

# Unequal Academy: The Struggle and Challenges of Token Black Academics in the United Kingdom

Toyin Ajibade Adisa <sup>1</sup>, Gbolahan Gbadamosi <sup>2</sup> and Kirk Chang <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Royal Docks School of Business and Law, University of East London, University Way, London, E16 2RD, UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Leadership, Strategy and Organisation, Bournemouth University, St. Paul's Lane, Bournemouth, BH8 8GP, UK

Corresponding author email: t.adisa@uel.ac.uk

**In this study, we tackle the under-explored issue of racial inclusion for Black academics in UK universities, thus exposing the harsh reality of ‘tokenism’. We amplify the voices of these academics and thereby reveal the disturbing prevalence of tokenism within UK higher education institutions. Drawing on organizational justice theory, we leverage a mixed-methods approach (24 interviews and 201 questionnaires) to examine their lived experiences, perceptions of belonging, interpretations of fairness within academia and the roadblocks hindering their career progression. We uncover evidence of covert racism, the pressure to outperform non-Black colleagues and epistemic injustice – the invalidation of their knowledge contributions. Interestingly, work prejudice and discrimination are not found to be associated with gender or work mode but rather with citizenship status. Our respondents, all British academics, report higher fairness perceptions, while non-British academics face greater discrimination. Our findings highlight the crucial role of procedural and distributive justice in mitigating prejudice in the workplace for Black academics, underlining the importance of residency status in human resources practices. This research strengthens organizational justice theory and calls for interventions promoting racial equity within UK universities. Our research demonstrates the detrimental impact of tokenism and highlights how it perpetuates racial disadvantages and prevents Black academics from achieving true equality within their institutions.**

## Introduction

Black academics in UK universities face significant systemic barriers that hinder their career progression. Despite their qualifications and hard work, they are often ‘tokenized’ and seen as mere symbols of diversity rather than as valued contributors. This study examines the covert forms of racism, epistemic injustice and discrimination that these individuals endure, highlighting the need for a more just and equitable academic landscape. Recent scholarship has illuminated UK universities’ diversity and inclusion records (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020; Williams *et al.*, 2019). These disparities are evident from the earliest academic career stages, with Black academics facing significant barriers to recruitment and selection (Beattie and Johnson, 2012). Furthermore, Black academics are under-represented at all levels of the academic hierarchy. Statistical data reveal a stark under-representation of Black professors, with

only 0.8% of the total professorial workforce identifying as Black (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2023). A study by the University and College Union (2019) highlights the significant disparities in the attainment of professorial status, with Black academics significantly less likely to achieve this position than their White and Asian counterparts. These systemic inequalities are exacerbated by a cultural climate that often silences discussions about race and racism (Ahmet, 2000). The prevailing discourse prioritizes White comfort and avoids confronting issues of racial injustice, a phenomenon known as ‘White fragility’, which DiAngelo (2019) defines as a ‘state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves’ (p. 60). The crisis of White masculinity, characterized by a sense of loss and resentment, further complicates the experiences of Black academics (Mo, 2022; Robinson, 2000). This study therefore examines the challenges faced by UK Black academics, focusing

on the role of tokenism and its impact on their access to organizational justice.

Tokenism, the practice of hiring or promoting individuals from marginalized groups to give the appearance of diversity without substantive change, is a significant challenge faced by Black academics. While existing research has explored the broader impact of human and social capital on the labour market outcomes of ethnic minority groups (Mouw, 2006; Ogbonna, 2019; Park and Westphal, 2013), there is a notable lack of understanding of the specific impact of tokenism on UK Black academics.

Organizational justice, as conceptualized by Greenberg (1987), refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in organizations. Extant studies identify three types of organizational justice theory (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998; Greenberg, 1987): (1) distributive justice; (2) procedural justice; and (3) interactional justice. This study focuses on procedural justice, which pertains to the fairness of the processes used to make decisions (Thibaut and Walker, 1975). By examining procedural justice, we can learn how tokenism may contribute to feelings of unfairness and discrimination among Black academics. Kanter's (1977) consideration of tokenism as relating to a subgroup representing less than 15% of a dominant group provides a useful framework for understanding the experiences of Black academics and helps to deconstruct racial tokens in a White-dominated context and predominantly White academic institutions.

We ask the following key research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of UK Black academics, particularly in relation to tokenism and organizational justice? (2) To what extent does tokenism contribute to the challenges faced by Black academics? (3) How do perceptions of procedural justice among Black academics relate to their experiences of tokenism and organizational fairness? (4) What are the implications of tokenism and organizational injustice for the career trajectories and well-being of Black academics? We aim to address these questions by exploring the complex interplay between tokenism, organizational justice and the experiences of Black academics in UK higher education institutions (HEIs).

We herein investigate the systemic racism experienced by Black academics in UK HEIs, focusing on the insidious forms of discrimination, including tokenism, that undermine their careers. By amplifying the voices of marginalized Black academics, we shed light on their unique experiences and challenges. The study further extends organizational justice theory by investigating specific factors, such as citizenship status, that exacerbate racial discrimination within academia. The findings offer actionable insights for HEIs to implement policies and practices that promote racial equity and prevent discrimination. By raising public awareness and inspiring further research, this study aims to contribute to dis-

mantling systemic barriers and creating a more just and inclusive academic landscape.

Our study offers three significant contributions. First, we document, explore and analyse the lived experiences of token UK Black academics, thus providing an understanding of their plight, perceptions and career journeys. Second, we present the distinctive and engaging voice of token Black academics and discuss the prevalence of racial tokens in UK HEIs. Third, we provide evidence that tokenism can disturbingly contribute to racial disadvantages for Black academics and prevent them from achieving organizational justice. We commence by giving an overview of the extant literature on tokenism and procedural justice, focusing on race in academia. We then present the methods used for gathering and analysing the study data. The study's findings are then presented, and the paper concludes with a discussion of the study's contributions and implications.

## Literature review

### *Organizational justice theory*

Organizational justice theory provides a framework for understanding perceptions of fairness and equity in organizations (Greenberg, 1987, 1990). It combines social psychological theories and psychological contract paradigms to explain fairness judgements. There are three typologies of organizational justice: (1) distributive justice, which refers to the fairness of outcomes and resource allocation (Adams, 1965); (2) procedural justice, which focuses on the fairness of decision-making processes (Leventhal, 1980); and (3) interactional justice, which concerns the fairness of interpersonal treatment and justifications (Bies and Moag, 1986). We use procedural justice along with tokenism to theorize our study. However, we also employ the concepts of justice and fairness interchangeably to interpret our findings.

Procedural justice can be objective (actual fairness) or subjective (perceived fairness) (Lind and Tyler, 1988). We focus on how objective procedural justice leads to subjective justice perceptions in interpreting our findings. Some researchers argue that subjective procedural justice involves cognitive, affective and behavioural components (see Leventhal, Karuza and Fry, 1980). Cognitive components include comparisons with others (Konovsky, 2000). Perceivers may compare their treatment to that of peers from different backgrounds, such as Black academics compared with White academics or academics of other races. Perceived unfairness can lead to negative emotions (Mikula, 1998; Tyler, 1994) and has important consequences for employee behaviours and attitudes. We aim to examine the reality and outcomes of (un)fairness among UK Black academics.

