

**The Impact of Social Identity on BAME Female Academics
Job satisfaction in the UK Higher Education Sector**

Noorzoha Munir

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

Supervised By:

Dr. Eyob Mulat-weldemeskel

Dr. Andrina Halder

London Metropolitan University

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Noorzoha Munir, declare that the contents of this thesis are solely my original work. For other sources of this thesis, I provided appropriate Harvard referencing for citations and references.

Any partial part or whole of this thesis has not been presented to any other universities for consideration for the award of a PhD degree or any similar degree.

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Name and Signature of Candidate:

Noorzoha Munir

Name and Signature of supervisor(s):

Dr. Eyob Mulat-weldemeskel

Dr. Andrina Halder.....

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to

My Loving Parents:

Late Hasan Munir

Masuma Khatun

My Loving Husband:

For his continuous support during my study in the UK

Md. Shahin Reza

And

My only son:

Shehran Zohan Reza

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Noorzoha Munir
Student ID: 19016497
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Abstract

This study has explored the impact of social identity on BAME female academic job satisfaction in the UK Higher Education Institutes (HEI). Using social identity theory as a critical theoretical perspective alongside an intersectional lens, this study centres the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. This study explores and evaluates the barriers to job satisfaction, the imbalance representation of BAME female academics and its impact on their job satisfaction, strategies to build a multicultural social identity, and a proposed multicultural social identity model to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK HEI. Fifteen semi-structured interviews with BAME female academics were conducted, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis. This research adopts an interpretivist approach, focusing on how BAME female academics understand their job satisfaction. It takes a subjective ontological stance, viewing reality as shaped by individual experiences and social contexts. An inductive approach is used to explore the under-researched impact of social identity on their job satisfaction in UK higher education. Unlike other studies, mostly focuses on specific aspects of BAME academics' experiences rather than comprehensively examining social identity's impact on job satisfaction. Most of the available studies only discussed about structural inequalities and underrepresentation of BAME female academics, yet how these factors affect their experiences and job satisfaction remains largely unexplored. Additionally, the application of social identity theory to this group is still underdeveloped because most of the existing research relies on frameworks such as critical race theory.

This study identifies the influence of in-group and out-group dynamics within institutions on the underrepresentation and job satisfaction of BAME female academics. This study theorises multiculturalism, which is a topic often overlooked in research due to its limited acceptance in the UK. The findings also reveal how social identity influences job satisfaction in the context of intersections of gender and ethnicity. The experiences of professors, associate professors, lecturers, and senior lecturers are different in the context of job satisfaction. The research findings highlight that in the HEI, BAME female academics face specific barriers on a structural, organisational, and personal level that impact their job satisfaction. Moreover, group favouritism, uneven career pathways, and limited growth opportunities often cause imbalanced representation and impact the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. This study has also introduced strategies to overcome these issues and build an effective multicultural social identity. Furthermore, this thesis proposes a new framework called "Employee Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity." This model aims to address these disparities and offer a potential solution to reduce the inequality within HEIs. This model will ensure initiative and drive, better job performance, engagement, career progression, well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition of contribution, and organisational commitment among BAME female

academics. To ensure this change, this model can be implemented alongside existing EDI practices for managing multicultural social identity by ensuring employee job satisfaction in the HEI.

List of Abbreviations

BAME – Black, Asian and minority ethnic
BME – Black and minority ethnic
HEI – Higher Education institute
ATHENA SWAN – Athena project and the scientific women’s academics’ network
Advance He – Advance Higher education
REC – Race equality charter
EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
UCU – University and college union
HRM – Human resource management
JS – Job satisfaction
UK – United Kingdom
SIT – Social Identity Theory
SI – Social identity
CRT – Critical Race Theory
STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
IDP – Identity of the participant
REF- Research Excellence Framework
TEF - Teaching Excellence Framework
ONS – Office for National Statistics
TUC–Trades union congress
IP – Imposter syndrome
TA – Teaching Assistant
ZHC- Zero-Hour contract
KPI- Key performance indicator

Table of Contents

<i>Declaration of Authorship</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Dedications</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>vi</i>
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 The Context of this Research	2
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Research Rationale	5
1.4 The Importance of The Study	7
1.5 The concept of this research and gap in the literature	9
1.6 Aim and objectives	10
1.7 A Brief Introduction to the Research Methodology	12
1.8 Key Terms used in this research study	13
1.9 The structure of this research	14
1.10 Chapter summary	17
Chapter Two: Literature review	18
2.0 Introduction	18
2.1 BAME Employment in the UK	18
2.2 Unemployment by ethnicity	19
2.3 Employees in the UK higher education sector	21
2.4 Academic staff employment contract by Gender and Ethnicity	22
2.5 Role models by Ethnicity and Gender	24
2.6 Pay gap in the HE sectors	25
2.6.1 Pay gap for academic staff in HE by ethnicity and gender	27
2.7 Discussion and Gap in the Context	29
2.8 Job satisfaction of academics	30
2.9 Social Identity theory	33
2.9.1 Social Categorisation	35
2.9.2 Social Identity and group membership	36
2.10 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs	38
2.11 Two-factor theory	39
2.12 Integration of social identity theory and intersectional theory	41
2.13 Gap in the literature	43

2.14 Barriers to job satisfaction for minor group of employees	48
2.14.1 Role Models	48
2.14.2 Gender-based culture	49
2.14.3 Institutional policy that supports equality, diversity, and inclusion	51
2.14.4 Institutional Bias and Growth Opportunities	52
2.14.5 Challenges within existing structures.....	55
2.14.6 Working Environment	58
2.15 Imbalanced representation and Group favouritism in SIT	59
2.15.1 In-group and Out-group Perspectives on Role Models.....	60
2.16 Multicultural Social Identity	68
2.16.1 Fair Performance Evaluation	70
2.16.2 Equal Reward and Benefit.....	71
2.16.3 Psychological diversity	72
2.16.4 Emotional stability	72
2.16.5 Recruitment and Selection.....	73
2.16.6 Organisational culture.....	73
2.17 Conceptual Framework.....	74
2.18 Chapter Summary.....	80
<i>Chapter Three: Research Methods and Methodology</i>	<i>82</i>
3.0 Introduction	82
3.1 Research philosophy.....	83
3.2 Epistemological and Ontological stance.....	84
3.3 Research Approach	91
3.4 Research Methods	92
Justification for using a qualitative research method:.....	92
3.5 Researcher Positionality	93
3.6 Sampling Procedures.....	95
3.6.1 Sampling Method of this research	96
3.6.2 Probability and Non-Probability Sampling	97
3.6.3 Purposive sampling	97
3.6.4 Sample Selection	98
3.6.5 Sample Size	100
3.7 Data Collection.....	101
3.7.1 Primary Data Collection	101
3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interview	101
3.7.3 Interview with the academicians and how uncertainty was handled.....	103
3.7.4 Secondary Data Collection	105
3.8 Data analysis and interpretation methods	105
3.8.1 Thematic analysis	105
3.8.2 Justification of data analysis	109
3.9 Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability	111
3.10 Research Ethics	112
3.11 Limitation of the Research	112
3.12 Chapter Summary	112
<i>Chapter Four: Research Findings</i>	<i>114</i>

4.0 Introduction	114
4.1 Qualitative data collection procedure	114
4.2 Theme Development.....	115
4.2.1 Key themes in line with the research objectives:.....	116
4.2.2 Key Themes are discussed:	117
4.3 Chapter summary:	119
<i>Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion.....</i>	120
5.0 Introduction	120
5.1 Objective 1: The barriers to BAME female academics’ job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector	120
5.1.1 Theme 1: Organisational Barriers.....	121
5.1.2 Theme 2: Structural Barriers	136
5.1.3 Theme 3: Individual Barrier.....	149
5.2 Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of imbalanced representation on Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Female academics’ job satisfaction	161
5.2.1 Theme 4: Group favouritism hinders social acceptance	163
5.2.2 Theme 5: Feel the squeeze: uneven career pathways and job satisfaction.....	176
5.2.3 Theme 6: Limited Opportunity to growth affects job satisfaction	189
5.3 Objective 3: To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build up effective multicultural social identity	198
5.3.1 Themes 7: Inclusivity Matters	199
5.3.2 Theme 8: Working together to Share Burden.....	206
5.4 Objective 4: ‘To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector’.....	214
5.5 Chapter summary	219
<i>Chapter Six: Conclusion</i>	221
6.0 Introduction	221
6.1 Summary of the Research	223
6.2 Contribution to knowledge	237
6.3 Study implications to policy, practice, and theory	241
6.4 Limitations of the research.....	248
6.5 Recommendations	250
6.6 Scopes for further studies.....	253
7.0 Reference	255
8.0 List of Appendix	294
8.1 Appendix A: Information Sheet	294
8.2 Appendix B: Letter of consent from the participant.....	295
8.3 Appendix C: Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews	296
8.4 Appendix D: Data Familiarisation.....	298
8.5 Appendix E: Generating initial codes	298
8.6 Appendix F: Themes and sub-themes.....	299

8.7 Appendix G: Data Coding	300
8.8 Appendix H: Mind Map before Theme analysis	302
8.9 Appendix I: Factors of Social Identity that impact on Job Satisfaction:	304
8.10 Appendix J: Factors of Job Satisfaction from the viewpoint of SI	314
8.11 Appendix K: Research objectives and Propositions	317
8.12 Appendix L: Sample of Interview Transcript	317

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Employment by gender and ethnicity	19
Table 2.2: Unemployment rate according to ethnicity.	20
Table 2.3: Academic staff by employment conditions	21
Table 2.4: Employment mode by Gender and Ethnicity	23
Table 2.5: Summary of the theoretical perspectives of social identity theory and intersectional theory in this thesis, aligned with the research objectives.	43
Table 2.6: Gap in the Contemporary Literature	47
Table 4.1 The Description of the Participants	115
Table 5.1: The identified issues in Model 1, 2, and 3	214
Table 6.1: Comparison of ‘Barriers’ in the existing literature and primary research data.....	227
Table 6.2: Factors of imbalanced representations and its impact on job satisfaction in the existing literature and the primary research data.....	231
Table 6.3: Factors of strategies for building multicultural social identity in the existing literature and primary research data.....	234
Table 6.4: The factors of ‘current policy’ in the existing literature and the primary research data	236

List of Figure

Figure 1.1: Diagrammatic Description of all the chapters.....	16
Figure 2.1: Academic staff by professorial category and ethnic group.....	25
Figure 2.2: Gender Pay Gap in Higher Education Sector in the UK	26
Figure 2.3: Pay Distribution by Gender and Ethnicity for Academic Staff.....	28
Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework.....	76
Figure 3.1: The research onion by Mark Saunders.....	84
Figure 3.2 Methodologies of this research	90
Figure 5.1: Model 1 Barriers for BAME Female Academics’ Job Satisfaction in UK HE	121
Figure 5.2: Model 2 - Imbalanced representation of BAME female academics and its impact on job satisfaction	162
Figure 5.3: Model 3 - Strategies to Build Up multicultural social identity to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics.....	198
Figure 5.4: Model 4 - Employees Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity.....	215

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The UK higher education system is known worldwide for its high-quality education and diverse student population. To maintain its quality, universities are increasingly focusing on diversity, inclusion, and equality to ensure the wellbeing of diverse students and staff. However, despite these efforts, Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority (BAME) female academics are still facing significant challenges in advancing their careers (Baltaru, 2024). They struggle to find their place in higher education institutions, often not receiving the recognition they deserve (Arday, 2022a). Many are hired to meet diversity quotas, but this does not always lead to a sense of belonging (Morris et al., 2022). Although universities have diversity and race-related policies, these often seem more like branding tools than solutions to the ongoing barriers BAME female academics continue to face.

Despite increased attention on diversity and inclusion in UK higher education, BAME female academics remain significantly underrepresented and appear to have distinct workplace experiences compared to their White and/or male counterparts (Bhopal, 2016; Showunmi, 2023). This research draws on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains how an individual's sense of identity derived from group membership influences attitudes, behaviours, and self-esteem through in-group and out-group dynamics. Employees who share a social identity (in-group) tend to support and cooperate with one another, while those perceived as different (out-group) are more likely to face exclusion or opposition (Hoog, 2006; Abbink & Harris, 2019). Wright and Guest (2013) argue that staff working in culturally diverse environments must develop a multicultural identity to navigate these dynamics effectively, as this can influence their performance and workplace experiences. In the context of UK higher education, where employees have a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds, institutions face growing challenges in managing, motivating, and retaining staff (Colgan, McKearney & Colgan, 2011; Galang & Jones, 2016). Understanding how social identity processes operate within this diversity is therefore essential for improving job satisfaction among employees, particularly BAME female academics who may be more likely to experience out-group positioning and its consequences.

This first chapter begins by outlining the context of the research, including the researcher's own positionality, before introducing the research problem and explaining the relevance and importance of the study. The rationale behind the research is then presented, leading into a discussion of the study's significance. The core research concept is explored, followed by the articulation of the research aim, objectives, and guiding questions. A brief overview of the key theories and concepts underpinning the research is also included. The chapter then provides a short summary of the research design and methodology adopted. Finally, it outlines the structure of the remaining chapters in the dissertation.

1.1 The Context of this Research

British academia remains administratively, normatively, habitually, and intellectually 'White' and BAME academic staff suffer the most from the institutional racism and implicit biases (Miller, 2016). According to HESA (2023), there are total 24,430 professor in UK academia of which 1325 are BAME female academics at professorial level. According to the latest data from HESA (2023), only 60 female Black professors work in the UK HE sectors. Furthermore, only one-fifth of vice chancellors are female. According to Santos and Phu (2019), role models are important for convincing employees to work hard. If they can see that people from their own ethnicity have secured managerial or higher positions, they are more likely to work hard for their carrier progression. However, when roles are filled by only a small number of ethnic staff members from minority communities, staff from the same (minority) group are discouraged from working hard, as they do not believe they will be promoted at work even if they work hard (Judd, 2019).

Moreover, among academic staff, 71,420 (or 30%) were employed on fixed-term contracts. This figure rises to almost half for teaching-only academics (44%) and over two-thirds (68%) for research-only staff (UCU, 2021). According to the latest data, among them 40% Black and 44% Asian female academics have a fixed-term contract. More notably, despite the bad press surrounding zero-hour contracts, 3% of Black academic staff have a zero-hour contract, and 19% of Black academics are on an hourly-contract (UCU, 2021; HESA, 2023). In contrast, White male employees have the highest number of full-time positions, followed by White women. Therefore, the sector is dominated by white male academics from the viewpoints job roles and contracts.

Furthermore, according to HESA (2020), there is a gap in earnings by both gender and ethnicity in the HE sectors. Women typically earn less than men, and ethnic minority groups earn less than the major groups (White men and women). Black men and black women are noticeably overrepresented at low levels of pay – up to £35,000 per year. In contrast, both White men and White women employees are engaged in higher-level positions where the income level is more than £55,000 per year (HESA, 2019). According to the latest statistics, White women receive 15% less than their male counterparts. The statistics also show that Asian and black women receive 22% and 39% less salaries, respectively, than their White male employees. Therefore, there is a notable pay gap between white male and female academics and BAME female academics.

In 2005, universities made real progress on race equality under the Labour government. However, since then, the government's focus on this issue has faded. Although they still discuss equality, other concerns, such as immigration and terrorism have become more important. As a result, the strong requirements of the Equality Act 2010 have been watered down, and funding cuts to the Equality and Human Rights Commission show that equality is no longer a top priority for the government because the funding cutdown in teaching and research in the name of 'efficiency savings' has put the financial future of the higher education system at risk as well as employee development (Bolton and Lewis, 2024). In addition, the most important policy by Race Equality charter or REC (Advance HE, 2021) is undertaken to improve representation, progress, and success of ethnic minority academics and students. However, evidence shows that universities are not engaging with this charter; they are not confident enough to discuss race and racism in their institutes (Advance HE, 2021). Moreover, in the name of high-quality academic experience, the academic world has significant consequences for BAME students and staff because of the ongoing exclusionary and racist practices rooted in institutions. In this competitive and profit-driven environment, harsh measures, such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework, put early-career BME academics in a difficult spot. BAME academics often end up in unstable, less skilled, and easily replaceable positions (Mirza, 2018: 21; Bolton and Lewis, 2024).

Overall, in terms of contract conditions, salary levels, and policy implementation, BAME female academics continue to be disproportionately disadvantaged within the UK higher education system. These inequalities directly affect their job satisfaction, as disparities in

treatment linked to social identity remain evident (Sainz et al., 2023). It is therefore essential to understand BAME female academics' perspectives and examine how their social identity shapes their experiences and overall job satisfaction within UK higher education.

Personal Context

The researcher is an HR professional with five years practical experience in the Ready-made garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh. The researcher was responsible for staff recruitment and selection in a large organisation with 17,000 staff. While performing her job role, she observed that social identity, for example, employees' age, gender, marital status, social class, and background significantly impact their performance and job satisfaction. Therefore, she decided to perform her Master's dissertation on social identity, examining its impact on employee performance at a UK university. During her study, she found that there is an imbalance in the representation of BAME academicians in the higher education industry in terms of managerial positions and in pay scale. However, the representation of female BAME academicians was significantly lower compare white Male and female academicians, which influenced her to perform her research on the impact that social identity has on BAME female academics job satisfaction. The current research is the continuation of her Master's thesis, where she found the gap in the literature in terms of social identity by the BAME female employees in the UK higher education sector and its impact on their job satisfaction. This research aims to contribute to current knowledge by proposing an effective model that will successfully establish effective multi-cultural organisations and enhance the level of BAME female employees' satisfaction in the UK higher education sector and other relevant industries.

1.2 Problem Statement

While research on female academics has expanded in recent years, the experiences of those from minority ethnic backgrounds remain underexplored and require further scholarly attention (Khalifa et al., 2016; Bhopal, 2020; Young & Anderson, 2021; Smith et al., 2022). Scholars have argued that within efforts to address inequality in higher education, gender has often taken precedence over ethnicity, leaving racial issues insufficiently addressed (Bhopal & Henderson, 2019). The available research on job satisfaction provides valuable insights but has significant limitations because most studies focus on specific aspects of BAME academics' experiences rather than comprehensively examining social identity's impact on job satisfaction. Moreover, most studies focus on the structural inequalities and underrepresentation of BAME female academics, yet how these factors affect their experiences and job satisfaction remains largely

unexplored. Additionally, the application of social identity theory to this group is still underdeveloped because most of the existing research relies on frameworks such as critical race theory (Omhand, 2023; Etchebarne, 2021; Barnes, 2021).

Previous research has often focused on single aspects of job satisfaction, such as pay, appraisal, promotion, wellbeing, or work environment or on organisational identification, without exploring how these factors interact more broadly (Judge et al., 2017; Cortland & Kinias, 2019; Chen, 2023). Much of the existing literature within UK higher education also concentrates on White academics, general gender issues, or specifically Black female staff, meaning that the experiences of BAME female academics remain largely overlooked. Understanding how social identity shapes job satisfaction is complex, especially as many studies treat gender and ethnicity separately and fail to consider how these intersect within the academic workplace. Additionally, little attention has been paid to how in-group and out-group favouritism, which is central to social identity theory, may influence BAME women's job satisfaction (Hussain & Findlay, 2025). Given the increasing ethnic diversity of the academic workforce, there is a need for a multicultural social identity perspective that considers how multiple overlapping identities interact with workplace environments to shape feelings of belonging, inclusion, and satisfaction, an area that has yet to be fully explored.

1.3 Research Rationale

In UK academia, there is a clear underrepresentation of BAME staff compared to White staff members who are professors and work at a senior level within academia (Bhopal and Brown, 2016, ECU, 2018; Advance HE, 2019). One of the key reasons for low level of BAME Leadership in this sector is that institutions somewhat unaccountable for not actively diversifying senior leadership positions within the university and that is why BAME women remain underrepresented in senior roles (Bhopal & Henderson, 2019; Rollock, 2019). Moreover, employee satisfaction is a multi-dimensional concept, such as satisfaction with colleagues and supervisors at work. Satisfaction also depends on the nature of the task, pay and conditions, appraisal, promotion, and work environment (Judge et al., 2017; Cortland and Kinias, 2019; Showunmi, 2023). If an employee believes that inequality exists between two social groups or individuals, that employee may become distressed or dissatisfied (Zhou et al., 2016).

Despite efforts such as the race equality charter, BAME women still face significant barriers that prevent them from reaching top management or professorship positions (Rollock, 2019). Additionally, self-esteem against societal and institutional expectations are considered as the lack of female BAME role models within the sector (Nicholls, et, al., 2017; Rollock, 2019). Furthermore, omission from decision-making roles portrays this sector as inequitable, discriminatory, and exclusionary (Law, 2017; Rollock, 2019; Showunmi, 2023). An extensive culture of bullying and stereotyping at UK universities has blocked the professorial paths for BAME female academicians in this sector (Harvey and Shepherd, 2017; Arday, 2018). Most existing studies on academic job satisfaction in the UK and internationally have adopted a positivist paradigm, relying on quantitative methods and often drawing from feminist epistemology or critical approaches. In contrast, this study is informed by an interpretivist epistemology and a subjectivist ontological stance and is therefore concerned with understanding the meanings and experiences attached to job satisfaction by BAME female academics themselves. Rather than measuring job satisfaction objectively, this research seeks to explore how these women perceive and experience the impact of social identity on barriers and underrepresentation in their careers. The aim is to uncover what job satisfaction means to them in their own contexts, recognising that individual realities are shaped by both internal perspectives and external social factors, and to understand how these factors influence the ways in which they think, act, and perform in UK higher education.

Social identity theory suggests that group membership and in-group/out-group dynamics can strongly influence individuals' attitudes, sense of belonging, and satisfaction within organisations (Filippi, Peter and Suitner, 2024). However, little empirical research has considered how these social identities impact the job satisfaction of BAME female academics specifically within the UK university context. Without a clear understanding of how social identity factors such as visibility, belonging, discrimination, and representation influence BAME women's job satisfaction because of their intersecting identities (ethnicity and gender), higher education institutions cannot create the right policies to support, retain and help BAME female academics progress in their careers.

Therefore, this study begins by reviewing the literature on employee satisfaction, social identity, in-group and out group favouritism, and multicultural social identity of UK HEI. Due to out-group identity factors, BAME female academics are known to experience various challenges in their work environment, such as employer bias (Case and Richley, 2013; Hakkola

and Ropers-Huilman, 2018), stereotyping (Guo and Ling, 2012; Van Veelen et al., 2019), and discriminatory organisational policies and practices (Thurasamy et al., 2011; Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2020), which can lead to experiences of bias, microaggressions, and systemic barriers that hinder career progression and contribute to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction among BAME female academics (Arday and Mirza, 2018). This study, therefore, addresses an important gap by investigating the impact of social identity on the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in UK higher education from a social identity theory perspective.

1.4 The Importance of The Study

This research is particularly significant because it takes a different approach from other studies. While previous studies have focused either on senior BAME women in academia (Rollock, 2021), those in the early stages of their academic careers (Webber and Canché, 2015), or coping strategies (Garvey, Talhouk and Ajibade, 2023), this study includes BAME female academic job satisfaction at various levels within the academic hierarchy, focusing on contract type, ethnicity, and gender to support its outcome. Furthermore, this study draws on social identity theory by using intersectional theory lens to strengthen its analytical depth. Unlike previous studies that only examined the professional experiences of BAME women in the UK (Opara, Sealy, and Ryan, 2020; Smith et al., 2021; Miller, D., 2021), this study asked participants to reflect not only on their recent job satisfaction but also on their past office experience, aiming to identify both direct and indirect challenges they face, and provides deeper insight into the ways their ethnicity and gender shape their overall job satisfaction.

Moreover, social identity shapes an individual's self-perception based on group affiliation, shared attributes, values, and goals (Judd, 2019). By using social identity theory, the researcher can identify the impacts of social identity on the job satisfaction of BAME female academics, which also defines their sense of in-group and out-group favouritism. Furthermore, this theory has been applied to understand the causes of underrepresentation of BAME female academics in the HEI (Stuart, Mary et al., 2009). Moreover, the paper highlights that BAME female academics are often undervalued in the HEI and that the emotions they feel from being undervalued significantly impact their job satisfaction, which creates isolation, marginalisation, and non-belongingness (Belluigi, Arday, and O'Keeffe, 2024). Feeling lack of belonging and recognising the limited chances of reaching decision-making roles can reduce their job satisfaction, particularly as they attempt to operate within a work environment that

does not provide equal opportunities. (Heward and Taylor, 1992; Belluigi, Arday, and O’Keeffe, 2024). The representation of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector has been a source of much research and debate (Bhopal, 2018; Showunmi, 2023; Rollock, 2019). Similarly, the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in UK higher educational institutions also requires attention. Job satisfaction depends on the employee’s attitude towards their job and how fairly they are being treated (Khalis and Irshad, 2010). Various authors have conducted studies to determine the level of job satisfaction among the academic staff (Pandey, 2016; Khanna, 2017; Heilman and Caleo, 2018). However, the job satisfaction of BAME female academics has yet to be identified.

Research has found that BAME female staff within UK higher education are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to their White counterparts (Bhopal and Brown, 2016) and promotion is one of the important factors of job satisfaction. Agreeing with this, Rollock (2019) states that racial discrimination and persistent unconscious bias have an impact on BAME leadership within the UK higher education sector, as people tend to develop unconscious biases and preferences, which influence decisionmakers’ judgement. This is a strong indicator of how senior stakeholders within universities appoint and promote candidates who share the same culture, gender, ethnicity, or racial identity (Jarboe, 2016). Moreover, equal pay issues and unfair performance evaluation leads to a pay gap, and BAME female academicians often remain in the lower paid roles (Bhopal, 2019). This is because traditional dominance of White male leadership hierarchy leads to ethnic minority groups and women being marginalised in top positions and creates a blockage for them receiving a higher salary (Jarboe, 2016; Singh and Kwahli, 2015).

In general, women experience a range of challenges in the workplace, including structural, organisational, and personal barriers (Matsuzuka, 2020); identity-related pressures (Settles, 2014); childcare responsibilities and limited career opportunities (Koekemoer and Olckers, 2019); harassment (Fielden and Davidson, 2012); and unequal pay (Atewologun and Singh, 2010). For BAME female academics, these difficulties are intensified by the combined impact of both gender and ethnicity. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify and evaluate the factors that influence BAME female academics in relation to unequal representation, unequal treatment, lower pay, and overall job satisfaction within the UK higher education sector.

Therefore, some questions emerge: Which barriers are this group of people facing to enter UK HEI? How are they being treated at work? Do they face any cultural and social barriers? Are

they satisfied with the obtained benefits from work? How can more BAME women be attracted and encouraged to participate in this sector?

1.5 The concept of this research and gap in the literature

Social identity (SI) is an essential element in diversity management used by managers to manage and motivate employees and workers in multicultural organisations (Moura et, al., 2009; Viki et, al., 2013; Rast et, al., 2012; Zomeren et. al., 2008; Knippenberg, 2011 and Hogg et, al., 2016). SIT was proposed as a social psychology theory to evaluate intergroup relationships; it is often applied to achieve different research purposes outside the organisations. Previously, the theory has been used to analyse more individual-level phases of the behaviour by employees in organisations (Nicholls, et, al., 2017; Pratt, 1998), such as work performance and motivation by individual employees (van Knippenberg, 2000), turnover (Abrams, et, al., 1998), and organisational justice (Guan and So, 2016). The theory has also been used to analyse group level aspects, for example diversity in organisations (van Knippnberg and Haslam, 2003), cohesiveness at the group level (Hogg, 2006), and decision-making by a group (Turner, et, al., 2003). Other authors, such as Kourti (2016), Rani and Samuel (2019), and Afshari et al. (2019), have applied this theory to their studies in different contexts. However, the findings of their studies are not valid in the context of employee satisfaction in higher education perspective. Additionally, the focus of their studies differs to this research. Table 2.1 (in Chapter 3) shows the gap in the literature; therefore, an intensive study should be conducted for the following reasons:

First, prior studies have not conducted (to date, as far as the researcher knows) studies using SIT to reveal the impact of SI on BAME female employee satisfaction in the UK HE context. Authors, for example Scandone (2018) and Ross (2000), have conducted studies focusing on BAME female employees to reveal different factors – for example, employee performance, adaption, and satisfaction; however, the crucial factors of SIT, namely in-group favouritism and out-group derogation remain insufficiently explored. Second, the industry statistics show that the representation of BAME female academicians is significantly lower than that of other groups. Previous research, however, has not fully explored how BAME female academicians' perspectives on job satisfaction are shaped by their social identity.

Third, there is a clear pay gap for the BAME female academicians, and an effective model must be formulated to minimise the gap. Fourth, the presence of BAME females in professorial

and senior management positions is significantly lower than any other groups; prior research does not show how BAME female academics perceive imbalanced representation or how it impacts their job satisfaction. Furthermore, contemporary literature does not guide practitioners and policymakers on how to ensure effective multicultural organisation and avoid derogations.

Finally, social identity theory has not been applied to evaluate employee satisfaction in a multicultural organisational context, and intensive research is needed to evaluate the impact of SI on BAME female academicians' job satisfaction. This research intends to fill the gap in the literature and propose a suitable model that will enable managers, decisionmakers, practitioners, and policymakers to manage and motivate BAME female employees to ensure an optimum level of job satisfaction.

1.6 Aim and objectives

The broad aim of this research is to explore and evaluate the impacts of social identity on the satisfaction of BAME female academic staff in the UK higher education sector. Therefore, the research pursues the following objectives:

- Explore and evaluate the barriers of BAME female academic staff to achieving job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector.
- Evaluate the impact of imbalance representation on BAME female academics' job satisfaction.
- Analyse and evaluate the strategies to build an effective multi-cultural social identity.
- To Propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector.

Research Questions:

1. What are the key barriers affecting job satisfaction among BAME female academic staff in the UK higher education sector?
2. How does underrepresentation influence the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in UK universities?

3. What strategies contribute to the development of an effective multicultural social identity among BAME female academics in UK higher education institutions?
4. How can a multicultural social identity framework be developed to promote and sustain job satisfaction among BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector?

The aims and objectives of this research are developed through a combination of literature review, current sector challenges, and observed gaps in academic research. The researcher begins by exploring job satisfaction in higher education more broadly. In the literature, BAME female academics' job satisfaction was not discussed precisely, particularly in relation to how their social identity shapes their work satisfaction. Most studies were about their wellbeing, turnover, imposter syndrome, recruitment, rank, or age. However, in most research, the voices of BAME female academics are missing. As the researcher is an interpretivist, she wanted to hear about BAME female academics' perception of job satisfaction.

Therefore, the researcher narrowed her focus and built a research aim that targets this intersection. Each objective was designed to support this aim by addressing key themes that emerged from the literature and real-world issues, such as barriers to job satisfaction and the impact of underrepresentation on job satisfaction. The final objective was inspired by the need for a practical outcome, a model that could help higher education institutions develop a more inclusive and supportive environment for BAME female academics. Therefore, the aims and objectives are both evidence based and solution oriented, grounded in theory but developed with real-world relevance in mind. To achieve these objectives, the researcher developed several key stages. Firstly, the researcher completes the contextual, conceptual, and gap analyses. Then, she moves forward to find a suitable methodology and to conduct data collection and data analysis. She then provides a discussion and finally the conclusion section to complete this research.

1.7 A Brief Introduction to the Research Methodology

This research is based on interpretivism, meaning it focuses on understanding how people experience and make sense of the world around them. Since the study examines BAME female academics' job satisfaction, it uses a subjective ontological stance, which posits that reality is shaped by people's thoughts, feelings, social surroundings, and shared meanings. This stance was chosen because the aim is to discover how social identity impacts BAME female academics' job satisfaction. As Saunders et al. (2018) explain, reality is not fixed or separate from people; it is created through individual perception and interpretation. This is why an inductive approach was chosen, which is useful when exploring a topic that has not been studied much before. The impact of social identity on BAME female academics in UK universities has not been deeply researched, especially in relation to job satisfaction and multiculturalism in higher education.

Given the limited research available on this topic, it is appropriate to allow insights to emerge directly from participants' experiences rather than imposing a pre-determined theoretical framework. Adopting a qualitative approach makes it possible to explore how BAME female academics perceive the barriers to job satisfaction, experience the effects of underrepresentation, and identify strategies they believe are necessary to foster more inclusive, multicultural academic environments. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants, leading to 15 semi-structured interviews with BAME female academics across seven UK universities. Interview data was analysed thematically, generating eight main themes and 31 sub-themes from an initial 210 coded extracts. To ensure credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness, all necessary methodological steps were followed, leading to valid and meaningful findings.

1.8 Key Terms used in this research study

A few key terms are used throughout this study, and their explanations are presented here to help guide the reader:

I. Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic

According to the aims and objectives of this research, the participants who identified themselves as Black, Brown, Mixed, or African, or those who have been racialised according to their heritage are known as ‘ethnic minorities’ in Western culture. The term BAME denotes the UK’s non-White population, allowing this study to take a more focused approach. Using this label helps narrow the scope of the research more effectively. However, it is acknowledged that under this term, realities can be hidden, and inequalities can also exist between ethnic minorities (Bunglawala, 2019). Other authors, such as Bhopal (2022) and Arday (2018), also use this term in their research. It is important to examine the job satisfaction of BAME female academics because this will give policymakers, practitioners, and most importantly, managers opportunities to analyse why and how their satisfaction is different based on their ethnicity and gender and how these have a clear connection between career progression and job satisfaction.

This study acknowledges that the experiences of BAME individuals are not uniform and that they differ across ethnicities and subcultures. However, the term BAME is used here to refer specifically to women of African, African-Caribbean, and Asian heritage. I opted for this term rather than ‘ethnic minority’ because it is widely used in the existing literature (e.g., Mirza, 2009; Showumni et al., 2016) and is a label with which both my participants and the researcher feel comfortable, despite its limitations. While alternative terms, such as postcolonial women (Mirza, 2009) or Black (Ahmed, 2009) are sometimes used, BAME remains a common descriptor in academic discussions. Most importantly, all the women who participated in this study self-identified as BAME women at the start of the interviews, and the researcher also self-identify as a BAME woman. Therefore, the researcher has intentionally chosen to use this term throughout the thesis.

II. Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the social group a person identifies with or is identified with by others based on shared cultural traits, such as language, religion, ancestry, diet, and sometimes physical appearance (Ramij, 2009). Importantly, ethnicity is largely self-defined and can shift over time. In research and policy, classifications of ethnicity are practical; they rely on categories that people recognise and that help reveal meaningful social differences (Smart et al, 2008). In recent years, there has been growing recognition that some people may identify with more than one ethnic background, leading to ‘mixed’ categories such as those included in the UK 2001 and 2011 censuses. While the terms race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. Race usually refers to grouping people based on physical traits and the social meanings attached to those traits, whereas ethnicity connects more closely to cultural background, including language, religion, customs, and collective history (Kenny and Briner, 2010:3). Finally, ethnicity should not be confused with nationality or country of origin, since many countries contain multiple ethnic groups, each with distinct identities.

III. Role Model

Gladstone and Cimpian (2021) define role models as individuals who act as successful examples, positively influencing early- or mid-career ethnic minority female academics’ motivation and, importantly, their job satisfaction. Morgenroth et al. (2015) provide a comprehensive definition, describing role models as ‘individuals who influence achievements, motivation, and goals by acting as behavioural models, representations of the possible, and/or inspirations.

1.9 The structure of this research

Chapter 1 explains why this study is being conducted by setting up the aim, objective, context, concept, and scope of this study. It also discusses present trends and the recent situation of UK higher education.

Chapter 2 explains background information about the UK HEI. This chapter discusses the history of the BAME population in the UK, the number of BAME individuals working in the HEI, their contract type, and pay scale. Furthermore, it outlines the contextual gap for this study. It also presents a literature review that defines social-identity-related theories, job-satisfaction-related theories, intersectional theory, gap analysis, critical analysis, factor

analysis, and a conceptual model. The literature review discusses academic job satisfaction and how this is influenced by in-group and out-group favouritism, which leads to underrepresentation. Moreover, it reviews present barriers in the HEI that impact BAME female academics' job satisfaction. Lastly, it explains the benefits of multicultural social identity practice in UK HEI.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology along with relevant philosophies, research methods, approaches, research strategies, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and the justification for choosing each method. This chapter explains that the study follows a qualitative research design, the data was generated using thematic analysis, and initial coding was done using NVivo 14 by conducting 15 semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 4 shows the findings of the research. Eight themes and 29 sub-themes were identified. The aim of the chapter is to present the qualitative data analysis and findings obtained from 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector. The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis techniques in line with the research objective.

Chapter 5 explains objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. Eight themes were identified and discussed. Furthermore, four models were identified. Model 1 is generated and named 'Barriers of BAME female academicians job satisfaction in UK HE'. Model 2 is generated and named 'Imbalanced representation of BAME female academics and its impact on job satisfaction'. Model 3 is generated and named 'Strategies to build up multicultural social identity to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics. Moreover, in this chapter, the researcher discusses Objective 4, and to meet this objective, 32 issues were identified from models 1, 2, and 3. Based on these issues, the researcher proposes Model 4: 'Employees' Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity'. The steps involved in developing this model are thoroughly discussed, along with the benefits. Chapter 6 gives a summary of the research, including a conclusion, contributions, recommendations, future study indications, and implications. On the following page diagrammatic description of all the chapters are provided:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND	1.1 Context of this research	1.2 Problem statement	1.3 Research Rationale	1.4 The importance of the study	1.5 Concept and research gap
	1.6 Aim and objectives	1.7 Introduction to the research methodology	1.8 Key Terms	1.9 The structure	1.10 Chapter summary
CHAPTER 2: LITERATUR REVIEW	2.1 BAME Employment	2.2 Unemployment by ethnicity	2.3 Employees in the HEI	2.4 Academic staff employment contract by gender and ethnicity	2.5 Role models by ethnicity and gender
	2.6 Pay gap in the HE	2.7 Discussion and Gap in the context	2.8 Job satisfaction in academic sector	2.9 Social Identity Theory	2.10 Maslow's Hierarchy of needs
	2.11 Two-factor theory	2.12 Integration of social identity theory and intersectional theory	2.13 Gap in the Literature	2.14 Barrier to Job satisfaction	2.15 Imbalanced Representation and group favouritism in SIT
	2.16 Multicultural Social Identity	2.17 Conceptual Framework	2.18 Chapter Summary		
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY	3.0 Introduction	3.1 Research Philosophy	3.2 Epistemological and Ontological stance of the Major paradigm	3.3 Research Approach	3.4 Research Methods
	3.5 Positioning myself as the researcher	3.6 Sampling Procedures	3.7 Data Collection	3.8 Data analysis and interpretation methods	3.9 Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and confirmability
	3.10 Research Ethics	3.11 Limitation of the Research	3.12 Chapter Summary		
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS	4.0 Introduction	4.1 Qualitative data collection procedure	4.2 Theme Development	4.3 Chapter summary	
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	5.0 Introduction	5.1 Objective 1- The barriers to BAME female academics job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector.	5.2 Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of imbalance representation on BAME Female academics job satisfaction	5.3 Objective 3: To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build up effective multi-cultural social identity	5.4 Objective 4: To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure job satisfaction of the BAME female academics in the UK Higher education sector
	5.5 Chapter summary				
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	6.0 Introduction	6.1 Summary of the Research	6.2 Contribution to knowledge	6.3 Study implications to policy, practice and theory	6.4 Limitations of the research
	6.5 Recommendation	6.6 Scopes for further studies			

Figure 1.1: Diagrammatic Description of all the chapters.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter contextualises the research study and explains the purpose and direction for this thesis. This chapter defines significance of this research in contemporary higher education where BAME Female academics imbalanced representation is apparent. The research process followed in this study is outlined through a summary of the chapters that make up the thesis. In addition, this chapter explains the key terms used in the study and provides reasons for their selection, helping readers better understand and engage with the research.

The next chapter, which is chapter 2; presents the background information for this research along with a literature review. In the background information, details about the UK HEI's history, the current population of BAME, and the reasons why they came to the UK have been discussed in detail. Moreover, the current scenario of higher education and the status of BAME female academics in terms of pay, position, contracts, etc. are discussed too identify the underrepresentation of BAME female academics. From this, the researcher has identified a contextual gap, and following this chapter, the researcher will continue the theoretical perspective of this study.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information of UK HEI, relevant information regarding the history of the BAME population, the current position of the BAME population in the employment sector, total employment in the HE sectors, and women in HE. It also discusses academic roles by gender and ethnicity, pay gaps by gender and ethnicity, and current policy practices. Moreover, inadequate role models for BAME women, inequality, and barriers for BAME female academicians are presented as well as other relevant aspects that impact job satisfaction.

2.1 BAME Employment in the UK

Chinese and Indian ethnic communities have had some success in the UK job market. However, most ethnic minorities still experience disadvantages in comparison to the White British majority (Catney and Sabater, 2015). Certain groups continue to have greater rates of unemployment: Black and mixed-race Caribbeans, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, Arabs, and White Gypsy men and women (GOV.UK, 2024). The following table shows that the employment rate is higher for women (71%) than men (67%) in the mixed ethnic group (GOV.UK, 2024). In all other ethnic groups, the rate was higher for men than women. Moreover, a notable gap can be seen between men and women in the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups, where 75% of men and 46% of women were employed (GOV.UK, 2024). Hence, for both men and women, the highest employment rate is in the 'White other' ethnic group, which is 86% for men and 79% for women. Furthermore, the lowest rate for women is in the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups (46%). By contrast, the lowest employment rate for men was in the mixed ethnic group (67%) (GOV.UK, 2023).

Ethnicity	All		Men		Women	
	%	Number of people employed	%	Number of people employed	%	Number of people employed
All	76	30,498,400	79	15,856,900	72	14,641,500
Asian	70	2,394,200	79	1,331,000	61	1,063,200
Indian	77	998,100	84	556,200	70	441,900
Pakistani, Bangladeshi	61	719,900	75	452,400	46	267,500
Asian other	71	676,200	75	322,500	68	353,800
Black	69	1,073,600	74	471,600	66	602,000
Mixed	69	484,700	67	221,400	71	263,300
White	77	25,908,400	80	13,474,100	74	12,434,300
White British	76	23,345,900	79	12,232,100	74	11,113,800
White other	82	2,562,500	86	1,242,000	79	1,320,500
Other	68	617,500	75	346,900	60	270,600

Table 2.1: Employment by gender and ethnicity (GOV.UK, 2023)

Therefore, the over-representation of ethnic minority groups in some employment categories, especially low-skilled positions, may be a sign of prejudice or stereotyping (TUC, 2020). However, several ethnic minorities are concentrated in management or professional positions; this could be viewed as a success or as a result of being shut out of other employment options. In general, compared to the fairer distribution among ethnic minorities, the employment patterns for these groups are uneven.

2.2 Unemployment by ethnicity

In the UK, 1.42 million people who are aged 16+ were unemployed in April 2023 to June 2024 (House of Commons, 2024). Of these, 946,000 were from a White background and 472,000 were from a minority ethnic background. People from White (3.3%) and Indian (4.9%) ethnic backgrounds had the lowest unemployment rates, whereas mixed or multiple (11.5%) and Pakistani (11.1%) ethnic backgrounds had the highest rates in April to June 2024 (House of Commons, 2024). Unemployment rates of the number of people from an ethnic minority background increased by 77,000 compared to last year (2023). However, unemployment levels decreased by 88,000 for people from a White ethnic background.

By contrast, the unemployment rate rose from 7.25% to 8% for people from a minority ethnic background, while it fell from 3.6% to 3.3% for people from a White ethnic background. The gap between the rates of unemployment for people from White and other ethnic groups was 4.6% points from April to June 2024 (GOV.UK, 2024). Table 2.2 is taken from the GOV.UK,

UK Labour Market, 2024. This table indicates the unemployment rate according to ethnicity and the differences between 2023 and 2024.

Ethnicity	2023		2024	
	Level	Rate (%)	Level	Rate (%)
Mixed	34	6.1%	64	11.5%
Pakistani	60	10.1%	65	11.1%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	93	6.9%	131	7.7%
Chinese	15	6.2%	19	6.8%
Bangladeshi	25	10.5%	22	8.6%
Indian	90	7.2%	63	4.9%
Other ethnic group	78	6.1%	107	8.6%
White	1,034	3.6%	946	3.3%
Minority Ethnic Group	395	7.2%	472	8.0%
Total	1,432	4.1%	1,418	4.1%

Table 2.2: Unemployment rate according to ethnicity. (GOV.UK, 2024)

Discrimination in the recruiting process may make it more difficult for members of certain ethnic groups to find employment. The Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration, and Markets Project and the University of Oxford’s Centre for Social Investigation conducted a study in 2019 wherein 3,200 job applications were submitted, with the only difference between the applications being that the applicants’ minority background skills, experience, and qualifications remained unchanged. Ethnic minority applicants had to submit 60% more applications to receive the same number of callbacks as those from the majority group, according to the survey, which exposed inequality across all employment sectors. These results align with those of a similar 1969 study. Similarly, the British Sociology Association (2020) states that ethnic minorities are more likely to be unemployed because employers reject applications from ‘non-White’ names. Moreover, caring responsibilities, fertility rates, and difficulty finding jobs are the main reasons for unemployment too (TUC, 2020). Moreover, BAME females who are already in the job market face inequalities in terms of promotion, increment, pay structure, and representation in senior positions. One in eight BAME females are kept in insecure jobs, compared to one in 16 White females (TUC, 2020). BAME females are overrepresented in insecure jobs or temporary contracts, and this uncertainty in jobs often creates financial uncertainty, anxiety, and stress (Bhopal, 2018; Rollock, 2019; Showunmi, 2023).

2.3 Employees in the UK higher education sector

Skilled labour is vital to the higher education industry, and women are essential to teaching, learning, and evaluation (Dilmaghani and Tabvuma, 2019; Kassim, 2016; Okpara et al., 2005; Oshagbemi, 2003). The number of academic staff in UK higher education increased by 3% between 2021 and 2023, from 234,020 to 240,420, according to the most recent figures from HESA (2024). There was a 3% increase in full-time academic staff in 2022 compared to December 2021 and a 2% increase in part-time workers during the same period. A total of 43%, or 103,005 academic staff members, worked in roles that combined teaching and research in 2022–2023. This table shows the number of staff on an academic contract, and among them, 37% of part-time staff were hourly paid, compared with less than 1% of full-time staff, while 9% of part-time non-academic staff reported to HESA were hourly paid, compared with less than 1% of full-time staff. The table below provides details on academic staff by employment condition in UK higher education.

Category	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Source of basic salary					
Wholly general financed by the provider	169,790	174,265	174,940	186,695	191,795
All other sources of finance	47,275	49,260	49,590	47,320	48,625
Teaching only	66,355	72,540	72,970	81,080	85,620
Teaching and research	98,600	98,085	98,630	100,170	103,005
Research only	50,855	51,510	51,375	51,025	49,995
Neither teaching nor research	1,255	1,390	1,555	1,740	1,800
Contract level					
Professor	21,520	22,810	22,855	23,515	24,430
Other senior academic	6,185	6,115	6,220	6,330	6,480
Other contract level	189,360	194,600	195,455	204,170	209,510
Terms of employment					
Open-ended/permanent	144,315	148,945	151,920	156,465	169,000
Fixed-term contract	72,750	74,580	72,610	77,555	71,420
Total	217,065	223,525	224,530	234,020	240,420

Table 2.3: Academic staff by employment conditions (2018/19 to 2022/23) (HESA, 2024)

Moreover, more staff on fixed-term contracts were hourly paid relative to open-ended or permanent contracts. Nonetheless, there were 3,915 academic staff on zero-hours contracts, of

whom 93% were hourly paid, and for non-academic staff, 84% of the 1,275 on a zero-hours contract were hourly paid.

However, between 2018–19 and 2022–23, there was a notable increase in the percentage of teaching-only contracts, from 26% to 36%. Previously viewed as safe routes to jobs in teaching and research, they are now more common than combined teaching and research roles. In 2018/19, there were 72,750 fixed-term contracts, a number that decreased only slightly to 71,420 by 2022/23, taking five years to reduce by just 1,330. This slow pace of change suggests that addressing casualisation in higher education remains a significant challenge.

2.4 Academic staff employment contract by Gender and Ethnicity

Racism in the UK is endemic (Sian, 2019), and this is reflected in the persistent inequalities faced by ethnic minority staff, who remain underrepresented in decision-making roles and marginalised within academia. They are often positioned as “minorities,” reinforcing their outsider status in what is perceived as an elite space (Bhopal, 2020; DaCosta, Dixon-Smith, and Singh, 2021). This marginalisation is further intensified by the fact that BAME employees are significantly underrepresented in full-time academic posts and disproportionately concentrated in part-time and less secure contracts. Table 2.4 shows employees by gender and ethnicity and their type of contracts in the HEI sector.

The following statistics show the current employment contracts for BAME employees compared to the mainstream groups in the UK higher education sector:

	Full Time			Part Time			Permanent		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
White	108,850	59,395	49,285	58,340	24,220	34,010	124,750	63,820	60,780
Black	4,765	2,865	1,890	2,525	1,285	1,240	4,655	6,785	1,955
Asian	20,570	12,030	8,515	7,530	3,355	4,165	16,750	9,420	7,315
Mixed	4,240	2,180	2,045	2,240	855	1,375	4,040	4,085	2,115
Other	4,295	2,510	1,775	2,005	920	1,085	3,810	2,170	1,635
Not known	13,275	7,960	5,195	11,790	5,715	5,970	14,990	8,440	6,460

Table 2.4: Employment mode by Gender and Ethnicity (HESA, 2024)

The table also shows that there are 108,855 White full-time employees in this sector compared with 4,765, 20,570, 4,240, and 4,295 of Black, Asian, Mixed and Other backgrounds, respectively. Fewer Black females than White and Asian ethnic groups work in full-time positions in this sector. The statistics reveal that more White female employees have part-time academic positions compared with other groups, including White male employees. The statistics also show that participation by the mixed male employees is less than any other groups in the UK HE sectors. According to the statistics, the total number of White part-time employees is 58,340; whereas the number of Black, Asian, Mixed and Other background is 2,525, 7,530, 2,240, and 2,005, respectively. More BAME male academics work in part-time positions compared to female academicians.

Table 2.1 also shows that total number of White male permanent staff in this sector is 63,820 compared with 60,780 White female staff. The number for Black, Asian, Mixed, and Other female employees is 1,955, 7,315, 2,115, and 1,635, respectively. The statistics show that female employees from all groups are less likely to have a permanent position than males. Finally, White male employees have the highest number of full-time positions, followed by White women. By contrast, Black employees are underrepresented compared to White and Asian groups in full-time positions. Asian, Mixed, and other ethnic employees are also

underrepresented in full-time positions. The representation of female employees in this position is comparatively lower for all ethnicities compared to their male counterparts.

2.5 Role models by Ethnicity and Gender

The shortage of ethnic minority leaders is probably due to by a lack of opportunity access (Arday, 2018; Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2020). Moreover, gender issues, a lack of BAME role models within the sector, and low self-esteem due to societal and institutional expectations are also considered reasons for underrepresentation (Coleman et al., 2023). In UK academia, White staff are far more likely than BAME staff to occupy professorial and senior roles (Bhopal and Brown, 2016, ECU, 2018). Figure 2.1 also reveals that the total number of academic staff is 240,420; among them 10%, or 24,430, are professors, and among them, the total number of BAME female academics at the professor level is only 1,325. A total of 2,865, or 13%, were from ethnic minority backgrounds, and among them, female professors from these backgrounds are Asian (490), mixed (160), and Black (60). By contrast, the number of White males in professorial roles is 13,280 and White females is 6,190. Furthermore, this difference reveals that White male leadership hierarchy remains unchallenged, and the constant cycle of supremacy and inequality of whiteness becomes an untold transparent matter (Mirza, 2017; Pilkington, 2013).

Highly skilled and experienced employees are needed in the higher education sector to ensure the expected teaching and learning and to facilitate research programmes. According to Santos and Phu (2019), role models are important to convince employees to work hard. If they can see that people from their own ethnicity have secured managerial or higher positions, they are more likely to work hard to progress in their career. By contrast, less ethnic staff from minority communities discourages the staff from the same (minority) group to work hard, as they believe that working hard makes little difference to whether they will be promoted at work (Judd, 2019). The following table shows the total number of academic staff by professorial category and ethnic group:

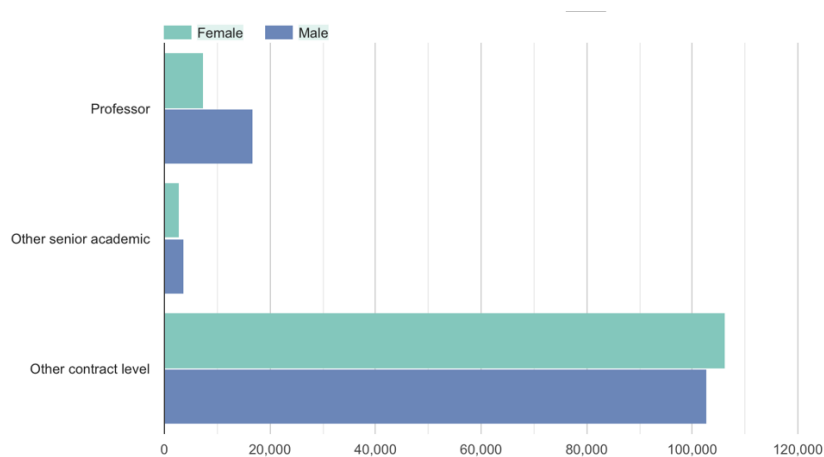


Figure 2.1: Academic staff by professorial category and ethnic group (HESA, 2024)

This figure shows that the sector is dominated by men, as they hold far more professorship positions than women. As BAME female academics have to wait longer for promotion compared to their White counterparts, BAME female academics often remain on a lower salary and at a lower contract level (Bhopal, 2020). BAME academics are habitually omitted from the decision-making process, which leads to a shortage of BAME leaders in academia (Mirza, 2017). According to Alexander (2018), BAME academics are rarely in a position to challenge embedded inequitable racist culture, as much of their effort is concentrated on survival within the academy. Omission from decision-making roles portrays a sector as inequitable, discriminatory, and exclusionary (Law, 2017).

2.6 Pay gap in the HE sectors

In this section, the researcher uses a data set between 2017 and 2019. There is a lack of data regarding ethnic pay gaps in HEI because organisations are not obligated to make these reports. According to the McGregor-Smith report on racial disparities in the workplace in 2017, the UK government began investigating and reporting on the ethnicity pay gap from October 2018. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities presented recommendations in 2021, but the government opted not to require ethnicity pay gap reporting in 2022; rather, they provided employers with voluntary recommendations. Although new guidelines have been released as of April 2023, required reporting of the ethnicity pay gap remains absent. King Charles III announced that employers with 250 workers or more would be required to disclose wage

disparities based on race and disability (Bloomberg, 2024). These numbers are currently required to be disclosed by British companies as part of gender pay gap reporting.

However, to create context for ethnic pay gap, the researcher has used the gender pay gap, which, today, receives much attention in HEIs. The gender pay gap refers to the percentage difference between the average earnings of male and female staff across the higher education sector. Although the sector has existed for more than 700 years, a pay gap between men and women still persists, much like in many other industries in the UK. According to a report by UCEA (2023), the gender pay gap in higher education institutes has significantly narrowed over the last decade: the gender pay gap fell from 19.4% in 2012/13 to 10.0% in 2022/23 (UCEA, 2023), whereas in terms of the whole economy, the gender pay gap fell from 19.8% in 2012/13 to 14.3% in 2022/23.

According to UCEA (2023), female academics in the UK receive 5% less pay than men, and in the case of professorial roles, female staff are paid 3% less than their male counterparts.

Figure 2.2 shows the current state of the gender pay gap in the HE sector:

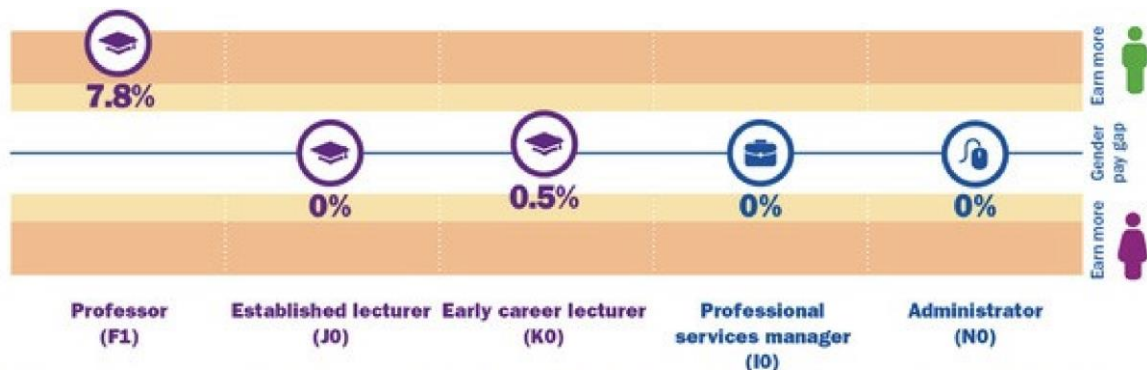


Figure 2.2: Gender Pay Gap in Higher Education Sector in the UK
UCEA (2023)

According to Figure 2.2, there is no pay gap for professional service managers, established lecturers, and administrators in the HEI sector. However, the most noticeable differences appear at the professor and early-career lecturer levels, where the pay gaps are 7.8% and 0.5% respectively.

2.6.1 Pay gap for academic staff in HE by ethnicity and gender

The median pay gap is the difference between the midpoints of men's and women's hourly earnings. By contrast, the mean pay gap is the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women. From 2008/09 to 2018/19, while the academic pay gap saw an upward trend at the median, a downward trend continued at the mean. These results refer to the mean and median gross hourly salaries, excluding overtime for all employees in both full-time and part-time roles. The main reason for these gaps is that more men are in senior and well-paid roles than females (Advance HE, 2018). Women are underrepresented in senior roles and overrepresented in the lower levels (Bhopal, 2018). The ethnic minority pay gap is caused by occupational segregation, mainly that there are more White men and women in higher-paid roles and ethnic minority males and females in lower-paid roles (Pfefer, 2020). Additionally, vertical segregation where fewer BAME women in higher and better-paying positions compared to White women (UCEA, 2023). Nonetheless, ineffective pay legislation, BAME female academics working in part-time, more BAME female academics in fixed term contract, barriers to entering a higher position create an unequal ethnic pay gap (UCEA, 2023). Furthermore, field of study and employer characteristics also influence the salary of ethnic minority women (Equality and Human rights commission, 2017). However, academicians from ethnic communities experience a significant pay gap. Figure 2.3 shows the pay gap for academic staff by ethnicity and gender:

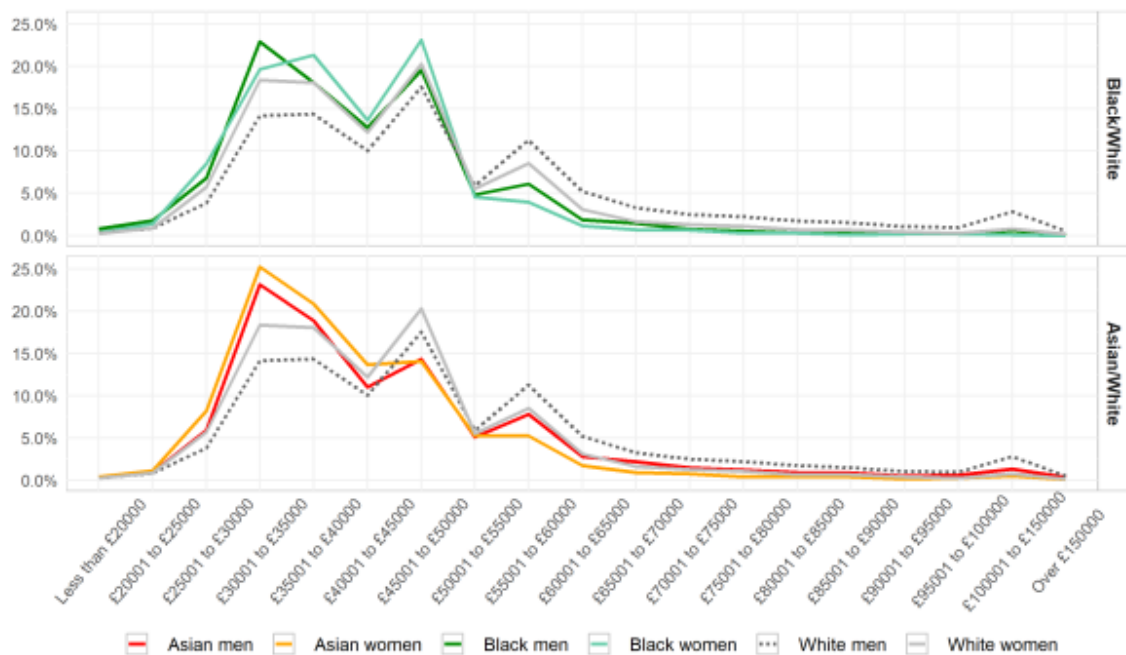


Figure 2.3: Pay Distribution by Gender and Ethnicity for Academic Staff UCEA (2018)

The above figure shows that White academic men are top earners, with 38.7% earning over £50,000 compared to 23.9% of White women; 25.1% of Asian men and other groups.

The upper part of the figure shows that the Black teachers dominate in lower academic positions where the income range is up to £55,000 and that the decision-making roles are taken by White academic staff. It also highlights that Black male academics occupy more positions and earn higher incomes than Black female academics. Additionally, the figure indicates that White employees are the least represented within this lower-salary category. The lower part of Figure 2.3 shows the pay gap between White and Asian academic staff in UK higher education. Asian men and women earn similar salaries, both reaching up to £55,000, while White women are the least represented in this income range. At the higher income levels, between £55,000 and £150,000, White men hold most of the positions, and Black women have the lowest representation. Overall, the figure shows that Asian and Black women are underrepresented compared to men from their own ethnic groups in higher-level roles and higher salary brackets.

2.7 Discussion and Gap in the Context

The evidence and statistics above show that the sector is dominated by white male employees across various roles and contracts (HESA, 2024). In 2023, there were 24,405 professors, of whom 16,895 were male and 7,510 were female. Among BAME staff, academics of Asian origin held the highest representation, with a total of 1,855 professors, 1,365 male and 490 female. The statistics also show that there were only 240 Black professors; among them, the total number of Black male professors was 150, and there were only 60 female professors. HESA (2019) estimates that female employees receive lower salaries than men. Moreover, White women receive 15% less than their male counterparts, whereas Asian and Black women receive 22% and 39% lower salaries, respectively, than White male employees. Nonetheless, 44% of Asian female academics was on fixed-term contracts compared to 30% of White academic staff on full-time contracts (UCU, 2021). Therefore, imbalanced participation in decision-making roles, pay gaps, lack of role models, and the low number of BAME female academics on permanent contracts are key contextual factors that negatively affect job satisfaction for BAME female employees, largely due to the impact of their social identity.

The following section discusses relevant theories, such as intersectional theory, job satisfaction theory, and social identity theory. These theories aid in the analysis of the data and the formulation of conclusions. They also serve as a guide for choosing the best research methodology. The challenges faced by ethnic minority female academics in UK higher education institutions, the causes of this group's underrepresentation in senior posts, and the effects on their job satisfaction have all been brought to light by the researcher through this conversation. The researcher also examines ways to support multicultural social identity, highlighting the paucity of information on multicultural practices in higher education institutions. Although multiculturalism is not yet completely supported by UK law, the growing presence of ethnic minorities in the workforce indicates that adopting a heterogeneous social identity could improve their participation.

