

Higher education as the pathway to personal and community success for Pakistani and Bangladeshi people: A systematic review

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The United Kingdom's (UK) goal of a 20% increase in participation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups in higher education (HE) by 2020 has not been met. Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are some of the most underrepresented BAME groups in UK HE institutions. This systematic review included 20 papers that identified barriers and facilitators towards participation in HE separately for Pakistani and Bangladeshi students in the UK. Using thematic analysis, two overarching themes were constructed: (i) the interplay of culturally expected roles on HE participation and (ii) belief that HE is vital for success. This review identified the importance of role models to challenge cultural values that restrict women from participating in HE. Many parents and children viewed HE as a route to personal and community success. The findings support the relevancy of social learning theory in driving change for models of widening participation.

Keywords: widening participation; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; higher education; systematic review

Introduction

Access to higher education (HE) should be a fundamental right for everyone regardless of ethnicity, race, gender or religion. In the United Kingdom (UK), Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is an umbrella term to define ethnic minority groups who are not White (Advance HE 2020). This term includes several ethnic subgroups such as people with ancestry from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and China who form the majority of the 'Asian' group in the UK (ONS 2011). The number of people in the UK who identify as Bangladeshi or Pakistani increased rapidly from 2001 to 2011 with Pakistanis being the second largest ethnic minority group in the UK (ONS 2011).

The current widening participation policy in HE in England encompasses the entire HE lifecycle; from increasing access to HE, progression during HE and progression into employment or further study for students from underrepresented groups (Connell-Smith and Hubble 2018). Underrepresented groups in HE includes those from low-income households, mature students, students with a disability and some ethnic minority groups (Connell-Smith and Hubble 2018). This systematic review explores the factors impacting access to HE for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. In 2015, the UK Government set a target of a 20% increase in HE participation rates of BAME groups by 2020 which subsequently has not been met (Connell-Smith and Hubble 2018). The UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA 2021) reported a 5% increase in BAME students enrolled on their first degree since 2015/16. This was likely impacted by the lack of attention of widening participation policies to the interplay of disadvantages experienced by BAME groups.

Amalgamated, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have been found to have higher HE participation rates (53%) than the White British group (36%) but lower than the Black (amalgamated; 57%) and Indian (72%) groups (Allen, Parameshwaran, and Thomson 2016).

However, when analysed separately, Pakistanis (56.5%) are less likely to progress to HE than Bangladeshis (64.9%) at all HE institutions by age 19 (Hubble, Bolton, and Lewis 2021). Reasons for combining ethnic groups for analysis include small sample sizes and preliminary identification of similar rates of HE applications (Boliver 2013). Thus, it is often difficult in the literature to differentiate the HE participation decision between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Whilst Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups share a similar religious-cultural background, these groups may not hold the same values or attitudes towards HE participation (Singh 2011). Thus, this systematic review will examine papers reporting findings on Pakistani and Bangladeshi students separately to enable the identification of factors specific to each group before any comparisons are made.

The underrepresentation of Pakistani and Bangladeshi students in HE has been associated with low levels of attainment for HE entrance (A-level), admission bias, parental expectations and cultural values (Shiner and Modood 2002; Dale et al. 2002; Bagguley and Hussain 2007, 2016). Pakistani and Bangladeshi students tend to have lower attainment at A-level (HE entrance) than White British students (Department for Education 2017). A study examining admissions rates in HE by ethnicity found that after controlling for academic performance, Pakistani but not Bangladeshi applicants had significantly lower admission rates to White applicants (Shiner and Modood 2002). Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents report high expectations for their children to secure a career in medicine, law or engineering despite conflicting career desires of the children (Dale et al. 2002; Bagguley and Hussain 2007; Shah, Dwyer, and Modood 2010). High expectations from parents are hindered by their lack of knowledge of the HE system and for the children are hindered by the high entry requirements required for these degree programmes (Dale et al. 2002; Bagguley and Hussain 2007; Ghaffar and Stevenson 2018).

One systematic review focussed on factors that facilitate the participation of BAME groups in HE in the UK from 1997–2007 (See et al. 2011). The findings demonstrated that factors such as family, individual aspirations, peers, school, government policy and institutional practices in HE influenced the likelihood of BAME student participation in post-16 years old education. The present systematic review expands on the search period from the See and colleagues (2011) systematic review to provide an updated summary of the widening participation literature. The previous review disaggregated the BAME category where possible but included some studies which amalgamated Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The present systematic review aimed to identify barriers and facilitators for participation in HE separately for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups in the UK.

Method

Search strategy and information sources

In consultation with the library officer, the first author developed key words and identified the most frequently accessed educational and psychological research databases (Figure 1). The databases were searched in January 2018 (updated search February 2020) and additional papers were identified through searching the reference list of relevant papers. The core search terms generated through a scoping exercise of the databases are detailed in Figure 1.

Eligibility criteria

This review included papers that identified barriers and/or facilitators towards participation in HE for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups in the UK. To be included, papers had to be (i) peer reviewed, (ii) UK based, (iii) published in English and (iv) published between January 2007 and February 2020. The search period was selected to provide evidence subsequent to the last known systematic review of research from 1997 to 2007 (See et al. 2011). After a scoping exercise, it was decided that no restriction would be placed on participant age as some barriers

were not age specific. Papers were excluded if data could not be identified for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups separately.

Quality assurance

Cohen's kappa (κ) was used to assess the inter-rater reliability between the first and second authors decisions in each of the quality assurance and quality analysis stages. A value of 0–0.20 indicates no agreement, 0.21–0.39 as minimal, 0.40–0.59 as weak, 0.60–0.79 as moderate (considerable), 0.80–0.90 as strong (substantial) and 0.90–1.00 as almost perfect agreement (McHugh 2012). Two authors independently screened all titles and abstracts against the eligibility criteria. There was substantial agreement between authors, $\kappa = 0.84$ (95% CI, 0.794 to 0.883), $p < 0.001$, with full consensus reached through discussion. At this stage, 10% of the excluded papers were selected using a random number generator and independently screened by the fourth author with 97.4% agreement then full consensus reached through discussion. Independently two authors screened the full texts against the eligibility criteria. There was considerable agreement between authors, $\kappa = 0.71$ (95% CI, 0.549 to 0.871), $p < 0.001$, with full consensus reached through discussion. Again, 10% of the excluded papers at this stage were selected using a random number generator and independently screened by the fourth author with 93.3% agreement then full consensus reached through discussion. All included papers were independently screened by the fourth author with 95.2% agreement then full consensus reached through discussion.