### *Tokenism and Black academics*

Kanter's (1977) seminal work on tokenism provides a foundational understanding of the experiences of numerically under-represented groups in organizations. The theory posits that tokenized minorities face unique challenges, including performance pressure, dominance by the majority and isolation. Kanter identifies three key perceptual tendencies: (1) assimilation, (2) visibility and (3) contrast. While influential, Kanter's theory has been criticized for its focus on numerical representation and neglect of intersectionality (Aldossari *et al.*, 2023; Simpson, 1997; Watkins *et al.*, 2019; Yoder, 1991).

Extant studies have expanded upon Kanter's work by investigating the intersectionality of tokenism and other forms of marginalization (Poutanen and Kovalainen, 2013; Yoder, 1991). They also consider the long-term consequences of tokenism, including its impact on mental health, career trajectories and organizational outcomes (Poutanen and Kovalainen, 2013; Watkins *et al.*, 2019).

Kanter's work remains valuable, providing a useful framework for understanding the challenges faced by tokenized groups and highlighting the importance of addressing numerical imbalances in organizations, but it requires a more nuanced and intersectional perspective when studying the experiences of minority groups. Laws (1975) and Kanter (1977) first developed the theory of tokenism to address the challenges faced by women in male-dominated professions. However, the concept is equally applicable to UK Black academics, as both groups represent numerically under-represented minorities. This perspective is particularly significant given the under-utilization of tokenism theory in explaining the challenges faced by UK Black academics.

Our research makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by investigating the impact of tokenism on UK Black academics within HEIs, particularly relating to organizational justice. By examining procedural justice and tokenism, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing perceptions of fairness and equity. Moreover, by exploring the systemic inequalities faced by Black academics, even in 'progressive' institutions, and providing empirical evidence of their lived experiences, we address a critical gap in current scholarship (Harris and Ogbonna, 2023; Hoque and Noon, 1999; Ogbonna, 2019).

Our mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, allows us to comprehensively examine the issue. We study the role of tokenism in perpetuating racial disadvantages and hindering Black academics' attainment of organizational justice. By focusing on the unique challenges faced by Black academics, we contribute new practical and theoretical implications to the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) discourse, as previous studies primarily examine

the subject from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) perspective (Harris and Ogbonna, 2023; Hoque and Noon, 1999; Ogbonna, 2019), neglecting the specific challenges this under-studied group faces. We thus expand upon previous studies, which often take a more generalist approach to organizational justice or focus on broader BAME experiences (Kanter, 1977). While Kanter's seminal work on tokenism provides a foundation for understanding the experiences of marginalized groups (Kanter, 1977), our research offers a more nuanced and intersectional perspective on the intersection of tokenism and racial discrimination.

By examining the role of citizenship status in racial discrimination, we offer a complex understanding of the factors contributing to racial discrimination, which can inform policy and practice and challenge existing assumptions about diversity and inclusion in HEIs (Aldossari *et al.*, 2023; Kanter, 1977; Laws, 1975; Poutanen and Kovalainen, 2013; Watkins *et al.*, 2019; Yoder, 1991). Our approach thus gives a fresh perspective on the intersection of race, ethnicity and nationality, providing a more complex understanding of the factors that contribute to racial discrimination.

### **Methodology**

The multifaceted nature of racial discrimination and tokenism necessitates a methodological approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative methods provide in-depth insights into the subjective experiences, perceptions and narratives of Black academics, enabling the exploration of complex phenomena and the development of theoretical understanding. Conversely, quantitative methods include numerical data and statistical analysis, allowing for the generalization of findings, empirical hypothesis testing and the measurement of disparities.

By employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, we seek to achieve several key objectives. (1) *Complementarity*: Qualitative data can identify key themes and patterns, while quantitative data can confirm or refute these findings and provide statistical evidence. (2) *Triangulation*: The convergence of evidence from multiple methods enhances the validity and reliability of the research. (3) *Comprehensive understanding*: A multifaceted approach is essential for understanding the complex interplay between racial discrimination, tokenism and the experiences of Black academics. We thereby aim to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by UK Black academics, which can inform policy development, interventions and future research as well as contribute to addressing the inequalities experienced by this marginalized group.

We chose a mixed-methods approach to be able to accurately understand the plight and challenges facing

token UK Black academics. The research takes the form of two separate studies: qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative (Study 2). Study 1, in which we used a qualitative approach, is based on in-depth interviews with 24 Black academics working in UK universities. Study 2, in which we used quantitative data from 201 Black academics, broadly hypothesizes tokenism and procedural justice as factors contributing to the plight and challenges of UK Black academics. The completeness and complementarity benefits of the mixed-methods approach (see Venkatesh *et al.*, 2013) enabled us to obtain mutual viewpoints and a total representation of the participants' experiences of working in a White-dominated context. In their investigation of consistently demonstrated bias against ethnic minorities within the workplace on racial discrimination, Hoque and Noon (1999) recommend that future studies on this topic triangulate their extensive quantitative dataset findings by employing several other methods, especially qualitative studies that explore the experiences of ethnic minorities and quantitative studies that help clarify the causality of research variables. The present study aims to bridge this research gap.

We chose the interview (Study 1) and survey (Study 2) methods for data collection. We selected Black academic staff members in UK universities as the research samples (participants) using the snowballing sampling technique. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the data-collection process. We arranged the participant information letter, consent form and other confidentiality measures in line with the guidance of the ethics committee of our university, and obtained ethical approval (ID ETH2223-0254).

### Study 1: Qualitative

We conducted semi-structured interviews with Black academics who work in 15 different UK universities. We recruited 24 Black academics for participation in the study through snowball sampling. To capture a rich and broad range of experiences, we intentionally recruited an equal number of participants from each gender (12 males and 12 females). The participants were required to have had academic work experience of not less than 12 months. We conducted the interviews until we achieved data saturation, which occurred after about 20 interviews, but we conducted an additional four interviews to ensure that no new information would emerge from further interviews. The use of Microsoft Teams helped us immensely to widen the range of our sampling, allowing us to reach participants in various parts of the United Kingdom, without any need for travel. We asked the participants to complete and return a form in which they agreed to participate in the study before each interview. All participants were anonymized using a generic