2.8 Job satisfaction of academics

Job satisfaction is viewed as a sense of fulfilment that individuals gain from their jobs (O'Leary et al., 2009), and it is positively related to employee development and wellbeing (Junaid et al., 2021). Job satisfaction among academics in the UK HEI is influenced by various factors, including career growth, working conditions, and interaction with students and colleagues and understanding these factors is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction. A study by Mumford and Sechel (2019) indicates that job satisfaction among academics is influenced by autonomy in the workplace, opportunities for further development, and recognition received by both supervisors and peers.

Various authors have conducted studies to determine the level of job satisfaction among academic staff (Pandey, 2016; Khanna, 2017; Heilman and Caleo, 2018). Metler (2002) revealed that gender is an important factor in job satisfaction in the HEI sectors, where satisfaction varies according to whether a person is men or women. According to Bryant and Constantine (2006), male faculty members have a higher level of job satisfaction when considering benefits and pay. However, Dabke et al. (2008) did not find any significant differences between male and female faculty members in overall levels of job satisfaction. However, they observed that male faculty members had almost three times the satisfaction levels of female faculty members when it came to promotion opportunities. Bryant and Constantine (2006) and Rubin et al. (2019) found that female faculty members in higher academic ranks expressed more satisfaction with their jobs than their male peers. Hence, according to Mgaiwa (2022), full professors were more satisfied than other groups because they had reached the highest rank in their careers, which comes with better pay and benefits.

Chen (2023) found that the overall job satisfaction of an academic is influenced by four main duties: service, teaching, advising, and research. Additionally, two key factors greatly impact job satisfaction: the 'university work environment' and the 'nature of the academic job'. Out of these two factors, the work environment plays a bigger role, especially for higher-ranked professors. The findings also suggest that universities can boost academicians' job satisfaction by offering better professional development, improving the work environment and resources, providing more flexibility in regulations, and implementing effective grievance mechanisms and reward systems. However, the overall work environment for academics varies significantly across higher education systems, leading to different levels of job satisfaction (Shin & Jung, 2014).

Mgaiwa (2022) highlights that the nature of work is a critical factor in academic job satisfaction, with both teaching and research considered fundamental pillars supporting it. Pandey (2016) notes that faculty who spend more time teaching and less on research often report lower job satisfaction. In contrast, academics primarily engaged in research tend to have longer job tenure and receive greater support from their peers. However, Black female academics frequently face heavier teaching loads and additional university service responsibilities compared to their White male and female counterparts, leaving them little time for research (Whaley & Krane, 2012). Furthermore, the service work assigned to Black women is often less prestigious than research, which negatively affects their career progression and overall job satisfaction (Garnett & Mohamed, 2012).

There is also a reverse relationship between workload and faculty productivity, as higher demands can sometimes limit research output, which is a key measure of academic success (Alonderiene & Majaukaite, 2016). Job demands, such as workload, can have both positive and negative effects on employee wellbeing, performance, and job satisfaction. Promotion in academia often depends on the number of journal articles or books published, as measured by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) (Lee et al., 2017). However, persistent pressure to produce research can lead to burnout and reduced job satisfaction, preventing faculty members from performing effectively and feeling fulfilled in their roles (Demerouti et al., 2001; Sheila et al., 2022).

Sivatte et al. (2019) state that job satisfaction is the measurement of employees' contentment against their performance at work that comes from both financial and non-financial benefits offered by the organisation. According to Lee et al. (2017), job satisfaction can be measured by the cognitive, affective, and behavioural components obtained from the workplace. Boland and Fowler (2000) suggest that non-financial benefits include the work environment, the relationship between the employee and their line managers, how they are treated, recognition, and promotion. In other words, job satisfaction refers to the feelings an employee has about their jobs.

Shoaib et al. (2009) found that attractive and competitive remuneration packages significantly impact job satisfaction by fulfilling financial and material needs. Key factors such as salary, retirement benefits, and job security are crucial for the satisfaction of faculty members working in colleges and universities. In another study, Rosser (2004) revealed that salary is a primary factor in work life and job satisfaction, often influencing faculty members' decisions to leave

their institutions. Tetley (2006) supports this, noting that salary dissatisfaction undermines faculty commitment. Rehman et al. (2013) reported a positive relationship between rewards and job satisfaction, and Gafoor (2014) found a moderate, positive correlation between pay and job satisfaction, aligning with Herzberg's model, where pay is an intrinsic hygiene factor.

Finally, job satisfaction is multi-dimensional; it is a combination of satisfaction with pay and conditions, supervision at work, promotion, and co-workers (Pandey, 2016). Hence, many academics prefer to spend most of their time doing research, as they consider it a major source of satisfaction (Chen, 2023). Additionally, few academicians consider teaching to be their main area of interest, as they love to see their students develop (Norshuaily Abu Bakar, 2019). By contrast, student assessment and administrative-related work have a negative effect on job satisfaction (Kalim et al., 2022), and it is also negatively influenced by skill mismatches (Mavromaras et al., 2010). A meta-analysis by Wilkin (2013) reveals that non-permanent or fixed-term employment decreases job satisfaction. More specifically, temporary workers have lower job satisfaction than those with permanent contracts because temporary workers compare themselves to their colleagues with permanent contracts, leading to less job satisfaction (Castellacci and Vinas-Bardolet, 2020). Moreover, a quantitative study of job satisfaction amongst academic economists in the UK by Mumford and Sechel (2019) states that job satisfaction is found to be positively related to one's own salary and negatively related to a co-worker's wage. Additionally, job satisfaction is correlated with the working environment, and having a professional network is positively associated with female academic job satisfaction (Mumford and Sechel, 2019). By contrast, being rejected for promotion is negatively related to job satisfaction, and for minority groups this rejection has a huge impact (Mumford and Sechel, 2019). Therefore, highly satisfied employees refer to increased job performance, enhanced participation in the decision-making process, and increased representation. In the next section, theories are discussed that help continue this research and support its outcome.

2.9 Social Identity theory

Social identity theory, which focuses on how individuals view themselves and their interactions with others, investigates how people create emotional and social bonds with different groups (Tajfel, 1978). It offers a theoretical framework for a deeper understanding of intergroup relations (Turner and Brown, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). Additionally, social identity theory aims to acknowledge and foresee the internal circumstances under which people think of themselves as individuals or part of certain groups (Viki and Abrams., 2013). Hence, identity is fundamentally about recognising who we are as people, but Jenkins (2014) notes that defining identity also includes considering our differences and similarities to others. Consequently, social identity theory provides an understanding of our identities in connection to others by establishing these similarities and distinctions through self-categorisation (Reicher, Spears and Haslam, 2010). This theory is also considered a model of the psychology of social structure (Viki and Abrams., 2013). The main focuses are social groups and status in relation to one another, who are usually competing against each other for resources, rights, and power (Verkuyten, 2010). Therefore, individuals become psychologically connected to social structures based on their self-definition of group membership.

Tajfel's theory states that a person's sense of social identity or belonging is derived from the groups they belong to, such as their family, clubs, or social class. This understanding gave rise to SIT in the 1970s (Tajfel, 1972). According to SIT, a person's identity is determined by the groups or categories they belong to, and in this current study, two main identities are focused on: ethnicity and gender. Tajfel (1979) also suggests that these groups give their members a sense of status and boost their sense of self-worth. According to Hogg (2016), a person's social identity can be defined as their perception that they fit into a particular social group or category, which defines them based on their shared and unique characteristics with other people (Reicher, Spears, and Haslam, 2010).

Originally, SIT was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) to identify intergroup relationships. Hence, the main concern of social identity theory is that a person's realisation of themselves comes from their own group memberships, such as ethnicity, race, gender, or religious groups (Raskovic and Takacs-Haynes, 2020) because self-belongingness is an essential element of social identity theory. To obtain this, individuals boost the status of the group they fit into,

which is considered the ‘in-group’, and discriminate against others who are in the ‘out-group’. According to social identity theory (SIT), people who strongly identify with their group also tend to view it favourably in comparison to other groups. Favouritism of one’s own group, a heightened sense of group pride, and the preservation of social status distinctions across groups might result from this.

According to social identity theory, a person has two different identities: personal identity and social identity. Personal identity refers to idiosyncratic characteristics or self-conceptions, such as personality, physical ability, and intellectual traits, whereas social identities are derived from group memberships, such as ethnicity, gender, race, class, etc. (Hogg, et, al., 2012). Group and category membership are important, as they contribute to a person’s identity (Abrams and Hogg, 2001; Viki and Abrams., 2013). Higher levels of group involvement reflect on individual attributes and characteristics.

Social identity theory explains how an individual makes and establishes their place in society. According to this theory, three psychological processes are central in this regard: social categorisation, social comparison, and social identification. The process by which people are divided under ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ is known as social categorisation. Social identification is related to collective identity among groups that encourages individuals to represent their similarities and nurture stereotypical perceptions of themselves and others (Welbourne, 2017). People identify with groups by categorising themselves according to group norms and acting similarly to how other members of the group act. Furthermore, their self-esteem becomes attached to the group (McPhee, 2017), whereas social comparison refers to making comparisons among different groups according to categorical and inherent aspects. The main purpose of this differentiation is to uphold or attain superiority over an out-group. Therefore, for a clear understanding of group similarities and dissimilarities, it is essential to clarify the main idea of group processes (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

In an organisational context, managers often manage and motivate diverse employees and workers in multicultural organisations by using social identity (Moura et al., 2009; Viki et al., 2013; Hogg et al., 2012; Zomeren et. al., 2008; Knippenberg, 2011; and Hogg et al., 2016). Furthermore, to maintain social identity in the workplace, managers focus on the main elements of SI, which are gender (Turner et al., 2003), ethnicity (Bukodi et al., 2014), race (Verkuyten, 2010), religion (Milburn and Alan, 2012), and background (Zomeren et al., 2008), to ensure equal opportunity. Different scholars have proposed different theories and models addressing

SI with various suggestions and guidance to manage diversity (Vignoles et al., 2011; Hogg et al., 2012; Judd, 2019; and Raskovic and Takacs-Haynes, 2020). Tajfel and Turner (1979) introduced Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explain how individuals construct and interpret their social identity within organisational settings, particularly through processes of in-group and out-group differentiation and the behavioural outcomes associated with group membership (Hogg et al., 2012). SIT provides a framework for analysing and evaluating employee behaviour and performance as they interact within and outside their social groups. In the context of this study, the theory is employed to examine how social identity shapes employees' job satisfaction, both in relation to their broader social group and their immediate work group (Jawaad et al., 2019).

2.9.1 Social Categorisation

In this research, categories have been divided into male, female, BAME, non-BAME, and ethnicity. Social categorisation helps predict when people are similar to or different from one another (Viki and Abrams., 2013). It creates an understanding of why other people are similar to each other or different (Welbourne, 2017). Moreover, when categorising people, individuals become aware of who they can cooperate with, who they can share similar goals with, and where they can receive cooperation (Viki and Abrams., 2013). Social categorisation is a cognitive tool that is used to classify individuals to enable them to undertake many forms of social action (Judd, 2019). These includes different groups, such as women (Hogg, et, al., 2012), ethnicity (Welbourne, 2017), and LGBTQ (Raskovic and Takacs-Haynes, 2020). Social categorisation helps a person cluster others based on their demographics (Viki and Abrams., 2013), personality (Jawaad, et, al., 2019), and occupation (Zomeren, et, al., 2008).as well as how they structure their understanding of the social world (Viki and Abrams., 2013).

Accordingto Welbourne (2017), individuals who are categorising are also part of a certain category. This is a result of carving the world into in-groups (i.e., the groups to which one belongs) and out-groups (i.e., the groups to which one does not belong) (Jawaad, et, al., 2019). People usually think highly of themselves and consider their own group favourably. Usually, this tendency leads to accentuating the differences between groups, which creates toxic categorisation and prejudice (Zomeren, et, al., 2008). If a person considers their group to be superior compared to others, there is a possibility of in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination among the group members (Judd, 2019).

Due to complex values and norms of individuals, the theme of social categorisation often stands in an inadequate state which also creates an impact on own group identification (Viki and Abrams., 2013). As a result, social categories often do not fit individuals' sense of self. For instance, despite having different cultural norm and traditions, Black, Chinese, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani are grouped as 'Asian' in the UK (Welbourne, 2017). The differences among these individuals, who come from different countries and have different backgrounds and histories, are overlooked despite individual uniqueness; instead, they are and categorised according to their ethnicity and/or race (Jawaad, et, al., 2019). Moreover, due to a rise in multiculturalism in recent decades, there is a growing awareness that racial and ethnic identification often do not conform to categories used by social institutions in the past (Verkuyten, 2010). For example, a person with an African American mother and a British father may identify with both groups, but their outward features may lead others, and sometimes themselves, to categorise them as belonging more to one group than the other. In-group and out-group distinctions alone are often enough to create discrimination, and stereotypes become convenient tools for interpreting others (McPhee, 2017). As a result, preconceived ideas take priority, and people are frequently judged based on group membership rather than their individual qualities.

2.9.2 Social Identity and group membership

People search for a group to belong to, and once they find one, they conform their behaviour and thought processes to fit in with the group (Turner et al., 1987). Being a part of a group offers people a feeling of distinction and moves their identification from a personal to a group level (Haslam et al., 2009). This sense of belonging also improves their status and self-esteem in the workplace (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Because people tend to choose their in-group, which reinforces their social identity, to boost their self-esteem and receive favourable feedback from others (Brown & Capozza, 2006). Understanding how people use group membership to boost their self-esteem in the workplace and how group behaviour affects social identity is crucial (Jawaad, et, al., 2019). To observe this phenomena, Tajfel (1979) conducted an experiment called 'minimal group paradigm', which was conducted to understand why people discriminate within groups. In his experiment, the participants were randomly divided into two groups without any previous interaction. When asked to allocate points to others, participants preferred those in their own group or those who looked like them, creating an 'in-group' and distancing themselves from the 'out-group'. Tajfel concluded that simply being part

of a group made people behave this way, shifting their focus from personal relationships to group dynamics. He believed that people strive to make their in-group seem better than others so they can maintain a positive social identity. Favouring their own group members boosts the group's self-esteem. While this idea faced some criticism, it laid the foundation for SIT, which emphasises that people's connections with groups helps define not only who they are but also who they are not.

Employees usually identify themselves not only as part of an organisation but also as part of a group (Turner et al.,1987). Dissimilarities can be observed among in-groups and out-groups, and due to membership in certain groups, individual employees have both high and low self-esteem (Neurosci, 2015). Therefore, the existence of distinct identities within a workplace eventually eliminates minorities from group membership and important decision-making roles and gives them less access to support, which leads to inadequate chance of career advancement and lesser job satisfaction (Carrim, 2019). Moreover, the perception of unfair treatment creates a negative work environment for all employees. Group membership and group status can be determined through social identity theory, which gives a better understanding of intergroup relationships in an organisation.

In conclusion, social identity has a considerable impact on job satisfaction because it ensures group membership and belongingness and improves status and self-esteem in the workplace. However, people often support in-groups compared to out-groups due to having the same social status, and social identity influences an individual's decision-making ability, which leads to discrimination, stereotypes, and unconscious bias against out-groups without any visible reasons. Consequently, due to social identity, certain differences between groups persist, which creates toxic categorisation and prejudice (Zomeren et al., 2008). If a person considers their group superior compared to others, there is a possibility of in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination among the group members, which impacts job satisfaction and reduces self-esteem. Therefore, it can be said that social identity has a great impact on job satisfaction.

2.10 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a sequence of needs, and to reach the next level, the previous stage must be satisfied (Maslow, 1970; Hagerty, 1999a). Humans fulfil their needs and maintain a hierarchy through behavioural motivation. When one need is fulfilled, another one arises automatically (Maslow, 1970). However, Hofstede (1984) argues that the hierarchy of needs alone cannot account for differences in the cultural needs of societies and their unique and intellectual needs. Additionally, Heylighen (1992) states that self-actualisation is considered an unclear explanation for human needs. According to Wahba and Bridwell (1976), the structure of human need can vary according to a person's age, weight, height, race, and gender and does not maintain a uniform motivational structure. The hierarchy of needs theory makes a general assumption for all employees that all employees are the same, even though their situations are different and there is only one way to meet all their needs (Cherry, 2020). The most common criticism of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is that this theory can only be applied to a limited group (Boeree, 2006).

The basic physiological needs of academics can be fulfilled by providing adequate remuneration (Cherry, 2020). Total rewards are positively related to organisational commitment, whereas motivation and adequate remuneration are significant to employee retention, which also leads to productivity and enhances organisational commitment (Ng'ethe, 2014; Bawa, 2017; Mabaso and Dlamini, 2018).

After their basic needs are met, academics look for job security and safety (Cherry, 2020). Akpan (2013) notes that feeling safe and secure at work increases organisational commitment and retention among academics. Similarly, Abdul Latif and Saraih (2016) argue that employees prefer stable, future-oriented jobs that guarantee job security.

These basic needs are the foundation of higher-level needs, such as the need for love and belongingness, which include intimacy, interpersonal relationships, trust, acceptability, respect, and affiliation (Suyono & Mudjanarko, 2017). In an academic scenario, professional affection in the organisation will enhance a sense of belonging, and employees of such organisations will feel part of different groups (Cherry, 2020). This argument is also supported by Gberevbie (2010), who explains that appropriate employee relationships that include compassionate human treatment are profitable for organisational commitment and ensure employee retention and an optimum level of performance.

In Maslow's hierarchy, the stage of love and belongingness is followed by the need for esteem. Maslow divides esteem into two categories: self-esteem, which is related to a person's independence, dignity, mastery, and achievement and public esteem, which involves the need for status and prestige (Ozguner & Ozguner, 2014; McLeod, 2018). Akfopure et al. (2006) specifically explore how high self-esteem can lead to better productivity, successful relationships at work, happiness, a healthy lifestyle, and increased job satisfaction. Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that individuals seek reputation, prestige, and recognition for their achievements and creativity. This can include timely promotions and awards that boost academic staff's prestige and self-confidence. Such recognition enhances academic interest in their work, fostering a sense of self-trust and confidence. This aligns with Bryant-Hampton et al.'s (2010) findings that recognising performance is an effective strategy for employee retention and job satisfaction.

When esteem needs are fulfilled, individuals feel valued and confident, which reduces feelings of inadequacy (Komninos, 2020). For professors, this often happens when they are appointed to management or decision-making roles. Maintaining satisfaction at this level is important, as it encourages them to take on more leadership responsibilities and supports their overall sense of well-being (Kurdi, Alshurideh, & Afaishat, 2020).

According to Maslow's hierarchy, fulfilling these needs can enhance people's confidence in their ability to improve their organisations and positively impact the lives of those around them. In the following sections, two-factor theory, the JCM model, and intersectional theories are discussed to further understand academics' job satisfaction.

2.11 Two-factor theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory reveals that work itself is the most important indicator of job satisfaction, as it highly influences the job satisfaction among employees in an organisation. Herzberg's (1959) theory emphasises that these two types of factors can be categorised as motivators and hygiene factors. To increase the level of job satisfaction among employees, motivators are used, such as opportunity for growth and development, recognition, and achievement, while hygiene factors, such as interpersonal relationship, pay/compensation, and working conditions, need to be met by the organisation to prevent the job dissatisfaction among employees. The following paragraphs outline the major hygiene factors:

One major hygiene factor is pay: salary is a hygiene factor, and employees expect to be paid fairly and competitively. If employees believe their salary or pay is unfair and that their salary is less than the standard salary or pay given by other organisations in the same industry for the same job, they are likely to be dissatisfied. Another major hygiene factor is supervision, which is one of the important hygiene factors, as a lack of poor supervision may cause dissatisfaction among employees. Supervision can be both the general and technical supervision in an organisation. A third hygiene factor is working conditions: the work environment of an organisation plays an important role in making employees feel proud of the organisation they work in and the work they perform. The physical environment and the tangible aspect of the job – cleanliness, availability of tools or equipment at the right place, modern facilities, spacious office area, adequate parking, lighting, drinking water facilities, canteen facilities, and rest room facilities, are some of the working conditions that can prevent job dissatisfaction among employees.

Fourth, administration, policies, and procedures are important hygiene factors: when an organisation has unclear policies and procedures, this can create frustration among employees, which can cause job dissatisfaction. An organisation's policies permit the employees to use their preference and initiatives while performing their jobs. Policies do not work as motivators but work as hygiene factors. Clear, fair, and employee-friendly policies can reduce the level of job dissatisfaction among employees. Fifth, inter-personal relationships are important hygiene factors: healthy and positive interpersonal relationships in an organisation can reduce the job dissatisfaction among employees. Interpersonal relationships include relationships with peer groups, relationships with supervisors, and relationships with subordinates and managers. A sixth important hygiene factor is status, which can be defined as the rank of an employee in the social groups based on an employee's characteristics and the formal position of the employee in the organisation. The communication problem arises when it involves employees with different statuses or communication barriers. Finally, security refers to safety and job security, harassment, bullying, threats of layoffs, discrimination, and frequent queries. A lack of job security creates a feeling of negativity among employees, which can cause job dissatisfaction.

2.12 Integration of social identity theory and intersectional theory

Intersectionality has not been sufficiently applied to the study of social identities (Bowleg, 2017; Hurtado, 1997, 2018; Tajfel, 1981). Traditionally, social identity theory has focused on how identities are formed through processes such as categorisation and intergroup comparison (Tajfel, 1981). These processes often lead to ‘us vs. them’ thinking, where some groups are valued more and others are devalued or stigmatised (Hurtado 1997). To study these processes, researchers usually design controlled studies with narrow definitions and methods. However, this approach often means they examine identity in just one way, for example only examining race or gender, rather than investigating how different identities overlap (Goff & Kahn 2013). As a result, less attention is given to how categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, or ability are interconnected and shaped by larger systems of oppression, inequality, and marginalisation (Hurtado & Sinha 2008). Studying social identities through the lens of intersectionality means understanding social categories (such as race, gender, or class) not as fixed but as created and reinforced by systems of inequality that shape people’s lives (Cole 2009; Goff et al. 2008; Hurtado 1997). For instance, Hurtado and Sinha (2008) explored how working class, adult, Latino men think about masculinity and feminism. Their study shows how these men’s views were shaped by the overlap of their race, class, and sexuality and how they navigated both stigma and privilege in a society structured by race and gender hierarchies.

Another example is Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach’s (2008) model of ‘intersectional invisibility’, which explains how people in overlapping marginalised groups can become overlooked or ‘invisible’. This happens because they do not fit the expected image or prototype of their group. The model identifies four systems that create this invisibility: history, culture, politics, and law. Researchers have even applied this model in areas such as early childhood development (Lei et al. 2020). More recently, psychologists have emphasised the importance of examining broader systems of inequality, rather than only focusing on how categories overlap in individuals’ lives (Cole 2020). For example, Richter et al. (2020) investigated the experiences of scholar activists in universities, where their work is often devalued because it is rooted in activism and community engagement. They argue that psychology should recognise these perspectives as legitimate forms of knowledge, since embracing them can push the field and academia more broadly towards real transformation. The researchers also highlight themes of resistance and liberation from harmful stereotypes, showing how intersectionality can be more directly applied in social psychology. For example, a recent case study examined a gender-fluid,

bisexual Latinx young adult (assigned female at birth) who used social media as a space to push back against marginalisation and to affirm and celebrate their intersecting identities (Lopez-Leon & Casanova 2023).

The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined in response to Black feminist activists’ criticisms of American and British Black women during the political climate of the 1970s and 1980s (Brah and Phonex, 2004). Intersectionality is used to describe systemic injustices that cause overlaps in identity categories. A distinctive identity that cannot be fully comprehended by focusing only on race or gender, or even when combining them, is formed when two or more characteristics of minorities or marginalised groups come together. The following table 2.5 explains how theoretical perspectives of social identity theory and intersectional theory are integrated in this thesis and aligned with the research objective.

Intersectional Theory	Social Identity Theory	Importance
Intersectionality does not rank oppressions. It shows how different kinds of unfair treatment can overlap and create unique experiences for each person for BAME female academics.	This theory posits that individuals will always favour their in-group.	Using both perspectives together allows this research to go beyond assumptions of simple in-group favouritism and instead understand the layered barriers that impact BAME female academics’ job satisfaction to meet Objective 1.
It helps go beyond simple views of social groups and shows how people can face discrimination and disadvantage in complex ways.	Social Identity Theory focuses on which groups people belong to and how they compare to others. However, it doesn’t fully address overlapping discrimination, unconscious bias, or stereotypes, and it can miss the bigger effects of systematic inequalities	The key terms in this topic – ‘BAME’, ‘female’, ‘academics’, ‘HEI’, ‘job satisfaction’, ‘social identity’, and ‘impact’ – are all connected, but each has its own meaning. To truly understand job satisfaction, it is impossible to examine the terms separately. Instead, it is important to understand the overlap and how they influence each other, since identities and workplace factors often intersect in complex ways, which is an important part for meeting Objective 2.
While identities are central, this theory focuses on how these identities are located within larger power structures and ‘interlocking systems of oppression’ that shape people’s lives.	SIT primarily focuses on group membership’s role in shaping self-concept and self-worth, but it overlooks other significant factors, such as personal experiences, cultural context, and individual characteristics, which influence identity.	This research aims to examine the dynamics of in-group and out-group favouritism in relation to job satisfaction, for which social identity theory provides an appropriate framework. However, to explore how these dynamics affect individuals with intersecting identities differently in terms of discrimination and privilege, both theories are essential.

<p>Intersectionality helps with understanding structural inequality and barriers faced by BAME female academics at the micro and macro level.</p>	<p>SIT does not always explain what happens in the real world.</p>	<p>To address Objective 4 and propose a multicultural social identity framework to ensure job satisfaction for BAME female academics, it is essential to understand the underlying factors influencing academics' job satisfaction as shaped by social identity. Both social identity theory and intersectional theory contribute to broadening this perspective by integrating psychological insights with real-world contexts.</p>
<p>Intersectional theory shows that Black, Asian, and other minority academics face different barriers and unequal representation. For example, among BAME female academics, Black women are less often found in decision-making roles within higher education. Their experiences can be different from those of Asian or other minority women.</p>	<p>SIT helps with understanding BAME women academics as a social group.</p>	<p>Job satisfaction for academics is shaped by factors such as promotion, work environment, opportunities for growth, autonomy, and pay. These experiences often differ by gender and ethnicity. To understand how BAME academics view job satisfaction both through their group membership and individual perceptions due to their intersecting identity, it is important to apply both social identity theory and intersectional theory.</p>

Table 2.5: Summary of the theoretical perspectives of social identity theory and intersectional theory in this thesis, aligned with the research objectives.

2.13 Gap in the literature

SIT was proposed as a social psychology theory to evaluate intergroup relationships, and the theory has been applied mainly to achieve different research purposes outside of organisations. However, some authors have applied SIT to evaluate group attitude, performance, and organisational processes (Haslam, 2001; Haslam et al., 2003; Hogg, 2016). Previously, the theory has been used to analyse individual-level aspects of employees' behaviour in organisations (Nicholls et al., 2017), individual employees' work performance and motivation (van Knippenberg, 2000), turnover (Abrams et al., 1998), and organisational justice (Guan and So, 2016) as well as group-level aspects, for example diversity in organisations (Van Knippenberg, 2011), cohesiveness at the group level (Hogg et al., 2012), and decision-making by a group (Turner et al., 2003). SIT has also been used to analyse and evaluate mergers and acquisitions at the organisational level (Viki and Abrams, 2013), gender identification and mistreatment of bystanders (2023), organisation bullying (Galang, M., & Jones, 2016), and pay inequality (Tanjitpiyanond, 2023). Recently, the authors have been applied to achieve various

research purposes, such as evaluating the influence of SI on self-efficiency (Guan and So, 2016), capturing and co-creating student experiences in social media (Fujita et al., 2018), determining consumer ethnocentrism (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015), evaluating the impact of SI on international politics (Ward, 2017), and determining service outcomes at work (Ye et al., 2019). The theory has not been used to evaluate employee satisfaction in the HEI context to identify BAME female academic job satisfaction.

Moreover, many studies have explored job satisfaction among general organisational employees, but limited research has focused on BAME female academics. Recent research on ethnic minority female academics in UK higher education has primarily concentrated on the experiences of Black female academics (Rollock, 2019; Castellacci and Vinas-Bardolet, 2020; Barnes, 2021; Omhand, 2023). However, the job satisfaction of BAME female academicians has received little attention, and how social identity impacts job satisfaction among BAME female academics remains unexplored. To gain a better understanding of this topic and compare it, the researcher has examined studies on Black female academics' job experiences (Bernes, 2021; Omhand, 2023; Opara, Sealy, and Ryan, 2020), professors' job satisfaction (Chen, 2023), academic economists' job satisfaction (Mumford and Sechel, 2019), gender-related job satisfaction, and overall job satisfaction among university academics (Mgaiwa, 2022) from different countries.

There is a notable gap in research on job satisfaction among BAME female academics, as most studies have focused on White academics, gender-related issues, or the experiences of Black female academics in UK higher education. This qualitative research aims to address this gap by exploring how social identity influences the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. The study identifies the barriers they face in achieving job satisfaction and examines how underrepresentation affects their job satisfaction. Additionally, it discusses how multicultural organisations can enhance job satisfaction among BAME female academics by building a model. The above discussion clearly shows that SIT covers the important elements of diversity management and job satisfaction; however, the theory has not been used by scholars in the context of HEI to identify the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. The following table 2.6 shows the gap in the literature:

Year and author	Aim of the study	Dependent factor	Independent factors	Research findings	Does the study concentrate on multicultural/ HEI business organisation for job satisfaction?
Farsides (1996)	To reappraise SIT based on self-esteem, social comparison, and discrimination	SIT	Self-esteem, social comparison and discrimination	SIT adequately specifies the in- and out-group processes by which the group phenomena are manifested	No, the study does not explain the discrimination by the dominant group in a team and did not focus on the performance and satisfaction
Aharpour (1999)	To analyse the functions of group identification following SIT	Group relationship between in-group identification and bias	SIT	Group members are biased towards members with the same social identity and discriminate against others with a different social identity	Partially, the study ignores the minor group of employee satisfaction and performance
Cummins (2014)	To determine the relationship between SIT and sport coaching leadership effectiveness within the team sport domain	Sports team, motivation, confidence, competence, and performance	SIT levels of the coach of a sports team	The social identity of coach and team are positively related to coaching and team performance	No, the research was conducted in the context of sports leadership, not in an organisational context
Guan and So (2016)	To evaluate the influence of SI on self-efficiency beliefs through perceived social support	Self-efficiency beliefs, social support	SIT	SI plays a significant role in perceiving social support that enables a person to achieve strong self-efficiency	No, the study does not consider the elements of SIT on employee satisfaction. Moreover, the research context is different from the current study
Rani and Samuel (2019)	To determine the relationship between prosocial identity fit and effective commitment	The employee's commitment to achieve targets in organisation	Prosocial identity	The study reveals that organisational prosocial identity is strongly correlated with effective commitment of employees, and the relationship is stronger for older groups than their younger counterparts	No, the research focuses only on the commitment by younger and older groups of employees

Judd (2019)	To explore how academic staff construct social identities in career transition in HE sector	Career transition and progression	SIT	The academicians who perform well can build up academic social identities in HE sector	No, this research only addresses career progression and does not consider the factors of SIT and employee satisfaction
Ye et al., (2019)	To evaluate the impact of negative workplace gossip on service outcomes	Productivity, performance, and service outcomes	SIT	Negative workplace gossip negatively affects employee performance and customer service in hospitality industry	No, the study focuses only on negative workplace gossip and does not consider all the factors of SIT. Moreover, the research was conducted in a different industry.
Raskovic, and Takacs-Haynes (2020)	To evaluate how and where MNE Internalization theory can benefit from SIT	SIT	MNE internalisation theory	SIT is appropriate in formulating plans in HR, leadership, and other strategy-oriented areas.	No, the research does not consider the behaviour by the major group members and other factors of SIT
Gloor et al., (2023)	Identity, including organisational, gender and feminist identification, influences of bystander responses on workplace mistreatment	SIT	Organisational identification and gender	Organisational identification impacts bystander responses to workplace mistreatment. Feminist identification increases intervention.	No, the research does not consider HEI or other factors of social identity theory
Tanjitpiyanond, (2022)	Pay inequality, superordinate identification, increasing conflict, toxicity, perceived identity leadership	SIT	Organisational identification and pay inequality	Impact of pay inequality on workplace outcome and how inequality impacts categorising process	Multicultural organisation missing, HEI missing, UK perspective missing

Mgaiwa, 2023	Academic age and rank significantly impact job satisfaction of university academics in Tanzania	JS	Age Academic rank	Validated MSQ for university academics, significant difference in job satisfaction based on rank and age	No mention of BAME female academics. Did not use SI. No mention of multicultural social identity.
Mamford and Sechel, 2019	Pay and job rank of academic economists in the UK. Gender relevant	JS	Gender, pay, and rank	Unexplained gender pay gap, individual productivity, workplace features	No mention of multicultural organisation. No mention of BAME females. HEI missing
Janib et al., 2022	Impact of career commitment and workload on job satisfaction	JS	Work environment and workload	Supportive work environment reduces workload	Not in the perspective of UK. No mention of BAME female academics.
Uwannah, Egwuonwu and James, 2022	Job autonomy and home/work conflict, female academics, workload, and job satisfaction	Job satisfaction	Autonomy, home/work conflict, workload	Quantitative analysis on job autonomy, workload and home/work conflict jointly contributed to job satisfaction	No mention of BAME female academics in UK
Chen, 2023	Professors job satisfaction, and job perception		Job satisfaction, job perception, professors	Full professors are more satisfied with their job than associate professors, and job satisfaction is influenced by work environment and nature of work	No mention of BAME female academic job satisfaction in UK HEI

Table 2.6: Gap in the Contemporary Literature (*The Author's View, 2024*)

Table 2.6 shows that prior researchers have not conducted adequate studies using SIT to analyse and evaluate the employee satisfaction in the current research context. Therefore, intensive research is needed to evaluate the impact of SI on BAME female academicians' job satisfaction. This research intends to fulfil the gap in the literature evaluating the impact of SI on BAME employee satisfaction in the UK HE sector using SIT.

Next, the researcher discusses barriers faced by ethnic minority academics, and the imbalanced representation and its impact on the job satisfaction of BAME female academics to understand how social identity influences job satisfaction to meet objectives 1 and 2 and support the empirical findings with enough evidence.

2.14 Barriers to job satisfaction for minor group of employees

Due to their social identity, BAME female academics encounter various barriers within the UK higher education sector. The following section is to address Research Objective 1 (RO1): Explore and evaluate the factors that hinder job satisfaction among BAME female academic staff in UK higher education.

2.14.1 Role Models

Due to social identity, BAME female academics' leadership abilities are often doubted, and people frequently assume they hold junior positions, even when they are in senior roles (Advance HE, 2019). As a result, BAME female academicians are usually invisible, isolated, and marginalised, and often face racial discrimination (Showunmi, 2023). A lack of diversity in leadership teams adversely impacts wider-ranging issues regarding setting up a culturally diverse environment that does not resemble the norms that dominant majority groups set up (Shrira, 2020).

According to Harvey and Shepherd (2017) as well as Arday (2018), BAME female staff members who work in higher education are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions than their White counterparts. Although there have been some barriers to evaluating and identifying patterns of BAME leadership within the sector (HESA, 2016), institutions continue to be unaccountable for not actively diversifying senior leadership teams within universities (Mayya et al., 2021). A significant factor that has facilitated this lack of accountability is unconscious bias against ethnic minority groups (Judge et al., 2017). Rubin et al. (2019) state that imbalanced representation is the output of unconscious bias that persistently impacts aspects of racial equality regarding the disparity in BAME leadership appointments within higher education.

Role models create fairness, equity, and respect and can foster a sense of belonging and inclusion among group members (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011; Sabharwal, 2014). However, underrepresentation often leads to BAME female academics being not promoted to senior positions, as there is no-one to follow or guide, ongoing silencing in cases of discrimination, persistent equality issues, and policy discrepancies (ECU, 2015; Bhopal, 2022). Additionally, bias and personal choice are responsible for BAME female academics being underrepresented in senior roles (Bhopal and Brown, 2016). While White leaders are generally perceived as being able to manage stress well, BAME female academics are often seen as less capable (Prieto et al., 2016). It is crucial to distinguish between just holding a job title and actually making a meaningful difference in addressing issues, which has the biggest impact on job satisfaction (Pogrebna, Angelopoulos, Omoijiade et al., 2024).

According to Llorens et al. (2021), successful organisations and leaders are often seen as more masculine, sharing traits like strength, aggressiveness, and competitiveness (Makarova et al., 2019). Due to all these traits which are more commonly associated with men, women are taken under less consideration by hiring managers (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Stereotypes frequently link high-status individuals with attributes such as competence and authority (Correll and Ridgeway, 2008). Consequently, an employee's function, rank, or gender might have a big impact on their ability to take on significant duties (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Such stereotyping has been documented as a major barrier to BAME females' entry into a top position and a reason for their job dissatisfaction (Luhe, 2014).

2.14.2 Gender-based culture

BAME female academics often face several barriers in a gender-based culture to progressing in their careers (Pandey, 2016). Women often feel marginalised in the academia, which leads to greater disadvantage compared to their male counterparts (Lee et al., 2017). Due to marginalisation, female academics often lack a sense of belonging, which is a critical aspect of wellbeing (Morris, 2021). As belonging is complex and influenced by different aspects, such as space, relationships, and culture, which vary for each person, these feelings are shaped by academic environments and inequalities. Moreover, non-belonging can lead to imposter syndrome, where an individual is questioned about their ability in order to prove their worth, which makes them feel inferior on the basis of their social identity (McGee et al., 2022). Imposter syndrome is considered an internal struggle women usually face in academic

institutes (Mayaa et al., 2021; Webber and Rogers, 2018). It denotes the internal experience of an underachiever, despite having a high intellect. Ethnic women often see themselves as 'imposters', even if they have achieved high levels of academic achievement. Usually, they consider their achievements to be based on luck, the output of hard work, or manipulation. A fear of failing stops them from applying for senior-level positions or professor-level positions, which creates their own barrier to being in a senior position (Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016).

Additionally, due to cultural stereotypical beliefs, such as that women should perform childcare and domestic work, women are needed at home. This attitude affects their chance of advancement within the organisation and causes a work/life conflict (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). However, Victoria et al. (2019) suggest that a fulfilling family life can enhance success and satisfaction at work. Additionally, traits such as competence and authority, considered a component of higher status in the organisation and due to cultural and stereotypical belief, there is a correlation between gender and higher position within the organisation where men are already in the higher status position (Arday, 2018). Similarly, society often privileges narrow forms of masculinity, and White supremacy helps maintain major groups in dominant positions while placing minor groups in subordinate roles within organisations (Stockfelt, 2018). This kind of stereotyping keeps major groups in top positions and confines minor groups to administrative roles, creating a major barrier for women seeking higher-level leadership positions and contributing to job dissatisfaction (Luhe, 2014).

A gender-based culture often hinders job satisfaction for female academics, as it pressures them to prioritise childcare and domestic responsibilities over decision-making roles. Additionally, the masculine nature of HEI culture frequently silences female academics or causes them to doubt their own abilities. Even when they achieve high levels of academic success, this masculine society may still view them as undeserving of their position. Crimmins et al. (2019) explain how men in academia often take credit for the work done by women. This can lead to women's names, identities, and contributions being overlooked or erased. As a result, men's careers are boosted, contributing to the lack of women in higher academic positions and the large number of men in senior roles. Moreover, Priddie et al. (2022) state that Black women faculty members are often considered caretakers and nurturers of students and communities, and this presence commonly goes unnoticed and uncelebrated because of their motherly characteristics. As a result, gender-based culture acts as a barrier to BAME female academics'

job satisfaction, leading to a loss of autonomy and a sense of not belonging due to their social identity.

2.14.3 Institutional policy that supports equality, diversity, and inclusion

Inclusion has become a salient issue in HE. With an aim to change the landscape of academic inequality, universities have implemented diversity legislation that creates equal opportunity and inclusivity (Baltaru, 2024). These policies, such as anti-discrimination legislation (2010) and the public sector equality duty (2012), are responsible for implementing cultural and organisational change to create diversification and diminish ethnic differences (Arday, 2018). While the primary causes of sex discrimination are rooted in cultural beliefs, secondary causes relate to organisational structures, policies, and practices (Ridgeway & England, 2007; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). These institutional features may build on gender stereotypes, disparately affecting women and men workers (Ridgeway & England, 2007; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Organisations formulate different policies, procedures, and strategies to create a positive culture and favourable environment for female workers; however, due to higher participation by males, female employees do not get the result, as the systems and procedures are manipulated by men (Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Ridgeway & England, 2007; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Unclear policies and procedures can create frustration among employees, which can cause job dissatisfaction (Khanna, 2017). An organisation's policies permit the employees to use their discretion and take initiative while performing their jobs (Singh & Gupta, 2008). Policies do not work as motivators but as hygiene factors (Khanna, 2017). Transparent, fair, and employee-friendly policies can reduce job dissatisfaction among employees.

The Race Relations Act of 1976 and the Equality Act of 2010 are two examples of attempts by the UK government to address underrepresentation and career progression for BAME academics. However, these attempts have frequently included more rhetoric than policy-driven action (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020). While programs such as the Athena SWAN Charter (Advance HE, 2018) and the Race Equality Charter (ECU, 2017; Baltaru, 2024) aim to confront the inequalities that currently exist, individual institutions are responsible not progressing on change (Arday, 2018) because when it comes to equity practices, there is frequently a disconnect between what leaders in higher education say and what they do (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020).

To understand this imbalance in representation and barriers faced by BAME female academics and how they impact their job satisfaction, the researcher has dived into the policies and identified that, with policies aside, the universities are unaccountable for not actively diversifying the senior leadership team because of discrimination and unconscious bias, which persistently impacts racial inequality in leadership practice (Arday, 2018). And many of the disparities happen due to in-group favouritism, where the institutions are dominated by a White male leadership hierarchy that has traditionally marginalised ethnic groups and women (Jarobe, 2016). Bhopal (2016) focused on unconscious bias training with proper care and guidance because everyone has an inner bias, which needs to be unravelled through self-reflection and unconscious bias training. Reducing unconscious bias may minimise misconceptions about BAME female academics' progress and give them a sense of belonging (Loke, 2018).

Currently, REC is the largest sector-level initiative to improve the representation and progression of minority groups for both students and staff (Baltaru, 2024). At present, 71 institutions are part of this charter, and a qualitative study with practitioners of diversity highlights the usefulness of REC in guiding race equality work and tackling race inequalities (Douglas Oloyede et al., 2021; Bhopal and Henderson, 2019). However, equality and diversity policies are often seen as tokenistic by the staff because many experiences of marginalisation, disproportional scrutiny, isolation, and insufficient opportunities to be promoted into leadership roles continue to be reported (Arday, 2018; Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2022). Furthermore, Bhopal (2022) mentions 'token appointments', where universities hire ethnic minority women mainly to appear inclusive. This often leaves them feeling emotionally burdened and makes them feel they do not belong in academia, as they must keep proving their skills and abilities even though they are fully qualified. Therefore, this discussion demonstrates that the greater emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion practice and present practice also needs to be evaluated once more, as most of the policies benefit students and White groups rather than BAME female academics (Bhopal, 2014).

2.14.4 Institutional Bias and Growth Opportunities

Regardless of a person's identity and background, everyone should get equal opportunity to reach their potential (Equality Act, 2010). Inequalities in the promotion process exist in higher education (Bhopal, et al., 2020). When BAME applicants apply for professorial position, they are less likely to be chosen compared to their White counterparts (UCU, 2012). Support from peers within an academic institution is also a prerequisite for a promotion at a professorial level

(Mbuagbaw, 2020). Male White candidates often have advantages in higher education institutions due to perceived racial superiority and extensive networks that support their promotion to senior positions, compared to women (Szromek & Wolniak, 2020). Arday (2018) highlights that ethnic minority women often face subtle silencing when reporting discrimination, minimal enforcement of equality policies, and practices such as nepotism and personal discretion in hiring and promotion (Bhopal & Brown, 2016; ECU, 2015). Permanent and part-time employees have different levels of job satisfaction. Those who are in permanent roles often have a higher level of job satisfaction compared to fixed-term or part-time contracts, due to job security (Lopes and Dewan, 2015). Additionally, those with tenure and a permanent contract enjoy the security to teach and research more freely (Sinclair, 2023). Due to institutional disparities, ethnic minorities often remain on casual contracts (UCEA, 2023). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Innes, 2020) at the UCU points out that the current policies are flawed and that the issue of casual contracts must be fixed; in addition, unclear definitions, rights, and employment terms also add to staff insecurity (Lopes and Dewan 2015), making it difficult to implement changes that impact job satisfaction and for BAME female academics to reach leadership roles. Therefore, during times of increased job insecurity in universities, ZHCs (zero-hour contracts) are likely to be used, maintaining this unfair status quo (Myers, 2022). Lopes and Dewan (2015) found that those who are in zero-hour contract live in constant hope and with uncertainty. They feel stressed and are often at 'breaking point', with lower self-confidence and a negative outlook on getting a permanent job. Similarly, Allmer (2018) revealed that many participants in their studies felt depressed and devalued and struggled with self-esteem. They also had trouble concentrating because they had part-time contracts, which impacted their job satisfaction and reduced their chances of assuming decision-making roles. BAME female academics often face dual minority-related stress (Holder and Vaux, 1998), leading to lower levels of job satisfaction for those who have part-time contracts (August and Waltman, 2004; Olsen, Maple, and Stage, 1995). According to Hutchings, Wilkinson, and Brewster (2020), older academics tend to have higher satisfaction levels than who are in part-time position or in zero-hour contract, when they have worked at the same institution for an extended period. A high level of job satisfaction ensures a positive attitude among the employees in their jobs.

Formal and informal networks are other factors that are associated with female academics' career progression (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Seo et al., 2022). Women who enter a traditionally male dominated workplace, such as academia, are often marginalised. Women academics who possess top managerial positions are very visible and need to balance the conflicting status of

being an academic, a manager, and female (Drake and Svenkerud, 2023). Universities are a male-dominated area; therefore, men are seen as being at the core of the organisation, whereas women are seen as being a part of the organisation (Beer, 2015; Ayyala et al., 2019). Women without informal networks of support find themselves blocked as they near the top of the administrative hierarchy where promotions are more likely to be based on trust than on performance (Pearce, 2017; O'Connor et al., 2020). Women are often excluded from informal networks and from having access to relevant information or decision-making networks within an organisation, whereas men tend to resist involvement in cross-sectional relationships (e.g., mentoring) (Pitcher, 2013; Kuzhabekova and Almukham betova, 2019). As a result, the lack of informal networks makes it difficult for women to learn to manage and participate in organisational life, which leads to dissatisfaction. According to Osho and Alormele (2025), for Black female academics who manage to remain in and succeed in higher education, building strong internal and external networks is crucial, as these provide safety, support, and solidarity. However, these networks are not always enough. When people outside these groups gain access, the safe space for Black women to share their experiences can become unsafe and even harmful.

According to Gwen (2020), the process of applying for research grants is often complicated and unclear, with different rules from different funders. This makes it harder to understand, especially without proper training. Women, racially minoritised academics, disabled people, and those with caring responsibilities are often at a disadvantage, as they may not have the same time, resources, or opportunities as others. Because of these structural inequalities, they struggle more to meet requirements and are less likely to receive recognition or to progress. Lee (2021) mentions that getting funding and continuing research is challenging due to dispersion in higher education, and according to Wanelik et al. (2020), gender differences in research grants are due to women getting less funding for research, which is the main reason for these disparities. A meta-analysis by Schmaling and Gallo (2023) found that fewer women applied for grants, reapplied, or accepted awards compared to the number of women who were eligible. While men and women had a similar success rate once they applied, women often received smaller grants and fewer awards after reapplying. This is because women are more likely to interpret peer reviewers' feedback more negatively than men, which in turn is related to less intention to reapply for the grants (Biernat et al., 2020). Magua et al. (2017) argue that because of gender bias where institutions favour men, male applicants receive more constructive feedback from peer reviewers than female applicants. In the perspective of in-

group and out-group favouritism, shows that in-groups tend to give more resources to their own members than to outsiders in terms of grant writing (Abbink & Harris, 2019).

In terms of job satisfaction, employees are more committed to an organisation when they feel they have equal opportunities and are fully included (Tajfel, 1979). To gain this acceptance, some individuals may try to 'act White' to fit in with group norms, showing that identity is not fixed (Bhopal, 2024). However, despite these efforts, inequalities still remain.

This section has found that, often, women do not get a chance to enter into informal networks due to their identity, and therefore, BAME female academicians networking with other colleagues, especially White academics, is unsupportive. Moreover, permanent employees generally experience higher job satisfaction than those on fixed-term or part-time contract. Due to institutional disparities, many BAME female academics remain on fixed-term contracts, and these insecure contracts create stress, uncertainty, and lower job satisfaction, making it difficult for BAME female academicians to acquire decision-making roles. Additional gender-related stress of not getting grant funding further lowers job satisfaction, creating a significant barrier to career progression and overall wellbeing.

2.14.5 Challenges within existing structures

Structural barriers are obstacles that collectively affect a group disproportionately and are responsible for outputs and outcomes (Karanika-Murray, 2015). In other words, this type of barrier comes from a system or procedure that is responsible for making something difficult. Regarding both gender and ethnicity, people have unconscious biases, and most people are unaware which biases play a role in how they evaluate people and their performance (Bombuwela and Alwis 2013). Such biases create inequality within the workplace (Ghaus, 2013; Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Therefore, when a person evaluates the same effort by a man compared to a woman, this effort is interpreted differently depending on the gender of the person being evaluated. Consequently, men are consistently overrated, and women and ethnic minority individuals are underrated (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017; Kark and Eagly, 2010). Therefore, professional women are often in slightly disadvantaged positions, and these disadvantages gather over time, creating large differences between men and women in terms of promotion rates, and usually minority groups become dissatisfied with their jobs (Agars, 2004; Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017).

Moreover, BAME women often face an incompatible perception between their leadership qualities and how their attributes are socially viewed (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Women are typically stereotyped as having communal traits, such as being nurturing, kind, helpful, interpersonally sensitive, and concerned for others' welfare, while men are more often associated with agentic qualities, such as being confident, forceful, self-sufficient, aggressive, and in control (Kark and Eagly, 2010). According to Eagly and Carli (2007), leadership is still widely believed to require agentic qualities rather than communal ones. As a result, women in leadership are frequently judged in negative terms, such as being pushy, selfish, deceitful, or abrasive, especially when compared to successful male managers. Due to these conflicting expectations, women are often forced to adopt alternative strategies and carefully navigate challenges to achieve their leadership goals. However, this constant negotiation can ultimately lead to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction in their jobs.

According to Bhopal (2022), White privilege is also considered a structural barrier that many BAME female academics face because this system favours whiteness rather than referring to White people individually; it sets whiteness as the standard against which everyone else is judged. While considering this intersectional lens, the combined advantages of race, gender, ethnicity, and class lead to significant disadvantages for BAME female academics. In higher education, BAME women face some of the toughest challenges, making it harder for them to reach top positions, such as professors or senior leaders (Arday, 2018). They often need to work twice as hard as their White colleagues just to be considered for promotions (Showunmi, 2023). Furthermore, according to Hall et al. (2012), the presumptions, second thoughts, and unease of the English middle class often force white/ men to critically examine BAME women's behaviours and practices. Daily experiences show that BAME female academics are often viewed as 'presumed incompetent' because their identities conflict with the racial stereotypes and expectations held by their White colleagues.

In UK HE, microaggressions represent another structural barrier, often expressed through ordinary comments, behaviours, or environmental cues that marginalise individuals based solely on who they are (Anon, 2015). When left unaddressed, microaggressions can lead to physical and mental health challenges, low job satisfaction, and even feelings of imposter syndrome. Supporting this view, Bernard (2017) highlights that the job satisfaction of BAME female academics is negatively affected by subtle racial microaggressions, which are often difficult to recognise and even harder to challenge. Within higher education, such experiences

create an unfriendly and unwelcoming environment, fostering isolation and marginalisation. Similarly, Grewal et al. (2024) found that students from BAME backgrounds in the UK medical sector reported facing microaggressions that left them feeling uncomfortable, lonely, and lacking a sense of belonging. As a result, many felt pressured to hide aspects of their identity or were judged through stereotypes, further undermining self-esteem and reinforcing exclusion. In line with this, Jeter (2025) employs the concept of ‘outsider status’ to capture the difficulties Black female scholars face in sustaining job satisfaction. Overall, these findings suggest that microaggressions, although often subtle, can significantly impact mental wellbeing, sense of belonging, and engagement within the university environment.

Furthermore, higher trust towards same groups has been proven in many large-scale meta-analysis games (Balliet et al. 2014) on the basis of race (e.g., Burns 2006), nationality (Tekingunduz et al., 2015), or religion (Rotella et al. 2013), as well as in a minimal group setting (Buchan et al. 2006). Bakiev’s (2013) study found that interpersonal trust in employees and creating a trusting climate lead to a high level of commitment and job satisfaction. Supervisors often use micromanagement or a hands-on management style to ensure high efficiency and standards (Stephen, 2020), which is not always suitable for everyone. According to Stephan (2020), supervisors micromanage due to a lack of trust; they often lean towards practicing this micromanagement practice. Employees in an organisation work hard to meet their targets, perform their roles and responsibilities, and contribute to their team and organisation to achieve goals (Maslach and Leiter, 2016). According to Baillien et al. (2011) and De Jonge and Schaufeli (1999), when employees have a heavy workload but have no autonomy and are constantly micromanaged, it can drain their energy and lead to problems such as high turnover, burnout, emotional exhaustion, workplace bullying, and an overall decline in wellbeing. According to Zbrodska et al. (2011), universities are often seen as unhealthy places to work because of their focus on strict micromanagement, constant pressure to be more productive, competitiveness, and an emphasis on individual success. These conditions can create toxic environments that lead to rudeness, workplace bullying, and other harmful treatment of employees (Zabrodska et al., 2011, p. 709).

2.14.6 Working Environment

The higher education workforce is facing growing stress as the sector continues to change (Bell et al., 2012). Research shows that factors such as funding cuts, job insecurity, rising student numbers, a lack of recognition and reward, and constant organisational changes driven by local and global competition are key contributors (Watts & Robertson, 2011). Together, these pressures can create stressful work environments, leading to burnout and exhaustion for staff in HE (Chapman & Ludlow, 2010; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Lester et al. (2020) and Santoro (2019) add to this point that in UK higher education, staff are overworked, which is why they are at risk of stress, burnout, and even premature death. According to UCU (2022), the average working week for academic staff is 51 hours, which exceeds the legal maximum of 48 hours. It has been a long-argued topic for better workload management, but progress has been minimal.

Sell and Cleal (2011) state that different psychosocial and work environment variables, such as workplace and social support, have a direct impact on job satisfaction and that an increase in rewards does not improve the dissatisfaction level among employees. Kinzl et al. (2005) conclude that job satisfaction is positively influenced by the opportunities provided to employees by an organisation and that a positive working environment enhances employee loyalty, commitment, efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity. Moreover, a study by Chen (2023) found that factors related to the academic work environment, such as the university's atmosphere, school management, and relationships with colleagues, significantly affect university professors' job satisfaction (Hee et al., 2020; Yoon, 2020). According to motivator-hygiene theory, the 'university work environment' and the 'nature of the academic job' are two main factors influencing job satisfaction. Among these, the university work environment had a greater impact, particularly for higher-ranked professors.

Ethnic minority women are burdened with heavier workloads and face greater scrutiny, which, along with ongoing racism and sexism, puts them under even more pressure compared to white male and white women academicians (Bhopal, 2022). A study by Jacobs and Winslow (2004) indicates that an increased number of working hours is positively related to academics' job dissatisfaction with the workload among overworked full-timers; thus, working time is not voluntarily chosen but rather a response to structural barriers (Frei and Grund, 2022). Women at the intersection of race and gender often face greater challenges – for example, Black women report heavier workloads and heightened scrutiny compared to their White peers – creating

further barriers to developing research capacity (Jones, 2006; Stockfelt, 2018; Wright et al., 2007). Webber and Rogers (2018) suggest that the number of publications and presentations by female faculty members does not have a significant impact on their overall job satisfaction. However, having research funds is generally beneficial to long-term success and career advancement because grant revenue plays a major role in getting promotions to senior positions in academia (Lopez et al., 2014).

In other words, if diversity is not properly managed, employees with different social identity ethnic minority employees will not be treated equally or with dignity and respect, which will affect their performance and job satisfaction. According to the above discussion, if people face any barriers due to their social identity and their intersecting identity, they will not be able to contribute with their full potentiality; furthermore, they will face negative or toxic work environments that will impact their job satisfaction.

Proposition 5: Barriers related to social identity are mainly responsible for employee dissatisfaction.

In the next section, the researcher discusses group favouritism in the workplace, which influences employee job satisfaction, especially in higher education. She discusses how this impacts BAME female academicians' chance to be in leadership roles. The next section is based on the findings from relevant literature and to meet Objective 2: Assess how imbalanced representations impact BAME female academics' satisfaction.

2.15 Imbalanced representation and Group favouritism in SIT

People often learn by observing or following their leaders; as highlighted in an earlier section of this research (3.6.1) and the contextual section (2.5), there is a significant underrepresentation of BAME females in decision-making roles (Arday, 2018). The low number of senior BAME female academics suggests that early-career and mid-level staff may struggle to find suitable role models and may face challenges in advancing their careers, which in turn affects their job satisfaction (Harris and Ogbonna, 2023). Most recent studies have focused on the causes of underrepresentation, role models' impact on female academics, and strategies to diversify leadership positions (Coleman, 2025; Karunagharan, 2023; Lesch et al., 2024; Bhopal, 2022; Showunmi, 2023; Osho and Alormele, 2024; Butner et al., 2009). However, few studies have examined how BAME female academics feel about not having role

models and how this shapes their job satisfaction. From a social identity theory perspective, belonging to an underrepresented group (out-group) can influence how individuals see themselves and their workplace, affecting their sense of inclusion, recognition, and overall job satisfaction due to imbalanced representation. Therefore, it is important to understand how these patterns directly influence BAME female academics' job satisfaction, especially in areas such as promotion, leadership, wellbeing, recognition, relationships with colleagues, and the nature of their work. Using an intersectional perspective, this literature review examines how BAME female employees may feel excluded due to their intersecting social identities. The limited presence of BAME women in decision-making roles reflects how in-groups often favour members of their own group over out-groups (Mahapatra & Gupta, 2013; Bhopal, 2020).

In the following section, the researcher discusses how role model representation impacts BAME female academics' job satisfaction. To keep the social identity theory lens, this impact has been divided into two categories: in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Abbink and Harris, 2019; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). As individuals often discriminate, show unconscious biases, exhibit stereotypical behaviour towards out-groups (underrepresented groups), and show reverse treatment towards in-groups by appointing and promoting candidates or colleagues who may manifest tenets of their own culture, gender, or ethnicity (Jarboe, 2016). Dasgupta (2004) and Abbink and Harris (2019) state that individuals consistently favour in-groups over out-groups, as people tend to choose 'like us', both at an explicit and implicit level. Such favourable characteristics can create social problems and complexities at work and affect employee satisfaction, which is common for minority groups who experience multi-layered disadvantage due to their group status (Balliet, Wu, and De Dreu, 2014).

2.15.1 In-group and Out-group Perspectives on Role Models

In-group favouritism is the inclination of people to favour one group over another (Abbink and Harris, 2019). Differentiating between identifiable in-groups and out-groups considering both positive and negative ways, it is a common social phenomenon that can occur even in the absence of regular interaction between groups or even interdependence amongst group members (Turner et al., 1979). In-group favouritism includes rating the in-group higher than the out-group on positive traits and lower on unfavourable characteristic is a common scenario

in many organisations. Without out-group derogation, in-group favouritism may trigger discriminatory actions in the workplace, such as favouring in-group members in performance evaluation (Bohm, Rusch and Baron, 2018). Job satisfaction is also significantly and positively correlated with overall life satisfaction. According to Karunagharan (2023), having a role model is mandatory because when individuals are guided by in-group role models, such as women being instructed by a female leader, they feel a stronger sense of belonging (Flore et al., 2018; Marx & Roman, 2002; Stout et al., 2015).

SIT suggests that identity-matching role models affirm group membership and reduce anxiety. However, intersectionality highlights that these benefits may not be equally experienced by all women, since those with overlapping identities (e.g., women of colour) face additional barriers that in-group gender alone cannot resolve (Crenshaw, 1989). According to Lesh et al. (2024), men's interest in an academic career is also influenced by male professor role models, suggesting that sharing the same gender is important for men's career development. This assumption supports Rask and Bailey (2002), who found that male professors positively influence men's major choices, and Bettinger and Long (2005), who note that same-gender role models are key in women-dominated fields. For this reason, Marx and Ko (2012, p. 808) suggest that people benefit most from role models when they share a similar identity. Therefore, the role model should be seen as a successful member of the same group as the individual (McIntyre et al., 2011, p. 301). Some studies have examined similarity based on race (e.g., Marx & Goff, 2005; Marx et al., 2009), while most have focused on shared gender (e.g., Bettinger & Long, 2005; Drury et al., 2011).

According to Greenwald and Pettigrew, (2014) negative attitudes are more likely expressed towards out-group than in-group members. Far less empirical evidence exists to demonstrate disparities in positive feelings. They identify some notable exceptions, including that low levels of sympathy and admiration can predict discriminatory beliefs (Balliet, Wu and De Dreu, 2014). These determinants represent the withholding of positive emotions rather than expressions of overt hostility (Greenwald and Pettigrew 2014; Brewer, 1999). Additionally, differential favouring has been associated with discrimination across several domains, including helping behaviour (e.g., favouritism, hostility, and multiculturalism) (Dasgupta, 2004; Abbink and Harris, 2019). For example, public opinion surveys in the US indicate that most White Americans support equal opportunity (i.e., the absence of overt out-group hate) but

oppose policies by which the minority group will be benefited (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014). However, discrimination is not only performed by majority groups against out-groups but can also come from within in-groups themselves (Vo et al., 2025). When members of an in-group adopt dominant behaviours to align with existing power structures, they may distance themselves from others in their group and even perpetuate discrimination (Mata-Greve and Torres, 2019).

Several studies have shown that in-group role models who break stereotypes can have a positive impact on women and ethnic minorities in higher education (Herrmann et al., 2016; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Shin et al., 2016; Stout et al., 2011). Research across different contexts supports the idea that in-group role models can help counteract the negative effects of stereotype threat, discrimination, and unfair treatment (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Marx & Roman, 2002) in areas such as gender (McIntyre et al., 2003; Stout et al., 2011) and ethnicity (Marx et al., 2009) and even among university students (Latu et al., 2013; Young et al., 2013). Role models from diverse backgrounds help foster inclusivity and provide aspirational figures for underrepresented groups. Exposure to these role models challenges stereotypes, strengthens self-perception (Eagly & Karau, 2002), enhances a sense of belonging, and encourages individuals to pursue paths that are less typical for their group (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). In HEIs, BAME female academics are often considered outsiders while being promoted to decision-making roles, and they become marginalised based on presumptions, treated unfairly, faces discrimination, and stereotypes regarding their abilities (Arday, 2018). Therefore, due to in-group favouritism in the HEI, BAME female academics are often not promoted to decision-making roles, and they remain in lower-graded positions (Bhopal, 2018), which has an impact on their job satisfaction. The following section discusses how underrepresentation impacts employee job satisfaction.