Databases: Australian Education Index, British Education Index, Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson), Education Administration Abstracts, ERIC, Humanities International Complete, PsycINFO and Web of Science Core Collection

Keywords: "Ethnic Minority Group" OR "Ethnic Minority Groups" OR BME OR "Ethnic Minority" OR "Ethnic Minorities" OR Asian* OR "South Asian" OR "South Asians" OR Pakistani OR Pakistanis OR Bangladeshi OR Bengali OR Bengalis OR "Black and Minority Ethnic" OR BAME AND University OR Education OR "Higher Education" OR "Higher-Education" OR "Higher Education Initial Participation Rates" OR HEIPR OR "Post 16" OR "Post-16" OR "Post Compulsory Education" OR College AND Participation OR "Entry Rate" OR Entry OR Transition OR Admission OR Enrolment AND Student OR Adolescen* OR Young* OR Youth* OR Teen*

Date: January 2007 – February 2020. **Search Mode:** advanced or Boolean/phrase

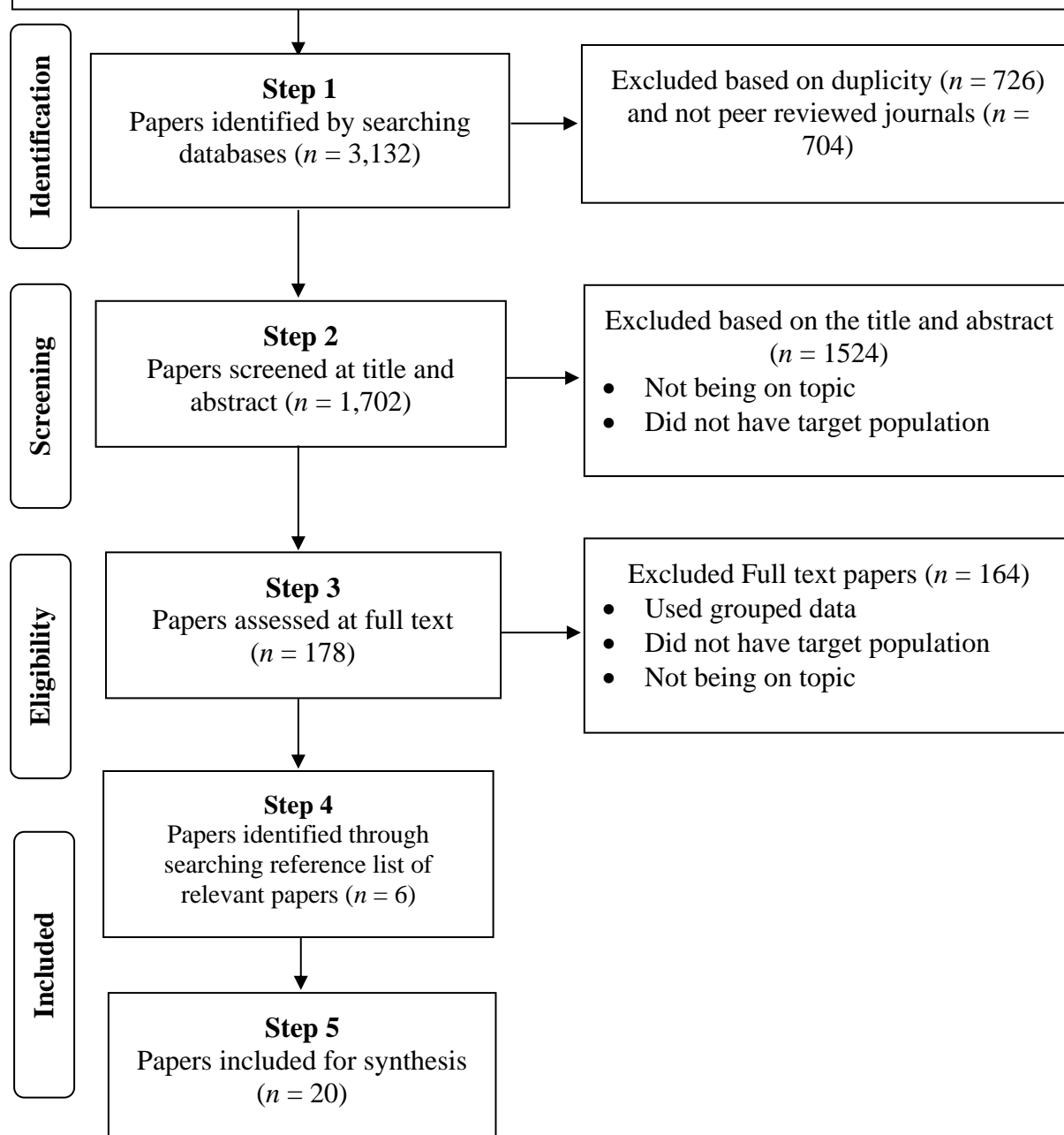


Figure 1. Study selection process

Quality analysis

Two authors independently rated all the papers using the standardised critical appraisal skills programme (CASP) to assess the interpretive rigour and quality of included papers (CASP 2018a, 2018b). The qualitative checklist was used for the qualitative papers (CASP 2018a; Table 1) and the cohort study checklist was used for the quantitative papers (CASP 2018b; Table 2). Two qualitative papers were rated as moderate quality and eight as strong quality. There was weak agreement between the authors, $\kappa = 0.59$ (95% CI, 0.435 to 0.746), $p < 0.001$, with full consensus reached through discussion. Three quantitative papers were rated as moderate quality and seven as strong quality. There was weak agreement between the authors, $\kappa = 0.56$ (95% CI, 0.413 to 0.707), $p < 0.001$, with consensus reached through discussion. All included papers were rated as moderate or strong quality respectively, thus, no papers were removed.

