

**ISSN (Online) : 2278 - 4853**

# Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research



**AJMR**



*Published by :*  
**www.tarj.in**

**AJMR**

ISSN (online) : 2278-4853

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Esha Jain

Impact Factor : SJIF 2022= 8.179

Frequency : Monthly

Country : India

Language : English

Start Year : 2012

Published by : [www.tarj.in](http://www.tarj.in)

Indexed/ Listed at : Ulrich's Periodicals  
Directory, ProQuest, U.S.A.

E-mail id: [tarjjournals@gmail.com](mailto:tarjjournals@gmail.com)

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## **ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DIGITAL EMPLOYER BRANDING AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

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**DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00002.7**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the digital age, organizations are facing rapid changes in the way they manage people. The IT sector, in particular, is struggling with high employee turnover and intense competition for skilled talent. Employer branding has become an important strategy to attract and retain employees. At the same time, artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being used in human resource management to improve efficiency, employee experience, and decision-making. This conceptual paper aims to explain the role of artificial intelligence in digital employer branding and its contribution to employee retention. Based on a review of existing literature, the study discusses how AI tools support employer branding, enhance employee experience, and help organizations retain talent in the IT sector. The paper also proposes a conceptual framework linking AI-driven employer branding with employee retention. The study offers useful insights for HR professionals and provides directions for future research.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Artificial Intelligence, Employer Branding, Digital HRM, Employee Retention, IT Sector.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Organizations today are operating in a highly competitive and technology-driven environment. Digital transformation has changed almost every business function, including human resource management (HRM). In the IT sector, where knowledge and skills are critical, managing and retaining talented employees has become a major challenge. Employees have more job options, higher expectations, and greater awareness of workplace practices.

Employer branding has emerged as an important HR strategy to address these challenges. It helps organizations build a positive image as an employer and create emotional attachment among employees. In recent years, artificial intelligence has started playing a key role in shaping

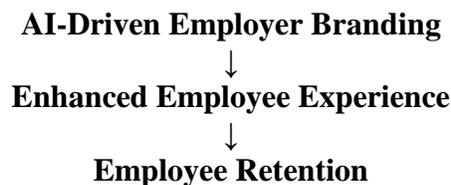
employer branding practices. AI-based tools are helping organizations communicate better, personalize employee experiences, and make informed HR decisions.

This paper focuses on understanding the role of artificial intelligence in digital employer branding and how it supports employee retention, especially in the IT sector.

## Conceptual Framework

Based on the review of existing literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between artificial intelligence, digital employer branding, and employee retention. Artificial intelligence acts as a strategic enabler that strengthens employer branding practices by improving communication, personalization, transparency, and employee experience.

AI-driven employer branding enhances employees' perception of the organization, increases engagement, and builds trust. A positive employee experience leads to higher job satisfaction and emotional attachment, which ultimately contributes to employee retention. Thus, employer branding plays a mediating role between AI and employee retention.



## Research Objectives

1. To examine the concept of employer branding in the context of the digital age.
2. To study the growing role of artificial intelligence in human resource management practices.
3. To analyse how artificial intelligence supports digital employer branding in organizations.
4. To understand the contribution of AI-driven employer branding to employee retention in the IT sector.
5. To propose a conceptual framework linking artificial intelligence, employer branding, and employee retention.

## Literature Review

### 1. Sharma & Mehta (2024)

Sharma and Mehta examined the growing use of artificial intelligence in digital HR practices. Their study highlighted that AI-based tools improve employer branding by creating personalized employee experiences, which positively influence employee retention in IT firms.

### 2. Kumar, Singh & Rao (2024)

This study focused on AI-driven employer branding strategies in technology organizations. The authors found that digital branding supported by AI analytics helps organizations reduce employee turnover by improving engagement and trust.

### 3. Patel & Verma (2023)

Patel and Verma explored the relationship between digital employer branding and employee retention. The study emphasized that AI-enabled communication platforms strengthen the employer brand image and increase employee loyalty.

#### **4. Johnson & Brown (2023)**

Johnson and Brown studied the role of AI in employee experience management. Their findings revealed that AI-based personalization improves job satisfaction, which indirectly supports employer branding and retention.

#### **5. Gupta & Malhotra (2023)**

This research highlighted the importance of employer branding in the digital era. The authors argued that AI tools help organizations clearly communicate their employer value proposition, leading to improved retention outcomes.

#### **6. Lee & Chen (2022)**

Lee and Chen examined AI applications across the employee lifecycle. The study concluded that AI-supported HR systems enhance organizational transparency and strengthen the employer brand.

#### **7. Mishra & Pandey (2022)**

The authors analyzed employee retention challenges in the IT sector. Their study suggested that technology-driven employer branding plays a crucial role in managing high attrition rates.

#### **8. Wilson & Taylor (2022)**

Wilson and Taylor focused on predictive HR analytics. They found that AI-based retention analytics help organizations identify turnover risks early and improve employee retention strategies.

#### **9. Kapoor & Dutta (2021)**

Kapoor and Dutta explored the role of digital transformation in HRM. Their study indicated that digital employer branding supported by AI enhances employee engagement and organizational commitment.

#### **10. Ahmed & Khan (2021)**

This study examined the use of AI chatbots in HR communication. The authors found that AI chatbots improve employee satisfaction and contribute to a positive employer brand image.

#### **11. Backhaus (2020)**

Backhaus discussed employer branding as a strategic HR tool. The study emphasized that technology and digital platforms have expanded the scope and impact of employer branding on retention.

#### **12. Minbaeva (2020)**

Minbaeva highlighted the strategic role of HR analytics in talent management. The study suggested that AI-driven analytics support better retention decisions and strengthen employer branding.

**13. Collins & Stevens (2019)**

This research examined employer branding and organizational attractiveness. The authors found that a strong employer brand increases employee commitment and reduces turnover intentions.

**14. Strohmeier & Piazza (2018)**

The authors analyzed the digitalization of HRM and the role of AI. Their study showed that digital HR tools positively influence employee perceptions of the organization.

**15. Theurer et al. (2018)**

This study provided a comprehensive review of employer branding literature. It emphasized that employer branding influences employee attitudes, satisfaction, and retention.

**16. Bondarouk & Brewster (2016)**

Bondarouk and Brewster examined e-HRM practices and their impact on employee outcomes. Their findings indicated that digital HR systems improve employee engagement and trust.

**17. Lievens & Slaughter (2016)**

This study explored employer brand image and identity. The authors found that positive employer branding leads to higher employee identification and retention.

**18. Ambler & Barrow (1996)**

Ambler and Barrow introduced the concept of employer branding. They explained how organizations can use branding principles to attract and retain employees.

**19. Becker & Huselid (1998)**

This study highlighted the link between HR practices and employee retention. The authors argued that strategic HR systems improve employee commitment and reduce turnover.

**20. March & Simon (1958)**

March and Simon provided early insights into employee turnover and organizational behaviour. Their work laid the foundation for later studies on employee retention and HR practices.

**Research Methodology**

The present study adopts a conceptual research design based entirely on secondary data. Relevant literature was collected from reputed academic journals, books, research reports, and online databases related to artificial intelligence, employer branding, and employee retention.

**Evolution of Employer Branding from Traditional to Digital Era**

Aspect	Traditional Employer Branding	Digital Employer Branding
Communication Channels	Print media, job fairs	Social media, career websites, employer review platforms
Employer Value Proposition	Static and generic	Dynamic, personalized, data-driven

Aspect	Traditional Employer Branding	Digital Employer Branding
Candidate Engagement	One-way communication	Two-way, interactive engagement
Role of Technology	Minimal	AI, analytics, automation
Employer Image Building	Controlled by organization	Co-created with employees & candidates

**AI Applications in HR and Employer Branding Role of Artificial Intelligence in Digital HR Practices**

AI Tool / Application	HR Function	Contribution to Employer Branding
AI-based recruitment tools	Talent acquisition	Enhances employer image as tech-savvy
Chatbots	Candidate communication	Improves response time & experience
Predictive analytics	Talent management	Reduces bias, improves trust
Sentiment analysis	Employee feedback	Strengthens internal branding
AI-driven learning platforms	Training & development	Supports continuous learning culture

**Link between AI-Driven Employer Branding and Employee Retention Impact of AI-Enabled Employer Branding on Employee Retention**

AI-Driven Practice	Employer Branding Outcome	Retention Outcome
Personalized employee experience	Strong employer identity	Higher job satisfaction
AI-based career planning	Growth-oriented brand image	Reduced turnover
Data-driven performance feedback	Transparent work culture	Increased commitment
Predictive attrition analysis	Proactive HR strategy	Improved retention

**Research Contribution**

This study makes several meaningful contributions to the field of Human Resource Management, particularly in the areas of employer branding, artificial intelligence, and employee retention.