Perceived inconsistencies in treatment

Job satisfaction refers to how employees generally view their work, whether positively or negatively (Arici et al., 2019). Members of in-groups are often more satisfied with their jobs because they share stronger emotional connections with their supervisors (Jones, 2020). In contrast, out-group members may experience a sense of injustice, particularly when they see colleagues of the same status being promoted over them (Arasli and Arici, 2020).

According to Verniers et al. (2024), when a woman achieves success in STEM, it can sometimes unintentionally reinforce stereotypes. Instead of recognising structural barriers, people may think that women, as a group, are responsible for their own disadvantages. This view is explained by the *just-world hypothesis* (Lerner, 1980), which suggests that many people want to believe the world is fair and that everyone gets what they deserve. When a reality such as women being underrepresented in high-status careers (Block et al., 2018) challenges this belief, people often cope by blaming women themselves (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). In this context, having a successful role model can make the issue worse: people might assume that if one woman can succeed, then others should also be able to. If they do not succeed, the blame is placed on women rather than on structural inequalities. Otaye-Ebede and Shaffakat (2024) state that Black female academics have often been positioned as victims of unfair treatment, although many are now actively reshaping this narrative. Instead of accepting a victim status, they are highlighting their strengths, positivity, and professional capabilities to gain recognition and acceptance from White colleagues. At the same time, they assert their right to fairness and equal treatment, emphasising that they are equally deserving of justice and opportunities.

According to Arici et al. (2019), favouritism occurs when people have the same status, and it decreases the integrity of an (Jones, 2020). Unfairly favouring certain people in an organisation negatively affects employees and job satisfaction among minority employees (Arasli and Arici, 2020), whereas equal treatment in an organisation influences employee productivity, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and turnover (Zagladi et al., 2015). According to Suliman (2007), if an employee faces unequal treatment, it will negatively affect their job satisfaction and performance. Additionally, Jahangir et al. (2006) found a positive correlation between unfair treatment in an organisation and employees' job dissatisfaction as well as less people being promoted to decision-making roles. According to Bettencourt et al. (2001), when people see a system as unfair and closed off, both in-groups and out-groups become more protective of 'their own'. For example, if BAME female academics believe they cannot progress in universities because promotion is blocked, they may naturally stay closer to each other for support. White academics may also stick to their own group to protect their advantages. However, when the system seems fair and open, with real chances for progress, people are less likely to form strong 'us versus them' divides. Instead, they are more willing to collaborate and see each other as colleagues rather than members of different groups. However,

it was initially believed that BAME female academics often face issues related to a lack of confidence or fear of failure why they are not applying for promotion (Aiston et al., 2020).

Disparities in evaluation:

In-group favouritism has been found to occur in various evaluative domains, including impression ratings (Park and Young, 2020), attributions of causality (Weisel & Böhm, 2015), and distribution of rewards (Hackel, Zaki and Van Bavel, 2017). Although some studies show that in-group preference can happen even without much information about other groups, it should not be assumed that people automatically see in-groups as more capable than out-groups (Spalluto et al., 2018). In the case of BAME female academics, their underrepresentation in decision-making roles makes it easier for others to make assumptions about their abilities without fair or accurate consideration (Bhopal, 2022; Showunmi, 2023). Moreover, according to Miller (2015), out-groups frequently face issues with promotions because they often need to 'prove themselves' and are not part of an 'in-group' or 'club' because few females from ethnic minority backgrounds are in decision-making roles that reflect their ability. It was initially believed that BAME females often face issues related to a lack of confidence or fear of failure, which why they often do not apply for promotion (Aiston et al., 2020).

Job status implies that in-group favouritism is most dominant among groups that have equal or greater status than the out-group in the organisation. Due to underrepresentation in the HEI, BAME female employees are often considered a secondary option in decision-making roles (Showunmi, 2023). According to Lewis and Sherman (2010), the symbols and signs of in-group favouritism are invisible, and therefore supervisors cannot trace them; however, they can passively harm the efficiency of a team by not valuing BAME female academics opinions. Therefore, organisations need to design systems, policies, and hierarchies that minimise grouping based on social identities, promote a positive work environment, and ensure employee satisfaction and motivation (Van Prooijen et al., 2015). In light of the above discussion, it is evident that in-group favouritism primarily arises from social identity factors, which intersect with ethnicity and gender, ultimately influencing employee satisfaction.

Proposition 2: In-group favouritism is responsible for minorities' job dissatisfaction

Stereotype threat:

Stereotype threat limits one's willingness to handle challenges and advance in one's career (Fiske and Lee, 2008). Experiencing stereotype threats can lead an individual to avoid platforms on which they are stereotyped and, to some extent, considered as unsuitable due to their ethnicity and gender, such as ethnic minorities women in a leadership role (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016) because leaders are often White males (Koenig et al., 2011); therefore, racial minorities seeking leadership positions might directly challenge majority groups, which creates a stereotype threat for them. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that when individuals face stereotype threats, they are often less interested in taking leadership roles, specifically when they are part of out-groups or the only member of the concentrated group among their peers (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016). Furthermore, an employee who faces stereotype threats assumes that other groups and superiors are biased against them due to their group membership, which reduces their self-esteem (Walton et al., 2015). This often happens when managers from different ethnic backgrounds give constructive feedback to ethnic minority subordinates. Because these subordinates are part of a small minority in the workplace, they may see negative feedback as biased or personally targeted and therefore tend to dismiss it (Kiefer & Shih, 2006).

Various authors have revealed that stereotype threat negatively affects performance due to a combination of factors, including heightened physiological arousal (Petzel et al., 2020; Bullock et al., 2020), affect psychologically (Holden et al., 2020; Barber, et al., 2020), impaired self-regulation (Liu, et al., 2020; Rees and Salvaore, 2021), and lowered performance expectations (Guardabassi and Tomasetto, 2020). Liu et al. (2021), in a meta-analysis of social identity theory interventions, explain that role models work well because comparing oneself to a successful in-group member can reduce stigma, challenge negative stereotypes, and boost confidence. This effect is especially strong when the role model is similar and successful. Therefore, when an individual encounter a situation where there is a negative stereotype about their group, they experience heightened arousal, resulting in fewer cognitive resources available for performing the task and acquiring job satisfaction. As a result, stereotype threat can cause workplace disengagement and reduced job satisfaction among working women and minorities (Adbi et al., 2021), which can lead to intentions to quit, mental exhaustion, and psychological burnout (Pinel & Paulin, 2005). According to Rees and Salvaore (2021), incompetence and a lack of feelings of acceptance are the outputs that female

employees face in a male dominant working environment because of BAME female academics' intersecting identities.

Stereotype threat can lead to employee disengagement in the workplace (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016). Disengagement influences employee existence in an organisation, which is related to their sense of achievement and success in the job (Liu, et al., 2020). Disengagement is perceived to be directly linked to productivity as well as job satisfaction (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016). That is, in contrast to the sense of engagement that arises when employees feel psychologically safe and secure at work (Liu, et al., 2020), employees who feel threatened at work by negative stereotypes are likely to feel disengaged due to their out-group status (Hippel et al., 2011). Disengagement, in turn, can lead employees to separate their personal and work roles and to psychologically withdraw from work (Liu, et al., 2020). This disengagement can be costly to an organisation, as disengaged employees are less satisfied and committed to their jobs and are more likely to quit (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016). According to Leech (2024), role models can shape people's career goals because individuals often observe and learn from their role models' behaviour (Hackett & Betz, 1981). These role models can motivate others to set and pursue their own career paths (Morgenroth et al., 2015). For example, the presence of BAME female academics as role models can help reduce women's doubts or negative expectations about entering male-dominated fields, such as higher education. However, studies have shown that role model interventions have failed to change the stereotypes held by female STEM students (Ramsey et al., 2013; Stout et al., 2011; Van Camp et al., 2019). However, when students strongly identify as 'STEM people', they may protect the field's image by reinforcing ideas such as success in STEM requires brilliance', a trait often linked more to men than women (Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2010; Leslie et al., 2015; Bian et al., 2017; Muradoglu et al., 2023). Stereotype threat not only undermines performance but also erodes interest and engagement in the stereotyped domain (Casad and Bryant, 2016). For instance, under conditions of stereotype threat, women choose not to apply for a leadership position (Gupta, Wieland and Turban, 2019). Finally, people from minorities face stereotyping due to their social identities, which negatively affects employee performance and satisfaction; these issues would be reduced if more people with the same social identity were role models.

Unfavourable work dynamics raise stress while lowering satisfaction and commitment:

An individual's perception of being mistreated or treated differently because of their group membership is perceived discrimination (Kutlaca, Becker and Radke, 2020). It takes more serious turn when role models are not there to make an example for future achievements or worth of that person holds (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Drawing on social identity theory, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979), role models can boost women faculty members' confidence and self-esteem (Wasend & LaVoi, 2019). Moreover, if women faculty members are being mistreated because of their group membership, they often feel isolated and distressed, which can create job dissatisfaction and reduce job performance (Ali et al., 2015). According to Sanchez and Brock (1996), perceived discrimination leads to higher work stress as well as a decrease in both job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Casad and Bryant, 2016).

Although the majority group (usually White or male colleagues) may initially accept advancements, as these women try to move up in rank or gain promotions, this initial acceptance can turn into resistance and sometimes even open hostility or discrimination. According to Verniers et al. (2024), out-group derogation leads majority groups to support people who are similar to them. When there are no role models from minority groups, colleagues may become more resistant to the advancement of ethnic minority women, doubting their capability.

Discrimination (e.g., name-calling, social exclusion, or unfair treatment) can take different forms: incidental or chronic, institutional or intentional, direct or indirect, and covert or overt (Mallory et al., 2017). Discrimination can be a cause of poor performance, a lower rate of initiative taken by ethnic and racial minority academicians, and higher job dissatisfaction (Ali et al., 2015). Hence, positive social and working relationships with supervisors, co-workers, and students, as well as satisfying working conditions, are beneficial for increasing job satisfaction (Kutlaca et al., 2020). Conversely, discrimination by supervisors and peers reduces an employee's organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Okpara et al., 2005). BAME female academics often face more negative and challenging situations than other female academics. According to Davidson (1997), Black and ethnic minority women face a 'concrete ceiling' which prevents them from being promoted. It is a myth that Black women and White women face the same level of discrimination; Black women experience double discrimination due to both race and gender (Otaeye-Ebede & Shaffakat, 2024). Overcoming this dual

discrimination is challenging due to deep-seated prejudice and traditional biases. Hence, role models create opportunities by sharing their experience and offering mentoring to those who are from underrepresented groups specifically for BAME female academics, where people are free to share their thoughts and belief (Tal et al., 2024). However, Gladstone and Cimpian (2021) argue that the effect of a role model's perceived competence on in-group students' motivation follows an inverted-U pattern; viewing the role model as competent boosts motivation and performance, but only to a certain point.

Sawyer et al. (2018) found that perceived discrimination among women was related to lower feelings of power and prestige on the job. Stein et al. (2016) reported that more than one-fifth of minorities perceived discrimination on the job, which resulted in lower organisational commitment, as seen in their higher likelihood to change jobs compared to their White counterparts and their less willingness to take initiative in their job, which also impacted their job satisfaction. Finally, out-group derogation creates division among employees; one group of employees in an organisation became frustrated due to their SI, which impacted their productivity and satisfaction. Therefore, the following proposition can be generated:

Proposition 3: Out-group Derogation causes dissatisfaction.

In conclusion, the existing literature suggests that in-group and out-group favouritism often leads to underrepresentation and have a great impact on job satisfaction. Based on these factors, the researcher interviewed participants to understand the impact on their job satisfaction. To meet RO3, the next section examines possible ways to build a multicultural social identity in the workplace in accordance with suggestions made in the existing literature.

2.16 Multicultural Social Identity

Multiculturalism is an important and active discussion in the UK and in a different segment of life (Verkuyten, 2010). Diversity is considered essential for securing ethnic identities and positive self-esteem; however, it is also confronted for being unfair and a threat to social solidarity (Milburn & Alan, 2012). In the UK higher education sector, there are both major and minor groups of employees. As a result, structural discrimination, social cohesion, and stability are the natural factors that may apply to the minorities (Verkuyten, 2010). To improve productivity and enhance employees' job satisfaction, it is necessary to ensure a common identity among the employees (Bukodi et al., 2014; Verkuyten (2010). Organisational cultures

that practice multiculturalism can ensure employees' job satisfaction (Myung et al., 2017). However, academia is dominated by a culture that is mainly male and White, creating an environment where White privilege is both consciously and unconsciously promoted as the norm. As a result, ethnic minority groups are often marginalised and excluded (Arday, 2017; McIntosh, 1990; Warren, 2007).

Britain's multiculturalism demonstrates how inherently varied and dynamic the nation's culture is. Multiculturalism is crucial for understanding concerns pertaining to inclusion and societal unity, whether it is applied in policy or to comprehend disparities and inequities (Modood, 2013). Effective diversity management is a process that changes according to the situation, and the government is crucial to its success (Nye, 2007). In 1966, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins proposed that integration should be a two-way process with policies supporting equality, describing multiculturalism as offering 'equal opportunity and cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (Jenkins, 1967). However, this perfect relationship never materialised, and many people think that multiculturalism has made communities more divided rather than more united. According to Stuart Hall, multiculturalism in the UK was not the result of deliberate policy but happened gradually and unplanned as ethnic minority communities became more visible and influential in national life (Hall, 2000).

According to Hall, Britain has gradually become more multicultural, but there have been clear moments when multiculturalism faced criticism. One early example is the 'Rushdie Affair' of 1989, which sparked a heated debate about cultural clashes in the UK (Asad, 1990). More recently, riots in Burnley, Oldham, and Bradford in 2001, often referred to as the 'Northern uprisings', led to discussions and new policies on community cohesion (Cantle, 2001). Following these events, and with the impact of 9/11 in the US and the 7/7 bombings in London, concerns have grown that too much diversity might weaken social cohesion and trust within communities (Collier, 2013; Goodhart, 2004; Putnam, 2007). Some people now believe that high levels of diversity can harm social cohesion and are using these views to argue for tighter immigration controls, linking immigration with security risks and renewing fears about outsiders (Bigo, 2002; Cheong et al., 2007; Ibrahim, 2008).

There is little information available in contemporary literature about multicultural social identity, as the UK has not legalised any policy for this; therefore, the researcher will contribute a model that will be helpful for building a multicultural social identity from the current

perspective of the UK HEI. The following section discusses the elements of effective multicultural social identity.

2.16.1 Fair Performance Evaluation

Performance appraisal is a key management tool for evaluating employee strengths and weaknesses and supporting organisational goals through rewards, which is also key to promotion. Fair and clear performance appraisal systems help organisations ensure employee job satisfaction, which leads to better performance. However, a conventional appraisal system may not be equally accurate while dealing with a multicultural workforce (Raja et al., 2011). In the context of diversity, organisations should adopt more specific performance appraisal systems, which can satisfy the multicultural workforce needs (Paola, and Antonio, 2012). For example, the performance appraisal committee should represent all the cultures, races, and age groups in an organisation. In this regard, Monga (2008) suggests that to effectively implement a performance appraisal system in a diverse workforce, minorities should be included in the committee that evaluates, selects, and promotes employees. Furthermore, the appraisal language should focus on performance instead of personality. However, a study by Dasanyak et al. (2021) found that the current appraisal system in the UK HEI focuses mainly on research, following the REF, while giving less attention to teaching. The study also shows weak connections between appraisals and promotions and pay or rewards. Additionally, most surveyed academic staff at the 30 universities were dissatisfied with the performance appraisal process, a trend that may reflect the situation across many UK universities. Moreover, Ammari and Howe-Walsh (2025) found that some academics believe that promotions and performance appraisal are influenced by favouritism, which weakened participants perception of fairness. Because of disparities within higher education institutions, performance evaluation in academia is often viewed as a checkbox exercise that mainly depends on the number of publications and citations (Hofstra et al., 2020). Therefore, fair performance appraisal is one of the main elements of employee satisfaction that can be achieved by building an effective multicultural organisation (Doghan et al., 2019). Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the appraisal system has been widely discussed by researchers (Belle et al., 2017; Wilson, 2010), who found an active and dynamic relationship between employee satisfaction and the performance appraisal system. Moreover, satisfaction with the appraisal process often reflects employees' overall perception of their job satisfaction (Belle et al., 2017; Choi et al., 2013).

2.16.2 Equal Reward and Benefit

Fair pay and benefits allow an organisation to distribute both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards according to employees' contributions (Poch and Martin, 2015). Unequal income, bonuses, and promotions affect the level of job satisfaction of a culturally diverse workforce (Ajmal et al., 2015). Previous studies have revealed that minority employees face discrimination in receiving the same number of rewards (Malgorzata and Beata, 2015). O'Reilly et al. (2015) argue that employees who belong to dominant groups in an organisation tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction because they receive more support from co-workers and better rewards, whereas employees outside the dominant groups within an organisation tend to have less job satisfaction because of inequalities in rewards and lower support from co-workers (Cheng-Liang and Mark, 2014). In this regard, Monga (2008), argues that pay inequality is the main reason for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the diversity management context. Additionally, it is important for organisations to fairly distribute rewards, especially when they are dealing with a multicultural workforce, because a positive employee perception about fair distribution increases job satisfaction (Doghan et al., (2019).

Moreover, mentoring is a process that can be used to develop underrepresented BAME female academics, and those who are in junior roles often need guidance to acquire decision-making roles (Bhopal, 2020). Career aspirants typically view positive mentoring as including behaviours such as supporting, coaching, sponsoring, and providing advice to increase visibility in the workplace, which enhances job satisfaction and career progression (Eby et al., 2000; Harris and Ogbonna, 2021). Mentors from the same groups often create value for BAME female academics, as they are mostly comfortable with the same groups mentors (Showunmi, 2023). However, it is also notable that it is difficult to find many role models among BAME female academics due to their low representation. This shortage indicates that mentoring is mandatory, and until recently, the issue of mentoring has received attention among academics (Bhopal, 2020; Harris and Ogbonna, 2021). By ensuring mentoring from all groups, it is possible to ensure equal opportunity.

Furthermore, training is needed to empower BAME female academic leaders, as it influences career progression and changes beliefs and behaviours (Barnes, 2021). Therefore, this training gives BAME female academics indications and support for future development to challenge and change university-held assumptions about leadership roles in institutions. Leadership

training programs serve as valuable qualifications that can be listed on a resume, aiding in career and academic leadership progression (Ofei et al., 2022).

2.16.3 Psychological diversity

Psychological diversity ensures employee satisfaction (Doghan et al., 2019). Moreover, psychological diversity would ultimately support organisations in enhancing employee performance, perhaps by fulfilling employee expectations (Bhatti et al., 2011). It is argued by Bhopal (2019) that employees expect their organisations to manage and play a significant role in their development and growth. Furthermore, having a pro-diversity climate in an organisation creates an important message to employees that their organisation is unbiased and that it cares for their wellbeing (McKay et al., 2011). When organisations create a psychologically diverse climate for employees, employees are more likely to be satisfied with their job (Myung et al., 2017). However, in a White-dominated HEI, it is often difficult to create psychological diversity due to a rigid mentality and a lack of desire to change perception (Verkuyten, 2020). BAME female academics are often expected to operate in certain ways and downplay their racial and ethnic differences by adapting to mainstream norms (Wolsko et al., 2006). Mannix (2005) believes that psychological diversity is a valuable goal that should be achieved by making decisions based on skills, not on race or gender. Moreover, psychological diversity helps colleagues from different backgrounds work together, find common ground, and learn from each other's cultures (Shand, 2019). Therefore, psychological diversity is needed to build a multicultural organisation where every identity will receive equal opportunity, which will ensure job satisfaction.

2.16.4 Emotional stability

Employees who are emotionally stable tend to perform better in their jobs, especially when they work in team (Bhatti et al., 2011). Individuals who are considered emotionally stable tend to feel satisfied with their job (Peltokorpi, 2008). In a multicultural environment, individuals from diverse cultures tend to show different behaviours in different situations. Emotional stability is useful for managing and understanding different behaviours; therefore, it is a vital characteristic. A lack of it may result in conflicts among employees, which will ultimately create work stress and reduced job satisfaction.

2.16.5 Recruitment and Selection

An organisation can achieve a competitive edge by recruiting the best people without regarding their cultural and personal characteristics as well as their age and gender (Daghan et al., 2019). A conventional recruitment and selection process may not be suitable for organisations to use when its priority is to attain and manage diversity (Shen et al., 2009). However, following several decades of legislation on equal employment opportunity, there is still a systematic discrimination in the recruitment and selection process (Koopmans et al., 2011). According to Bhatti et al. (2019), organisations with diversity management practices can develop new employment policies and cope with issues of promoting women and ethnic minorities to higher levels of management, which encourages diversity. By using the best diversity management practices during the recruitment and selection process and avoiding discrimination, the level of job satisfaction will be high (Myung et al., 2017).

2.16.6 Organisational culture

Organisational cultures that practices multiculturalism can ensure employee job satisfaction (Myung et al., 2017). Organisational culture is a system of values, beliefs, and behaviours shared among employees (Belias and Koustelios, 2014). It is a dynamic process that can be promoted to facilitate the achievement of job satisfaction and organisational goals (Nguyen and Benet-Martinez, 2010). Organisations that are flexible and adopt the participative management type, with an emphasis on clear communication, multicultural identity, and employee reward and benefit, are more likely to be satisfied, resulting in the organisation's success (Mckinnon et al., 2003; Beniflah and Veloz, 2021). However, Ainie and Shamsul (2013) found that the job satisfaction of employees from Korea was positively correlated with the position the employee holds, tenure, and age; older employees who have held higher positions and for longer periods of time reported higher levels of job satisfaction. Thus, the differences between an employee's expectations and the current organisational culture can affect the job satisfaction of an employee (Belias and Koustelios, 2014). When people feel included and see diversity as valuable to the organisation, they tend to develop more open and accepting attitudes. This can encourage minority group members to take part more in work activities and increase their job satisfaction. According to the above discussion, employees from ethnic minorities receive fair and equal treatment in a multicultural organisation.

Managers and decisionmakers need to apply a different system, policies, and procedures to ensure an effective multicultural organisation.

Proposition 4: An effective multicultural organisation ensures higher job satisfaction for the BAME female academics.

2.17 Conceptual Framework

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) is used as the primary framework to understand how group membership, such as ethnicity or gender, shapes workplace experiences, including job satisfaction, perceptions of inclusion, multicultural social identity, and responses to in-group/out-group dynamics. SIT provides a psychological lens to examine how BAME female academics may feel like out-group members in decision-making roles and how this affects their job satisfaction, whereas intersectional theory complements SIT by highlighting how overlapping social identities, specifically ethnicity and gender, create barriers for BAME female academics' job satisfaction in the UK HEI. For instance, while SIT explains the general effects of out-group status on job satisfaction, intersectionality clarifies why BAME women may experience compounded challenges that are not fully captured when considering gender or ethnicity alone. Integrating these theories allows this research to capture both the psychological mechanisms of social identity and the structural and systemic factors associated with intersecting identities, providing a more nuanced understanding of BAME female academics' job satisfaction, which is impacted by social identity.

This study has observed that research on gender in academia has often treated women as a single group, usually focusing on the experiences of White women while overlooking BAME women (Opara, Sealy & Ryan, 2020; Townsend, 2021). This approach leads to gaps in understanding the specific challenges faced by BAME women, whose experiences are shaped by both gender and ethnicity. For example, women's underrepresentation in leadership roles is often explained as a lack of confidence, ambition, or agency (Acker, 2010; Ramalho Luz et al., 2018). However, studies show that women are just as ambitious as men, but structural barriers such as biased recruitment, limited networks, and a shortage of mentoring opportunities block their progress (Shepherd, 2018b; Hammarén & Johansson, 2014). BAME women face additional obstacles, including heavier workloads, a lack of recognition, and exclusion from

decision-making (Mirza, 2006; Stockfelt, 2018). Furthermore, they are often expected to symbolise ‘diversity’ for institutions without being given real opportunities for advancement (Mirza, 2006a; Ahmed, 2009). Much of the existing research on women in academia highlights discrimination, a work–life imbalance, and slower career progression but it rarely addresses how ethnicity and class intersect with gender (Syed & Murray, 2009).

In short, the absence of BAME women’s voices in mainstream gender literature limits the understanding of inequality in academia and of how dual identity impacts job satisfaction. When whiteness is decentred, different truths about women’s experiences emerge (Jensen, 2020), highlighting the urgent need for intersectional approaches that reflect the realities of BAME women in higher education.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) looks at how people identify with different groups. It mainly focuses on major and minor groups, which are based on things like status, ethnicity, and gender (Haslam et al., 2020). There are different employees with different social identities in an organisation; according to SIT, employees with the same SI form groups; they help each other and discriminate against others who have different SIs (Jawaad et al., 2019). Therefore, the groups increase cooperation in some contexts; however, the members of the minority groups are discriminated against, which creates dissatisfaction (Rast et al., 2012). Within organisations, this perspective also extends to factors such as management role, work environment, seniority, job title, functional responsibilities, and the nature of work itself. In the context of higher education institutions, and specifically for this research, intersectionality is understood through dimensions such as ethnicity and gender, because this research is about BAME female academics and how their overlapping social identities impacts job satisfaction and how they perceive job satisfaction. Ali et al. (2010) explain that it is hard to look at just one factor, like gender or ethnicity, because people belong to multiple groups at the same time, and these groups affect each other. Racialized women often face discrimination even when policies exist to protect them, and their dual identities are sometimes ignored (Crenshaw, 1991; Rugunanan, 2019). Gender and ethnicity are separate identities, but for this research, they will be considered together, as understanding both is important for studying the job satisfaction of BAME female academics, especially regarding leadership, barriers, and favouritism within groups. The following figure shows the conceptual framework for this research:

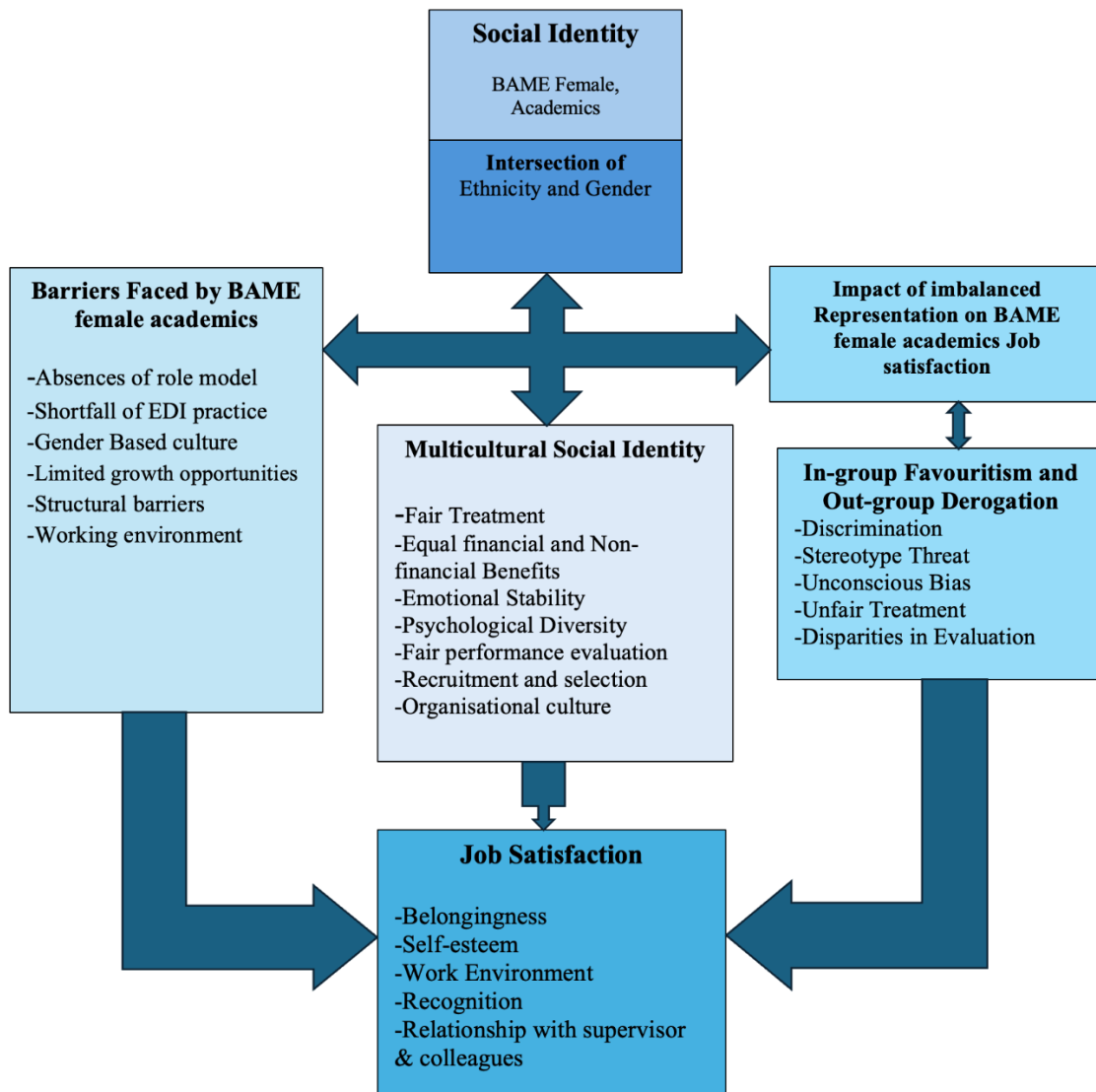


Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework (Author's view, 2024)

According to HESA (2019), common groups in the UK HEI are formed based on colour, gender, ethnicity, and age. Therefore, managers must ensure that employees from minority groups are treated fairly and receive the same opportunities and benefits as those in majority groups. For this study, ethnicity and gender are emphasised, as the research applies both an intersectional lens and social identity theory.

Second, the major group (white male and white female) of employees at workplaces are in a dominant position; they enjoy favours and cooperation; therefore, the minor groups (BAME female academics) believe they are discriminated against and ignored, creating employee

dissatisfaction (Vignoles et al., 2011). The imbalanced representation of BAME female academics in decision-making positions place them as an out-group in workplaces often dominated by White and/or male colleagues. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that individuals tend to favour their in-group, which can create barriers to recognition, promotion, and leadership opportunities for those in the out-group. For BAME female academics, these barriers are compounded by the intersection of both ethnicity and gender, making them more vulnerable to exclusion and inequality. This intersectional position reduces their sense of inclusion and belonging, which in turn negatively impacts job satisfaction (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011; Sabharwal, 2014). The absence of in-group role models in decision-making positions further reinforces these challenges, exposing BAME female academics to stereotype threat, discrimination, unfair treatment, and disparities in evaluation within academia (Bhopal, 2022). Out-group derogation often surfaces through subtle and unexpected behaviours from majority group members towards minority colleagues (Rast, 2012). Moreover, as the minor community is dominated, they receive less opportunity for their promotion. Consequently, few minor employees can secure higher or managerial positions; therefore, there are fewer role models from the minor community for entry-level and mid-level employees. Stephan (2000) reveal that out-group members can create realistic and symbolic threats that may create further dissatisfaction by both groups of employees. Grand and Brown (2011) state that threats to employees can cause insecurity, and minor groups can face a hostile environment and feel that their jobs are not secure, which are further reasons for dissatisfaction caused by the SI of employees. In this conceptual framework, social identity theory helped explain how belonging to both minority ethnic and female groups affects self-concept and workplace experiences, while intersectionality theory illuminated how these overlapping identities interact with structural inequalities. Together, they demonstrate that job satisfaction among BAME female academics cannot be fully understood without considering both personal identity and the institutional context.

Third, one of the major barriers faced by BAME female academics is the absence of role models from similar backgrounds in leadership or decision-making roles (Arday, 2018). Although, BAME female academics are more comfortable with people from the same background, where they feel the belonging and interacting with colleagues from similar background due to shared experience (Miller, 2025). However, leadership in HEIs is often still assumed to align with masculine traits rather than feminine ones, reinforcing gender bias (Showunmi, 2023). While equality, diversity, and inclusion practices exist within UK HEIs,

their implementation often falls short in practice. On the surface, growth opportunities may appear equally available to all (Arday, 2018; Baltaru 2024); however, closer examination reveals disparities in promotion criteria, contract types, and access to formal and informal networks, all of which limit participation in professional development and access to research grants (Rollock, 2019). For BAME female academics, these challenges are compounded by their overlapping social identities of gender and ethnicity, meaning that barriers are not only structural but also embedded within the working environment itself, which impacts employee job satisfaction (Bhopal, 2022; Rollock, 2019).

Fourth, multiculturalism is a significant factor in the workplace in the UK and plays a vital role in ensuring the satisfaction of employees and workers (Verkuyten, 2010). Employees in a multicultural organisation have various social identities; therefore, different disadvantages, such as structural discrimination, and challenges to social cohesion and stability are among the expected impacts that minoritised groups of employees may face (Staveren et al., 2017). Significant characteristics of an effective multicultural organisation are fair treatment (Farsides, 1996), equal rewards (Breinling, 1997), equal financial and non-financial benefits (de la Torre-Ruiz, 2017), and an adequate number of role models for employees from all social identities. Moreover, there are adverse effects on the self-esteem of members of minority groups compared to those of majority groups (Bokodi et al., 2014). According to Verkuyten (2010), top managers must foster a shared organisational identity by developing a strong organisational culture that emphasises structure, procedures, and systems. For BAME female academics, adopting an intersectional perspective can help managers promote both fairness and a stronger sense of organisational identity for them. Intersectional theory also highlights that social categories such as gender and ethnicity do not operate independently but interact to create unique experiences of advantage or disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989). This suggests that organisational practices should take these intersecting identities into account to ensure equity, inclusion, and meaningful representation. For instance, women from ethnic minority backgrounds may encounter compounded barriers that differ from those faced by White women or ethnic minority men. These intersecting identities can influence access to opportunities, representation in leadership, and perceptions of fairness within the workplace. Therefore, to develop inclusive organisational cultures, it is essential for management to recognise how intersecting forms of inequality shape employees' experiences. Policies must be designed that address both gendered and racialised dimensions of discrimination. This intersectional

understanding is crucial for ensuring that multiculturalism in the workplace is not only symbolic but also substantively equitable.

Finally, employee satisfaction significantly depends upon the financial and non-financial benefits they receive from work; they will be satisfied if they receive enough benefits in relation to their performance. Janssen (2001) states that job satisfaction depends on the cognitive and behavioural components an employee obtains from the workplace. According to Sivatte et al. (2019), job satisfaction comes from financial and non-financial benefits offered by the employer and work environment; fair treatment and behaviour are significant elements of satisfaction. Boland and Fowler (2000) suggest that non-financial benefits, such as the relationship between employee and supervisor, recognition, and opportunity to progress to the next level, are essential to job satisfaction. Employees compare the output they receive from their organisation against their performance at work; they also consider the non-financial benefits, and they will be satisfied if the total benefits are equal to or more than their expectations (Guan and So, 2016). The purpose of this research is to explore the job satisfaction of BAME academics and how it is shaped by social identity. While existing studies have examined job satisfaction among professors in general or among women as a broad category, little attention has been given specifically to BAME female academics. This gap highlights the need for focused research in this area. Drawing on established job satisfaction theories, such as Herzberg's two-factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and combining them with available literature that considers the intersections of ethnicity, gender, academic status, and job contract, this study identifies key factors influencing satisfaction. To deepen this understanding, an intersectional lens is applied. Intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989) highlights how identities such as ethnicity and gender intersect to create unique experiences of privilege or disadvantage. Combining intersectionality with SIT enables this research to capture how overlapping identities influence perceptions of fairness, access to opportunities, and overall job satisfaction. This integrated approach provides a richer understanding of the complex factors shaping satisfaction among BAME female academics in UK higher education.

2.18 Chapter Summary

This literature review explored the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in UK higher education, focusing on how their social identities, particularly ethnicity and gender, interact and shape their experiences. The review first identified the key factors that influence job satisfaction among academics and examined how BAME female academics perceive their own satisfaction within the current higher education context.

The chapter also discussed how job satisfaction is shaped by one's ethnicity and gender and how these identities influence self-definition within professional roles. By placing intersectionality at the centre, the review highlighted how organisational and structural inequalities create barriers that lead to differences between groups and foster in-group and out-group divisions. These barriers, such as unequal resource distribution, limited career progression opportunities, structural challenges, a lack of effective EDI practices, and absence of role models, significantly affect the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. The absence of role models often contributes to feelings of exclusion and reinforces in-group and out-group biases. Additionally, these academics frequently face discrimination, stereotype threats, unconscious bias, unfair treatment, and disparities in evaluation, all of which hinder career advancement and reduce overall job satisfaction.

Despite these challenges, many BAME female academics remain committed to engaging in UK higher education. The literature suggests that fostering multiculturalism could help reduce disparities and promote equal opportunities. However, there is limited discussion of multiculturalism within the higher education context, highlighting a clear gap in the literature. Moreover, most existing studies on job satisfaction address general aspects rather than the specific experiences of BAME female academics. Addressing this gap would help policymakers, institutions, HR managers, and higher education leaders better understand the underlying factors that shape job satisfaction for BAME women, the impact of lacking role models, and strategies to create more inclusive, multicultural academic environments, where they can feel a sense of belonging and reach their full potential.

The next chapter is the research methodology, where the researcher discusses the research techniques, methods, data analysis process, procedure, and data collection process. For this study, 15 BAME female academics were interviewed, and the researcher-maintained confidentiality when recording and documenting the data.

Chapter Three: Research Methods and Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods and methodologies of this research. The relevant research philosophy, approach, and methods are presented with justifications. Additionally, the sampling frame, size, and criteria as well as data collection procedures and analytical techniques used in this study are evaluated and presented in this chapter. Moreover, research ethics, expected contribution, and limitations are also stated in this chapter.

Research Philosophy Grounded in Literature Insights

The literature review revealed that job satisfaction among BAME female academics is not solely influenced by measurable variables, such as salary or workload, but is deeply shaped by subjective experiences. Studies have explored issues of marginalisation, in-group and out-group dynamics, and intersectionality, all of which are complex, personal, and context dependent. These insights suggested that understanding BAME female academics' job satisfaction requires a deeper exploration of how individuals make sense of their realities. Moreover, most of the research that has been undertaken is about the lived experiences of Black female academics, the job satisfaction of professors or economists, or the general job satisfaction of faculty members in the UK HEI. However, how social identity impacts BAME female academics job satisfaction is still uncovered. Many policies have been implemented to address the underrepresentation of BAME female academics, yet a noticeable gap still remains. Therefore, it is important to understand the perceptions and experiences of BAME female academics, what barriers they face, and which factors most strongly influence their job satisfaction from their own perspective. The literature review informed the decision to adopt a subjectivist ontological stance and an interpretivist epistemology, as they provide the philosophical foundation needed to explore lived experiences, meaning making, and the socially constructed nature of identity within higher education.

3.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to how the researcher views the world; it is the belief that defines nature, the source of data, and the correct analytical tools (Saunders et al., 2015). According to Bryman and Bell (2011), research philosophy enables the determination of the proper methodology for research by ensuring data collection, analysis, and presentation processes, which are also considered the foundation of knowledge. The philosophy can be broadly divided into ‘epistemology’, ‘ontology’, and ‘axiology’ when viewed alongside assumptions about the methodology (Cresswell, 1999; Collis and Hussey, 2009), and it can reach deeply into the overall ‘research process’, shaping not only which questions a researcher will ask but also how the researcher will approach the process of finding responses to those research question (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Bhattacharjee (2012) Ontology is the philosophical study of being and related concepts, such as existence, becoming, and reality, while epistemology focuses on understanding and constructing meaningful knowledge about the social world. It mainly focuses on questions that are related to the identification of reality (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, axiology refers to the role of values, purpose, and ethics in shaping how research is conducted (McGregor & Murdane, 2010). It is closely linked to epistemology and involves moral choices and judgments within the broader research context (Lynch et al., 2020). A paradigm refers to a shared way of thinking about research. The term comes from the Greek word paradigm, meaning ‘pattern’. Philosopher Thomas Kuhn introduced it in 1962 to describe a set of ideas, methods, and tools on which researchers in a field commonly agree. In simple terms, a paradigm is a framework of beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide how researchers understand and investigate problems (Kuhn, 1996; Anand et al., 2020). It shapes how research is approached and what is considered valid knowledge. According to Saunders et al. (2019), different types of philosophical assumptions are used in research design. The most discussed ones are ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2011). Lincoln et al. (2011) describe these as core research beliefs. These four assumptions create the foundation for qualitative research. Each one offers a unique viewpoint and helps answer different questions about the research topic, depending on the researcher’s perspective or worldview (Neuman, 2000).

This research follows uses the research onion model, which was developed by Saunders et al. (2007). This model offers a structured and practical guide for designing a research methodology. Like peeling an onion layer by layer, the model walks researchers through the

essential steps of the research process – from choosing a research philosophy and approach to selecting appropriate strategies, methodological choices, and data collection methods. Starting from the outer layers, it gradually leads to the core decisions of the research process, helping ensure that each step is thoughtfully aligned with the research aim. Saunders et al. (2019) explain that this layered model supports decision-making on three levels: the research philosophy and approach, the research design (including strategy and methods), and the time horizon and techniques. The following research onion framework not only simplifies the planning process but also helps researchers justify their choices in a clear and coherent way, contributing to a more rigorous and meaningful study.

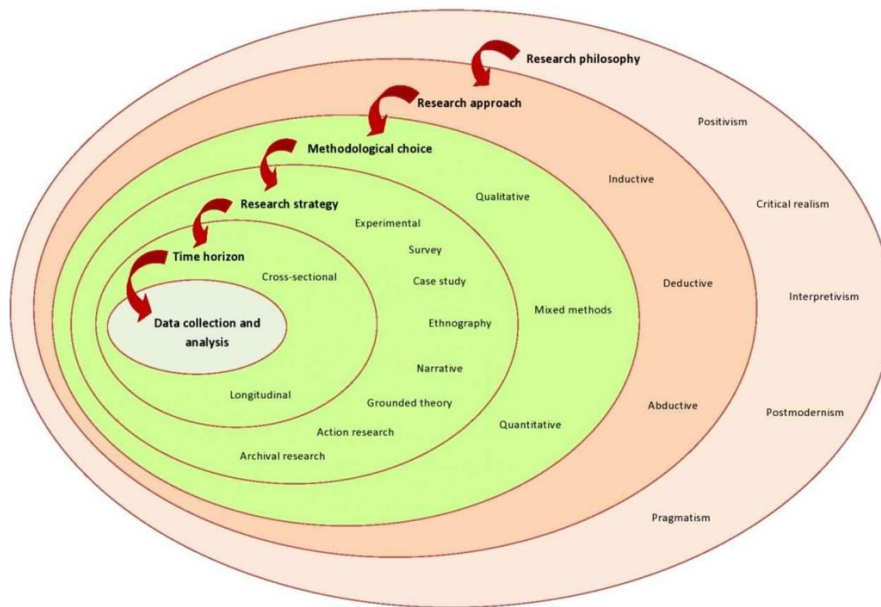


Figure 3.1: The research onion by Mark Saunders (Saunders et al., 2019)

3.2 Epistemological and Ontological stance

Epistemology refers to how researchers understand and make sense of the world, especially by exploring the relationship between the person doing the research and the knowledge they are trying to gain (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Levers, 2013). It asks which kinds of beliefs or views about the world can be considered valid or justified (Goldman, 1986). While ontology focuses on what reality is (Scotland, 2012), epistemology examines how we can know or learn about that reality (Wainwright, 1997). It is a way of thinking about, analysing, and deciding on an appropriate philosophy to gain knowledge and meet the objectives of any intended research (Bryman and bell, 2011). Therefore, to achieve the objectives of a study, epistemology

examines and determines the appropriate philosophical approach for acquiring knowledge (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Sandberg (2005) explains that most research approaches can be grouped into two main types: positivism (also called functionalism in Burrell and Morgan's 2017 model) and interpretivism. These approaches influence how a researcher plans and conducts a study to answer research questions. Bickman and Rog (2008) suggest that researchers usually choose from three main research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, and interpretivism (or constructivism). However, other scholars, such as Guba and Lincoln (1994), argue that there are four key paradigms in qualitative research: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and critical theory (Myers, 2019; Creswell and Poth, 2018). For this research, the researcher uses interpretivism. Below, the researcher justifies the reason behind chosen research philosophy.

Ontology:

This study adopts a subjectivist ontological stance because the impact of social identity, including ethnicity and gender, on job satisfaction is inherently subjective. It cannot be measured through objective variables alone, as it is experienced differently by each BAME female academicians. In contrast, an objectivist approach would require fixed, measurable variables (such as job satisfaction scores), which would not fully capture the personal and social meanings behind their experiences. The researcher chose a subjectivist/constructivist stance to explore how BAME female academics interpret their experiences in academia, such as perceived discrimination, inclusion, belonging, and career development.

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. From a subjectivist perspective, reality is not fixed or external but rather shaped by individual experiences, consciousness, and interpretations (Saunders et al., 2012). This means that multiple realities can exist, as each person views the world in a unique way. Subjectivism is closely linked to interpretivism, while objectivism aligns with positivism (Creswell, 2014). These individual realities are shaped by both internal beliefs and external social interactions, making subjectivism the most appropriate ontological foundation for this research. Therefore, the research will follow an interpretivist approach and subjectivist ontological stance. Which requires the research to focus on respondents' views, opinions, job satisfaction, career growth, sense of belonging, challenges in the HEI, organisational culture, and the in-group and out-group favouritism to which they belong.

Axiology:

Axiology is about the role of values in research and is an important part of research philosophy (McGregor & Murdane, 2010). It examines how a researcher's beliefs and purpose and the context of their study shape how the research is conducted. It also covers moral choices, ethics, and judgments about what is important or meaningful in the research process (Lynch et al., 2020). Axiology helps researchers reflect on questions such as 'What do I value?' 'Why do I value it?' and 'How should values influence my research?' In this context, an interpretivist believes that since reality is subjective, social inquiry is in turn into value bound. Axiology suggests that research paradigms, methodologies, and even the choice of research questions are influenced by the researcher broader philosophical stance and worldview. The goal is not objectivity but rather understanding meaning through the lens of those involved (Rooney, 2013). During the data collection stage, the researcher and interviewees (participants) are interdependent and mutually interactive with each other and construct a collaborative account of perceived reality. The researcher remains open to new ideas throughout the study and develops them with the help of the interviewees. Moreover, even though many researchers understand its importance, axiology is rarely openly discussed in research practice (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016). Still, when combined with ontology (one's understanding of reality) and epistemology (how one comes to know things), axiology helps define what kind of knowledge is valid and valuable, especially in fields such as management and organisational research (Rooney, 2013).

As subjectivism emphasises individual realities, the findings of subjectivist research are often specific to the particular people or context being studied (Lynch et al., 2020). This also means that both participants and researchers may bring their own biases, experiences, and interpretations into the research process. In this research, to improve reliability and reduce these influences, the researcher has employed several strategies. Firstly, the researcher has practiced reflexivity by regularly reflecting on her own positionality and potential impact on the research. Additionally, the researcher has engaged in prolonged interaction with the data, reviewing and re-coding interview transcripts multiple times to ensure the analysis remained firmly grounded in the participants lived experiences. These steps helped enhance the validity of the findings while minimising the risk of researcher bias.

Interpretivism:

This research adopts an interpretivist philosophy, as it focuses on understanding the experiences of BAME female academics in UK higher education. Interpretivism is appropriate because it allows for deep exploration of how individuals make sense of their experiences within specific social contexts (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2015). Interpretivist researchers believe that there is not just one single reality but many different realities, based on how people personally understand and experience the world (Winit-Watjana, 2016). A key idea in this approach is that both the researcher's views and the participants' values and experiences play an important role in how knowledge is created. Instead of trying to be completely objective, the focus is on understanding people's unique perspectives (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

The research title, aim, and objectives are closely linked to key themes, such as social identity, multicultural social identity, in-group and out-group favouritism, and imbalanced representation, and their influence on job satisfaction. These concepts require a subjective approach, which aligns with the interpretivist belief that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the perspectives of those who experience it (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, Jacoucci and Churchil Jr. (2010) suggest that interpretivism is effective when there are no measurement variables and researchers must conduct qualitative studies. For this research, no conceptual framework with measurement variables is available in the contemporary literature (to date, as far the researcher is aware). The research title, aim, and objectives are related to social science, social identity, employee relations, organisational culture, and job satisfaction and the study demands the views and opinions of the respondents, their level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, their working environment, their relationships with peers and managers, and the organisational culture to which they belong (Creswell, 2014).

Therefore, interpretivism is a suitable and practical philosophical approach for this research, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the issues faced by BAME female academics in UK higher education. This approach also supports the development of a multicultural social identity model aimed at enhancing BAME female academics' job satisfaction.

However, as subjectivism focuses on individual realities, the findings often apply only to the specific people or context studied, and there is a high chance the participants and researcher bring their own biases, experiences, and interpretations. Therefore, to ensure

reliability and to mitigate these influences, the researcher has adopted several strategies, including reflexivity (regularly reflecting researcher own positionality), for which the researcher has maintained a diary. Additionally, the researcher has engaged in prolonged interaction with the data, reviewing and re-coding interviews multiple times to ensure the analysis was grounded in participants' lived experiences. These steps helped ensure the validity of the findings while minimising researcher bias.

Positivism:

Positivism is a research approach based on the belief that there is a real, objective world that can be observed, measured, and studied scientifically (Nyein et al., 2020). It is commonly used in research, especially in business, management, and organisational studies (Scotland, 2012; Rabetino et al., 2021). Positivists believe that reality is what can be seen, recorded, and tested through observation (Flick, 2015a). However, this study requires the views and opinions of the respondents – asking them how job satisfaction for BAME female academics is shaped by their interpretations of their identity and experiences in academia, including how they perceive unequal treatment, discrimination, inclusion, sense of belonging, and their underrepresentation. Positivism oversimplifies the complexity of human experience, reducing it to measurable variables rather than understanding how individuals interpret their realities, which is not the point of this research, as the researcher is not searching for one objective 'truth' but for multiple truths as lived and perceived by different individuals (Bryman and bell, 2011). The main idea behind positivism is that reality exists independently of people's thoughts or feelings (known as objectivist or dualist thinking). It also assumes that facts can be kept separate from personal values. Therefore, researchers are expected to ensure their own opinions and influence do not affect the research (Nyein et al., 2020). According to Bryman and Bell (2011), interpretivism is mostly used in qualitative studies, and positivism is often used for quantitative studies. Positivist research aims to do statistical analysis to answer the research questions and meet the objectives and aims. According to Collins and Hussey (2003), positivism is an epistemological position where a set of methods considered part of natural science is used to study social realities and beyond. However, interpretivism focuses on understanding individuals' experiences and perceptions. Therefore, this research does not aim to discover the impacts of job satisfaction empirically; rather it aims to understand individuals' experiences and their interactions with the social world (Ormston et al., 2014). This process relies on the researcher's interpretation, making interpretivism and the focus on social identity

central to the methodology, particularly in understanding how these identity-based experiences impact job satisfaction (Bonache, 2021).

Pragmatism:

Pragmatism adopts a more practical, trial-and-error approach, often favouring mixed methods to find what ‘works’ in each context (McGrgor and Murdane, 2010). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) argue that in pragmatist research, ideas and principles are considered valid based on their workability and practical outcomes. Pragmatists, therefore, use multiple methods and reject the idea that a single scientific method can uncover absolute truths (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), whereas interpretivist research assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and value-laden, meaning that personal and flexible research structures are not only viable but necessary (Reay *et al.* 2019). Interpretivism emphasises understanding participants lived experiences and perceptions, which are inherently subjective and context specific. As such, the findings from interpretivist studies are not meant to be generalised to broader populations. Because this study is rooted in an interpretivist paradigm, which values depth over breadth and subjectivity over generalisability, pragmatism is not an appropriate fit. In the interpretivist paradigm, knowledge is shaped by participants’ perspectives and the research context, resulting in rich, culture-specific insights rather than generalisable theories (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019).

Feminist Epistemology:

While previous research on the experiences of BAME female academics has often adopted a feminist epistemological approach (Omhand, 2024; Barnes, 2021; Arday, 2018; Bhopal, 2020), this study is grounded in interpretivism and subjectivism. It focuses on the personal meanings, interpretations, and lived experiences of the participants. Although feminist methodology shares some similarities, such as attention to power dynamics, voice, and marginalised perspectives, this research does not directly engage with the broader political or epistemological commitments of feminist traditions. Instead, it adopts a social identity lens, aiming to enhance understanding job satisfaction within the context of UK higher education. The research methodology adopted for this study can be summarised as follows:

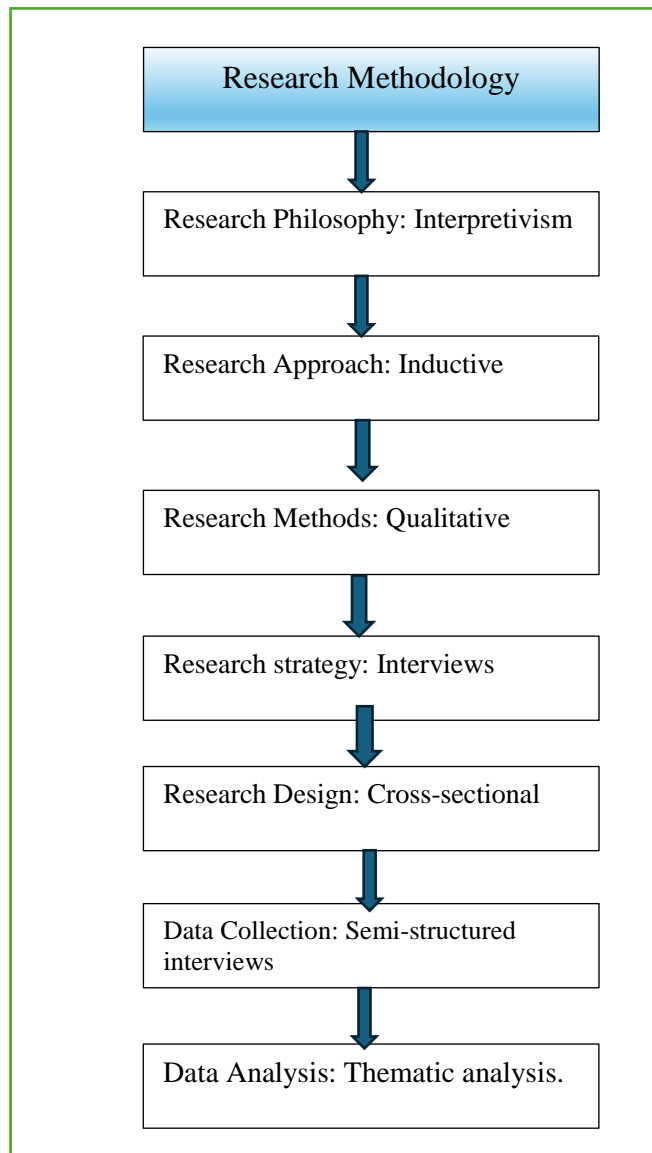


Figure 3.2 Methodologies of this research (Adopted from Saunders et al., 2012 and Bryman and Bell, 2011)

3.3 Research Approach

This research follows an inductive approach, which was used to collect qualitative data from different participants to build a conceptual framework. In other words, information was collected by interviewing 15 BAME female academics in the higher education sector, and the data was analysed to build up the theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Justification for Research approach:

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), inductive reasoning allows for theory to emerge from the data, helping researchers gain new insights, whereas the deductive approach focuses on testing existing theories by applying them to new data (Saunders et al., 2009), essentially confirming what is already known. The deductive method can be restrictive, especially when studying new or underexplored topics, as it may miss unexpected themes or patterns (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In contrast, the inductive approach is more flexible and open-ended, making it well-suited for this research (Bingham and Witkowsky, 2021). Since the impact of social identity on BAME female academics' job satisfaction in UK higher education institutions remains underexplored, there is a noticeable gap in the literature. Additionally, the concept of multiculturalism in higher education is still evolving, and the data collected through interviews can provide new insights into this context.

This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how BAME female academics perceive barriers to job satisfaction, how underrepresentation affects their professional experiences, and which strategies they believe are necessary for building multicultural, inclusive environments. By focusing on participants' subjective interpretations, the inductive method aligns with the interpretivist philosophy, making it an appropriate and meaningful choice for exploring this complex social issue.

In this research, the researcher is interpretivists and think reality is only possible through social construction, consciousness, and shared meaning (Bingham and Witkowsky, 2021). This approach values discussion and interviews as essential for generating theory and qualitative insights (Bernard, 2002). Consequently, the study uses a small, purposive sample and conducts in-depth interviews to explore social constructions in detail. As the aim is not to test Social Identity Theory (SIT), no hypotheses are formulated. The deductive approach is considered a scientific approach that emphasises structure, quantification, generalisability, and testable

hypotheses (Morgan, 2007). Therefore, a deductive approach is unsuitable for meeting the current research aim and objectives. The inductive approach can be used with interpretivism, and based on the aim and objectives, the researcher chooses the appropriate approach (Namey et al., 2008).

3.4 Research Methods

Research methods help a researcher identify the appropriate data sources based on their philosophy and approach. They also help them use the correct instruments for data collection and analyse the data with suitable tools. This research follows an inductive approach, which aligns with conducting a qualitative study. The goal of the research is to evaluate impact of social identity on BAME female academics job satisfaction, and qualitative research is effective for this type of analysis. Therefore, this study has used a qualitative approach to establish causality rather than quantitative correlations. The following paragraphs detail the reasons for choosing qualitative research methods.

Justification for using a qualitative research method:

This research aims to analyse and evaluate the impact of social identity on employee satisfaction at work. A qualitative study was conducted through interviews since no accepted framework or measurement variables exist in the current literature. The goal is to identify measurement variables and develop a model. Discussions with relevant participants were used to generate qualitative data to identify the responsible variables. Moreover, the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 lends itself to a qualitative methodology, where BAME female academics, through social identity theory, share their perception and experiences of job satisfaction. The aim is to find how BAME female academics perceive themselves within their institutional and professional groups and how their intersecting identity such as ethnicity and gender impacts their sense of inclusion and belonging. Therefore, this study requires an interpretive and subjective ontological philosophy, where the researcher can use qualitative research methods to gather participants' perceptions regarding job satisfaction.

Qualitative research focuses on text, video, audio recordings, and photographs instead of numbers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This type of data can be gathered through diary entries or in-depth interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The goal is to understand individuals' social reality by studying participants in their natural settings. Qualitative research

has three key features: (a) it uses an inductive approach to research and theory; (b) it takes an interpretivist epistemological position; and (c) it adopts a subjectivist ontological stance. Lewis (2012) notes that a good qualitative study has a clear purpose, aligns research questions with methods, and produces valid and reliable data.

Quantitative research, by contrast, is typically linked to positivism and is used when the data collection process is structured and predetermined. It follows a deductive approach, where the goal is to test existing theories using measurable data (Tashakkori and Teddie, 2010). However, this research takes an interpretivist approach combined with an inductive reasoning process, as the aim is to explore how BAME female academics perceive job satisfaction and how it is shaped by their social identity. Interpretivism is ideal for studying subjective experiences and social issues, allowing researchers to understand the meaning participants attach to their lived realities. This approach is particularly effective in natural settings, where building trust and openness enhances the depth of the data. Because this study focuses on perceptions and individual interpretations rather than testing predetermined variables or measuring relationships between factors (as shown in Table 3.3), a quantitative method is not suitable. Instead, the qualitative, inductive design better captures the nuanced, complex experiences of the participants.

3.5 Researcher Positionality

This study follows a subjective interpretivist approach, which means it focuses on how people understand and give meaning to their experiences, rather than trying to present one fixed or objective reality. The strength of this qualitative research lies in the relationship between the researcher and the participants. In this kind of study, the process is often mutual; both the researcher and participants share and gain insights with and from each other, resulting in a two-way interaction where both sides contribute and benefit (Trainor and Bouchard, 2013).

The researcher aimed to build meaningful and respectful relationships with the participants to better understand their experiences from their own perspective, without judgment. The researcher also recognised that the quality of the relationship between researcher and participant would directly affect the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. Gaining access to this group gave valuable insight into complex and sensitive issues, but it was equally

important to carefully consider and ask the right questions about setting clear, shared boundaries to maintain ethical standards throughout the study. To reduce bias, the researcher took some initiatives, such as creating a comfortable and flexible place where the participants could express themselves clearly. Furthermore, the researcher used an interview guide, asking follow-up questions and rearranging the questions to ensure sensitivity and learn about the interviewees' current work experience and current challenges or barriers they face. The interview guides were also used to learn about the interviewees' perceptions of underrepresentation and how it impacts them. I also asked for their opinion on building strategies to create an effective multicultural organisation. This experience allowed me to provide enough space for participants to express themselves and to define and re-define the topic under discussion.

As a self-identified BAME female early in academic career, the researcher was mindful of the ethical considerations, power dynamics, and gender-related issues throughout the research process. Having own experiences within higher education, the researcher aimed to amplify the voices of underrepresented BAME female academics whose struggles have often been overlooked. By using a social identity theory and intersectional theory lens and adopting an interpretivist, subjective approach, the study created space for participants to share their lived experiences in higher education. A comfortable and flexible interview environment was established to help participants speak openly. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, Guba's model was applied to minimise bias. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, encouraging participants to respond honestly. When clarity was needed, the researcher used gentle probing rather than direct questioning to respect the participants' perspectives and ensure accurate understanding.

In this study, concepts such as insider–outsider roles, differences and similarities, and the researcher's positionality are central to the research process. Alexander et al. (2007) argue that communities are fluid and socially and culturally constructed rather than fixed or homogenous. They also caution against allowing one voice to stand in for an entire group. The researcher was careful not to position the BAME women in this study as representative of all BAME female academics or as speaking for an entire ethnic group. Instead, their experiences are seen as individual and context-specific, offering valuable insights without claiming to speak for everyone.

As a BAME female academic, the researcher's own background aligned closely with the focus of the study, which created practical and cultural advantages during the interviews. This shared identity reduced the likelihood of being seen as an 'outsider' and helped build trust with participants. In many research settings, there is often a power imbalance between the researcher and participants, particularly when those being studied are from marginalised groups. For instance, this imbalance would likely be more pronounced if White male researchers were investigating the experiences of BAME women. In contrast, the researcher position as an insider helped ease this dynamic, allowing for mutual respect, openness, and flexibility in the research process (Mazonde and Carmichael, 2020). However, it was difficult to predict how participants would perceive the researcher or how our shared identity as BAME female academics in higher education alongside any differences would be understood or experienced. While the researcher shared certain perceived commonalities with participants, such as group membership, experiences of in-group and out-group favouritism, and issues related to job satisfaction, this does not automatically mean the data collected would be deeper or more insightful. Shared identity does not guarantee a more meaningful connection or understanding; assumptions about commonality should be approached with caution (Neville et al., 2022).

At times, it was perceived that some participants' responses felt a bit rehearsed. This made the researcher wonder whether sharing a similar background or professional circle affected how open participants felt during the interview. Even though the researcher clearly assured them of confidentiality, the participants may still have had concerns about being judged by a peer or about their words being shared. This experience highlighted how cultural and institutional dynamics shape the researcher-participant relationship and, ultimately, how knowledge is created in such contexts (Fraser, 2025).

