EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEARNING, AND COGNITION: ISSUES AROUND BLACK, ASIAN, AND ETHNIC MINORITY (BAME) LEARNERS IN LONDON

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Abstract

This study explores the intersection of emotional intelligence, learning, and cognition with a focus on Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority (BAME) learners in London. It employs a qualitative research design by using data from secondary sources of research publications, journals, Articles, textbooks and official published reports from government and organization documentaries. It however revealed the unique challenges faced by these learners, examines the role of emotional intelligence in their educational experiences, and proposes strategies for educators and policymakers to support their academic and emotional development. The paper showed that the educational attainment disparity among BAME learners is attributable to issues arising from socio-economic status, cultural interpretations, language barriers, Social Discrimination, etc. It therefore advocated for self-awareness on the part of learners, developing social skills and self-regulation. While on the part of other school partners, inclusive curriculum, cultural responsive teaching, promoting mental health wellbeing, building strong home school partnership and supporting cultural based language development is advocated. The paper concluded that addressing the unique challenges faced by these learners and implementing strategies that promotes emotional intelligence and inclusive education, schools can create a more equitable and supportive learning environment and therefore increase the level of educational attainment for this categories of learners.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Learning and Cognition, BAME.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI), could be seen as the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence one's own feelings, actions, and the emotions of others. It encompasses several core competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (D'Amico and Graci, 2023; Alberto et al., 2023). These competencies play a crucial role in personal and professional success, influencing how individuals navigate social complexities, manage stress, and make decisions particularly as it concerns learning weather online or physical learning situations (Audrin and Audrin, 2023; Alberto et al., 2023).

Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a vital component of educational success. It affects how students engage with their learning environment, interact with peers and teachers, and handle the challenges and pressures of academic life (Audrin and Audrin, 2023); (Pérez-González et al., 2020). For BAME learners, who may face additional socio-cultural hurdles, the development of emotional intelligence can be particularly beneficial in helping them navigate the complexities of their educational experiences (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021).Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are all interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, self-awareness can enhance self-regulation by helping students understand their emotional triggers and develop strategies to manage them (Pirsoul et al., 2023). Similarly, empathy can improve social skills by fostering better communication and collaboration among students. Understanding and cultivating these

competencies can create a more supportive and effective learning environment for BAME learners (Pirsoul et al., 2023; Pérez-González et al., 2020).

Learning and cognition are deeply intertwined processes. Cognition involves the mental processes of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. Learning, on the other hand as noted by Özdemir and Seçkin (2024), is the process of acquiring new, or modifying existing, knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, or preferences(Özdemir and Seçkin, 2024). Effective learning is not solely dependent on cognitive abilities but is also significantly influenced by emotional and social factors (Fayyaz et al.,2023);(Roebers,2017).The relationship between emotional intelligence and cognitive processes is complex. Emotions can facilitate or hinder cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and problem-solving. Positive emotions can enhance cognitive processes by increasing motivation and engagement, while negative emotions can impede learning by causing stress and anxiety. Understanding this relationship is essential for creating learning environments that support the cognitive and emotional needs of all students.(Roebers,2017). Research has shown that emotionally matured students tend to perform better academically. This is because emotional intelligence helps students manage stress, stay motivated, and develop strong relationships with peers and teachers (Fayyaz et al.,2023). Moreover, emotionally matured students are better equipped to handle setbacks and challenges, which are inevitable in the learning process. By integrating emotional intelligence into educational practices, schools can help all students, especially BAME learners, achieve their full potential (Fayyaz et al., 2023).

London is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world, with a substantial population of BAME individuals (WHO, 2021); (London Assembly Health Committee, 2017). These learners could face unique challenges that can impact their educational experiences and outcomes. Jacobs and Pentari (2021) reported that children from BAME background are more likely to be faced with mental health challenge and might have limited level of educational attainment. Understanding the intersection of emotional intelligence, learning, and cognition in the context of BAME learners is essential for developing effective educational strategies that promote equity and inclusion.

BAME learners in London are not a homogenous group; they come from diverse backgrounds with varying cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic experiences (WHO, 2021). This diversity necessitates a nuanced approach to education that considers the specific needs and challenges of different ethnic groups. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the educational experiences of BAME learners, including cultural identity, language proficiency, and socio-economic status. (Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government, 2018). Moreover, BAME learners often bring rich cultural perspectives and experiences to the classroom. These can be valuable assets in the learning process, contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive educational environment. However, to fully leverage these assets, educators must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to support BAME learners effectively. This includes understanding the unique challenges they face and implementing strategies that promote emotional intelligence and academic success (Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government, 2018).