Table 1. Quality analysis of qualitative papers design using the CASP qualitative checklist (CASP, 2018)

Paper (P)	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9 MM	P10 MM
1. Clear statement of research	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2. Qualitative methodology appropriate	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3. Research design appropriate for aims	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4. Recruitment strategy appropriate for aims	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
5. Data collection addresses research issue	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
6. Researcher-participant relationship considered	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
7. Ethical consideration accounted for	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
8. Rigorous data analysis	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
9. Clear statement of findings	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Overall score	7	9	7	5	7	9	7	7	4	8

Mixed method (MM). Scoring: weak 1-3, moderate 4-6, strong 7-9. Yes = +1, No/Can't Tell = 0

Table 2. Quality analysis of quantitative papers design using the CASP cohort study checklist (CASP, 2018)

Paper (P)	P11 MM	P12	P13	P14	P15	P16	P17	P18	P19	P20
1. Clear focussed issue	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2. Cohort recruited in an acceptable way	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3. Exposure accurately measured to minimise bias	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
4. Outcome accurately measured to minimise bias	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
5A. Identified important confounder variables	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5
5B. Confounder variables taken into account	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5
6A. Subject follow up complete enough	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
6B. Subject follow up long enough	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
7. Results believable	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
8. Results applied to local population	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
9. Supported evidence	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
10. Implications of study	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Overall score	8	7	10	7	7	10	9.5	8	8	10

Mixed method (MM). Scoring: weak 1-4, moderate 5-7, strong 8-10. Yes = +1, No/Can't Tell = 0, A/B = 0.5 (scores not rounded up)

Synthesis

A convergent mixed methods design was applied to synthesise the included papers as it allowed for all methods and findings to be integrated in a qualitative manner (Pluye and Hong 2014). The 20 papers were synthesised following an adaptation of the six stages of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). The first and third author independently read each paper several times, taking care to identify data that was relevant to the research question, namely similar patterns (quantitative papers as suggested by Pluye and Hong (2014) and themes (qualitative papers) capturing data relating to barriers or facilitators towards participation in HE (stages one to three). Only data that was identifiable distinctly to the Pakistani or Bangladeshi groups were included. Authors in P1 (paper 1), P3 and P4 were contacted as it was unclear whether some

findings as presented in the papers applied to both Pakistanis and Bangladeshis or separately. The first and third author discussed their initial patterns and themes in the papers focussing on similarities and differences to generate themes and subthemes to adequately synthesis the finding of the individual papers (stage four). Through further discussion, the first, third and fourth author developed and refined themes that they felt adequately synthesised the findings relating to the research question (stage five). At this stage, if themes did not fit across the data or answer the research question then they were discarded. The themes were then written up with input from the wider research team (stage six).

The first author is a second-generation British Pakistani Muslim, the second, third and fifth authors are White British, and the fourth author is White Australian. The first two authors are male and the other three are female. The first two authors and the fourth author were involved in the paper selection process but not the third and fifth author. The first two authors independently used an eligibility criteria checklist to screen all papers (see quality assurance) and the CASP checklists to appraise papers (see quality analysis) with papers independently screened by a fourth author. Thus, minimising bias in the selection process. Cohen's kappa shows the reliability of the selection process. For the data analysis stage, the first, third and fourth author were involved but not the second and fifth author. Using broad ethnic groupings (South Asian), the first author occupied insider positioning with Pakistani Muslims and to a lesser extent with Bangladeshi Muslims. The first author's lived experience enabled him to understand the nuances of the cultural and religious experiences reported in the papers. Positioned as an outsider in relation to gender with female participants and parents, the first author was less knowledgeable about their experiences and may have held stereotypical views. The third and fourth author were positioned as insiders in relation to gender with female participants and as parents but were outsiders in relation to ethnicity and religion. Authors personal experiences of the challenges associated with their personal characteristics may have

resulted in selective bias towards these in the selected papers. However, having mixed authorship minimised preconceptions regarding ethnicity, religion and gender made by authors based on their positions, prior knowledge, and experiences. The authors viewed that the experiences of participants related to their specific socio-cultural contexts and were products of their social, cultural and economic experiences at a particular time. This influenced data analysis as the first author has personal experiences with the challenges associated with amalgamating ethnic groups. Thus, in conjunction with empirical evidence, the experiences of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were analysed separately.

Results

Paper selection

The paper selection process followed five steps (see Figure 1 for details). Initially, of the 3,132 papers identified (Step 1), 1,702 were retained for the title and abstract screening after removing duplicates and non-peer reviewed papers (Step 2). Of these 1,702 papers, 1,524 were removed for not meeting the eligibility criteria. Thus, 178 papers were retained for the full text screening (Step 3), and 14 of these papers met the eligibility criteria after full text screening. A further six papers were identified from searching the reference list of relevant papers (Step 4). Therefore, 20 papers were included in the review for data extraction and quality analysis (Step 5). Additionally, an updated search was carried out in February 2020 which identified 638 papers of which 146 were duplicates. Of the 491 papers retained for title and abstract screening, 12 were retained for full text screening and none were included due to not meeting the eligibility criteria.

Paper characteristics

Two authors independently extracted the author(s), publication year, country, study design, participant characteristics and aims from all included papers with full consensus reached

through discussion (Table 3). The 20 included papers were all based in the UK. Eight of the papers were qualitative (P1-8), three mixed methods (P9-11) and nine quantitative (P12-20). For the mixed method papers, the quantitative data presented in P9 was not included in the review as the BAME grouping did not allow for identification of Pakistani or Bangladeshi data separately. The quantitative data of P10 and the qualitative data of P11 were not included in the review as there was no identification of barriers or facilitators of participation in HE.

Table 3. Characteristics of included papers

Paper (P)	Author(s), Year, Country	Study Design	Participant Characteristics and sample size	Aim
P1	Bagguley and Hussain 2016, UK	Qualitative Semi-structured interviews	$n=114$ females of which 51 were Pakistani and 26 Bangladeshi Included Sixth form, university and graduates	Explored factors associated with the increased participation of south Asian women in HE
P2	Bhatti 2011, UK	Qualitative In-depth interviews	$n=4$ Pakistani males of which two were A-level students and two were undergraduates Age Range 16-24	Explored identities and educational success
P3	Bhopal 2016, UK	Qualitative In-depth interviews	$n=30$ female undergraduates including Pakistani and Bangladeshi Age Range 20-30	Explored British Asian women experiences of financial support in HE
P4	Crozier 2009, UK	Qualitative In-depth Interviews Group interviews	$n=157$ Pakistani and Bangladeshi families $n=69$ teachers from primary and secondary school	Explored teachers expectation of south Asian parents HE expectations for their children
P5	Hussain, Johnson, and Alam 2017, England	Qualitative Narrative interviews	$n=3$ Pakistani female undergraduate students Age Range 20-21	Explored factors associated with British Pakistani women participation in HE
P6	Shah, Dwyer, and Modood 2010, UK	Qualitative Interviews	$n=64$ Pakistani of which 33 were males and 31 were females Age Range 16-26 $n=14$ Pakistani parents	Explored factors associated with British Pakistanis participation in HE