3.6 Sampling Procedures

The sampling procedure is a vital step for any research. The sampling procedure helps researchers gather suitable data from a targeted population. However, sample selection usually depends on the research question, objective, geographical position, and nature of the question. For this research, the collection process was designed to collect empirical data through semi-structured interviews and secondary data through an analysis of academic staff satisfaction, working environment, and workplace review on HESA, UCU, TUC, and Advance HE reports of the UK higher education sector.

This research aimed to explore barriers that BAME female employees experience as well as in-group and out-group behaviour, willingness to work, and satisfaction; therefore, the data is based on the beliefs, facts, knowledge, experience, and perceptions of the interviewees. The participants were selected from different positions, for example six lecturers, three senior lecturers, two associate professors, and four professors. Among them, three lecturers were in part-time positions, the other two lecturers were on fixed-term contracts, and the rest of the staff were in permanent positions. Moreover, all the participants were BAME and female, and among them there were five Black British, two British Pakistani, four British Bangladeshi, two British Indian, one British Moroccan, and one British Chinese.

The study was based on an online meeting with semi-structured interviews; each interview lasted for 60 minutes. According to this research aim and objective, the participants who identified themselves as 'Black', 'Brown', 'Mixed', or 'African' or who have been racialised according to their heritage are known as 'ethnic minorities' in Western culture. The term BAME refers to the UK's non-White population, which helps make this study more focused. Using this label also makes it easier to compare the findings with current government policies related to non-White groups in the UK. However, it is acknowledged that through labelling, realities can be hidden, and inequalities can also exist between ethnic minorities (Bunglawala, 2019). Moreover, other authors, such as Bhopal (2022) and Arday (2018), also use this term to define their research.

It is important to examine the job satisfaction of BAME female academics because it helps policymakers, practitioners, and managers understand why and how their satisfaction differs based on their ethnicity and gender. This also shows how these factors are connected to their career progression and overall job satisfaction. Participants were picked from seven different higher education institutes; all of them are inside London, and eight of them are post-92 universities, also known as modern universities; three of them are from the Russell Group; and the other four are public research universities.

3.6.1 Sampling Method of this research

Sampling method is the first step where the sampling process begins to define the target population, which is related to the number of people living in a country. The BAME female academics of the UK higher education sector are the target population of this research.

3.6.2 Probability and Non-Probability Sampling

Probability sampling is a method where every population has an equal chance, or probability, of being chosen. According to Zikmund (2002), researchers must identify representative samples from a large population in this type of sampling to generalise their findings. Moreover, probability sampling method is free from biases but more costly than other methods, considering time and energy (Brown, 1947). Non-probability sampling, in contrast to probability sampling, is mainly related to case study research design and qualitative research (Yin, 2003). In non-probability sampling, the researcher selects samples based on subjective judgement rather than random selection. This is a much more flexible method, as the researcher does not need to consider the whole population; they select limited participants based on their judgement, purpose, or convenience. Additionally, non-probability sampling tends to focus on small samples and intends to determine real-life phenomena instead of making statistical inferences about the wider population (Yin, 2003). Therefore, non-probability sampling has been used in this research.

3.6.3 Purposive sampling

This research has also used purposive sampling, as the targeted candidates are BAME female academicians who are mainly on part-time, full-time, permanent and fixed-term contracts. The participants are also lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors. Since participants in this sector are not all located in the same place, probability sampling would not be practical. Moreover, Qualitative inquiry seeks to uncover meaning rooted in human experience by interviewing participants, who help researchers gain a deeper understanding of the topic under study (Gill, 2020). Therefore, the researcher applied the purposive sampling technique by selecting appropriate interviewees who could provide adequate information to meet the research objectives (Ahmad and Wilkins, 2025). Additionally, not all of the BAME female academics in the higher education sector would fit the purpose of the research; for example, employees from different ethnicities or genders are only eligible to answer some of the researcher's questions. Therefore, the researcher selected the participants according to their experience and ethnicity to ensure the validity of the gathered data.

Snowballing could also have been used, but it presents certain limitations. Issues around privacy and consent may arise, particularly if participants feel obligated to refer others from their networks. Additionally, snowballing often leads to recruitment within similar universities or social circles, which can reduce the diversity of the sample and introduce bias (Palinkas et

al., 2015). Therefore, the researcher chose purposive sampling and personally contacted participants to maintain control over sample diversity and research integrity.

3.6.4 Sample Selection

It was difficult to select a sample because the number of BAME female academics is less in UK HEI, and only some were available for the interviews; some had conflicts of interest regarding research, and some did not respond to the researcher's email. The researcher sent 85 emails to different BAME female academics from universities inside London, and only 20 responded. The researcher applied different strategies to select the interviewees; the techniques are stated below:

Initially, the researcher collected information from her own university and requested the faculty members' cooperation. Then, the researcher gathered information on BAME female academics from different university websites, specifically those inside London and around the UK. The researcher contacted them by email and requested information. Moreover, the researcher compiled a list of information on female BAME academicians from different research publications and article websites to send a request letter for information. The researcher also made a flyer asking for volunteers for this research and posted it on different social platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and ethnic minority support networks. Lastly, the researcher asked for references for more participants from those who had already been interviewed.

The participants in this study were BAME female academics working in universities across London. This focus was chosen for both contextual and practical reasons. Firstly, London is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the UK, and this diversity is clearly reflected in its universities. This diversity made it a fitting setting to explore how BAME female academics experience and navigate their academic careers. The city also hosts a wide range of higher education institutions, including research-intensive, post-1992, and specialist universities, which provided access to participants with varied academic experiences within a single geographic area.

Secondly, BAME women make up approximately 12.4% of the UK population (BITC, 2010), representing a broad mix of ethnic communities, including Indian (20%), Black African (14%), Pakistani (13%), Black Caribbean (10%), Bangladeshi (5%), Chinese (5%), Mixed heritage (8%), other Asian backgrounds (9%), other Black backgrounds (1%), and other ethnic groups (15%). Recruiting participants from this demographic was challenging; however, London

universities offered the greatest opportunity to reach a diverse pool of BAME female academics who were willing and available to take part in the study.

Therefore, focusing on London made the research more manageable in terms of time and resources, while still allowing for in-depth discussions with participants. The diversity found within London's universities also provided rich insights into how race, gender, and professional identity come together in academic spaces. The researcher recognises that limiting the study to London means the findings cannot fully represent the experiences of BAME female academics across the whole UK. However, London's highly diverse academic environment offers a strong and relevant context, and the findings can still help inform wider conversations about equality, diversity, and inclusion in higher education.

To reduce sample selection bias, the researcher made sure the sampling frame matched the target group and used purposive sampling, choosing only BAME female academics for the study (Barratt et al., 2015). The participants came from different cultural backgrounds such as Black, Bangladeshi, Moroccan, Chinese, and Pakistani to keep ethnic variation. The advertisement for participants also clearly stated the required job status, ethnicity, gender, and position to limit researcher bias (Ahmed, 2024). In addition, participants were selected from seven different higher education institutions, which increased diversity in the sample and helped reduce bias even further.

The researcher considered it important to explore the organisational and career experiences of different groups, not for the purpose of statistical comparison but to understand why and how social categories such as gender and ethnicity influence career outcomes and workplace experiences. Therefore, it was essential to include participants from a range of intersectional backgrounds. This approach was not intended to meet superficial notions of diversity (Bilge, 2013) but rather to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a BAME woman academic in UK higher education today. Such an approach allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage that participants might encounter (Crenshaw, 1991).

3.6.5 Sample Size

The sample size was determined based on specific characteristics of the proposed study, such as its aim, underlying theoretical framework, and the type of analysis used (Bryman and Bell, 2011). There are 165 higher education providers (HESA, 2019), and among these institutes, 20 individuals responded to the invitation, and 15 participants took part in this study because, among the five respondents, two of the schedules did not match. The other three respondents backed out of the interview before attending. According to Hogg and Tanis (2005), as a rule of thumb, the choice of 30 marks the boundary between small and large samples. However, Cohen (1990) argues that the ‘magic number’ 30 is a fallacy.

Guest et al. (2022) argues that in qualitative research, thematic saturation, the point at which no new themes or insights emerge, can often be achieved within 6 to 12 interviews, particularly when the sample is relatively homogenous in relation to the research focus. This provides empirical support for using a smaller, focused sample size in qualitative studies where depth of understanding is prioritised over numerical representativeness (Hagaman and Wutich, 2017). In this research, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with BAME female academics. Given that this group shares key social and professional characteristics, such as that all of them identify as BAME and all of them are female and working in UK HEI, the sample is relatively homogeneous in focus. Furthermore, this study adopts an interpretivist approach, which seeks to understand how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences and within this paradigm, the emphasis is on gaining depth of understanding rather than breadth or numerical generalisability (Francis et al, 2010). Accordingly, 15 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with BAME female academics to capture their unique perspectives on job satisfaction and how it is influenced by social identity. The interpretivist approach values rich, detailed accounts that reflect participants’ subjective realities, making smaller, information-rich samples appropriate (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022). Therefore, the number of interviews is sufficient to capture diverse yet meaningful insights while achieving thematic saturation.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), at least 40 semi-structured interviews are required to get the overall information regarding the experience, attitude, and behaviour of the employees in organisational research. When developing the research methodology, especially in qualitative studies, one of the most common and difficult challenges is deciding on the sample

size (Sim et al., 2018). In quantitative research, there are clearer guidelines and methods for determining an appropriate sample size (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, 2016). However, in qualitative research, the guidance is often vague or overly simplistic (Boddy, 2016). Saunders et al. (2018) suggest that one way to avoid this ambiguity is by focusing on the concept of saturation (Hennink and Kaiser, 2020). In research methods, saturation is the point where no new information, themes, or codes emerge, indicating that all relevant data has been gathered (Braun and Clarke, 2021c). At this stage, new participants are likely to reflect themes that have already emerged, and additional interviews would not provide much new insight. Once this point is reached, collecting more data becomes unnecessary, as the existing information is sufficient to address the research questions. To avoid this ambiguity, the researcher was able to extract data from the 15 semi-structured interviews to reach a saturation point.

3.7 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study, and suitable data collection tools were applied to meet the research objectives. The following subsections discuss the instruments used for primary data collection for this research.

3.7.1 Primary Data Collection

Data was collected using online interviews because they are one of the best methods for collecting qualitative data in a way that is good for both the researchers and the participants. Using interviews is also flexible and convenient, as it creates a mutual understanding and an environment where interviewees feel comfortable and confident sharing helpful information. The following subsection discusses the interview methods used for this research.

3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interview

This research used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the interviewees. The interview questions cover job satisfaction, career progression, working environment, organisational culture, employee perceptions, and employee attitudes towards peers and managers (Cachia and Millward, 2011). Eight questions were asked, along with follow-up questions, to clarify the main idea and to meet the research objectives. On the one hand, structured interviews are not compelling, as the researcher asks different relevant questions under a single topic (de la Croix, Barrett and Stenfors, 2018). On the other hand, an in-depth interview was not applicable, as different stages of interviews are required when using this

method and because the participants are busy professionals; the researcher could only interview the participants once, as they were too busy for multiple interviews.

An appropriate interview guide was prepared after reviewing the relevant literature based on different factors of social identity theory that the researcher applied to conduct the interviews. While Lofland et al. (2022) recommend using an interview guide as a source for the probes and prompts. However, they also state that an unstructured interview should be 'long', in-depth, and allow participants to speak freely. Additionally, the interview guide was carefully modified and finalised, synthesising the relevant literature and contextual framework. For each interview, the researcher maintained a diary to record field notes that were used as a source of primary data.

Justification for Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews are widely recognised as a leading method for collecting and analysing qualitative data (Scanlan, 2020). They are especially useful in studies exploring experiences of gender (Alhalwachi and Mordi, 2021), race (Huot, Elliot and Fells, 2021), and class inequality, particularly within higher education. This approach is well established in career progression research (Cappellen and Janssens, 2010; Cohen Miller et al., 2023; Hall, Greenman and Yi, 2019) and is valued for its flexibility and ability to capture rich, contextual, and personal insights (Kallio et al., 2016; Creswell, 2013; Smith, 1995; Romito et al., 2021). This research uses a qualitative research method and inductive approach, which means it focuses on collecting detailed personal experiences. The researcher conducted online semi-structured interviews with 15 BAME female academics working in HE in the UK. The aim was to understand the barriers they face with job satisfaction, how in-group and out-group favouritism affects their experience of underrepresentation, and how they build a multicultural sense of identity. These factors were explored from the participants' own perspectives. Moreover, given the study's interpretivist epistemological stance and subjectivist ontological position, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method. The researcher used semi-structured interviews (Hasle et al., 2012; Kitchen, 2004) because the researcher was interested in in-depth information, which cannot be collected through email, mail questionnaire, and postal survey questionnaires that do not permit follow-up questions and more in-depth probing. Moreover, a structured interview uses a set questionnaire consisting of a predetermined and standardised set of questions, while in a semi-structured interview, the

researcher has a list of themes and questions to be covered in a more flexible discussion (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, an unstructured interview is not suitable for this research because it is more informal and is a conversation-type interview, which can affect the study's reliability. The researcher's presence, tone, or reactions may unintentionally influence the participant's responses. This approach does not align with the study's aim to explore the subjective experiences of BAME female academics in UK higher education.

3.7.3 Interview with the academicians and how uncertainty was handled

While semi-structured interviews offer flexibility and depth, they are not without limitations. The subjective nature of both the responses and their interpretation may introduce researcher bias, which requires careful reflexivity. Additionally, the open-ended structure can result in variability across interviews, making it more challenging to compare responses or generalise findings. Furthermore, some respondents avoided some questions.

To resolve these issues, during the interview, the researcher changed the question structure when an interviewee was unresponsive to a particular question. Rather than asking the questions directly, the researcher rephrased the question along with other follow-up questions. The participant then openly discussed the satisfaction/dissatisfaction she has with her institute, and other relevant information was gathered during this interview. Moreover, the researcher re-read transcripts multiple times to reduce premature judgment. Additionally, steps were taken to minimise bias by actively listening and allowing participants to lead the conversation where possible. Furthermore, the researcher audio-recorded and transcribed interviews to stay close to the participants' actual words.

The main objective was to collect valid, reliable, and adequate information about BAME females' knowledge, experience, perceptions of their job roles, work environment, experience working with out-group members, treatment, expected and perceived benefits, and satisfaction. The questions were created to allow the person to discuss their own experiences. The researcher informed the participants of the research aim and objectives by sending a formal email or letter when requesting the interview. The interviewees were asked to set a convenient time for an online meeting using Google Meet (if agreed).

The researcher followed an interview guide to conduct the interviews and encouraged the interviewees to provide detailed information. The aim was to obtain information on their perceptions of different SI issues, their experience with the present and previous working environment, various opportunities and challenges, expected and perceived benefits in the UK HEI etc. With the participants' permission, the researcher recorded each interview. The researcher gave an overview of the research and stated the purpose of the interviews at the beginning of each semi-structured interview. The researcher also explained to attendees that their information would be kept secure, especially if they consented to audio recording. The participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time and signed a consent form, and each interview lasted for 1 hour to 30 minutes.

However, a problem that arose during the interviews was the misinterpretation of a question. To avoid this uncertainty and to foster rapport, the researcher started the interview by asking closed-ended questions to elicit basic information such as age and employment function. Because the primary questions were open-ended, participants could discuss their experiences in greater detail, which resulted in more thorough answers. The researcher encouraged the participants to speak more; however, the researcher did not push the participants to provide any information. Finally, the researcher created a favourable environment for each participant to provide accurate and correct information willingly.

Before conducting interviews, it is important to consider cultural and power dynamics (Nimmon and Stenfors-Hayes, 2016). Recognising and addressing these dynamics can help balance power differences, encouraging honesty and openness between researchers and participants (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). While power relations in qualitative interviews are complex (Pile, 1991; Smith, 2006), they can be managed through reflective strategies and ongoing dialogue (Anyan, 2013). Therefore, the researcher was transparent about the collaborative nature of the research, emphasising the contribution of both parties and clarifying that data analysis involves considering what is said, how it is said, and when it is said (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009; James and Platzer, 1999). The researcher achieved this by being culturally aware, respectful, flexible, and sensitive to context (Mazonde and Carmichael, 2020). Understanding both the participants' cultural backgrounds and the UK higher education environment is essential for interpreting their experiences within the right social and workplace context.

The research aims were explained in an introductory email to participants who were reached by phone, email, or personal connections. Following consent, all interviews were digitally recorded, saved on two platforms for backup, and transcribed. The data was coded and analysed based on the research objective. To keep the interviews focused, the researcher used a flexible interview schedule.

3.7.4 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data can include both raw data and published summaries (Saunders et al., 2009). Secondary data through an analysis of academic staff satisfaction, working environment, and workplace review on HESA, UCU, TUC, and Advance HE reports of the UK higher education sector was analysed.

3.8 Data analysis and interpretation methods

The research follows an inductive research approach, aiming to develop a theory from emerging data rather than to test an existing theory. This method requires that qualitative data be analysed using an appropriate method. For this research, thematic analysis was considered appropriate.

3.8.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a popular form of data analysis in qualitative research. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003), themes represent the fundamental concepts that describe the subject matter of each author's article. Consequently, the themes represent the core ideas, arguments, and conceptual linking of expressions on which an article's research questions, constructs, concepts, and measurements are based (Thorpe et al., 2005). Quinlan (2011) indicates that thematic analysis is an analysis of data using themes. Furthermore, it is a qualitative analytic method for 'Identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (e.g. themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

In this study, the goal is to understand how social identity impacts BAME female academics' job satisfaction. This study examines key themes related to barriers, underrepresentation, in-group and out-group favouritism, intersectionality, and strategies to set multicultural social identity in UK HEI. Furthermore, it investigates how these aspects impact BAME female academics' feelings, sense of belonging, and, most importantly, job satisfaction. Thematic analysis was chosen because it has already been used in studies focusing on the experiences of marginalised groups, such as academics of colour, and in diversity research in general (Reyes, Bogumil and Welch, 2021; Bhopal, 2022; Nash and Moore, 2022). This research seeks to understand common themes related to social identity, job satisfaction, inclusion, and intersectionality within the academic workplace. Thematic analysis is a flexible method that can be used in many types of research, including both general qualitative studies (Brooks et al., 2015) and, more specifically, business and management research (Burton and Galvin, 2019; Tabari, King, and Egan, 2020). This flexibility means it can be adapted depending on the researcher's views and assumptions (King, 2004a).

The study follows six phases of thematic analysis, which are becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing reports (Robson, 2011; Namey et al., 2008; Braun and Clarke 2006; Wright and Pollert, 2006; Thorpe et al., 2005; Welsh, 2002; Boyatzis, 1998). The present research uses thematic analysis because it offers flexibility in terms of data analysis and establishing research patterns (i.e., inductive and deductive).

The six phases are presented below:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with data

The first step in the thematic analysis process is becoming familiar with the data set, which entails repeated and active reading through of the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this study, transcripts were made from 15 semi-structured interviews (Appendix 8.4). The interviews were recorded and transcribed with consent. The initial data was stored in NVivo 14 software. At this stage, the researcher took notes and re-read the entire transcript to understand the in-depth meaning of the answers but did not start coding (Robinson, 2011). Although the process of transcription is time-consuming and frustrating, it can be an excellent starting point for familiarisation with the data for the formal coding process (Robson, 2011; Riessman, 1993).

Once the researcher had transcribed a data set, she checked the transcriptions against the recordings to ensure accuracy, as directed in the Braun and Clarke (2006) guidelines for good thematic analysis.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

A code should be sufficiently well-defined and demarcated so that it does not overlap with other codes, and it should fit logically within a larger coding framework or coding template (sometimes also called coding manuals) that guides the coding process by outlining and defining the codes to be applied (Crabtree and Miller 1999; Attride-Stirling 2001; King 2004; Nowell et al. 2017). According to Gibbs (2007), code should include specific acts, events, behaviours, activities, states, participation, and reflexives. Coding can be done by either using NVivo software or manually highlighting codes with different coloured pens (Robson, 2011; Barun and Clarke, 2006). For this study, NVivo 14 was used for analysing data (Appendix 8.5). This study initially coded 210 codes and 268 references from 15 semi-structured interviews. Given the lack of research on how social identity affects the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in UK higher education, as well as the strategies they use to navigate related challenges, this study was initially designed to be exploratory. Consequently, inductive analysis techniques were used to develop initial codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Swain, 2018).

The next step was to develop a theory-driven code that was aligned with the research objective. A theory-driven coding scheme involves breaking down an existing theoretical foundation to create codes that can be applied to the data (Syed and Nelson, 2015; Bhattacharya, 2015). For this research, the coding scheme was created by breaking down social identity theory, social categorisation, in-group and out-group favouritism, intersectional theory, multicultural organisation, and job satisfaction theory. The data were carefully reviewed multiple times, initially using pre-determined themes based on the literature and the theoretical framework, ensuring alignment with each research objective.

Phase 3: Identifying themes

At this stage, the researcher allowed the data to speak for itself, identifying patterns and themes based solely on what emerged from the data, without relying on any prior assumptions or theories.

The researcher started with open coding (also called first-cycle coding), which involved giving basic, simple labels to parts of the data. These early codes were often just descriptions to help start organising the information (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). After identifying initial codes, the researcher developed a list of codes. Themes do not simply emerge from the data (Varpio et al. 2017); instead, they are constructed by the researcher through analysing, combining, comparing, and even graphically mapping how codes relate to one another. Next, the researcher began grouping the codes into possible themes and subthemes. The researcher examined how different codes related to each other and which ones could be combined to form bigger ideas (themes). In inductive analysis, the researcher derives the themes expressly from the coded data so the themes identified will be more closely linked to the original data and reflect the entire data set (Braun and Clarke 2006). However, some themes might appear repetitively, and some appear not to belong to any group; in this situation, these files can fall under the miscellaneous category. The researcher compiled all relevant data and organised it according to themes, which helped capture the main ideas and perspectives in a way that directly aligned with the research objectives. Thus, the researcher, after analysing the data, produced 39 themes and sub-themes from the 210 initial codes (Appendix 8.6).

Phase:4 Reviewing themes

Phases 3 and 4 of the thematic analysis serve to ensure that the analysis of qualitative data achieves a satisfactory position in the study. Braun and Clarke (2013) state that it is paramount for the initial themes to be reviewed. During phase 4, the researcher often went back to the raw data and the codes; through doing this, the researcher saw that some of the initial themes did not have enough evidence to support them. It was at this point that some were then broken down and combined with other themes. If there is some issue, then the theme should be discarded (Robson, 2011). Once the researcher is satisfied with the themes, they might develop a thematic map. When creating the thematic map, the researcher checked whether each theme

was valid by making sure the map accurately reflected the overall meanings found in the data. The accurate representation of data and themes in a thematic map depends on the selected theoretical and analytic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Phases 3 and 4 of the thematic analysis serve to ensure that the analysis of qualitative data achieves a satisfactory position in the study.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming themes

At this stage, the researcher creates an overall narrative reflecting the data. Furthermore, they analyse each theme and its details and clearly identify which themes are valid and which are not. Finally, the researcher develops concise names for themes that immediately give the reader a sense of the theme in relation to the research objectives (Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2006) (Appendix: 8.7).

Phase 6: Producing the report

In the final step, the researcher wrote about the main themes in a clear and honest way to show that the data was trustworthy. The researcher backed up the ideas with quotes and examples from what people said. Since an inductive approach is used, the researcher tried to explain each theme in a rich and detailed way (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). Based on the emerging themes, the researcher has met the research aim and objectives and drawn up the final framework.

3.8.2 Justification of data analysis

This study seeks to understand BAME female academics' job satisfaction and experiences, not just measure or quantify them. Thematic analysis aligns with an interpretivist approach, which focuses on understanding how people make sense of their world. This study is not about measuring how often job satisfaction or discrimination is mentioned but is rather about how BAME female academics experience and understand these issues. During the interviews, the participants provided various information in relation to each point in the interview guide. The transcript was prepared based on each interview, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis, a qualitative data analysis method appropriate for exploring patterns across qualitative data obtained from the interview transcripts. The main aim was to

identify and evaluate the common themes that appeared across participants' responses. Thematic analysis helps organise and interpret textual data by grouping it into themes, making it easier to understand the key issues that participants mentioned repeatedly and how these issues are connected.

The primary source of data is the transcripts prepared from the interviews; therefore, the data is textual and not in large quantities. Furthermore, the data will not come from audio, video, graphics, or images. Therefore, thematic analysis is a suitable tool for this research to analyse the data based on the interview transcripts. Additionally, thematic analysis is appropriate for this study because it can detect and identify the factors responsible for the BAME female academic staff's job satisfaction. Furthermore, it allows the building of different relevant codes, which rectifies different perceptions of respondents' views (Varpio et al. 2017). It can also be used to classify qualitative data according to similarities and dissimilarities.

The process of identifying and defining themes is deeply influenced by the researcher's own interpretation and perspective, which can lead to differences in findings among researchers analysing the same data. For this reason, reflexivity plays a crucial role in qualitative research. The researcher did not include a separate reflexivity section in this thesis; however, she has maintained a personal diary throughout the research process. This diary captured her thoughts and reflections during interviews, coding, and theme development. The researcher also documented details such as the tone and emotional expressions of participants during interviews. Furthermore, the researcher regularly reflected on her own positionality and used the diary to identify and minimise any personal biases.

However, reliability is a concern with thematic analysis because more interpretation is required to define data to make codes and apply the codes to chunks of text. Moreover, no clear and concise guidelines explain how it should be conducted (Barun and Clarke, 2006). Despite these issues relating to reliability, researchers find this analysis the most useful approach for capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.9 Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Credibility: Credibility techniques include prolonged engagement, continuous observation, the data collection process, and researcher triangulation (Lincon and Guba, 1985). Checking the credibility of a study involves conducting an external review of the research, examining the researcher's background, and assessing the findings and interpretations against the raw data. It can be operationalised by checking and testing the findings and interpretations with the participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The credibility of a study depends on the researcher's experience and representation of the research, which fits the respondent's view (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The credibility of the findings in this research has been cross-checked with UK HE industry statistics, different databases, and information from the Office of National Statistics.

Transferability: The generalisability of inquiry is stated as transferability in qualitative research, which depends on case-to-case transfer (Tobin and Begley, 2004). The researcher has provided detailed descriptions of the findings so that those who want to apply the findings to their research can judge the transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The findings of this research are presented in a general way so that the relevant practitioners and policymakers can use them in different industries and sectors, including the UK HE industry, to make decisions. The researcher has clearly explained the moves or strategies used in the data analysis to demonstrate rigor and facilitate evaluation. Furthermore, she has connected the findings to existing theories or proposed new models that explain the phenomenon being studied.

Dependability: To ensure dependability, the researcher must ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This research process will be presented following the standard research process. Furthermore, the researcher regularly re-coded a portion of the data that helped ensure consistency in coding and interpretation.

Confirmability: Confirmability ensures that the researcher has interpreted and derived the findings using data. Moreover, it leads to a demonstration of the conclusion and interpretations

of the research (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Conformability is achieved for this research, ensuring credibility, transferability, and dependability.

3.10 Research Ethics

The researcher worked with humans to collect the necessary data for interviews. Therefore, careful measures were taken to communicate with the participants respectfully and to ensure they were treated with dignity. Steps were also taken to thoughtfully address any concerns or disagreements that arose (Greenwood, 2016). Additionally, the interviewees were sent consent forms and information sheets containing the aim of the research, the topic of discussion, and the duration. The interviewees received the information about confidentiality and understood that they have the right to withdraw at any time after or during the interview. The researcher did not use the names of the participants in the data analysis; the obtained data was used only for this research, and it will not be handed over to third parties.

3.11 Limitation of the Research

The researcher is from a BAME background, and it was difficult for her to remain biasfree. However, during the data interpretation and analysis, the researcher tried her best to remain bias-free by only focusing on the information given to the participants. She guided the participants during the interviews and analysed the data to form a picture of the sector and the job satisfaction of the selected employees. The main challenge of this research was to reach the right participants and motivate them to provide information. As the selected participants are busy professionals and few in number, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews; the researcher conducted the interviews online using Google Meet, which created a challenge with asking necessary relevant questions. Moreover, there are some possibilities of biases, as the interview is qualitative, and most of the answers relate to the participants' experiences.

3.12 Chapter Summary

Women play significant roles in higher education, teaching, assessment, managing overall activities, and conducting research. However, there are fewer BAME female employees than any other group in the UK higher education sector. This research uses social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. Since then (according to the researcher's best knowledge), research has not been conducted in the context of organisational research to

evaluate the satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector. Data was collected from BAME female academics and senior managerial staff and analysed using the thematic analysis technique. The researcher has treated the participants with respect and dignity; the collected information will not be handed over to third parties.

This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that shape job satisfaction among BAME female academics in the UK higher education. The empirical contribution will be social identity and employee satisfaction measurement variables. Moreover, the research findings will be helpful for managers and policymakers, as they will propose practical ways to improve BAME female employee satisfaction with an appropriate model.

The key points made include

1. In this research, both primary and secondary sources were used to collect data.
2. Fifteen semi-structured face-to-face and remote interviews were conducted, and secondary data was collected from HESA, Advance HE, TUC, ONS, CENSUS, journals, and books.
3. Non-probability sampling has been used.
4. This is qualitative research.
5. This is an interpretivist philosophy of epistemology.
6. Thematic analysis is used for analysing data.

The next chapter is the findings and discussion chapter. This research has found eight themes and 31 sub-themes; based on the findings, the researcher has created four models.

In the next part of the study, the researcher presents two chapters: Chapter 4 (Findings) and Chapter 5 (Analysis and Discussion).

Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

The aim of the chapter is to present the qualitative data analysis and findings obtained from 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector. The collected data has been analysed using thematic analysis techniques in line with the research objective.

4.1 Qualitative data collection procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 female academics from BAME backgrounds. The participants were selected from different positions, for example, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and professor level from 7 different higher education institutes; all of them are inside London, and 3 of them are post-92 universities, also known as modern universities; 2 of them are from Russell Group; and the other two are public research universities. Due to time constraints, the meetings were held online using Google Meet, and each meeting lasted for 60 minutes. Therefore, the semi-structured interview technique has been applied with follow-up questions. The researcher prepared an interview guide reviewing contemporary literature, which was followed during the interview in order to gather valid and relevant data. The interviewees were selected using the non-probability sampling technique. The aim was to reach the appropriate subject who could provide relevant information to meet the research purposes. A formal request to obtain information has been sent to each participant along with a consent letter. In the request letter, the research aim, objectives, and topics of the discussion were presented. The participants agreed to the interviews, considering the topics of discussion, filled out the consent forms, and returned them to the researcher by email.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher requested to record the interviews, and they agreed. The researcher has prepared the transcripts based on the recorded discussion. During the interviews, the researcher asked questions following the interview guide and made further relevant questions in order to get in-depth information regarding their experience, knowledge, belief, behaviour, and attitudes about social identity and its impact on job satisfaction. The researcher did not push anyone to provide any information, and the participants provided data willingly. The following table shows a description of the participants who contributed to this research.

Anonymous Name and ID of the Participant (IDP)	Nationality	Gender	Department	Position
IDP 01 Belgium	Black British	Female	English	Senior Lecturer (Permanent)
IDP 02 Bobita	Black British	Female	Education	Professor (Permanent)
IDP 03 Ibtisam	Moroccan British	Female	Business	Lecturer (Permanent)
IDP 04 Laila	British Pakistani	Female	Marketing	Professor (Permanent)
IDP 05 Lucky	British Bangladeshi	Female	Education	Lecturer (Part-time)
IDP 06 Liyana	Black British	Female	Film and Art	Professor (Permanent)
IDP 07 Maria	British Chinese	Female	Accounting and Finance	Lecturer (Fixed term)
IDP 08 Nahar	British Bangladeshi	Female	Business	Senior Lecturer (Permanent)
IDP 09 Pamela	Black British	Female	Education	Associate professor (Permanent)
IDP 10 Tania	British Indian	Female	English	Professor (Permanent)
IDP 11 Nisa	British Pakistani	Female	Business Management	Lecturer (Part-time)
IDP 12 Nupu	British Bangladeshi	Female	Business Management	Senior Lecturer (Permanent)
IDP 13 Naysa	British Indian	Female	Film and Art	Associate Professor (Permanent)
IDP 14 Mukta	Black British	Female	Business Management	Lecturer (Part-time)
IDP 15 Kakoli	British Bangladeshi	Female	Marketing	Lecturer (Fixed term)

Table 4.1 The Description of the Participants (The Author's View, 2024)

4.2 Theme Development

The researcher has been through the transcripts many times to become familiar with the data collected from fifteen participants. This study initially coded 210 codes and 268 references from fifteen semi-structured interviews, and NVivo 14 was used to analyse the data (Appendix 11.7). After analysing the data, the researcher found eight themes and thirty-one sub-themes. This research has followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis technique and the six phases of theme development such as a) Familiarising yourself with the data, b) Generating initial codes, c) Searching for themes, d) Reviewing the themes, e) Naming the themes, and f) Producing the report. Regarding the number of themes, Robson (2011) suggests that it is

challenging to analyse if the number of critical themes is more than 15. On the other hand, if the number of themes is less than 4, it is not adequate to justify the information. At this initial stage, each theme has been analysed to identify the sub-themes, if any. Later, the unique names are given to make it clear to the readers. Lastly, after analysing the data, the researcher developed 39 themes and sub-themes from the 210 initial codes. (Appendix 11.5), which are presented below:

Theme 1- Organisational Barrier.

Theme 2- Structural Barrier.

Theme 3- Personal Barrier.

Theme 4- Group favouritism hinders social acceptance.

Theme 5- Uneven career pathways.

Theme 6- Limited Opportunities to growth.

Theme 7- Inclusivity Matters.

Theme 8- Working together to Share Burden.

4.2.1 Key themes in line with the research objectives:

The main findings of this research are presented under 8 key themes that were generated by the gathered concepts from the transcripts. Following are the key themes in line with the research objectives:

1. Research Objective 1: Theme 1,2 and 3
2. Research Objective 2: Theme 4,5 and 6
3. Research Objective 3: Theme 7 and 8
4. Research Objective 4: The Study will build up a New Model.

4.2.2 Key Themes are discussed:

This section begins by introducing the explanation of the themes as:

Theme 1: Organisational Barriers.

BAME academic work responsibilities in the institutions are not different from any other faculties. However, the skills of the BAME female faculty have always been questioned in terms of their career advancement to higher positions. To save the quota and keep the branding game on, they hide the whiteness under the equality curtain, where BAME female academicians go through unbearable job challenges, mental stress, hectic jobs, and become inefficient in their own positions.

Theme 2: Structural Barrier

When compared to the work of their white counterparts, employees of ethnic minorities frequently feel that their work is inspected more and given less credibility. One could feel both hyper-visible and simultaneously invisible because of this. Moreover, BAME female academics feel discriminated against because they can't say no to work because of their cultural practices and because the institution's gates are too high for them to grow. Nonetheless, BAME female academics are mostly in fixed term, part-time and zero-hour contract comparing to white backgrounds which creates disparities too.

Theme 3: Personal Barrier

Personal barriers are created by oneself, and it has been complicated to find a balance between work and home. Work-life balance is defined as "an individual's ability, regardless of age or gender, to find a life rhythm that allows individuals to combine their work with other responsibilities, activities, or aspirations. Employees improve their quality of life by dedicating more time to various hobbies, leisure activities, training courses, and social commitments. However, in academia, it is hard to find time for personal interests, which disrupts personal growth and causes job dissatisfaction. Nonetheless, BAME female academics are mostly responsible for care responsibilities, and most of the time they are stereotyped, and their potential growth is always marked negatively. In addition, their own choice of being comfortable in the same place also hinders their growth, which eventually turns into job dissatisfaction.

Theme 4: Group favouritism hinders social acceptance.

BAME Female academics frequently not only hold space in the lower levels of leadership but are also positioned as a deficit, which needs to alter because they are not typically perceived as leaders. Numerous BAME women excel in their respective fields, but in higher education institutions, they seem to minimise their expertise by denying them equal opportunities or by not supporting their development as much as their white counterparts. Additionally, promotions are rigged and frequently given to white co-workers who are from same group. Usually due to in-group and out group favouritism BAME female academics faces certain stereotyping, unconscious biasness, discrimination and even blamed for their own underrepresentation in the decision-making roles, which impacts their job satisfaction.

Theme 5: Uneven career pathways.

BAME Female employees who are in professorial positions can explain their thoughts more openly than a lecturer. The difference between positions refers to the voice used to express the thoughts. As time passes, one develops professional competency and confidence, which creates awareness that one can make decisions. Furthermore, it has advanced how individuals communicate because of their position. However, hesitation in expressing needs and thoughts can create conflicts and give birth to uncertainty, which leads to job dissatisfaction.

Theme 6: Limited opportunity to growth.

Academicians who are working in higher education are self-satisfied. Teaching and working in higher education are rewarding for them. However, taking on more workload than a person can bear is also referred to as responsibility," and BAME female academicians are taking on these responsibilities without any position in a higher grade. Nonetheless, policy and procedure for equality remain a showpiece that is only for show and not for use.

Theme 7: Inclusivity Matters.

In this theme, a strategy has been built to manage social identity to ensure job satisfaction effectively. An inclusive recruitment policy and diverse interviewers can help the system. Moreover, those already in the academic world should be allowed to prove themselves. Universities now recruit record numbers of BAME students in attendance, but this diversity has not been seen in staff, particularly at the senior level. For that, the BAME leadership programme can be a solution to getting over it. Nonetheless, assessing the effectiveness of policies is required when building an inclusive workplace. In addition, training for managers and recruitment panel members can reduce workplace inequality and create job satisfaction for BAME female academics.

Theme 8: Working Together to Share the Burden.

In this theme, both in-group and out-group members can work together by sharing burdens, which can benefit the organisation. By creating equal opportunities, differences can be reduced. Moreover, mutual and common networks can make this relationship much stronger. Sharing the burden can enhance job satisfaction and reduce differences.

4.3 Chapter summary:

This chapter provides a brief overview of the qualitative data collection process, participant information, and the process of generating themes that align with the research objectives. A short summary of each theme is also presented before moving to the main findings and analysis. The following chapter integrates both the findings and their discussion, supporting each with relevant literature. Additionally, four new models are introduced to further address and complement the objectives of this research.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of eight themes along with thirty-one sub-themes to meet Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. These chapters are divided into Sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4, and each section presents an analysis and discussion of each theme and sub-theme. Four models (Models 1, 2, 3, and 4) are introduced after analysing the data that policy practitioners, HEI managers, agencies, and multicultural organisations can use. The following analysis and discussion section meet Objective 1.

5.1 Objective 1: The barriers to BAME female academics' job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector

In this section of the research, the researcher presents and discusses the relevant themes by interviewing 15 BAME female academics in UK HEIs. This section comprises Theme 1: Organisational Barriers, Theme 2: Structural Barriers, and Theme 3: Personal Barriers. To achieve the first objective of this study, 'To explore and evaluate the barriers for BAME female academic staff in the UK higher education sector', three themes and 12 sub-themes are identified. Based on the findings, the 'Barriers for BAME female academicians' job satisfaction in the UK' model has been built. BAME female academicians face organisational, structural, and personal barriers that affect their job satisfaction due to their social identity. The identification of these issues points to the need to develop a new model to improve practices and conditions in the industry. This paper supports existing evidence that various factors create barriers for BAME female academic job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector. The following Model1 is based on Themes 1, 2, and 3 and aims to meet Objective 1. In the next section, analysis and discussion of this model continue.

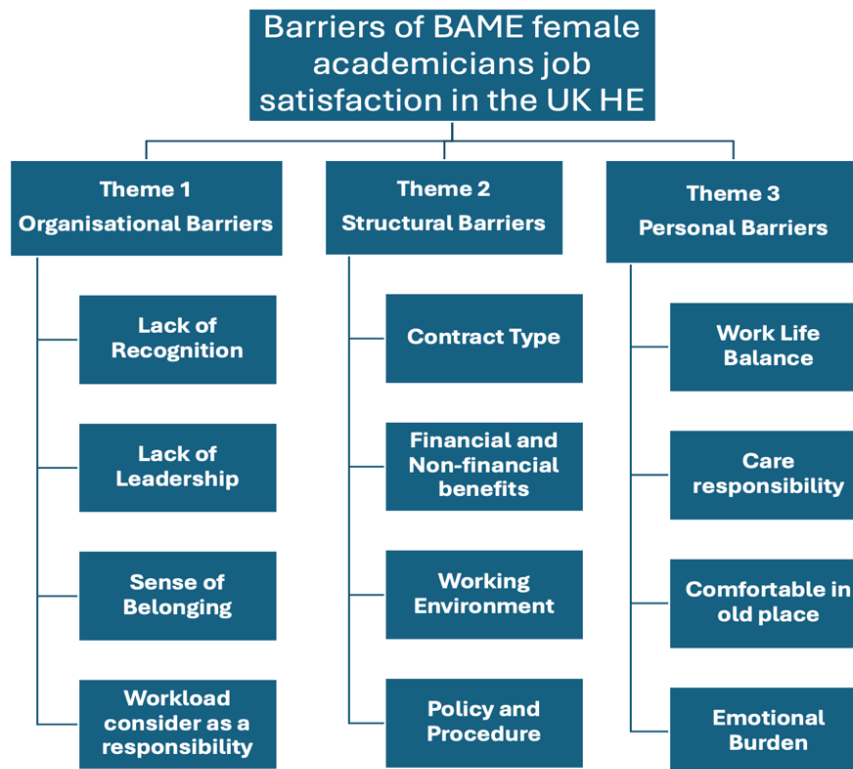


Figure 5.1: Model 1 Barriers for BAME Female Academicians’ Job Satisfaction in UK HE (The Author’s view, 2024)

Based on Figure 5.1, BAME female academics face various types of barriers on a structural, organisational, and personal level that hinder their job satisfaction. Model1 is based on the themes and sub-themes extracted from the 15 semi-structured interviews with BAME female academics. To support the empirical findings of this research, the most recent research by various authors has been used. The questions that were asked during the interview were related to the interviewees’ experiences regarding overall job satisfaction and barriers they faced in higher education as BAME female academics. Based on their answers, the scripts were analysed using NVivo 14 to find out the themes and sub-themes, and the most suitable results were selected to continue the findings and analysis chapter. In the next section, the interview findings are presented and each factor is discussed.

5.1.1 Theme 1: Organisational Barriers

Organisational barriers, in the context of BAME female academics in UK higher education, are systemic obstacles within institutions that disproportionately hinder their career progression, sense of belonging, and overall job satisfaction. Baltaru (2024) has stated that ongoing inequalities hinder the potential of minority ethnic individuals in the workplace. This

observation reflects Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory that social categorisation, which exaggerates group differences, disadvantages certain groups and harms society overall. These assumptions negatively impact BAME female academics the most, shaping White colleagues' perceptions of their organisational value and capabilities. Due to these organisational barriers, BAME female academics often experience lower job satisfaction.

According to Cherry (2020), individuals must first fulfil their basic needs before they can seek out social, emotional, and self-actualisation needs. These essential needs serve as the foundation for higher-level satisfaction, such as the need for love and belonging, which encompass intimacy, interpersonal relationships, trust, cultural acceptance, respect, and affiliation (Suyono & Mudjanarko, 2017). For this study, these needs are turned into sub-themes of organisational barriers, such as sense of belonging, lack of recognition, role models that build leadership roles, workload considered as responsibility, and White sanction and networking.

During the interviews, participants shared their experiences about how organisational obstacles impact their job satisfaction. There were certain differences faced by BAME female academics at the professor level, senior lecturer level, or lecturer level. In the next part of this chapter, the sub-themes of the organisational barriers are discussed, along with a discussion of each sub-theme. The structural barriers and individual barriers are also considered.

Sense of Belonging

The study refers to the impact of social identity on BAME female academic job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector, where social identity can be related to the institution's intention to promote diversity and how an individual positions themselves in a group. The researcher found different views among the respondents regarding social identity in the workforce. For some of them, the number of BAME female academics was growing, but to meet the equality quota. Few of the interviewees believed it was their dedication to work that brought them to their place. One of the female academics (IDP 02, Bobita) mentioned that:

I believe ethnic minority academics lack credibility and are solely employed to fulfil diversity quotas rather than based on their qualifications. I had first-hand experience with this. After receiving a promotion, some co-workers began discussing behind my back how the institution was striving to advance BAME academics. This gave the

impression that my advancement was not based on my merit, which was quite depressing.

Another respondent (IDP 01, Belgium) stated that advancement of a BAME faculty member is just a piece of evidence that proves equality does exist in the institution to keep up the branding game:

I was getting ready to go. Since I started at this university, it has been around 10 years since I got a promotion. I applied three years in a row, but I was rejected each time. I made the decision to leave the facility because I was depressed. Then I received an email informing me that all my co-workers were being offered promotions. Okay, why me? I asked. So, when I turned to look, I saw that everyone was White and male. I was the only Black woman there. I understood why I was there. To balance things out so that they appear to be equal.

IDP 09, Pamela believed that belongingness also comes from visibility in the workplace. BAME female academics were sometimes highlighted in the workplace when it was time to take blame, rather than fame.

The trauma that people of colour face working in a White institution, is being marginalised, being patronised, and not being visible. OK, you are invisible until something happens and they need someone to play, or if something is failing and they want someone to take the fall for it, then they put your name forward to take on such a project. They won't take those failing projects into their own hands; rather, they will pass them to us so that we can take the blame for the failing project.

This view was supported by another respondent (IDP 07, Maria),

The programme that I'm leading now, it was a failing programme, I mean properly failing. It had no structure, it was failing. They asked me because I took some time out and when I came back, they asked me to take on the programme leadership, but I said why? They said because it's new, you had an interest in this before and we think you'll be best suited. I said OK, so when I looked at it, I said this programme is rubbish, however, I took the risk and started working on the project. Once I started that in January, I turned things around and those same students who were failing, their scores

got higher than the previous years of the project. And then in the following year, they got higher, and they got higher, and you know they continued to go higher for four years. So, when the first lot of students graduated, and the record came out that the students were with me from when the programme started, from September, my first September. Of those students, who graduated, 88% of them transitioned into Level 5. And for all those students who transitioned to Level 5, I think something like 90% of them received a 60 or above. And they finished on time without any problems, and they were most satisfied. So, when those data were presented, they were asking what the project was. I corrected as my supervisor who was about to take all the credit for it. He was saying he assigned me for this work. Moreover, he wanted to present this fantastic result and asked my opinion. I told him directly that this had always been a failing project, but you gave this to me, and I am happy to present these fantastic results in university-wide projections and all over the website. So, my supervisor let it be. What I felt is that they didn't think about the journey when they gave it to someone like me because it was failing under a White colleague.

However, another respondent (IDP 10 Tania) believed that skills can get you wherever you want to be, although the wait can be long.

After 15 years, I have been promoted to this professorial role. It was a long journey, but I didn't lose hope; rather, I polished my skills each day to fight the obstacles. Because of my skills and experience, I am here today.

Discussion

The participants were asked to share their experiences regarding barriers to their overall job satisfaction in their institutions, and mixed opinions were found. The common barrier was a sense of belonging, where BAME female academics often felt they did not belong. According to the literature, a sense of belonging is a very important aspect of the wellbeing of an employee, and it is influenced by different aspects, such as space, relationships, and culture, to ensure those HEIs have initiated policies and involved themselves in charters (Porter et al., 2020; Morris, 2021). Both professors and senior lecturers believed that BAME female academics were sometimes viewed with scepticism, as if they were hired for diversity reasons rather than their qualifications (Bobita, professor, IDP 02). This difficult situation often causes BAME female academics to feel marginalised and undervalued in their interactions with White

faculty members (Rollock, 2021). They constantly have to navigate power dynamics that keep them out of groups, making them feel like they do not belong (Porter et al., 2020). Another participant (IDP 01 Belgium, senior lecturer) added that BAME faculty members are often promoted to show the institution's commitment to equality. In both scenarios, getting promotion and being recruited are questioned when considering BAME female academics in the organisation.

After analysing the data and comparing it with the existing literature, a gap was found. The literature claims that diversity policies are considered to create equality in the workforce, which eventually creates belongingness in the workplace for BAME female academics (Baltaru, 2024). However, despite having policies in place, HEIs often prioritise branding over skills, which means institutions are promoting diversity but at the same time making BAME female academics unvalued by judging their abilities (IDP 09, Pamela, professor). This feeling of being undesirable in the workplace leads to feelings of isolation and disconnection among BAME female academics (Bhopal, 2016).

A study by Baltaru (2024) has stated that universities that are members of Athena SWAN employ more minority ethnic staff in higher-level positions compared to those that are not members. This shift could change the perception of a university towards valuing demographic representation. However, there is no proof that simply joining the charter makes a university more inclusive (Baltaru, 2024). Therefore, having membership and policies to manage diversity in the workplace is just an organisational barrier for BAME female academics, who prioritise branding over skill. In between, BAME female academics lose their sense of belongingness. This reflects Bhopal's (2022) idea of 'token appointments', where universities hire ethnic minority women mainly to appear inclusive. This often leaves these women feeling emotionally burdened and like they do not belong to the HEI. They have to keep proving their skills and abilities even though they are fully qualified.

Pamela (IDP 09) framed belongingness in terms of visibility, emphasising that BAME academics often become visible not for recognition or celebration but when accountability or blame is required. This highlights how BAME women are positioned within UK higher education in ways that sustain their invisibility until institutions find it convenient to make them visible, typically in negative contexts. Showunmi (2023) has similarly referred to this as 'conditional visibility', where BAME women's presence is acknowledged only when it serves institutional interests. However, this study extends that idea by showing that such visibility

often arises solely to shift blame rather than to share success or recognition. This form of mistreatment has significant implications for job satisfaction. As Gloor et al. (2023) have argued, when employees are mistreated based on their social identity, they are more likely to experience dissatisfaction, which can, in turn, lower performance. For BAME female academics, the lack of genuine visibility and recognition is, therefore, not only a barrier to belonging but also a key factor undermining their job satisfaction.

Morris (2021) has stated that these academics' sense of not feeling like they belong is associated with poor mental health and less involvement in their development. Hence, this study finds some specific words used by the participants, such as disappointment, frustration, and low self-confidence, which relate to their feeling that they did not belong when they were in their early careers. Non-belongingness creates an imposter syndrome among early-career BAME female academics because their ability is questioned all the time, and this feeling turns into inferiority where their intellectual abilities are questioned to prove their worth. Although no interview questions explicitly asked about the imposter phenomenon, participants used the term to describe their experiences. These findings align with McGee et al. (2022), who have argued that feelings of non-belonging can lead to imposter syndrome. In such cases, individuals are forced to constantly prove their worth, and this can make them feel inferior.

Therefore, the finding of this section was that HEIs prefer branding over the skills that impact BAME female academics sense of belonging, and their job satisfaction was impacted which works as an organisational barrier. It leads to individuals not feeling a sense of belonging to their organisation or work group. This situation can lead to conflicting goals and reduced motivation, resulting in job dissatisfaction (Sameer and Priyadarshi, 2020).

Lack of recognition

Lack of recognition increases dissatisfaction within the group, and one can feel invisible too. BAME female academics are cornered due to their lower vocal quality. One of the participants (IDP 04, Laila, Professor) stated that she receives little acknowledgement for her work, and individual contributions go unrecognised, which makes her feel invisible in the workplace.

Sometimes I feel that my work is scrutinised more and given less credence than the work of my White counterparts. These feelings often made me think I am hyper-visible and simultaneously invisible in the department.

IDP 07, Maria, lecturer believed that supervisors' favouritism is one of the reasons employees get extra care and support. Some employees, both men and women, were getting guidance and assistance to get groomed for promotion and awards, while others who were also working hard were being ignored.

I feel that some staff were treated better than others. I have seen certain employees get extra help and chances to win awards and get promoted. Even in my department, our supervisor decides who will get this support. People were getting support without having the right qualifications, and those who were working hard were being ignored. It is quite heart-breaking and, at the same time, demotivating to see some of us left behind.

IDP 02, Bobita, professor added that having a successful career allowed senior-level faculty members to help both the university and other people. It also gave them more freedom and options in their career path. However, an intrinsic feeling in big position sometimes fades away when suggestions by BAME female academics are not valued by the authorities.

It seems like a bigger position, the position I am in now as professor, but sometimes it feels like I am just there. They even ask for my participation and my suggestions, but when it's time to really apply them, they don't even bother with whatever I have said or proposed.

However, IDP 16, JO thought that recognition came from determination. Working hard is the way to gain recognition from senior staff, and having the right skill ensures a person's value.

I have been working hard for the past three years now in this institution...your work supports you so that you can thrive and develop. If you ask me how to get recognition... what I believe is being able to feel motivated by working hard and getting yourself to be a valued member. Tell yourself that you can get to the next step.

Discussion

The above findings show that senior BAME female academics believe that, although they have reached the senior level, their work is still undervalued. Usually, faculty members who achieve a high level of success often feel competent and autonomous, enabling them to make significant contributions to their institution and to assist others (Helland et al., 2020; Mgaiwa, 2021). However, this study finds that for BAME female academics, these benefits can be undermined by a lack of recognition and respect. This leads to their suggestions and contributions being overlooked, as described by one of the participants (IDP 02, Bobita, professor), resulting in a diminished sense of purpose and achievement, even at higher career levels. Therefore, the gap between the literature and the findings of this study show that those who are already at the professor level and already in the highest position require academic freedom, participative decisions, and resources more than recognition, which are related to the professor's job satisfaction (Chen, 2023).

Another senior BAME female academic stated that (IDP 04, Laila, professor), despite her efforts, her work was not given the same level of respect or acknowledgement compared with her White counterparts. Recognition, as highlighted by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is a crucial factor related to self-esteem, which is essential for enhancing employee job satisfaction. According to Sivatte et al. (2019), a lack of recognition can marginalise senior female academicians, reducing their impact and presence in key discussions and decisions. If an employee thinks their contributions are not as valued as others, they might identify an inequality between two social groups, and there is a chance that the employee might get distressed or dissatisfied. Therefore, these findings agree with the existing literature. Settles (2019) has explained that recognition in the workplace often brings visibility, which can be empowering when it provides individuals with a voice and the chance to speak and be heard. However, as noted by IDP 04, Laila, a professor, BAME female academics often experience a different kind of visibility, described as being 'hyper-visible'. This means they feel constantly noticed, often because they are one of the few, or the only, minority individuals in their department. Such heightened visibility highlights persistent inequalities in institutions that make them out-groups and directly impacts their job satisfaction.

According to IDP 02, Bobita, professor, when BAME female academics hold senior positions, workplace inequalities restrict them from fully exercising the authority of their roles. Their contributions are often treated as routine duties rather than valued efforts that benefit the

institution, which leaves their work undervalued (Barnes, 2021). Decision-making roles continue to be seen as masculine, and women's leadership abilities are frequently doubted (Arday, 2018). This is further reinforced by the 'presumed incompetence' effect, where both ethnicity and gender fuel assumptions of inadequacy. This aligns with Hall et al. (2012), who found that members of the English middle class often scrutinised BAME women's behaviours and practices more critically. Such daily encounters push women into situations where they are treated as 'presumed incompetent', as their identities clash with racial stereotypes and the expectations of their White colleagues. The findings of this study show that simply having a senior title is not enough. Because of workplace inequalities, BAME female academics in senior roles often cannot fully use their authority, which makes them invisible and unrecognised for their efforts, ultimately lowering their job satisfaction. This supports Pogrebna, Angelopoulos, Omoijiade et al. (2024), who have argued that there is an important difference between just holding a title and being able to make a real impact, with the latter having the strongest effect on job satisfaction.

On the other hand, the recognition of BAME female lecturers often depends on the care and support they receive from their supervisors. However, many believe that supervisors show favouritism towards those from the same group, meaning that employees in those groups receive extra support and their opinions are more valued (IDP 07, Maria, lecturer). The existing literature has also highlighted this issue, as in-group favouritism is described as the tendency of people to prefer their own group over others (Abbink and Harris, 2019). This finding aligns with Bohm, Rusch, and Baron (2018), who have argued that group formation, whether in-groups or out-groups, influences employee performance, productivity, and satisfaction. In this context, BAME female academics often suffer the most, as a lack of supervisor support prevents them from gaining opportunities for growth and advancement. As a result, they remain in the same roles for longer, missing out on crucial development that only supervisors can provide. This limits their ability to perform effectively and ultimately affects their job satisfaction. According to social identity theory, individuals identify more strongly with their in-groups as organisational identification increases, which in turn impacts job satisfaction. However, in this research, evidence of nepotism and in-group favouritism towards majority groups has been found, which negatively affects the job satisfaction of BAME female academics.

Senior BAME female academics often lack the freedom to exercise real decision-making power, while lecturers and senior lecturers feel their career progression is held back despite their efforts, largely due to favouritism. Thus, the lack of both decision-making freedom and acknowledgement for their contributions emerges as a significant barrier, negatively affecting the job satisfaction and self-esteem of BAME female academics at both junior and senior levels.

Workload considered as a responsibility

BAME female academics are considered to behave in a certain way, where they are supposed to take on extra workload. Four participants stated that they cannot say no. In academia, employee productivity depends upon a work-hard mentality, which is an unhealthy practice. Employees frequently have heavy responsibilities that demand they put in significant effort and energy. However, continual hard work and energy use without rest can lead to a decline in wellbeing and create job dissatisfaction. IDP 06, Liyana stated that,

For this exam year, I'm leading a few modules: from year one to year three for undergraduate programmes in the subject of accounting, banking, finance, and economics, and another few modules, another two or three modules in the postgraduate programme. But because my expertise is in finance, my teaching is always in the field of banking, finance, and economics. It's hard work and there is no time for a break or to think out of the box for your own development. Sometimes I feel there is no time left for my mental health.

IDP 04, Laila stated that extra workload hindered the quality of work and career development.

So, I am allocated a very small number of hours for research. I can be doing my own paper writing to build out some output, which is counted towards the university's research. But due to huge job responsibility in teaching, assessing, administrating, and even mentoring diverse students, I can't make time for my own research. Research adds value when someone is going for promotion, but I can't make it. I don't have any break. These kinds of work are invisible responsibility.

IDP 03, Ibtisam said that the expected output from performance is always inadequate due to workload. Working outside the working hour is also not enough to meet the prospect.

Unfortunately, we don't have enough time to deliver what is required of us. I believe because so many academics work outside working hours. And if you decide to just work for your working hours, you might feel like you don't have enough time.

According to (IDP 02, Bobita),

Time constraints are always a big issue for academicians. This is one of the challenges that creates a certain invisible barrier to performing a job properly. However, the way academicians work in HEIs is not properly rewarded. Their pay scale is below expectations, which creates dissatisfaction.

And it has a lot of things that you need to learn, but for me, I feel like the most challenging thing is time and what is required of you and the pay for academics is not up to the mark.

Discussion

This research shows that increased workloads and intensified work demands serve as an organisational barrier for employees, systematically affecting their ability to manage their time and wellbeing. BAME female academics are often expected to take on extra workloads due to their accommodating nature, as reported by participants (IDP 06, Liyana, professor). This persistent sense of urgency and pressure can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction, preventing faculty members from performing effectively and feeling fulfilled in their roles (Sheila et al., 2022). Overburdening minority academics with work is a common tactic to limit their time for personal and career development (Dhamoon, 2020).

According to Showunmi (2023), faculty members who spend more time researching and less time teaching are satisfied with their work. However, this study findings were different. IDP 04 Laila, professor stated that her extensive teaching responsibilities limited her research time, which is crucial for career advancement but was unattainable due to her workload. BAME female academics often have to deal with heavier teaching loads and extra university service, and they cannot refuse it due to their compliant behaviour (IDP 06, Liyana, professor). She also noted that the demanding workload did not allow for breaks, personal development, or mental health care. These results support the findings of the study by Priddie et al. (2022) showing that Black female academics must often deal with heavier teaching loads and extra university service work. The service work given to women is less prestigious than research.

Therefore, the BAME female academics are unable to carry out their research due to the additional workloads given by their superiors, which impacts their satisfaction, and personal and mental wellbeing.

Nonetheless, another participant (IDP 03, Ibtisam, lecturer) pointed out that the expected performance and output often do not meet due to the workload, even when working beyond official hours. This supports previous research, such as Sang et al. (2013), who pointed out that job stress and burnout are linked to heavy workloads and high demands, along with workplace policies that negatively affect teachers' wellbeing (Santoro, 2019).

One of the participants (IDP 04, Laila) stated that a heavy workload often has the effect of being an invisible responsibility. Because she is from a BAME background, she has often been expected to mentor diverse students. As role models, BAME female academics often engage in motherly behaviour, which helps international students acclimatise easily. However, this extra burden of mentoring students often increases the workload and remains unrecognised. This finding aligns with the quantitative study by Priddie et al. (2022), which mentioned that Black women faculty are often considered to be caretakers and nurturers of students and communities, and this presence often goes unnoticed and uncelebrated. The invisible responsibility of mentoring significantly impacts the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. They are expected to provide pastoral or 'motherly' support for diverse students, which increases their workload but usually goes unrecognised (Ramdeo, 2022). From a social identity theory perspective, this is reflected in in-group and out-group dynamics. BAME women are positioned as 'representatives of diversity' and burdened with extra tasks that their White colleagues are not. Through an intersectional lens, the combined effects of race and gender intensify these pressures, as these women are stereotyped both as carers and as cultural role models. These overlapping expectations undermine their academic achievements, slow career progression, and reduce job satisfaction.

Job demands, such as workload, can have both positive and negative impacts on employee wellbeing and performance (Shockley and Holloway, 2019). However, for BAME female academics, surviving in academia often means handling a heavier workload and proving their responsibility in the workplace, as found in Arday's study (2018). Employees frequently bear heavy responsibilities requiring significant effort and energy. However, continuous hard work without rest can deteriorate wellbeing and cause job dissatisfaction. Therefore, the extra work

burden on BAME female academics is an organisational barrier that impacts their job satisfaction because high work pressure without good self-regulation can cause conflicts and impaired performance (Purba, 2017).

Role models build leadership roles

Position reflects the voice. Those BAME female academics who are already in leadership roles can develop the leadership characteristics of other BAME female academics in higher education (Showunmi, 2023). Four participants agreed that role models perform a vital function in character building, and leaders from the BAME female group can bring about that change. IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer added that,

I see myself as a role model for other women, especially in terms of BAME growth. I have a number of students, and the important thing is, you know, I share my journey. I share my story with them.

However, there is a crucial distinction between merely holding the position and actively influencing BAME female academic-related issues (Pogrebna, Angelopoulos, Omoijiade et al., 2024).

Although all BAME female leaders naturally bring their own experiences to their roles, not everyone opts to focus their leadership specifically on advocating for BAME female academic and developmental concerns. (IDP 09, Pamela, Associate professor)

BAME female leaders often face double minority microaggression, where White leaders are considered to work well under pressure and minority ethnic female academics are perceived as less competent (Prieto et al., 2016). IDP02, Bobita, professor stated that,

The competition is intense, and there are moments when the ongoing challenges wear me down. Being a woman presents its own set of challenges, and when you add race-related differences into the mix, life becomes even more difficult. I have observed some of my colleagues holding a specific mindset that women cannot handle work under pressure. The perception is that we tend to be loud, complain, ask questions, and express ourselves boldly, which unfortunately leads to the assumption that we are less competent and cannot handle pressure.