Table 1. Demographic profiles of 24 interviewees in Study 1 (N = 24)

| Participants   | Gender | Age | Work experience | Position            |
|----------------|--------|-----|-----------------|---------------------|
| Participant 1  | Female | 46  | 8 years         | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 2  | Male   | 37  | 5 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 3  | Female | 40  | 9 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 4  | Male   | 52  | 15 years        | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 5  | Male   | 46  | 8 years         | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 6  | Female | 50  | 12 years        | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 7  | Female | 39  | 5 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 8  | Male   | 49  | 9 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 9  | Female | 48  | 12 years        | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 10 | Female | 57  | 18 years        | Associate professor |
| Participant 11 | Male   | 40  | 7 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 12 | Male   | 60  | 25 years        | Professor           |
| Participant 13 | Female | 52  | 17 years        | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 14 | Male   | 36  | 6 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 15 | Female | 42  | 7 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 16 | Female | 35  | 3 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 17 | Male   | 45  | 8 years         | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 18 | Female | 38  | 4 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 19 | Male   | 40  | 6 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 20 | Male   | 36  | 4 years         | Lecturer            |
| Participant 21 | Female | 47  | 9 years         | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 22 | Female | 44  | 9 years         | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 23 | Male   | 50  | 16 years        | Senior lecturer     |
| Participant 24 | Male   | 51  | 12 years        | Senior lecturer     |

numbering system (Participant 1, Participant 2 and so on). During the interviews, we asked the participants to reflect on and share their lived experiences of being Black academics amid numerous White academics. The research team recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed the interviews. Table 1 gives an overview of the demographics of the participants.

### Data analysis

We thematically analysed the data using a three-stage coding process following Charmaz's (2006) system: (1) initial coding, (2) focused coding and (3) theoretical coding. We first read (and then reread) the interview transcripts to identify the preliminary codes relating to the plight of token Black academics and procedural justice in UK HEIs. We then further refined the initial codes to develop higher-order codes that reflect the impact of tokenism on Black academics (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). Lastly, we discussed, evaluated and refined the higher-order codes with reference to the research question. We finalized the findings after several iterations of this process. Charmaz's (2006) coding system enabled us to move our analysis from the 'ground' to a higher and abstract theoretical level. Table 2 gives a summary of the key themes and associated codes, and provides indicative quotations. It also contains an extensive elaboration of these themes.

Table 2. Key themes and associated codes

| Core themes                                      | Sample codes                                                                                                                                                                             | Aggregate theoretical dimension                                                           | Example data (verbatim samples)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Covert institutional racism                      | A normative preference for White over Black academics for faculty positions.                                                                                                             | Systemic discrimination, injustice and bias.                                              | I was advised by my head of department not to apply, because a White person will be preferred for the position.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                  | The system places being White over merit and Black academics.                                                                                                                            | Tokenism and organizational justice theory.                                               | In my opinion, the university system is biased and anti-Black. My White colleagues with the same qualifications and the same experience that I have are appointed into different faculty positions and promoted above me and other Black colleagues. Seriously, being a Black academic is a disadvantage in this White-dominated society. |
| Working extra hard for promotion and progression | Discreet discrimination that is difficult to prove is perpetrated against Black academics.                                                                                               |                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                  | Black academics work twice as hard to achieve promotion and academic progress.                                                                                                           | Systemic discrimination, bias, tokenism and procedural injustice.                         | Being Black means that I must work harder to progress. I think the system and the White people here perceive us [Black people] as second fiddle... So, I need to work many times harder to achieve progress.                                                                                                                              |
|                                                  | Black academics with similar profiles as White colleagues not being promoted.<br>More White academics get promoted and enjoy smooth career progression than Black academics.             |                                                                                           | In theory, the criteria for promotion are the same for everybody. In practice, White academics have different criteria to Black academics. Black academics do not have the White colour, which is a major criterion. Therefore, we work mercilessly harder to achieve promotions and progression.                                         |
| Epistemic injustice against Black scholarship    | Black academics' research is rejected because their stories do not resonate well with their White counterparts.                                                                          | Epistemic injustice against Black academics because of their token number – tokenism.     | Being Black negatively affects our working lives... Our applications for promotion are rejected the same way our stories are rejected in top journals... making progression difficult for us.                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                  | Epistemic prevalence of White supremacy places White academics over Black academics.                                                                                                     |                                                                                           | I think it is a campaign against the Black people – it is what it is.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                  | White supremacy is rigidly enforced, both ideologically, academically and socioeconomically... thus disadvantaging Black academics (this is also evident in the two sample codes above). | The legitimization of White supremacy – discrimination and organizational justice theory. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

### Findings

Our analysis of the study findings provides insights into the experiences of Black academics working in different UK universities. The participants shared their experiences as both numerical and racial minorities. They presented themselves as individuals who struggled to manage numeric and racial tokenism and expressed their lack of fulfilment in terms of organizational justice. Three major themes emerged from the data: (1) covert institutional racism; (2) the need to work

extra hard for promotion and career progression; and (3) epistemic injustice against Black scholarship. The participants reflected on their Black racial affiliation to narrate their experiences.

### Covert institutional racism

The first theme in our findings is covert institutional racism, which has become popular in Britain, especially in academia (Sian, 2019). Its widespread nature,

unfortunately, affects Black people more than it does other minority groups. For example, statistical evidence suggests that nearly 50% of Black Caribbean people and 30% of Black African people experience racism (Owolade, 2023). However, the clandestine nature of racism has often made it difficult to prove or challenge, as evidenced in the participants' criticism of their institutions as covertly racist:

It is not overt. It is quite subtle and very difficult to prove... They are very professional about the racism. I have been racially abused and discriminated against on many occasions. For example, a White colleague once told me that she thought I was a cleaner, because Black people are usually cleaners. I was really upset, but I did not report it, because I can't prove it. (Participant 5, senior lecturer)

Additionally, the participants commented on how their White colleagues have been placed and favoured over them in recruitment into faculty positions in their places of work and the implications thereof on their careers:

I think it is a campaign against the Black race. I have been in this university for 5 years, and faculty positions have always been given to my White colleagues even when I was the most qualified. I remember a White colleague who joined us as a lecturer and was given two top faculty positions within 2 years. The head of the department told me that the dean wanted a White person in the positions and advised me not to quote him. I think it is unfair. I have experienced this almost everywhere that I have worked, and it has negatively affected my career. (Participant 7, lecturer)

I think the university's management team prefers non-Black academics for faculty leadership positions. For example, my White colleague – with a meagre academic profile – was appointed over us [Black academics], even though we had better profiles, and were more qualified. Unfortunately, we cannot appeal against the decision. Most of the decision-makers, both at the university and faculty levels, are White, and they prefer non-Blacks. (Participant 9, senior lecturer)

The following participants shared their experiences in recruitment that evidence racism and injustice:

A particular position became vacant in the faculty, and I approached the dean for a discussion about the position. To my surprise, he told me that the management team already had someone in mind and that it was unlikely that I would be considered for the position – but I could still apply for it, if I wanted to do so. Eventually, a non-Black colleague was appointed to the position. I was told that I could not appeal the decision of the promotion panel. (Participant 5, senior lecturer)

I applied for a faculty position, and I did not get it. My friend, a White colleague who was a member of the panel, though unofficially, told me, 'I know you are the most qual-

ified. You have all the requirements but one: You didn't have the required skin colour. You are Black'. It hurts me, but I can't prove it. (Participant 17, senior lecturer)

The covert nature of the racism and a lack of evidence were reported by all but three participants. Thus, the participants cannot report instances of racial abuse and discrimination, because they occurred covertly, and the participants cannot prove they are being discriminated against. Our data reveal that racism is covertly endemic in UK universities, and to excel in this racially charged terrain remains a struggle for Black academics.

