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Enhancing Diversity & Inclusion in Paramedic Education: exploring educator and learner perspectives on asset-based initiatives

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Introduction

Ethnic minorities are **underrepresented** among UK paramedics.

Their numbers are **significantly lower** than in other allied healthcare professions.

Median proportion of non-White staff in English Ambulance Services (2019): **3.6% (range: 1.5 – 15.5%)**

13% of accepted offers to paramedic courses (2023 UCAS data) are from non-White applicants.

This disparity is not reflective of the diverse population the NHS serves, **lagging behind national diversity levels – ~19%** (ONS, 2022)

NHS – National Health Service

Educational Disparities & Challenges

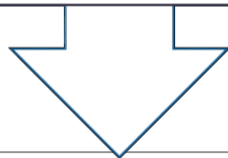
Ethnic minority students face unique challenges

(Mahmud and Gagnon 2023)

Cultural Isolation

Discrimination

**Lack of representation
among educators and peers**



These factors can negatively impact their academic attainment and overall educational experience

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

Traditional Approach

- Often **deficit-based**, focusing on **limitations** and **barriers** faced by ethnic minority students.
- Can **reinforce stereotypes** and overlook students' strengths and resilience (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Asset-Based Approach

- Emphasises **strengths**, **resources** and existing **assets**.
- Promotes **agency** and creates environments where students can **thrive**.

Aim



To explore paramedic educators' and learners' views on the profession's lack of diversity and the use of the ABCD framework (**barriers/facilitators**) to engage and empower ethnic minority students.



The study adopts a strengths-based approach, recognising and leveraging students' skills and resources.



Methods



STUDY DESIGN:
EXPLORATORY
MIXED METHODS



ONLINE SURVEY:
225 PARAMEDIC
LEARNERS



**SEMI-
STRUCTURED
INTERVIEWS:** 7
PARAMEDIC
EDUCATORS



FOCUS GROUP: 4
ETHNIC MINORITY
STUDENTS



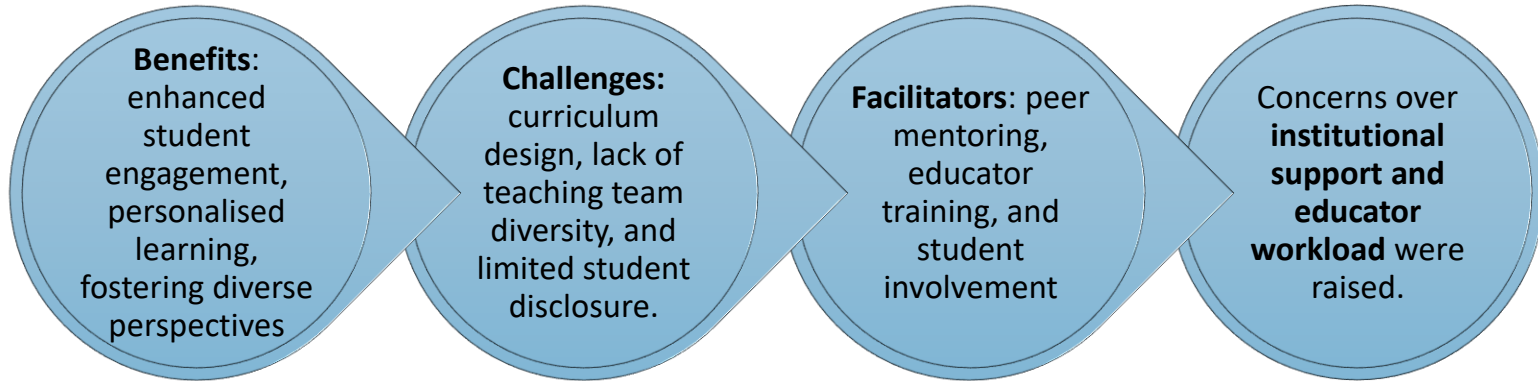
WORKSHOP: 36
THIRD-YEAR
PARAMEDIC
STUDENTS

Results

Educators were predominantly young (57.1% aged 25–34), White Caucasian (85.7%), male (57.1%) and born in the UK (71.4%)

43% had 1–2 years of teaching experience.

Majority reported **unknowingly** applying elements of the **ABCD** approach in their practices.



"Staff members may feel overwhelmed without proper assistance."

Results

Paramedic students were young (82% aged 18-24), female (79.6%) and White Caucasian (78.7%)

Most respondents were born in the UK (91.6%) and spoke English as their first language (93.3%)

21.8% spoke at least one additional language

57% identified as non-religious, with Christians making up 26.7%. Muslims (11.6%); Hindus (1.3%), and Sikhs (0.4%)

Most cited key barriers contributing to lack of diversity were **limited outreach**, **lack of role models** and **cultural factors**

Discrimination was witnessed by ~15% of respondents

~5% felt the profession's lack of diversity affected their decision to enrol.

Although awareness of asset-based approaches was low (6.6%), 67.9% believe they could benefit ethnically diverse students.

Results

4 themes & several sub-themes were derived from the learners' qualitative data

1. Lack of representation and cultural isolation:

1.1 Feelings of Isolation; 1.2 Family Influence and Expectations

"I felt scared because I did not see anyone who looked like me, wearing a hijab."

"My family had reservations about me pursuing a career as a paramedic because they perceived it as a masculine profession and were worried about potential Islamophobia and racism."

2 Cultural/Religious Sensitivity in Placements:

2.1 Navigating Patient Interactions; 2.2 Experiences of Discrimination and Verbal Abuse

"I faced comments about my religious attire and racially charged remarks from patients during placements."

3. Support and Inclusivity in Academic Environments:

3.1 Importance of Supportive Academic Environment & Peer Networks; 3.2 Need for Systemic Changes

"The support from faculty members and peer networks was crucial in mitigating the challenges we faced."

"It's not just about one lecture on inclusion – the whole system needs to change, from how we're recruited to how we're supported on placement."

4. Practical Challenges and Solutions:

4.1 Logistics & Admin Barriers to cultural holidays; 4.2 Improving Practical Training and Preparation

"It feels like cultural or religious needs are seen as an inconvenience, like we're asking for special treatment."

"There's no clear process to request cultural leave (...)"

"More frequent practical sessions can better prepare us for placements and create a supportive learning community."

Conclusion



Culturally responsive teaching and support could improve Minority Ethnic students' attainment and retention.



ABCD framework has the potential to foster inclusivity by leveraging student strengths, peer mentoring, educator training and diverse role models.



The success of the ABCD approach relies on **institutions' commitments** to diversity and equity



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THANK YOU

Research Team



Widening access and improving retention and career progression into the Paramedic Profession for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups within the West Midlands

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