However, two participants added that for ethnic minority females, their dedication and work often get overlooked. To overcome these disparities, they take more risks and involve themselves in leadership roles to move forward in their careers (Pogrebna, Angelopoulos, Omoijiade et al., 2024).

Being in a leadership position gave me the liberty to state my opinion. I think with your experience with your education and with everything, you become very confident, you know, and it's not that I'm going to take any wrong thing from anyone. So, I take a stand, I clarify myself, and I take the challenge and succeed. (IDP13, Naysa, associate professor).

Discussion

The finding of this sub-theme reveals that, in academia, BAME female academics hold less organisational power compared to the dominant White and male cultures. It is, therefore, important that someone speaks up and advocates for their inclusion (Showunmi, 2023). In this case, representation provides psychological support and a feeling of belonging achieved through the commonalities shared by people with similar backgrounds, cultural characteristics, and experiences, such as their shared impediments to progression in the workplace (Davies, Yarrow, and Syed, 2020). According to the findings of this study, role models are crucial for personal development, and leaders from the BAME female community can drive this change (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer). However, BAME female leaders frequently encounter dual minority microaggressions, while White leaders are seen as capable of handling pressure because BAME female academics are often viewed as less competent (IDP02, Bobita, professor).

There are BAME female academics at the professorial level in HEIs, but the mentality of giving back to society is not widespread. Even those who wish to support early-career BAME female academics are often hindered by the structural influence of White society. To fit into White society, BAME female academics sometimes avoid acting as role models for junior BAME female academics. This is because BAME women feel pressured to conform to White society's norms, leading to a loss of cultural identity and marginalisation as leaders (Mirza, 2018; Shrirra, 2020, Omoijiade et al., 2024). BAME female academics often feel pressured to hide their cultural traits and adopt 'White' behaviours to avoid rejection or anxiety among White colleagues. As a result, even when they hold positions of power, they may struggle to make independent decisions and may hesitate to support other BAME female academics. This

reflects a key idea in social identity theory that individuals see themselves as part of a group and may adjust their self-identity to align with that group. The findings of this study resemble those of Bhopal (2024), who has explained that, to gain acceptance, individuals often 'act White' to fit group norms, rather than viewing identity as a fixed entity.

Therefore, there is a gap between the literature and the current study, which proves that just having a leader from the same group does not ensure that a person will perform leadership roles. The mentality of giving back is important, and even if someone wants to involve themselves, it is the extremist norm of White society that will start marginalising that individual. In this aspect, there is an important difference between simply holding a position and actively making an impact on issues. Therefore, it can be said that representation impacts job satisfaction, and this works as an organisational barrier.

The next section discusses the structural barriers faced by BAME female academics, which affects their job satisfaction. Structural barriers are also identified in the literature and have a significant impact on job satisfaction.

5.1.2 Theme 2: Structural Barriers

In higher education, BAME women face various challenges at the structural level that hinder their job satisfaction (McGee, 2020). Among them, contract type (Kreshpaj et al., 2020), policy and procedure (Arday, 2018; Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2023), financial and non-financial benefits (Kharabsheh, 2017; Mgaiwa, 2022), working environment (Bhopal, 2018; Chen, 2023), and research funding grants (Wanelik et al., 2020) are mostly considered structural barriers for academicians. All these factors were found after interviewing 15 BAME female academics. They explained how these structural barriers hinder their career progress and job satisfaction in the institutions. The research is first presented in the theme analysis, followed by the discussion.

Contract Type

In the UK higher education sector, BAME female academicians are more likely to look for stable jobs, which ensures job security. Being in a full-time permanent job can ensure promotion and further career development (Bhopal, 2015; Mumford et al., 2019). Four respondents mentioned that when it comes to getting promoted to decision-making positions, those who work full-time usually get picked over those who work part-time. They also mentioned that people who look like the ones already in charge often get chosen even if they don't have all the requisite skills. This unfairness is a reason why there are few BAME women in important decision-making jobs in academia. IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer added that,

Yeah. Well, everyone says that. But when it comes to the panel, they choose their own people who look like them, not like me. Who is doing less than what I am doing right now. They are now professors, but then again, they're White. And that's why there are so many White professors. If you have no one up front that looks like me, they won't promote me. They will promote people who are white over me.

Three respondents added that even in well-known universities, ethnic minority female academics are given fixed-term contracts with no promise of being permanent employees. According to IDP 13 (Naysa, associate professor),

In all universities, especially Russell Group universities, they have fixed-term contracts, which are two or three years. And you are doing teaching, administrative

work, and research together. And to get a permanent contract, you need to be creating a lot of output in research, but due to the huge workload in teaching, sometimes it is not possible to give enough time for research, and then you must give your own personal time out of your working hours for research, which I find stressful.

IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor) shared the same view,

And that's why there are fewer BAME female academics, because there are a lot of fixed-term contracts where it's one or two years, and then there's no promise later of being permanent.

This statement highlights significant issues related to job satisfaction and structural barriers in the workplace. The participants expressed a need for job stability to achieve career advancement, as their previous experience with a zero-hour contract led to constant uncertainty and stress (UCU, 2016; Read and Leathwood, 2020). This lack of stability prevented them from feeling valued and hindered their ability to plan for career development. The unpredictable nature of their job made it difficult to achieve job satisfaction and balance work with personal life. Additionally, the structural issues of zero-hour contracts and employer practices that prioritise business flexibility over employee wellbeing created barriers to the interviewees' professional growth and satisfaction (Pyper and Dar, 2015). IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer stated that,

I need job stability, and I think it is the only way I could get promotion. However, there are so many places that do not offer stability; they take their employees for granted, like my last employer. I was on a zero-hour contract, and you cannot imagine the horror after each semester passes by; see, my hours were not fixed; everything was so uncertain, I could not even think of my career development there.

Another respondent (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer) shared the same view regarding the teaching hours:

It is sometimes groundbreaking when my supervisor says there aren't available teaching hours for next semester, which makes me, as a part-time lecturer, feel scared.

However, IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer mentioned that part-time teachers cannot avail themselves of all the non-financial benefits, but if the institution is concerned about employee satisfaction, they can help with employee advancement.

As a part-time lecturer, I currently do not receive any non-monetary advantages. But they provided the reference when I applied for a different job. In addition, the department head informed me that the university could manage to cover one third of the course's entrance costs when I discussed my plans to enrol in a course with him.

Discussion

There are a higher number of BAME female academics on fixed-term and ZHCs contracts compared to non-BAME academics, reflecting a pattern of structural barriers (Kreshpaj et al., 2020; Blackham, 2020; Myers, 2022). Bhopal and Chapman (2019) have stated that BAME female academics are underrepresented at the highest contract levels and overrepresented at the lowest. During the interview, participants felt their social identity made their experiences with zero-hour contracts even harder (IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer). This instability made them feel undervalued and unable to plan for career growth. The unpredictability of their job made it hard to find job satisfaction and maintain a work–life balance. The lack of stability and unpredictability in their job places them in a lower-status group compared to those with stable, predictable jobs (Bhopal and Henderson, 2021).

This status quo often prevents BAME female academics from accessing decision-making roles, particularly those on fixed-term contracts or working part-time more specifically in ZHCs contracts, as they are rarely considered for such positions. This leaves them with ongoing insecurities about their career development (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer). From a social identity theory perspective, exclusion from decision-making reflects how out-group members are systematically denied influence, reinforcing unequal power dynamics in universities. An intersectional lens highlights how the overlapping factors of ethnicity, gender, and contractual status combine to intensify this disadvantage. These findings align with Myers (2022), who has argued that rising job insecurity in universities, particularly through zero-hour contracts (ZHCs), tends to maintain and reinforce the unfair status quo.

However, one of the participants mentioned that part-time teachers cannot avail themselves of all the non-financial benefits or the chance to be selected for decision-making roles yet, if the institution is concerned about employee development, they could help with employee advancement. She received funding for her course, which is part of her academic development (IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer). In this sense, it depends on the institute and their practices for their staff development strategies, which does not count which contract type an individual has. Therefore, contract type is an organisational barrier that impacts the job satisfaction of BAME female academics, and it is the HEI's duty to ensure benefits for all employees and recruit more BAME female academics on permanent contracts rather than fixed-term or zero-hour contracts.

Financial and non-financial benefits

Financial Benefits

In the UK's higher education sector, there has been considerable focus on the gender pay gap, but attention to the ethnicity pay gap is still ongoing. Even when ethnic minority female academics have similar experience and skills, they tend to get paid less compared to both male BAME academics and non-BAME academics. (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor) reveals that:

I have been working in academia for the past 16 years now. Things have changed, but you know, having the same skills, it took me almost seven years of waiting and hard work to get this promotion. And the salary band is still less than that of my other White female colleagues, which somehow demotivates me in every aspect.

The starting salary for a lecturer in the UK higher education sector is 33k–55k GBP yearly (GOV.UK, 2022), considering job experience and skill. However, minority ethnic women are paid less considering their other colleagues, which is nowadays very visible in the ethnic minority pay gap reports (UCU, 2019). IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer shared that,

You know, being a single mother for a family of four, I find it hard to save up for anything. And when you are part of a minority group, you almost expect to be paid less, and that's a big worry because of the pay gap. Recently, I have realised universities should share more about their ethnic pay gap. I was really surprised when I checked

our university's reports on the ethnic pay gap. It got me thinking there are disparities that are hidden behind the extra work we minorities often do without questioning.

Within academia, academics often work for their personal fulfilment, highlighting the intrinsic value they find in their work. However, according to three respondents, the discrepancies in the salary structure significantly hinder employee satisfaction in the workplace, leading to a sense of being undervalued. IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer added that,

I work in academia for my own interest. I find it fulfilling. Seeing my students progressing, it works as an intrinsic reward for me. But see, when you see differences in pay grade it sometimes hurts that my work is undervalued, even if you are here for a longer period.

Discussion

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959), pay is a hygiene factor, meaning employees expect to be paid fairly and competitively. However, some faculty members found that witnessing student progress was more rewarding than fair pay (IDP01 Belgium, senior lecturer). In the UK's HEIs, much attention has been given to the gender pay gap, but the ethnicity pay gap remains a critical issue. In this study, both professors and lecturers discussed the limited financial benefits they received due to this persistent pay disparity. One of the participants stated that, as a single mother, pay disparities made it challenging to save money, and she was shocked by the inequities revealed in her university's pay gap report (IDP 05 Lucky, lecturer). These disparities adversely affect the wellbeing of BAME female academics. Therefore, this study agrees with the existing literature.

A recent study by Mgaiwa (2022) has shown that professors report higher job satisfaction than other groups because they have reached the top of their careers, gaining better pay and benefits. However, this study has revealed a very different reality for BAME female academics. For example, despite 16 years in academia and seven years of effort to earn a promotion, one participant (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor) explained that her salary remained lower than that of her White colleagues, which she finds deeply demotivating. This exposes a significant gap between the literature and the experiences of BAME women. While existing studies have

often focused on the satisfaction of predominantly White professors, this research highlights how ethnicity and gender intersect to create systemic disadvantage. From a social identity theory perspective, BAME women's identities position them outside the dominant in-group, resulting in exclusion from equal recognition and rewards. At the same time, intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989) explains how overlapping identities of gender and ethnicity compound structural barriers, leaving BAME female academics marginalised, underpaid, and undervalued despite their qualifications and contributions (Arday, 2018). The lack of transparent reporting on ethnicity pay gaps further enables these inequalities to persist in academia, reinforcing structural obstacles that limit both career progression and job satisfaction (Bhopal, 2022).

Financial benefits work as a barrier to ethnic minority female academics' job satisfaction. BAME female academics struggle to reach decision-making roles and earn less than their male counterparts, despite having similar skills and experience. They remain in a longer waiting queue for promotion. Therefore, there is a clear gap between the literature and the findings of this study. These accounts underscore the need for greater transparency and efforts to address the ethnic pay gap in higher education.

Non-Financial Benefits

Four participants emphasised that they consider learning and career development opportunities as essential non-financial benefits. However, a notable gap for BAME academics was their limited networking opportunities. They expressed a struggle with not knowing the right person to connect with for these opportunities. IDP02, Bobita, professor stated that,

Well, I think you know that in terms of research hours and publication, this is one of the non-financial benefits I, as an academician, want from my institution, but at times, you know, I do feel like I have less networking because I do not know the right people; sometimes I lack behind. But see, my other non-BAME academics get to know about the opportunities more quickly than us, and by the time you know, they will come up with a publication.

IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer shared a similar view,

Well, I got the chance to attend a conference, and I also have my fellowship, which was sponsored by my institute. But there are other treatments, such as the opportunity to research and publish, which has been given to other White male colleagues of mine who have been in this university for a longer period and have good relations with the higher authority.

IDP 07, Liyana, professor added that sometimes funds are not enough, and due to this scarcity of the resources, academicians who have strong networking with the right person can avail themselves of the funds.

Yes, because this might be the case sometimes. It is hard to get some funding for your research or the support; I would say those are not enough and are not available for all the staff.

Discussion

During the interviews, participants gave mixed responses about non-financial benefits. Participants emphasised the importance of learning and career development opportunities as essential non-financial benefits. IDP02 Bobita, professor highlighted that research hours and publication opportunities are valuable; however, the lack of networking hampers her progress compared to her non-BAME colleagues. Another participant (IDP 12 Nupu, senior lecturer) stated that, despite attending conferences and having a fellowship sponsored by her institute, other opportunities for research and publication were more readily available to White colleagues with longer tenures and better connections within the university. In both cases, participants were very keen to do research, which is an essential aspect of an academic's job satisfaction.

Lee (2021) has noted that securing funding and continuing research is very challenging because of disparities in higher education. Wanelik et al. (2020) have explained that gender differences in research grants mainly occur because women receive less funding, which helps explain these gaps. This shows a clear difference between the existing literature and the findings of this study. While past research has focused only on gender, this study found that success in

obtaining funding are also linked to longer job tenure and being from a White background (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer).

I argue that being in academia longer and having White group status provides White male academics with stronger networks than out-groups (Seo et al., 2022). In addition, those with tenure enjoy greater security to teach and research freely (Sinclair, 2023), whereas racially minoritised academics, especially women, are disadvantaged in gaining tenure (Gaughan, 2023). Evidence from in-group and out-group favouritism testing also shows that in-groups tend to give more resources to their own members than to outsiders (Abbink & Harris, 2019). Because of this in-group favouritism and longer time in academia, White male academics often receive better guidance and support for grant writing, a link for where to look for it, and, as a result, secure more grant funding. Out-groups, by contrast, usually lack this support, and when BAME female academics apply for funding, their applications are judged more critically than those of White men (Biernat et al., 2020). Therefore, this study offers a unique finding, not only group status but also job tenure influences access to research funding. According to participants, this acts as a non-financial benefit for some, while creating barriers that reduce job satisfaction for others.

Due to the double minority, BAME female academics often do not have these opportunities because there are not enough funds available, and not knowing the right person who can guide them through the process also reduces their chances (IDP07 Liyana, professor). This finding aligns with the study by Gwen (2020), which showed that applying for research grants is often complex and unclear, with varying funder rules. Women, racially minoritised academics, disabled people, and those with caring responsibilities face additional challenges due to structural inequalities, making it harder to meet requirements, gain recognition, or progress due to not having a proper guide or network. The unique findings of this chapter are that BAME academics face a significant challenge in availing themselves of these opportunities because they do not have the right contacts and have less support or guidance. Those who are in the same institutions for a longer period, especially White men, receive more grant funding than BAME female academics. The insufficient funding further complicates this situation, which reduces the chance for BAME female academics to gain research funding. Therefore, there is a gap for BAME female academics within the institutions because structural barriers in higher education do not allow everyone to access non-financial benefits equally, which impacts their job satisfaction.

Policy and procedures

Rules and regulations are put in place to make sure employees are satisfied and treated fairly, preventing discrimination and inequality (Tzanakou and Pearce, 2017). According to the respondents, all UK universities have these rules to ensure fairness, yet it is hard to know if they are followed in real work situations. IDP 16, JO, senior lecturer stated that,

You know, there is no proof to indirect discrimination. So yeah, there are lots of regulations everywhere and I believe every university in the UK has these regulations in place. Whether they are implemented or not.

Three respondents mentioned that you often must stand up for your own rights because, while there are rules in place, those rules are more geared towards helping the majority groups. IDP 10, Tania, professor mentioned that,

Saying that we are a diverse institute but not practising it. I think that is lacking as people are not practising it and most importantly those policies are made to help them, I mean majority groups to succeed and for that you have to fight for your own rights, so that is important.

In a diversified organisation where policies are made according to majority groups and stated policies are not maintained accordingly, employee engagement is hampered in the organisation. IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer added that,

Like I mentioned before, there are rules to make things fair for everyone. But I suspect that the people in charge of enforcing these rules might be corrupt. If these rules are already in place, why aren't we seeing any changes? Doesn't that make you wonder?

Discussion

During the interview, one of the participants said that, while all UK universities have rules to ensure fairness, it is difficult to determine if these rules are followed in practice (IDP 16, JO, senior lecturer). According to Bhopal (2020), rules and regulations in UK universities are designed to ensure employee satisfaction, fair treatment, and the prevention of discrimination. While these policies do not directly motivate people, they help create a supportive work environment, contributing to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959).

However, this research finds that there is an overwhelming disconnect between actions and words regarding race equality policies. The findings of this present study reflect the experience of BAME female academics' perspectives differently about policy within the HEI. Despite having regulations, their implementation is questionable because, in the HEI, although the policies look the same for everyone, they affect out-groups the most (IDP 16, JO, senior lecturer). Another participant added that employees often have to advocate for their own rights as existing rules seem to favour majority groups (IDP 10, Tania, professor). This creates a sense that the workplace is not level and that opportunities are limited, leading to feelings of frustration (Showunmi, 2023).

When policies are perceived to favour majority groups, this can create trust issues in the institution and diminish job satisfaction, as their contributions and potential may not be adequately recognised (Mgaiwa, 2021). Among these experiences shared by the participants, the unique finding was corruption among policy administrators. Every other study talks about the implementation of policies and practices related to recruitment, promotion, equality, and race; however, the monitoring protocols are rarely evaluated for impact and effectiveness by senior university administrators and those who are responsible for monitoring the rules and regulations are often corrupted for creating these disparities (IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer).

The findings reveal an inconsistency between institutional policies and acknowledging equality in the workplace. According to the literature, policy creates a supportive work environment (Bhopal, 2020); however, one of the participants stated that BAME female academics often have to stand up for themselves because there is neither someone to advocate for them nor any policies that will benefit them (IDP10 Tania, professor). These types of disparities create a sense of non-belonging and inequality in opportunities, which creates frustration among BAME female academics (Shand, 2021). From a social identity perspective, policies and action

plans are often created or influenced by White-majority academics in senior management. As a result, the policies reflect the interests of the dominant White managers, sustaining racial inequalities and reinforcing White privilege. This finding aligns with Baltaru (2024) who has also suggested that such policies can sometimes worsen inequalities, leading to poor work performance and reduced job satisfaction.

The existing literature has revealed that policies and strategies are implemented for addressing inequality and improving the experiences of BAME female academics; however, their existence alone cannot ensure success. The sparse literature on the topic rarely mentions monitoring the impact and effectiveness of policy procedures. Monitoring and those who are responsible for monitoring are the two most important factors in this section. The study finds that, due to corruption among administrators, there are disparities in ensuring the effectiveness of policies (IDP 11 Nisa, lecturer). Those who are responsible are not given much power to reflect an accurate report for the sake of institutional reputation. This aligns with Rollock's (2021) study, which argues that policies often become bureaucratic exercises used by employers to enhance their reputation rather than to tackle genuine inequalities. There is a significant gap between stated commitments and actions on race equality policies. More research is needed on corruption among administrators and how they exercise power in handling such issues. Therefore, this finding can be extended for future research.

Therefore, equality and diversity policies often hide underlying inequalities and act as a superficial fix without leading to significant workplace changes (Bhopal, 2020). When policies are perceived to favour majority groups, this can create trust issues in the institution and diminish job satisfaction, as their contributions and potential may not be adequately recognised. There is disparity in measuring policy effectiveness because of corrupt administrators, which is also a structural barrier for BAME female academics in academia and impacts their job satisfaction. This suggests possible structural flaws in how higher education institutions engage with diversity in the workplace.

Working Environment

Working environment plays a vital role in enhancing employee confidence (Cooper, 2019). Even previous experiences of toxic working environments can impact employee confidence and employee satisfaction (Savigny, 2017). IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer questioned her ability to apply for promotion as she believes she is not good enough to be employed in the faculty:

Our work environment is very rigid, which sometimes makes me feel doubtful about myself. I know I can do it, but the surroundings will give you such a chill that it makes one nervous to take any initiative. It feels like if I do not get the promotion, it will make me unwanted in front of others.

Toxic working environments have pushed some female academics to break down; just to avoid dealing with it, they just work on their own (Maddrell et al., 2016). It has become an everyday challenge that they need to avoid for their own safety. IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer stated that,

Right now, I am just surviving; I am not looking for any challenge; I will work on my own and leave; I just do not want to be part of any office drama.

Women who make it to higher positions forget about the struggles faced by early-career female academics. This practice creates a toxic working environment where, unknowingly, they use masculinity tactics against other women. A sense of pride makes the working environment more challenging. IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer added that,

Sometimes we women do not value our fellow female academics. Who should I look at for my progression? Those who have already made it to the top positions seem to forget the struggles of women in lower positions; it feels like they are mirroring other non-BAME male characteristics.

Discussion

A study by Chen (2023) has found that factors related to the academic work environment, such as the university atmosphere, school management, and relationships with colleagues, significantly affect university professors' job satisfaction (Hee et al., 2020; Yoon, 2020). BAME female academics often face unequal treatment from supervisors and White colleagues, which happens due to a rigid working environment (Ali et al., 2020).

During the interviews, participants shared their experiences regarding the working environment, which significantly impacts their confidence, and particularly focused on the negative effects of a toxic work environment. The participants added that this toxic

environment has diminished their self-satisfaction, which affects seeking promotion or taking on new challenges (IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer). The participants also added that office politics, rigid structure, and lack of support from supervisors led to self-doubt, which created a barrier to being involved with other colleagues (IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer). This finding aligns with the Rollock (2023) findings that this happens because employees often have issues with supervisors who do not treat them with respect. When supervisors are harsh, employees feel uncomfortable sharing good ideas and new ways of doing things. For that reason, some of them work in isolation to avoid the toxicity present in their work environment (Basalamah, 2021; Jainb et al., 2022). Therefore, this study supports the existing literature on this aspect.

However, another participant (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer) shared a different perspective, explaining that this issue is not always limited to White or majority groups. In some cases, the work environment becomes even more toxic when senior BAME female academics forget their own struggles and begin to replicate the same patterns of domination in the workplace. By adopting masculine behaviours and creating a hostile environment, they can hinder the career growth of other BAME female academics (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer). This presents a new finding, that discrimination is not only carried out by White or majority groups against out-groups but can also come from within in-groups themselves (Vo et al., 2025). According to social identity theory, individuals identify strongly with their group memberships, which can lead to both in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination (Tajfel, 1979). However, when members of an in-group adopt dominant behaviours to align with existing power structures, they may distance themselves from others in their group and even perpetuate discrimination (Mata-Greve and Torres, 2019). Senior BAME female academics may internalise and reproduce the same systems of control they once resisted to maintain authority and legitimacy within academia. These dynamic highlights the complexity of workplace inequalities, showing that barriers to career progression are not only shaped by majority group dominance but also by intra-group power struggles.

Therefore, the working environment can be toxic from both BAME and non-BAME groups' behaviour, which can lead to feelings of being unwanted. Individuals may choose to work alone to avoid the stress and conflicts of toxic workplaces (Rollock, 2023). Therefore, the work environment plays a crucial role in job satisfaction and acts as a structural barrier for BAME female academics who feel excluded due to their social identity.

Theme Summary

An employee consistently on short-term contracts may feel hesitant to express their personal opinions objectively, fearing that complaints could jeopardise the renewal of their contract. Differences in financial benefits impact BAME female academics work, which indicates their work is undervalued, whereas financial benefits are one of the main aspects of employee satisfaction. In addition, BAME female academics see learning and career development as their non-financial benefits, which they miss due to the unavailability of proper networking channels. Policies for inclusion and diversity management are written in such a way that they benefit the majority groups more than minority staff. Toxic cultural practices and structural inequalities work as demotivators for BAME female academics to excel in their careers and hinder their job satisfaction.

5.1.3 Theme 3: Individual Barrier

Individual barriers for BAME female academics hinder job satisfaction (Francis and Stulz, 2020). During interviews, participants highlighted various experiences regarding their individual barriers. The researcher derived four sub-themes from the interviews to complement the theme of individual barriers. Challenges BAME female academics face are work–life balance (Lendák-Kabók, 2020), caregiving responsibilities (Crocco, Grenier, and Kemp, 2022), comfort in their current roles (Hutchings, Wilkinson, and Brewster, 2020), and emotional burden (Hsieh et al., 2022). Female academics at the lecturer, senior lecturer, and professorial levels shared their personal experiences, which varied based on their current life situations. To elaborate, the researcher will first present the sub-themes and then discuss each one with relevant evidence.

Work–Life Balance

Work–life balance is an important function of employee job satisfaction. Work–life balance ensures employee flexibility, adaptability, and autonomy in the workplace (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). Employees are responsible for maintaining their own work–life balance. However, universities have also provided some policy to help minority female academicians balance their work and life, but the respondents mentioned them in different ways. Instead of seeing this balance as a good thing that helps them manage work and personal life, they feel like keeping that balance affects their careers negatively. IDP 13, Naysa stated that,

You know, there's this expectation in academia that, you must work every single day, even bring work home at night and on weekends. I have reached a point where I don't want to do that anymore. I mean, sure, sometimes I take work home, but I have got a life outside of university, you know? I prioritise having that life, which means my research might fall behind because I'm not working seven days a week.

IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer added that institutions bind BAME female academics to behave differently from their non-BAME colleagues. Although rules are the same for everyone, practice for groups is different.

See, I can't say no to anyone; this is my practice. But people are taking advantage of it; this nature of mine nowadays binds me to take extra work at home during weekends too. I think they want us to behave this way. I have not seen my other non-BAME colleagues ever working on weekends; even they won't reply to you on weekends, whatever the urgency and if I do not do it then my supervisor will indirectly tell me the importance of accountability.

BAME female academics feel the same pressure before having children and being judged for future care responsibilities. IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer mentioned that:

Even if a woman doesn't have kids, especially if she's around the age where she might have them, she might worry that others see her as a problem just because she could have kids someday. Even though the university has rules for maternity leave and work balance.

Due to less pressure for research work, some respondents feel they have a work-life balance with heavy job responsibilities during working hours. IDP 01, Belgium, stated that,

Here is less pressure with the publishing, so I still need to publish things but, at a more doable rate than with other universities. So, I feel like I have a reasonable work-life balance in that sense, However, teaching responsibility is a lot.

Discussion

Work–life balance is an important part of achieving employee job satisfaction, which helps with adaptability and autonomy, and universities have established policies to assist employees and especially female academics in balancing their professional and personal lives (Dousin et al., 2019).

However, this study finds that perceptions of these policies vary significantly among individuals. Despite the good intentions behind these policies, many BAME female academics are still striving for this balance, which adversely impacts their careers (IDP 13, Naysa, professor). For instance, IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer revealed her frustration at the expectation to work continuously by her supervisor, including nights and weekends, and if she did not respond, her accountability was questioned. This study aligns with French et al. (2020), who have shared that while flexible working hours, autonomy, and supportive company policies are theoretically linked to higher job satisfaction, the reality often falls short for BAME female academics.

Work–life balance becomes more complicated when this is coupled with personal and professional growth aspirations and job satisfaction. Victoria et al. (2019) have suggested that a fulfilling family life can enhance success and satisfaction at work. However, this study finds that women of childbearing age might be perceived as problematic due to the possibility of maternity leave (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer). This perception persists despite official university policies that support work–life balance and maternity leave. This finding aligns with Arena et al. (2023) that the motherhood penalty is rooted in the assumption that mothers are less dedicated or capable in their work. They often face delays in promotion, fewer career opportunities, or the pressure to make choices that may hold back their professional growth to meet their children’s needs.

However, some respondents, like IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer reported a more manageable work–life balance due to less pressure to publish, though the teaching responsibilities remained substantial. This finding aligns with studies by Haar et al. (2014) and Dousin et al. (2019), which have highlighted the positive effects of work–life balance on job satisfaction. This variation suggests that while certain aspects of academia may offer a better balance, significant pressures continue to affect the overall job satisfaction and wellbeing of BAME female academics.

Work–life balance should encompass more than just autonomy in the workplace and with family; it also has to do with the fact that people on part-time contracts frequently experience pressure to take on additional responsibilities by taking on second jobs. Juggling two or three jobs can lead to tension among academicians and job dissatisfaction, which impact wellbeing. This area does not receive much attention, and further research can be carried out.

Therefore, the findings of this study show that while flexible working hours, autonomy, and supportive company policies are theoretically linked to higher job satisfaction, reality often falls short for BAME female academics. Women of childbearing age might be perceived as problematic due to the possibility of maternity leave, and this perception persists despite official university policies that support work–life balance and maternity leave. Work–life balance is an essential part of job satisfaction, and due to social identity, BAME female academics often face barriers in the workplace. There is a gap, which is that as BAME female academics have less autonomy over their work, they have less work–life balance.

Care responsibility

During the interviews, nine respondents mentioned that they felt pushed to juggle work and family. These women thought finding a balance between work and life was hard. Especially for women academics with children, the way work and care are set up based on gender makes it tougher. It is difficult due to cultural issues. BAME female academics have more care responsibility than men and other non-BAME academics. IDP 06, Liyana, professor stated that,

Female academics tend to have even more responsibilities outside the workplace, which are unpaid responsibilities, and they must compete for her time. And that means that I am not as frequently giving up my time outside of work to do my research or writing because I have a family.

BAME female academics who take care of their families end up spending less time on research. They do this to handle teaching, university responsibilities, and family duties. Many of the respondents felt they had to sacrifice their research work to take care of the family and have time for themselves. IDP 13, Naysa, associate professor added that it is easier to be successful without care responsibilities.

The other day, one of my colleagues was telling me how busy she is. She has to teach, grade papers, and take care of a little kid and a teenager. She also said that she spends so much time on these things and thinks if she were a man, it might be easier. It's tough to do everything at once and be a successful academic.

Due to the extra workload and care responsibilities, sometimes BAME female academics forget about their hobbies and their personal development. IDP 04, Laila, professor mentioned that,

In the academic sector, the workload strain is typically distributed equally among several obligations, including teaching, administration, evaluation, and research. This can make it difficult to maintain a healthy work–life balance, particularly for those who have been teaching for a long time and find it difficult to find time for hobbies and other interests outside of work.

However, some academics did not push to balance work and family. Three of them said it is because they either did not have children or their children were grown up. But most women in this group talked about finding work–life balance in a way that resembles what is seen as a modified ideal worker (Kelly et al., 2010). IDP 15, Kakoli, lecturer stated that,

I use my working hours wisely and take extra work home. I have always been able to balance my work and family life; I have never felt any problem with that.

Discussion

The experiences of BAME female academics balancing work and caregiving responsibilities have an impact on their job satisfaction (Warren, 2020). Research on this specific group is limited, as most literature has focused on gender-based issues within White populations. However, interviews with BAME female academics paint a vivid picture of the unique barriers they face. They stated that gender-based expectations and cultural issues add to the difficulty, with BAME female academics often involved with more caregiving duties than their male and non-BAME peers. IDP 06, Liyana, professor highlighted that BAME female academics typically have additional unpaid responsibilities outside the workplace, which compete for their time and hinder their ability to focus on research. These academics frequently sacrifice research time to manage teaching, university duties, and family obligations. Building a successful academic career is in indirect conflict with the discourse of good mothering (Raddon, 2002).

One participant, (IDP 13, Naysa, associate professor) echoed this sentiment, recounting a colleague's struggle with teaching, grading, and childcare, noting that success in academia seems easier without caregiving responsibilities. This assertion aligns with the study by Horta and Tang (2023) who have argued that, due to cultural stereotypes within BAME communities, women are often expected to take responsibility for childcare and housework. From a social identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), these expectations function as in-group norms that shape behaviour and limit opportunities, making it harder for BAME female academics to progress in their careers and creating ongoing conflicts between professional and personal lives. However, this study also found that BAME female academics without children or caregiving responsibilities reported more positive outcomes, including stronger career progression and greater job satisfaction (IDP 15, Kakoli, lecturer). This reflects how variations within the same social identity group can lead to different experiences, depending on whether individuals conform to or are free from in-group role expectations. These findings also align with Cummins (2017), who has highlighted that academic mothers face barriers that cause their careers to lag compared to both their male colleagues and their childfree female peers. In the context of social identity theory, this underscores how group-based norms and stereotypes intersect with gender and caregiving roles, reinforcing structural disadvantages for academic mothers while advantaging those who are childfree. However, much research is required in terms of BAME female academics' caregiving responsibilities.

These findings highlight the significant impact caregiving responsibilities have on the job satisfaction of female academics. Despite the existence of policies meant to support them, the interplay of gender-based expectations and cultural issues continues to create substantial barriers to their career progression and overall job satisfaction. However, how the care responsibility of BAME female faculty members impacts job satisfaction requires further research because most of the research carried out has been based on White female academics. Therefore, there is a gap, and it is one of the barriers that impacts BAME female academic job satisfaction.

Comfortable in old space

In some cases, BAME female academics worked at their own barriers by becoming comfortable in old spaces. They did not want to risk their happiness in their current roles.

Some respondents stated that they were comfortable in their old spaces. IDP 02, Bobita, professor added that:

When you first join the institute, you do not know about the system. You do not know about the people, but with the passage of time, like I have been here for 20 years now, I think things have changed. I know my colleagues. They know me, and things are working well; it feels comfortable.

Four respondents mentioned that they are more likely to prefer flexible working where things would work out eventually. The decision to work flexibly produced an unequal outcome, and employees remained in the same position without any progression, as leadership positions demand an extra workload. IDP 07, Maria, lecturer stated that,

I have a promotion opportunity. I think after this summer, after five long years, I shall be promoted as a senior lecturer. I haven't tried for any other institution yet as I find it less competitive than other institutes. This university doesn't pressurise you for research, so I like to take things easy and slow. Things will come eventually.

Mobility and location can also act as barriers for women. Two respondents said they stay at the same place even if there is discrimination and unfairness in their institute because they are not willing to move. They feel comfortable where they currently live.

IDP 04, Laila, professor stated,

I prefer to work closer to where I live, you know, shorter journeys. But the place just did not fit for me. I did not fit in those places, nor did the students fit with me. I have stayed in East London for 20 years now, serving this university with all the inequalities and discrimination.

Discussion

BAME female academics often find themselves settled in familiar environments or roles they have been in for a long time. There is not enough evidence available in relation to these findings. The researcher found this issue interesting during the interviews. This comfort in their 'old space' can sometimes act as a barrier to seeking new opportunities or making changes in their careers. They may prefer to stay where they are because of the known system and

colleagues and feeling established. This familiarity provides a sense of stability and security, even if they may face challenges, such as discrimination or inequality, in their current workplace.

As IDP 07, Maria, lecturer explained, she prefers a slow and steady pace of progression, which aligns with both her personal work style and the institutional culture, where there is less pressure to produce research. This supportive, low-pressure environment contributes significantly to her job satisfaction (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). An important factor here is that the institution is less research-focused and less competitive, which further reinforces her sense of contentment in her role. However, the literature presents a different reality. According to the REF framework, promotion and career development in academia are closely tied to a strong research record (Baltaru, 2024). This tension highlights a challenge in Maria's case. With limited guidance from supervisors and a lack of role models, she lacks the necessary direction to navigate long-term career growth (Bhopal, 2019).

From a social identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Maria's experience reflects how institutional culture and group membership shape individual identity and career pathways. Belonging to an institution that values teaching and provides flexibility creates an in-group norm of 'slow but steady' progress, which enhances her immediate job satisfaction. Yet, this same identity positioning also restricts her access to the wider academic in-group, where research productivity is the main marker of success. Through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989), these barriers are compounded for BAME female academics, who face overlapping disadvantages of gender, ethnicity, and institutional culture (Arday, 2018). While flexibility offers comfort, it simultaneously creates hidden barriers by leaving them without the guidance, mentorship, and visibility needed to progress in a research-driven academic system (Rollock, 2019). In the long run, this comfort becomes a constraint, as structural inequalities intersect with institutional practices to limit job satisfaction and career advancement. Therefore, this finding extends Bhopal and Pitkin's (2019) research, which has reported that while programmes like the Athena SWAN Charter (Advance HE, 2018) and the Race Equality Charter (ECU, 2017; Baltaru, 2024) aim to confront inequalities, individual institutions are responsible for not progressing on change (Arday, 2018). There is frequently a disconnect in equity practices between what leaders in higher education say and do (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020).

During the interviews, IDP 02, Bobita, professor, shared that she feels comfortable in her familiar environment but acknowledged that this comfort has limited her career progression. For many BAME female academics, comfort is often found in spaces where they share a sense of belonging with colleagues from similar backgrounds, as shared experiences provide a stronger foundation for interaction and identity affirmation (Miller, 2025). From a SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) perspective, this demonstrates how individuals are drawn to in-group membership, which provides psychological safety and reinforces a positive self-concept through shared identity. This finding aligns with Hutchings, Wilkinson, and Brewster (2020), who have found that older academics report higher levels of satisfaction when they have remained at the same institution for an extended period. These individuals often express a desire to continue working in familiar institutions, provided opportunities remain and health allows. However, this sense of security and comfort can also create barriers. By settling into established roles and routines, academics may avoid seeking new opportunities or challenging the status quo, even if this limits career progression.

For example, IDP 04, Laila, professor, who has worked at her institution for 20 years, described feeling comfortable because she knows the system and her colleagues well. She believes things are going smoothly and, therefore, prefers the familiarity of her current situation. Within an SIT framework, this shows how strong in-group identification fosters belonging and satisfaction but simultaneously discourages out-group engagement, which is often necessary for career advancement. Thus, while comfort in familiar institutional and social environments enhances job satisfaction for BAME female academics, it can also function as a self-imposed barrier. By prioritising in-group belonging and stability, they may inadvertently restrict their own opportunities for career development and growth. This is a factor that has gone unseen, as no relevant literature was found to support this. Therefore, it would be a finding of an extended study of how familiar surroundings can sometimes become a barrier to part of BAME female academics' job satisfaction.

Emotional Burden

Continuous pressure to perform at work impacts employee satisfaction. The invisible burden of 'not being good enough' to perform a task increases the emotional burden on an employee

and it has a direct effect on employee outcomes and wellbeing (Humphrey, 2023; Chen, 2022). These extra pressures increase dissatisfaction in the workplace, which impacts both psychological and emotional burdens. As one of the participants (IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer) stated, being a BAME female academic is sometimes challenging as it creates a situation where there is an extra burden to outperform. This continuous pressure to perform is exhausting, and one cannot perform because of the invisible barriers, which makes it challenging to keep pace with their own emotional status.

I almost have this bright light over me, so the light shines on me and so I feel the pressure. I feel the pressure of that to perform. That is exhausting, absolutely exhausting. Like it's mentally, emotionally exhausting, and then you're trying to perform, but you can't perform to your fullest because of the inside competition in place saying you can't perform.

Another participant (IDP 15, Kakoli) believed that continuous expectations and not having a proper opportunity to perform made her feel always behind, which impacted her emotional state.

It is never enough; it feels like I am never meeting the expectations of people who expect more from me. Sometimes I feel like I am always behind.

Having all the skills is sometimes not enough to pass the barriers of higher education. IDP 07, Maria stated that even though one has every capability to perform, certain discrimination hinders progression, which affects mental health and increases emotional burden.

You know, I am discriminated against heavily since I joined this university. There's no better progression. I said, you know, they've really put the gates up and they really don't want me to grow. I am so low in my mental health.

Emotionally, it is tough when people do not think an individual is as deserving as their White colleagues. Even if they work just as hard, it does not get recognised, and this makes an employee dissatisfied at work. As IDP 09, Pamela mentioned, the habit of stereotyping and not considering minority ethnic groups as deserving as their White counterparts creates an emotional burden for employees.

There was a time when me and two other faculties, one of which is White and the other is Asian, published a paper. When it was time to present it, the organiser sent an email to the White faculty, ccing us in the email, where I was the main author for that paper. On top of that, he asked the White faculty to present it in the seminar. I don't know if it was done intentionally.

Discussion

The invisible burden of 'not being good enough' to perform a task increases the emotional burden on an employee, and it creates a situation where there is an extra burden to outperform by taking on an extra workload (Xia et al., 2024). However, the work pressure sometimes acts as a positive indication to perform better in the workplace, which ultimately leads to career progression (Hsieh et al., 2022). Therefore, career progression and job satisfaction are positively related to each other (Herzberg, 1959).

However, during the interviews, it was found that the continuous expectations to perform better, coupled with the lack of appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities, made the academics feel perpetually 'behind'. This situation negatively affected their emotional well-being, creating exhausting conditions that hindered their ability to perform at their fullest potential. From a social identity theory perspective, these experiences can be understood in terms of in-group and out-group dynamics: BAME female academics often find themselves in the out-group within predominantly White, male-dominated academic environments, which amplifies the pressure to constantly prove their worth. This aligns with the study by Curtis and Showunmi (2019), which has highlighted that ethnic minority women face an ongoing struggle for recognition. The need to continually validate their competence is experienced as a persistent emotional burden largely invisible to others and fully understood only by those who live it (IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer; IDP 15, Kakoli; IDP 07, Maria).

From a social identity theory perspective, the experience of IDP 09, Pamela illustrated how group membership shapes workplace satisfaction. Even when minority ethnic academics work as hard as their White colleagues, their efforts often go unrecognised, which leads to dissatisfaction and a sense of exclusion. This reflects the dynamics of in-groups and out-groups, where White colleagues are positioned as the dominant in-group, and minority groups are seen as outsiders. The tendency to stereotype and undervalue BAME academics reinforces their out-group status, creating a continuous emotional burden. This aligns with Walton et al.

(2015), who have argued that, when employees face a stereotype threat and the fear of being judged or undervalued based on group membership, they experience lowered self-esteem, reduced engagement, and decreased job satisfaction. BAME female academics are often considered outsiders while being promoted to decision-making roles. They become marginalised based on presumption and treated unfairly regarding their ability (Arday, 2018). Considering both experiences, it has been found that BAME female academics are often judged as not doing more in the workplace, which relates to these academics' perceptions of emotional burden.

Therefore, this research finds that extra workload and pressure create an emotional burden on BAME female academics because this impacts not only psychologically but their overall performance at work. The expectations and perceptions of BAME and non-BAME employees are not the same, due to the perceived benefits and opportunities of different groups of employees.

Theme Summary

Continuous workplace pressure affects employee satisfaction and is compounded by feelings of inadequacy in task performance. This emotional burden contributes to workplace dissatisfaction, impacting both psychological and emotional wellbeing. BAME female academics may further hinder their own progress by remaining in familiar spaces out of fear of jeopardising their happiness in their current roles. While work–life balance is crucial for job satisfaction, some perceive university policies aimed at supporting minority female academics as detrimental to their careers rather than beneficial.

In the next chapter, the researcher discusses Themes 3, 4, and 5 to achieve Objective 2, which is 'To assess how imbalanced representations impact on job satisfaction among BAME female academicians. Based on these three objectives, the researcher has developed Model 2, which is an illustration of the causes of BAME female academic underrepresentation in HEIs and how this has an impact on their job satisfaction. After interviewing 15 BAME female academics and two non-BAME academics, the researcher developed 11 sub-themes, which are the experiences of the participants shared during the interview. In this chapter, Model2 is presented, followed by the findings from the interviews, after the discussion of each sub-theme.

5.2 Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of imbalanced representation on Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Female academics' job satisfaction

This section of the research is a continuation of the analysis and discussion chapter to meet Objective 2: 'To evaluate the impact of imbalanced representation of BAME female academics on their job satisfaction'. To identify this, 15 BAME female academics were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. During the interviews, the participants were asked two significant questions. First, what are the underlying factors for imbalanced representation, and second, how do these impact your job satisfaction? After analysing the data using thematic analysis, the researcher found that BAME female academics were often underrepresented in top-level positions and overrepresented in the lowest-level roles (Bhopal and Chapman, 2019). The factors identified were unconscious bias, stereotyping, discrimination, and being blamed for their underrepresentation in decision-making roles.

The model below has identified how imbalanced representation of BAME female academics impacts on job satisfaction. The job satisfaction of BAME female academics could be improved by acknowledging the underlying factors of imbalanced representation. The following model (Fig. 5.2) considers Theme 4: group favouritism hinders social acceptance; Theme 5: uneven career pathways; and Theme 6: limited opportunities for growth. The following figure shows the how imbalanced representations impact on job satisfaction among BAME female academics:

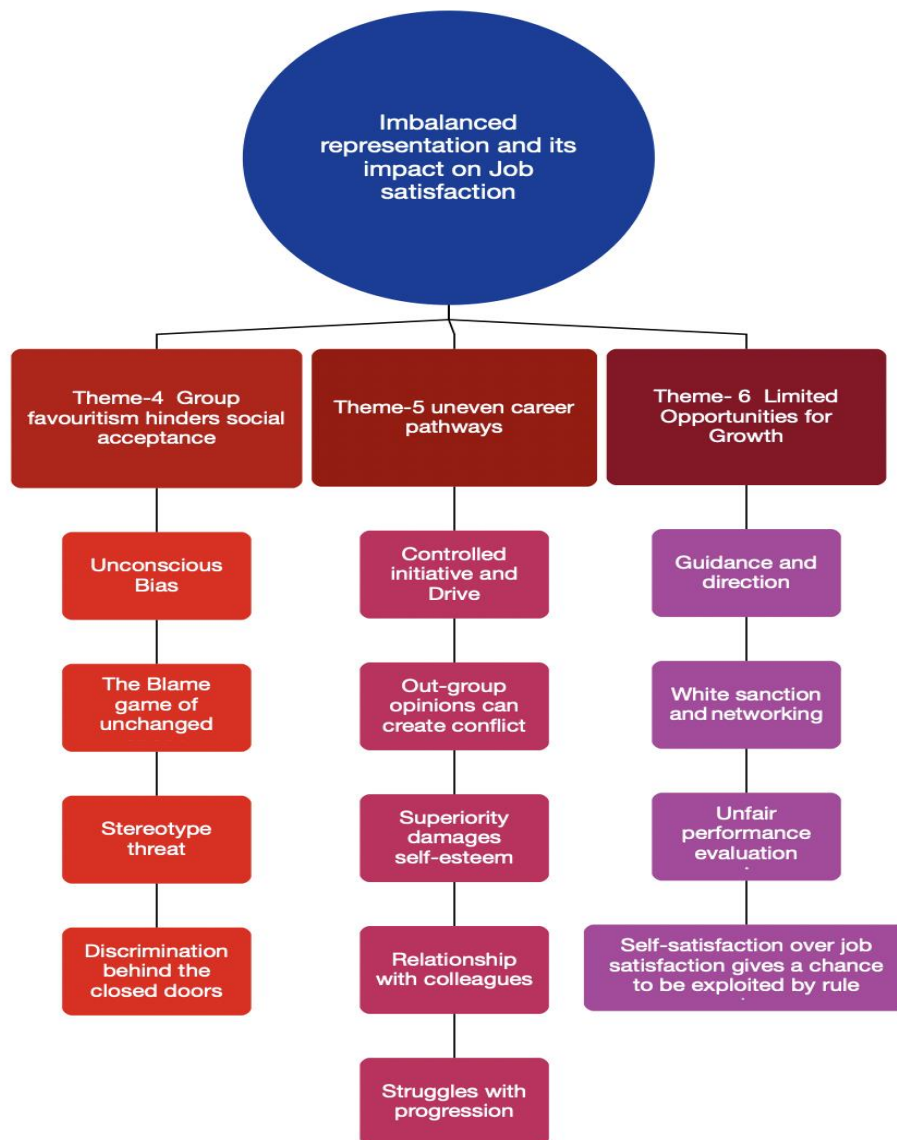


Figure 5.2: Model 2 - Imbalanced representation of BAME female academics and its impact on job satisfaction (The Author’s View, 2024).

After analysing the data, the researcher has identified several themes and sub-themes that highlight the possible causes of imbalanced representation in academia and how this impacts BAME female academics’ job satisfaction. BAME female academics in the UK often face challenges in reaching higher positions, and the interviews with the participants revealed that group favouritism frequently marginalises BAME female academics. Career paths for everyone are different due to limited access to resources. The researcher has outlined the imbalanced representations and their impact on job satisfaction among BAME females by providing findings and discussions on each theme and sub-theme.

5.2.1 Theme 4: Group favouritism hinders social acceptance

In the UK higher education sector, there is a thin line between majority groups and minority groups, which makes BAME female academics feel unequal to their White counterparts (Bhopal, 2018). BAME female academics challenge this norm and try to make their places in UK HEIs, but White academics have protected their privilege by pushing them to the sidelines and making them out-groups. These social acceptances often turn into unconscious bias, discrimination, stereotype threats, or even denying BAME female academics' effort in the workplace. Unwanted attitudes persist in these institutions, making these academics feel invisible and constantly under pressure to prove themselves against stereotypes (Rollock, 2019).

The Blame game of unchanged spaces

In the UK's higher education sector, the percentage of BAME female professors has gone up from 2.5% in 2019 to about 2.7% in 2023 (AdvanceHE, 2023). Even though more BAME women are becoming professors, this change is taking time to be accepted by other non-BAME academics due to organisational disparities (Opara, Sealy and Ryan, 2020). Policy and procedures are written in such a way that every employee receives an equal opportunity to improve their position. However, due to an invisible and systematic barrier, there is less representation of BAME female academics in the UK higher education system. Indirectly, BAME female academics are blamed for their own lack of representation in decision-making positions. One of the participants (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer) stated that,

See it is like, if you complain that's why there are no BAME female academics, you are held responsible for your failure to advance because of some invisible, systemic barriers. I've been employed here for more than five years, and I've never heard them ask to make me a permanent employee. They had available positions; I personally applied for them, but my boss never mentioned this, they will say opportunities are there then why not utilise this.

Three respondents said that while others might act accepting on the surface, it is tough for them to recognise an ethnic minority female as a professor because they do not truly embrace this progress. IDP 02, Bobita, professor added that,

Yeah, that has been happening for a long time, and it is still happening. You know, they might say we accept them; we accept who they are, but somewhere deep down, they do not want us to be in that position, and that is why, you know, you see very few females in higher positions from BAME backgrounds. Because till the time we are working like donkeys, and you know, at the lecturer level or senior lecturer level, yeah, they are being appreciated and everything. But once it comes to promotion, mostly it goes to White people. Well, it is like an open secret in academia.

Nonetheless, almost every decision-making position in higher education is held by people from the majority groups, which has become an organisational culture (Bhopal and Brown, 2016). It is that rigid mentality that will not accept the BAME female academics in a decision-making position, as the mentality of this culture will not accept change. IDP 06, Liyana, professor stated that,

And I think it is the mental barriers that play a significant role. We might say we are very inclusive. They are very diverse. But I think if your management is all White, then it might have an impact on ethnic minority females' existence in decision-making positions.

IDP 07, Maria, lecturer added that,

The acceptance that, OK, from someone from the same background. He has worked so hard and reached some position, but again, acceptance by the culture is missing. Sometimes, they are not accepted. Sometimes, we do not have that privilege.

Discussion

During the interviews, an important insight came from one participant (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer), who explained that BAME female academics are often blamed for their lack of presence in decision-making roles. She described this as a hidden structural barrier, which was something beyond the control of BAME employees, yet they still faced criticism for the underrepresentation. This creates feelings of isolation, as many believe they are not supported by their own institutions. The participant highlighted that out-group members are judged simply because few ethnic minority women are seen in leadership roles. Since institutions

brand themselves as ‘equal opportunity’ employers, colleagues often from White backgrounds may assume that BAME female academics are failing to make proper use of the opportunities available. This finding reflects the *just-world hypothesis* (Lerner, 1980), which argues that people want to believe the world is fair and that individuals get what they deserve. When faced with realities such as the underrepresentation of women in high-status careers (Block et al., 2018), many cope by blaming women themselves (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). Instead of acknowledging structural barriers, BAME female academics are unfairly held responsible for their disadvantages.

The literature has suggested that universities have adopted various policies and charters to reduce systemic disparities and ensure equal opportunity (Oloyede et al., 2021; Mayya et al., 2021). However, participants in this study commented that BAME female academics are still blamed by non-BAME groups for their lack of advancement in decision-making roles. The majority group know that the minority groups are behind due to systematic barriers. This blame questions their ability and the majority group believe they (BAME) are not taking advantage of available opportunities. As a result, BAME female academics may accept marginalised views, believing they are less intelligent than their White counterparts. This perception decreases their job satisfaction and reduces their chances of obtaining decision-making roles (Dakbe et al., 2008; Elliot and Blithe, 2020; Rana et al., 2022).

One of the participants (IDP 06, Liyana, professor), emphasised that mental (psychological) barriers within management are another reason that are responsible for the blame. The management is still entirely White, which is one of the major barriers for the BAME female academics’ participation in decision-making roles. BAME female academics often cannot challenge this unfair culture because they are too focused on simply surviving in the academic environment (Rubin et al., 2019; Drake and Svenkerud, 2023). Otake-Ebede and Shaffakat (2024) have stated that BAME female academics have made the decision not to identify as victims because the term ‘victim’ is often associated with weakness and myths about their skills and abilities; instead, it implies a right to justice or restitution. In their study, Black female academics held positive self-images and showed themselves to have higher standards by emphasising their competence and quality, which helped them to avoid reinforcing negative preconceptions about themselves.

However, during the interviews, one of the interviewees shared that, it is challenging for majority groups to accept BAME female academics as professors because they do not fully

embrace this progress (IDP 02, Bobita, professor). As long the management remains predominantly White, it affects the inclusion of BAME females in decision-making positions. The same view was shared by another participant who mentioned that achieving a promotion to a decision-making role is considered a privilege. They expect to see that only the White employees are promoted, and not any members from the minority group. Therefore, the mental barrier of non-BAME groups often prevents BAME female academics from reaching decision-making positions (IDP 06, Liyana, professor, and IDP 07, Maria, lecturer). Even if BAME female academics change their victim status, it does not help them to reach decision-making roles because, as long as the decision-makers are all White and achieving a decision-making role is considered a privilege not a right, it is tough for BAME female academics to achieve these roles (IDP 06, Liyana, professor; IDP 07, Maria, lecturer). This findings aligns with Verkuyten (2020). In the White-dominating HEIs, it is often hard to create psychological diversity due to rigid mentality and a lack of desire to change perception. It is often expected that BAME female academics operate in certain ways and downplay their gender and ethnic differences by adapting to mainstream norms (Wolsko et al., 2006). Therefore, blaming BAME female academics for not progressing in this sector is one of the excuses made by this White supremacy institution. Accepting BAME female academics in the top position hinders their progress in decision-making roles.

Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias is mostly related to the behavioural traits of an individual, which impact employee job satisfaction and career development (Verkuyten, 2021). According to Filut, Kaatz, and Carnes (2017), gender bias leads to underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and racial bias can limit the opportunities for ethnic minority women. Three participants added that due to unconscious bias and the judgemental tendency of the workplace, BAME female academics do not receive the opportunity to be in leadership positions as management is still not ready to accept that change. IDP 15, Kakoli, lecturer added that,

People don't see the credibility. People are judgemental. OK, against certain, you know, backgrounds as well, people have certain perceptions that they are not ready to change.

Majority groups tend to favour those who resemble them. More specifically, when a decision-making group is similar, such as a committee of White male professors, they tend to pick

people who are alike (Bonomo, Zundel and Martin, 2016). Five respondents said that BAME women in academics often deal with such unconscious bias when it comes to promotions to decision-making roles. IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer stated that,

You know even the promotion thing. You apply once, you apply twice, and you are just thinking, OK, what was the reason? What? What am I lacking? So, there isn't any apparent reason. You know, so yeah, those things are still there. So legally, there shouldn't be. Or morally, they shouldn't be there. But. They still exist to a certain point.

Two participants agreed that BAME female academics are not in leadership positions because promotions were decided by a small group of senior staff members on committees. They felt that sometimes office politics played a role, and this led to ignoring some of the important criteria for promotions. According to IDP 04, Laila, professor,

You know, there has been quite a bit of behind-the-scenes stuff happening at our university. Getting promoted seems to depend a lot on whether you are liked by the panel member or not. Sure, there are rules they are supposed to follow, but those inside dealings are a huge factor. In our department, very few women have moved up to the top positions, and they are trying to change that. But honestly, there are so few people from ethnic minorities here that it doesn't seem to be an issue they're tackling.

IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer added that, due to cultural differences, such unconscious bias emerges. Due to disparities, sometimes it does not allow an ethnic minority female academic to be part of a majority group's informal relationship, which rather stays between formal relationships.

See, I don't say I don't have any insecurities. Yes, I do. It is the cultural differences. I am from a different background; sometimes I don't understand their jokes or cannot relate to them. Yes, I do have real conversations with them, but mostly formal ones. It is about the environment in which you have grown up. That doesn't mean I have a bad relationship with them, but sometimes I feel left out.

However, IDP 13, Naysa, associate professor stated that due to cultural practice, people often commit unconscious bias, which they do not even realise.

There's some training coming up, and it's funny. You know. He rang me up, and he said, 'There's this training coming up, and I only have a few people on the list. Can you help me?' I said, 'OK, show me your list'. But when he showed me the list, everybody on it was Black and Brown. I said, 'You can't involve all BAME people in the list. Where are the Whites?' With this, I said, this list was wrong. He said, 'Oh, my God'. 'But how does this happen?' I said. 'You cannot submit a list of names where everybody is the same colour.' 'Oh my God, I didn't realise it all,' he said. 'I was thinking about those who, I think, worked really hard, needed a bit of a break, and would benefit from the project that we have put forward.' I said, 'You needed to make this list a little bit more diverse'. 'How did that happen?' he said. I said, 'That's because the world is changing'.

Discussion

During the interviews, participants shared that unconscious bias persists in HEIs, hindering their advancement into decision-making roles (Showunmi, 2022). This bias arises from a competitive environment where one group's gain is seen as another's loss. A study by Erete et al. (2021) has found that when BAME female academics seek career advancement after years of employment at the same institution, the initial acceptance from majority groups often turns into resistance and sometimes outright hostility. Although majority groups are educated and aware of unconscious biases, they often demonstrate them unintentionally. Participants noted that these biases and judgemental attitudes reflect on decision-makers who prevent BAME female academics from obtaining leadership positions, as management often resists change. This finding aligns with Mirza (2017) who has stated that BAME female academics are excluded from decision-making processes due to a rigid hierarchical system that discriminates against them.

Kakoli, a lecturer, mentioned that people are often judgemental and unwilling to change their perceptions of certain backgrounds. This bias leads decision-making groups, typically composed of White male professors, to prefer promoting people like themselves (Bonomo, Zundel, and Martin, 2016). According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), people's self-esteem is influenced by the status of their groups, and they seek to maintain a positive group identity by achieving respect and distinction for their own groups. As a result, they choose non-BAME academics over BAME female academics. This aligns with the study by Arday (2019) who has shown that unconscious biases in HEIs continue to affect inequality

in the recruitment and progression of BAME female academics. These biases often lead university leaders to favour candidates who share their own cultural, gender, class, or racial identity, and this issue is compounded by a predominantly White male leadership structure that has historically marginalised ethnic minorities and women. Among them, few people intentionally discriminate, but everyone else has unconscious biases that influence their decisions, which impacts BAME female academics' career progression (Olasunkanmi-Alimi et al., 2022).

Naysa, another associate professor, noted that unconscious biases often go unnoticed by those committing them because unconscious bias against women is not intentional (Filut, Kaatz, and Carnes, 2017). The concept of unconscious bias suggests that these biases lead an individual to make incorrect decisions even when someone aims to act correctly (Bellugi et al., 2024). However, Durodoye et al. (2020) have argued that BAME female academics remain underrepresented because female academics are frequently expected to be nurturing and emotionally supportive to students, acting like motherly figures, and unconsciously, BAME female academics are judged by majority groups about their ability because of a lack of trust (Shand, 2019).

Among all this evidence, my argument is that, beyond unconscious bias, office politics play a crucial role in limiting the progression of BAME female academics into decision-making positions (O'Connell et al., 2021). Research has shown that hidden factors influencing promotion often leave BAME female academics 'in the dark', restricting their career advancement (Laila, professor). Even those who manage to reach senior positions face ongoing challenges, as limited autonomy and the pressures of office politics make it difficult for them to maintain their roles and support early-career colleagues (Blell et al., 2022). These findings align with Wyatt (2022), who has argued that office politics remain largely dominated by White men, leaving women and ethnic minorities with weaker networks and fewer advantages. Instead of focusing on how organisations can build inclusive cultures, responsibility is often shifted onto those excluded expecting them to adapt or prove themselves, which ultimately reduces their chances of leadership and career development, while the deeper systemic issues remain unaddressed.

As the participants pointed out, the absence of guidance leaves BAME female academics struggling to navigate career development and vulnerable to unconscious bias. These findings

also align with Karunagharan's assertion (2023) that when individuals are guided by in-group role models for instance, women being mentored by female leaders experience a stronger sense of belonging and can undermine the office politics, which enhances career outcomes (Flore et al., 2018; Marx & Roman, 2002; Stout et al., 2015). From a social identity theory perspective, identity-matching role models affirm group membership and reduce anxiety (Tajfel, 1979). Without such representation, BAME female academics are positioned as the out-group, experiencing exclusion, unconscious bias, and limited progression due to office politics. These dynamics contribute to feelings of silence even among leaders and ultimately undermine job satisfaction, mental health, and overall wellbeing.

Discrimination behind the closed door

It is often challenging to directly notice or measure discrimination (Showunmi, 2023). People might not realise if they have faced discrimination or why it happened. Those who discriminate might not admit to it, either because it is illegal or because they might not even be aware they are doing it (Bhopal and Brown, 2016). Experiencing discrimination, or feeling that one's group is treated unfairly, can impact a person's chances of being promoted to leadership roles; it also affects their belongingness to certain groups and their job satisfaction (Nandi et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2014). IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer stated that,

You never see it blatantly in your face. I started to recognise it; I was so naive in my first five years. After two times in a row when my promotion got denied, I started to understand the discrimination, which is behind closed doors. That's, you know, discrimination from a distance.

Four respondents added that ethnic minority academics who are new to the institute are unaware of British culture and often face discrimination while promoting to the next position. IDP 02, Bobita, professor) stated that,

My White friends were saying, oh, you've been discriminated against because you're Black. Then I said I'm not Black. That's the first thing I said. They're like, Yes, you are. I'm like. No. Why? Why is it important to do anything with that? What has my skin colour got to do with it? They said, oh, you are so naive and totally out of your

own depth here. You don't know, and then they explain how things work here in the UK.

According to the Equality Act 2010, it is mandatory to treat each employee equally, considering race, gender, ethnicity, or religion (GOV.UK, 2010). Academic institutions are also following these rules to treat their staff and students equally. However, inside this ivory tower, there is discrimination, which makes BAME female academics feel cornered and insignificant (Gabriel and Tate, 2017). IDP 10, Tania, professor added that,

No, no. They are there. They have always been there to protect people. But if you talk about it, it's insignificant, and it makes you look silly, but they know they are doing it, and they do it intentionally.