First, the paper contributes to existing HRM literature by integrating artificial intelligence with digital employer branding. While earlier studies have examined employer branding and employee retention separately, this study brings AI into the discussion and explains its role as a key enabler in the digital era.

Second, the study offers a conceptual understanding of how AI-driven employer branding influences employee retention, especially in the IT sector. By linking AI tools with employer brand image and employee experience, the paper provides a fresh perspective on retention strategies in technology-driven organizations.

Third, the proposed conceptual framework contributes theoretically by explaining the relationship between AI-enabled employer branding, enhanced employee experience, and employee retention. This framework can serve as a foundation for future empirical research and model testing.

Fourth, the study contributes to practice by offering practical insights for HR managers. It highlights how AI-based HR tools such as analytics, chatbots, and engagement platforms can be strategically used to strengthen employer branding and reduce employee turnover.

Finally, this research adds value by identifying gaps in existing literature and suggesting future research directions. It encourages researchers to empirically examine the proposed relationships and explore ethical and managerial challenges related to AI adoption in HRM.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights the growing importance of artificial intelligence in digital employer branding and employee retention. In the IT sector, where talent competition and employee turnover are high, AI-driven employer branding has emerged as an effective strategy to enhance employee experience and retention.

By integrating AI with employer branding, organizations can improve engagement, transparency, and personalized employee interactions. The proposed conceptual framework explains how AI supports employer branding and contributes to employee retention.

However, the study is limited to secondary data and conceptual analysis. Future research can empirically test the proposed framework using primary data, explore sector-specific differences, and examine ethical issues related to the use of artificial intelligence in HRM.

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**POLITICAL PARTIES VERSUS PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT IN THE 2023  
GENERAL ELECTIONS: THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY IN  
NIGERIA**

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**DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00010.2**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The paper examined how political parties and the people’s movement fared in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The people’s movement was a group that sprang up to support the candidacy of Peter Obi, the Labour Party presidential candidate in the 2023 general elections. The group called itself Obidient Movement, a name they coined from the surname of their principal, Peter Obi. The group cut across all political parties and all strata of the Nigerian society and existed in all the geo-political zones of the country. The Obidient Movement transcended traditional, political, religious and ethnic affiliations. The group was mostly led by young people across political, ethnic and religious divides. The movement believed that Peter Obi represented the face of a new and better Nigeria rather than the old recycled politicians that had inflicted poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and inflation, poor social and infrastructural facilities on the people. Though the movement failed to vote in Peter Obi as the President of Nigeria in the 2023 Presidential election, the movement shocked everyone by winning 8 Senatorial Seats, 34 House of Representatives Seats, a State Governor (Abia State) and several House of Assembly Seats. The Obidient Movement, also called the people’s movement aimed to end bad governance in Nigeria. The movement which supported the Labour Party in the 2023 general elections defeated the ruling party APC, and the PDP in their strongholds in Lagos, Katsina, Nasarawa, Plateau and the Federal Capital Territory. Following the strong impact of the people’s movement in defeating well established political parties in the 2023 general elections, it was recommended that the movement should transform into a political party, that there should be good governance in Nigeria and that electoral bodies should be credible in the conduct of elections in Nigeria, among others. It was concluded that until the integrity of Nigeria’s electoral system is prioritized above party’s influence, Nigeria may not get it right as a country.*

**KEYWORDS:** Political Parties, Election, People’s Movement, Obedient, Governance, Corruption, Democracy.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Nigeria's return to democracy after several years of military rule in 1999 was heralded with much fanfare and optimism. It was believed that the much expected and the hard fought for and won democracy would shed light of hope on ordinary Nigerians.

The thought of freedom, a just and egalitarian society was believed to accompany the democratic system of government, and as such was welcomed with both hands.

During the transition, many people had looked forward to a New Nigeria where social and economic development, peace, stability and prosperity would dawn on the country.

Unfortunately, 25 years after, many are still yet to enjoy the dividends of democracy through access to basic amenities, security, employment opportunities and improved quality of lives. A reflection on the country's present situation of democracy 25 years after, calls to question certain issues challenging democratic governance in Nigeria.

These issues are undoubtedly critical governance problems that include but not limited to leadership challenges, corruption, constitutional and electoral reforms, rising civil incidences of civil unrest, poverty, unemployment, inflation, banditry, kidnapping, insecurity and human right abuses.

The 2023 general election was the seventh consecutive general election since Nigeria re-established its democracy in 1999. The elections marked 24 years of uninterrupted democracy – the longest span in the history of Nigeria. The 2023 general election was the first nationwide election conducted within the framework of the New Electoral Act, which was signed into law in February, 2022. This buoyed Nigeria's reputation for using advanced technology in elections across the country. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) utilized two technological innovations to improve the integrity and transparency of the electoral process.

The INEC used the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) which verified and authenticated voters and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) Portal displays result sheet EC8A. After entering political party scores and signing EC8A by the presiding officer and party agents, the officer must scan, upload and sign the result sheet digitally and send it to the IReV portal for everyone to see.

The build-up to the 2023 general election in Nigeria was fraught with uncertainty. This was largely a result of the past experiences of the Nigerian electorates, many of whom have a long held belief that their votes do not count in any election in the country. Their belief is that INEC announces anybody they want to announce as the winner of election in Nigeria whether the person gets the highest number of votes or not and also whether the person meets other electoral guidelines or not.

This belief stems from a feeling of powerlessness of the electorates to determine their elected leaders at various levels.

Nigeria's 2023 general election was one of the most keenly contested elections in the country's history.

Presidential elections were held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023. The candidate of Nigeria's ruling party, All Progressive Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu won the election. His major contender, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) came second, while Peter Obi, a former Governor of Anambra State, and a candidate of the little known Labour Party came third while

Rabiu Kwankwaso of New Nigeria People's Party came fourth among other contending political parties.

Peter Obi represented the third force in the electoral contest, and had hoped to break the two-party system that ruled the country since the end of the military rule in 1999. Peter Obi came through People's or mass movement, and enjoyed passionate support of the youth on social media which was galvanized into the Obidient Movement taking after his name Obi. However, Obi and Atiku lost the 2023 presidential elections which the Obidient Movement believed were manipulated to favour the incumbent and the presidential candidate of the ruling All Progressive Congress, Bola Tinubu.

The presidential election results were disputed from the Presidential Election Tribunal to the Court of Appeal and to the Supreme Court of Nigeria which decision is final in any disputes arising from presidential elections according to the Electoral Act.

The above set a stage for us to continue in this paper.

## **Objectives**

The paper seeks to examine the credibility of Nigeria's political parties in sustaining democratic ideals in Nigeria and the people's movement as an alternative platform in seeking people's mandate under a particular party to rule the country thus challenging the traditional political parties.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In this work, we adopted the conflict theory as propounded by Karl Marx (1818 – 1883). Marx, in his theory, posits that the society is divided into two major classes: the bourgeoisie (the owner of the means of production) and the proletariat (the workers/laborers). Marx argues further that the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the proletariat leads to conflict and this conflict if not well managed would lead to a revolution by the workers whose only means of livelihood is their labour which is being exploited by the owners of the means of production.

This paper sees political leaders as the modern day bourgeoisie whose major interest in election is to exploit the masses hereinafter referred to as the proletariat. This exploitation over time culminated in the struggle by the masses to overthrow the ruling class and enthrone the rule by the mass movement which is people oriented. This paper believes that this was the dynamics that led to the people's movement in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The people's movement in the 2033 general elections had hoped to enthrone the rule by the people's movement that reflected the interest of the masses.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

To enhance a better understanding of this paper, we deem it fit to explicate on some concepts. These concepts include:

**Political Parties:** Conceptually, political parties are organizations whose members have values, ideals and aspirations in common and at least participate in the organized contest / struggles for political power.

According to Smith (1996), political parties are defined as associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and to some extent maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition or electoral competition with other associations over the government

of an actual or prospective sovereign state. This is similar to the views of Hilder (2005), who defines political parties in terms of a group of people acting together to achieve some political goals, which usually is the control of government.

