

Unmasking the Disparities: Investigating the Profound Effects of Covid-19 on Ethnic Minority Students - A Case Study at the Open University

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted education, shining a spotlight on existing disparities faced by ethnic minority students. This study, "Unmasking Disparities: Effects of COVID-19 on Ethnic Minority Students" at Open University Level 1 Computing Modules, employs a comprehensive approach, blending quantitative analysis, literature review, and focus group insights to unveil the multifaceted challenges encountered by these students. From economic hardships and digital divides to housing instability and employment setbacks, various factors intersect, further exacerbated by mental health issues, racism, discrimination, and unconscious bias. Structural and institutional elements significantly shape students' experiences. Recommendations call for targeted interventions, policy revisions, and community-building efforts, emphasizing support services, bias training, and innovative teaching methods. Highlighting the awarding gap between white and ethnic minority students, this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative performance analysis with qualitative stakeholder input. It emphasizes that recognizing disparities is only the beginning; addressing structural issues is essential for change. "Unmasking Disparities" serves as a call to action, urging institutions to bridge the gap and create inclusive learning environments. It challenges society to reshape education, placing equality at its core.

Keywords: academic performance, awarding gap, BAME students, higher education, study experiences