### *The need to work extra hard for promotion and career progression*

All the participants commented about the impact of their Black skin colour on their career progression. While all the participants held doctoral degrees, had published articles in CABS-ranked journals and had presented papers at prestigious conferences (e.g. the Academy of Management and the British Academy of Management), they still needed to overcome racial impediments and work extra hard to be promoted or wait a significant amount of time to get half as far as their White counterparts had. All the participants commented on their Black skin colour as a barrier to their promotion and career progression, for example:

My two White friends [Ree and Roo] and I started lecturing immediately after we had completed our PhD studies in 1998. We have almost the same academic profile, because we studied the same course, published articles together and presented conference papers together as co-authors. I should mention that the three of us work in different universities, but all are in the United Kingdom. Ree and Roo became professors in 2003 and 2004, respectively, and I became a professor in 2010. I appealed several promotion outcomes, but to no avail. I needed to have twice as much, in quality and quantity, as Ree and Roo had before I became a professor. I remember applying for a professorial position at Roo's university in 2005, and I did not get it. Roo – not officially, though – told me that a White guy who did not have half of my academic profile got the job. 'You didn't get it because you are Black', she concluded. (Participant 12, professor)

Being Black means that I must work harder – for me, more than thrice as hard as my White colleagues. For example, during our last promotion exercise, two members of my department applied for the position of associate professor. I was not promoted, despite having submitted my application backed up by 45 publications – and my White colleague, who had less than ten publications, was promoted. During the feedback session, my line manager said, 'Yes, you have the requirements, but you don't have the required skin colour – you are Black'. He claimed it was a joke, but

I believed he spoke the real reason why I had not been promoted. Unfortunately, I cannot appeal against the decision. I accepted it as the price I must pay for being Black. (Participant 21, senior lecturer)

I applied for an associate professorship along with a White colleague, and I was not promoted. I was sure I was even more qualified than my colleague who was eventually promoted. He was magnanimous enough to share his application form with me, which indeed revealed that he was far less qualified than I was. Fortunately for me, I was allowed to appeal the decision. The decision not to promote me was later overturned, and I must say, it was because I presented my colleague's application, which showed I had been discriminated against. The dean also apologized to me. (Participant 10, associate professor)

The above excerpts question the procedural justice inherent in many UK universities and show how preference for White academics influences the administration of justice and motivates unfair and unethical behaviour in academia.

### *Epistemic injustice against Black scholarship*

In our data analysis, we uncover patterns of epistemic injustice that Black academics are experiencing in UK HEIs because of their racial minority and identity status. The participants believe that the fact that they are Black often negatively affects their scholarship and epistemically intensifies their struggles as Black scholars. For example, the participants believe that their articles often suffer rejections from editors and reviewers, the majority of whom are White. They believe that editorship of top Western books and journals is based on the White supremacy of racist editors who find Black stories (especially African stories) inappropriate for their platforms. The participants also believe their scholarly work may have been rejected because of their names, which reveal their Black identity, for example:

I think that they don't like our stories. We are Black, and I think the White supremacy conundrum goes beyond the idea that only White people should be promoted or occupy faculty positions. I think it extends to publishing only White people's stories. (Participant 1, lecturer)

This finding resonates with Grimes's (2001) and Mignolo's (2009) conclusion that White supremacy places White people, both ideologically and socioeconomically, as superior to every other race and systematically positions non-White people (especially Black people) as ignorant and incapable of generating knowledge. The participants also believe that their struggles are enormous because they lack representatives in the editorship of these journals and publications who would make decisions in their favour:

The majority of the editorial teams of top journals, such as CABS journals, are White people, and they decide what is published and what is not. Perhaps that is why fewer Black stories, especially African stories, are published. We don't have the numbers... You can go and check – out of the total number of articles they publish in a year, how many are authored by Black scholars? And how many were undertaken in the Global South? The injustice being done to us is epistemic – simply because we don't have the numbers to make a case for us. (Participant 24, senior lecturer)

I think Black stories and the African context really don't appeal to most editors and reviewers of leading journals, and our names always help them to identify our Black identity, and they just find excuses to reject our papers. One editor told me that she often (subconsciously, though) feels that any paper submitted by Black people, which she is always able to identify by the authors' names, lacks merit and is unsuitable for the journal, and she often desk-rejects them. (Participant 6, senior lecturer)

Here, the participants' experience of publishing in top journals is characterized by rejections, and it is based on racism and tokenism. Research has found that few Black stories are published in the leading journals because they are considered unfit for publication (Cox, 2004; Diaz and Bergman, 2013). Thus, Black scholars struggle to penetrate the powerful networks of 'global knowledge' (Ibarra-Colado, 2006, p. 465).

A senior lecturer commented on how the injustice against Black academics is well scripted and released:

I think it is a well-prepared plan against Black academics. The White majority dominates and prevents us from getting faculty positions and promotions. Their fellow White editors and reviewers at the journals make sure our articles are not published by rejecting them. This reveals why we have few Black professors in the United Kingdom. I think the plan is to make sure that there are few Black academics at the top. It is an unfortunate injustice against Black academics and scholarship. (Participant 23, senior lecturer)

Black scholars struggle to disseminate their work in the elite scholarly networks, which are dominated by White gate hegemonic actors (Stanley, 2006), who determine 'good' and 'bad' papers and theories (Mehrpouya and Willmott, 2018). The struggle is huge, and the problem is real. This paper sheds light on the great magnitude of these issues.

### *Study 2: Quantitative*

Following Study 1, in which we provided qualitative evidence of tokenism (e.g. Black academics currently experience the adverse consequences of tokenism), in Study 2, a quantitative study, we further investigated the role of prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. We identified the potential predictors among the selected

research variables. We determined the selected variables as positive attitudes towards the organization (affective commitment and job satisfaction), organizational justice (procedural justice, distributive justice and procedural unfairness) and prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. The study thus focuses on these variables as potential precursors of prejudice and workplace discrimination. As such, we have aimed to fulfil two objectives using a quantitative approach: (1) to investigate the extent to which differences exist in gender, work mode and British citizenship among the study variables; and (2) to investigate the direction of the relationship among the study variables and the extent to which the variables predict prejudice and discrimination in the workplace.

### *Development of the hypotheses*

In the literature review presented above, we explored the relationship between tokenism (superficial inclusion) and three potential influences: gender, work mode (full-time or part-time) and British citizenship. We also examined relevant constructs, like affective commitment, job satisfaction, organizational justice (procedural and distributive), procedural unfairness and prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. These factors can affect employee attitudes (commitment) and behaviours (turnover). For example, studies suggest that satisfied employees are more committed to their work than dissatisfied employees (Saridakis *et al.*, 2020).