P7	Thapar-Bjorket and Sanghera 2010, UK	Qualitative In-depth interviews	<i>n</i> =54 Pakistani of which 25 were male and 29 were female Age Range 16-27 Included participants from school, university, did not attend university and graduates	Explored Pakistanis educational expectations
P8	Vincent 2013, UK	Qualitative Life history interviews Case study	<i>n</i> =6 Bangladeshi women in Year 13	Explored Bangladeshi women educational expectations
P9	Archer, DeWitt, and Wong 2014, UK	Mixed method Interviews	Qualitative (Year 6) <i>n</i> =170 participants (92 Pupils and 78 Parents) Qualitative (Year 8) <i>n</i> = 85 of original 92 pupils Various ethnicities including Pakistani	Explored factors associated with students educational expectations
P10	Niven, Faggian, and Ruwanpura 2013, England	Mixed method Semi-structured interviews	<i>n</i> =21 female British-Bangladeshi	Explored factors associated with British Bangladeshi women participation in HE to labour market
P11	Strand and Winston 2008, UK	Mixed method Questionnaire	<i>n</i> =849 pupils from a selection of inner-city schools of which 56 were Pakistani and 25 were Bangladeshi Age 12 and 14	Explored students educational aspirations and factors that influenced these aspirations
P12	Anders and Micklewright 2015, UK	Quantitative Questionnaire Secondary data analysis of LSYPE	<i>n</i> =15,000 Various ethnicities including Pakistani and Bangladeshi Age Range 13-20	Examine how early expectations translate to actual university applications
P13	Boliver 2016, UK	Quantitative UCAS application Data – secondary analysis	<i>n</i> =68,632 of which 4265 were Pakistani and 1177 were Bangladeshi Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applicants	Examine whether ethnic inequalities in admissions at Russell Group Universities are associated with the percentage of applications from ethnic minority students

P14	Fernández-Reino 2016, UK	Quantitative Questionnaire Secondary data analysis of LSYPE	<i>n</i> =14422 of which 990 were Pakistani and 745 were Bangladeshi. Included parents and students in the sample Tested at Age 14, 15 and 16	Test mechanisms behind different educational choices for ethnic minorities and majority, particularly focusing on role of discrimination and expectations.
P15	Gittoes and Thompson 2007, UK	Quantitative UCAS application – secondary analysis	<i>n</i> =1000 Bangladeshi UCAS applicants	Respond to a previous secondary analysis of UCAS data looking at ethnic group and attainment
P16	Ivy 2010, UK	Quantitative Questionnaire	<i>n</i> =427 sixth form students of which 38 were Pakistani Average age 18	Explored motivational factors associated with students' participation in HE to understand which marketing tools are used by student to decide upon university choices
P17	Jackson, Jonsson, and Rudolphi 2012, UK	Quantitative Survey – secondary data analysis of YCS	<i>n</i> =10,456 students Various ethnicities including Pakistani and Bangladeshi Age 18	Test models of performance and choice effects on ethnic inequalities in education
P18	Jackson 2012, UK	Quantitative Survey – secondary data analysis of YCS	<i>n</i> =9793, of which 130 were Pakistani and 47 were Bangladeshi Age 16 and 18	Examine ethnic inequalities in educational attainment in England and Wales, with a focus on educational transitions at aged 16 and 18
P19	McCulloch 2017, UK	Quantitative Survey secondary data analysis of LSYPE	<i>n</i> =15,770 initial survey 7852 male and 7579 female overall sample Various ethnicities including Pakistani and Bangladeshi Age range 13-16	Examine trajectory of educational aspirations from 13 to 16

P20	Noden, Shiner, and Modood 2014, UK	Quantitative UCAS dataset – secondary analysis	<i>n</i> =50,000 UCAS applicants of various ethnicities including Pakistani and Bangladeshi Aged under 21	Examined ethnic differences in UCAS admission rates, controlling for academic quality of applications and social characteristics.
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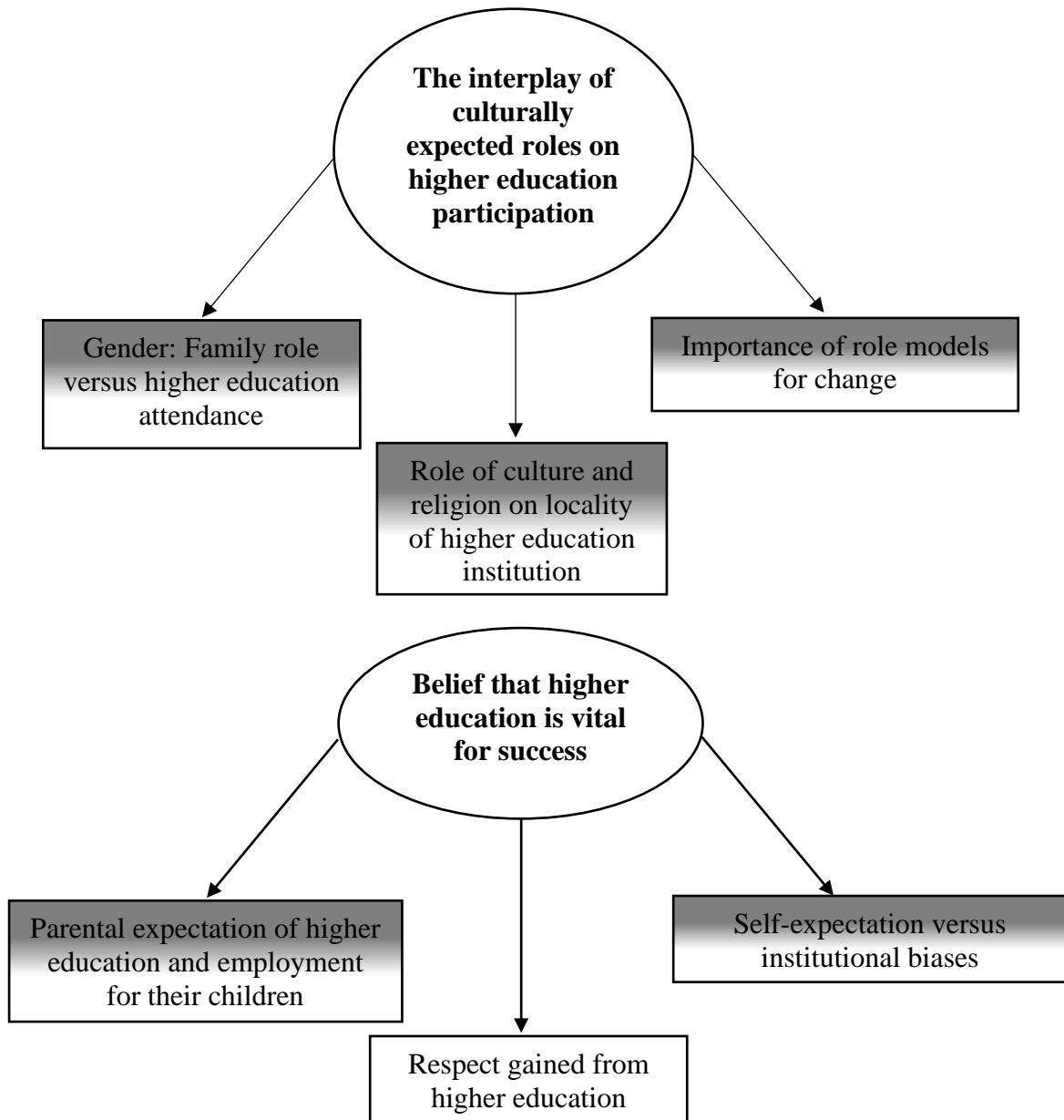


