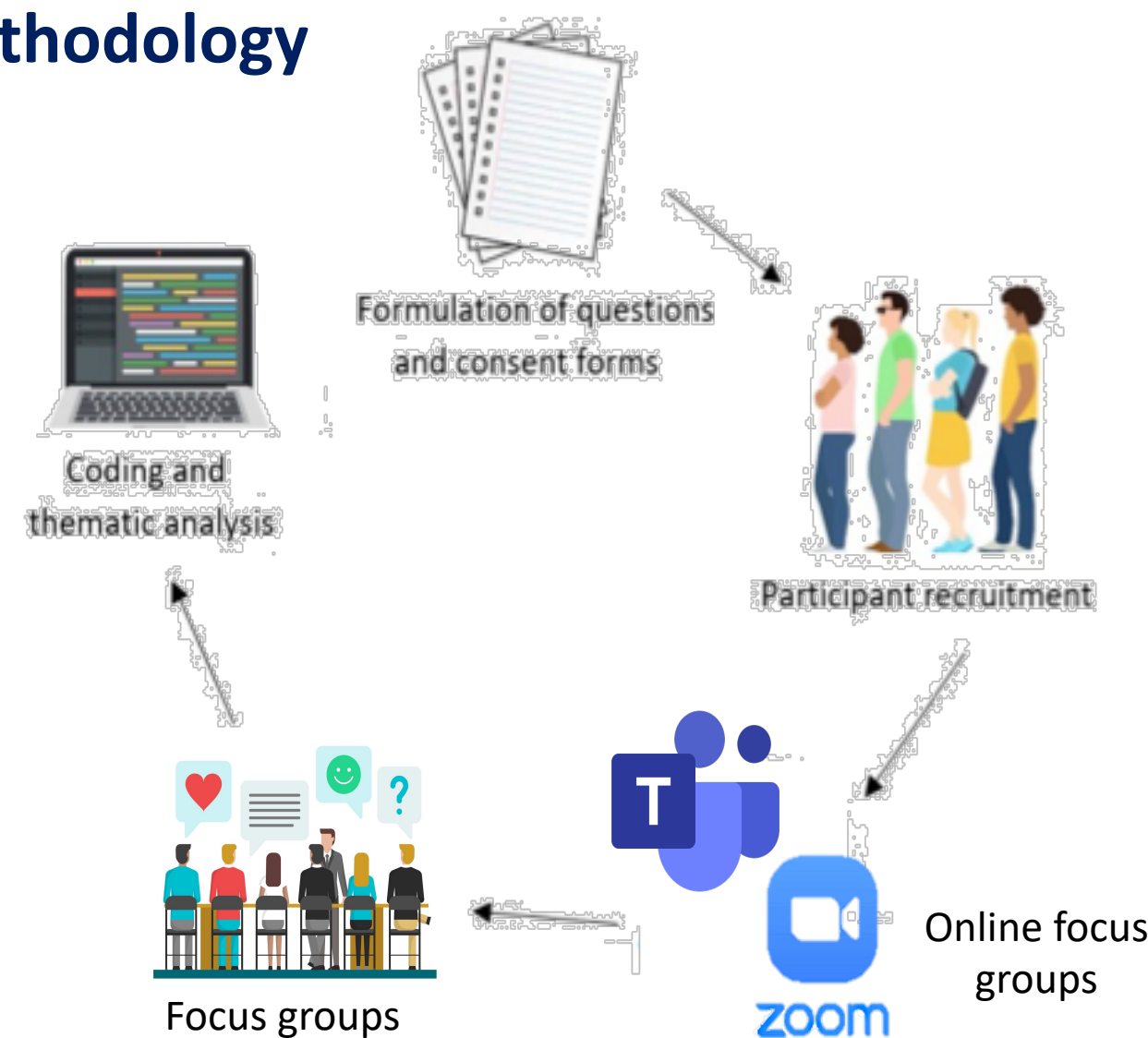


Background

Existing literature has identified Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BME) students enrolled in higher education institutes (HEI) are subjects of attainment disparity and therefore, opportunities. It is the imperative of HEI's to foster equality, and harbour an inclusive environment. This study aimed to probe the level of support available to students and whether it could be a contributor to the attainment disparity, moreover since institutes from the Midlands predominantly enrol students from BME backgrounds how can we better support them.