London's population is incredibly diverse, with significant representation from various ethnic groups. According to the 2021 Census, approximately 40% of London's population identifies as BAME, with substantial communities of Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and other ethnic minorities(WHO, 2021);(Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government, 2018). This diversity is reflected in the city's schools, where a significant proportion of students come from BAME backgrounds.

The demographic composition of London's schools presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the diversity of the student population enriches the learning environment by exposing students to different cultures and perspectives. On the other hand, it requires educators to adopt inclusive teaching practices that address the diverse needs of their students. Understanding the demographic landscape is the first step in developing educational strategies that support BAME learners (Jacobs and Pentari,2021).

According to Bignall, et al (2019) ethnic diversity, London's BAME population is characterized by a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, languages, and cultural practices. This diversity can enhance the educational experience by fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration among students. However, it also means that schools must be prepared to address a variety of educational needs and challenges (NHS Digital, 2020).. This includes providing language support for students who are English language learners, offering culturally responsive teaching practices, and addressing the specific needs of students from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Educational Attainment and Disparities

Educational attainment among BAME learners in London shows a mixed picture. While some groups, such as Indian and Chinese students, often perform exceptionally well academically, others, particularly Black Caribbean and Pakistani students, face significant educational disparities. Factors contributing to these disparities include socio-economic status, language barriers, cultural differences, and experiences of discrimination and bias (WHO, 2019; London Assembly Health Committee, 2017).Disparities in educational attainment are evident in various measures of academic performance, including standardized test scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates. For instance, data from the Department for Education indicates that while Chinese and Indian students consistently outperform their peers, Black Caribbean and Pakistani students are more likely to fall behind(WHO, 2019; London Assembly Health

Committee, 2017). These disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions to support underperforming groups.

The reasons for these disparities are complex and multifaceted. Socio-economic factors play a significant role, as students from low-income families often have less access to educational resources and support. Language barriers can also impede academic progress, particularly for students who are not fluent in English. Additionally, cultural differences and experiences of discrimination can affect students' engagement and motivation (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021; Arday, 2018; Memon et al., 2017). Addressing these disparities requires a holistic approach that considers all these factors and implements strategies to support the academic and emotional needs of BAME learners.

Socio-Economic Factors

Socio-economic status is a critical determinant of educational outcomes. BAME families are disproportionately represented in lower socio-economic brackets, which can impact access to educational resources, quality of schooling, and extracurricular opportunities (Mind, 2020). Economic hardship can also contribute to stress and instability, affecting students' emotional well-being and cognitive functioning. Poverty and economic disadvantage are linked to a range of educational challenges, including lower academic achievement, higher dropout rates, and reduced access to higher education. BAME learners from low-income families may face additional barriers, such as limited access to educational materials, inadequate learning environments, and reduced opportunities for academic enrichment (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021; Arday, 2018; Memon et al., 2017; Mind, 2019) . Addressing these socio-economic disparities is essential for promoting educational equity.

Economic hardship can also affect students' emotional well-being and cognitive functioning. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues, which can impact their ability to focus and perform academically. Moreover, economic instability can create a sense of uncertainty and insecurity, further affecting students' motivation and engagement (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021; Memon et al., 2017). Schools must provide support for these students, including access to mental health resources, academic support, and extracurricular opportunities that can enhance their educational experience.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Cultural and linguistic diversity can pose significant challenges for BAME learners. Language barriers may hinder communication between students, teachers, and parents, impacting learners' ability to fully engage with the curriculum. Additionally, cultural differences can affect learners' comfort and confidence in the classroom, potentially leading to feelings of isolation and marginalization (HCL, 2020).

For many BAME learners, English may not be their first language, which can create additional hurdles in understanding and participating in classroom activities. Furthermore, cultural norms and values may differ from those of the dominant culture, influencing students' behavior, communication styles, and attitudes towards education (Memon et al., 2017). Educators must be sensitive to these differences and adopt inclusive teaching practices that respect and celebrate cultural diversity.

Language barriers can impede academic progress by affecting students' ability to understand instructions, participate in discussions, and complete assignments. Additionally, cultural differences can affect students' engagement and motivation (Callender, 2021). For example, students from collectivist cultures may value group harmony and cooperation, while students from individualist cultures may prioritize personal achievement and competition. Understanding and accommodating these cultural differences can help create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Discrimination and Bias

BAME learners often face both overt and subtle forms of discrimination and bias in educational settings. This can manifest in lower teacher expectations, biased disciplinary practices, and a lack of culturally relevant curriculum and teaching methods. Such experiences can negatively impact students' self-esteem, motivation, and academic performance (Bignall, et al, 2019).