Figure 2. Themes and subthemes synthesised for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups

Subtheme related exclusively to the Pakistani group

Two themes summarised the findings from the papers, namely, (i) the interplay of culturally expected roles on HE participation and (ii) belief that HE is vital for success. Each theme comprised of a number of sub-themes (Figure 2) that will be described from the experiences of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups separately using exemplar quotes where appropriate from the included papers. Likewise, the number of papers including data for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis will be presented to show the relevance of the themes to the two groups separately. However, where a sub-theme applies to both groups, one quote encompassing the experiences of both groups will be provided.

[Figure 2 near here]

Theme 1 - The interplay of culturally expected roles on HE participation

Gendered roles for men and women were reported with women aspiring to marriage and motherhood whereas men were expected to provide for the family. These marital roles hindered women's HE participation and, in some cases, restricted men. Role models, in particular female role models currently attending HE or having attended HE, helped pave the way for more women to attend. In addition, women often argued that religion validated their right to education as equal to men. Parental fears of their children losing their religious and cultural values led to women, and to a lesser extent, men, being restricted to local HE institutions. Three sub-themes contributed to this theme namely, (i) gender: family role versus HE attendance, (ii) role of culture and religion on locality of HE institution and (iii) importance of role models for change.

Gender: Family role versus HE attendance

This sub-theme was reported in five papers, with two papers focussing on the Pakistani group (P5, P6), one paper focussing on the Bangladeshi group (P10) and two papers focussing on both groups (P1, P4). This sub-theme relates to parental expectation for women to aspire to

marriage and for men to provide for the family. In terms of barriers, parents from Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups expected their daughters to aspire to marriage and not to pursue HE or have a career (P5, P10). However, in the Bangladeshi group the expectation of marriage for women has lessened since initial migration of parents to the UK (P10). Some Bangladeshi women still conformed to parental expectations for marriage, whilst some Pakistani women resisted culturally prescribed expectations (P5, P10). Also, some career advisors and teachers held these stereotypes that made them less supportive of HE participation for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (P4, P5). Some Pakistani men were expected to financially provide for the family, and this led to some men being pressured into enrolling in HE whereas others sought employment (P6).

‘Traditionally women were expected by the community to go into marriage, but that has now changed. I really believe that. In our days, you see a lot of girls going into higher education that are dedicated to having a career’ (P10, 119).

Conversely, whilst not evident in the Bangladeshi group, some Pakistani women participated in HE to increase their marriage prospects. ‘I think men are looking for a more educated woman to marry, especially our generation. They want women who have a degree, even if they don’t necessarily want her to work’ (P5, 419). One Pakistani woman justified her participation in HE to educate her future children (P5). Pakistani mothers who had experienced the financial hardships of divorce encouraged women to attend HE as financial insurance in the event of divorce (P5, P6). Some Pakistani women participated in HE to delay marriage and pursue individual aspirations (P1).

The papers reporting on marriage expectations suggest gender inequality in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups. However, some Pakistani and Bangladeshi women used religion to justify their right to education as equal to men (P1, P5), ‘It preaches that men and

women are equal and since men are to go out and get an education, then women should go out and get an education' (P1, 53). Religion also supported Pakistani and Bangladeshi parental HE expectations for their children, (P1, P4, P5, P6), 'We are Muslims. Without education there is no progress' (P4, 294).

Role of culture and religion on locality of HE institution

This sub-theme was reported in six papers, with two papers focussing on the Pakistani group (P3, P7), two papers focussing on the Bangladeshi group (P8, P10) and two papers focussing on both groups (P1, P4). This sub-theme relates to parental preference for their children to attend local HE institutions. Parents from Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups were supportive of their children attending HE institutions provided it was local (P1, P3, P4, P10). In terms of barriers, Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents feared that their children would lose their cultural and religious values by attending HE institutions away from home and this was heightened for women (P1, P3, P4, P10). The restriction on location enabled parents to monitor the behaviour of women and ensure they conformed to religious and cultural values (P3). Whilst there was less anxiety about Pakistani and Bangladeshi men attending HE, they were also restricted to local HE institutions due to a fear of consuming alcohol (P4). Moreover, financial constraints restricted Pakistani Muslims to local HE institutions as paying interest on loans is not permitted in Islam (P3).

'Because we come from a Muslim culture, it's different. Parents are really afraid to send their girls away. They might start drinking, forget their culture, and become "Westernised." That would be a disgrace. It is rare to meet a girl that has gone away to university [travelled to an academic institution located away from the familial area], because it is just not going to happen. I only know of one and that is after a lot of fights [*sic*]' (P10, 121-122).

Conversely, some Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents did not impose any restrictions on the location of HE institutions for their daughters (P7, P8). One paper reported for the Bangladeshi group that parental restrictions on the location of HE institutions for women was due to parents not attending HE rather than religious or cultural values (P8).