However, two respondents believed that in many cases, the university is not responsible for certain discrimination; rather, an ethnic minority female academic becomes discriminated against by a particular individual in the university, which also impacts BAME female academics being promoted to decision-making positions and their job satisfaction. IDP09, Pamela, associate professor added that,

But I wouldn't say what I experienced was caused by the university; it could be just caused by a particular person, you know, a member of staff, who has attacked you because of something that happened.

Discussion

Discrimination is often difficult to detect or measure directly because individuals may not always realise, they have been discriminated against or understand why it happened, while those who discriminate may not admit it, either because it is illegal or because they are unaware of their actions (Bhopal & Brown, 2016; Showunmi, 2023). As IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer explained, discrimination is not always overt but can be subtle, something she only recognised after being repeatedly denied promotions. Bhopal (2022) has argued that despite facing discrimination, BAME female academics still enter predominantly White universities, aware of the elite nature of these spaces, because they see them as offering opportunities for career progression.

Recent statistics have illustrated this change: between 2022 and 2023, the number of professors from ethnic minority backgrounds increased by 22%, with 2,865 out of 22,345 professors nationwide identifying as BAME (HESA, 2024). Of these, 165 were Black professors, including 61 Black women. While these numbers suggest that the participation of BAME academics in decision-making roles is gradually increasing, this does not mean that discrimination no longer exists. This study found that hidden forms of discrimination continued to affect BAME female academics, restricting their ability to progress (UCEA, 2020). This aligns with Nandi et al. (2020) and Schmitt et al. (2014), who have noted that experiencing or perceiving discrimination negatively impacts promotion opportunities, the sense of belonging, and job satisfaction. However, from a social identity theory perspective, these patterns reveal how BAME female academics are often positioned as the out-group within the dominant White academic culture. Even when progress is made, the presence of a few successful BAME female role models can create the illusion that opportunities are equally accessible, reinforcing the expectation that ‘if one woman can succeed, others should be able to as well’. This overlooks structural inequalities and ignores the identity-based barriers that continue to burden those outside the in-group. As SIT suggests, such dynamics erode belonging, increase anxiety, and undermine the job satisfaction of those who must constantly navigate discrimination (Barnes, 2021).

One participant (IDP10 Tania, professor) stated that inside this White space, there is such discrimination, which makes BAME female academics feel cornered and insignificant if they share it. This finding aligns with, Bryan (2018) who has pointed out that Black female academics who thought or acted differently were seen as outsiders and faced challenges at work and in society. Those who spoke about their discrimination did not fit into predominantly White workplaces, where inclusion was seen as a privilege, making it difficult for Black women to discuss their marginalisation. In addition, a recent study by the University of Manchester (2021) reveals that BAME female academics, especially Black female academics, face a concrete ceiling in their careers. It is a myth that Black women and White women face the same level of discrimination. **Black women experience double discrimination due to both race and gender (Otaye-Ebede and Shaffakat, 2024).** Overcoming this dual discrimination is challenging due to deep-seated prejudices and traditional biases.

This research has found that newly recruited academics often face discrimination while advancing in their career because of their unfamiliarity with British culture, which makes them disadvantaged from the beginning of their career compared to a White female who does not have to face this cultural shock. Therefore, BAME female academics are discriminated against not only because they share marginalisation but also because they are unaware of British culture, which is the reason for underrepresentation. Pamela, an associate professor, noted that her experiences of discrimination were likely caused by individuals rather than the university. Positive social and professional interactions with supervisors, colleagues, and students, along with satisfactory working conditions, contribute significantly to higher levels of job satisfaction (Kutlaca, Becker, and Radke, 2020). In essence, fostering supportive relationships and favourable work environments enhances employees' satisfaction with their jobs. However, some respondents believed that discrimination can also be due to individual actions rather than institutional policies, which happen due to perceived discrimination. According to the literature, perceived discrimination is when someone believes they are being treated unfairly because they belong to a particular group (Mirage, 1994; Sanchez and Brock, 1996). When people feel mistreated due to their group membership, they often experience feelings of alienation and anger, leading to negative work-related behaviours. The finding from this study supports the existing literature. This subtle discrimination and cultural shock are often unacknowledged in UK HEIs, which hinder the promotion of BAME female academics to decision-making positions and they remain underrepresented.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotyping creates obstacles for employee job satisfaction and career growth (Jawaad et al., 2019). People from out-groups often encounter stereotypes that affect their thoughts and hinder their personal growth (Skov, 2020). While some stereotypes are obvious, many are subtle microaggressions that others may not even realise they hold (Showunmi, 2023). During discussion a participant stated,

You know, sometimes stereotypes about other groups just seem to happen based on where people come from and how they grew up. But it really does affect those who have been targeted for such stereotypical behaviour. (IDP 03, Ibtisam, lecturer)

Participants mentioned that BAME female academics often face judgement based on assumed characteristics associated with their ethnicity. They undergo profiling based on these presumed traits. IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor stated,

I have always been very polite and prefer to talk less; that is how I operate, but being a Black woman, people think I must be loud, so the first few days when I started here, my colleagues thought I was not comfortable or that I did not want to mingle with them. Even though I have heard someone say, No problem, you will get along with the culture here and become yourself soon, seriously, I didn't understand what she meant.

During the discussion, a participant added that it is tough being in leadership roles in academia as an ethnic minority female; these positions are designed for a White environment where your ideas are often overlooked. IDP 02, Bobita, professor stated,

In higher education, being a person of colour in a predominantly White environment often leaves you feeling isolated and disadvantaged. You are made to feel inferior. Dealing with subtle stereotypical behaviour has become a regular part of my experience. It is like the system is built to keep leadership roles reserved for White individuals, and I often feel that my ideas are overlooked.

Discussion

The existing literature has suggested that stereotyping is one of the major causes that can impact the job satisfaction of the minority group of employees (Parker, 2004; Rosette et al., 2016; Skov, 2020). This research reveals that UK universities are dominated by White males, and the typical traits linked to leadership often clash with the stereotypical expectations placed on BAME female academic. Due to imbalanced representation of BAME female academics, their decisions are often second guessed and their ability to perform a job is judged. One of the participants (IDP 02, Bobita, professor) mentioned that the system of UK higher education is built in such a way that it ultimately rejects the place of BAME female academics in decision-making roles. Such situations make people more aware of their actions, requiring more emotional control, reducing mental capacity, and lowering motivation, which impacts their career growth and makes them underrepresented in decision-making roles (Bhopal, 2019).

This research reveals that BAME female academics' opinions are not considered at all by the majority group of employees. This is because the structures and systems of HEIs are designed to favour White groups, automatically excluding BAME female academics who are considered as out-groups. As a result, BAME female academics are ignored and have no place in decision-making areas (IDP 02, Bobita, professor) because of certain presumptions about their capability. This finding aligns with, Showunmi (2023) who has found that due to cultural differences, colleagues from major groups consider BAME female academics as coming from a different planet. This stereotypical thinking gives White employees a second guess at the instincts of BAME female academics, which leads to continuous silencing of BAME female academics, which influences their job satisfaction. According to social identity theory, this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as in-group bias or favouritism (Tajfel, 1978), and it is regarded as a privilege issue when members of the out-group face discrimination while members of the same group receive favours.

This research also founds that pre-assumptions about BAME female academic behaviour, their way of arguing and loudness often lead to stereotypical thinking. A participant described that she was typically quiet, but her white colleagues made assumptions about her character, which revealed stereotypical behaviour (Pamela, associate professor). This incident indicates that the majority group of employees believe that the minority group of employees are always loud. If they are gentle and polite, the majority group consider they (BAME) are not comfortable with the work environment and lack relationship with colleagues. BAME female academics are judged wrongly by their White colleagues based on wrong, stereotypical assumptions. This situation can cause individuals to perform worse than their potential in the long run, especially when reminded of negative stereotypes about their group. This finding aligns with Olasunkanmi-Alimi et al. (2022), who have found that Black female academics are often stereotyped because of their blunt communication style, which aligns with a Eurocentric perspective of masculine communication as being direct and authoritative. In addition, this group of employees are also distinguished by their looks and attire (Wolf, 2002; Showunmi, 2023).

This research highlights the significant impact of stereotyping on BAME female academics in UK universities, which contradicts the existing literature and suggests their opinions are considered to be secondary. This study finds that their perspectives are often entirely disregarded due to institutional biases favouring White groups. This exclusion from decision-

making roles, combined with stereotypical assumptions about their behaviour and communication style, leads to heightened stress and reduced career progression. Consequently, BAME female academics remain underrepresented in leadership positions, facing unique challenges that hinder their professional growth.

Theme summary

Due to invisible barriers in the UK higher education system, there is a lack of representation for BAME female academics. Sadly, they are often blamed for this underrepresentation. While some may appear accepting, they struggle to see ethnic minority women as professors. Unconscious bias and workplace judgements prevent them from reaching leadership roles. Majority groups tend to favour those like them, perpetuating disparities. Cultural differences also play a role, as ethnic minority women may be excluded from informal networks. Discrimination and stereotypes affect their chances of promotion and job satisfaction. These stereotypes, both obvious and subtle, hinder their personal growth. Ethnic minority women are often seen as nurturing, not fitting the typical strong leader stereotype.

The following themes and sub-themes are the effects that are caused by social acceptance, which we have discussed earlier, such as blame games, stereotype threats, discrimination, and unconscious bias. During the interviews, the researcher asked how social acceptance impacts their job satisfaction and how these are related to their job satisfaction. The participants have discussed different experiences, and among them, two themes were raised. Theme 5 was 'Feel the squeeze: uneven career pathways and job satisfaction', and Theme 6 was 'limited opportunity for growth'. In the next section, the researcher presents the interviews and explains and discusses the themes and sub-themes.

5.2.2 Theme 5: Feel the squeeze: uneven career pathways and job satisfaction

The intersectionality of gender and ethnicity creates additional challenges, as BAME women face unique obstacles in reaching leadership roles that White women and BAME men do not (Showunmi, 2023). BAME female academics in higher education often feel different, exposed, and like outsiders because of their dual identities and face uneven career pathways (Ahmed, 2007; Crawford et al., 2023; Puwar, 2004). In a society where Whiteness is the norm and academic leadership is predominantly White and male, BAME women are often overlooked

and invisible, with limited access to the power structures within academic leadership (Landers and Santoro, 2017; Chance, 2022). They have to work harder than their White counterparts (Bernard, 2017), leading to fewer opportunities for promotion and advancement in leadership roles. During the interviews, participants shared different experiences about uneven career pathways as part of an underrepresented group and its impact on their job satisfaction. They mentioned how their initiatives were controlled, how they faced continuous silencing, how the superiority of majority groups decreased their self-esteem, and their struggle with progression, which impacted job satisfaction.

Controlled initiative and Drive

HEIs impose strict controls over BAME female academics, which make the environment restrictive and controls their initiative and drive. This is also known as micromanagement (Sims, 2021). Roles with limited organisational power could increase the likelihood of traditional workplace dissatisfaction and fewer ethnic minority females in leadership roles (Filut, Kaatz, and Carnes, 2017). One of the participants (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer) added that being part of an out-group is tough; even if she has the potential to lead certain areas, excessive control limits her ability to fully use her skills and expertise.

But you know I am part of an out-group, and that alone is a big challenge and can be stressful because I feel like I have to be on guard all the time. They can see that I have the potential to lead in some areas, but what we are allowed to teach is strictly controlled, and we cannot go beyond those limits. I really feel that.

Two respondents mentioned that the supervisor's extreme follow-up tendency increases self-doubt and hindrances to taking initiatives.

My supervisor will give me some work, and then after an hour or two, he will again follow this up. I know the deadline, so why this follow-up? (IDP 15, Kakoli, lecturer)

BAME female academics are often seen as polite and capable of handling routine tasks. However, when it comes to decision-making roles, they need to take extra steps to prove their worth and credibility. Unfortunately, the restrictive culture within the department limits their ability to think freely and take initiative, making it harder for them to reach leadership roles (Omoijiade et al., 2024).

What I see in my department in other ethnic minority female academics is that they are thought to be polite and can-do routine jobs; but to perform in decision-making roles, one must take initiative to prove credibility, but you know the restricted culture drives their way of thinking. (IDP04, Laila, Professor)

Discussion

Controlling the initiative and drive of BAME female academics often leads to micromanagement leadership styles by line managers. A study by Tariq and Sidhu (2023) has stated that micromanagement is a leadership style that indicates excessive control, including close supervision and attention to detail. However, during the interviews, participants shared different experiences regarding controlled initiative and drive. This was not a direct question, but while sharing their experiences, participants used words like restricted culture, controlling, follow-up, distress, and initiative. While analysing the data, the researcher came up with this sub-theme, which ensures that due to certain bias and in-group favouritism, BAME female academics often feel controlled in terms of taking initiative. One of the participants mentioned that having skill in this HEI is not enough because excessive control limits the ability to perform (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer). This is because majority groups, even line managers, have unconscious biases about BAME female academic ability; according to them, BAME female academics cannot take on decision-making roles apart from handling routine day-to-day tasks (IDP04, Laila, professor). Nonetheless, extreme follow-up increases self-doubt and hinders initiative (IDP15 Kakoli, lecturer). Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2012) and Milosevic et al. (2020) have suggested that sometimes a detailed, hands-on management style requires micromanagement, as this can be helpful to ensure tasks are done accurately and to high standards, improving efficiency and quality.

After analysing the impact of micromanagement, this study shows that it reduces creativity and performance among participants (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer). It creates distress among employees by demanding constant updates, which signals a lack of trust between managers and employees (IDP 15, Kakoli, lecturer). Although hands-on management is said to ensure quality, the findings suggest that when employees are distressed, this approach alone cannot produce effective outcomes; instead, it may lead to favouritism and negatively impact job satisfaction, particularly for BAME female academics. These findings align with Raskovic and Takacs-Haynes's (2020) study, which has also noted that people tend to trust those who are similar to themselves, which can lead to prejudice and bias in intergroup relations, as people often

highlight their own group's strengths while distancing themselves from others based on differing beliefs. Therefore, the controlled initiative and drive of BAME female academics reduces their chance of being in leadership roles due to the majority groups' implicit bias about the abilities of BAME female academics. Due to these biases, BAME female academics' job satisfaction is impacted.

Out-group opinions can create conflict

Different opinions can lead to conflicts, affecting how well groups work together and positive social processes (Jonasson, Norman, and Lauring, 2014). In higher education, minority groups often receive advice instead of having their opinions taken seriously (Chiocchio et al., 2011). The thoughts and contributions of people from ethnic minority groups are often overlooked. Three participants stated that this impacts employee satisfaction and makes it challenging for BAME women in academia to reach decision-making roles. IDP 07, Maria, lecturer added,

Given that most of the instructors in my department are White men, I have found it rather difficult to communicate with them. Even in informal chats about current affairs or other pertinent subjects, I find it difficult to engage them in meaningful discussion since they frequently lack an interest in my viewpoint. It annoys me and makes it challenging for me to feel valued and heard at work. but they always have insights for me, which feels very undervalued, and for that reason, I keep myself apart from them to avoid the disagreements.

Ethnic minority female academics often keep their conversation limited to avoid disagreements which makes a major impact on their interpersonal relationships with White colleagues. One of the participants added,

Since I do not want to get into a disagreement, I normally have a casual conversation. Instead, I keep myself occupied by working alone. I travel three days a week, do my lectures, and then return home. (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer)

Early-career BAME female academics are often triggered by majority groups and blamed for certain deeds that they have not done. IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor stated,

The feeling that you are a minority, especially when I was very new at this university, which was a long time ago, I was so young that I never felt comfortable with any

disagreement. People used to blame me for things that I hadn't done and often it happens that I couldn't go for any disagreements. But things are changing day by day. I will say not fully, but yes, the change can be seen.

Discussion

Different opinions can lead to conflicts, which can impact group cohesion and positive social processes (Jonasson, Norman, and Luring, 2014; Aiston and Kent, 2020). In exploring how imbalanced representation impacts the job satisfaction of BAME female academics, it was initially believed that they often faced issues related to a lack of confidence (Aiston et al., 2020). However, the findings from this research present a different perspective. During interviews, participants indicated that they tend to avoid socialising to prevent disagreements, which partly explains their silence within academic settings.

Participants shared that in higher education, BAME female academics frequently receive advice instead of having their opinions taken seriously, and their contributions are often overlooked (IDP 07, Maria, lecturer). This is because their voices are sometimes misinterpreted, diminishing their potential in the workplace and leading to stereotypical thinking in majority groups. They also mentioned that being silenced in the workplace makes it challenging for BAME women to attain decision-making roles. BAME female academics often limit their interactions to avoid conflicts, which affects their relationships with White colleagues and reduces their commitment to the organisation (IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer). Early-career academics may feel targeted by dominant groups and are sometimes blamed for things they did not do, leading them to avoid interactions to prevent disagreements (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor).

This research highlights a gap between existing literature and the findings of this study. While the literature has suggested that BAME female academics remain quiet due to a lack of confidence (Aiston et al., 2020), this study reveals that BAME female academics distance themselves from majority groups to avoid conflict (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor). The literature has suggested that when employees participate in decision-making, their job satisfaction and commitment drops, which leads to conflict in the workplace (Heilman and Caleo, 2018). The study finds that early-career BAME female academics often face some

indirect blaming for things they have not done. Therefore, they choose to distance themselves from their White colleagues to avoid conflicts, rather than because of their fear or lack of confidence.

Therefore, it is stereotypical thinking that women 'fit in' the masculine culture of HEIs (Aiston and Kent, 2020), and due to that, women are silenced, and their opinions are not given much value. The opinions of BAME female academics are often ignored and they are not given a chance to be in decision-making roles; instead of hearing them, they are given advice (IDP 07, Maria, lecturer). Consequentially, to avoid conflict in the workplace BAME female academics often avoid sharing their opinions, which limits their chances of being in leadership roles.

Superiority damages self-esteem

Self-esteem makes individuals in majority groups sometimes show their superiority over minority groups. This behaviour is linked to the belief that their dominance is acceptable, leading the dominant group to feel more valued than the subordinate groups. One of the respondents added,

Well, if you look around yourself in academia, you will only find White supervisors, and they sometimes try to impose an extra workload, even if this increases to a certain level, which becomes a dominance that is very visible, but you cannot talk back because this dominance is acceptable. (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer)

Majority groups frequently appraise themselves as superior to their minority counterparts. This sense of self-superiority diminishes levels of trust, leading to potential derogation of others' moral character. Another participant (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer) articulated a sense of heightened control over him, coupled with doubts regarding his competence at work, resulting in a diminished sense of accountability for his professional responsibilities.

You can feel that heat. I have always been monitored, and this sometimes makes me question my own ability to work. Even these unnecessary follow-ups and hierarchical chains of command make me slow in my work.

Four respondents agreed that majority groups' superiority behaviour often makes the confidence level of minority groups lower, and they even suffer from an inferiority complex, which impacts their job satisfaction and enthusiasm for work.

Well, in my opinion, sometimes if you show too much superiority, this can backfire because people lose their enthusiasm for work, and you can see inequality within the workplace. (IDP 13, Naysa, associate professor)

Discussion

The literature has found that high self-esteem leads to better productivity (Casper & Fishbein, 2002), successful relationships at work (Cooper & Locke, 2000), happiness (Hina et al., 2014), a healthy lifestyle (Chakrabarty et al., 2008), and increased job satisfaction (Ali & Tatlal, 2022), because self-esteem ensures dignity and independence in the workplace (McLeod, 2018). But during the interviews, the participants shared different experiences about self-esteem. They said that majority groups have higher self-esteem than BAME female academics, because they are from White backgrounds and have significant independence in the workplace compared to other groups. According to Iacoviello et al. (2017), in-group favouritism would enhance people's self-esteem because they are members of an advantaged group. This heightened self-esteem has created such intention among majority groups that they have normalised superiority over minority groups, as they believe that dominance is acceptable (Golec de Zavala, 2024). Two participants (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer, and IDP12, Nupu, senior lecturer) added that White supervisors in academia sometimes impose extra workloads and extra monitoring, creating invisible dominance that cannot be challenged due to its perceived acceptability by White colleagues and claiming this as a culture (Banaji et al., 2021). This sense of self-superiority among majority groups diminishes trust and can lead to questioning the moral character of others. While supervisors may monitor subordinates to improve work quality and timeliness, this can negatively impact the self-esteem of minority groups because this takes away BAME female academics job autonomy. A feeling of inferiority can be created, which affects job satisfaction and becomes discrimination at work. One of the participants (IDP 13, Naysa, associate professor) observed that, too much superiority can backfire, leading to a loss of enthusiasm and increased workplace inequality. Thus, the superiority behaviour of majority groups often creates conflict in the workplace. This situation affects the organisational

commitment and job satisfaction of BAME female academics, and impacts their career growth (Opara et al., 2020).

After analysing the data, there is a gap between the existing literature and the experiences of BAME female academics. According to the literature, self-esteem ensures independence (McLeod, 2018). However, the findings of this study indicate that this independence of majority groups has turned into superiority, which has normalised dominance in the workplace. In contrast, BAME female academics self-esteem has been downgraded, which eventually takes away their autonomy (IDP 13, Naysa, Associate Professor). Nonetheless, self-esteem ensures positive relationships among colleagues (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Ali & Tatlah, 2022); however, because of self-esteem, both majority groups and minority groups are divided, where majority groups become superior and BAME female academics suffer from inferiority (Banaji et al., 2021).

The findings of this section indicate that the sense of superiority held by majority groups and the resulting dominance in the workplace affects BAME female academics' career growth, limiting their opportunities to reach decision-making roles. Their diminished self-esteem and feelings of inferiority make it more challenging for them to assert themselves and be recognised for leadership roles.

Relationship with colleagues

The relationship between colleagues is an essential part of employee satisfaction which impacts employee advancement in their career (Francis and Stulz, 2020). Due to the imbalanced representation of BAME female academics, they remain out-grouped and their relationship with colleagues can be different based on their culture, position, or background (Pogrebna et al., 2024). Some participants said that no matter what hierarchy level a person is at, there are a few co-workers who make it harder for them to move ahead in their jobs. They might not stop other colleagues' development, but they are not always helpful or supportive. This feeling of competing with co-workers is stronger when those co-workers are from a superior background. IDP 14, Mukta stated,

I do not mind working with others; even I find it more interesting when we work together as a team. However, at times I feel that things are not just about working

with the different group, it is just that there are colleagues who will not support you nor stop you in your advancement.

Hence, there are academics who like to socialise, but due to cultural restrictions, some cannot get along with a team, which impacts their satisfaction level and makes them feel disconnected from the team too. IDP 01, Belgium stated,

My colleagues tend to go out for drinks, and sometimes I'm a social person too. I technically can drink, but it's not my culture. You know, it's not something that I won't enjoy doing, so I would go. I would have my hot chocolate with them or have food. I felt that I worked well with these people within the workplace, but I don't have that mingling with them outside of work for a longer period, which makes me sometimes feel like I'm not connecting with them thoroughly.

IDP 09, Pamela added that it is easier to maintain relationships with colleagues with the same background as it helps an employee to open their mind in the workplace and express themselves. However, being an employee from a different background won't allow an individual to share the same thought process as superior groups, which makes these relationships rigid and formal.

There was one of my colleagues ... every time I heard her going into our supervisor's office, both are White, I would always be hearing them making jokes and laughing even after they're speaking about work. While, I have never seen him speaking to me that way. I always felt he was bit more formal to me. Didn't have the same sense of humour, although I would say I have a sense of humour and I joke a lot.

(IDP 02, Bobita) added that, when people don't have similar senses of humour, it can sometimes be hard for different groups to connect with each other.

I'm not reserved or anything. But it's a different kind of humour. people tend to use swear words more. Yeah, I don't. And I feel that kind of puts up a barrier, which I don't mind. But I feel like I did my work at work. People who work do me fine. But I feel like the network or connection is missing. Will not work. OK.

However, this competitive mindset is mainly created by the organisation between colleagues due to availability of limited resources and the multi-campus environment, which does not

allow faculty members to work together, which impacts the relationship with colleagues. IDP 15, Kakoli added that,

My campus is in the north, and we moved here a year ago. We used to sit together with other departments, but now the university is expanding, and places are too. I feel that this multi-campus structure hinders our culture of staff members working together.

Discussion

During the interviews, participants expressed mixed feelings about their relationships with colleagues, highlighting cultural differences, which are affecting their job satisfaction. Herzberg's (1959) theory emphasises that hygiene factors, such as interpersonal relationships with peers, need to be met by the organisation to prevent job dissatisfaction among employees. Collegiality among faculty members is strongly linked to job satisfaction at both the personal and institutional levels (Victorino, Nylund-Gibson, and Conley, 2018).

During the interviews, professorial-level staff did not perceive these relationships as either a threat or a benefit. However, lecturers and senior lecturers stated that academics from different backgrounds often do not share the same mentality as those in superior positions, resulting in rigid and formal relationships interactions (IDP 01, Belgium). Therefore, people may experience the same action in a different aspect depending on whether the action was executed by a member of the same group or a reference group, which also differs from position to position. Therefore, if this contradicts the existing literature, not everyone requires the same level of peer support, which is the unique finding of this study.

According to one participant (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer), while some academics enjoy socialising, cultural restrictions can prevent others from fully connecting with their teams, leading to dissatisfaction and feelings of isolation. For BAME female academics, these informal networking opportunities are often even more limited. Many feel pressured to remain formal and guarded because of cultural differences and limited resources, which restricts their ability to build strong collegial relationships and, in turn, impacts their job satisfaction. From a social identity theory perspective, group memberships are central to self-concepts (Balliet et

al., 2014). When BAME female academics cannot socialise freely with their White peers, they may feel excluded, as individuals are motivated to belong to positively valued groups and to maintain a positive group identity. The absence of such trust-building opportunities reinforces in-group favouritism within majority groups, pushing BAME women further to the margins of workplace relationships. This finding is consistent with Meleady and Vermue (2019), who have shown that cultural differences shape workplace trust and cooperation, and with Bhopal (2020), who has highlighted how BAME female academics often feel excluded from informal networks and disconnected from a sense of belonging within HEIs. Therefore, it can be said that relationships with colleagues influence academic job satisfaction. Due to cultural differences and trust issues, BAME female academics often struggle to connect with their colleagues and remain outsiders.

Struggles with progression

In universities, challenges for BAME female academics in advancing their careers are not usually because of direct discrimination but more because of subtle and widespread biases in the system that are not addressed. These academics are often working twice as hard as others, but their abilities are still judged. It is important to identify the issues that BAME female academics face in their careers, which cause job dissatisfaction and a lower number of BAME women in leadership roles. IDP 12 Nupu, senior lecturer added,

I think we have to fight, and especially for women from BAME backgrounds, we have that stress as we have to work harder considering others, and to face the challenges that we do face is another thing. But you know, addressing them, I think, is important.

Women are usually well-represented in lower-level professional positions but tend to be less represented in higher-status roles with higher salaries (Catalyst, 2021). Three respondents mentioned that they may have fewer role models or mentors encouraging them to aim for high standards (Holman et al., 2018).

And I think this is a challenge because usually we see BAME female academics at the junior level, you know, as associate lecturers to senior lecturers, that is it... it stops at senior lecturer... with tonnes of responsibilities, and then it takes ages to progress through different levels. (IDP09, Pamela, associate professor)

In academic settings, if a woman occupies a higher-status position, people often view her role as being more like one involving service. However, when the same position is held by a man, it is perceived as a position of power (Monoree et al., 2008). Five respondents agreed that ethnic minority female academics need to prove themselves twice as hard before getting promotion in contrast to their White male counterparts.

Recently, I got a promotion after five years from lecturer to senior lecturer position. I was devastated during those periods, so, as you know, to get a promotion, you need to perform some extra work. Sometimes I worked from home during my off days; sometimes I took extra classes or worked as a proxy teacher. I also worked on policymaking and published two articles. Even though I have a PGCert and became SFHEA, I took a combination of work to prove my credibility. However, when a male White colleague didn't get his promotion on time after three years, we both started working together. He tried to resign. To keep him, they raised his salary and gave him a promotion. They didn't even negotiate or say no to him, which was quite a shock to me. (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer)

Discussion

During the interviews, the participants shared that they have to work twice as hard as their counterparts (IDP 12 Nupu, senior lecturer), and they face significant challenges in career progression in universities due to subtle biases, and their abilities are often questioned. They are typically underrepresented in decision-making roles and overrepresented in lower positions (Bhopal, 2020). They struggle to advance to higher-status roles as BAME female academics are less likely to be promoted to full professor in HEIs (Durodoye et al., 2020). This finding resonates with the 'ivory ceiling' concepts through which passive inequality in HEIs requires BAME female academics to work twice as hard as their White peers to secure promotion (Manfredi, 2015; Morrison et al., 1987). After so much discussion, underrepresentation continues to exist in HEIs, which impacts the career progression of BAME female academics because of certain disparities.

A lack of role models hinders their progression, and they often need to prove their credibility to gain promotion. Persistent inequality is faced by BAME female academics (IDP09, Pamela, associate professor). According to the literature, a lack of positive role models, reduced mentoring opportunities, and an unwillingness to challenge patriarchal procedures and culture

are also identified in individual institutions as restricting career prospects for BAME female academics (Bhopal, 2020; Stockfelt, 2018). One cannot be what one cannot see (Rabinger, as cited by Featherstone and Porritt, 2021). These findings align with the current literature. Imbalanced representation impacts BAME female academics' career progression.

Theme summary

In higher education, BAME female academics in leadership roles can inspire others and develop leadership qualities. However, they often face double minority microaggressions, where they are perceived as less competent than White leaders. Limited organisational power can lead to dissatisfaction and fewer BAME females in leadership positions. Despite having job autonomy, minority groups may still feel unaccepted. In academia, minority groups often receive advice instead of having their opinions taken seriously. Their contributions are often overlooked, and they may avoid disagreements to maintain relationships with White colleagues. Biases in the system, rather than direct discrimination, hinder career advancement for ethnic minority women, leading to job dissatisfaction and fewer leadership roles.

5.2.3 Theme 6: Limited Opportunity to growth affects job satisfaction

BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector have fewer growth opportunities (Arday, 2018; Bush et al., 2006). This lack of opportunities and improper guidance often reduce the chances for BAME female academics' career growth, which impacts their job satisfaction.

Guidance and direction

The participants added that BAME female academic leaders require professional and directional resources for overcoming the challenges they encounter. One participant added that, due to a lack of opportunities and proper guidance, BAME female academics are behind the growth in leadership roles, which impacts their job satisfaction.

See, I will not sugarcoat things; rather, I will say that it is hard to see that growth opportunities are not equal for everyone. (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor)

Three participants agreed that equitable access to mentorship is required for BAME female academics in leadership roles, which is interlinked with employee satisfaction. IDP 08, Nahara, senior lecturer mentioned,

I want a mentor who will guide me and advise me on the route to success. This is more like grooming, getting me ready for the world, but I know there are very few who are from my colour in the department, and if I want someone, it will not be possible, and someone White will never understand my issues, as they are not bothered and most importantly it is hard to find a real mentor.

Discussion

During the interviews, the participants shared that they require guidance and direction to move upward in the career path. Due to unequal opportunities, their career development often remains at stake. It is difficult to find a real mentor for grooming them for career development (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor). According to the literature, career aspirations typically require positive mentoring, which includes supporting, coaching, providing advice, and helping to improve visibility, which impacts job satisfaction and career progression (Eby et al., 2000). However, due to out-group derogation, individuals who are in-groups with their mentors are more likely to report a higher level of satisfaction because such mentees commonly derive

enhanced psychological satisfaction and receive support from their mentors for career progression (Zambrana et al., 2015). There are very few BAME female academics in decision-making roles. They often do not have an opportunity to be trained under the same group mentors. The equal opportunity of guidance and direction for a career path is hard to acquire. This outcome aligns with Murphy and Taylor's (2012) findings that leaders from diverse backgrounds help foster inclusivity and provide aspirational figures for underrepresented groups. Exposure to these role models challenges stereotypes, strengthens self-perception (Eagly & Karau, 2002), enhances a sense of belonging, and encourages individuals to pursue paths that are less typical for their group.

In this study, it has been found that there are White mentors, and they are often not concerned about BAME female academic career progression. This is because of out-group derogation against BAME female academics, who often face stereotype threat to gain guidance from White leaders because they are mostly fond of their own in-groups (Hoyt and Murphy, 2016). Due to imbalanced representation, BAME female academics do not receive enough support from the same cultural background mentors. White mentors are uncomfortable with BAME mentees because of cultural differences and not knowing how to respond to their needs. White mentors do not want to get involved with BAME female academics (Bonilla-Silva, 2021; Ray, 2019). Therefore, this finding aligns with Harris and Ogbonna's (2023) study, which revealed that stereotypes and typical racial attitudes can influence mentoring across races, often putting BAME mentees at a disadvantage. What looks like poor mentoring may be the common way White mentors behave towards BAME individuals in a racialised society. This sense of not belonging impacts job satisfaction for BAME female academics.

EDI has policies to guide BAME female early-career academic staff for institutions. However, this study finds that mentoring and guiding policies are inadequate because it is hard to find real mentors. Although there are policies available to support BAME female academics mentoring, they can affect BAME academics negatively. As noted earlier, BAME academics continue to face unfair treatment in UK universities, even though institutional racism has already been highlighted (EHRC, 2019). This finding aligns with Harris and Ogbonna's (2023) study, showing that university policies and practices often claim to be fair, but still disadvantage BAME academics. This happens because ethnicity and gender are treated as unimportant, even though they clearly shape people's experiences. Unfair conditions continue

in UK universities despite the evidence of institutional disparities. Due to a lack of guidance and proper direction towards career aspiration, BAME female academics remain underrepresented, and this impacts their job satisfaction.

White sanction and networking

Three participants mentioned that White colleagues acted as ‘gatekeepers’, implying that securing a job required impressing or forming alliances with them first. Obtaining approval from White colleagues for career advancement and promotion is known as a ‘white sanction’.

You have to know and be friends with White colleagues, and these friendships should be strong, not just casual. Other people who can help your career should see these friendships. (IDP 10, Tania, professor)

However, BAME female academics are not good at networking. Endorsement from White colleagues are required to prove one’s ability to work in academia and to gain promotion:

I think endorsement from White colleagues is necessary when you are planning to get promoted. I have been in the same position for the past five years now. Sometimes I can feel the gap, but I am not that much of a big mouth type, who will go and ask for things. (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor)

Ethnic minority academics are not often welcomed to networks of White people, and they remain out-grouped. Four participants added that, without such connections, their chances of progression are severely diminished.

We are not entirely welcomed to these White network groups, rather we are in our own BAME group. We just talk and listen to each other. That’s it, you see. On that note again, you need a White person recommendation, which will make your voice stronger. (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer)

Discussion

During the interviews, one of the participants added that formal and informal social networks play a crucial role in career advancement (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor), which also

leads to job satisfaction (Angervall et al., 2018; Heffernan, 2021). According to the two-factor theory, a healthy and positive relationship with colleagues enhances the job satisfaction of employees. However, in this study, this relationship with a colleague is more like White sanction that will make recommendations for career development. This is an organisational barrier where BAME female academics struggle to be involved and make progress because, without White sanction and networking, it is difficult to survive in academia (IDP 10, Tania, professor). She also added that it is tough to get promoted because White colleagues often acted as ‘gatekeepers’, meaning that securing a job required impressing or forming alliances with them first. However, it is also true that BAME female academics struggle with networking (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor), and endorsement from White colleagues is needed to demonstrate their capability in academia and to achieve promotion. IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer mentioned that without these connections, their chances of advancement are significantly reduced. Therefore, the findings are that, although relationships with colleagues ensure job satisfaction, for BAME female academics, this relationship with White colleagues works as a sanction or nomination for promotion, which is the reason for their dissatisfaction.

There are plenty of BAME networks available, and usually BAME female academics are influenced to enter these networks (Seo et al., 2022). However, this study finds that BAME networks, whether formal or informal, do not possess the same influence or credibility as White networks (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer). Although they provide an important space for discussing issues and supporting each other, they lack the power to effectively leverage promotion and advancement opportunities, which reduces job satisfaction.

Therefore, there is a clear gap between the literature and the findings. BAME female academics are often led to same-gender networks, which are often temporary and less stable (Harris and Ogbonna, 2023). As women advance in their careers, they lose peer support and become isolated while this can be helpful initially, it can create barriers over time (Arday, 2022). Although few ethnic minority academics are welcomed into White-dominated networks, this leaves them marginalised, and BAME female academics are left no choice but to connect with women-led groups, which in the long run makes them suffer in their career growth (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer). White sanction and networking are barriers to BAME female academic job satisfaction in HEIs.

Unfair performance evaluation system

Almost every participant added that working in higher education has always been their desire, and they are satisfied.

My desired job has always been to work in higher education, so I am happy to be in this position. My main drive is the satisfaction I get from working in this industry. I am also delighted to add that I have a good bond with my students.(IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer)

However, two participants believed that advantage is taken of this devotion to teaching and strong desire to work in higher education. Ethnic minority female academics are treated differently than their other counterparts, where superiors take them for granted.

Fair. I'm not hung up on colour identity. I know it exists. I know people treat me differently because I am Brown or Black. But it doesn't discredit my love for my job and the work that I do. (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer)

Transparency in performance evaluation encourages employees to work on their shortfalls and helps them work towards further development. Three participants added that performance evaluation is more like tick-boxing, where expectations are not properly stated. According to IDP 14, Mukta, lecturer,

Well, it is more like a tick-box process. I have written my own KPI and given it to my supervisor to review. No feedback, no guidance towards my development.

A contradictory opinion was voiced by another participant. She thought people from White backgrounds sometimes get an earlier promotion than those from Black backgrounds. Performance and productivity levels vary from one employee to another. Sometimes in-group favouritism and unconscious biases let a candidate be promoted, which decreases the chances for a minority employee to gain a promotion.

People who joined my team after me were promoted. However, I am still in the same position, which is really heartbreaking. (IDP 03, Ibtisam, lecturer)

Discussion

Performance management systems are crucial for shaping academics' careers by highlighting their weaknesses and linking their performance to financial rewards and career advancement (Guarini et al., 2020). However, UK HEIs lack a strong feedback and accountability system in the performance evaluation of academic staff (Broad and Goddard, 2010; Hutaibat et al., 2021). During the interviews, participants agreed that the current evaluation system is not effective because it is more focused on ticking boxes than providing constructive feedback or guidance for development. For instance, one of the participants (IDP 14 Mukta, lecturer) expressed frustration that her performance was reviewed without any feedback or direction for further improvement, which mostly ticked boxes and the supervisor merely fulfilled his duty.

However, this study reveals a gap between existing literature and the lived experiences of BAME female academics. One participant (IDP 12, Nupu, senior lecturer) raised concerns about fairness in promotions, noting that White colleagues often receive preferential treatment due to in-group favouritism and out-group derogation. While performance management systems are designed to highlight strengths and support career growth, research has shown that biases against out-groups frequently undermine the advancement of minority employees. In academia, this bias manifests in two ways. First, White academics are often selected for decision-making roles because of in-group loyalty (Doghan et al., 2019); and second, they benefit from exclusive networking opportunities that enable greater visibility and access to promotion pathways (Bhopal, 2020). In contrast, BAME female academics are left with performance evaluations as their main route to recognition. Yet, without consistent feedback or robust performance management structures, their contributions are overlooked, leading to delayed progression. This study extends the findings of Bhopal (2022) and Showunmi (2023), showing how the intersection of gender and ethnicity intensifies underrepresentation in decision-making roles, making BAME women more vulnerable to stereotypes and unfair assumptions about their abilities.

Overall, the discussion underscores the importance of fair and transparent performance evaluations in fostering employee development and ensuring equitable opportunities for career advancement in leadership roles. Ensuring transparent performance evaluations is important for employee satisfaction and is an integral part of establishing employee capability. However, UK HEI sare not practising performance evaluation properly, which leads to disparities in the progression of BAME female academics into decision-making roles (Doghan et al., 2019).

Self-satisfaction over job satisfaction gives a chance to be exploited by rule makers

BAME female academics might find self-satisfaction in their work through a sense of purpose, dedication to their field, and the impact they have on students and communities. This intrinsic motivation can be powerful and fulfilling. However, job satisfaction refers to satisfaction derived from the actual conditions of the job, such as fair treatment, opportunities for advancement, recognition, and a supportive work environment. Unfortunately, the reality for many BAME female academics is that their job satisfaction might not always align with their self-satisfaction. The participant's statement, 'I just enjoy teaching', states a multifaceted experience. It represents a blend of cultural connection, knowledge sharing, advocacy, and empowerment. Teaching becomes a vehicle for personal fulfilment, social change, and the celebration of diverse voices within academia. IDP 06, Liyana, professor stated,

I just enjoy teaching. I enjoy the interaction with the students and passing my knowledge to them.

Another participant shared the same view (IDP 04, Laila, professor): 'My desired job has always been to work in higher education, so I am happy to be in this position. My main drive is the satisfaction I get from working in this industry. I am also delighted to add that I have a good bond with my students.'

In academic jobs, particularly those that are not always highly paid, motivation often comes from a sense of purpose and a desire to contribute to the field. It is about finding personal value in the work, especially in the impact it has on students and the broader academic community. Staying motivated in the academic job involves a combination of intrinsic motivation, continuous learning, and collaboration with colleagues. This not only enriches an individual's own work but also contributes to the broader academic community and the advancement of knowledge in the field.

In an academic job it is more about self-motivation. You are going to do the job. It is not massively well paid. You are going to do this job to get value from giving to students. Still, to keep me motivated, I try to learn more by participating in different conferences, studying new journals and trying to do some publications with another

professor. I also try to make good conversation with other staff in the team by discussing new ideas. I have already talked with one of my colleagues about publishing something together and again there is another professor who is a White professor who has already approached me for working with him in his new publication. (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer)

However, another participant added that, due to self-satisfaction, BAME female academics are being exploited by the authorities and non-BAME colleagues.

Well, I love my job; I am also attending lots of conferences; I am the face of the university, there is no doubt. Whenever they want to show equality and diversity among team members, I am the one who will get the call. But see, it's been so many years now. I am a professor, but I do not get any calls to join for decision-making roles. Yes, they can easily involve me in this, but, as you see, those places have already been occupied by their own group. (IDP 09 Pamela, associate professor)

Discussion

Academicians are self-satisfied, and during the interviews, participants shared that they are in academia due to personal fulfilment from their work through a strong sense of purpose and dedication to their field. Knowing the disparities in academia, BAME female academics become resilient and consider this job a source of life satisfaction. Resilience and the ability to adapt positively correlate with life satisfaction (Abolghasemi and Varaniyab, 2010). This means that as resilience increases and perceived stress remains positive, life satisfaction also tends to increase. However, when stress levels rise, life satisfaction tends to decrease.

This dynamic is compounded by overt sexism and discrimination. BAME female academics often find personal fulfilment and satisfaction in their work through teaching, mentoring students, and contributing to their fields. This intrinsic motivation is meaningful and drives their dedication despite challenges (Herzberg, 1959). However, job satisfaction, which includes fair treatment, opportunities for advancement, and recognition, may not always align with this personal satisfaction. There is a disparity where BAME female academics might feel exploited or overlooked in decision-making roles despite their contributions and qualifications (IDP 06 Liyana, professor). Overall, while BAME female academics derive personal

satisfaction from their roles, they face systemic challenges that affect their job satisfaction, mental health, and opportunities for leadership and recognition within academia.

Theme Summary

BAME female academics face challenges that hinder their advancement and job satisfaction in the workplace. They often lack the necessary resources and guidance, putting them behind in acquiring leadership roles. whereas White colleagues act as gatekeepers, and they require approval from them for career progression, known as ‘White sanction’. In addition, networking and endorsements from White colleagues are crucial for advancement. Research funding and publication are vital for career growth, but BAME females face barriers to obtaining these opportunities compared to White men. Supervisors play a significant role in grooming employees for promotion, often displaying favouritism. Performance evaluations lack transparency, leading to the exploitation of BAME females. The fear of saying no and not being acknowledged creates pressure and impacts job satisfaction. Different tasks in academia are not equally appreciated or rewarded, leading to discrimination, especially against teaching roles. BAME female academics remain silent during discussions to avoid conflict, which prevents their voice from being heard. Their self-esteem may suffer due to the superiority of White colleagues, and they often face challenges in career progression, which are also outlined in the factor of imbalanced representation. Their tendency towards self-satisfaction makes them vulnerable to exploitation by those in power. Strained relationships with colleagues and unfair performance evaluations further undermine their ability to focus on their competency, which are considered to be reasons for imbalanced representation and its impact on job satisfaction.

In the next chapter, the researcher discusses potential strategies to build a multi-cultural social identity, which could help to overcome the dispersion in UK HEIs and create equal opportunity for BAME female academics. The following strategies are suggested by the participants from their personal experience, and based on the suggestions, the researcher has come up with Model 3, also known as ‘Strategies to build up multicultural social identity to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics’.

5.3 Objective 3: To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build up effective multicultural social identity

This section of the research is the continuation of the findings and discussion chapter. It focuses on Objective 3, ‘To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build an effective multicultural social identity to ensure job satisfaction’. It covers Objective 4, ‘To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector’. The chapter first focuses on the findings and discussion related to Objective 3, followed by the findings and discussion of Objective 4. To address Objective 3, Model 3 has been introduced. This model is based on insights gathered from interviews, where participants shared their real-life expectations on strategies for promoting a multicultural social identity within the UK higher education system. The researcher has identified themes such as ‘Inclusivity Matters’ (Theme 7) and ‘Working Together to Share Burden’ (Theme 8) based on 15 semi-structured interviews to capture participants’ perspectives and expectations regarding the development of these strategies. The researcher supports these findings by referencing relevant literature to evaluate their effectiveness. The following Figure 5.3 shows the strategies that are effective to build up an effective multicultural society:

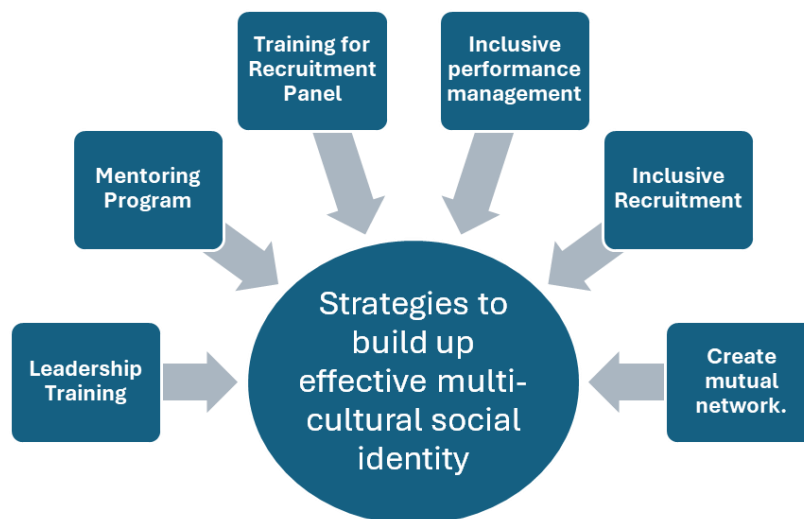


Figure 5.3: Model 3 - Strategies to Build Up multicultural social identity to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics (The Author’s View, 2024).

During the interviews, the participants were asked about how universities can increase diversity in the workplace and possible solutions to establish social identity effectively in the UK HEI. Based on these questions, the participants shared different experiences, and among them, the researcher identified two themes: ‘Inclusivity Matters’ (Theme 7) and ‘Working Together to Share Burden’ (Theme 8). For both themes, the researcher has identified six sub-themes that can be used to build an effective multicultural social identity, ensuring employee job satisfaction. First, the researcher illustrates Theme 7, followed by the sub-themes: diversity training for the recruitment team, inclusive recruitment, and inclusive performance management. After illustrating the findings and discussing each sub-theme, the researcher analyses Theme 8 and its sub-themes, which create a mutual network of mentoring programmes and leadership training.

5.3.1 Themes 7: Inclusivity Matters

Building an effective multicultural social identity within an organisation is crucial for promoting diversity, inclusion, and employee job satisfaction (Baltaru, 2024). During the interviews, almost every participant agreed that inclusivity enhances learning and creativity in the team. It improves student engagement in academic settings. Various participants in the study agreed that working with people from diverse backgrounds brings new perspectives and ideas, benefiting both the team and the institution. The inclusive recruitment process is also essential for increasing diversity in leadership positions. Ultimately, the responses from the participants suggest that all academic staff, regardless of background, ethnicity, or gender, should have equal opportunities for success (Arday, 2018).

Diversity training for recruitment team

Participants added that all the panel members in the interview board need to be trained. For recruiting a diverse workforce and ensuring a multicultural working environment, institutions should invest more in training their recruitment team and panel members to create inclusive workplaces and boost productivity. IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer added,

A diverse panel is not enough if they are not trained enough to recruit one.

Agreeing to that, two participants added that application process for recruitment is tough to compete as it was mostly designed for people from White groups and BAME female academics hardly get called for an interview.

And the application process is. It's not designed for people of colour. Yeah, it's hard. It's really hard and that's why we have very few female academics. (IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor)

Another participant (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer) added that due to cultural differences and shortcomings in cultural sensitivity training, BAME female academics credibility in the interview board are judged.

I have been on the interview board once, and I have seen how Black candidates were judged. Even some interviewers were saying that she talks too much, and he does not trust her words, and even other panel members agreed to that, which was quite uncomfortable for me, but I did not know how to react.

Nonetheless, (IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer) added that diversity training is merely tick-boxed; it should be compulsory to make the recruitment and selection team liberal during recruiting the best fit for the institution.

Discussion

In almost every interview, participants emphasised the necessity of training all members of the interview panel when they were asked about how to make a multicultural organisation and what are the things that should be changed. They stressed that to recruit a diverse workforce and foster a multicultural environment, institutions must invest extensively in training their recruitment teams and panel members (IDP 05, Lucky, lecturer). According to Bhatti et al. (2019), organisations that use the best diversity management practices during recruitment and selection can prevent discrimination and create new employment policies that help promote women and ethnic minorities to higher management levels.

However, this present study finds that having a diverse panel and policies is insufficient if its members are not adequately trained for recruitment tasks (IDP 05 Lucky, lecturer). Because unconscious bias is a significant and ongoing challenge for academic leadership in higher education, it directly hinders the creation of an environment of inclusive excellence (Eberhardt, 2019; Flaherty, 2019; Rollock, 2012; Ross, 2014; Torino, Rivera, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Sue, 2019; Thiederman, 2015).

Participants highlighted challenges in the application process, which they perceive as biased towards white applicants, making it difficult for BAME female academics to secure interview opportunities. One of the participants (IDP 09 Pamela, Associate Professor) expressed frustration over the application process not being inclusive, leading to underrepresentation in academia. This happens due to unconscious bias, which reinforces major groups preferences for their own groups, especially towards individuals who do not share their personal perspectives and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, another participant (IDP 01 Belgium, senior lecturer) stated that cultural differences and a lack of cultural sensitivity training resulted in unfair judgements of BAME candidates during interviews. This experience highlighted the need for greater awareness and training among interview panellists.

Therefore, there is a gap between the literature and the present findings. As the literature highlights, HEI is using diversity management policies; however, unconscious bias training for the recruitment panel is yet to be considered (IDP 01 Belgium, senior lecturer). Because not all universities have made unconscious bias training mandatory due to its ineffectiveness (Noon, 2018). Hence, according to the findings of this study in the previous discussion, it is often hard for White managers to change their behaviour towards out-groups. According to the literature, overusing bias training can have a backfire effect, such as tension between different groups (Carter et al., 2020).

The findings of this study suggest that to achieve a bias-free recruitment and selection process, mandatory evidence-based unconscious bias training is essential. Addressing these issues is crucial for creating a positive work environment where daily judgements are made without relying on biased thinking. Effective training is necessary not only for recruiting diverse faculty but also for educating existing members of interview panels. This approach is vital for promoting diversity, inclusivity, and fairness in recruitment within academic institutions, ultimately leading to increased job satisfaction in multicultural organisations.

Inclusive Recruitment

Six participants added that inclusive recruitment is mandatory in terms of maintaining social identity in the workplace and enhancing the job satisfaction of diverse employees. According to one participant, giving master's-level BAME female students the experience of how it feels to become an academician can enhance their interest in choosing an academic career.

Unfortunately, it's not the same with Black students, even though most of them are attending classes. They don't have the headspace because they have other responsibilities, and they're not given the opportunity. So, I feel as though when we have TAs' (Teaching assistant) positions, we can include more people of colour. It's an opportunity to, if they have an interest in it from the master's level, teach on it. The team will work with colleagues and Level 3 and 4s to get a feel for what it's like to be in academia. (IDP 02, Bobita, professor)

However, students from White backgrounds often get a better chance to become teaching assistants than BAME students. IDP 07, Maria, lecturer stated,

Something that's dead, I said. It has been taken as seriously as I think it should. We have students at the master's level. Could become academics. But when they are looking for graduate teaching assistants, you know, White students. That's what they choose, because that's the institution, and that's because colleagues are making the choice. They navigate more than White people. Who looks like them?

Four participants also suggested that to increase the engagement of international students, it is essential to recruit academics from diverse backgrounds in the institutes.

Yeah, because nowadays all the universities have international students who are joining to study different programmes. I would say, from my own observation, authorities can choose more dynamic and diverse faculties that can add value in terms of offering different insights to different programmes. (IDP 06, Liyana, professor)

Nonetheless, three participants believed that an inclusive recruitment policy could add more diverse faculty members to the team.

I believe an inclusive recruitment policy and diverse interviewers can help the recruitment system. Those who are already in academia should be given a chance to prove themselves. If you can see, universities now have record numbers of BAME students in attendance, but this diversity has not been seen in staff, particularly at the senior level. For that, I think a BAME leadership programme can be a solution to get over it. (IDP 03, Ibtisam, lecturer)

Discussion

During the interviews, participants stressed the importance of inclusive recruitment for maintaining workplace diversity, fostering multicultural organisations, and improving job satisfaction among diverse employees. One participant highlighted the importance of giving master's-level BAME female students opportunities to experience academia, believing it could spark their interest in pursuing academic careers. Early-career BAME females require support and guidance to move forward in their careers (Frechette et al., 2020). Cooper (2018) has emphasised that empowering women in academia requires recognising their individual skills and aligning their abilities with opportunities within the organisation. He argues that it is the organisation's responsibility to implement a talent management philosophy that supports this alignment.

Unfortunately, it is different for Black students; even though many of them attend classes, they face a lack of opportunities. One participant suggested that offering TA positions to BAME female students could provide them with valuable academic experience, and early-career development opportunities could help reduce underrepresentation in higher education, contributing to the growth of a more multicultural organisation. (IDP 02, Bobita, professor)

However, participants noted that White students often have better chances of becoming teaching assistants compared to BAME students. IDP 07, Maria, lecturer expressed concern that this disparity is not taken seriously enough.

Therefore, there is a clear gap between the literature and the findings of this study. The literature indicates that it is the duty of institutions to give opportunities to females to experience academia; however, the findings of this study argue that Black students often do not get a chance to access this opportunity. According to the previous discussion on equal opportunity, it has been found that not all opportunities are open to BAME female academics due to structural barriers in UK HEIs (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017; Coleman et al., 2023). Therefore, an inclusive recruitment policy attracting existing students from diverse backgrounds could be a useful strategy for finding new talent in higher education, which would help to build multicultural identity in the workplace.

Inclusive performance management

A diverse workforce creates new and better ideas. However, individuals from minority groups often experience exclusion while ensuring equal opportunity in terms of accessing performance (Hofstra et al., 2020). Inclusive performance assessment for BAME female academics ensures a fair job performance evaluation. These opportunities open the doors for BAME female academics to be in leadership roles (Barefoot and Sousa, 2019). One of the participants stated that the requirement for promotion should be inclusive too. Measuring everyone's performance according to the same criteria decreases their potential to be successful in their career and reduces their chance of being promoted to leadership roles.

I believe we should make the requirements more inclusive of promotion and have different tracks. So, everyone is included. There is strength in different things, so there isn't one way to be promoted. It shouldn't be that way. It should be. You are more interested in the teaching, and research you have can have an impact on that rather than on publishing. You should be able to be promoted on this basis. Someone else might be terrible at teaching. That's an excellent researcher. Maybe they should be like a dummy basis. So, I think you need to tailor the approach to promotion rather than everyone promoted in the same way, and that indirectly discriminates against certain kinds of people because it hurts. All have the same requirements. (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer)

Agreeing with that, IDP 03, Ibtisam, lecturer added,

I don't need a 360-degree performance evaluation. But it can be improvised, as not everyone in the company is the same. So, stating the same parameters for everyone is not part of equal treatment.

Another participant suggested that the importance of both diverse interview panel members and supervisors who are in managerial roles plays an important part in restoring and maintaining diversity in the workforce. These diverse decision-making people create equal opportunity for BAME female academicians and enhance their job satisfaction.

Obviously, having a diverse panel, as I just explained, is one of the main strategies, and another one is just the fact that you have a diverse workforce. It makes it more inclusive for a diverse workforce, so it's like chicken and egg. You don't know which

one causes, but this is the fact. That you have a diverse workforce in the first place and purchase more diversity.(IDP 09, Pamela, associate professor)

However, IDP 17, Katrina, senior lecturer argued that creating inclusive performance criteria could be complex and time-consuming.

Well, everything is the same for everyone here, you see. We all have access to mentoring opportunities, training sessions, and conferences to attend. What more could we ask for? If someone chooses not to take advantage of these opportunities, then it becomes their individual choice and responsibility. Also what I believe is inclusive performance assessment could bring inconsistencies in how different individuals are assessed. It is a complex process. This needs careful consideration of various factors.

Discussion

During the interviews, participants shared that an inclusive performance management system can promote fair evaluations and can bring innovation to create multi-cultural organisations. Employees who are satisfied with their performance evaluations display high levels of job satisfaction, which contribute to the organisation's innovation and challenging ideas (Zhang et al., 2014; Settles et al., 2021).

One of the participants emphasised that promotion criteria should be inclusive to foster creativity in the workplace, as uniform performance measures can hinder career success and leadership opportunities for BAME female academics. They suggested multiple tracks for promotion based on different strengths, such as teaching and research, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer).

After analysing the data, a gap has been identified between the literature and this study's findings. The literature has suggested that performance management systems promote fair evaluation, in practice and bring creativity. However, advancing in academic careers and attaining leadership roles is often challenging for disadvantaged groups, particularly for BAME female academics. White privilege creates power imbalances that marginalise these individuals (Bhopal, 2019). Performance evaluation in academia is often seen as a checkbox exercise, as discussed earlier (Showunmi, 2023). Participants suggested that promotion criteria should be

more inclusive, focusing on the core strengths of each staff member. This approach would not only enhance employee satisfaction but also support career growth in decision-making roles and would help to build multicultural organisation.

Therefore, the findings of this study have outlined that a diverse workforce generates innovative ideas, but minority group members often face exclusion in performance evaluations because of racial and gender biases (McFarlane, 2021), favouring White and male norms in hiring and career advancement (Hofstra et al., 2020). An inclusive performance appraisal system can be used as a strategy to increase job satisfaction among BAME female academics and career growth in decision-making roles.

Theme summary

Establishing a strong multicultural identity within organisations is vital for fostering diversity and enhancing job satisfaction. Inclusive training for all interview panel members is essential for ensuring equitable recruitment processes. However, cultural differences occasionally result in unfair assessments of BAME female academics. Effective communication is fundamental for improving productivity and satisfaction levels. Implementing inclusive recruitment policies can help attract a diverse pool of talent. Inclusive performance evaluations guarantee fair assessments, providing opportunities for BAME female academics to advance into leadership positions. Diverse decision-makers are crucial for preserving diversity and promoting satisfaction within the workforce.

5.3.2 Theme 8: Working together to Share Burden

An inclusive workforce creates a safe workplace for everyone. People from all backgrounds and groups flourish in their career paths when employees share the work burden and aim to bring success to the organisation (Bhopal, 2018). HEIs are filled with different workloads, and academic staff can help one another share their burden, enhancing employee wellbeing. As one of the participants mentioned, both staff and students' relationships are co-dependent. If the staff are satisfied with the work environment where support is available for BAME academics, students would also benefit from the teachers.

Another participant added that spaces could be created where White individuals who benefit from societal privileges due to their race can actively exercise these privileges in support of their BAME colleagues. This also involves recognising that White individuals can use their positions and advantages to advocate for diversity and equity. Welcoming behaviour from majority groups enhances BAME female academics' motivation to be part of the team. As one of the participants stated, being approached by the majority groups in research work motivated her to contribute to the workplace.

Create a Mutual Network

Mutual networks create a sense of belongingness by reducing the feeling of isolation (Bhopal, 2018). Creating mutual networks for BAME female academics can be incredibly beneficial for support, collaboration, and professional development, as mutual networks recognise complexity and provide holistic support (Kim and Ng, 2019). One participant added that by creating mutual networks, people from all backgrounds come to know one another, which increases collaboration and reduces differences.

Not only obviously, but be there to do writing, but in the evenings and on break times we will talk, and you just start to realise that there's so many similarities between you. You know, we have things in common. When we are talking about things, somebody will give their cultural example, and then I'll give my cultural example. And it was just a nice space. To get to know one another, learn from one another. (IDP 06, Liyana, professor)

IDP 10, Tania, professor suggested that mutual networks would be beneficial for BAME female academics, particularly for networking purposes. She has added that, due to cultural practices, BAME females may not naturally gravitate towards networking and often prefer to maintain formal relationships with their colleagues.

Especially, you know, and for females, I think at times in the start, networking seems to be very difficult. You have very formal sorts of relationship with your work colleagues. Just saying hello. Hi, nothing more. So, I think networking plays a very important role whether you are in the in-group of people or in the out-groups. Our culture. You know that networking is missing.

Another participant (IDP 11, Nisa, lecturer) shared the same view about a mutual network.

I don't feel that here these happen, because here everyone's a bit more diverse and we socialise a bit differently. I felt that before it didn't impact my work, however, it impacted my networking.

However, before creating mutual networks, it is important to have mutual acceptance when people from different cultures interact (Kim and Ng, 2019). A participant (IDP 16, JO, senior lecturer) added that it is more crucial for the other side to have an accepting attitude than for an individual to be skilled at networking or socialising. This implies that openness and willingness to accept cultural differences are key factors in successful interactions between cultures and building mutual networks.

Now this is it, it goes both ways. You know, there are certain things that we might have put limitations on in our culture. That's OK. We cannot go beyond that. We cannot do that, but once you come to a different culture, you must be a bit adaptable as well. That is important and, secondly, the acceptance level from the other side needs to be there no matter how open you are or how good you are at networking.

Discussion

Mutual networks create a sense of belonging by reducing feelings of isolation (Bhopal, 2018). Establishing such networks for BAME female academics can provide crucial support, collaboration, and professional development, as they recognise the complexities involved and offer holistic support (Kim and Ng, 2019). One participant mentioned that mutual networks help people from all backgrounds connect, which fosters collaboration and diminishes differences. They shared that not only do they work together, but they also engage in informal conversations, finding commonalities and learning from each other's cultural examples (IDP 06, Liyana, professor). This finding aligns with Bhopal (2022) who has found that racism is a daily reality for 'academics of colour' in elite UK and US universities. To cope, they often create 'safe spaces' with other racially minoritised colleagues, which provide support, solidarity, and temporary relief (Osho & Alormele, 2024; Rollock, 2019; Gwayi-Chore et al., 2021).