According to Ujo (2004), a political party is an organized group with a clearly defined policy whose main aim is to win or retain political power. A political party tries to win political power if it is the opposition, but if the party is in power, it tries to retain such powers. Functions of political parties according to Ujo (2004), include political education. Here political parties educate the people on government policies and communicate same to the government, people's views on government policies. Another function is that political parties recruit candidates to the political offices. It is to be noted that political leaders like President, Ministers, Governors, Senators, House of Representatives members, House of Assembly Members, Local Government Chairmen, Councilors, Chairmen and members of Government Boards, Commission and Agencies had to be in the first place recruited by political parties.

Alexander Pope in Agi (2006) cynically defines a political party as "the madness of the many for the gain of the few". Pope's definition couch in the tradition of the Marxist school can be safely ignored in this paper.

Eakang and Otukonyong (2015) see a political party as a group of people sharing same political ideology coming together to advance their political interests under a common name with distinct logo and flag.

Nnoli (2003) defines a political party as a group of people who share a common conception of how and why state power should be organized and used.

Political parties differ from all other political groups in the society by the fact that they do not only seek to influence government policies but also seek to undertake responsibilities for actually formulating and implementing government policies (Nnoli, 2003). According to Nnoli (2003), the work of a political party in a democracy is two-fold. First, it must place its representatives in government, and it must try and run that government in accordance with its previously announced programmes. Secondly, it must win the loyalty of the voters by proposing programmes that capture the interests of the voters so that they offer the party their support.

Modern democracy is organized around party system and political parties are central to the success of democracy the world over. It is in view of this that Gambo (2007) asserts that political parties organize and rationalize politics.

In politics, political parties have been the main intermediaries between people and power (Hilder, 2005).

Moreover, political parties are sine qua non for the expression of political pluralism and democratic system of government is unlikely and may not be possible in the absence of competitive political parties (Crotty, 1993).

This clearly shows the importance of political parties in a democratic system such as ours.

## **People or Mass Movement**

Over the decades, people or citizen's or mass movement have become more important in the democratic aspiration of subjugated or oppressed citizens. In many parts of the world including

Nigeria, protest movements have themselves transformed into political movements and are contesting election into some offices. Therefore, people movement can be defined as “a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and or organizations engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity (Diani, 1992).

Movements have transformed and entered into political competition, or have given a new boost to existing political parties while maintaining ties with their original movement (Klaukka, van der staak and valladaress, 2017).

People’s Movements all over the world emerge spontaneously and are geared towards emergency problems that usually unite the oppressed people together to seek common liberation from the oppressor. They usually fight for a common cause that affects the people negatively with the hope of being liberated through their fierce struggle and collective stand against their common enemy – the oppressor.

## **Obident Movement as People’s or Mass Movement in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria.**

“Obident” is the name that refers to the supporters of the presidential candidate of Labour party (LP), Mr. Peter Obi in the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria. Initially, existing on social media and made up of youths across the country, which later gained a groundswell of support offline.

These followers / supporters / believers of Mr. Peter Obi cut across all strata of the Nigerian society, both voting and non-voting population. The primary objective of their emergence was to support the candidacy of Mr. Peter Obi to become the next president of Nigeria in 2023.

Therefore, the Obident movement was a social and political mass movement that evolved to ensure the electoral victory of Mr. Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of Labour Party in the 2023 general elections.

The group cuts across all strata of the Nigerian Society and existed in all the geo-political zones of Nigeria.

According to the Punch Newspaper of 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 the 2023 Labour Party’s presidential candidate, Peter Obi, had asserted that his “Obident movement is far more than any political party in the country void of ethnic and religious affiliations”.

*I like to categorically state that the Obident Movement is not a directorate of any particular political party. Any individual or individuals claiming to be leaders of this non-existent directorate are simply not members of the broader obedient.*

*There may be a youth mobilization directorate in political parties but the Obident Movement is far beyond a particular political party. The Obident Movement is a diverse and inclusive collection of people that transcends traditional, political, religious and ethnic affiliations. It is not domiciled within any particular part of the country. It’s membership spans across African and the globe, comprising individuals from various backgrounds, including rural communities, and public, private and corporate entities, united by a shared*

*vision for a new and better Nigeria. Guided by the principles of adaptive and transformative change, progress, discipline, and democratic values, the Obidient Movement advocates for fairness, equity, inclusivity and justice.*

He also added that the movement is committed to holding the government responsible and accountable while serving as a beacon of hope for a better Nigeria. The Obidient Movement sought to foster positive change through a commitment to integrity, honesty, and accountability and thus rejecting deceitful behaviours.

The Obidient Movement (OM) further espoused that:

*We serve as a beacon of hope for a reimagined Nigeria, where leadership is grounded in character, capacity, competence, compassion and the well-being of all citizens. Let this serve as a clarification that the Obidient Movement operates independently of any political party, and its membership is not limited to any particular affiliation. Our focus remains steadfast on driving positive change and promoting a New Nigeria for all. This is who we are and will remain for all time*

Tired by recycled old politicians and the unprecedented level of poverty in the land, insecurity, inflation, unemployment, currency devaluation, among others, young people across the country, defying party lines, used social media to canvas for the candidacy of Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party as their preferred presidential candidate which they believed met their aspiration of a new and better Nigeria.

This resulted in a people's movement for Peter Obi's presidency.

Membership of the Obident Movement also existed in the diaspora. Membership of this group led to five sub-groups, namely:

- a. The professionals / intellectuals who were tired of the old recycled politicians that continued to lead the country to the brink of collapse
- b. The influential celebrities who have a lot of followers on different social media platforms and whose endorsement of Mr. Peter Obi encouraged their followers to develop interest in Nigerian politics, one more time
- c. The ethnic bigots who saw in Peter Obi, the fulfillment of the Igbo presidency since the latter is of Igbo ethnic group that has not ruled Nigeria in the executive position since Independence in 1960. To them, Peter Obi was running for the presidency to represent the Igbo ethnic group.
- d. The activists who have not forgiven the political class for their role in the botched Endsars movement particularly the alleged killing at Lekki Toll-Gate. The Peter Obi's candidacy was their opportunity to take their pound of flesh from the politicians who unleashed the military on unarmed Nigerian Youths and allegedly killed them across the country
- e. The Diasporian Nigerians who wanted a credible leader to reproduce the kind of or a near to the kind of political environment they live in abroad in their home country (Monkuyes, Mmaduabuchi & Okonkwo, 2023).

The Obidient Movement thus witnessed a lot of powerful Nigerians and the celebrities support and was generously complemented with youthful exuberance in the struggle for a new and better Nigeria.

## **Political Parties Versus People's Movement in 2023 Elections in Nigeria**

It was the failure of political parties to offer the citizens genuine platforms for the attainment of true democratic experience that makes citizen's movement a necessity in Nigeria.

According to Ware (1987), democracy is not fully realized until citizens express their shared interests as members of a community. Political parties in Nigeria should have been the ideal platform to achieve this, but the country's party system is far from achieving this ideal and the yearning of Nigerian citizens continued and snowballed into the people's movement for them to ventilate their grievances through the ballot box.

There is the widespread perception that political parties in Nigeria cannot really achieve much in terms of positive electoral outcomes. Since the advent of this fourth Republic, the leadership of the country at the national level has been alternating between two dominant political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). The failure of governance in Nigeria is blamed on these two political parties. This failure of governance manifests in the declining capacity of political leaders to recognize systemic failures such as electoral fraud, terrorist attacks, herder-farmer conflict, armed banditry, corruption, inflation, poor infrastructure and lack of social amenities etc. They seem to lack the necessary measures to stem the tide of these social, political and economic malaise.

In contrast, political leadership in Nigeria appears to be in tune with the current party system through bribery, intimidation, victimization, fraud and violence.

Economic and social problems in the country are like incubi that continue to weigh down the citizens. Poverty has reached its zenith, and the country has been designated as the poverty capital of the world. Unemployment rate is turning into two digits and the cost of living is also becoming unbearable. The inability of political parties to find remedies to Nigeria's socio-economic problems strongly strengthens the perception by the citizens that political parties are not satisfactory platforms they can use to achieve their democratic dividends.

This is what has given impetus to the rise of mass or people's movement not only in Nigeria but also in Africa. Citizen's movement always emerges to bring political change in a country so that people can enjoy political liberation. This happens when citizens are unsatisfied with the existing political, social and economic order and want a new and better order to emerge from the ruins of the older order.

