal investigator (PI) is from a BAME background and this could have helped with the participant recruitment as the students were familiar with the PI. Another strength of this study is that the methodology used is transparent enabling other researchers to adopt the methodology used.

Limitations

The majority of the participants in the study were from the Health and Social Care Department hence, the findings from this study may not be a true representation of the experiences of all BAME students at UCO. This study was limited to UCO and, as a result, the findings from this study may not be the general representation of the experiences of students from a BAME background at other institutions.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of the present study have implications for policy makers:

- They may help inform policy development to support this population better by encouraging active understanding of the needs of BAME students to ensure effective practices are in place for teaching staff
- The findings could also help inform practices at UCO where lecturers and other student support staff are made aware of BAME students' specific needs. This should include learning-related challenges and include the complexities of meeting the needs of BAME students who have additional learning needs. Thus, providing a basis for future staff development opportunities
- Moreover, UCO should endeavour to actively recruit staff from a BAME background to serve as role models and mentors for the students. Peer mentoring between staff from BAME background and those from non BAME background should be encouraged
- Decolonisation of the curriculum could also be a way to support this population better, this could include using inclusive and familiar terms when teaching students, especially around assessments
- Further studies are to be carried out to explore the experiences of the BAME students from other Faculties and institutions
- A survey is to be carried out to explore the effectiveness of the proposed measures put in place for BAME students at UCO

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Appendix 1 Research proposal



MEG Small Scale Research Bursary Proposal Form

1. Title of research proposal

The experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students at University Campus Oldham during their study.

2. College and name/contact details of lead researcher –

College name: University Campus Oldham (UCO)

Lead researcher - Clara Fatoye

3. Research Objectives

- To explore the experiences of students from the BAME community
- To explore UCO's support for students from BAME community
- To compare their experiences upon completion of their courses

4. Please give a brief justification of your proposed research project (250 words max).

We face significant challenges in terms of representation, pedagogy, curriculum reform and student experience. BAME students do not do as well at university compared with their White counterparts – the latest statistics show a 13% attainment gap. University leaders and senior managers need to demonstrate a commitment to removing the BAME attainment gap

and lead by example. Universities UK (UUK) and National Union of Students (NUS) have created a checklist for university leaders to draw upon when considering how to address attainment gap (NUS, 2019).

Attending university can be intimidating for many students, those from BAME background frequently encounter a particular set of difficulties and concerns. This reality is alarmingly attested to by the BAME student retention rate. According to a survey by the University Partnership Program (UPP) foundation and the Social Mobility Form (SMF) foundation, Black students in the UK are more than 50% more likely than their White colleagues to leave university early. Even when they get the same grades as their White peers, ethnic minority students are less likely to receive offers from top universities. Young people from underrepresented groups should have opportunity to share their experiences while they are studying because doing so can improve their academic performance as well as their confidence and employability. There is limited information on the experiences of students from the BAME community therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of this student population by providing the students from the BAME community opportunity to share their experiences at UCO with the researcher.

5. Please outline the proposed sample group, including any specific criteria.

- Participants must be students from the BAME community
- BAME students from all year groups FdE, Yr 1, 2 and top up would be included
- BAME students who are willing to share their experiences, others who are not willing to share their experiences would not be included
- Participating students must be willing to share their experiences

6. Describe how the proposed sample group will be formulated.

- Check the UCO's database to identify potential students, this would be done by collaborating with the administrative staff member
- Participant's information sheet would be sent to the student identified on the databases
- The students would be given background information on the study for their understanding
- The students would be given the participant information sheet (PIP) explaining expectations regarding participation
- The participant would be asked to provide informed consent by signing a consent form before participation in the study

- The students would be allocated into 4 groups based on their year group such as FdE, FdA yr 1, FdA yr 2 and top up
- Each year group experiences would be captured by doing the analysis of the data based on each year group

7. Indicate clearly what the involvement of the sample group will be in the research process.

- The involvement of the sample group would be for them to share their experiences through a focus group interviews or individual interviews.
- The interviews would be expected to take about an hour, hence student who want to participate should be willing to be interviewed for an hour.
- The group would be expected to sign informed consent
- interviews would take place either though face to face and over the phone for participants who can not commit to face to face interview
- Students would be asked questions that would cover their experiences at UCO for face to face.
- Students responses to the questions would be recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis

8. Specify how the consent of participants will be obtained. Please include within this a description of any information with which you intend to provide the subjects.

Participating students would be provided with information about the study by giving them participants' information sheet. They would be asked to provide informed consent by signing a copy of consent form. Signing the consent form would indicate that the student has given their consent to participate in the study.

The participant information sheet would include information about what the researcher intends to do with the data collected - that the data collected would be analysed and published at reputable journal, for conferences proceeding and it would be used by UCO to ensure quality and other related activities.

9.Indicate any potential risks to subjects and how you propose to minimise these.

The potential risk to students would be the emotional feelings that come with sharing their experiences especially if they are negative experiences. Student would be advised to

withdraw participation if sharing their experiences would affect their overall wellbeing. In addition, students would be advised to get help from the wellbeing services. Lastly students would be advised to read and understand the background information about the study and the participant information sheet so that they have a good understanding about the study before participation.

10. Describe the procedures you intend to follow in order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects.

It is crucial to respect the confidentiality of, and data provided by student's participants in an ethically and legally appropriate manner. During the data collection period, identifiable features would not be used such as name and date of birth, instead pseudonyms would be used such as participants A, B and so on, data collected would be anonymised. Information provided by the student would also be kept confidential during the process of the study. Data collected would be stored on the university's computer which is password protected, for a period of 6 years.