Another participant (IDP 10, Tania, professor) suggested that mutual networks could be especially valuable for BAME female academics if they included White colleagues, as these connections often shape career opportunities (Harris & Ogbonna, 2023). She observed that cultural practices sometimes make BAME women less inclined to engage in informal networking, leading them to maintain more formal relationships with White peers. Since networking plays a key role in determining whether someone is seen as part of the in-group or out-group, its absence can place BAME academics at a disadvantage. This view was echoed by IDP 11, Nisa (lecturer), who noted that diverse environments have different social dynamics that affect access to networking opportunities. However, as Kim and Ng (2019) have highlighted, mutual acceptance is necessary for such networks to work across cultures. IDP 16, JO (senior lecturer) reinforced this, stressing that openness and willingness to embrace cultural differences are essential. Without adaptability and acceptance, it is difficult to build effective networks ‘and in predominantly White HEIs, rigid attitudes and resistance to change often prevent psychological diversity, making it harder for BAME academics to benefit from mutual networks’ (Verkuyten, 2020). Therefore, a gap remains in the literature. While mutual networks can create opportunities, they are often insufficient for BAME female academics when rigid mindsets and resistance to change persist.

Mentoring Programme

Mentorship plays a pivotal role in supporting women as they step into leadership positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hannum et al., 2015). According to Black Chen (2015) and Hannum et al. (2015), there is a clear link between the absence of mentorship opportunities and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within higher education. For BAME female academics, mentoring serves as a form of resistance, offering emotional support and aiding in maintaining self-esteem in environments where racial discrimination is prevalent.

Yes, that’s true. A mentoring programme can bring out the best in you; it gives you confidence and clarity on this rocky path of Whiteness. (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer)

(IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer) added that mentoring programmes help people speak up more confidently about the subtle signs of being treated unfairly in academic settings. She also stated that it is only possible when one woman helps another one grow.

Mentoring women from the same background creates a safe space for them. You know, you can keep yourself out of isolation, anger, and even frustration just by sharing your thoughts.

However, another participant added that since she was the only Black academic in her faculty, finding a mentor of the same gender and race was unlikely. It took her a long time to ask her institution to fund a Black mentor from outside the academy. This shows that successful mentorship can be hard to find for BAME women starting leadership roles, but it is crucial for those who want to succeed in academia, which can sometimes be unwelcoming.

See, I am the only Black female in my department. I have been working here for 25 years now. When I needed a mentor, I could not find one to help me out. It was tough; even now, sometimes it is hard to discuss something with others. What I believe is that if I get that mentorship from the beginning, it will then help me reach the decision-making roles I had many years ago. This is important in terms of understanding your own capability and self-worth.(IDP02, Bobita, professor).

Discussion

Mentorship programmes foster inclusivity, career development, and skill enhancement, and address disparities for underrepresented individuals through nurturing and educational relationships (Omadeke, 2021; Lee et al., 2022). For BAME female academics, mentoring acts as a form of resistance, providing emotional support and helping maintain self-esteem in environments where racial discrimination is common.

One of the participants (IDP 01, Belgium, senior lecturer) stated that mentorship programmes can boost confidence and clarity in navigating predominantly White academic settings. Similarly, IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer noted that mentoring programmes empower individuals to speak up about subtle signs of unfair treatment. She emphasised the importance

of women supporting each other to foster a safe space and reduce feelings of isolation and frustration.

However, it is often hard to find a mentor from the same group. One of the participants pointed out the challenges faced by BAME women in finding mentors of the same gender and race. This participant, the only black academic in her faculty, struggled to find a suitable mentor and eventually had to request institutional funding for a Black mentor from outside the academy. She noted that having had mentorship from the start would have significantly aided her progression into decision-making roles and enhanced her job satisfaction and understanding of her skills. However, in the previous discussion, it was found that mentors from the same group, especially those from BAME backgrounds, are hard to find due to the underrepresentation of BAME female academics in senior positions (Lee et al., 2022). Therefore, these findings align with Liu et al. (2021) in a meta-analysis of social identity theory interventions, who have explained that role models work well because comparing oneself to a successful in-group member can reduce stigma, challenge negative stereotypes, and boost confidence. This effect is especially strong when the role model is similar and successful.

Mentorship is vital for women, particularly BAME female academics, to achieve leadership roles. It provides emotional support, helps navigate discrimination, and fosters confidence. Establishing effective mentorship programmes is a key strategy for building a multicultural social identity in higher education, as it addresses underrepresentation and supports career advancement for women from diverse backgrounds.

Leadership Training

Leadership training programmes act as qualifications and can be used on a resumé for career and academic leadership progression (Ofei et al., 2022). They enable an employee to understand their current situation and set a pathway to a leadership role. Two participants stated that their institutions provide an opportunity to participate in an accredited external leadership programme. One of the participants added that,

The programme was a race-sensitive, honest form of leadership, which gave such insights to academics on how to navigate their careers in leadership roles.(IDP 06, Liyana, professor)

However, one of the participants shared different thoughts. When the leadership training was introduced, it was very neutral, not focused on a specific gender or ethnicity.

In my institute, there are training programmes run by external trainers, but they are mostly for everyone, not for specific entities. I can feel that these are mostly designed for White people, not for us. (IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer)

Discussion

Leadership training programmes serve as valuable qualifications that can be listed on a resumé, aiding in career and academic leadership progression (Ofei et al., 2022). These programmes help employees understand their current positions and create a pathway to leadership roles (Arday, 2018). When participants were asked about how their institutes deal with ethnic minority women in leadership roles, they mentioned that their institutions offer opportunities to participate in accredited external leadership programmes. One participant (IDP 06, Liyana, professor) highlighted that their programme was race-sensitive and provided insights on navigating leadership roles in academia. However, another participant (IDP 08, Nahar, senior lecturer) had a different perspective, noting that the leadership training at their institution was neutral and not focused on specific genders or ethnicities. This participant felt that the programmes seemed to be designed primarily for White people and did not cater to their needs.

Both participants explained the effectiveness of these training programmes differently. IDP 08, Nahar, a senior lecturer, said the training was advancing her career in higher education but was seen as a limited opportunity to learn about academic leadership (Gabriel, 2017). However, for IDP 06, Liyana, a professor already in a decision-making role, the training was appropriate and met her leadership needs. Therefore, leadership training for academics seeking advancement in decision-making positions is an essential part of the strategy to build a multicultural identity in higher education.

Theme summary

Creating an inclusive workforce fosters a supportive workplace environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can thrive in their careers (Bhopal, 2018). Academic staff in higher education institutions can alleviate workloads by sharing responsibilities, ultimately enhancing employee well-being. Staff satisfaction with the work environment positively impacts students' learning experiences. White individuals, acknowledging their societal privileges, can actively advocate for diversity and equity, contributing to a more inclusive environment. Mutual networks among BAME female academics foster a sense of belonging and provide support for collaboration and professional growth (Kim and Ng, 2019). Cultural acceptance is crucial before establishing such networks to ensure effective interactions. Mentorship plays a vital role in supporting women's advancement into leadership positions, particularly for BAME female academics facing racial discrimination (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hannum et al., 2015). Leadership training programmes enhance qualifications and career progression opportunities, enabling employees to understand their current situation and work towards leadership roles (Ofei et al., 2022). Representing the voices and perspectives of BAME female academics is essential for societal change and serves as inspiration for others.

Model 4 is introduced to meet Objective 4 in the next section. After analysing issues found in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, this model builds an effective multicultural social identity. In this chapter, the process of making it and the advantage of this model are discussed.

5.4 Objective 4: ‘To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector’

This section discusses Objective 4, ‘To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector’. To meet this objective, Model 4 is introduced. This model fulfils the purpose of this research: to introduce a conceptual model that practitioners, academicians, managers, and policymakers in multicultural organisations, including higher education, can use to ensure the job satisfaction of ethnic minority employees, especially for BAME females. This proposed model is made by following a logical and systematic procedure and satisfies Objective 4. The researcher has identified 32 issues from Models 1, 2, and 3 in Table 5.1. Based on these issues, the researcher formulates a framework named ‘Employees Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity’.

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Lack of recognition, workload consider as responsibility, lack of leadership, sense of belonging, policy and procedure, working environment, financial and non-financial benefits, contract type, work–life balance, care responsibility, comfortable in old place and emotional burden	The blame game of unchanged spaces, unconscious bias, discrimination behind the closed door, stereotype threat, unfair performance evaluation system, out-group opinions can create conflict, superiority damages self-esteem, struggles with progression, self-satisfaction over job satisfaction gives a chance to be exploited by rule makers, relationship with colleagues, job autonomy, White sanction	Leadership training, mentoring programme, create mutual network, inclusive recruitment, inclusive performance management, training recruitment panel
Total: 32 Issues identified from Models 1, 2, and 3.		

Table 5.1: The identified issues in Model 1, 2, and 3 (The Author’s View, 2024)

Based on these 32 issues, the researcher has selected the most important ones to justify this conceptual framework and that can be easily used by practitioners. Figure 5.4 shows the proposed model of multicultural social identity based on the findings of this study.

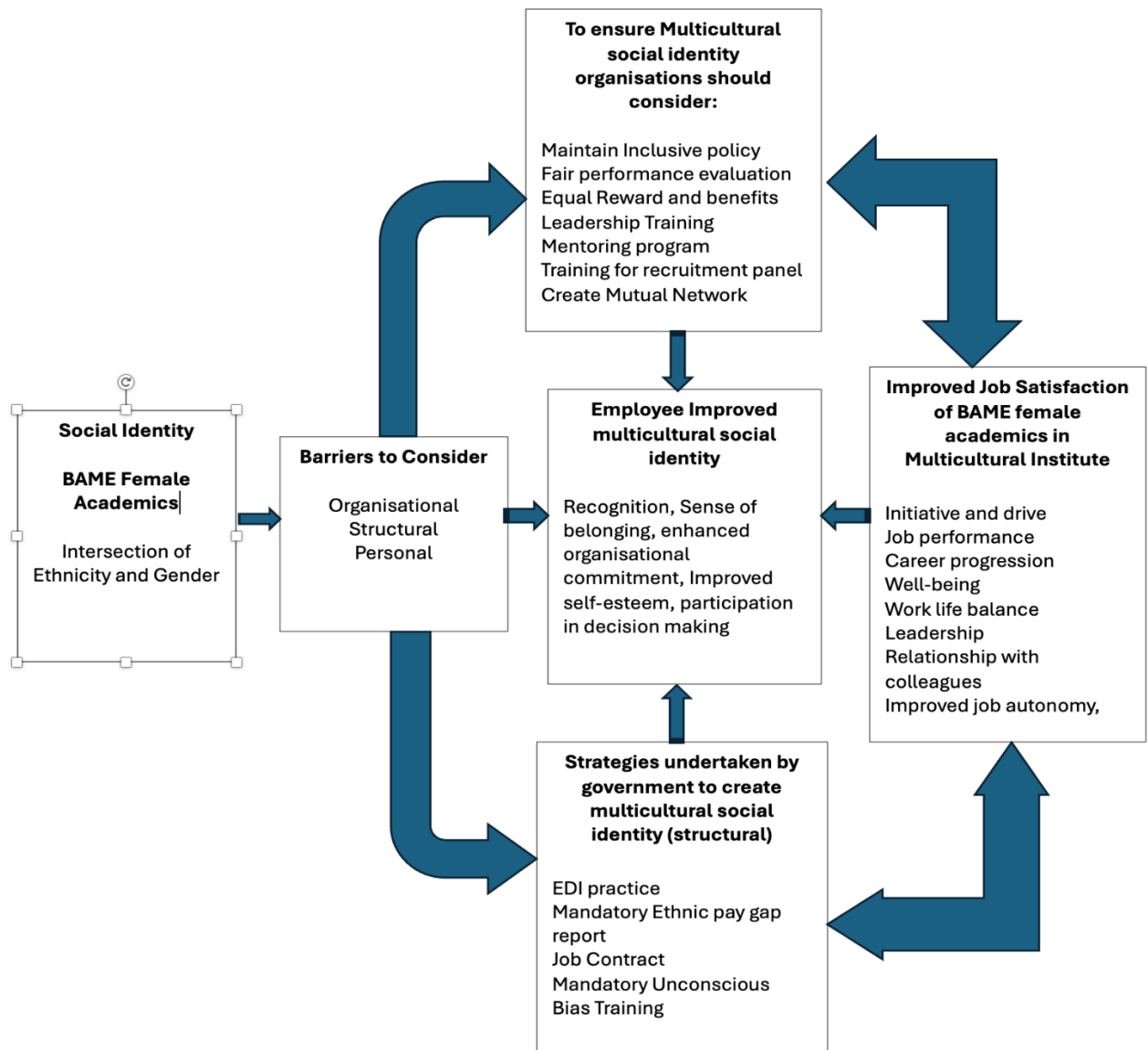


Figure 5.4: Model 4 - Employees Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity (The Author’s View, 2024).

First, the model identifies the first four key factors to be involved in social identity, barriers to consider, ensuring multicultural social identity (organisational), strategies undertaken by the government to promote multicultural social identity (structural), the job satisfaction of ethnic minorities in a multicultural institute, and improved employees’ multicultural social identity.

Second, the model demonstrates the links between these factors by using arrows to connect the responsibilities taken by both organisations and the government based on the barriers faced by ethnic minority groups to ensure the job satisfaction of employees.

Third, this dynamic shows the primary factors and how they affect each other. However, the research found significant obstacles preventing solid relationships in this sector.

Finally, the researcher needed to determine who would use the model, where and when it would be used, and which groups should be involved. The model would primarily benefit employers and employees but should involve government institutions and other ethnic minorities.

Step 1: Problem Identification

This chapter covered four empirical models and highlighted 32 issues related to BAME female academicians' job satisfaction, barriers, and the impacts of imbalanced representation and strategies shared by participants to benefit the HEI sector. The researcher suggests the 'Employees Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity'. In this model, the first step is social identity, where intersecting identities such as ethnicity and gender have priority, and BAME and female academics are included.

Step 2: Find a solution

Addressing the barriers BAME female academics face at the organisational, structural, and personal levels is essential for ensuring optimum job satisfaction and building an effective multicultural social identity.

To Ensure Multicultural Social Identity Organisations

Organisations need to maintain inclusive policies, fair performance evaluations, and ensure equal rewards and benefits. Leadership training should be tailored for BAME female academics, along with mentoring programmes that include both mentors from similar backgrounds and White academics who can support their career progression. Participants mentioned that a lack of guidance and support often holds them back from advancing in their careers. It is also important to train recruitment panel members on diversity and inclusion. This includes working together to create fair assessment criteria that reduce personal bias or subjective ideas about who is the 'right fit'. For instance, qualities like 'collegiality' are often

judged in person and have sometimes been used to exclude applicants from marginalised groups who do not display the kind of ‘Whiteness’ expected by predominantly White hiring panels. Similarly, in other organisations, the idea of ‘fit’ has been used to favour certain social classes. Reflecting on how these criteria can unintentionally exclude people with intersecting identities is essential for fair and equitable hiring. Therefore, training for recruitment panel members is crucial. Creating mutual networks where BAME female academics and non-BAME academics can connect, share experiences, offer mutual support, and help each other progress in their careers is also important.

These strategies ensure that employees feel valued and included (Le et al., 2021). Traditional appraisal systems may not be equally effective for a multicultural workforce (Raja et al., 2011). Therefore, an inclusive performance system and feedback process are essential for fostering a multicultural social identity in the workplace (Beniflah and Veloz, 2021). Monga (2008) has suggested that including minorities in the committees that evaluate, select, and promote employees is crucial for effectively implementing performance appraisal systems in a diverse workforce.

Strategies Undertaken by Government for Multicultural Social Identity (Structural)

According to Li et al. (2023), organisations that influence diversity and inclusion are profitable, innovative, and receive organisational commitment from employees. Therefore, this practice should be controlled by the government by taking a few steps, which should include asking for a previous six-months diversity report to understand disparities happening inside the universities. These reports would include the number of complaints registered about discrimination, sexual assault, and bias; the retention rate of ethnic minority staff; the rate of promotion; the rate of salary increment; and the number of diverse employees on the interview board. All this information should be gathered to determine the effectiveness of EDI practice in universities.

Every institute must submit an ethnic pay gap report to address the disparities. Fixed-term, part-time, and zero-hour contract policies need to be reviewed to create multicultural social identity in the workplace. According to the proposed new law, ethnic minority pay gaps need to be circulated by every organisation, and this should be monitored to understand diversity representation by collecting and analysing the relevant data (David & Anderson, 2023). The

new law was initiated to ban zero-hour contracts. These new rules provide more security and less instability for workers (BBC, 2024).

Improved Job Satisfaction of Ethnic Minorities in Multicultural Institute

This model would ensure job satisfaction for ethnic minority female academics by giving them the chance to take initiative and drive their work. When an employee has job autonomy, they are able to control their job, take initiative and drive in the workplace (Ghasemy et al., 2021). Akfopure et al. (2006) have stated that high self-esteem boosts productivity, successful work relationships, happiness, a healthy lifestyle, and increased job satisfaction. When these esteem needs are met, individuals feel self-worth and self-satisfaction, which enhances job performance and engagement (McLeod, 2018). Faculty members find satisfaction in having control over their career development, enjoying a high degree of autonomy (Waddell et al., 2015), and embracing work challenges (Cardoso and Costa, 2016).

Employees Improved multicultural social identity

Research has indicated that organisations that are flexible and embrace participative management emphasising clear communication, multicultural identity, and employee rewards and benefits tend to have higher employee satisfaction, leading to organisational success (Mckinnon et al., 2003; Villotti, 2019). Recognising employees' contributions and fostering a sense of belonging can automatically boost their commitment to the organisation. This approach enhances employees' multicultural social identity, contributing to a more diverse workplace.

Step 3: Action

This is the implementation stage, where various agencies, HEIs, and academics adopt this model to better understand multicultural social identity in the workplace by prioritising the needs and expectations of the team. This model aims to ensure equal opportunity and a win-win situation for all, eliminating any form of favouritism.

Step 4: Cost Analysis

A crucial aspect of this model is to ensure that government policies, such as equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), are upheld within institutions. To achieve this, different teams must be recruited within the organisation to report on these matters. An annual ethnic pay gap report must be produced. Using this model should help ensure equal pay and address disparities. Leadership training and mentoring should be arranged if not available externally, and research funding should be allocated to ethnic minority females following this model.

Step 5: Limitations of the Model

Implementing policies can be time-consuming and may face organisational barriers, making timely execution challenging. Existing government policies and organisational protocols already in place might complicate the adoption of a new model. Training and time are required to integrate this model effectively, which can be cost-intensive.

Step 6: Conclusion

By implementing this model, various organisations, HEIs, agencies, and policy practitioners can benefit. This model is easily accessible and can be practised effectively if all reports are maintained properly, in line with government policies.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has analysed and presented the findings from 15 interviews undertaken with academics in UK HEIs. In accordance with the research objectives, each finding is presented along with discussion. The thematic analysis adopted a social identity theory lens to understand the experiences arising from intersecting identities of the BAME female academics in relation to their job satisfaction and career journeys in HEIs. This analysis supported the development of eight key themes, and 31 sub-themes based on the experiences of BAME female academics. This study has addressed the possible gaps in the literature by proposing a model that can help managers, decision-makers, practitioners, and policymakers effectively manage and motivate BAME female employees, ensuring the highest possible level of job satisfaction. The study identified several interconnected barriers influencing the job satisfaction of BAME female

academics in UK higher education. Organisational and structural barriers persist, as their skills and credibility are often questioned, while institutional practices mask inequality behind diversity rhetoric. Compared to White colleagues, BAME women experience greater scrutiny, limited credibility, and are often confined to insecure contracts due to intersecting identities.

Personal barriers, including challenges in achieving work–life balance and managing care responsibilities, further hinder career growth and satisfaction. Due to imbalanced representation, group favouritism often reinforces exclusion, with promotions and recognition often favouring White peers and leading to stereotyping and underrepresentation in leadership. Uneven career pathways also restrict the voices and confidence of these women, particularly for those in the lower academic ranks. Limited growth opportunities and superficial equality policies leave BAME female academics overworked but under-rewarded. However, fostering inclusivity through diverse recruitment panels, leadership programmes, and effective EDI implementation could enhance fairness and representation. Finally, promoting collaboration between all groups and encouraging shared responsibility may strengthen networks, reduce inequalities, and improve overall job satisfaction, which can be possible by setting multicultural social identity. Collectively, these themes reveal how systemic, structural, and personal barriers intertwine to shape the job satisfaction of BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector. The next chapter deals with the conclusion for this study. The chapter addresses the research objectives, outlines the contribution to knowledge, considers the practical implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and research.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

This research explored how social identity impacts job satisfaction among BAME female academics. By examining commonalities and differences among BAME and non-BAME individuals, as well as between genders and ethnicities, a theoretical framework incorporating intersectionality, social identity theory, group membership, and job satisfaction were applied. The researcher conducted context and conceptual analysis and gap analysis to establish the impact of social identity on job satisfaction among BAME female academics.

In HEIs, BAME female academics face certain barriers on a structural, organisational, and personal level that impact their job satisfaction (Francis and Stulz, 2020). There are fewer BAME female academics in decision-making roles, which is a significant issue due to group favouritism and has a serious impact on their job satisfaction (Dagil and Akyol, 2019). There are currently 23,515 professors, and only 2.7% are BAME female academics (Advance HE, 2022). According to HESA (2023), there are 61 Black female professors. One-third of all academics working in academia are employed on fixed-term contracts, and among them, 44% are Asian females, compared to 28% of White male academics on fixed-term contracts. Nonetheless, despite the negative press, there are still 3,545 academics on zero-hour contracts, and among these academics, 3% are Black (UCU, 2023). A variety of initiatives have been taken by the government to address this imbalanced representation, such as Advance HE's diversifying leadership programme, EDI practice, and REC. However, there are still issues of marginalisation, unequal treatment, and, most importantly, less diverse faculty members in decision-making roles (Oloyede et al., 2021).

The contemporary literature shows that structural inequalities rooted in the intersection of ethnicity and gender continue to affect the progression of BAME female academics, and they remain underrepresented in decision-making roles (Arday and Mirza, 2018; Bhopal, 2020). Research has also found that BAME female academics continue to be marginalised in HEIs; they are underrepresented in the lowest; they are less likely to gain promotion to senior roles; they are less likely to be professors; and they remain in a lower pay band compared to their White colleagues (Bhopal and Chapman, 2019; Showunmi, 2023).

Social identity theory is used to identify in-group and out-group favouritism among groups and how this impacts BAME female academic job satisfaction. However, this theory has not yet been widely used to assess employee job satisfaction in multicultural organisations, and the researcher has used it to understand how group membership has an impact on the job satisfaction of BAME female academics. To understand the barriers, in-and out-group behaviour, career progression, strategies to build multicultural social identity, and the job satisfaction of BAME female academics, the researcher conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with BAME female academics, of which six were lecturers, three were senior lecturers, two were associate professors, and four professors took part. The researcher used a qualitative research method to align research objectives with the findings of this study, which have been analysed using thematic analysis.

Analysing the data, the researcher identified eight key themes and 31 sub-themes based on the experiences of BAME female academics. This study addressed the possible gaps in the literature by proposing a model that can help managers, decision-makers, practitioners, and policymakers to effectively manage and motivate BAME female employees, ensuring the highest possible level of job satisfaction. By conducting a thematic analysis of the dataset using NVivo 14, the researcher identified eight key themes, and based on that, four models were generated that examine their relation to the broader context, as demonstrated in the data analysis and discussion chapter (Chapter 5).

This comprehensive approach led to the identification of four main objectives for the project.

RO 1. To explore and evaluate the barriers of BAME female academic staff job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector.

RO 2. To evaluate the impact of imbalanced representation of BAME female academics on their job satisfaction.

RO 3. To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build up effective multi-cultural social identity.

RO 4. To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure job satisfaction for BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector.

6.1 Summary of the Research

In this summary chapter the key findings of the research is highlighted in terms of a) the existing knowledge bank and the implication of the research for BAME female academics job satisfaction in the UK HEI; b) the analysis of empirical findings in relation to the research objectives; c) experiences of BAME female academics with intersecting ethnicity and gender; d) the impact of underrepresentation on BAME female academics' job satisfaction e) the implications of the findings in the context of UK HEIs; f) strategies building a multicultural social identity and g) the contribution of the research. This chapter also identifies the limitations and recommendations for further work in this sector.

The findings from the research confirm that social identity has an impact on BAME female academics' job satisfaction, which varies based on ethnicity, gender, and job roles. The findings from the literature review and primary data are discussed below, according to the research objective.

RO 1. To explore and evaluate the barriers of BAME female academic staff job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector.

To explore and evaluate the barriers for BAME female academics job satisfaction, the literature review at first identified job satisfaction factors. Job satisfaction for academics, such as instruction, research, service (Chen, 2023), position (Larsson & Alvinus, 2019), mentoring (Harris and Ogbonna, 2021), work environment (Hee et al., 2020), relationship with supervisor (Byren et al., 2012), participative decisions (Mgaiwa, 2021), autonomy (Ghasemy et al., 2021) job security (Lee, 2021), workload (Uwannah et al., 2022) and work–life balance (Dorenkamp and Ruhle, 2019), were considered as the most important factors for academics' job satisfaction.

During the interviews, participants shared various aspects of their job satisfaction and the barriers they face in the workplace due to their social identity and the intersection of ethnicity and gender. According to the participants, job satisfaction varies based on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Sivatte et al., 2019). Job satisfaction can be influenced by leadership styles (Mgaiwa, 2023). The work environment varied significantly across the higher education system leading to different levels of job satisfaction. Among them autonomy, organisational policies, childcare, roles models, structural barriers, unequal opportunities, working environment (Bhopal, 2018; Arday, 2018; Mgaiwa, 2023; Chen 2023; Hee et al., 2020) were

the notable factors. The primary research on the barriers of BAME female academics' job satisfaction found some distinctive features. For instance, BAME female academics face barriers at the organisational, structural, and personal levels, which impact their job satisfaction.

According to the literature, a sense of belonging is a key factor in employee wellbeing, shaped by elements such as position, ethnicity, and gender. To address this, HEIs have introduced policies and signed up to charters (Porter et al., 2020; Morris, 2021). However, participants in this study shared that their sense of belonging was often questioned, as they were sometimes perceived as being hired to meet a diversity quota rather than for their qualifications. This perception undermined their confidence and negatively influenced their job satisfaction. These findings align with Bhopal's (2022) concept of 'token appointments', where universities employ ethnic minority women to appear inclusive. In practice, BAME female academics in UK higher education often remain invisible, except when blame is shifted onto them rather than when success or recognition is shared. From a social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979) perspective, this highlights how BAME female academics are positioned as part of an out-group and their professional identity is not validated in the same way as for their White colleagues, making them feel excluded and undervalued. This finding extends the study of Showunmi (2023), who stated this situation as 'conditional visibility', which demonstrates how intersecting identities of race and gender compound the belongingness and reduce job satisfaction for BAME women in academia.

An unexpected finding from the study suggests that feelings of non-belonging may be linked to experiences of imposter syndrome. Although this aspect was not directly explored through specific questions, participants used words such as disappointment, frustration, and low self-confidence to describe how they felt or were made to feel that they did not belong, particularly during the early stages of their careers. These observations align with McGee et al. (2022), who have argued that a lack of belonging can contribute to imposter syndrome. In such circumstances, individuals may feel compelled to continually prove their worth, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, which also work as a barrier for job satisfaction. This situation happens because of social identity.

This study has also found that senior BAME female academics often feel their work is undervalued, even after reaching high positions. While successful academics typically gain confidence, autonomy, and recognition (Helland et al., 2020; Mgaiwa, 2021), BAME women

report that their contributions are frequently overlooked, reducing their sense of purpose and achievement. Unlike White professors, whose job satisfaction mainly depends on academic freedom and resources (Chen, 2023), BAME female academics still struggle for recognition and respect.

This study also found that, BAME female academics in senior roles often face workplace inequalities that limit their authority and leave their work undervalued (Barnes, 2021). Leadership is still viewed as masculine, and their competence is frequently questioned (Arday, 2018). This ‘presumed incompetence’ (Hall et al., 2012) means these academics are more critically judged and less recognised, despite their positions. As a result, holding a senior title does not guarantee influence or satisfaction. This finding supports those of Pogrebna, Angelopoulos, Omoijiade et al. (2024), who have stated that there is an important difference between just holding a title and being able to make a real impact, which drives job satisfaction. Moreover, BAME female lecturers’ recognition often depends on supervisor support, but many report favouritism towards majority groups. This finding aligns with Abbink and Harris (2019) who have found that in-group favouritism, preferring one’s own group, is well documented and affects performance, productivity, and satisfaction (Bohm, Rusch & Baron, 2018). For BAME women, limited supervisor support hinders growth and advancement, lowering job satisfaction. This study also finds evidence of nepotism and in-group bias towards majority groups, which is consistent with social identity theory and links group belonging to job satisfaction.

The literature has suggested that academics who spend more time researching and less time teaching are more satisfied (Showunmi, 2023) and this study found the same. BAME female academics often have to take extra workload and work beyond their working hours. This demanding workload does not allow for breaks. Taking workload counts as ‘surviving’ in academia, which impacts on their research time. Research is important for academics to progress in their careers.

Nonetheless, the existing literature has stated that role models from the same group create a difference in ethnic minority academics’ career progression (Omoijiade et al., 2024). However, this research found that having a leader from the same group does not ensure that person would perform leadership roles. The mentality of giving back is important, and even if someone wants to involve themselves, the norm of White society marginalises an individual.

According to two-factor theory, pay is a hygiene factor and employees should be paid fairly. However this study reveals that BAME female academics know they are underpaid yet still feel satisfied seeing their students' progress, which is more rewarding than fair pay.

Mgaiwa (2022) has stated that full professors were more satisfied than other groups because they had reached the highest rank in their careers, with better pay and benefits. Hence, this study finds that despite 16 years in academia and seven years of effort to earn a promotion, a BAME female academic's salary remains lower than their White colleagues, which leads to demotivation.

The gender differences in research grants are due to women getting less funding for research, which is the main reason for these disparities (Wanelik et al., 2020). The literature is gender-based. However, this study has found that not getting funding also depends on longer job tenure and belonging to a White background (Bhopal, 2022). Due to the double minority, BAME female academics are often not able to take advantage of these opportunities because there are not enough funds available. They do not know the right person who would guide them through. These women have a reduced chance of attaining decision-making roles, as to be promoted to these roles requires a higher number of publications and citation (Showunmi, 2023; Bhopal, 2022; Arday, 2018).

According to Rollock (2021), policies can become bureaucratic exercises that employers use to enhance their reputation rather than address genuine inequalities. The study finds that, due to corruption among administrators, there are disparities while ensuring the effectiveness of policies.

This research also shows that there are few BAME female academics in decision-making roles. There is a lack of freedom, of power and acknowledgement, for the work of lecturers and senior lecturers, which are among barriers impacting BAME female academics' job satisfaction and self-esteem at both senior and junior levels. Crimmins et al. (2019) have explained how men in academia often take credit for the work undertaken by women. This can lead to women's names, identities, and contributions being overlooked or erased. Men's careers are boosted, contributing to the lack of women in higher academic positions and the large number of men in senior roles.

Victoria et al. (2019) have suggested that a fulfilling family life can enhance success and satisfaction at work. However, this study finds that women of childbearing age might be perceived as problematic due to the possibility of maternity leave. This perception persists despite official university policies that support a work–life balance and maternity leave. Table 6.1 compares the existing literature and the primary data of this research regarding the barriers to job satisfaction.

Barriers in the research literature	Barriers in this primary research
Belonging	Diversity quota
Wellbeing	Surviving in academia
Research	Extra workload
Role models	Role models do not always give back
Relationship with colleagues	Marginalised
Pay	Dual minority
Rank promotion	White sanction
Policies	Networking
Performance	Contract type
Structural barrier	Working hour
Childcare	Extrinsic reward
	Funding
	Rank
	Promotion
	Job tenure
	Whiteness
	Policies
	Corruption
	Work–life balance
	Comfortable in the old place
	Extra burden lower performance
	Status quo
	Organisational barrier
	Structural barrier
	Personal barrier

Table 6.1: Comparison of ‘Barriers’ in the existing literature and primary research data (The Author’s View, 2024).

Hutchings, Wilkinson, and Brewster (2020) have found that older academics tend to have higher satisfaction levels when they have worked at the same institution for an extended period. This study finds that BAME female academics are sometimes responsible for creating their own barriers to their job satisfaction and career growth. BAME female academics are more comfortable with people from the same background, and this barrier was created by

BAME academics themselves. Sometimes flexible working arrangements act as a barrier too, because these academics are comfortable in their old space. They feel settled in their current roles and are hesitant to risk their happiness by seeking new opportunities or challenging the status quo (Bhopal, 2020).

Finally, the literature has suggested that work pressure can increase employee performance (Hsieh et al., 2022), and this research reveals that the pressure creates an extra burden that leads to dissatisfaction and a lower level of performance.

RO 2. To evaluate the imbalanced representation of BAME female academics and its impact on their job satisfaction.

In-group favouritism and out-group derogation are key elements of social identity theory (Hogg, 2016; Welbourne et al., 2017; Abbink & Harris, 2019). To assess how imbalanced representations impact on job satisfaction among BAME female academics, this study examines how BAME female academics in UK HEIs experience these dynamics. Key factors associated with in-group favouritism, as highlighted in the contemporary literature, include better mental health (Jetten, Haslam, Haslam, Dingle, & Jones, 2014), positive emotions (Golec de Zavala, 2019), self-esteem (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; van Veelen et al., 2011), unfair treatment (Arici et al., 2019), relationships with supervisors (Jones, 2020), equal treatment (Zagladi et al., 2015; Mayya et al., 2021), perceived discrimination (A.ensher et al., 2017; Sawyer, 2018), trust (Tekingunduz et al., 2015), victim status (Otake-Ebede & Shaffakat, 2024), and unconscious bias (Advance HE, 2020).

When looking into the factors of outgroup- derogation that are responsible for the imbalanced representation of BAME female academics in HEIs and have an impact on job satisfaction, the study finds that stereotype threat (Petzel et al., 2020; Bullock et al., 2020), discrimination (Kutlaca, Becker, and Radke, 2020), performance management (Guarini et al., 2020), and culture (Kingston, McGinnity, and O'Connel, 2015) are the most notable factors.

This research finds that the causes of imbalanced representation in HEIs have an impact on BAME female academic job satisfaction, which affects their career progression. For instance, the literature has suggested that universities have adopted various policies and charters to reduce systemic disparities and ensure equal opportunity (Oloyede et al., 2021; Mayya et al., 2021). However, participants in this study commented that BAME female academics are

blamed by non-BAME groups for their lack of advancement in decision-making roles, and this blame questions their ability. The majority group believe that they (BAME) are not taking advantage of available opportunities. As a result, BAME female academics may accept marginalised views, believing they are less intelligent than their White counterparts. This perception decreases their job satisfaction and reduces their chances of obtaining decision-making roles (Dakbe et al., 2008; Elliot and Blithe, 2020; Rana et al., 2022).

The literature has suggested that Black female academics are changing their victim status to showcase their abilities and to gain acceptance from White groups by conveying their right to justice (Otake-Ebede & Shaffakat, 2024). However, this study finds that due to the mental barriers of majority groups, the acceptance of BAME female academic progress is not embraced. First, Otake-Ebede and Shaffakat's study is only focused on Black females. Second, in UK HEIs, all decision-making positions are held by White males (Rollock, 2019). Even if BAME female academics change their victim status, it would not help them reach decision-making roles. As long as the decision-makers are all White and achieving a decision-making role is considered a privilege, not a right, it will be tough for BAME female academics to achieve these roles.

Erete et al. (2021) have found that when BAME female academics seek career advancement after years of employment at the same institution, the initial acceptance from majority groups often turns into resistance and sometimes outright hostility. Although the majority groups are educated and aware of unconscious biases, they often enact them unintentionally. However, this study finds that these biases and judgemental attitudes reflect on decision-makers who prevent BAME female academics from obtaining leadership positions, as management often resists change.

Durodoye et al. (2020) have suggested that cultural norms often label female academics as nurturing and emotionally supportive, leading majority groups to judge their capabilities based on these stereotypes. This perception hinders their chances of obtaining decision-making roles, which are often associated with masculinity (Morris et al., 2021). However, this study finds that it is not just unconscious bias that limits BAME female academics' progress in decision-making roles. Office politics also play a crucial part (O'Connell et al., 2021). The research has revealed that behind-the-scenes factors related to promotions often keep BAME female academics out of leadership positions, affecting their career advancement. Therefore,

unconscious bias and office politics contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles.

The existing literature has indicated that the views of BAME female employees are often treated as secondary in decision-making processes (Showunmi, 2023). However, recent research suggests that their perspectives are largely disregarded by the dominant employee group. This occurs because the structures and systems within HEIs are designed to privilege White groups, effectively marginalising BAME female academics. Consequently, they are excluded from decision-making spaces, and their contributions are overlooked.

Olasunkanmi-Alimi et al. (2022) have found that Black female academics are often stereotyped because of their blunt communication style. This study finds that the majority group of employees believes that the minority group of employees is always loud. If they are gentle and polite, the majority group considers they are not comfortable with the work environment and lack relationships with colleagues. BAME female academics are judged wrongly by their White colleagues, and their wrong assumptions create stereotype threats, causing individuals to perform worse than their potential in the long run. Negative stereotypes about their group lead to underperformance and reduce their chances of being in decision-making roles and eventually that impacts their job satisfaction (Sawyer & Clair, 2020).

Factors of imbalanced representations and its impact on job satisfaction in the contemporary literature	Factors of imbalanced representations and its impact on job satisfaction from the primary research
Mental health Positive emotion Self-esteem Unfair treatment Relationship with supervisor Equal treatment Perceived discrimination Trust Victim status Unconscious bias Stereotype threat Discrimination Performance management Culture	Blamed for uncertainty Discrimination Stereotype threat Unconscious bias Less intelligent Psychological barrier (mental barrier) Office politics Continuously silenced Not comfortable at work Negative stereotype Lack of leadership quality Blunt communication stereotype Controlled initiative and drive Out-group opinions create conflict Superiority damages self esteem

Table 6.2: Factors of imbalanced representations and its impact on job satisfaction in the existing literature and the primary research data (The Author’s View, 2024).

The literature has suggested that initiative and drive intention are often diminished when handled by micromanagement, this hands-on management style ensures high efficiency and standards (Stephen, 2020). This study suggests that micromanagement reduces creativity and performance. It creates distress among employees by demanding constant updates, which signals a lack of trust between managers and employees (Osho & Alormele, 2024). This approach cannot produce effective outcomes. Instead, it may lead to out-group derogation and negatively impact on job satisfaction.

According to two-factor theory (1959), having a healthy and positive relationship with colleagues enhances employee job satisfaction. However, in higher education institutions, this relationship often functions more as a pathway to career advancement, referred to as ‘White sanction’ (Miller, 2016), where recommendations for career development come from those in positions of privilege. It is challenging for BAME female academics to engage and progress due to their inability to network with significant groups and needing to know the right person. Without access to White sanction and networking, navigating and succeeding in academia becomes exceedingly difficult for them.

In exploring how imbalanced representation impacts the job satisfaction of BAME female, it was initially believed that they often face issues related to a lack of confidence or fear of failure to apply for jobs or take a stand for their benefit (Aiston et al., 2020). However, the findings from this research present a different perspective, as participants indicated that they tended to avoid socialising to prevent disagreements, which partly explains their silence within academic settings.

Most decision-makers in HEIs are from White backgrounds. Since BAME female academics are underrepresented, their self-esteem is often downgraded. Self-esteem ensures independence (McLeod, 2018; Ali & Tatlah, 2022). However, the findings of this study indicate that the independence of majority groups has turned into superiority, which has normalised dominance in the workplace against BAME female academics. In contrast, BAME female academics' self-esteem has been downgraded, which eventually takes away their autonomy at work. Nonetheless, self-esteem ensures positive relationships among colleagues (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Banaji et al., 2021; Ali & Tatlah, 2022). However, because of self-esteem, majority groups and minority groups are divided, where majority groups become superior, and BAME female academics suffer from inferiority, which impacts their job satisfaction.

Finally, Herzberg's (1959) theory emphasises that hygiene factors, such as interpersonal relationships with peers, need to be met by the organisation to prevent job dissatisfaction among employees. Collegiality among faculty members is strongly linked to job satisfaction at both the personal and institutional levels (Victorino, Nylund-Gibson, and Conley, 2018). However, this study finds that professorial-level staff did not perceive these relationships as either a threat or a benefit. However, lecturers and senior lecturers stated that academics from different backgrounds often do not feel free to share the same mentality as those in superior positions, resulting in rigid and formal relationships and interactions. This finding contradicts the existing literature, as not everyone requires the same level of peer support, which is the unique finding of this study.

RO 3. To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build up effective multicultural social identity.

Considering such barriers and the imbalanced representation of BAME female academic job satisfaction in HEIs, this objective provides practical strategies for managers to build an effective multicultural social identity. The findings of this objective are based on the practical suggestions shared by the participants, and to validate this, the primary data has been compared to the contemporary literature on multicultural social identity. According to the contemporary literature, the significant elements of effective multicultural social identity are fair performance evaluation, equal reward and benefit, psychological diversity, emotional stability, recruitment and selection, and organisational culture (Myung et al., 2017; Doghan et al., 2019; Bhopal, 2019; Baltaru, 2020), which decision-makers need to consider.

While Bhatti et al. (2019) have emphasised that effective diversity management during recruitment can help promote women and ethnic minorities to higher management levels, this study finds that having a diverse panel and policies is insufficient without proper training for recruitment tasks (Flaherty, 2019; Rollock, 2012; Carter et al., 2020). Unconscious bias training remains unaddressed, and many universities have not made it mandatory due to doubts about its effectiveness (Noon, 2018). Practical training is essential not only for recruiting a diverse faculty but also for educating interview panel members.

Participants suggested giving master's-level BAME female students opportunities to experience academia, believing it could spark their interest in pursuing academic careers. Early-career BAME females require support and guidance to move forward in their careers (Frechette et al., 2020). The findings of this study show that Black students often do not get a chance to access this opportunity. According to our previous discussion on equal opportunity, not all opportunities are open to BAME female academics due to structural barriers in UK HEIs (Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017; Coleman et al., 2023). Therefore, an inclusive recruitment policy attracting existing students from diverse backgrounds could be a useful strategy for finding new talent in higher education, which would help to build multicultural identity in the workplace.

Participants suggested that promotion criteria should be more inclusive, focusing on each staff member's core strengths. Due to disparities in HEIs, performance evaluation in academia is often seen as a checkbox exercise and depends on several publications and citations (Hofstra et al., 2020). Therefore, making promotion criteria diverse according to the core strengths of

the employees, such as research and teaching, would not only enhance employee satisfaction but also support career growth in decision-making roles and help build a multicultural organisation. Table 6.3 shows the factors for building multicultural social identity identified in the contemporary literature and revealed during the semi-structured interviews for this research.

Factors of strategies building multicultural social identity in the contemporary literature	Factors of strategies for building multicultural social identity found in the primary research
Fair performance evaluation Equal reward and benefit Psychological diversity Emotional stability Recruitment and selection Organisational culture	Mentoring programme Inclusive leadership training Inclusive recruitment Inclusive performance system Core strength Diversity training Unconscious bias training Training for recruitment panel members Attracting existing BAME female students Mutual network Mutual acceptance

Table 6.3: Factors of strategies for building multicultural social identity in the existing literature and primary research data ([The Author’s View, 2024](#)).

Mutual networks help people from all backgrounds connect, which fosters collaboration and diminishes differences (Richard et al., 2023). According to Shand (2019), mutual networks create an opportunity to work together and engage in informal conversations, finding commonalities and learning from each other’s culture. However, this study finds that before creating mutual networks, it is vital to have mutual acceptance when people from different cultures interact (Kim & Ng, 2019). The other side must have an accepting attitude, emphasising that openness and willingness to embrace cultural differences are essential for successful interactions and building mutual networks. Adaptability and acceptance are critical factors in fostering effective mutual networks.

Mentorship programmes foster inclusivity, career development, and skill enhancement and address disparities for underrepresented individuals through nurturing and educational

relationships (Omadeke, 2021; Lee et al., 2022). However, this study finds that it is hard to find mentors from the same group, especially those from BAME backgrounds, due to the underrepresentation of BAME female academics in senior positions (Lee et al., 2022). Establishing effective mentorship programmes is a crucial strategy for building a multicultural social identity in higher education, as it addresses underrepresentation and supports career advancement for women from diverse backgrounds.

Leadership training programmes serve as valuable qualifications that can be listed on a resumé, aiding career and academic leadership progression (Ofei et al., 2022). However, this study finds that a leadership programme benefits those who are mid-career. Those who are already professors do not need it. These leadership programmes are made with White managers in mind; therefore, leadership programmes should be inclusive, which would help to build a multicultural social identity.

RO 4. To propose a multicultural social identity model to ensure job satisfaction for BAME female academics in the UK higher education sector.

Multiculturalism in the UK has yet to develop through deliberate policies or an official implementing body. Instead, it has gradually and organically evolved as British society began to ‘feel’ multicultural with the increasing presence of ethnic minority communities. Over time, this unplanned evolution has made multiculturalism more visible and shaped national life (Hall, 2000; Banting & Kymlicka, 2010; Chetty, 2017). To meet this objective, the researcher has proposed a model by following a logical and systematic procedure. After analysing Objectives 1, 2, and 3, the researcher has identified 32 issues (Table: 8.1). Based on these issues, the researcher has formulated a framework named ‘Employees’ Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity’ (see Figure: 8.2). This proposed model can be used side by side with present EDI practice to ensure the effectiveness of diverse faculty members in UK HEIs.

The contemporary literature highlights that the EDI practice eliminates discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, ensures equal opportunity, recruitment, the Equal Pay Act, sexual discrimination, disability discrimination, equal pay for both genders and races, compliance practices, and accessible information for HEIs (Equality Act 2010). Currently, only two reports are available on REC, and this data has been retrieved from the latest one. Present REC members ensure training for race equality for senior leaders, help to join charters, race-

related training before joining the institutes, networking with other members and institutions, and funding links (Oloyede et al., 2021; AdvanceHE, 2021).

After conducting interviews and analysing the data, it is evident that current initiatives need to be revised to ensure job satisfaction and address the leading causes of the underrepresentation of BAME female academics in HEIs needs to be highlighted. This study finds that BAME female academics are often hired merely to meet diversity quotas. There are discrepancies in policy implementation; unconscious bias training is not mandatory due to ineffectiveness; ethnic pay gap reports are lacking; 44% of BAME women are on fixed-term contracts; and policies are often used for branding rather than addressing absolute inequalities (UCU 2023). The imbalance in representation of BAME female academics persists, and work–life balance remains challenging (Rollock, 2019; Bhopal, 2020; Baltaru, 2020; O’Connell et al., 2021; Showunmi, 2023). Table 6.4 shows the factors of ‘current policy’ in the contemporary literature and the findings from this primary research.

Factors of ‘current policy’ in the contemporary literature	Factors of ‘current policy’ in the primary research
Discrimination Harassment Victimisation Ensure equal opportunity Good relations between in-groups and out-groups Recruitment Equal Pay Act Sexual discrimination Disability discrimination Compliance practices and accessible information for HEIs RECMembers ensure training for race Equality for senior leaders Help to join charters Race-related training before joining the institutes Networking with other members and institutions And funding links	Diversity quota Corruption in policy implementation Lacking in ethnic pay gap report Lacking in unconscious bias training Contract disparities Policies are for branding Underrepresentation in decision-making roles Work–life balance is still challenging Funding for research shortage

Table 6.4: The factors of ‘current policy’ in the existing literature and the primary research data (The Author’s View, 2024).

The proposed Model4, ‘Employee Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity’, aims to address these disparities and offers a potential solution

to reduce inequality within HEIs. Model4 ensures initiative and drives better job performance, engagement, career progress, wellbeing, sense of belonging, contribution recognition, and organisational commitment.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge

This research study adds to the theoretical and empirical understanding of job satisfaction among BAME female academics in UK universities. Most previous research on lived experiences has used critical race theory (CRT) to examine race, gender, and ethnic minority academics and students' experiences (Bhoapl, 2020). Social identity theory has been used as a secondary theory in some research. This study identifies the influence of in-group and out-group dynamics within institutions on the underrepresentation and job satisfaction of BAME female academics. This study theorises multiculturalism, which is a topic often overlooked in research due to its limited acceptance in the UK. The findings also reveal how social identity influences job satisfaction in the context of intersections of gender and ethnicity. The experiences of professors, associate professors, lecturers, and senior lecturers are different in the context of job satisfaction.

The literature has identified a series of research gaps. First, most of the BAME female academic satisfaction-related research influenced by social identity in the UK context is insufficient. Most previous research is based on White females, gender-based, using CRT, On Black females, and their experiences, nothing is directly written from the perspective of this study. Thus, the findings have made a theoretical contribution to knowledge management.

The research develops three empirical models from eight themes. These models were developed with careful consideration of research objectives and discussed in Chapter 4. Each model complements each objective. Model 1: Barriers to BAME female academicians' job satisfaction in the UK HEIs; Model 2: Imbalanced representation of BAME female academics and its impact on job satisfaction; Model 3: Strategies to build up multicultural social identity to ensure job satisfaction of BAME female academics. These models support policy practitioners, academicians, researchers, HEIs, and multicultural organisations. Therefore, these models have made a theoretical contribution to the existing literature.

A significant contribution of this research is Model 4, 'Employees' Job Satisfaction Improvement Model to Ensure Multicultural Social Identity', in UK higher education. This model aims to ensure initiative and drive better job performance, engagement, career progress, wellbeing, a sense of belonging, contribution recognition, and organisational commitment. This model can be used alongside the present EDI practice to ensure effectiveness. Therefore, this model has made a significant theoretical contribution to the present knowledge.

The findings of the research confirm that BAME female academics face barriers at the organisational, structural, and personal levels in the workplace, which hinder their job satisfaction. Moreover, this research finds that in-group and out-group favouritism are the reasons why there are fewer BAME female academics in decision-making roles, and this underrepresentation impacts their job satisfaction. The research also adds a wide range of new ideas, thoughts, and insights into the existing knowledge related to job satisfaction, barriers, multicultural social identity and underrepresentation (Mgaiwa, 2022; Chen, 2023; Opara et al., 2020; Crimmins et al., 2023; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017).

A methodological claim is made by using thematic analysis as a tool for data analysis along with 15 semi-structured interviews. This allowed for a better focus on gathering data to meet all the study objectives. Eight key themes emerged from the analysis of the empirical data. Initially, 31 sub-themes were identified, which were then grouped into eight key themes (see Chapter 4). Each of these highlight the impact of social identity on BAME female academics' job satisfaction in UK HEIs.

This study offers a methodological contribution using an interpretivist lens to explore how BAME female academics experience job satisfaction within HEIs. Rather than attempting to measure or predict behaviour, this approach focuses on understanding how these women interpret and give meaning to their experiences at work. Although job satisfaction has been widely examined, limited research has focused on this specific group or explored how their ethnicity and gender influence their sense of satisfaction. By centring their perspectives, this study provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of the experiences of BAME female academics, highlighting the value of interpretivist methods in uncovering insights that quantitative approaches alone may overlook.

Another unique contribution of this study is being in academia longer and having White group status provides White male academics with stronger networks than out-groups, which allows

them to get grant funding (Seo et al., 2022). In addition, those with tenure enjoy greater security to teach and research freely (Sinclair, 2023), whereas racially minoritised academics, especially women, are disadvantaged in gaining tenure (Gaughan, 2023). Evidence from in-group and out-group favouritism testing also shows that in-groups tend to give more resources to their own members than to outsiders (Abbink & Harris, 2019). Because of this in-group favouritism and longer time in academia, White male academics often receive better guidance and support for grant writing, a link for where to look for it and, as a result, secure more grant funding. Out-groups, by contrast, usually lack this support, and when BAME female academics apply for funding, their applications are judged more critically than those of White men (Biernat et al., 2020). Therefore, this study offers a unique finding that not only group status but also job tenure influences access to research funding. According to the participants, this acts as a non-financial benefit for some, while creating barriers that reduce job satisfaction for others.

Another important contribution of this study is that discrimination is not only carried out by White or majority groups against out-groups but can also come from within in-groups themselves (Vo et al., 2025). According to social identity theory, individuals identify strongly with their group memberships, which can lead to both in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination (Tajfel, 1979). However, when members of an in-group adopt dominant behaviours to align with existing power structures, they may distance themselves from others in their group and even perpetuate discrimination (Mata-Greve and Torres, 2019). In this context, senior BAME female academics may internalise and reproduce the same systems of control they once resisted to maintain authority and legitimacy within academia. These dynamic highlights the complexity of workplace inequalities, showing that barriers to career progression are not only shaped by majority group dominance but also by intra-group power struggles.

Another interesting contribution of this study is that belonging to an institution that values teaching and provides flexibility in research creates an in-group norm of ‘slow but steady’ progress, which enhances academics’ immediate job satisfaction. Yet, this same identity positioning also restricts employees’ access to the wider academic in-group, where research productivity is the main marker of success. Through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989), these barriers are compounded for BAME female academics, who face overlapping disadvantages of gender, ethnicity, and institutional culture (Arday, 2018). While flexibility offers comfort, it simultaneously creates hidden barriers by leaving them without the guidance,

mentorship, and visibility needed to progress in a research-driven academic system (Rollock, 2019). In the long run, this comfort becomes a constraint, as structural inequalities intersect with institutional practices to limit job satisfaction and career advancement. Therefore, this finding extends Bhopal and Pitkin's (2019) research, which added that, while programmes like the Athena SWAN Charter (Advance HE, 2018) and the Race Equality Charter (ECU, 2017; Baltaru, 2024) aim to confront the inequalities that currently exist, individual institutions are responsible for not progressing on change (Arday, 2018). There is frequently a disconnect in equity practices between what leaders in higher education say and do (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020).

Another interesting contribution is feeling comfortable in the same space because employees know the system and their colleagues well. They believe things are going smoothly and, therefore, prefer the familiarity of their current situation. Within an SIT framework, this shows how strong in-group identification fosters belonging and satisfaction but simultaneously discourages out-group engagement, which is often necessary for career advancement. Thus, while comfort in familiar institutional and social environments enhances job satisfaction for BAME female academics, it can also function as a self-imposed barrier. By prioritising in-group belonging and stability, they may inadvertently restrict their own opportunities for career development and growth. This is a factor that has gone unseen, as no relevant literature was found to support this. Therefore, it is a finding of this extended study of how familiar surroundings can sometimes become a barrier to part of their job satisfaction.

Another contribution of this study concerns self-esteem. According to the literature, self-esteem ensures independence (McLeod, 2018). However, the findings of this study indicate that this independence of majority groups has turned into superiority, which has normalised dominance in the workplace, and in contrast, BAME female academics self-esteem has been downgraded, which eventually takes away their autonomy at the work. Nonetheless, self-esteem ensures positive relationships among colleagues (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Ali & Tatlah, 2022). However, because of self-esteem, majority groups and minority groups are divided, where majority groups become superior and BAME female academics suffer from inferiority (Banaji et al., 2021).

This study also contributed to extending the study by Bhopal (2024), who has explained that to gain acceptance, individuals often 'act White' to fit group norms, rather than viewing

identity as a fixed entity. Hence, this study has found that there are BAME female academics at the professorial level in higher education institutions, but the mentality of giving back to society is not widespread. Even those who wish to support early-career BAME female academics are often hindered by the structural influence of White society. To fit into White society, BAME female academics sometimes avoid acting as role models for junior BAME female academics. This is because BAME women feel pressured to conform to White society's norms, leading to a loss of cultural identity and marginalisation as leaders (Mirza, 2018; Shrira, 2020, Omoijiade et al., 2024). BAME female academics often feel pressured to hide their cultural traits and adopt 'White' behaviours to avoid rejection or anxiety among White colleagues. As a result, even when they hold positions of power, they may struggle to make independent decisions and may hesitate to support other BAME female academics. This reflects a key idea in social identity theory that individuals see themselves as part of a group and may adjust their self-identity to align with that group.

6.3 Study implications to policy, practice, and theory

Zero-Hour contract

Social identity makes BAME female academics' experiences with zero-hour contracts (ZHCs) even harder. The lack of stability and unpredictability in their job's places them in a lower-status group compared to those with stable, predictable positions. This situation often prevents BAME female academics from accessing decision-making roles, particularly those on fixed-term or part-time contracts, and especially those on ZHCs, as they are rarely considered for such positions. This leaves them with ongoing insecurities about their career development. From a social identity theory perspective, exclusion from decision-making reflects how out-group members are systematically denied influence, reinforcing unequal power dynamics within universities. At the same time, an intersectional lens highlights how the overlapping factors of ethnicity, gender, and contractual status combine to intensify this disadvantage. Although there are new rules aimed at properly banning ZHCs (Myers, 2022), employers still benefit from using them for reasons such as staffing cover and demand fluctuations (Datta, 2024). Therefore, this issue remains ongoing. Policymakers should carefully consider the extent to which zero-hour contracts are regulated. Completely banning them could have negative consequences; however, introducing policies that allow employees to request fixed working hours after a certain period of employment would be a more balanced approach.

Additionally, greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring that workers on ZHCs receive equal pay to those on fixed-hour contracts.

EDI Act (2010)

According to social identity theory, BAME female academics are often positioned as members of an out-group, which results in them facing multiple barriers throughout their academic careers. These challenges occur across different levels from lecturer and senior lecturer to associate professor and professor. Although their experiences vary, common themes emerge, including inequality, limited support, a lack of belonging, and insufficient recognition. These issues, while visible, are often obscured by deeply embedded structural inequalities. The experiences of BAME female academics demonstrate how structural, organisational, and personal barriers intersect with both ethnicity and gender, hindering their career progression in higher education because of their 'double minority' status. Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives within many institutions often appear tokenistic, despite the existence of the Equality Act 2010. While this legislation is intended to eliminate workplace discrimination, its poor implementation reveals institutional complacency and, in some cases, corruption among senior administrators and those responsible for enforcing it. Consequently, equality and diversity policies frequently conceal underlying inequalities, acting as superficial fixes rather than driving genuine structural change (Bhopal, 2020). To create real progress, institutions must refocus their efforts on authentic equality and inclusion practices, supported by consistent monitoring, transparent reporting, and actionable plans that promote meaningful diversity and equity for all members.

Flexible Working Act (2023)

Work–life balance plays a crucial role in achieving employee job satisfaction, supporting adaptability and autonomy. Universities have introduced policies to help employees particularly female academics manage their professional and personal responsibilities (Dousin et al., 2019). According to the Flexible Working Act (2023), employees are entitled to request flexible working arrangements from their first day of employment and may do so twice within a 12-month period. Despite the positive intentions of these policies, many BAME female academics continue to struggle to achieve a healthy work–life balance, which negatively affects their career progression. Some participants expressed frustration about the expectation from their supervisors to work continuously. As noted by French et al. (2020), although flexible

working hours, autonomy, and supportive institutional policies are theoretically linked to higher job satisfaction, the practical experience often falls short for BAME female academics. Current policy states that the first point of discussion regarding flexible working requests should be the line manager. However, findings from this research suggest that outcomes often depend on how individual managers perceive such requests. Due to limited authority and autonomy, BAME female academics often take on responsibilities that extend beyond their control. Therefore, it is recommended that policies be reviewed to ensure fair implementation specifically, that both the line manager and the HR department are informed simultaneously when flexible working requests are made, to uphold the policy effectively.

The Race Relations Act of 1976

The Race Relations Act of 1976 and the Equality Act of 2010 are two examples of how the UK government has attempted to address imbalance representation of BME career progression. However, these attempts have frequently included more rhetoric than policy-driven action (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020). While programmes like the Athena SWAN Charter (Advance HE, 2018) and the Race Equality Charter (ECU, 2017; Baltaru, 2024) aim to confront the inequalities that currently exist, individual institutions are responsible for not progressing on change (Arday, 2018). Because when it comes to equity practices, there is frequently a disconnect between what leaders in higher education say and do (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020). To understand this imbalance in representation and barriers faced by BAME female academics and how they impact their job satisfaction, the researcher has dived into the policies and identified that, with policies aside, the universities are unaccountable for not actively diversifying the senior leadership team because of discrimination and unconscious bias, which persistently impacts racial inequality in leadership practice (Arday, 2018). And many of these happen due to in-group favouritism, where the institutions are dominated by a White male leadership hierarchy that has traditionally marginalised ethnic groups and women (Jarobe, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to revise existing equality acts and hold institutions accountable for genuinely promoting diversity in leadership roles. This should go beyond simply advertising themselves as ‘equal opportunity employers’ and focus on supporting the real progression of BAME female academics. Diversifying recruitment panels and ensuring fair promotion to professorial levels through recognition of their work, dedication, and measurable performance appraisals can help create more inclusive and diverse decision-making structures.

Ethnicity Pay gap report

The lack of transparent reporting on ethnicity pay gaps continues to allow inequalities to persist within academia, reinforcing structural barriers that restrict both career progression and job satisfaction (Bhopal, 2022). This study finds that BAME female academics remain marginalised, underpaid, and undervalued despite their qualifications and contributions (Arday, 2018). On 18 March 2025, the UK government proposed a consultation on mandatory ethnicity and disability pay reporting for employers with 250 or more employees (GOV.UK, 2025). A similar initiative was introduced in 2018, but it was voluntary at the time and faced challenges due to difficulties in designing an appropriate methodology, which made interpretation complex. The new proposal follows the same framework as the gender pay gap reporting system. Although this initiative is still in progress, it forms part of the proposed Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, which is expected to be introduced to Parliament soon. If implemented effectively, this measure could help reduce the ethnicity pay gap in the same way that gender pay gap reporting has contributed to narrowing gender-based disparities. However, there remain some grey areas in calculating the actual ethnicity pay gap, particularly because many individuals choose not to disclose their ethnicity. In such cases, it is important never to guess or impute missing data. Instead, organisations should use only the data that has been disclosed, report the pay gap within the disclosed group (for example, between White and BAME employees who have disclosed their ethnicity), and include a clear note explaining that results may not represent the entire workforce due to limited disclosure. Applying the correct methodology adds credibility to the findings; therefore, the report should clearly state the number of people who disclosed their ethnicity, the approach used, and any limitations in interpreting the results.

Stereotyping on the ability of BAME female academics

Sex discrimination stems primarily from cultural beliefs and secondarily from organisational structures, policies, and practices that reinforce gender stereotypes (Ridgeway & England, 2007; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Although many organisations introduce policies to create inclusive workplaces, male dominance often results in systems being shaped to their advantage, limiting women's progress (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). This study finds that BAME female

academics face a double disadvantage, as women, they are stereotyped as less capable of handling stress and thus excluded from decision-making roles (Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi, 2023); and as ethnic minorities, they are often viewed as outsiders and trusted less than their White colleagues (Mahony and Weiner, 2020). Consequently, BAME female academics experience dual discrimination based on both gender and ethnicity. Understanding how social identity influences their job satisfaction, promotion, and progression is therefore crucial, particularly for those demonstrating strong acculturative competence.

The combined influence of ethnicity and gender deserves more attention in research (Capper, 2015). It is important to explore how these intersecting factors shape both the challenges and opportunities faced by BAME female academics, particularly in relation to their underrepresentation in academic leadership. Such research can help BAME female leaders strengthen their own anti-racist identities, which in turn can encourage similar awareness and commitment among their colleagues and students (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Capper, 2015).