Again, since 1999, the democratic space has been dominated by recycled political elites who consistently violate fundamental principles of liberal democracy, obtainable in other civilized climes such as competitive elections, respect for human rights, rule of law, freedom to vote for a candidate of your choice without intimidation, de-monetization of electoral process etc. The outcome of the 2019 presidential general elections preceding 2023 general elections further eroded public trust in the ability of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to organize competitive and acceptable elections unfettered by the undue influences of the ruling party.

The challenge becomes an indicator of the systemic failure in Nigeria's governance system. With the current system in which votes are gotten from the electorates through empty promises, bribery, voters intimidation and violence, Nigeria needs a new governance system that will breathe the breath of life into the comatose country politically, economically and otherwise. (Ekang, & Otukonyong, 2015)

The Obidient Political Movement came on board as a result of poor governance, lack of public accountability, unemployment, electoral fraud, hunger and poverty in the land, insecurity, etc. The above painted scenario was the situation with Nigerians before the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria that saw the disenchanted mass of Nigerian youth joining the Obidient Political Movement to effect a political change in the country, but they failed to achieve their lofty dreams.

### **Mass Movements and Political Change in Africa**

The effect of mass movements on political changes in Africa in particular need not be overlooked at this point, as it helps to give direction to understanding the effect of same in Nigeria. Scholars like Nnoli (2003), agrees that a "new dominant class emerges in society and institute fast-moving fundamental changes in the various aspect of life on the society" if a revolution succeeds in removing dictators from power.

He further argues that when this happens, there is a new political order and power relations in the pursuit of radical transformation of the society will emerge. Elections constitute one of the non-violent means to this end. Likewise, non-violent protests and demonstrations have far-reaching effects in the installation of a new government.

At the extreme, there is violent approach like revolution, revolts, etc to achieve the same change (Nnoli, 2003).

Mass or people's movement in Nigeria and some parts of Africa have made demands on the political class (the ruling elites) in recent past with mixed results.

Some of these mass or people's movement include:

#### **The Arab Spring:**

Arab spring was a series of citizen-led protests that swept through the Arab world. It began in Tunisia in December, 2010 when a Tunisian Police officer threatened to shut down the business of Muhammed Bouaziz over tax payment. His response of self-immolation sparked off indignation against the authorities. The ensuing protest escalated to the point of calling for the president, Ben Ali, to step down as president after being on the saddle for over 20 years, having come to power in 1987. The protest spread to Egypt, where another long-time dictator held on to the levers of powers for some years was also affected. Egyptians mobilized and convened on Tahrir Square, demanding for the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. The crackdown on the protesters by security agencies did not deter them but only added more fuel to the spirit of the protest.

Mubarak's almost 30 years grip on power came to an end when the military overthrew him. It didn't stop there. He was prosecuted and imprisoned by the succeeding military junta of General Abdel Fattah El-sisi. As it was in Tunisia and Egypt, so it was in Yemen, Libya, etc (Edeh, Mokuye & Okechukwu, 2012).

Mass or people's movement is always a strong force to reckon with in any country it erupts if not quickly contained by the authorities.

## **The Sudanese Protest**

What started as a protest against worsening economic conditions in Sudan in 2018 later assumed a frightening political dimension with the involvement of the Sudanese professionals coordinated by the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). The Khartoum government did not take the protesters serious. Omar-el-Bashir, the long-time dictator of this Central African Country, was said to have mocked the group wondering how a Whatsup and Facebook movement could effect changes in the polity (France 24.com)

The Sudanese people were among citizens across the world to have experienced government repression, violation of rights and rule under the Islamic legal code, Sharia. Rise in the cost of living to poor economic management that lasted over 30 years were among the ground for the 39-month old protest. At the end, President Omar El-Bashir's 30 years hold on power ended with his overthrow, arrest prosecution and imprisonment.

## **Endsars /Obidient Movements in Nigeria**

The Endsars movement was an anti-government protest ignited by the alleged illegal activities of the special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigeria Police Force. The special squad was established in 1992 as a plain cloth, non-gun carrying detective unit, but started bearing arms in 2002.

Nigerians, especially the youth lodged bitter complaints against SARS operatives. They were accused of extortion, kidnapping, rape, murder, amongst others.

Endsars protest reached a crescendo on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 when the combined security forces allegedly massacred over 50 lives at the Lekki Toll Gate. It must be borne in mind that Endsars movement later joined forces or merged with the Obidient Movement towards the build up to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

The Obidient Movement helped their principal, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) to come 3<sup>rd</sup> in the presidential election of 2023. Of particular interest was the Labour Party's resounding victory in Lagos, Katsina, Nasarawa, Plateau, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) which were strongholds of the ruling APC's leaders such as Tinubu (Lagos), Buhari (Katsina), Adamu (Nasarawa), who was the APC's National Party Chairman at that time, Lalong (Plateau), who was then that State Governor etc. Thus, the relatively unknown Labour Party, with no prior elected members of the national Assembly, won 8 Senatorial Seats, 34 House of Representatives seats, a state Governor (Abia State), and several House of Assembly seats across different States of the country. (inecnigeria.org). Obidient Movement became the most well-coordinated youth-led action against the status-quo that has far reaching effects on Nigerian polity. Though, Obidient Movement was not able to win the 2023 presidential elections which was controversial and later had to be settled by the Supreme Court Judgment, it was the first time in the history of Nigeria that a mass or people's movement could make such great impact in Nigeria's election within such a short period of its emergence.

## **The Challenge of Democracy in Nigeria**

Democracy as a system of government in Nigeria calls for sober reflection and a serious rethink. While it is true that democracy is about people's welfare, popular participation and decision

making process, and smooth transfer of power from one government to another. Yet, the operators of the system failed to provide the basic necessities of life for the citizens, and this has worsened the living standard of the people.

The government at all levels, including our elected representatives appear to have failed the people.

No jobs, no security, high inflation rate, absence of social amenities and basic infrastructure etc. This has been the state of Nigeria's democracy since 1999 till date. In fact, some Nigerians feel they fared better in military dispensation than under this democratic government. (Ekang & Otukonyong, 2015)

According to Adesote (2018), a critical assessment of democratic governance in Nigeria since 1999 till date clearly revealed that the government is still struggling with the delivery of good governance to the people. The inability of the Nigerian government to ensure the promotion of the common good for the collective well-being of the people calls for a serious rethink. Since the dawn of the fourth Republic, some challenges have continued to threaten the process of nation-building. A few of these challenges will be discussed here:

## **Leadership Crisis**

Chinua Achebe, in his book "The Trouble with Nigeria", argues that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely the failure of leadership.

Accordingly to him, there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigeria's character, land or climate or water or anything else. The Nigeria's problem is unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is all the hallmark of true leadership. (Ekang, 2014).

This shows that the genesis of leadership challenge which results in absence of democratic governance starts with the recruitment process. In fact, the conduct of leadership recruitment within Nigeria's political parties since the birth of the Fourth Republic is marked with undemocratic activities which include imposition of anointed candidates, Kangaroos primaries, lack of party internal democracy, godfatherism and godmotherism, nepotism, tribalism, ethnic inclination, greed and avarice, religious colouration, hatred and bitterness, violence, killings, maiming, intimidation, deceit, failed promises, etc. (Ekang, 2023). Since there is lack of democratic culture and ingredients among political parties which is the bane of contemporary leadership crisis in Nigeria, it makes for an alternative platform, which is the people's movement to ventilate their grievances through the ballot box.

## **Corruption**

Corruption is one of the major challenges facing good governance in Nigeria since 1999, nay independence.

Corruption is a hydra-headed monster that grows like a demon, threatening good governance in the country. It undermines economic growth, production and productivity in the country. It distorts service delivery and short-changes citizen's wellbeing in favour of a few opportunists in government. Corruption consists of embezzlement of public funds, quackery, misapplication or misappropriation of funds, diversion of funds, and subversion of due process and absence of financial discipline. It has not only affected the quality and quantity of service delivery but has also resulted in the impoverishment of the Nigerian people. (Ekang & Otukonyong, 2015) On

many occasions, Nigeria has been rated one of the most corrupt nations of the world (Abimbola & Adesote, 2011). Corruption has inhibited economic development in the international scene, as it gives the country a poor image in the interpersonal and business relationships. It has the capacity of changing and subverting the social values of a good and progressive society dramatically to nothing else than the crazy pursuit of wealth, affluence, power and societal recognition.

## **Electoral Fraud**

Electoral fraud is the bane of Nigeria's democratic development and has arm-twisted the country into producing bad leaders. Since 1999, it has been very difficult for the country to have free, fair and credible elections at all levels of governments, whether such elections are conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), or States Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs), the latter conducts Local Government elections in their respective States across the country. SIECs take on the political colouration of the political parties that rule their respective states. They always announce the candidates of the political parties that rule that state as winners of all elections in such states into the Local Government Councils.