Extant studies demonstrate a strong link between procedural and distributive justice (focusing on fair processes and outcomes) and equitable employment practices (Le, Palmer Johnson and Fujimoto, 2021). Procedural justice relates to employee inclusion through the concept of voice in decision-making (Le, Palmer Johnson and Fujimoto, 2021). Inclusion encompasses feelings of acceptance by colleagues, participation in decision-making, access to resources and valued membership within work teams (Le *et al.*, 2018; Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006). Thus, perceptions of organizational justice align strongly with inclusion.

Conversely, employee perceptions of prejudice or discrimination based on race or ethnicity can cause negative consequences, including resignation, legal action, conflict, performance decline and psychological/physical health issues (Banaji, Fiske and Massey, 2021; James, Lovato and Cropanzano, 1994; Mannix and Neale, 2005). Our research employs the Workplace Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) scale (James, Lovato and Cropanzano, 1994) to assess such perceptions.

Research on gender and justice perceptions reveals mixed findings. Dulebohn *et al.* (2016) conclude that women process information related to fairness differently than men, and both gender and distributive jus-

tice influence bargaining behaviour. Olowookere *et al.* (2020) report similar gender-based variations in procedural and interactional justice perceptions but not distributive justice, with men having a slight advantage. Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* (2019) suggest a link between female gender and higher turnover intentions, while Marsden, Kalleberg and Cook (1993) observe more substantial affective commitment among women. However, Becker, Klein and Meyer (2009) and Chanana (2021) find no significant gender differences in job satisfaction.

Harris and Ogbonna (2023) highlight the need for intersectional analyses, considering how factors like race and religion might interact with gender. We aimed to bridge these gaps by focusing on gender differences and providing an in-depth examination of the challenges facing Black academics. Additionally, we expected to find an inverse relationship between organizational justice and turnover intention, with employees perceiving fairness being less likely to leave than those who do not perceive fairness. Griffith, Hom and Gaertner (2000) add that there is a connection between low procedural justice and high turnover. Triana, García and Colella (2010) further suggest that organizational efforts promoting diversity can strengthen the positive effect of perceived fairness on employee commitment.

We thus set the research hypotheses as follows:

- H1a*: Gender significantly influences affective commitment, job satisfaction, procedural justice, distributive justice, procedural unfairness, turnover intention and workplace discrimination among employees.
- H1b*: Work mode significantly influences affective commitment, job satisfaction, procedural justice, distributive justice, procedural unfairness, turnover intention and workplace discrimination among employees.
- H1c*: Citizenship significantly influences affective commitment, job satisfaction, procedural justice, distributive justice, procedural unfairness, turnover intention and workplace discrimination among employees.
- H2a*: Workplace discrimination (WPDI) is negatively correlated with affective commitment, job satisfaction, procedural justice, distributive justice and procedural unfairness.
- H2b*: Workplace discrimination (WPDI) is positively correlated with turnover intention.
- H3*: Workplace discrimination (WPDI) is predicted by negative affective commitment, low job satisfaction, low procedural justice perceptions, low distributive justice perceptions, high perceptions of procedural unfairness and high turnover intention.

Table 3. Research variables and measures

| Variables                                           | Example item and descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Source                              | Cronbach alpha |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Affective commitment                                | <i>'I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own'</i><br>The six-item scale had three items negatively worded, which were reversed for analysis.                                                                        | Myer and Allen (1997)               | 0.82           |
| Job satisfaction                                    | <i>'Overall, I am very satisfied with my current job'</i><br>Two-item scale.                                                                                                                                                           | Conlon, Porter and Parks (2004)     | 0.78           |
| Turnover intention                                  | <i>'I am likely to leave the organization in the next 12 months'</i><br>Three-item scale.                                                                                                                                              | Mitchell et al. (2001)              | 0.95           |
| Procedural justice                                  | We asked questions about the procedures used to determine an outcome related to the respondent in the last 5 years, such as:<br><i>'Have you had influence over the outcomes arrived at by those procedures?'</i><br>Seven-item scale. | Colquitt (2001)                     | 0.92           |
| Distributive justice                                | As for procedural justice:<br><i>'Are the outcomes you receive appropriate for the work you have completed?'</i><br>Four-item scale.                                                                                                   | Colquitt (2001)                     | 0.95           |
| Procedural unfairness                               | <i>'Superiors aim to be well informed before they make any decisions'</i><br>Five-item scale.                                                                                                                                          | De Boer et al. (2002)               | 0.77           |
| Workplace Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) | <i>'Where I work, all people are treated the same, regardless of their racial/ethnic group'</i><br>Eleven-item scale.                                                                                                                  | James, Lovato and Cropanzano (1994) | 0.78           |

### Sample and procedures

We employ a cross-sectional design using a survey methodology, with the data collected from Black academics working in UK universities. Following Harris and Ogbonna (2023), we loosely define 'academic' as any individual employed by a university with a primary role of either teaching or research (or both). We obtained a total of 201 fully completed and usable responses over 3 months of a fully electronic survey. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2022) estimate the number of UK Black academics as 5205, with the known ethnicity being 17% BME in 2020–2021, increasing by one percentage point (year on year) since 2018–2019. We approached the respondents through the various social networking groups of Black academics, including those on social media. We shared the URL of the e-survey within these groups and received positive responses from the participants.

The instrument was a detailed e-survey designed to elicit structured responses and some open-ended items with the aim of obtaining evidence relating to Black academics' possible challenges, personal characteristics, as well as work-related prejudices and discrimination. The questionnaire included a cover letter providing information on the purpose of the survey, a guarantee of anonymity and an affirmation of the participants' right

to withdraw from the study at any time. The measures we used to obtain the data are detailed in the following sections (see Table 3).

### Measures

All the scales used are self-report measures, and all the study variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale (from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'), except for procedural and distributive justice, for which we applied a six-point Likert scale (from 'never' to 'very often', adding the sixth choice of 'not applicable'). We did so because of the nature of the items and to avoid forcing the participant to respond in relation to a non-applicable item (Colquitt, 2001).

**Demographic profiles:** We also asked the participants questions about their demographic information, including their gender, age, overall years of work experience, the years for which they had worked in their present organization, their mode of work (full-time or part-time) and whether they had British citizenship.