Unconscious Bias training

The findings of this study suggest that to achieve a bias-free recruitment and selection process, mandatory evidence-based unconscious bias training is essential. Addressing these issues is crucial for creating a positive work environment where daily judgements are made without relying on biased thinking. Bhopal (2016) has focused on unconscious bias training with proper care and guidance because everyone has inner bias, which needs teasing out through self-reflection and through unconscious bias training. This training can reduce misconceptions about BAME female academic progress and give them a sense of belonging (Loke, 2018).

Development of Early-career BAME female academics

Offering TA positions to BAME female students could provide them with valuable academic experience, and early-career development opportunities could help reduce underrepresentation in higher education, contributing to the growth of a more multicultural organisation. However, participants noted that White students often have better chances of becoming TAs compared to BAME students, and this disparity is not taken seriously enough. Institutions should give opportunities to females to experience academia. However, the findings of this study argue that

Black students often do not get a chance to access this opportunity. According to our previous discussion on equal opportunity, it has been found that not all opportunities are open to BAME female academics due to structural barriers in UK HEIs (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017; Coleman et al., 2023). Therefore, an inclusive recruitment policy attracting existing students from diverse backgrounds could be a useful strategy for finding new talents in higher education, which would help to build multicultural identity in the workplace.

Mentoring

The findings highlight the critical need for structured mentorship and developmental support for early-career and mid-level BAME female academics. Institutions should implement formal mentoring schemes that connect these academics with senior role models who can provide guidance on career progression, research visibility, and navigating institutional structures. Line managers and heads of departments must receive training to recognise the specific challenges faced by BAME women and to offer targeted professional development opportunities. Additionally, universities should move beyond simply providing access to opportunities by ensuring that all staff are equipped with the knowledge and support needed to make effective use of them. Embedding mentorship and inclusive leadership practices within institutional policies can help prevent career stagnation and promote a more equitable academic environment.

The establishment of a mutual network is recommended, whereby White colleagues actively assist BAME female academics in recognising, addressing, and managing challenging or discriminatory workplace behaviours (Rollock, 2019). Such mentorship can also take the form of individual White peers serving as advocates or champions who promote their BAME colleagues' visibility, connect them with professional opportunities, and support their career advancement. This form of engagement has the potential to evolve into a formal mentoring structure, strengthening institutional commitment to equity and inclusion (Rollock, 2019).

Multiculturalism

This study integrates social identity theory and multiculturalism to explain BAME female academics' job satisfaction in UK higher education. Social identity theory highlights how

group memberships such as gender and ethnicity shape self-perception, belonging, and inclusion. Multiculturalism adds an institutional dimension, showing how universities value and accommodate diversity through policies and culture. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that job satisfaction is shaped by both individual identity dynamics and the inclusiveness of the institutional environment. Although multiculturalism is not yet widely implemented in the UK, the proposed Employee job satisfaction improvement model, which incorporates multicultural social identity, can guide policymakers, institutional leaders, governors, and higher education authorities in enhancing the job satisfaction of BAME female academics.

In-group and out-group derogation

This study highlights the role of in-group and out-group dynamics in shaping job satisfaction among BAME female academics. Findings indicate that out-group derogation by majority (White) colleagues can diminish the self-esteem of BAME women, reducing their job autonomy and fostering feelings of inferiority, while the same self-esteem in majority groups reinforces a sense of superiority (McLeod, 2018; Ali & Tatlah, 2022). In HEIs, where decision-makers are predominantly White, this imbalance normalises dominance, divides groups, and undermines positive workplace relationships (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Banaji et al., 2021; Ali & Tatlah, 2022). Theoretically, this underscores how social identity processes can create structural inequities, linking identity, self-esteem, and job satisfaction.

Comfortable in old space

A key finding of this study is that BAME female academics often report higher job satisfaction when remaining in familiar institutional environments, valuing comfort, stability, and established relationships. Within a social identity theory (SIT) framework, this reflects strong in-group identification, which enhances belonging and satisfaction but can simultaneously limit engagement with out-groups necessary for career advancement. Theoretically, this highlights a tension between in-group comfort and professional growth: while familiarity

supports wellbeing and satisfaction, it may also function as a self-imposed barrier, constraining opportunities for progression.

Applying the multicultural social identity model together with current EDI practices

To ensure this change, the following strategies can be implemented alongside existing EDI practices, with their effectiveness monitored by using data-driven metrics to identify areas for improvement (Davis & Anderson, 2023). This includes requiring a diversity report six months prior to assess disparities within universities, tracking complaints related to discrimination and assault, retention rates of BAME female academics, promotion rates, salary increases, diversity on interview panels, mandatory unconscious bias training with effective follow-up, and the participation of BAME individuals in decision-making roles. Additionally, monitoring the ethnic pay gap annually and reducing zero-hour contracts in line with new government laws (BBC, 2024) are crucial steps. The policy implementation team should also be diverse, research funding information must be posted every time it appears, and universities should take this initiative to keep members posted. By motivating, all relevant information must be transparent and easily accessible.

6.4 Limitations of the research

All the participants are from London-based universities, and none are from the STEM field. Universities outside of London are mostly White-dominated, and the STEM field is White-dominated (Eaton et al., 2020). Expanding the sample to include female academics from BAME would give a more comprehensive picture.

Another consideration is that not all participant's experiences were considered while making the findings and analysis. The researcher has taken only repetitive and important ones, mostly related to social identity, ethnicity, job satisfaction, underrepresentation, and gender, which is very common for sensitive research studies for marginalised groups (Arday, 2022b). The research is mainly based on experiences verbally shared by the participants. It would be helpful to do quantitative research on the job satisfaction of BAME female academics, which will provide specific validation of the current data.

Social identity theory faces several criticisms, including its deterministic nature, which suggests individuals are primarily driven by the need to form positive identities, limiting personal agency. This theory focuses on social comparison, and group membership overlooks other crucial factors like personal experiences, culture, and individual traits. Additionally, while widely used, there is limited empirical support, and it does not always align with real-world outcomes. Its applicability is mainly restricted to issues like prejudice and discrimination, leaving its relevance to other areas, such as consumer behaviour or organisational change, unclear. Moreover, the theory provides little practical guidance for developing interventions to address social issues like prejudice.

Although the in-depth interviews generated rich and detailed data, this complexity sometimes made interpretation and structuring the thesis challenging. Additionally, conducting follow-up interviews with some participants could have further strengthened the depth and validity of the findings, which was not fully explored in this study.

Another limitation is that the data were collected exclusively from academics working within the UK, specifically in London. Expanding the study to include women of colour with international experience or those working outside London might have revealed different perspectives and experiences regarding ethnicity, gender, and professional roles (Sang, Al-Dajani, & Özbilgin, 2013; Sang & Calvard, 2019).

Interviewees' accounts were prioritised based on their relevance to the research topic, but a larger sample of women of colour, with more emphasis on their backgrounds, could have strengthened the study. Additionally, this research focused only on ethnicity and gender, whereas other intersecting identities such as social class, religion, and age also shape career experiences for ethnic minority academics. Scholars have long advocated for an intersectional perspective, which recognises that individuals belong to multiple groups and that experiences differ, for example, between White women and BAME female academics (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000; Tariq & Syed, 2017). Considering these multiple factors is essential to fully understand the complex experiences of marginalised academics.

The study relied on participants' verbal accounts of how social identities, such as ethnicity and gender, affect job satisfaction in UK higher education, and on strategies like building multicultural organisations to overcome these challenges. Future research could use

ethnographic methods to observe inequalities in real time. Additionally, more detailed analysis such as comparing experiences in ‘pre-1992’ and ‘post-1992’ universities could provide deeper insights.

Another limitation of this study is the limited availability of prior research on social identity and multiculturalism within the context of UK HEIs. Consequently, the researcher had to rely on studies conducted in other countries and compare their findings with those of the present research.

Another limitation concerned potential biases in participants’ perspectives, which may have been shaped by their cultural backgrounds or by specific ways in which they articulated their experiences. Furthermore, prior exposure to pre-read articles may have influenced participants’ responses, making it challenging at times to discern their authentic, lived experiences.

6.5 Recommendations

1. The focus here is to build an equitable work environment where BAME female academics can feel a sense of belonging and reduce structural inequalities within HEI. To establish equality, governing bodies, senior policy practitioners, and higher authorities of universities must revise their commitments about equal opportunity for race, ethnicity, and gender once more. Because the report says institutions are not willing or feeling confident enough to talk openly about race and racism within their institutions (REC, 2021).

For this process of identification of the issues, the researcher recommends a last-year report review on the ethnic pay gap, promotion, increment, discrimination, assault complaints, and retention rate of BAME female academics. If the reports are not made, then a team could be hired from inside the institution and another from outside to prepare them. After that, a mandatory anonymous survey for everyone would highlight the work environment, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, culture, work responsibility, discrimination, unconscious bias, stereotypes, opportunities for progress, access to resources, leadership and mentoring opportunities, and options for research and funding opportunities. To make it more useful, the same questions can be presented in different ways to ensure their certainty. The next

step is, after comparing the results, to make an action plan to create a better place for BAME female academic growth and dynamics. This is a baseline identification of the challenge, and further monitoring is needed for developments.

2. The study found that a White sanction is required for progressing in a career, and for that, reverse mentoring and mentoring by Whites can be taken as a solution (Johnson, 2019; Rollock, 2019), and a policy must be created where senior academics will empower early-career, mid-level BAME female academics, and for that, White academics must be well trained beforehand to avoid certain biases while dealing with BAME female academics. It is also found in the study that BAME female academics are more comfortable with the same groups; however, if the mentor is from a different background, it will help to grow their network, give them a chance to enter the White networks, and by understanding each other, BAME female academics will progress in their decision-making roles. According to social identity theory, group membership is important for making the right use of social identity. Therefore, making a good relationship with mentors and getting advice and suggestions for career progression will be helpful.

3. As the research finds, an institutional policy that is to educate everyone about unconscious bias theory often backfires, and due to its ineffectiveness, not every organisation practice unconscious bias training (Atewologun, Cornish, and Tresh, 2018; Advance HE, 2020). For this reason, educating students about unconscious bias theory and creating awareness among all staff in the university is necessary, and to test its effectiveness, an implicit association test can be taken every six months. Nonetheless, a policy for recruitment and selection teams that will ensure equality and prevent favouritism over one group above another, Whiteness as power, and diverse teams including (White, Black, BAME, men and women) in the recruitment board. Ultimately, this will assist in the in the appointment, retention, and progression of BAME female academics in senior positions and reduce the institutional stereotypes about BAME females in leadership roles.

4. BAME female academics, mostly those who are in mid-level careers, need transformational leadership that will bring them forward. For that reason, training the senior from the same background will act as a mentor for mid-careers (senior lecturers and associate professors) to move into decision-making roles. Leadership training is mostly focused on Whites; however, policies for 'Leadership for Ethnic Minority Groups' are required.

5. Much research has explored the experiences of Black female academics using CRT, but this is the first study to examine both psychological and structural barriers side by side. Triangulating SIT and intersectionality provides a framework to explain why BAME female academics may experience both psychological challenges (e.g., lowered self-esteem, identity threat) and structural barriers (e.g., limited progression opportunities). It also highlights that interventions should address both individual and systemic levels to improve job satisfaction and equity in higher education. Therefore, my recommendation is developing a conceptual impact report can help communicate research findings to a wider audience and stakeholders. Such a report can clarify policy issues, reframe discussions, and serve as a knowledge resource, providing guidance on navigating the academic system and highlighting relevant support resources.

6. During the interviews, the researcher noticed that some participants were unaware of their rights, as they were focused primarily on surviving and sustaining their careers in academia. Therefore, I recommend incorporating a curriculum that recognises and values the knowledge and lived experiences of BAME women and men, promoting a shift in perspective across research, teaching, and knowledge exchange. Institutions should ensure that teaching staff reflect proportional representation and that both students and staff have access to safe, inclusive spaces such as identity networks and forums where their voices can be heard. Recruitment and selection processes should actively challenge inequities related to contracts, pay, and workload allocation. Additional support should include training for BME early-career researchers, attention to the campus environment, and the development of an inclusive institutional culture. This approach goes beyond simply increasing the number of students or staff of colour. It proposes a strategy aimed at creating real institutional change through collective action, agency, and the self-determination of participants (Rollock, 2018: 327).

7. Performance management systems promote fair evaluation, in practice and bring creativity, however, advancing in academic careers and attaining leadership roles is often challenging for disadvantaged groups, particularly for BAME female academics. White privilege creates power imbalances that marginalise these individuals (Bhopal, 2019). Additionally, performance evaluation in academia is often seen as a checkbox exercise, as discussed earlier (Showunmi, 2023). This research finds that promotion criteria should be more inclusive, focusing on the core strengths of each staff member. This approach would not only enhance

employee satisfaction but also support career growth in decision-making roles and will help to build multicultural organisation.

6.6 Scopes for further studies

These studies highlight the significant impact caregiving responsibilities have on the job satisfaction of female academics. Despite the existence of policies meant to support them, the interplay of gender-based expectations and cultural issues continues to create substantial barriers to their career progression and overall job satisfaction. However, how the care responsibility of BAME female faculty members impacts job satisfaction can be taken as further extensive research because most of the research is done based on White female academics; therefore, there is a gap, and it is one of the barriers that impacts BAME female academic job satisfaction.

Additionally, the researcher thinks that work–life balance should encompass more than just autonomy in the workplace and with family; it also has to do with the fact that people on part-time contracts frequently experience pressure to take on additional responsibilities by taking on second jobs and juggling two or three jobs can lead to tension among academicians and job dissatisfaction. Hence, this area still does not receive much attention, and further research can be done on this.

Financial benefit is one of the most important aspects of job satisfaction, although this study finds that faculty member satisfaction relies on seeing students' progress, not on monetary benefit. However, to identify the actual disparities in the ethnic pay gap, it is important to have reports properly done. As there is less information available on the ethnic pay gap report, it was hard to compare the actual data. Therefore, future research can be done on this topic.

The unique findings of this chapter are that BAME academics face a significant challenge in availing themselves of career development opportunities, more specifically, getting funds for further research, because they do not know the right contacts and have less support or guidance. This study finds that this is not only because of networking but also because those who are in the same institutions for a longer period, especially White men, receive more grant funding than BAME female academics. The insufficient funding further complicates this situation, which reduces the chance for BAME female academics to get research funding. Hence, further quantitative research is required to validate this finding that those who spend a longer period in the institute receive the grant more often.

The researcher has highlighted different barriers in academia and reasons for underrepresentation. Therefore, this suggests that academia and universities are facing social inequality and that major change is required. Further research can be done on EDI practice, its effectiveness, and the actual reasons for present disparities in academia (Dupree and Boykin, 2021).

This study has used social identity theory, job satisfaction theory, and multiculturalism to identify the BAME female academics job satisfaction in UK HEI. Therefore, to understand more deeply how BAME female academic job satisfaction differs in neoliberal society, this can be taken as further research.

While qualitative research can offer valuable insights based on a specific sample, future studies could build on this work by conducting more extensive in-depth interviews with larger and more diverse groups, as well as by incorporating ethnographic methods.

I also suggest broadening the empirical scope to include not only BAME female academics but also male BAME academics. This would allow for a richer understanding of how class, gender, and race shape both disadvantage and privilege within academic settings.

While qualitative research provides valuable subjective insights, future studies could benefit from incorporating approaches that allow for greater generalisation of the findings. This would help to more precisely understand how aspects of social identity and in-group/out-group favouritism influence factors related to job satisfaction.

Finally, in-depth research is required for establishing multiculturalism in the UK HEI. As this is a new concept in the UK and being a multicultural country and the number of ethnic minorities is increasing day by day, it is high time to focus on multiculturalism. The present study has made the multicultural social identity model based on the outcomes of the issues found in the entire study, and this section needs further validation.

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8.0 List of Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

My name is Noorzoha Munir and I am a research student studying at London Metropolitan University.

The aim of my research is to determine and evaluate the impact of social identity on BAME female academics job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector. I want to discuss with

you regarding your experience, perception, attitude towards working in and out of your social group. The discussion will also cover your expectation regarding different benefits, working environment and group work to achieve targets.

I can ensure that I will not ask any personal or sensitive question, the data and information that you will provide will be treated confidentially, I will not mention your name and any other details in my research and in any case I will not disclose to the third parties.

Following are the topic that we will discuss during the interviews:

- Social identity
- Advantages and disadvantages of working in-group (same social group/identity).
- Advantages and disadvantages of working in out-group (different social group/identity)
- Female representation in the UK higher education
- Possible ways to build up a multi-cultural social identity
- Expected benefits from work
- Job Satisfaction

If you would like to participate and contribute to the research, please write to Noorzoha Munir,
email: nom0239@my.londonmet.ac.uk

Gratefully,

Noorzoha Munir
ID: 19016497
London Metropolitan University

For further enquiry, please
Contact the supervisors for this
research:

1. Eyob Mulat-Weldemeskel
Acting Deputy Dean
Academic Development-
GSBL
e.mulat-weldemeskel@londonmet.ac.uk
2. Dr Andrina Halder
Senior Lecturer
London Met Email
address:
a.halder@londonmet.ac.uk

8.2 Appendix B: Letter of consent from the participant

The Impact of Social Identity on BAME Female Academic Staff Job Satisfaction in the UK Higher Education Sector

Name of participant:.....

Contact details:

Telephone:

Email address:

I would like to participate for the research. I am clear about the given information sheet. I understand it is voluntary and I believe the data and information that I will provide will be treated confidentially. I can withdraw from the research within 30 days from the date I was interviewed.

Signature of Participant.....

Date.....

Signature of the Researcher.....

Date

N.B If you would like to withdraw from the research, please send an email to nom0239@my.londonmet.ac.uk. Please mention ‘withdrawn from the research’ in the subject line. You can withdraw from the research within 30 days from the date you were interviewed.

8.3 Appendix C: Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

The impact of Social Identity on Job Satisfaction by BAME Female Academics in the UK Higher Education Sector

This research to investigate the impact of Social Identity on BAME female academic employees’ job satisfaction in the context of the UK Higher Education Sector. In order to conduct the study, the researcher needs to gather information from UK higher education

institutes. More particularly, the researcher needs to gather information on how In-group favouritism and out-group derogation influences job satisfaction of BAME female academics. In addition, how women from minority groups being treated due to different social identity and finally the impact of multicultural social identity will be the centre of this research.

Confidentiality

Interview will be recorded and I would request your permission to continue. The gathered information will be used only to meet the research aim and objectives and will not be used in any other purpose. The interview information will be kept confidential, your information will remain fully anonymous and will not be disclose to anyone and in any case, it will not be handed over to the third parties. Moreover, research ethics has been reviewed by the London Metropolitan University's Research ethics team to maintain the confidentiality. Finally, I will not mention your name anywhere in my research and I will not give any clue to anyone by which others can identify you.

Section 1

Interview Guide

There are 8 questions. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes

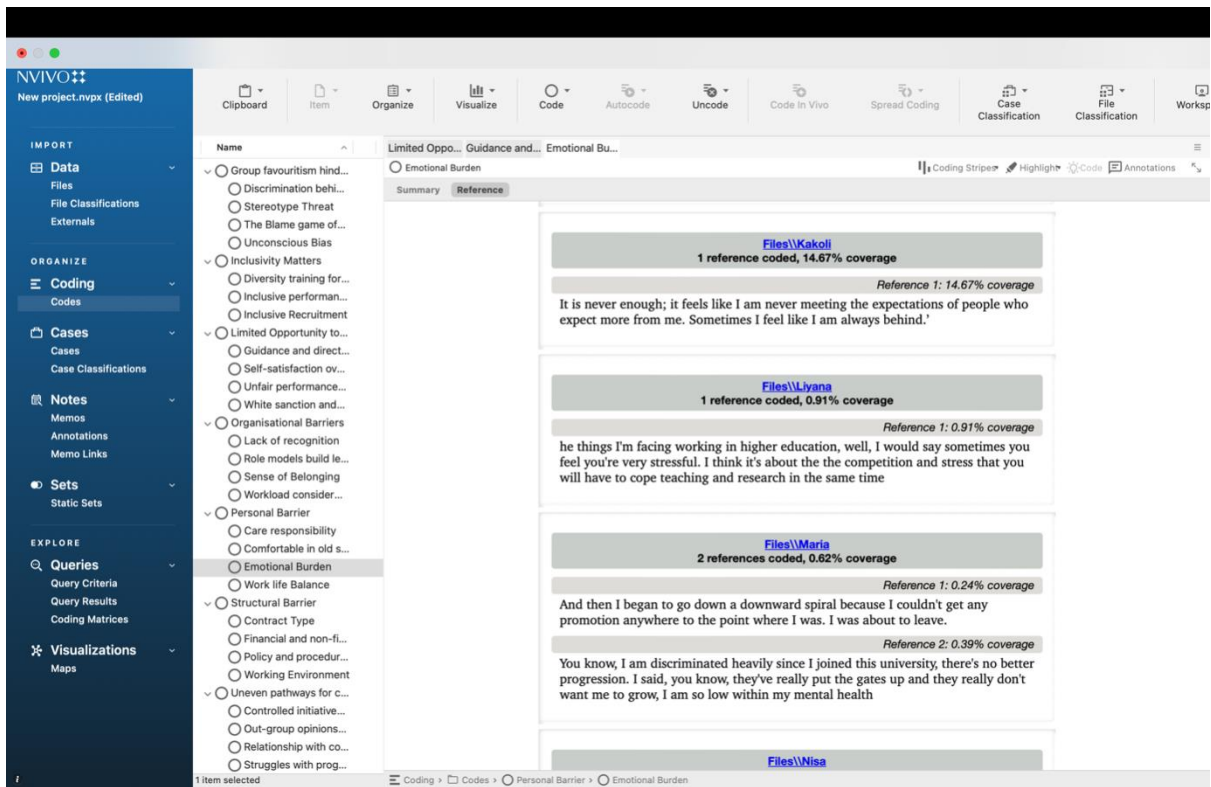
1. When did you start working in this organisation?
2. What are some of the challenges academics faces?
3. Do you have colleagues from different background? Could you please tell me about them?
4. What are some of your experiences regarding overall job satisfaction at your organisation?
5. How do you think Higher Education Institutions can attract more diverse academics?
6. What is your view on job satisfaction's impact on efficiency and effectiveness at the workplace?? Can you please explain?

7. Why do you think BAME female representation is less in the UK Higher Education sector?
8. Do you feel there are any barriers for BAME female academics in HEI?

8.4 Appendix D: Data Familiarisation

Name	Codes	References	Created by	Modified on	Modified by	Color
Belgium	20	27	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Bobita	24	37	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Ibtisam	15	17	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 14:08	NM	
Kakoli	5	5	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Laila	24	31	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Liyana	18	20	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 14:53	NM	
lucky	18	24	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Maria	19	32	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 17:11	NM	
Mukta	7	7	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Nahar churchill	13	17	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Naysa	7	7	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Nisa	6	6	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Nupu	6	6	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Pamela	23	27	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	
Tania	5	5	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:22	NM	

8.5 Appendix E: Generating initial codes



8.6 Appendix F: Themes and sub-themes

The screenshot displays the NVIVO interface with a table of codes. The table has columns for Name, Files, References, Created on, Created..., Modified on, Modified by, and Color. The codes are listed in a hierarchical structure, with sub-themes indented under their parent themes.

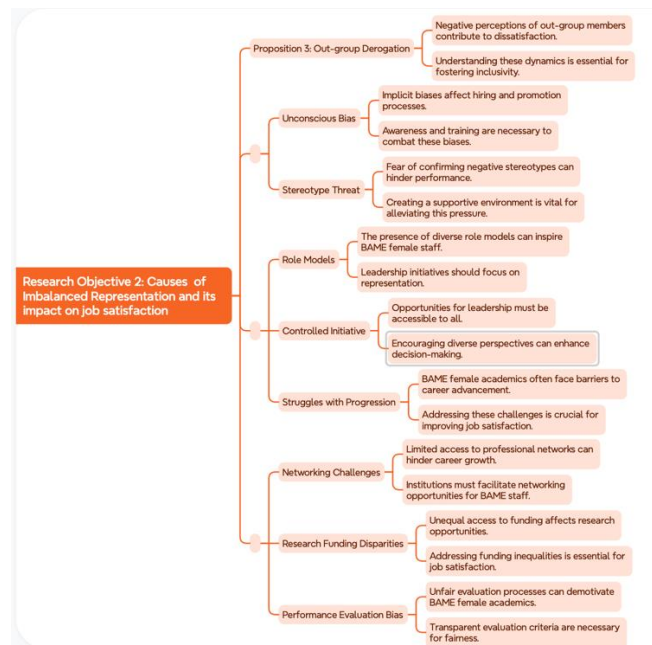
Name	Files	References	Created on	Created...	Modified on	Modified by	Color
Group favouritism hind...	4	4	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:00	NM	
Discrimination behi...	7	9	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:23	NM	
Stereotype Threat	4	5	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:16	NM	
The Blame game of...	4	5	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:06	NM	
Unconscious Bias	5	8	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:55	NM	
Inclusivity Matters	6	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:59	NM	
Diversity training for...	6	7	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:17	NM	
Inclusive performan...	3	5	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:18	NM	
Inclusive Recruitment	5	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:04	NM	
Limited Opportunity to...	6	9	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:13	NM	
Guidance and direct...	5	7	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:17	NM	
Self-satisfaction ov...	6	9	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:17	NM	
Unfair performance...	6	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:58	NM	
White sanction and...	6	10	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:23	NM	
Organisational Barriers	4	8	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:00	NM	
Lack of recognition	4	8	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:03	NM	
Role models build le...	5	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:15	NM	
Sense of Belonging	7	14	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:23	NM	
Workload consider...	7	8	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 20:56	NM	
Personal Barrier	4	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:11	NM	
Care responsibility	5	5	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:54	NM	
Comfortable in old s...	3	3	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 19:03	NM	
Emotional Burden	6	7	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:15	NM	
Work life Balance	5	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 20:57	NM	
Structural Barrier	5	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:11	NM	
Contract Type	8	11	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:15	NM	
Financial and non-fl...	8	9	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:15	NM	
Policy and procedur...	5	6	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:23	NM	
Working Environment	6	9	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:12	NM	
Uneven pathways for c...	5	7	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 16:58	NM	
Controlled initiative...	4	4	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 14:29	NM	
Out-group opinions...	6	7	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:16	NM	
Relationship with co...	9	9	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:16	NM	
Struggles with prog...	6	8	6 Jul 2023 at 13:54	NM	6 Jul 2023 at 21:17	NM	

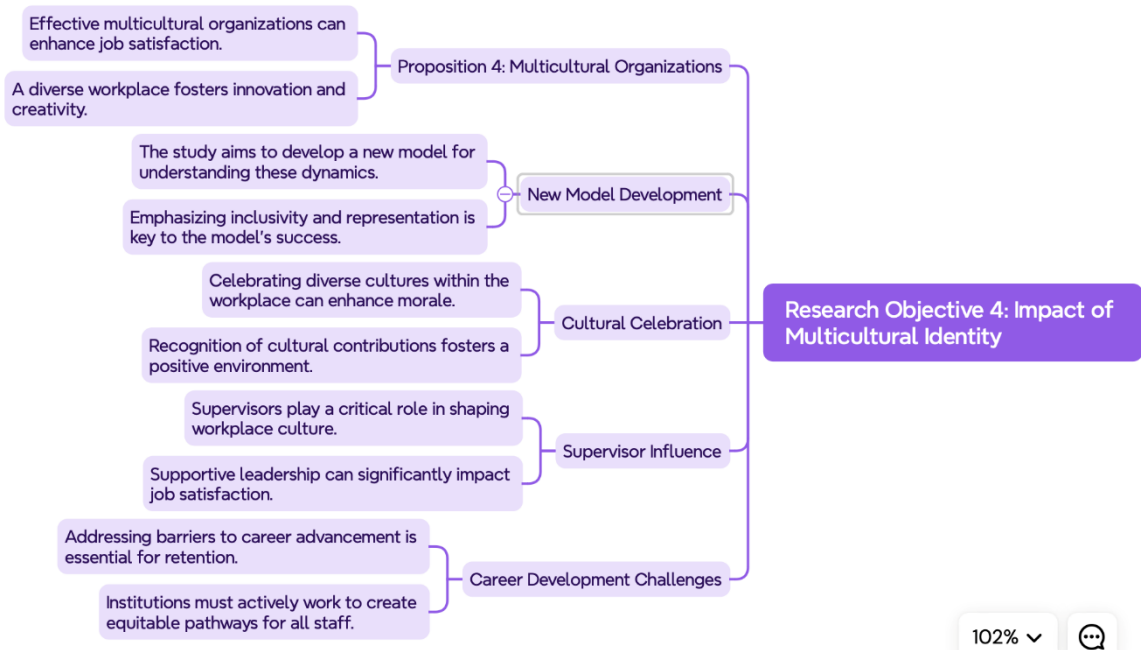
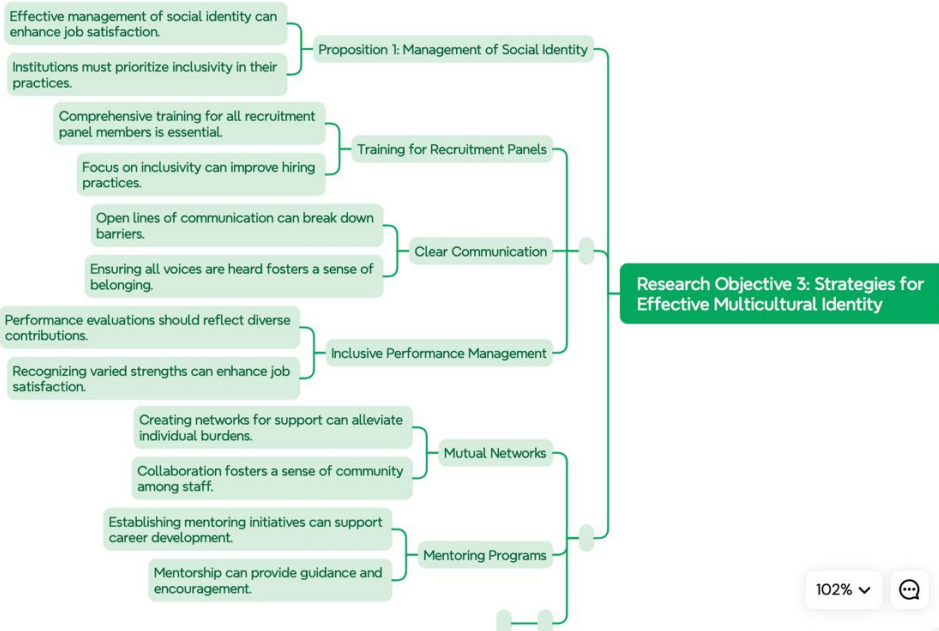
8.7 Appendix G: Data Coding

Research Objective 1: To explore and evaluate the barriers of BAME female academic staff job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector.			
Overarching Theme 1	Organisational Barrier impacts job satisfaction of BAME female academics		
Theme 1:	Subtheme	Code	Quotes
Organisational Barrier	Workload considered as responsibility	Workload	Unfortunately, we don't have enough time to deliver what is required of us. I believe because so many academics work outside working hours . And if you decide to just work for your working hours, you might feel like you don't have enough time.
		Higher job responsibility	So, I am allocated a very small number of hours for research. I can be doing my own paper writing to build out some output which is counted towards the universities research if you know. but due to huge job responsibility teaching and assessing I can't make it. research adds value when someone is going for their promotion, but I can't make it, I don't have any break
		Takes extra workload to prove the worth	We keep on taking responsibilities which again you know , affects our mental health, work life, conflict, stuff like that. So I would say there have been a lot of challenges career wise. You know that at every step I think we need to do double the amount of work as compared to others. We need to you know. Professionally, we have to develop ourselves.
	Sense of Belonging	Not visible enough in the organisation	Trauma that people of colour face working in a white institution, being marginalised, being patronised, and not being visible . OK, you're invisible until something happens and they need someone to play, or if something is failing and they want someone to take the fall for it, then they put your name forward to take on such a project. They won't take those failing projects into their own hands; rather, they will pass them to us so that we can take the blame for the failing project.'
		Employed to fulfil diversity quota	This may cause one to feel both hyper visible and simultaneously invisible. Additionally, some believe ethnic minority academics lack credibility and are solely employed in order to fulfil diversity quotas rather than based on their qualifications
		Not accepted in the organisational culture despite having same skill	There are. There are a number of factors you know I would say. First of all, the acceptance that, OK, from someone from the same background. Has worked so hard and reached some position, but again acceptance by the culture, the organisational culture are missing. Sometimes they are not accepted. Sometimes they are just not being promoted.
	Role models build leadership roles	Leadership position gives the autonomy	Being in a leadership position gave me the liberty to state my opinion . I think with your experience with your education and with everything, you become very confident, you

			know, and it's not that I'm going to take any wrong thing from anyone. So I take a stand, I clarify myself, and I take the challenge and succeed
		Less number of BAME in decision making roles makes the path for other early career academics path tough	This feeling is partially motivated by the fact that there aren't many women in senior roles in my department, and as a person of colour, the lack of female leaders can make the idea of moving up the corporate ladder seem even more frightening.
		Mindset of others about women's ability about Unable to take leadership roles, makes women less competent and cannot handle pressure	The competition is intense, and there are moments when the ongoing challenges wear me down. Being a woman presents its own set of challenges, and when you add race-related differences into the mix, life becomes even more difficult. I have observed some of my colleagues holding a specific mindset that women cannot handle work under pressure. The perception is that we tend to be loud, complain, ask questions, and express ourselves boldly, which unfortunately leads to the assumption that we are less competent and cannot handle pressure

8.8 Appendix H: Mind Map before Theme analysis





8.9 Appendix I: Factors of Social Identity that impact on Job Satisfaction:

Author's Name and Year	Factors related to organisational identification on job satisfaction	Contributions	Research Gap
Ndjama (2020)	Work experience, organisational identification, job level	This study has focused on organisational identification which is influenced by job grade and has greater influence on satisfaction level where age and work experience has not showed any differences.	This study can be further carried on considering ethnic female in the higher education institutes.
Subba (2019)	Organisational identification, peer support, communication	Organisational support and clear communication by managers enhances the organisational identification of employees which influences their job satisfaction.	This study is based on tourism industry, further this can be developed considering UK higher education industry
Valle et al.,(2020)	Procedurals justice, training and development, organisational identification	This study has identify when policy and developments opportunities are discussed fairly by	This study can be carried on UK higher education perspective.

		managers that creates organisational identification of employees and enhances job satisfaction.	
Sameer and Priyadarshi (2020)	Promotion, organisational identification	Organisational identification considered as an important resource of employee development and promotion which impacts on their job satisfaction.	This study is based on public sector, further this study can be developed considering UK higher education.
Wilkins et al., (2017)	Turnover intention, organisational identification, peer support, communication	The study assesses the influences of organisational identification on employee satisfaction, extra-role behaviours and turnover intentions in higher education institutions and they need to implement different human resource strategies to enhance employee satisfaction.	This study can be further develop considering UK higher education sector.
Zagladi et al., (2015)	Unfair treatment, performance, organisational commitment, turnover	This research has identified the capacity of organisational fair treatment which	This research can be carried out on ethnic minority female

		influences lecturer's turnover intention, job satisfaction and power distance.	academician and in the UK perspective.
Arici et al., (2018)	In-group favouritism, policy, status, turnover, unfair treatment	This study examines the effect of favouritism on job embeddedness and the mediating influence of organisational justice dimensions, underpinned by social identity and social exchange theories.	This study is based on hotel employees. Further it can be done on UK higher education perspective concentrating on ethnic minorities.
Jamaludin et al., (2015)	In-group favouritism, policy, status, turnover, unfair treatment	Mainstream work culture influence loyalty and perceived discrimination.	This study has focused on international students, this can be carried on ethnic academics as well.
B. Spalluto et al., (2018)	Un-conscious bias, diversity, culture, well-being.	They have address women faces bias, ensure well-being, and how to cultivate a safe and positive work environment for radiologist.	This study is for all women who are out group, faces different difficulties in the workplace. This study can be carried on female ethnic academics.
Belle et al., (2017)	Unconscious Bias, performance appraisal	Unconscious Bias affect evaluation of ratees performance and mostly females are triggered due to Halo effect	This study can be carried on ethnic female in academic sector.

Wilson (2010)	Unconscious Bias, performance appraisal, out-group, stereotype, culture	This study explored supervisors' explanations for performance ratings assigned to subordinates	This study can be carried on UK higher education sector.
Tekingunduz et al., (2015)	Organisational trust, interpersonal relationship, communication, promotion	The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of the organisational trust dimensions, job satisfaction dimensions, and several personal characteristics on the organisational commitment.	This study can be carried on ethnic female academics in UK higher education perspective.
Bakiev (2013)	Trust, interpersonal relationship, organisation commitment	The results of this study indicate that that interpersonal trust among officers and high level of commitment leads to an increased level of satisfaction.	This study can be carried on ethnic female academics in UK higher education perspective.
A.ensher et al., (2017)	Perceived discrimination, organisational identification, organisational commitment.	Employee perceived discrimination from a variety of sources including supervisors, co-workers, and the organization itself	This study can be carried on ethnic female academics in UK higher education perspective.

		affect their job satisfaction.	
Sawyer et al (2018)	Perceived discrimination, Gender discrimination, work culture	This study tested competing theoretical predictions surrounding the moderating effect of male domination in teams on the relation between women's perceptions of gender discrimination and their job satisfaction	This study can be carried on ethnic female in academic sector.
Ali et al., (2015)	Workplace discrimination, job stress, social class, cultural & religion	The study investigated the impact of workplace discrimination on minority Muslim women.	This study is only focusing on religion and job satisfaction, this study can be carried out on ethnicity.
Choi (2016)	Working environment, status difference, discrimination	This study examines how the racial mixture of the agency affects job satisfaction of racial/ethnic minority and White employees.	This study can be carried on UK higher education perspective.
Arshad (2020)	Unequal Opportunities, pay gap, autonomy, mistreatment, promotion, workplace discrimination	The effect of Gender discrimination in the workplace which influences the job performance and job	This study has only focussed on gender discrimination where ethnic minority group job satisfaction is missing.

		satisfaction in individuals	
Okpara et al., (2005)	Supervision, pay difference, promotion, peer relation, reward	The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of gender on the job satisfaction of US academics.	This study can be carried on UK higher education perspective.
Bobbitt-Zeher (2011)	Gender stereotype, policy, workplace discrimination, cultural difference, structural	The analyses reveal how gender stereotyping combines in predictable ways with sex composition of workplaces and organisational policies, often through interactional dynamics of discretionary policy usage, to result in discrimination.	
Cortland and Kinias (2019)	Peer support, Supervision, role models, gender stereotype	This research explores whether and in what way(s) social support from different workplace sources (role models, formal and informal mentors/sponsors, supportive supervisors, and peer support)	This study has only focused on women of all type, for present research context ethnic minority female are missing.

		benefit and protect women's psychological resilience to disrupt the negative cycle of gender inequity and job satisfaction.	
Settles et al., (2012)	Work environment, mistreatment, gender discrimination,	This study is about gender-based mistreatment where both women and men are impacted by gender discrimination where women are strongly affected.	This study is concentrated in both male female discrimination in the workplace. It can be carried out for minority ethnic female and for UK higher education sector.
Walton et al., (2015)	Trust, workplace environment, stereotype threat	In this study negative workplace environment have been discussed where stereotype threat causes job dissatisfaction and underperformance for all employees where situational cues and strategies have been promoted by authors.	In present research context minority ethnic satisfaction can carried further which is not present in this research.
Hippel et al., (2015)	Workplace environment, job stress, well-being, recruitment and retention, stereotyping	Research demonstrates that stereotype threat among women in management and accounting leads to negative job attitudes	This research is based on finance and accounting sector women. For this research context both ethnic minority and

		and intentions to quit via its effects on identity separation, or the perception that one's gender identity is incompatible with one's work identity	higher education sector is missing which can be carried out in future.
Casad and Bryant (2016)	Job disengagement, performance, mental stress	Effects of stereotype threat beyond test performance and the application of brief, low-cost interventions in the workplace	Ethnic minority is missing in this research.
Hoyt and Murphy (2016)	Leadership, workplace environment, gender stereotype, disengagement, disidentification	The process and implications of stereotype threat for women in leadership.	In the present context, this research can be carried on considering ethnic minority female academics.
Hippel et al., (2011)	Career goal, workplace environment, stereotype threat, social comparison, turnover intention, disengagement, disidentification	The purpose of the current research is to examine stereotype threat as a barrier to women's success in male dominated fields.	In the present context ethnic minority women is missing as well as UK higher education section.

Mayya et al. (2021)	Inequalities in promotion, Support from peers, inadequate sense of achievement, Imposter phenomenon.	The main purpose of this research is to identify the factors influencing the decision of women to take senior leadership positions and further recommendations are provided for the readiness of women to take senior leadership position.	This research has conducted on female leadership, however, BAME female leadership is missing in this research.
Elliot and Blithe (2020)	Work life conflict, peer support, job stress, promotion inequality, rank, limited access to leadership position, working condition.	This study applies stress process theory to analyse inequitable situation, treating gender as a social status in higher education that predicts differential exposure to stressors and access to resources.	This research is about job stress and well-being of the female academics, for current context considering all the contemporary issues in the UK perspective the research can discussed further on barriers faced by BAME female academics.
Bhopal et al (2019)	Exempt from Decision making position, cultural insensitivity.	Effects of mentoring on the career progression of BAME academics in the senior role.	This research only discussed on mentoring and career progression; further focus on satisfaction and opportunities to grow of BAME female academics can be carried out.
Arday (2018)	Work environment and culture, lack of visible BAME senior leaders, recruitment, and inequality in promotion.	Outline the challenges faced by BAME academic staff and recruitment and promotion to leadership opportunities.	This research can be carried out further focusing on the BAME female academicians' job satisfaction considering different barriers that they face in the organisation.
Stockfelt (2018)	White supremacy, lack of visible BAME senior leaders, status quo, contract type, promotion, and progress, misinterpretation of voice	This research has challenged CRT model and highlighted the underrepresentation of Black female academics and the implication of strategies.	Given policy and suggested strategies can be modified as per BAME female academics career progression.

Yousaf and Schmiede (2017)	Cultural and stereotypical believes, masculinity, gender stereotype, status difference, pay less	In the Pakistani higher education system possible barriers for underrepresentation of women has been undermine and comprehensive effects of diminishing discrimination was outlined by suggesting gender equality insights.	The research has not been carried out in the current research context therefore further research can be conducted considering all the contemporary issues in the UK perspective.
Shepherd (2017)	Lack of confidence, opt out of applying the top jobs, inequality in promotion, structural factors	This study is concentrated on women are missing in university executive management team where structural factors are responsible for women underrepresentation.	This study is based on all type of women where ethnicity is missing. Further development can be done on women in colour and their barriers in UK higher education
Mahapatra and Gupta (2013)	Internal external barriers, fewer opportunities for managerial role, less valued member, job autonomy, job stress,	Managerial qualities required as a successful administrators and challenges faced by women as an educational manager in the field the higher education.	This research has only conducted on the context of Indian higher education female managers, it can be further carried on female from different countries.

Source: The Author's View, 2024

Factors that have been identified are given below. Based on this, an interview guide has been prepared, and a semi-structured interviews have been conducted to find out the empirical evidence for this research.

8.10 Appendix J: Factors of Job Satisfaction from the viewpoint of SI

Dependent Variable	All Independent Variables from the literature search	Emerging theme of job satisfaction from the viewpoint of SI
Job Satisfaction	Work experience, organisational identification, job level	Organisational identification
	Organisational identification, peer support, communication	Peer support, communication
	Procedurals justice, training and development, organisational identification	Procedurals justice, training and development
	Promotion, organisational identification	Promotion
	Turnover intention, organisational identification, peer support, communication	Turnover intention
	Unfair treatment, performance, organisational commitment, turnover	Unfair treatment
	In-group favouritism, policy, status, turnover, unfair treatment	In-group favouritism, policy, status or job level
	Un-conscious bias, diversity, culture, well-being.	Un-conscious bias, diversity, culture, well-being.
	Unconscious Bias, performance appraisal	Performance appraisal
	Unconscious Bias, performance appraisal, out-group, stereotype, culture	Out-group, stereotype
	Organisational trust, interpersonal relationship, communication, promotion	Organisational trust, interpersonal relationship
	Trust, interpersonal relationship, organisation commitment	Organisation commitment
	Perceived discrimination, organisational identification, organisational commitment.	
	Perceived discrimination, Gender discrimination, work culture	Gender discrimination
	Workplace discrimination, job stress, social class, cultural & religion	Workplace discrimination, job stress, social class
	Working environment, status difference, discrimination	
	Unequal Opportunities, pay gap, autonomy, mistreatment, promotion, workplace discrimination	Unequal Opportunities, pay gap, autonomy, mistreatment
	Supervision, pay difference, promotion, peer relation, reward	Supervision, reward
	Gender stereotype, policy, workplace discrimination, cultural difference, structural	
	Peer support, Supervision, role models, gender stereotype	Role models

	Work environment, mistreatment, gender discrimination	
	Trust, workplace environment, stereotype threat	
	Workplace environment, job stress, well-being, recruitment and retention, stereotyping	Job stress, recruitment and retention.
	Job disengagement, performance, mental stress	Job disengagement
	Leadership, workplace environment, gender stereotype, disengagement, disidentification	Leadership
	Career goal, workplace environment, stereotype threat, social comparison, turnover intention, disengagement, disidentification	Career goal
	Policy, inclusive leadership, fair recruitment and selection, psychological diversity	
	Psychological diversity, emotional stability, equal reward, and benefit, recruitment, and selection	
	Cultural diversity, emotional stability, peer relation, working condition	
	Well-being, working environment, earning and promotion, policy, peer relation, communication, performance evaluation	
	Communication, diversity, value	Value of employee voice/voice
	Policy, diversity value, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal	
	Inequalities in promotion, Support from peers, inadequate sense of achievement, Imposter phenomenon	Inadequate sense of achievement, Imposter phenomenon
	Work life conflict, peer support, job stress, promotion inequality, rank, limited access to leadership position, working condition.	Work life conflict
	Exempt from Decision making position, cultural insensitivity.	Decision making position
	Work environment and culture, lack of visible BAME senior leaders, recruitment, and inequality in promotion.	
	White supremacy, lack of visible BAME senior leaders, status quo, contract type, promotion, and progress, misinterpretation of voice	White supremacy, contract type

	Cultural and stereotypical believes, masculinity, gender stereotype, status difference, pay less	
	Lack of confidence, opt out of applying the top jobs, inequality in promotion, structural factors	Opt out of applying the top jobs
	Internal external barriers, fewer opportunities for managerial role, less valued member, job autonomy, job stress	job autonomy

Source: The Author's View, 2024

Based on the above table, following are the key factors and their sub-factors that impact on job satisfaction:

First, In-group Favouritism:

Unconscious bias, perceived discrimination, unfair treatment, Leadership, Social Class, Organisational trust, interpersonal relationship, status or job level, Peer support, communication,

Second, Barriers:

Structural, gender stereotype, Decision making position, Work life conflict, Inadequate sense of achievement/ incompatible perception of leadership, Imposter phenomenon, Job stress, supervision, imbalance representation/ role model

Third, Out-group Derogation:

Prejudice, Opt out of applying the top jobs, job autonomy, White supremacy, contract type, Value of employee, Job disengagement, Unequal Opportunities, mistreatment, Workplace discrimination, Gender discrimination, stereotype, Turnover intention, pay gap

Fourth, Multicultural Social Identity:

Fair performance evaluation, equal benefits, organisational identity, policy, recruitment selection, wellbeing, Career goal, reward, diversity, culture, well-being, Procedurals justice, training and development,

Fifth, Job satisfaction:

Higher performance, promotion, support, positive feedback, Organisation commitment,

The following table shows that propositions against the research objectives:

8.11 Appendix K: Research objectives and Propositions

Research Objective (RO)	Proposition
RO 1. To explore and evaluate the barriers of BAME female academic staff in the UK higher education sector.	Proposition 5: Barriers related to social identity are mainly responsible for employee dis-satisfaction.
RO 2. To evaluate causal nexus of imbalanced representation and BAME female staff job satisfaction in the UK higher education sector.	Proposition 3: Out-group Derogation causes dis-satisfaction Proposition 2: In-group favoritism is responsible for job dis-satisfaction by the minor group of employees.
RO 3. To analyse and evaluate the strategies to build up effective multi-cultural social identity in order to ensure job satisfaction.	Proposition 1: Effective management of social identity ensures job satisfaction
RO 4. To evaluate the impact of multicultural social identity on BAME female academic staff in the UK higher education sector	Proposition 4: Effective multicultural organisation ensures higher job satisfaction for the minor group of employees.

Source: The Author's View, 2024

8.12 Appendix L: Sample of Interview Transcript

Questionnaire on

The impact of Social Identity on Job Satisfaction by BAME Female Academics in the UK Higher Education Sector

This research to investigate the impact of Social Identity on BAME female academic employees' job satisfaction in the context of the UK Higher Education Sector. In order to conduct the study, the researcher needs to gather information from UK higher education institutes. More particularly, the researcher needs to gather information on how In-group favouritism and out-group derogation influences job satisfaction of BAME female academics.

In addition, how women from minority groups being treated due to different social identity and finally the impact of multicultural social identity will be the centre of this research.

Confidentiality

Interview will be recorded, and I would request your permission to continue. The gathered information will be used only to meet the research aim and objectives and will not be used in any other purpose. The interview information will be kept confidential, your information will remain fully anonymous and will not be disclose to anyone and in any case, it will not be handed over to the third parties. Moreover, research ethics has been reviewed by the London Metropolitan University's Research ethics team to maintain the confidentiality. Finally, I will not mention your name anywhere in my research and I will not give any clue to anyone by which others can identify you.

Section 1

Interview Questionnaire

There are 8 questions. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes

1. When did you start working in this organisation?

OK, I have been in this organisation for the last 13 years. Moreover, before that, I was born and raised in Pakistan. Yeah, I was teaching at a famous higher education institute in Pakistan. Then, I came here on a scholarship to pursue my master's, and after completing my master's, you know, I was offered to join as a part-time lecturer because I had teaching experience from the same institute. Moreover, from there, I started. So, I started as a part-time lecturer. Then you know, I am a lecturer, senior lecturer, and associate professor.

Follow-up questions

a. Could you please share your career journey?

I was already in the profession of teaching. So, after coming here, and you know, things are very different. Cultures are different from our country's coming here. The way we teach here is different from other countries' cultures as well, so I have that passion for teaching, and I think that was the main reason that I continued in that.

b. What are your primary job responsibilities?

You know, job responsibilities have changed with your experience and time increased. Well, once I started working, I was an associate lecturer, or we used to say hourly paid lecturer. HL's at that time. So it was, you know, the modules that had to be taught and everything. So I started with that. Later on, once I had joined full-time as a lecturer, I would have been the module

leader for different modules across all levels. In between, side by side, I started doing my PhD, which was not that easy because once you are studying, you are working. I am a single parent. As well, so things become more challenging. They become difficult.

2. What are some of the challenges academics faces?

One of the challenges is that, as I have said, we are tuned to specific ways culturally, and it is sometimes hard to say no. If you are given a task, you would say, " OK, I will manage, I will do. That becomes challenging at times. You know, and then. If you are doing much work, people give you more work, So those are the things I find challenging now because, you know, I am responsible for different two or three areas, but again, there are some more responsibilities that you know they want you to take. Then you are at that level that you think is OK. If I do it, it might also help me in your progression. So you are taking on much stuff, which becomes difficult for you to manage and challenging. You know work-life conflict is there. Then, your workload is affected.

These are times when, you know, I thought that I was working so hard, and the reward or recognition I should get or the promotion I should be getting is not coming to my side. Moreover, I applied for various, you know, promotion roles. Moreover, for one of them, I was denied as well. I was not selected, but I did not leave it at that and got demotivated. I took the feedback and tried to improve my qualifications; I am a senior. Fellows of higher education are one of the requirements for promotion and everything, and based on that, you know, it is not that you leave things at that level. We have to fight, and especially for women from the BAME background, we have to have that stress. To face the challenges we face is another thing. However, addressing them is essential.

Follow-up questions

- a. Being a part of a minority group, what challenges do you face at work?

Thus, especially for females, at times in the start, networking seemed very difficult. You know for me as well because, in our culture, I am from Pakistan. You know that networking was missing. You have a very formal relationship with your work colleague. You were saying hello.

Hi, nothing more. However, here, things are different. Now, this is it; it goes both ways. There are certain things that we might have put limitations in our culture that, OK, we cannot go beyond that. We cannot do that, but once you come to a different culture, you must also be adaptable. That is important, and secondly, the acceptance level from the other side needs to be there, no matter how open you are or how good you are at networking.

b. Have you ever been treated differently due to your ethnicity at work?

Yeah, and that is the that has been happening for a long time, and it is still happening, you know, on the face of things, we might say we accept them, we accept who they are, but somewhere down, and that is why, you know, you see very few females in higher positions, from game background. Because till then, they are working like donkeys, and you know, at the lecturer level or senior lecturer level, they are being appreciated. However, once it comes to promotion, it mostly goes to white people. Well, that there is hidden this.

c. What factors motivate you to continue working at this institution?

I do not hide that I have just landed on some planet like this. I think, and you know, I get a lot of comments and appreciation because you see very few people going that route, and then you become an inspiration for others. I think that is a big motivation. Secondly, I have two daughters as well. They look forward to me and have seen me working very hard to reach those positions. I think that is. A big motivation. And then another big motivation. There are my students as well. You know. You get the feedback there, and then you see them. You learn from them. So I think these are the main things I am in this profession.

3. Please tell me about your colleagues from different backgrounds.

OK. It would be around. Generally, I am saying it might be 30% from BAME or ethnic backgrounds and 70% White.

Follow-up questions:

a. How is your relationship with them? Please share any experience that you do not like. Now, this is an exciting aspect. I try to be as peaceful and calm as possible, but if things turn that way, then I. However, that does not mean I will cause chaos; I do not want any argument.

With your experience, your education, and everything, you will become very confident, you know, and it's not that I'm going to take any wrong thing from anyone. So I take a stand, I clarify myself, and that. That is it.

Each, but when you started your career here, like your academic journey, you were very like you were what you were on 25 or 27 or not more than that at that time. If someone blamed you directly, we had. I do not have that courage. Like what? I do not dare to face them. However, after I go to your place, like after 13 or 14 years, I will gather that confidence. Right? So, what did you do at that age in the very initial periods?

Are they your boss? Are they your colleagues? You have to see how you tackle it. But you're right: It becomes stressful once you are not in a strong position to defend yourself.

b. How do you keep yourself motivated while working with a majority group?

OK, I think you know. With time, you have that professional competency; you gain that confidence. You gain your position, and then you know you are in a position where you can make choices. At times, you know, you have joined the institute once you were initially. You need to learn about the system. You do not know about the people, but the passage of time. Things change now. I know my colleagues. They know me, and things are things. Work well. Most importantly, I see myself as a role model for other women, especially those from BAME communities. I've got a number of students, and the important thing is that I share my journey and my story with them.

c. How can teamwork and cooperation be improved with both in-group and out-group members?

The most important thing is transparency. If we are transparent in our accounts or what we do, and there is clear communication, things go right. OK. But again, you know, there is a tendency, if we see it anywhere, for people from the same culture to group together.

d. What do you think about mutual groups? Do these groups can reduce some of the challenges?

Well, I am part of different committees as well. We have the BAME representation committee and the Brown girls' events. We do that. So, I mean different groups within the university who have a BAME background. They arrange awareness sessions, workshops, and lunches to share the experiences of others. One point is that at least you can release your frustration by talking. To each other. OK. However, the other thing is that you know, in certain things, it is being

communicated because I will give you an example. I was in this baim group meeting yesterday, and the Vice Chancellor was there. Thus, I shared the views and comments I had in mind, which were one of the main things. I shared was. However, sometimes, once the beaming star progresses, they are promoted.

4. What are some of your experiences regarding overall job satisfaction at your organisation?

Follow-up question

- a. What are the non-financial benefits you are getting from your organisation?

You know, we are human beings and are never satisfied with whatever we have. We want more and more. OK. However, you know, job satisfaction comes from various sources. It is not only one thing: if I say, OK, if my pay were this much, I would be satisfied with financial benefits. I do not know. Honestly, it is just the working environment, your colleagues. You know, the resources you sometimes get for the laptops and stuff like that for work purposes, but they are all these things. There is nothing major that I say that it is the.

- b. Any benefit related to your growth, such as research funding or attending conferences?

It depends on how good your research is, so I get some hours, and with that, I mean there is some funding available up to £1000. That I can use? I mean, I have, but the processes are so long. For example, if one of my papers gets selected for a conference, I can apply for that funding. So yeah. No, it is not available to everyone. You have to be. It would help if you had some publications. It would help if you were an early career researcher. You need to. Apply for research hours first. If you have the research hours, you are eligible for funding.

Now, this is interesting. You know, some opportunities can be availed of, but again, once you apply for specific courses or certain things, females from a male background might be denied those once or twice, and a third time, they might get it.

Well, you know, research hours and location are determined relatively based on your publication and stuff, but at times, I feel there is more networking because of knowing the right people. They get to know about the opportunities more quickly than we do.

5. How do you think Higher Education Institutions can attract more diverse academics?

Well, you know our institute. It focuses on diversity, inclusion, racial equality, and all the good initiatives. However, at times, you do think about the overall culture. UM. Alternatively, the perception of people is that it takes much time to change. The organisational culture or how people perceive other people. You know that that has been the case at times; you know the environment is very inclusive, but at times, individual experiences have been like this, so you feel discriminated against.

Follow-up question:

- a. What are the shortfalls of present cultural practices in your institution? Could you suggest a few guidelines to improve them?

You know, rules and laws are there. Now, how much are they followed? That depends, you know. Moreover, as you have said yourself, you know this unconscious bias stuff like that. So, no matter the rules and regulations, people discriminate against you in specific ways. They have been painful. You at the same time. So, for example, even for promotion, you apply once and twice and are just thinking, OK, what was the reason? What? What am I lacking? So, there is no apparent reason. You know, so yeah, those things are still there. So, legally, they should not be there. Alternatively, morally, they should not be there. But. They still exist to a certain point.

6. How does job satisfaction impact efficiency and effectiveness in the workplace? Can you please explain

Absolutely. Absolutely. Moreover, I have counted several factors before as well. Your working environment, your colleagues, your pay, the resources that you get—all these, you know, and again, your workload. OK, it all affects your job satisfaction.

Follow-up questions:

a. When did you get a promotion? When was your last performance appraisal? Did you receive any feedback from your supervisor on the appraisal? How do you get recognition from your organisation for your hard work?

You know it is. The appraisal process in our institute is just like a tick box active. OK, they give us specific objectives for the university strategy. According to the university strategy, they come up with some objectives, and then we can add one or two of our objectives. OK, by next year, I will publish a book chapter or an article. That is my object. Otherwise, you know that increasing student numbers improves student performance. Those are the sort of. These objectives we all work towards. So what I think at times is for us, it is not based on any bonus system or how well you are doing that. You receive some extra reward or recognition. It is just a thing, folks activity once a year to go through that process, which I am not satisfied with, and I have raised many times. So let us see if change happens.

b. Is the present performance evaluation system fair enough for all? Do you have any suggestions for improving it?

Moreover, the second thing they say is, thank you for all your hard work, OK? Moreover, that is not enough. Thank you. It is not enough. It would help to recognise the people working hard and providing good results for NSS because you know the nation. Student survey: I deal with that. As well, and it has been. It is perfect for for me. Course. So I have been tracking every meeting, you know, for years and well done. We appreciate your hard work, but sometimes you. You have to go beyond. Appreciation, you know. This promotion thing takes much time, but I think some type of. Financial reward or, you know, flexibility in your world. That, that, that needs to be given.

c. How does supervisors' cooperation help an employee to be promoted?

No, I mean my, you know, my line manager. He is very helpful. He's very supportive. It's not. We are doing an extra amount of work, but at the same time, if something goes wrong or we are not well or something, the line manager is very accommodative, you know, so that makes you work even harder if your live manager is supportive.

7. Why do you think BAME female representation is less in the UK Higher Education sector?

If you look at the BAME representation, it is notably lower than you can think. There are certain things you need to consider when you talk about representation. The structure of the HEI is built in such a way that BAME female academics will automatically get left out of the decision-making roles. Moreover, people like to see masculinity in decision-making roles, and sometimes, family responsibility often creates problems in reaching this position.

When at work, you know, proving yourself. Moreover, sometimes I see that women of colour or from BAME backgrounds have to do 200 times the work. To show our worth or to prove our credibility. At the same time, we sometimes find it difficult to say no to a person if we are being asked to do certain things. We keep on taking responsibilities which, again, you know, affects our mental health, work life, conflict, stuff like that. So, there have been many challenges career-wise. You know that we need to do double the work we do at every step compared to others. We need you to know. Professionally, we have to develop ourselves. That is very important as well. Knowing your credibility is very challenging.

Thus, especially for females, at times in the start, networking seemed very difficult. You know me as well because, in our culture, I am from Pakistan. Culture. You know that networking was missing. You have a very formal relationship with your work colleague. We were saying hello. Hi, nothing more. However, here, things are different. So, do you think this is from our side? This is lacking because we are not connecting or giving any scope to be connected.

Follow-up question

- a. As a higher education institution, how does your organisation support ethnic minority women securing leadership positions?

I have also done women's leadership programmes, including the Arora Women Leadership programme. I have done that. I have been a member of the Athena Swan for the university, which caters to gender equality. I have presented at different conferences as well. However, you know what I feel is that leadership training is primarily designed for white backgrounds; if it is made by considering diverse backgrounds, it will be more beneficial.

8. What are the main barriers for BAME female academics in HEI?

Being a female academic now, you know that you face different challenges at every step or phase of your career. You know, the first of the most critical challenges is if you are coming from a different culture to a new culture, adjusting to the new one. That in itself is a challenge. Or in this thing. So, job satisfaction has different variants and different factors related to it. Again, if your workload is very high. You do not feel satisfied with your work. If you are on good terms with your colleagues, you are satisfied with your job. The working environment could be more comfortable. That affects your job satisfaction. If you think you are working more than some other White colleague and are being paid less. Moreover, that affects job satisfaction. So there have been several because I am talking about a span of 13 years.

There are. There are several factors. First of all, the acceptance that, OK, from someone from the same background. He has worked hard and reached some positions, but again, he is accepted by the organisational culture. Sometimes, they are not accepted. Sometimes, they need to be promoted. They are used as associate lecturers.

Moreover, I think the barriers come from some mental barriers as well. We are very inclusive. They are very diverse. However, I think if your management is all white, then it might impact how other people are treated. We are a diverse institute, but we are not practising it. That is lacking, but again, I think there are—more competent people. You have to fight for your rights as well and rights, so that is important.

Moreover, that discourages you at times. Well, because you think. OK, compared to the other White colleagues I have been here for a long time, I have the same qualifications. So why not me? So I am I am. I am just thinking, so these are some things you know we have opportunities, but we have to work hard for them. We have to apply for them again and again. We have to talk to our line manager. Even if the managers are supportive, things are so bureaucratic and hierarchical that somewhere you know there is a stoppage point. Barriers are that, at times, people do not see their credibility. People are judgmental. OK, against specific backgrounds, people also have certain perceptions that they are not. Ready to change? So I mean, those are the things mainly from the other side, but for being academics, I would say you. Know if you are hard-working. If you are competent, you must learn to fight for your rights at some stage, which is essential.

.....The End.....