Relevant link

<https://www.nus.org.uk/articles/universities-acting-to-close-bame-student-attainment-gap>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/publications/2020/jul/supporting-bame-students-challenging-times>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/for-bame-students/>

For further information contact: megcoordinator@gmail.com

Appendix 2 Participant information sheet (PIS)

Participant information sheet (PIS)

Study title

The experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students at University Campus Oldham (UCO) during their study.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is undertaken and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please, ask questions if nothing you read is clear, or if you require any further information.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of BAME students at UCO during their study. You have been invited to participate in this study as you have identified yourself as a student from the BAME background currently studying at UCO.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide. I will explain the study and go through the information sheet, which will be provided to you. You will be asked to sign a consent form to record that you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

If you choose to participate

You will be required to take part in a focus group that will last for around 45 - 60 minutes.

The focus group will be semi-structured and the content discussed will be transcribed and prepared for analysis.

The focus group would consist of students studying at UCO, the focus group will be conducted face-to-face and will take place @S2/3.

This is an anonymous. No identifying details will be asked for.

Expenses and payments

The focus group interview will be conducted at UCO @ S2/3 when you are on campus, you would not have to travel anywhere else to participate, therefore no extra expenses will be incurred.

What will you have to do?

You will be asked to give your written consent to participate in the study. During the focus group, you will be asked questions relating to your experiences as a student from BAME background at UCO during your study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no disadvantages or risks associated with your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

I cannot promise the study will help you personally, but the information I receive from the study may help to bridge the gap between educational provider such as UCO and students from the BAME background in terms of support that is required for students from this background. Findings from the students may help policy makers to support this population more; thereby improving efficient allocation of limited educational resources.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the faculty lead who will answer your questions. Leanne Buckley, +4416134493;

leanne.buckley@oldham.ac.uk

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded during and after the study. All information collected during the course of the research will be kept anonymous and strictly confidential in accordance with UCO and GDPR guidelines/policies. Any information used in the analysis of the data collected, peer reviewed publications/research conferences proceedings will also be anonymised so that you cannot be recognised.

Confidentiality may be breached if you or someone else is at risk of harm in order to act in the best interest of the person in question. The information provided by you during the interview will be collected via audio-recorder and you might have to respond to a scenario by writing down your response to the scenario.

The information provided by you will be stored safely, and anonymously and coded by the investigators. Any hard paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet, within a locked office, accessed only by the investigators. An electronic version of the information provided by you during the focus group interview will be stored on a password protected computer with the password known only by researcher. Only the investigator and supervisory team will have access to any identifiable data.

What will happen if I wish to withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw from this study without giving any reason to the investigator. If you withdraw from the study, I will destroy all your identifiable information, but it may not be possible to remove your data from interview recordings prior to your withdrawal.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be analysed and written up as part of UCO's reports, and with the intention of the publication in peer reviewed journals and presentation at conferences. The recording will be kept until the research project is completed or published. You will not be identified in any reports/publications.

Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

The research is funded by the Mixed Economic Group (MEG) Small Scale Research.

Further information and contact details:

If you would like to enquire or complain about any aspect of the study, please contact: Clara Fatoye, +441613448829; clara.fatoye@oldham.ac.uk

Thank you for your participation!!

Appendix 3 Consent form

Consent Form

Title of Project: The experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students at University Campus Oldham during their study.

Name of Investigator: Clara Fatoye

Participant Identification Code for this project:
(Please tick the boxes)

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this project and opportunity to ask questions about the interview. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time from interview without giving any reason to the investigator. ☐
3. I understand that my response will be sound recorded, used for analysis, and may be used in publications arising from this research project. ☐
4. I understand that the response will be made anonymous at all times. ☐
5. I understand that following the transcription of the interview, the recording will be kept until research project is examined or published. ☐
6. I understand that once my data have been anonymised and incorporated into themes it might be possible for it to be withdrawn, though every attempt will be made to extract my data, up to the point of publication. ☐
7. I understand that the information from my interview will be pooled with other participants' responses, anonymised and may be published. ☐
8. I consent to my information and quotations from my interview being used in reports, conferences and training events. ☐
9. I consent to University Campus Oldham (UCO) keeping written transcriptions of the interview for 5 years or the minimum period stipulated by legal, contractual, ethical or regulatory requirements, whichever is longer. ☐

10. I agree to take part in the above research project.

X _____
Name of Participant Date Signature

Researcher Date Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant. Once this form has been signed, you will receive a copy.

Appendix 4 Research questions

Research Questions:

1. What year are you FdE, FdA yr 1, FdA yr2, Top up? Circle the appropriate one
2. What course are you studying?
3. How would you describe your learning experience at UCO
4. What factors do you think account for why your experience is as you have described it?
5. Have you experienced learning-related difficulties or do you have study/learning-related concerns?
6. How do you think your learning experience is affecting your academic progress and performance?
7. Do you desire change(s) in any aspect of your learning experience? If yes, what aspects?
8. Do you think coming from a BAME background influences your experience at UCO. If yes how (either positively or negatively).

9. What would you tell someone who was considering attending UCO in the future?

10. Is there anything else you would like to say that you haven't had chance to?

Appendix 5 Research question case scenario

As a current student at UCO, you have been invited by the vice principal to talk to potential students considering joining University Campus Oldham (UCO) in the next academic year. You are to talk about your academic experience at UCO so far. Based on the questions you have – interview questions, come up with your responses to the questions as a way of advising the potential students considering UCO.