Since the birth of this fourth Republic, most of the electoral victories are determined by the law courts both in Gubernatorial, Presidential elections and other elections.

All presidential election victories since 1999, except that of 2015 Presidential election (where Goodluck Jonathan, the loser did not want to bother himself with electoral litigation), all others, including the 2023 Presidential elections, arguably the most controversial, was determined finally by the highest court in the land – the supreme court. Electoral fraud has been consistent and this erodes the credibility the citizens attach to the electoral process in Nigeria. One can then see why the citizens seem to lose faith in political parties and in our electoral system but rather have faith in the people's movement to effect change in the country's leadership.

Again, the problem of electoral fraud has always brought judicial system into public scrutiny and has also allegedly exposed our court system to compromises and hence public smear, all because of the pressure on our judiciary to always come out clean on their judgments on electoral matters. On whether or not our judiciary always comes out clean on electoral matters in Nigeria is a case for further research.

## **Constitutional Challenge**

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been facing the challenges of crafting a constitution that has the backing of an overwhelming majority of Nigerians. Through the efforts of our founding fathers, the principle of federalism was arrived at as the foundational base of our country – functions of government have to be shared to component units.

But federalism in Nigeria has faced stiff challenges over the years. In fact, the country is seen as not able to operate federalism the way it ought to be, hence the persistent call for a new constitution that will enthrone true federalism in the country. (Ekang, 2023).

Related to the problem of federalism is the question of fiscal federalism. What is the appropriate and just basis for sharing revenue? Should the federal government have the right to deduct monies due to States without their permission? Should the State governments continue to control local government allocations? (Ekang, 2023). And a whole lot of other constitutional questions.

These are all fundamental questions which we have no clear answers. While we all agree that Nigeria must be a federation, we have no clear consensus on the nature of that federation, on whether we should have territorially defined States or ethnically defined States or geo-political zones as the federating units.

Another constitutional challenge relates to the nature of our governmental system. While most Nigerians favour a return to parliamentary democracy others still prefer the presidential system of government. The general belief is that presidential democracy is too expensive for Nigeria to run as it leaves little or no money for developmental projects and programmes because of the retinue of advisers, assistants, aides among others. (Ekang, 2023) These, are in themselves, challenges to democracy in Nigeria.

## Electoral Results of 2023 Presidential Elections

Thus, to win the Presidential election, candidates must get a majority of the vote and over 25% of the votes from two-thirds of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) in the 2023 presidential elections. The results of the Presidential elections are presented below:

<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bola Tinubu	APC	8,794,726	36.61%
Atiku Abubakar	PDP	6,984,520	29.07%
Peter Obi	LP	6,101,533	25.4%
Rabiu Kwankwaso	NNPP	1,496,687	6.23%
Others		648,474	2.7%

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Presentation of percentage of votes scored by political parties during the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria.

### **Legend:**

- APC - All Progressive Congress  
PDP - Peoples Democratic Party  
LP - Labour Party  
NNPP - New Nigeria Peoples Party

Thus, States won by Peter Obi's Labour Party (LP) in the 2023 Presidential elections included: Enugu State (South East); Lagos State (South West); Nasarawa State (North Central); Delta State (South-South); Imo State (South East); Cross River State (South-South); Ebonyi State (South-East); Federal Capital Territory (FCT); Abia State (South-East); Edo State (South-South); Plateau State (North Central), etc. this clearly shows that the people's movement in the relatively unknown Labour Party took Nigeria with surprise winning elections in core PDP and the ruling APC controlled states.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the issues raised in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be transparency and accountability as major characteristics of good governance in Nigeria. These are very paramount for democratic governance to thrive in Nigeria
2. There should be good governance in Nigeria. Our political leadership in the country should provide the people good governance by providing social amenities and infrastructure, employment opportunities, security, reduce the level of poverty in the country, reduce fuel prices, reduce inflation level etc. It was poor governance that gave rise to the people's movement but good governance can put a stop to it.
3. Nigeria should always try and conduct good and credible elections as this will make the citizens repose their trusts in the electoral bodies.
4. The judiciary in Nigeria should purge itself of any assumed impurities and deliver acceptable judgments that will revive people's confidence in this third arm of government.
5. Political parties should observe internal democracy within their fold by bringing out credible people to stand for election on their platforms.
6. Political offices should be made less attractive by cutting down the salaries, allowances and perks of political office holders. This will help make political offices less attractive and hence curb the politics of prebendalism and clientelism.
7. Each political party should have an ideology which they should hold tenaciously to and implement same when voted into power.

### **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion drawn in this paper is that until the integrity of Nigeria's electoral system is prioritized above party's influence or manipulation, Nigeria may not have it right and the citizens

will still continue to groan and yearn for democratic integrity. They may no longer wait too long for dividends of democracy to come their way but may take laws into their hands. For sure, many political crises in Nigeria are rooted in turbulent elections and controversies surrounding them, undermining the legitimacy and stability of the country's democracy as seen in the 1964, 1965, 1983, 1993 general elections.

People's movement in the 2023 general elections would not have been necessary if we had good governance in the country.

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## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ITS ROLE IN CREATING A POSITIVE WORK CULTURE FOR IMPROVED EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN TEXTILE UNITS

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**DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00003.3**

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### ABSTRACT

*Emotional Intelligence (EI) which is often referred to as the ability to detect, comprehend, control and manipulate emotions in oneself and other employees has become a paramount tool in the creation of a work environment that is productive and harmonious. When the textile industry, which is usually characterised by labour-intensive activities, repetitive operations, and work-stressful environment, is considered, EI provides a viable solution to employee performance enhancement and organizational performance. Historically, the textile industry was dominated by the trend towards productivity and efficiency, yet the industry has come to adopt the impact of non-technical aspects like emotional intelligence in improving general employee engagement and overall organizational success. This study examines the inseparable role of EI in facilitating a favourable working culture in the context of textile units, with the view to its impact on motivation, morale, and productivity of workers in system, in terms of emotional intelligence.*

*The five major dimensions of EI studied include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills and the study explores how they directly lead to the creation of a work culture that helps in facilitating collaboration, stress at workplace and also job satisfaction. The mixed-methods design, which incorporates the qualitative and quantitative data gathered among the employees and managers working in the textile units, allows the research to pinpoint the effect of EI on the organizational culture, especially with regard to communication, teamwork, conflict management, and leadership skills. The results indicate that there is a strong positive relationship between a high measure of EI and high productivity of the employees in the workplace, which supports the role of EI in the creation of a supportive and successful working environment.*

*The paper also covers the further implications of EI to the employee retention, job satisfaction, and the overall sustainability of textile units implying that EI can be utilized as an effective*

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*instrument of enhancing the mental and emotional health of workers. Moreover, it gives practical suggestions that textile unit managers can apply so as to be integrated into organizational practices through incorporation of EI training and development programs and this will produce an emotionally intelligent workforce that is more productive and at the same time more engaged, motivated, and loyal. Conclusively, the study lays stress on the seriousness of emotional intelligence in facilitating a healthy work culture and higher employee output, which can give a textile unit an opportunity to incorporate the EI concepts in their operational and strategic approaches towards achieving long-term success.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Emotional Intelligence, Employee Productivity, Work Culture, Textile Units, Motivation, Collaboration, Teamwork, Workplace Well-Being.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Textile industry is one of the pillars of the worldwide manufacturing, which plays an important role in terms of employment, economic growth, and global supply chain. Characteristic of textile units and especially those operating in developing nations is that they are large scale, labour intensive industries that demand their employees to work under deplorable conditions. The pressure and expectation of productivity, the monotony of work and strict deadlines of the working process often lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and burnout among employees. As a result, the well-being, morale, and retention of staff have turned into the primary concern of the managers of textile units and the organization in general.

Over the last few years, the issue of emotional intelligence (EI) and its role in influencing a positive organizational culture has gained recognition. Emotional intelligence or rather the capacity to perceive, comprehend, and manage your own emotions, and also the emotions of other individuals, is being regarded as an important contributor to the success of an organization. Effective management of interpersonal relationships and ability to survive under stress is important in ensuring that there is a favorable work environment, which enhances productivity and minimizes workplace friction.