### Quantitative findings

Table 4 shows the respondents' demographic profiles. In terms of gender, 40.8% of the participants are female,

Table 4. Summary of respondent profiles in Study 2 (N = 201)

|                                              | Count | Ratio (%) |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Gender                                       |       |           |
| Male                                         | 118   | 58.7      |
| Female                                       | 82    | 40.8      |
| Other/prefer not to say                      | 1     | 0.5       |
| Age (years old)                              |       |           |
| 21–25                                        | 1     | 0.5       |
| 26–30                                        | 15    | 7.5       |
| 31–40                                        | 57    | 28.4      |
| 41–50                                        | 74    | 36.8      |
| Over 50                                      | 54    | 26.9      |
| Length of work experience (accumulated)      |       |           |
| Under 5 years                                | 36    | 17.9      |
| 5–10 years                                   | 58    | 28.9      |
| 11–15 years                                  | 31    | 15.4      |
| Over 15 years                                | 76    | 37.8      |
| Length of work experience (current employer) |       |           |
| Under 5 years                                | 114   | 56.7      |
| 5–10 years                                   | 58    | 28.9      |
| 11–15 years                                  | 13    | 6.5       |
| Over 15 years                                | 16    | 8.0       |
| Work mode                                    |       |           |
| Full-time                                    | 171   | 85.1      |
| Part-time                                    | 30    | 14.9      |
| Citizenship                                  |       |           |
| British citizen                              | 115   | 57.2      |
| Non-British citizen                          | 86    | 42.8      |

and only one respondent (0.5%) did not disclose their gender. The average age of the participants is 41–50 years old (where  $SD = 0.93$ ); the mean years of their overall work experience are 5–10 years (where  $SD = 1.15$ ); and the mean years for which the participants had worked with their current employer are under 5 years (where  $SD = 0.91$ ). Furthermore, 85.1% of the respondents reported being engaged in full-time work and 14.9% in part-time work. Approximately 57% are British citizens.

#### Common method variance

All the data in this study were obtained at one time using one instrument (see Table 5); consequently, they might be subject to common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003), which is often evidenced by inflated correlations between variables (Spector, 2006). We adopted Harman's single-factor test to examine the potential bias of CMV. All the research variables were first merged into one factor, and the results showed a poor fit, suggesting that one single factor of merging all the variables was inappropriate for data analysis ( $\chi^2(1081, N = 201) = 8.02, p < 0.001$ , cumulative variance = 37.38%). We then adopted an unmeasured latent construct method (ULCM) to measure the potential influence of CMV, as recommended by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003). The outcome ( $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.95, p > 0.05$ ) was congruent with the findings of Harman's single-factor test. Based on

these findings, we concluded that the influence of CMV was slim, so the data were accepted for further analysis.

The fact that all the data were obtained at one time by means of one instrument raises the question of CMV bias (CMVB) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003), so both Harman's single-factor test and the ULCM test were adopted to examine the occurrence of CMVB. Notably, the outcome of Harman's single-factor test ( $\chi^2(1081, N = 201) = 8.02, p < 0.001$ , cumulative variance = 37.38%) indicated a low occurrence of CMVB. The outcome of the ULCM test ( $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1.95, p > 0.05$ ) also showed a low occurrence of CMVB. Therefore, we confirmed that the influence of CMVB was very small, so the data were accepted for further analysis.

We applied an independent t-test to determine significant differences in the data regarding gender differences (Table 6), work mode (Table 7) and British citizenship (Table 8).

Regarding gender differences (Table 6), no significant difference was found between males and females in relation to all the study variables; hence, we reject *H1a*. Similarly, in terms of differences in work mode (Table 7), no significant difference was found between work modes (full-time or part-time) in relation to all the study variables. We therefore reject *H1b*. Based on the statistical findings (Tables 6, 7 and 8), we reject *H1a* and *H1b*.

However, regarding differences in citizenship (British or not) (Table 8), we found significant differences in our study variables between academics who self-declare as British citizens and those who report they are not British citizens. We found a difference in relation to four of the seven research variables: procedural justice ( $t(199) = -2.09, p < 0.05$ ), distributive justice ( $t(199) = -2.89, p < 0.01$ ), procedural unfairness ( $t(199) = -2.62, p < 0.05$ ) and WPDI ( $t(199) = 3.24, p < 0.01$ ). British academics perceived lower levels of procedural justice ( $M = 3.81, SD = 1.59$ ), distributive justice ( $M = 3.52, SD = 1.91$ ) and WPDI ( $M = 3.05, SD = 0.47$ ) but higher levels of procedural unfairness ( $M = 3.69, SD = 1.22$ ) than non-British academics. Consequently, *H1c* is partially supported, as we detected differences between British and non-British employees in relation to four research variables. Nevertheless, the direction of the identified difference seems sporadic, as British academics perceived more procedural justice and distributive justice but less procedural unfairness and more discrimination. We further analyse the implications of these findings in the discussion section. Table 9.

Based on the statistical findings (Table 4), WPDI is negatively correlated with affective commitment ( $r = -0.35, p < 0.01$ ), job satisfaction ( $r = -0.46, p < 0.01$ ), procedural justice ( $r = -0.52, p < 0.01$ ), distributive justice ( $r = -0.58, p < 0.01$ ) and procedural unfairness ( $r = -0.41, p < 0.01$ ) but positively correlated with turnover intention ( $r = 0.37, p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the relevant hypotheses (*H2a* and *H2b*) are supported.

Table 5. Summary of research variables and correlation analysis (N = 201)

| (Research variables)                             | Means | SD   | 1                   | 2         | 3        | 4         | 5         | 6        | 7      |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------|------|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------|
| 1 Affective commitment                           | 3.93  | 0.42 | (0.82) <sup>a</sup> |           |          |           |           |          |        |
| 2 Job satisfaction                               | 3.38  | 1.02 | 0.494**             | (0.78)    |          |           |           |          |        |
| 3 Turnover intention                             | 2.85  | 1.22 | -0.428**            | -0.578*** | (0.95)   |           |           |          |        |
| 4 Procedural justice                             | 4.01  | 1.58 | 0.379**             | 0.484**   | -0.414** | (0.92)    |           |          |        |
| 5 Distributive justice                           | 3.85  | 1.92 | 0.308**             | 0.436**   | -0.411** | 0.808***  | (0.95)    |          |        |
| 6 Procedural unfairness                          | 3.89  | 1.25 | 0.258**             | 0.421**   | -0.335** | 0.672***  | 0.667***  | (0.77)   |        |
| 7 Work Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) | 2.95  | 0.54 | -0.348**            | -0.456**  | 0.367**  | -0.522*** | -0.584*** | -0.407** | (0.78) |

<sup>a</sup>Reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha) are presented in parentheses on the diagonal.

\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05.

Table 6. Summary of gender comparison (females vs. males; N = 201)

| (Research variables)                           | Gender (means)       |                       | Independent t-test results |     |                   |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------------------|
|                                                | Male employees (118) | Female employees (82) | t                          | df  | p                 |
| Affective commitment                           | 3.95                 | 3.91                  | 0.78                       | 198 | 0.44              |
| Job satisfaction                               | 3.50                 | 3.19                  | 2.11                       | 156 | 0.04 <sup>a</sup> |
| Turnover intention                             | 2.86                 | 2.83                  | 0.161                      | 198 | 0.87              |
| Procedural justice                             | 3.87                 | 4.22                  | -1.59                      | 198 | 0.11              |
| Distributive justice                           | 3.74                 | 4.01                  | -0.97                      | 152 | 0.33              |
| Procedural unfairness                          | 3.89                 | 3.90                  | -0.03                      | 198 | 0.98              |
| Work Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) | 2.90                 | 3.01                  | -1.36                      | 198 | 0.18              |

<sup>a</sup>The assumed difference existed within the sample of female employees (Levene's test F = 4.57, p < 0.05, variance ratio within the female employees = 34.64%).