Methodology



Study Population



White
5

Asian
68



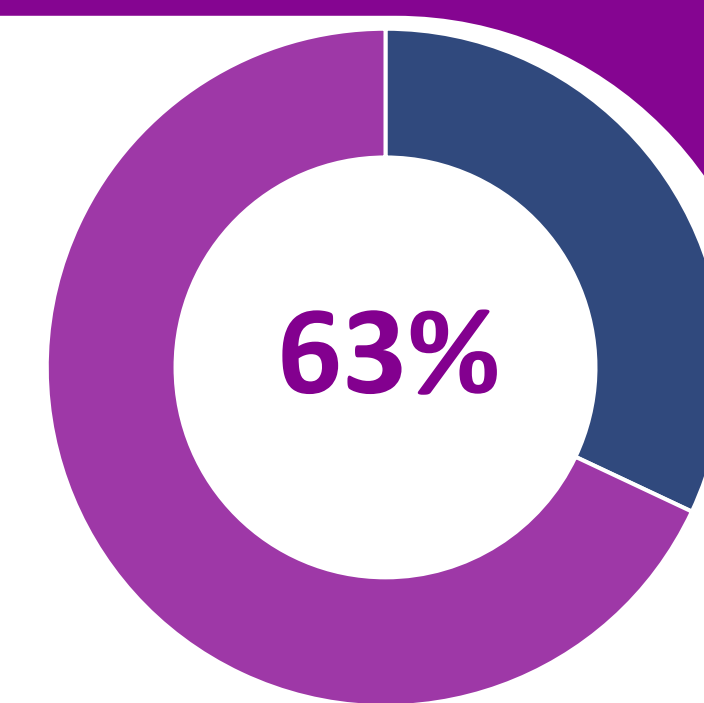
Black
29

Arab
8

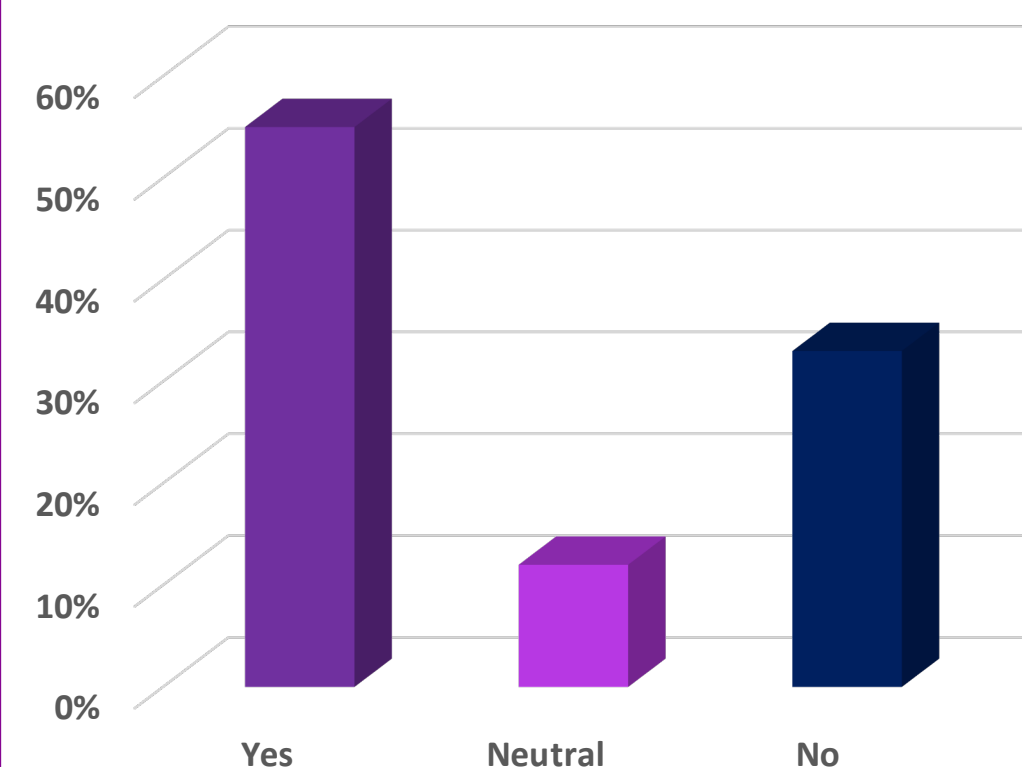
110 students, including 82 females, 28 males, with an average age of 20 years from a variety of universities were interviewed. All students were enrolled on STEM courses and in their final year of study.

Key Findings

When asked whether students were aware of the attainment gap, **63% of students were unaware of both what the term meant and factors which elude to attainment disparities.** Respondents agreed more awareness regarding the issue ought to be raised by HEI and reinforced throughout degree programs.