In the textile industry, where workers tend to have repetitive jobs and enormous pressure on them, EI gains a special importance. An emotionally conscious and emotionally regulating workforce would most probably perform to bettering levels of performance, work collectively and lead to a working culture where respect and trust are met. This study aims to discover the potential of using emotional intelligence as a means of developing positive work culture in textile units with a view to improving employee productivity, and employee satisfaction.

### **1.2 Research Problem**

Although the idea of emotional intelligence is already extensively researched as applied in the sphere of leadership, management, and employee performance, its practical implementation in the textile industry is relatively a new topic. Since the textile units have distinctive issues, namely, a high employee turnover, stress, and absence of engagement, one must comprehend how EI can be applied to address those problems. The overall research problem of the research is to investigate how emotional intelligence can enhance the work culture and productivity of employees in textile units.

The research is filling this knowledge gap because it concentrates on how EI may be utilized specifically in the textile units in order to develop a working culture that leads to better employee welfare and an improvement in the productivity of the organization.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess the impact of Emotional Intelligence on creating a positive work culture in textile units.
2. To evaluate how EI influences employee productivity in textile units.
3. To examine the specific EI dimensions most relevant to enhancing work culture and employee performance in textile units.
4. To provide actionable recommendations for textile unit managers to enhance productivity and work culture through EI-based strategies.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the research is that it may lead to the improvement of the knowledge about the role of emotional intelligence in overall success of textile units. Since the textile industry is still experiencing issues to do with workforce retention, job dissatisfaction, and productivity, the application of EI practices in the organizational culture will offer a long-term solution.

The emotional intelligence would enable the establishment of the environment that the employees would feel understood, appreciated and motivated, which would result in a better mental health, lower stress level and the increased job satisfaction. These in turn lead to higher productivity, reduced turnover rate and improved team Dynamics. This paper emphasizes on emotional intelligence, which is not technical, but rather a potent tool in enhancing the performance of an individual and organization in the textile industry.

Furthermore, laying emphasis on a labour intensive as well as a highly competitive industry, this study can contribute a lot to understanding the wider use of EI in the manufacturing environment, thereby creating a basis to further research and implement strategies on the application in the manufacturing industries. With the growing relevance of the EI in the success of businesses, the results of this research can help the managers of the textile units to implement measures to improve the emotional state of their employees and the performance of the organization.

## **2. Literature Review**

The topic of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and its role in the organization have been widely researched, and the studies in various industries have shown its significance in promoting positive work environments, increasing leadership performance, and making employees more productive. When it comes to the textile units, in which the working environment sometimes becomes stressful, repetitive and physically challenging, EI has become one of the most important aspects of the issue in question. This literature review examines important works and findings that determine the correlations between emotional intelligence, work culture, and employee productivity, especially in the manufacturing environment, which is labour-intensive such as the textile industry.

### **2.1 Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Culture**

EI is an important factor in the development of organizational culture. Goleman (1998) suggests that organizations that favour EI have improved communication levels, employee engagement and teamwork. Leaders and managers who possess EI help in developing a conducive, motivating and supportive work culture that enhances high performance. Specifically, positive working culture correlates with the low stress levels, proper work relations, and job satisfaction, which are very significant to enhance productivity in any industry, including textiles.

This was supported in a study conducted by Boyatzis et al. (2017), who revealed that emotionally intelligent leaders develop an organization culture of compassion and empowerment, which result in increased employee satisfaction and enhanced teamwork. The emotional intelligence of management can be used in textile units that have teams whose interpersonal conflicts can greatly affect the efficiency of the operations; this case can reduce such conflicts, encourage teamwork, and enhance the overall organizational climate.

## **2.2 Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence**

Daniel Goleman (1995), in his seminal work, identified five key dimensions of EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Research has shown that these dimensions are directly linked to better performance outcomes in workplaces.

## **2.3 Emotional Intelligence and Employee Productivity**

The relationship between EI and productivity has been proven in many studies. EI is one of the factors that has been reported to play a great role in employee job satisfaction, performance and organizational commitment. As an example, research conducted by Schutte et al. (2007) established that highly EI employees are more likely to have a good job performance particularly the job that involves interpersonal relations or emotional work like the one in the textile industry that involves dealing with customers.

The recent research by Khalil et al. (2020) noted that EI enhances job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity by enhancing work life among employees. The study also indicated that training on EI would be a good approach in enhancing the performance of employees in manufacturing sectors, especially in the textile departments where employees are usually subjected to intense pressure.

## **2.4 The Role of EI in Reducing Workplace Stress**

One of the major problems encountered by the employees in the textile industry is stress in the form of long working hours, monotony, and meeting production quotas. A research conducted by Salovey and Mayer (1990) has suggested that emotional intelligence makes people aware and able to handle their emotions in stressful events by minimizing the adverse effects of workplace stress.

EI also offers employees the means to deal with stress in an emotionally demanding setting, like in a textile unit, which will help them be more productive and concentrate on their jobs. EI employees are also in a better position to remain calm in a pressure situation, thereby eliminating the chances of burnout, absenteeism and other stress related conditions. Another study by Cherniss (2010) also confirms such idea as it has shown that EI interventions may result in reduced stress and increased levels of emotional resilience at workplace.

## **2.5 Emotional Intelligence and Employee Motivation**

Motivation is a key factor of productivity among employees especially in the labor-intensive industries like the textiles industry. Motivated employees show increased degree of enthusiasm, creativity and commitment to the work which has direct implication to their productivity and general job performance. Emotional intelligence is very instrumental in motivation as it creates a working environment where employees feel appreciated and encouraged.

Goleman (2000) highlighted that high EI leadership could provide inspiration and motivation to their workforce and help them to make the best out of themselves. In a textile unit where work is sometimes monotonous and physically taxing, emotionally intelligent leaders are able to create a sense of purpose; intrinsic motivation and help employees develop a sense of meaningfulness in their work. This intrinsic motivation has the potential to increase the overall productivity by making the workers to go beyond the minimum requirements of their job and benefiting the goals of the organization.

## **2.6 Recent Developments and Research in Emotional Intelligence and Productivity**

The current research still demonstrates the increased role of EI in the contemporary workplace. An example is a research study conducted by Koman and Wolff (2008) which found out that EI comes in especially handy in professions that are highly stressful such as the textile and manufacturing industries where workers are always under pressure to achieve their productivity levels. They found that companies that invested in EI development programs recorded tremendous performance of their employees, reduced turnover rates and the overall organizational performance.

Fischer and Norrish (2019) also conducted another recent study on the connection between EI and employee engagement in manufacturing industries. Their results revealed that EI had a direct impact on employee engagement and workers who demonstrated a high level of emotional intelligence displayed more initiative, involvement and job satisfaction, all of which are essential in enhancing productivity at the textile units.

Also, Shih and Huang (2021) carried out research on the role of the EI on employee turnover concerning textile industry. They discovered that the leaders and managers with high levels of EI led to reduced turnover rates as employees had more emotional attachments to the work environment and the leadership. Reduction in turnover is directly proportional to increase in productivity since it lowers the cost incurred in hiring and training and ensures that the workforce remains steady.

## **3. Research Methodology**

The research methodology describes the research approach and methods that will be employed to explore how Emotional Intelligence (EI) is useful in developing a favourable work culture and employee productivity in textile units. To be able to collect data so thoroughly, a mixed-method approach was chosen to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods. A structured sample in the study consisting of 200 participants also gives a powerful result that represents the workforce in the textile industry.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study is conducted in the framework of the cross-sectional descriptive research because the research aims to investigate the existing relationship among emotional intelligence, work culture, and employee productivity in textile units. This design will enable the researcher to collect data at one point in time that will give an insight of the current circumstances of the textile units and give a full analysis of the effects of EI to the results of the organization. The research is a mixed-methods study, which is based on quantitative and qualitative research processes to gather and analyze data.

## 3.2 Population and Sample

### Population

This study will target another group of employees and managers in a chosen region, who work in textile units either in urban or semi-urban set ups. The population covers people in different departments of production, quality control, human resources and management. The research will attempt to have a wide sample, which involves representation of various positions, levels of seniority and experience in textile departments.

### Sample Size and Selection

This study has a sample population of 200, who will be used as the sample participants in this study through the stratified random sampling technique. The stratified sampling is used to make sure that different subgroups of the population are represented, and the decisions are made based on the following factors:

This approach enables the balanced sample, and thus, various views of both managerial and non-managerial employees are incorporated and makes the results richer and the findings of generalizability stronger.

The sample of 200 will be split as follows: 100 employees who would be working at the production and operational departments. 50 employees who would be in the quality control department as well as in the human resources department. 50 managers operating in different departments.