Discrimination and bias can take various forms, including racial stereotyping, micro aggressions, and institutional racism. These experiences can create a hostile and unwelcoming learning environment for BAME students, affecting their emotional and psychological well-being (Arday (2018). It is crucial for schools to implement anti-bias training for staff, promote inclusive policies, and create a supportive environment where all students feel valued and respected. Bias and discrimination can have profound effects on students' academic and emotional well-being. Students who experience discrimination may feel marginalized, leading to lower self-esteem and motivation (Mind, 2019; Callender,1995).They may also experience stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues, which can further impact their academic performance. Schools must take proactive steps to address bias and discrimination, including implementing anti-bias training for staff, promoting inclusive policies, and creating a supportive and inclusive school culture.

Emotional and Psychological Challenges

The unique challenges faced by BAME learners can contribute to emotional and psychological difficulties. Experiences of racism, discrimination, and cultural dissonance can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. These emotional challenges can, in turn, affect cognitive processes

such as attention, memory, and problem-solving, further impacting educational outcomes (Damie and Huat, 2022) Emotional and psychological well-being is essential for effective learning. Students who experience high levels of stress and anxiety may struggle to concentrate, retain information, and perform academically. Schools must provide adequate mental health support and create a positive school climate that fosters emotional resilience and well-being (Fayyaz et al., 2023) ;Pentaris, 2019).

Pentaris (2019) noted that providing mental health support for BAME learners is crucial for their academic success. This includes offering counseling services, creating safe spaces for students to discuss their experiences, and promoting a positive school climate that supports emotional well-being (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021). Additionally, schools can implement programs and initiatives that promote emotional intelligence and resilience, helping students develop the skills they need to manage stress and overcome challenges. These skills can be categorized thus:

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness, the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, is a foundational component of emotional intelligence. For BAME learners, developing self-awareness can help them navigate the complexities of their identities and experiences. Educators can support this by creating a safe and inclusive environment where students feel valued and understood (Prajapati et al., 2022).Self-awareness involves reflecting on one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and understanding how they influence academic performance and interpersonal relationships. For BAME learners, self-awareness can help them recognize the impact of cultural and racial experiences on their emotions and actions (Fayyaz et al.,2023; Albornoz, et al., 2011). Educators can facilitate self-awareness by encouraging reflective practices, providing feedback, and fostering an open dialogue about identity and culture.

Promoting self-awareness in the classroom can help students develop a better understanding of their emotions and how they influence their behavior. This can lead to improved self-regulation, better decision-making, and stronger relationships with peers and teachers. For BAME learners, self-awareness can also help them navigate the challenges and complexities of their cultural and racial identities, leading to a greater sense of confidence and self-esteem.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation involves managing one's emotions and behaviors in response to various situations. This skill is particularly important for learners who may face stressors related to discrimination or socio-economic challenges (Adams, 2021). Teaching self-regulation strategies, such as mindfulness and stress management techniques, can help BAME learners maintain emotional balance and focus on their academic goals. Effective self-regulation enables students to cope with stress, manage impulses, and stay motivated in the face of challenges. For BAME learners, who may encounter additional stressors, developing self-regulation is crucial for maintaining academic and emotional well-being. Educators can support self-regulation by teaching coping strategies, promoting a positive classroom environment, and providing opportunities for students to practice self-regulation skills (Fayyaz et al., 2023).

Self-regulation is a key component of emotional intelligence that can help students manage stress, stay focused, and maintain motivation. For BAME learners, self-regulation can be particularly important in managing the additional stressors they may face related to discrimination, socio-economic challenges, and cultural differences (Kereshaw,2021). Educators can support self-regulation by teaching students' mindfulness techniques, stress management strategies, and other skills that can help them manage their emotions and behaviors effectively.

Motivation

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays a critical role in learning. BAME learners may face unique motivational challenges due to cultural expectations, family pressures, and experiences of bias. Educators can foster motivation by recognizing and celebrating diverse forms of achievement and by providing support that aligns with students' cultural values and personal goals. Intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest and enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards and recognition, both influence academic performance. For BAME learners, motivation can be affected by cultural attitudes towards education, family expectations, and societal stereotypes (Murray, 2011; Alessio D'et al., 2011). Educators can enhance motivation by creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, setting high expectations, and providing opportunities for students to pursue their interests and passions.