Table 7. Summary of work-mode comparison (full-time vs. part-time; N = 201)

| (Research variables)                           | Work mode (means)         |                          | Independent t-test results |     |                   |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------------------|
|                                                | Full-time employees (171) | Part-time employees (30) | t                          | df  | p                 |
| Affective commitment                           | 3.94                      | 3.89                     | 0.60                       | 199 | 0.55              |
| Job satisfaction                               | 3.44                      | 3.02                     | 2.12                       | 199 | 0.05 <sup>a</sup> |
| Turnover intention                             | 2.82                      | 3.02                     | -0.84                      | 199 | 0.40              |
| Procedural justice                             | 3.94                      | 4.37                     | -1.37                      | 199 | 0.17              |
| Distributive justice                           | 3.75                      | 4.41                     | -1.75                      | 199 | 0.08              |
| Procedural unfairness                          | 3.82                      | 4.25                     | -1.74                      | 199 | 0.08              |
| Work Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) | 2.95                      | 2.91                     | 0.45                       | 199 | 0.65              |

<sup>a</sup>The t-value of job satisfaction was at the borderline significance level. The internal variances were similar between full-time employees (var = 0.29) and part-time employees (var = 0.33), indicating a sign of Type I error (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013) and thus the significance should be reserved.

To examine *H3*, we undertook a linear regression analysis with the single-entry method in the calculation, in which we regarded WPDI as the dependent variable and the other research variables as independent variables. The outcome was a regression model with a high condition index (CI = 63.04), implying a sign of profound multicollinearity between the independent variables (cf. regression bias; Aiken and West, 1991). To rectify the potential bias of multicollinearity, we treated the demographic characteristics as control variables and the other research variables as independent variables. We entered the control variables into the first block of pre-

dictors: *gender*, *age*, *length of work experience* (cumulative), *length of work experience* (current employer), *work mode* and *citizenship*. We entered the independent variables into the second block of predictors: *affective commitment*, *job satisfaction*, *turnover intention*, *procedural justice*, *distributive justice* and *procedural unfairness*. The first and second blocks of predictors were entered using the *stepwise entry method* included in the calculation, in which we regarded WPDI as the dependent variable.

The regression coefficients, standard errors and relevant statistics are presented in Table 8. The condition index of the final model is within the conventional

Table 8. Summary of citizenship comparison (British vs. non-British; N = 201)

| (Research variables)                           | Citizenship (means)        |                                | Independent t-test results |           |          |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------|
|                                                | British employees<br>(115) | Non- British employees<br>(86) | <i>t</i>                   | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Affective commitment                           | 3.88                       | 4.00                           | −1.92                      | 199       | 0.06     |
| Job satisfaction                               | 3.33                       | 3.44                           | −0.77                      | 199       | 0.45     |
| Turnover intention                             | 2.87                       | 2.81                           | 0.37                       | 199       | 0.71     |
| Procedural justice                             | 3.81                       | 4.27                           | −2.09                      | 199       | 0.04     |
| Distributive justice                           | 3.52                       | 4.30                           | −2.89                      | 199       | 0.00     |
| Procedural unfairness                          | 3.69                       | 4.16                           | −2.62                      | 199       | 0.01     |
| Work Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) | 3.05                       | 2.81                           | 3.24                       | 199       | 0.00     |

Table 9. Summary of the regression analyses (N = 201)

|                         | Work Prejudice Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) |                |                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                         | Model 1                                        | Model 2        | Model 3        |
| (constant)              | 3.58                                           | 3.91           | 4.08           |
| (condition index)       | 4.26                                           | 8.34           | 10.74          |
| <i>Control variable</i> |                                                |                |                |
| British citizen         | −0.13 (0.06)* <sup>a</sup>                     |                | −0.13(0.06)*   |
| <i>Predictors</i>       |                                                |                |                |
| Distributive justice    |                                                | −0.14(0.02)*** | −0.13(0.02)*** |
| Job satisfaction        |                                                | −0.13(0.03)*** | −0.13(0.03)*** |
| R <sup>2</sup>          | 0.341                                          | 0.391          | 0.405          |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | 0.338                                          | 0.385          | 0.396          |
| F                       | 103.187***                                     | 63.641***      | 44.714***      |
| F change                | 103.187                                        | 16.209         | 4.567          |

<sup>a</sup>Regression coefficients and standard errors.

\*\*\**p* < 0.001; \*\**p* < 0.01; \**p* < 0.05.

threshold (CI = 30; Aiken and West, 1991), indicating that the chance of multicollinearity bias is slim. Thus, the data were appropriate for further analysis. Based on the results of our regression analysis, we concluded that WPDI is negatively predicted by British citizenship ( $B = -0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), distributive justice ( $B = -0.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and job satisfaction ( $B = -0.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a total variance ( $R^2 = 41$ ,  $F = 44.71$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These statistics indicate that only two of the six variables (i.e. job satisfaction and distributive justice) are supported.

### Discussion and conclusion

Study 1, the quantitative study, has three main findings. (1) We found a significant difference between academics who self-declared as British citizens and those who self-declared as non-British citizens. The respondents who are British citizens considered themselves more significantly discriminated against than non-British citizens. When people consider themselves to possess some rights, they are sensitive to those rights being violated or taken away. They are likely to be particularly alert to and intolerant of unfairness. (2) Work prejudice and dis-

crimination are inversely associated with affective commitment, job satisfaction, procedural justice, distributive justice and procedural unfairness but are positively associated with turnover intention. (3) A low occurrence of job satisfaction and distributive justice for a Black British academic is highly predictive that they may suffer a high level of work prejudice and discrimination. Study 1 reveals the extent and frightening reality of Black academics' plight and struggles against racism and discrimination. The findings reveal that being Black has a negative impact on Black academics' promotion, career progression and scholarships. Additionally, we find that UK Black academics struggle with both secretly and professionally paraded institutional racism, which the victims often find difficult to prove.

Racism within UK academia, while historically present (Cole, 2017), has intensified, manifesting in systemic discrimination against Black academics. Our study results reveal that White academics are favoured in faculty positions, and this discrimination undermines principles of organizational justice, especially procedural and interactional justice (Greenberg, 1987, 1990). The participants knew and were sometimes even told

(albeit jokingly or unofficially) that their Black colour was why they did not get certain faculty positions. This finding suggests a lack of procedural and interactional justice regarding fairness, equity and objectivity (Bies and Moag, 1986; Leventhal, 1980). Our findings reveal that Black academics are often required to work extra hard to be promoted or to get half as far as their White counterparts. This disparity highlights a lack of objective procedural justice (Lind and Tyler, 1988). These findings reveal a pervasive injustice against Black scholarship within UK higher education, demanding urgent attention and systemic reform.