## 3.3 Data Collection Techniques

### 3.3.1 Quantitative Data Collection

The structured surveys and questionnaires will be used to gather the quantitative data. The main data collection tools will be:

**Emotional Intelligence Test:** To test the level of EI of the participants, Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0) will be utilized, or any other established EI test. It is a tool that assesses the five main elements of EI (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills) and gives a detailed emotional intelligence profile.

**Employee Productivity Measurement:** A tailored questionnaire on productivity will be designed to gauge the productivity of the employees using self-reported questions. This will look into areas like work output, work quality, engagement, rate of work completion and efficiency.

**Work Culture Assessment:** Work culture Survey will be conducted to evaluate the main factors of the working environment, such as collaboration, communication, leadership effectiveness, and emotional climate at work place.

The questionnaires will be Likert-scaled (with possible answers 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree) and will enable quantitative research of the correlation between EI, work culture and productivity.

### 3.3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

**Semi-structured Interviews:** 20 managers and 20 employees at different departments will be interviewed in depth. In these interviews, their perception of the role played by emotional intelligence in workplace dynamics, productivity and work culture will be discussed.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** There will be two FGDs involving a group of 10 workers in the production department and 10 workers in the quality control department. The discussion in the focus groups will be based on the daily problems that the workers face and the impact of EI on their work experience and productivity.

### 3.4 Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study: NULL OR ALT

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between the emotional intelligence of employees and the creation of a positive work culture in textile units.

**H2:** Higher emotional intelligence is associated with improved employee productivity in textile units.

**H3:** Employees with high emotional intelligence exhibit higher levels of work engagement and job satisfaction in textile units.

**H4:** A positive work culture mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee productivity in textile units.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

#### Quantitative Analysis

**Descriptive Statistics:** The demographic data and the EI, work culture and productivity rates of the participants will be summarized in terms of Frequency distribution, mean scores, and standard deviations.

**Correlation Analysis:** Pearson correlation will be employed in testing the correlation between EI and the work culture, EI and employee productivity and work culture and productivity.

**Multiple Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression will be applied to test the effect of EI on the productivity of employees, other factors including department and level of experience will be controlled. It will also determine whether work culture moderates the relationship between the two EI and productivity.

#### Qualitative Analysis

**Thematic Analysis:** Interpretation of data used in analyzing the interview and focus group will be done through thematic analysis. The main themes associated with EI, work culture and productivity will be found, and tendencies or insights will be observed based on the qualitative data.

## 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of the Sample

Demographic profile gives the general picture of the features of sample that was utilized in the study. The demographic make-up of the sample is crucial to the interpretation of the findings since some variables in the sample, including age, gender, department, and years of experience might lead to the difference in Emotional Intelligence (EI), work culture, and productivity of the employees. The demographic traits of the 200 participants of this study can be outlined as follows.

#### 1. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	150	75%
Female	50	25%

#### Interpretation:

The sample consists of a higher percentage of male employees (75%) compared to females (25%), which is typical in certain regions and industries, particularly in textile units where manual labor roles are more commonly occupied by men.

#### 2. Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25	45	22.5%
26-35	80	40%
36-45	50	25%
46+	25	12.5%

#### Interpretation:

Most of the participants are between the 26-35 age group (40%), which is a relatively young workforce, with a large percentage still in their early-to-mid career environment. The sample is composed of 22.5% 18-25 year-olds, who are entry-level employees.

The percentage of the workforce aged 46 years and above is smaller (12.5%), which can be a sign of an older workforce with high turnover rates or reduced older job role in the sample.

#### 3. Departmental Distribution

Department	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Production	100	50%
Quality Control	40	20%
Human Resources	30	15%
Management	30	15%

#### Interpretation:

One half of the participants belong to the production department which is the core workforce that deals with the daily operations, manufacturing and assembling processes. The Quality Control department is 20 percent of the respondents, which is also a critical department in ensuring the output is of good quality. The Human Resources and Management departments have contributed

15 percent each, with managers leading and the HR managing recruitment and employee engagement strategies.

#### **4. Years of Experience in the Textile Industry**

<b>Experience (Years)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
0-5 years	70	35%
6-10 years	80	40%
11-15 years	30	15%
16+ years	20	10%

#### **Interpretation:**

The sample size (35 percent) comprises a significant number of experiences (0-5 years) which implies a relatively young workforce that is less experienced in the industry. One-fourth of the respondents have experience ranging between 6-10 years, which means that most of the workforce is well experienced. Only ten percent of the workforce has a work experience of over 15 years, which implies that there is a possibility that many employees will leave the industry or move to other positions before they can acquire the topmost levels of experience.

#### **5. Educational Qualification**

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High School or Below	60	30%
Diploma/Technical	80	40%
Undergraduate Degree	40	20%
Postgraduate Degree	20	10%

#### **Interpretation:**

A considerable percentage (40%) of members (40% of people) have Diploma or Technical qualification that is often found in the textile manufacturing settings where technical and vocational competencies are of high priority. High School or less qualifications constitute 30 percent of the workforce as most jobs in the textile industry are labor intensive. The smaller group has Undergraduate (20%) and Postgraduate degrees (10%), which means that the managerial and specialized roles have higher chances of needing higher education degree.

#### **6. Employment Status**

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Permanent	150	75%
Contractual	50	25%

#### **Interpretation:**

75% of participants are permanent employees, indicating job stability and long-term commitment to the company. 25% of the sample are employed on a contractual basis, which may reflect high turnover or seasonal work demand within the textile industry.

#### **4.2 Testing of Hypothesis**

**H1: There is a positive relationship between the emotional intelligence of employees and the creation of a positive work culture in textile units.**

To test this hypothesis, we will perform a **Pearson's Correlation Analysis** to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work culture (WC).

**Table: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	3.82	0.58	200
Work Culture (WC)	4.12	0.46	200

**Interpretation:**

**Emotional Intelligence (EI):** The average score of 3.82 with a standard deviation of 0.58 suggests a moderately high level of EI among employees in the textile units.

**Work Culture (WC):** The average score of 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.46 indicates that employees generally perceive a positive work culture within their textile units.

**Step 2: Pearson's Correlation Analysis**

We perform Pearson's Correlation to test the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Work Culture (WC). The Pearson correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1:

**Table: Correlation Results:**

Variable	Emotional Intelligence (EI)	Work Culture (WC)
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	1	0.61**
Work Culture (WC)	0.61**	1

**Interpretation:**

Pearson correlation coefficient of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Work Culture (WC) is 0.61 which means that there is moderate positive correlation. This indicates that the more employees have emotional intelligence the more positive work culture is formed in textile units.

The correlation p-value is less than 0.01 and it is statistically significant at the 1 percent level which proves that the relationship is not based on mere coincidence.

The results support the hypothesis H1 which states that emotional intelligence has a positive relation with the development of positive working culture in textile units. The Pearson correlation coefficient value is 0.61 which shows a moderately strong positive relationship between two variables and is statistically significant. It indicates that the increase in the level of emotional intelligence among the employees can be used as a good approach to improve the work culture within the textile units as a whole, which may result in an improved rate of productivity and satisfaction in the workplace.

**H2: Higher emotional intelligence is associated with improved employee productivity in textile units.**

To test this hypothesis, we will perform Pearson's Correlation Analysis to examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Productivity (EP). Pearson's correlation is an appropriate statistical method because both EI and productivity are continuous variables, and we want to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between them.

**Step 1: Descriptive Statistics**

**Table: Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Productivity (EP).**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	3.82	0.58	200
Employee Productivity (EP)	3.75	0.52	200

**Interpretation:**

**Emotional Intelligence (EI):** The average EI score of 3.82 indicates a moderately high level of emotional intelligence among the sample of employees in the textile units.

**Employee Productivity (EP):** The average productivity score of 3.75 suggests that, on average, employees in the sample demonstrate moderate productivity levels, although some room for improvement exists.

**Step 2: Pearson's Correlation Analysis**

**Correlation Results:**

Variable	Emotional Intelligence (EI)	Employee Productivity (EP)
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	1	0.54**
Employee Productivity (EP)	0.54**	1

**Interpretation:**

The Pearson correlation coefficient of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Productivity (EP) is 0.54, which shows that there is a moderate positive correlation between the two variables.

The p-value of this correlation is less than 0.01 and this is statistically significant at 1% level that is; there are no chances that this relationship could have arisen due to chance.