Motivation is a key driver of academic success. For BAME learners, motivation can be influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural attitudes towards education, family expectations, and experiences of bias and discrimination (Memon et al., 2017). Educators can foster motivation by recognizing and celebrating diverse forms of achievement, providing support that aligns with students' cultural values and personal goals, and creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.

Empathy

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is crucial for building positive relationships and fostering a supportive learning environment. Promoting empathy among students and teachers can enhance mutual respect and understanding, reducing instances of discrimination and bias (Tereshchenko, 2020; Demie, 2019 ;Memon et al.,2017). This can be achieved through culturally responsive teaching practices and inclusive curricula.

Empathy involves recognizing and validating the emotions of others, understanding their perspectives, and responding with compassion. For BAME learners, experiencing empathy from teachers and peers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Educators can promote empathy by incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices, fostering open dialogue about diversity and inclusion, and encouraging students to share their experiences and perspectives (Tereshchenko, 2020; Demie, 2019, ;Damie and Huat, 2022)

Empathy is a critical component of emotional intelligence that can help create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. For BAME learners, experiencing empathy from teachers and peers can help them feel valued and understood, reducing feelings of isolation and marginalization. Educators can promote empathy by incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices, fostering open dialogue about diversity and inclusion, and encouraging students to share their experiences and perspectives.

Social Skills

Social skills, including effective communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork, are essential for success in school and beyond. BAME learners may face unique social challenges due to cultural differences and experiences of discrimination (Morries et al, 2021). Educators can support the development of social skills by creating opportunities for collaborative learning and by addressing issues of bias and exclusion.

Social skills are critical for building positive relationships, resolving conflicts, and working effectively in teams. For BAME learners, developing strong social skills can help them navigate the challenges of cultural differences and discrimination. Educators can support the development of social skills by creating opportunities for collaborative learning, providing explicit instruction in social skills, and addressing issues of bias and exclusion in the classroom.

Developing strong social skills is essential for success in school and beyond. For BAME learners, social skills can help them navigate the challenges of cultural differences and discrimination, build positive relationships with peers and teachers, and succeed academically and socially (Morgan & Scarlett, 2021). Educators can support the development of social skills by creating opportunities for collaborative learning, providing explicit instruction in social skills, and addressing issues of bias and exclusion in the classroom.

Strategies for Enhancing Educational Outcomes for BAME Learners
Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) involves recognizing and incorporating students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. This approach can enhance the educational experiences of BAME learners by validating their cultural identities and making learning more relevant and meaningful. Strategies for CRT include incorporating diverse perspectives in the curriculum, using culturally relevant materials, and employing teaching methods that reflect students' cultural backgrounds (Debnam et al., 2013); (Bhopal, 2020).

Culturally responsive teaching can help create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for BAME learners. By recognizing and incorporating students' cultural references in all aspects of learning, educators can validate students' cultural identities and make learning more relevant and meaningful (Debnam et al., 2023). This can enhance students' engagement, motivation, and academic performance.

To implement culturally responsive teaching, educators can incorporate diverse perspectives in the curriculum, use culturally relevant materials, and employ teaching methods that reflect students' cultural backgrounds. This can include incorporating literature, history, and examples from diverse cultures, using teaching methods that align with students' cultural learning styles, and creating a classroom environment that respects and celebrates cultural diversity (Debnam et al., 2023).

Inclusive Curriculum

An inclusive curriculum reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all students, providing a more balanced and comprehensive education. For BAME learners, an inclusive curriculum can enhance engagement and motivation by making learning more relevant and meaningful (Debnam et al., 2023). Strategies for developing an inclusive curriculum include incorporating diverse perspectives and voices, addressing issues of bias and discrimination, and providing opportunities for students to explore and celebrate their cultural identities (Tereshchenko et al, 2021, Morris, 2021).An inclusive curriculum can enhance the educational experiences of BAME learners by making learning more relevant and meaningful. By reflecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all students, an inclusive curriculum can enhance engagement, motivation, and academic performance. This can include incorporating diverse perspectives and voices, addressing issues of bias and discrimination, and providing opportunities for students to explore and celebrate their cultural identities (Morgan and Scarlett, 2021).

To develop an inclusive curriculum, educators can incorporate diverse perspectives and voices in all subject areas, address issues of bias and discrimination, and provide opportunities for students to explore and celebrate their cultural identities (Debnam et al., 2023). This can include incorporating literature, history, and examples from diverse cultures, addressing issues of bias and discrimination in the curriculum, and providing opportunities for students to explore and celebrate their cultural identities.

