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# **Workforce Diversity, Equality, And Organisational Inclusion in Healthcare Settings: A Qualitative Study of Racialised Staff Experiences**

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## **Abstract**

Healthcare organisations internationally continue to experience workforce shortages alongside persistent racial and ethnic inequalities. While diversity and inclusion policies are increasingly prominent, much of the existing evidence relies on quantitative indicators that offer limited insight into how inequities are experienced and sustained in everyday workplace contexts. Within the United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS), Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff continue to report disparities in progression, inclusion, and wellbeing, reflecting challenges common across large public-sector healthcare systems. This study explored how organisational cultures and practices shape experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and endurance among healthcare staff of African and Asian descent over time. A qualitative study design was employed using semi-structured interviews with 15 healthcare staff of African and Asian descent working across multiple NHS Trusts. All participants had worked in the NHS for more than two years and represented clinical, professional, and managerial roles. A narrative inquiry approach informed data generation, while data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis to identify patterned meanings across participants' workplace experiences and career trajectories. Participants described strong vocational commitment and expectations of fairness on entering healthcare work. Over time, accounts revealed recurring experiences of exclusion from informal networks, limited transparency in career progression, and heightened scrutiny of competence. These experiences were understood as cumulative and embedded within organisational norms rather than isolated incidents. Participants also described adaptive strategies, including emotional regulation and sustained commitment to patient care, often alongside constrained leadership aspirations and emotional labour. The findings highlight how workforce diversity and equality are shaped through everyday organisational practices rather than policy intent alone. Although situated in the UK NHS, the insights

are transferable to international healthcare contexts seeking to strengthen inclusion, retention, and workforce wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Healthcare workforce; Organisational inclusion; Racialised experiences; Staff wellbeing; Workplace inequality