Another significant finding relates to the disproportionate rejection of scholarly work by Black academics by elite journal editors and reviewers, who are predominantly White. This phenomenon can be attributed to three factors. (1) White supremacy has a pervasive influence, which marginalizes non-White individuals, particularly Black academics (Grimes, 2001; Mignolo, 2009). (2) The under-representation of Black scholars on elite journal editorial and review boards limits opportunities for fair evaluation and publication of Black scholarship. (3) The limited number of Black academics at the top in the UK HEIs perpetuates a 'tokenistic' system wherein Black individuals are often isolated and marginalized, hindering their career advancement and scholarly impact (Kanter, 1977). This systemic discrimination is evident in the alarmingly low proportion of Black professors in UK universities – at only 1% (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2022). In summary, the injustices and discrimination that Black academics in UK universities face are the consequences of tokenism, and the under-representation of Black academics reinforces White supremacy and discrimination, creating a vicious cycle that hinders the advancement of Black scholarship.

In this study, we examined the impact of tokenism on the experiences of Black academics within HEIs, focusing on their perceptions of organizational justice. We employed a mixed-methods approach to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative findings revealed instances of covert institutional racism, the disproportionate effort required for career advancement and the devaluation of Black scholarship. While the quantitative data did not identify significant gender or work mode differences, it did indicate that British Black academics perceived higher levels of procedural and distributive justice than their non-British counterparts. Interestingly, for British Black academics, a sense of distributive justice and job satisfaction were negatively associated with reported experiences of workplace prejudice and discrimination. These findings underscore the complex relationship between tokenism, organizational justice and the experiences of Black academics in UK HEIs.

The practice of tokenism, whereby Black academics are appointed solely to fulfil diversity quotas, can have detrimental consequences. Such an approach can perpetuate stereotypical expectations, limit the influence of Black scholars and fuel debates about meritocracy versus representation. Moreover, tokenism can restrict career advancement opportunities, confining Black academics to narrowly defined roles that do little to address systemic under-representation. To create a truly inclusive academic environment, it is imperative to dismantle systemic barriers through targeted interventions. These interventions should include addressing implicit biases in recruitment, mentorship, retention and promotion processes, as well as fostering a robust pipeline of Black talent through dedicated support programmes. Ultimately, the goal should be to create an inclusive academic environment wherein Black scholars can flourish based on their qualifications and contribute meaningfully to the intellectual discourse.

### *Theoretical contributions*

Our research contributes to organizational justice theory by investigating the interplay between objective procedural justice and subjective perceptions of fairness among Black academics. We posit that Black academics' sense of justice is shaped through social comparisons with colleagues of different races. Perceived procedural unfairness, as operationalized by our measures, is hypothesized to be a significant predictor of adverse emotional and behavioural outcomes, including work prejudice and turnover intentions. This finding aligns with existing scholarship on organizational justice (Mikula, 1998; Tyler, 1994) and extends it by focusing on the specific experiences of Black academics in a racialized workplace context. Furthermore, our study addresses a critical gap in the literature relating to discriminatory human resources practices. While research has documented gender and sexual-orientation bias extensively (Drydakis, 2015; Dulebohn *et al.*, 2016; Olowookere *et al.*, 2020), the impact of racial bias on Black academics' experiences within academia remains understudied. This research sheds light on this neglected area by highlighting racial bias as a crucial contextual factor influencing academic attitudes and behaviours. By demonstrating the strong association between procedural (un)fairness and negative work outcomes for Black academics, we contribute significantly to understanding racial discrimination in organizational justice theory.

Finally, our mixed-methods approach strengthens the research design. By combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative open-ended responses, we achieved a comprehensive understanding of Black academics' lived experiences of fairness (or lack thereof) in their

workplaces. This approach transcends the limitations of single-method studies, which often rely solely on self-reported assessments or interviews. The enriched data allowed for a nuanced and holistic appreciation of the complex dynamics between racial bias, perceived fairness and academic well-being.

### Managerial implications

Effective management requires attention to employees' attitudes (commitment and job satisfaction), perceptions of fairness (organizational justice) and adherence to legal mandates regarding workplace discrimination. These factors demonstrably influence employee performance, as evidenced by our research. Furthermore, employees' perceptions of their rights and sense of entitlement can evolve with changes in citizenship status. Individuals initially tolerant of potentially discriminatory practices may become more assertive in demanding their legal rights and privileges upon acquiring citizenship. This shift is particularly likely after 5 years, as this often coincides with the eligibility period for citizenship acquisition for many immigrants. Such changes in expectations can heighten turnover intentions if not effectively addressed.

### Study limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has some limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes the establishment of causal relationships between variables. Future research could benefit from experimental designs to address this limitation. While the case study approach focused on UK academics and provided in-depth data, a broader, global sample encompassing academics from various countries could offer valuable comparative insights and enhance the study's generalizability. The findings might not be generalizable to other sectors. Additionally, we did not explore potential variations in discrimination experiences across Asian ethnicities (Indian, Chinese, Arab and so on). A more diverse sample might yield different results. Jun, Phillips and Foster-Gimbel (2023) support this notion, finding that Asian employees in the United States facing racial discrimination exhibited similar experiences and allyship with Black colleagues compared to Black individuals themselves.

Despite employing rigorous statistical analyses, including t-tests and Levene's tests, we did not identify significant differences between UK and non-UK scholars, perhaps because of the limitations of our data or the complex interplay of factors influencing the experiences of Black academics. Future research may explore additional contextual factors that contribute to the unique experiences of UK Black scholars, such as whether UK scholars face distinct pressures or

challenges that compel them to seek justice through institutional mechanisms. An interview-based study could provide deeper insights into these nuances and inform targeted interventions to address the specific needs of UK Black academics.

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Toyin Ajibade Adisa is Professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management at the Royal Docks School of Business and Law, University of East London, UK. His research focuses on human resource management, organizational behaviour, employment relations, organizational culture, diversity and equality, flexibility and work–life balance, and reforms in emerging and developing economies. Toyin is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD). He has published articles in CABS journals such as the *British Journal of Management*, *Work, Employment and Society*, *Gender, Work & Organisation*, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Information Technology & People*, *Personnel Review*, *Employee Relations*, *Gender in Management*, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *Management Decision* and *Career Development International*, among others.

Gbolahan Gbadamosi is Professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management at Bournemouth University Business School, UK. A mixed-method behavioural scientist, his research focuses on unethical work practices, well-being, work–life balance and employability. His most recent research addresses diversity, inclusion and careers. He has published widely in these areas and is also an editorial board member for the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. He is deeply committed to fostering inclusive and ethical work environments, and his research endeavours are driven by a passion for promoting positive organizational change.

Kirk Chang is a university professor and research centre director. He investigates people management practices and scrutinizes the implications of technology on employee behaviour, group dynamics, teamwork and organizational performance. He has a long-standing commitment to public sector and private businesses, supporting their personnel management system through AI applications.