Support for Language Development

Many BAME learners in London come from multilingual backgrounds and may face challenges related to language proficiency. Providing support for language development is crucial for their academic success (Demie and Huat See, 2023). This can include offering English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs, employing bilingual teaching assistants, and creating a language-rich environment that encourages the use of multiple languages.

Supporting language development is crucial for the academic success of BAME learners who come from multilingual backgrounds. This can include offering English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs, employing bilingual teaching assistants, and creating a language-rich environment that encourages the use of multiple languages(Demie and Huat See, 2023; Morris et al, 2021). To support language development, educators can offer EAL programs that provide targeted instruction in English language skills, employ bilingual teaching assistants who can provide language support in students' native languages, and create a language-rich environment that encourages the use of multiple languages. This can include providing opportunities for students to use their native languages in the classroom, incorporating language development activities into the curriculum, and providing resources and support for language learning.

Addressing Socio-Economic Disparities Addressing

Socio-economic disparities is essential for promoting educational equity. This can involve providing additional resources and support for students from low-income families, such as free school meals, after-school programs, and academic tutoring. Schools can also partner with community organizations to provide holistic support that addresses the broader socio-economic needs of BAME learners and their families. Addressing socio-economic disparities is essential for promoting educational equity for BAME learners (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021). This can involve providing additional resources and support for students from low-income families, such as free school meals, after-school programs, and academic tutoring. Schools can also partner with community organizations to provide holistic support that addresses the broader socio-economic needs of BAME learners and their families. To address socio-economic disparities, schools can provide additional resources and support for students from low-income families, partner with community organizations to provide holistic support, and implement programs and initiatives that promote educational equity. This can include providing free school meals, after-school programs, and academic tutoring, partnering with community organizations to provide resources and support for families, and implementing programs and initiatives that address the specific needs of low-income students.

Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health and well-being are critical for effective learning. Schools can support the mental health of BAME learners by providing access to counseling services, creating a positive school climate, and implementing programs that promote emotional intelligence and resilience. It is also important to address the specific mental health needs of BAME learners, who may experience additional stressors related to discrimination and cultural dissonance (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021)

Promoting mental health and well-being is critical for the academic success of BAME learners. Schools can support the mental health of BAME learners by providing access to counseling services, creating a positive school climate, and implementing programs that promote emotional intelligence and resilience. It is also important to address the specific mental health needs of BAME learners, who may experience additional stressors related to discrimination and cultural dissonance. To promote mental health and well-being, schools can provide access to counseling services, create a positive school climate, and implement programs that promote emotional intelligence and resilience (Jacobs and Pentari, 2021). This can include providing individual and group counseling, creating a supportive and inclusive school environment, and implementing programs that teach students coping strategies and promote emotional resilience.

Combating Discrimination and Bias

Combating discrimination and bias is essential for creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. Schools can implement anti-bias training for staff, promote inclusive policies, and create platforms for students to discuss and address issues of discrimination. It is also important to actively engage with the experiences and perspectives of BAME learners to create a more equitable educational environment (Debnam et al., 2023).

Combating discrimination and bias is essential for creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for BAME learners. Schools can implement anti-bias training for staff, promote inclusive policies, and create platforms for students to discuss and address issues of discrimination. It is also important to actively engage with the experiences and perspectives of BAME learners to create a more equitable educational environment. To combat discrimination and bias, schools can implement anti-bias training for staff, promote inclusive policies, and create platforms for students to discuss and address issues of discrimination. This can include providing professional development for teachers and staff on issues of bias and discrimination, implementing policies that promote inclusivity and equity, and creating opportunities for students to share their experiences and perspectives on issues of discrimination.

Building Strong Home-School Partnerships

Building strong partnerships between schools and BAME families is crucial for supporting students' educational success. Schools can engage with families through regular communication, culturally relevant events, and inclusive decision-making processes (Demie and Huat See, 2023); (Debnam et al., 2023). By involving parents and caregivers in the educational process, schools can create a more supportive and collaborative learning environment.

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Conclusion

Emotional intelligence, learning, and cognition are deeply interconnected, and understanding these connections is essential for supporting the educational success of BAME learners in London. By addressing the unique challenges faced by these learners and implementing strategies that promote emotional intelligence and inclusive education, schools can create a more equitable and supportive learning environment. This involves fostering self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills among students, as well as addressing socio-economic disparities, promoting mental health and well-being, and combating discrimination and bias. By taking a holistic approach to education, educators and policymakers can help BAME learners achieve their full potential and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

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