Importance of role models for change

This sub-theme was reported in six papers, with three papers focussing on the Pakistani group (P5, P6, P7), two papers focussing on the Bangladeshi group (P8, P10) and one paper focussing on both groups (P1). This sub-theme relates to the importance of having role models, who were currently or had previously attended HE. This was seen to both hinder the consideration of HE attendance and in some cases facilitate their consideration of HE attendance. In terms of barriers, a lack of female role models in HE for Bangladeshi women and unsuccessful male graduates for young Pakistani men hindered their consideration of HE attendance. Firstly, a lack of female role models attending HE was evident for Bangladeshi women (P10). There was recognition that this was changing since the initial migration of parents to the UK with more women attending HE but there were still insufficient female role models for young Bangladeshi women to learn and aspire (P10). Secondly, seeing friends who were not successful in securing careers after graduation discouraged prospective Pakistani men from considering HE attendance (P6). Similarly, seeing family members who were self-employed and successful without attending HE discouraged young Pakistani men from considering HE attendance (P6).

Role models such as family, advisors and peers were found to inspire the choices of Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups when considering their own HE futures (P1, P5, P6, P8, P10). Participation in HE for Pakistani women was facilitated by extended family who had successfully secured careers in their chosen degrees or by extended family sharing regret of not having attended HE (P6). Pakistani and Bangladeshi advisors facilitated participation of women and men in HE by providing advice and guidance (P1, P7, P8). Pakistani peers were

also able to provide advice and support to those whose parents were not supportive of participation in HE (P7).

‘Some of my wider family went to university. I’ve got a cousin, and she was the first in the whole of my wider family to go to university. She didn’t go to just any university, she went to Cambridge. It was quite a huge thing at that moment, it was a big deal. That has encouraged more people in my family to go to university’ (P10, 120).

Theme 2 - Belief that HE is vital for success

Parents and children viewed HE as a vital route to both personal and community success. Personal success related to children doing better than their parents in the labour market. This appeared to influence the choice of degree programme with many parents wanting their children to study degrees such as medicine, law or accounting. Community success was seen as the status of the family increasing due to HE. In particular, gaining a professional qualification that led to a career increased the reputation of the family within their community and thus facilitated participation in HE. However, there was a disconnect between expectations of attending HE and admission offer rates. Three sub-themes contributed to this theme, (i) parental experience in HE and employment, (ii) respect gained from HE and (iii) self-expectation versus institutional bias.

Parental expectations of HE and employment for their children

This sub-theme was reported in 14 papers, with seven papers focussing on the Pakistani group (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P9, P16), two papers focussing on the Bangladeshi group (P8, P10) and five papers focussing on both groups (P4, P11, P14, P17, P18). Parents held clear expectations for their children in terms of the need for a HE qualification and more specifically, the type of programme studied. This related to many Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents

experiencing financial and employment hardships due to not attending HE and thus wanting a better life for their children. One paper reported that after controlling for parental expectations and anticipated discrimination, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students were significantly more likely to report higher expectations of applying and admission to HE than White British students ($p < 0.05$; P14). High parental expectations explained most of the variance for the high expectations of application by Pakistani and Bangladesh students and was interpreted as optimistic expectations (P14).

In terms of barriers, when controlling for Pakistani and Bangladeshi parental social class, parental level of education and student performance at A-level (HE entrance), attendance in HE increases in comparison to White British students (P17). Thus, suggesting Pakistani and Bangladeshi students have higher aspirations than White British students. Likewise, controlling for social class (using a measure of both mothers' and fathers' occupations) significantly increases attendance in HE for Pakistani and Bangladeshi students compared to White students (P18). Pakistani parents wanted their children to study degrees they believed led to job security and potentially high earnings (P9, P6). Pakistani parental preference for degree programmes such as medicine, law and accountancy often conflicted with the preferences of their children (P1, P6, P9). 'My mum wanted me to become a doctor or a solicitor "typical" but I didn't want to be that because everybody was doing that.' (P1, 54). Religion also influenced Pakistani Muslim women's choice of degree programme (P1). A barrier for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups was a lack of knowledge or guidance to fulfil their expectations (P2, P4).

In terms of facilitation, one paper reported that five factors motivated Pakistani students' decision to attend HE (P16). Pakistani students reported the primary motivator to attend HE was to increase career prospects, followed by family motives, personal motives, academic motives and the weakest motivator was social motives which related to being with peers or partner and making friends (P16). Another paper reported that in comparison to White

British students, Pakistani students had significantly higher aspirations for achieving a degree ($p < 0.001$) but Bangladeshi students did not significantly differ (P11). The significantly higher aspirations displayed by Pakistani students compared to White students were mediated by several factors including home aspirations, positive influence of peers, commitment to schooling and strong academic self-concept (P11). The low aspirations of Bangladeshi students related to poor academic self-concept (P11). Pakistani and Bangladeshi parental hardships in the labour market led them to encourage their children towards a HE qualification (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11).

‘I think my parents, especially my dad, felt it was their duty to make sure I had a good education because they didn’t get the chance and they really believed it’ll help me get a better job than the ones they had’ (P5, 417).

Respect gained from HE

This sub-theme was reported in three papers that focussed on the Pakistani group (P4, P6, P16). This sub-theme relates to the respect that comes with gaining a professional qualification and the societal status that is gained from attending HE both of which were found to positively influence parental expectations for their children to attend HE. Pakistani students reported gaining independence, personal satisfaction and a degree as a status symbol influenced their decision to access HE (P16).

Participation in HE was seen to positively enhance the reputation of Pakistani parents within the community and influenced the desire of students to attend HE. ‘Education is the most important thing in your life. . . . In society, people judge you; when you speak people can tell how educated you are’ (P4, 294). The competitiveness and comparison between families by parents was seen to fuel this desire to attend HE. ‘When they meet up with their friends or whatever, he [Dad] will say to them “my daughter done this degree”, they all talk about their

children, ‘what did your children do?’ (P6, 1115). Likewise, gaining a professional qualification increased the reputation of the family, ‘you get a lot of respect if you’ve got a good job’ (P6, 1114).