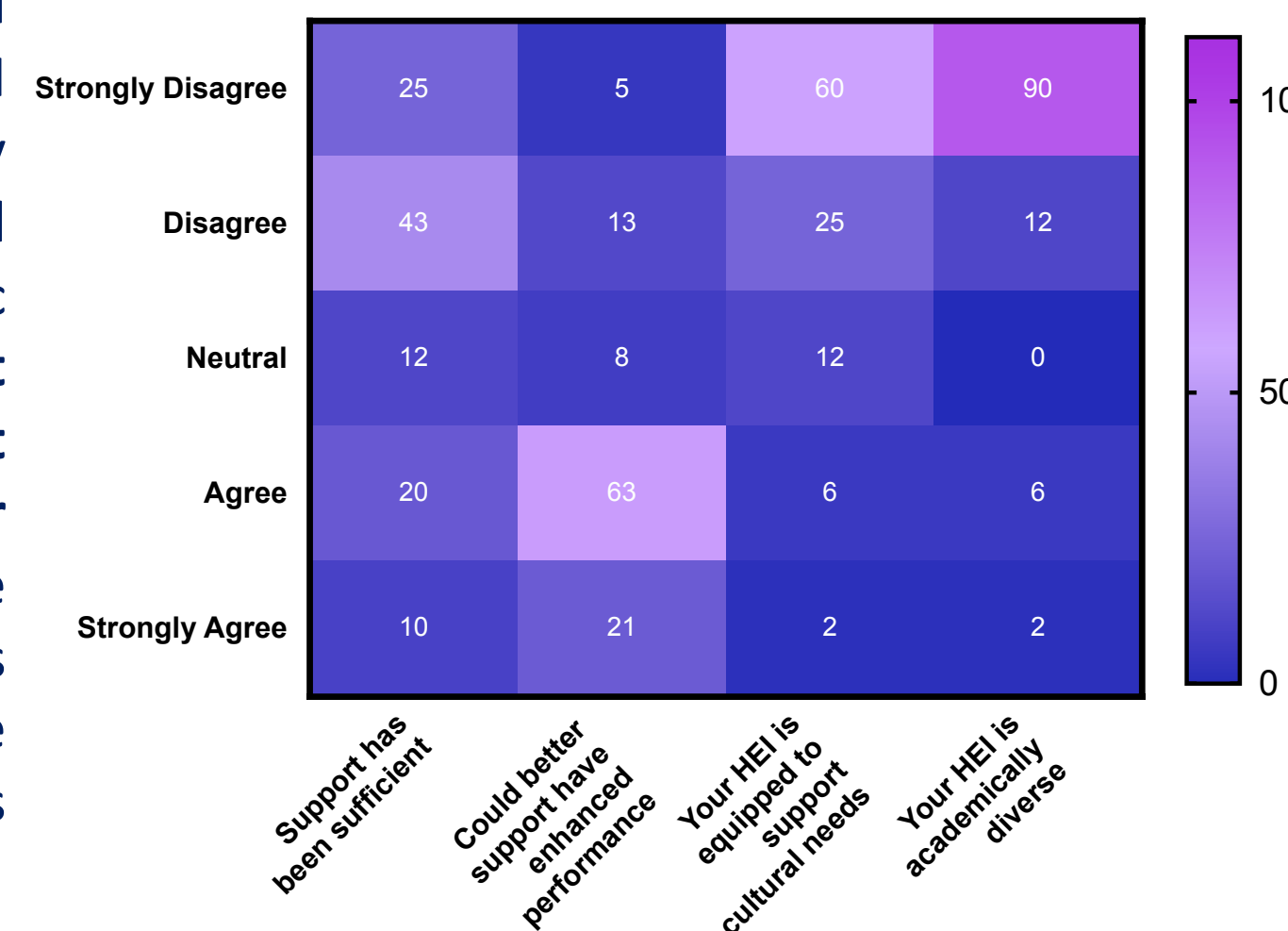


■ Aware ■ Unaware



55% of respondents would be more comfortable speaking to an academic of the same ethnic background regarding personal issues. Whilst 33% agreed that it would not make a difference. Discussions did agree, that cultural awareness from academics would be considerably more useful and a quicker fix in comparison to recruitment.

Participants mostly disagreed that pastoral support at their HEI was sufficient and the majority agreed enhanced support could have improved their academic performance. **77% students felt their university was not equipped to support their cultural needs.** Finally a large proportion of participants strongly disagreed with the statement their HEI was ethnically diverse.



"There is no ethnic diversity in the Biology department amongst staff. Majority of the staff are white, and only two lecturers are brown and non are black. I feel the staff do not represent the student population."



"Speaking to staff from the same background as me, I would feel like they are more likely to understand my situation as they have first-hand experience. but non-BME staff could also provide this support."



"I don't feel it would make a difference to me, however, I could understand that some students would feel more comfortable speaking to a tutor of the same ethnic background"

Recommendations

Whilst students agreed HEI excelled in certain elements, but highlighted enhanced BME representation throughout degree programmes was necessary. This includes inculcating conversations around diversity, brining in BME role models. Establishing a "safe-haven" for conversation. Participants strongly felt staff members could better empathise with BME students, if they were more culturally aware.

What universities do well:	How universities can improve:
Good facilities and equipment	Bring in more BME staff
International buddy scheme	Extra English lessons and translators for international students
Widening participation programme	A module where students can teach each other about cultures
International buddy scheme	Scholarships
Wellbeing services	BME society
Prayer rooms/facilities	More representation, Role models
A2B scheme	Take Ramadan into consideration for Muslim students
Societies	Offer more non-alcoholic based events
Diverse student cohort	More cultural events

Future Work

A study looking at enhancing cultural awareness in HEI, which will be led by undergraduate students. Collate data and views from students and staff to develop resources, specifically a handbook to help educate academics. Students will be invited to deliver a summary and aim to widen implementation of the data and handbook, across departments