Self-expectation versus institutional biases

This sub-theme was reported in five papers that focussed on both groups (P12, P13, P15, P19, P20). The included papers demonstrated a disconnect between high expectations and receiving an admission offer for Bangladeshi and Pakistani students. Those with high expectations of applying to HE, were more likely to be admitted to HE than those with low expectations. However, Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants were less likely to receive an admission offer to HE institutions than White applicants.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi students with high attainment at key stage 4 (KS4; secondary school Year 10 and 11) and high aspirations of applying to HE, were significantly more likely to be admitted to HE institutions than those with lower attainment and lower aspirations (P19). Another paper examined the likelihood of students applying to HE if they stated they were likely to apply at age 13-14 years and at age 16-17 years. It was found that the probability of Pakistani and Bangladeshi students applying to HE was significantly greater than White students after controlling for attainment at key stage 2 (KS2; age 10 or 11 years), general certificate of secondary education (GCSE; age 15 or 16), those not in education at age 16 years and influence of school (school attended at age 14 may differ to school attended at age 17; P12). Pakistani and Bangladeshi students who stated at age 13-14 years that they were unlikely to apply, were significantly more likely to express intention to apply at age 16-17 years than White students, after controlling for KS2, GCSE and those not in education at age 16 years (P12). Pakistani students remained significantly more likely to express intention to apply than White students when adding influence of school into the model, but Bangladeshi students did

not differ significantly from White students (P12). Comparing the expectation of applying to HE institutions to actual application, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students who said they were likely apply at age 16-17 years were significantly more likely to actually apply to HE institutions than White students after controlling for attainment at KS2 and GCSE (P12). When adding influence of school into the model, Pakistani students remained significantly more likely to apply than White students, and Bangladeshi students did not differ significantly from White students (P12). Thus, the role of schools is vital in influencing HE expectations for Pakistani students. After controlling for attainment at KS2, GCSE and influence of school, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students who said they were less than very likely to apply at age 16-17 years were significantly more likely to actually apply than White students (P12).

One paper examined admission rates to Russell Group HE institutions (UK equivalent to the North American Ivy League) and found that Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants were significantly less likely to receive an offer at Russell group HE institutions compared to White British applicants. Whilst controlling for year of application, applicant characteristics, prior attainment, competitiveness of course and percentage of BAME applicants for course, increased the odds for receiving an offer, there remained a significant gap in Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants receiving an offer than White British applicants (P13). Another paper reported that after controlling for academic factors, social factors (social class, gender and school type i.e., grammar or independent school) and ethnicity, Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants were significantly less likely to receive an offer to study in HE than White British applicants (P20). On average per 100 applications, Pakistani applicants received an additional seven rejections and Bangladeshi applicants received an additional five rejections compared to White British applicants (P20). However, one paper reported that controlling for subject of study (including removing medicine and dentistry), institution type and region, Bangladeshi applicants were not significantly less likely to receive an offer to study by different types of

HE institutions than White applicants (P15). However, Pakistani applicants had 'slightly' lower offer rates in all subjects and HE institution types than White applicants (P15).

Discussion

Two overarching themes were developed from the data in this review (i) the interplay of culturally expected roles on HE participation and (ii) the belief that HE is vital for success. Cultural values were central to both themes and are defined as socially acceptable behaviours of individuals, in this instance, within their respective communities. This systematic review synthesised the Pakistani and Bangladeshi participants findings separately to ensure the views and attitudes of both groups were examined. Themes were found to encompass the experiences of both groups indicating many similarities between the groups and few differences. Whilst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis share many similarities, in some cases, Pakistanis were more disadvantaged than Bangladeshis and vice versa in terms of accessing HE. Sociological research has dominated the exploration of the HE participation decision with little cross reference to psychological research (Howard and Davies 2013). Previous research suggests that social capital, ethnic capital, socioeconomic status, religion, culture and parental expectations are influential on Pakistanis and Bangladeshis participation in HE (Bagguley and Hussain 2016; Shah, Dwyer and Modood 2010; Bhopal 2016; Bhatti 2011; Vincent 2013). Thus, by utilising a psychological framework a new perspective to the literature can be explored.

Social learning theory proposes that individuals learn behaviours through observation of others and observing the outcomes of the behaviour (Bandura 1977). Self-efficacy is a key component of social learning theory and is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to complete an action or to engage in a specific behaviour to produce a desired result (Bandura 1977). A study conducted with indigenous students of Australia found that four sources of self-efficacy: (i) mastery experiences, (ii) vicarious experiences, (iii) verbal persuasions and (iv) physiological and affective states were vital in determining access to HE (Frawley et al. 2017).

Mastery experiences are based on an individual's past experience in achieving a desired behaviour (Frawley et al. 2017). Vicarious experiences can occur through observations of role models who are similar to them succeeding in a task or behaviour (Bandura 1977). Role models can include family members, peers, mentors as well as those observed in books and television (Bandura 1977). Verbal persuasion can strengthen an individual's self-efficacy through positive encouragement by significant others persuading the individual they can accomplish a task or perform certain behaviours (Bandura 1977). Physiological and affective states refer to an individual experiencing emotional arousal which may affect the individual's ability to complete a task or behaviour (Bandura 1977). Given the previous application of social learning theory to understanding HE participation with minority groups, this systematic review will discuss the results within a social learning theory framework.

This review identified that role models who had or were currently attending HE facilitated the HE participation decision in particular for women. Whilst not evident in the Pakistani group, Bangladeshi women reported a lack of role models. A major barrier hindering participation in HE for women were gendered roles, namely, parental expectations of marriage. From a social learning theory perspective, individuals are more likely to imitate the behaviours of role models that are similar to them (Bandura 1977). Previous research has suggested that race and gender matched role models provide information to individuals in developing their identity and societal expectations (Zirkel 2002). It appears that these gendered expectations were constructed through social expectations and that over time that women gaining HE degree qualifications has helped shift attitudes towards women's HE attendance, employability and away from marriage. Thus, in the past women may have had lower self-efficacy and were more likely to conform to parental expectations as there was an absence of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in HE as role models. Moreover, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in this review often used religious teachings to challenge these gendered expectations. These gendered

expectations do not align with Islamic values as the Qur'an states that every Muslim man and woman has the right to acquire knowledge (Abukari 2014). Social learning theory suggests that whilst direct observation of behaviour is important, behaviours can be modelled through symbolic modelling such as words (Bandura 1977). Therefore, religious texts and teachings appear to be guiding the behaviours of women and helping to justify their right to participate in HE.

This review identified that Pakistani men were expected to financially provide for the family which resulted with some men enrolling in HE. However, Pakistani male graduates who were not successful in securing postgraduate employment hindered the decision of younger Pakistani men to attend HE. Whilst this was not evident in the Bangladeshi group, Pakistani (12.2%) and Bangladeshi (11%) graduates are less likely to be in employment one year after graduation (Department for Education 2018). Moreover, role models who gained careers without attending HE hindered participation for potential students. Social learning theory suggests that observational learning can occur through witnessing the consequences of behaviours of role models (Bandura 1977). Therefore, prospective students' observation of the career outcomes of role models may influence self-efficacy beliefs and the HE participation decision. This review identified that some Pakistani women participated in HE as financial insurance against divorce. Pakistani women self-efficacy beliefs may be influenced through observation of financial hardships of divorced women and thus did not want to experience these same outcomes.

This review identified that Pakistani parental preferences for degree programmes were associated with job security, potentially high earnings and status. Whilst not evident in this review, previous research has suggested that Bangladeshi parents also share preferences for medicine, law and accountancy (Dale et al. 2002). These preferences may be partly explained by anticipated consequence of unemployability due to previous role models experiences. Social

learning theory suggests that feedback received by significant others reinforces or discourages individuals from pursuing behaviours such as career related outcomes (Bandura 1977). Thus, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis without role models who can guide them into these degree programmes may have lower self-efficacy than those with role models in these programmes. Moreover, this review found that parental degree preferences overrode their child's preferences which may have been due to verbal persuasion. Therefore, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students with low self-efficacy may have been pressured to apply for degree programmes with high entry requirements to avoid parental disapproval despite not meeting the entry requirements. Attainments at A-level (HE entrance) show that Pakistani and Bangladeshi students have lower attainment than White British students (Department for Education 2017). Previous research has suggested that attainment is associated with mastery experience (Frawley et al. 2017). Therefore, those with high attainment may have stronger self-efficacy beliefs in their subsequent successes in HE than those with lower attainment. This review found that student expectations and aspirations were influenced by parental expectations. Previous research has shown that self-efficacy is closely linked with outcome expectations and those with high self-efficacy are more likely to perceive expectations as positive (Lippke 2017). Thus, self-efficacy may influence students' HE expectations and aspirations. Whilst high expectations and aspirations are important predictors for students' HE application, this does not necessarily translate to participation. This systematic review identified that Pakistani applicants are the most disadvantaged ethnic group in receiving an offer to study at HE institutions (Noden, Shiner, and Modood 2014). This evidence attests to the need to separate the BAME subgroups HE participation rates and to better explore drivers of this difference.

For Pakistani parents, participation in HE was seen to enhance the reputation of the family within their community. Thus, status may have influenced competitiveness between Pakistani families and influenced preferences for degree programmes associated with

potentially high earnings. Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents were supportive of women attending HE providing it was a nearby location. Research has shown that Bangladeshi women (70.5%) are more likely to be living in parental or guardian homes than Pakistani (66.3%) and Indian (38.9%) women whilst attending HE (Khambhaita and Bhopal 2015). This suggests there are differences between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Previous research has suggested that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis tend to apply to HE institutions that their friends and family have attended (Bagguley and Hussain 2007). Therefore, a lack of role models may contribute to Pakistanis and Bangladeshis decision to study at local HE institutions. Moreover, Bangladeshis may have lower self-efficacy beliefs in studying at non-local HE institutions than Pakistanis. To a lesser extent, Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents restricted their sons to local HE institutions. The gender difference may be partly due to women have a higher responsibility for maintaining the status of the family than men (Cowburn, Gill and Harrison 2015). In a collectivist culture, children engaging in behaviour that is contrary to the group's religious and cultural values reflects negatively on the status of the family within their community (Zaidi, Couture-Carron and Maticka-Tyndale 2016). Thus, the anticipated consequence of community disapproval, may result in parents restricting their children particularly daughters to local HE institutions to monitor their behaviours to reduce the risk of adopting values contrary to culture and religion. It is likely that parental verbal persuasion may have discouraged their children from attending HE institutions away from the family home. Therefore, low self-efficacy may partly contribute to students' decision to study at local HE institutions. Parental preferences for local HE institutions was not reported in the previous systematic review (See et al. 2011).

Implications

The widening participation strategy in England focusses on BAME as a singular group, yet this review identified similarities and differences between Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups. Therefore, future research should examine the mechanisms driving these similarities and

differences to better understand the experiences of these groups and thus tailor widening participation activities. Some studies in this review were excluded as BAME grouping did not allow for identification of Pakistani or Bangladeshi data separately. Transparency and justification for combining the experiences of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups would be beneficial in future research. Widening participation activities would benefit from utilising BAME role models either currently attending HE or successful graduates to share experiences and mentor prospective students. In particular, highlighting more Pakistani and Bangladeshi women attending HE institutions away from the home, may alleviate parental fears of children losing their cultural and religious values. In addition, HE institutions could provide parental information sessions on campus to showcase the support for their cultural and religious values. This is critical to address barriers for women wanting to attend a non-local HE institution. Participation in HE may also be enhanced by schools and HE institutions connecting with Muslim scholars to educate parents and children on the importance of gaining knowledge regardless of gender.

Strengths and limitations

A strength of this systematic review is that it separated the experiences of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups. By including quantitative and qualitative papers, the findings were built upon one another thus adding depth to the results. The quantitative papers show that some factors had a proportionately different contribution to accessing HE between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The authors viewed that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis may not have a shared experience in their HE participation decision. Thus, the nuances between the groups were explored and some differences were found. As a result of authors positionality, particular attention was paid to the details in the included papers which suggested how participants constructed their HE views. Namely, their social interactions, gender, religious and cultural values. Moreover, authors personal characteristics may have influenced the decision to include

and discard themes. However, having a mixed authorship of ethnicity and gender who were involved in each stage of the review enabled different views to be explored and minimised any biases. Included papers were restricted to those written in English. However, as this review was focussed on HE in the UK, it is unlikely the exclusion of other languages resulted in a bias in the included data. While some of the included papers appeared to be of moderate or high quality, authors did not always present all findings of BAME groups separately. Moreover, only data that was identifiable distinctly to the Pakistani or Bangladeshi groups were included. Thus, it was difficult to distinguish whether some findings were exclusive to one group. Therefore, the authors of these papers were contacted for clarity. Some papers did not consider the researcher-participation relationship or account for ethical considerations that may challenge the validity of the results of some papers.

Conclusion

Applying social learning theory enhanced the findings of this systematic review by helping to understand the mechanisms that are potentially driving some of the findings and highlighted the implications for combining both groups. Cultural values and community influence were shown to be more restrictive for women participating in HE than men due to anticipated consequences. Religion appeared to be more important for women than men in challenging cultural values. Role models were central in shifting cultural attitudes towards HE attendance for both genders. It is imperative that widening participation activities address the interplay of barriers such as cultural values, religion and gender rather than focussing on ethnicity alone.

Disclosure statement

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