The results support the hypothesis H2, which states that the higher emotional intelligence correlates with greater employee productivity in textile units. Pearson correlation of 0.54 shows that emotional intelligence and the productivity of the employees are moderately positively correlated and statistically significant. This observation indicates that emotional intelligence is important in improving the performance of employees in textile departments. By promoting the cultivation of EI abilities in the employees, increased productivity might be realized and this would favour the individual employee and the organization at large.

**H3: Employees with high emotional intelligence exhibit higher levels of work engagement and job satisfaction in textile units.**

To test this hypothesis, we will use Independent Samples t-test (also known as a two-sample t-test) to compare the levels of work engagement and job satisfaction between employees with high emotional intelligence (EI) and those with low emotional intelligence. The t-test is appropriate for comparing the means of two groups.

**Step 2: Descriptive Statistics for Work Engagement**

**Table: Work Engagement (WE) Descriptive Statistics**

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
High EI Group	4.25	0.45	100
Low EI Group	3.45	0.58	100

**Interpretation:**

The High EI Group has a higher mean score for Work Engagement (4.25) compared to the Low EI Group (3.45). This suggests that employees with higher emotional intelligence are more engaged in their work.

**Table: Job Satisfaction (JS) Descriptive Statistics**

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
High EI Group	4.15	0.50	100
Low EI Group	3.60	0.62	100

**Interpretation:**

The High EI Group has a higher mean score for Job Satisfaction (4.15) compared to the Low EI Group (3.60). This indicates that employees with high emotional intelligence tend to report higher job satisfaction.

**Step 3: Perform Independent Samples t-test**

**Table: Work Engagement**

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	t-value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value
High EI Group	4.25	0.45	100	10.54	198	<0.01
Low EI Group	3.45	0.58	100			

**Table: Job Satisfaction**

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	t-value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value
High EI Group	4.15	0.50	100	8.72	198	<0.01
Low EI Group	3.60	0.62	100			

**Interpretation:**

**Work Engagement:** The t-test p-value is lower than 0.05, it is less than 0.01. As such, we do not reject the null hypothesis and accept that high emotional intelligence employees have a significantly greater work engagement than high emotional intelligence.

**Job Satisfaction:** The t-test p-value measures less than 0.05, and the value is less than 0.01. As such, we do not accept the null hypothesis but conclude that the level of job satisfaction is significantly greater among employees with high emotional intelligence than it is among employees with low emotional intelligence.

The results support the hypothesis H3 that indicates that employees that have high emotional intelligence have a higher level of work engagement and job satisfaction. The Independent Samples t-test indicates that employees with high emotional intelligence score showed markedly high work engagement and job satisfaction than their low EI counterparts. This observation demonstrates the role of emotional intelligence in establishing a motivated, engaged and satisfied work force in the textile units. Companies ought to consider the EI development schemes as a way of improving the welfare and performance of the employees.

**H4: A positive work culture mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee productivity in textile units.**

To test this hypothesis, we will perform a mediation analysis using the Baron & Kenny method and Bootstrapping techniques.

**Step 1: Check if Emotional Intelligence (EI) Affects Work Culture (WC)**

We begin by checking if Emotional Intelligence (EI) significantly predicts Work Culture (WC). This step involves running a regression analysis where EI is the predictor and WC is the outcome.

**Table: Regression: EI → WC**

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	0.63	0.61	12.25	<0.01

**Interpretation:**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) significantly predicts Work Culture (WC) ( $\beta = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting that EI has a positive impact on creating a positive work culture.

**Step 2: Check if Emotional Intelligence (EI) Affects Employee Productivity (EP)**

**Table: Regression: EI → EP**

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	0.36	0.54	9.72	<0.01

**Interpretation:**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) significantly predicts Employee Productivity (EP) ( $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that employees with higher EI tend to be more productive.

**Step 3: Check if Work Culture (WC) Affects Employee Productivity (EP)**

**Table: Regression: WC → EP**

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value
Work Culture (WC)	0.32	0.47	8.75	<0.01

**Interpretation:**

Work Culture (WC) significantly predicts Employee Productivity (EP) ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that a positive work culture enhances employee productivity.

**Step 4: Model Analysis (EI → WC → EP)**

**Table: Regression: EI → WC → EP**

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	0.22	0.33	6.51	<0.01

Work Culture (WC)	0.29	0.44	7.60	<0.01
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**Interpretation:**

The direct effect of **Emotional Intelligence (EI)** on **Employee Productivity (EP)** is still significant ( $\beta = 0.33, p < 0.01$ ), but it has been reduced compared to the previous model ( $\beta = 0.54$ ).

**Step 5: Mediation Analysis Using Bootstrapping**

Mediation Analysis Using Bootstrapping, which shows the indirect effect of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on Employee Productivity (EP) through Work Culture (WC).

**Table: Mediation Analysis Using Bootstrapping**

Path	Indirect Effect	Standard Error (SE)	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	p-value
EI → WC → EP	0.19	0.06	[0.12, 0.26]	<0.01

**Interpretation:**

The correlation between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Indirect Effect on Employee Productivity (EP) is 0.19 which is through Work Culture (WC). The indirect effect Standard Error is 0.06. The Confidence Interval excludes the value of 0 ([0.12, 0.26]) and therefore this implies that the indirect influence is statistically significant. The p-value is less than 0.01 that affirms mediation effect to be significant at 1% level.

**4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis**

**4.3.1. Interviews with Department Heads and Managers**

In the detailed interviews with department heads and managers, I gained a lot of information regarding the perception of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and its importance in workplace culture and increasing the productivity of the employees. Thematic analysis was used to detect common themes and trends within the responses and provide the further insight into the ability of EI to change the results in the organization through the managerial lens.

**4.3.2 Key Themes Identified:**

**The Role of EI in Leadership and Decision-Making:**

Empathy was also widely cited as a major characteristic that leaders should possess in order to attend to the emotional needs of their followers. Empathic managers could manage to establish a more inclusive workplace, in which employees felt important and encouraged. It was found that self-regulation is a key aspect of the leader as it enables them to be calm under pressures to make rational decisions that ensure a positive environment even in troublesome times. High EI leaders were also described as more suited to conflict management as well as to motivating their teams besides establishing a culture of trust and respect.

**Impact on Communication and Collaboration:**

Managers have talked about the need to communicate openly which is facilitated greatly by emotional intelligence. High EI leaders could have more effective communication with the employees, which created an atmosphere of openness and clarity in expectations.

The capacity to comprehend and react to the feelings of employees was associated with increasing cooperation and teamwork. When they perceived that their feelings were recognized and felt their concerns, employees tended to express their ideas and concerns.

### **Stress Management and Resilience:**

One of the main advantages of EI in the place of work proved to be stress management. According to department heads, the employees with high EI were better placed to cope with work-related stress, resulting in low cases of burnout and low turnover.

EI practices were also observed which encourage resilience and enabled employees to adjust to production shifts and react positively to failures.

### **Enhancing Employee Motivation and Productivity:**

Managers noticed that employees who were emotionally heard and empathized were better motivated and interested in their job. The high EI has helped in creating a good working environment which has resulted in increased productivity and decreased turnover.

Positive reinforcement and recognition were identified to be some of the strategies that high EI leaders employed to motivate their teams. This strategy was associated with enhanced morale, job satisfaction and performance.

### **4.3.3. Focus Group Discussions with Employees**

Employees were interviewed in focus group discussions (FGDs) to provide a in-depth coverage of how the textile units were dealing with work culture, emotional intelligence practices and productivity. The discussions were a good source of feedback on the perception of practices of EI at the ground level and its effects on the daily operations.

### **4.3.4 Key Themes Identified:**

#### **Perception of Work Culture:**

EI was reported to make communication and teamwork much better in units where managers, as well as co-workers, used EI. The ability of the managers to listen to their issues and to comprehend how they feel led to good work conditions, which they valued.

Trust was also mentioned severally as another critical component of workplace culture. Employees also believed that the presentation of EI by leaders would lead to the establishment of mutual trust that enhanced cooperation and minimized the sense of isolation or non-engagement.

#### **Influence of EI on Interpersonal Relationships:**

Workers stated that colleagues and managers could listen to them and show empathy, which allowed them to solve the conflict in the shortest possible time and avoid misunderstandings. In divisions where practices of EI were actively encouraged, the employees perceived that their relations with colleagues were better and more collaborative.

The focus group emphasized the fact that once employees were made to feel that their feelings were being heard, there was more respect and a sense of friendship amongst the work mates hence feeling that they belonged to the team.

#### **Productivity and Motivation:**

Workers reported to have increased motivation and productivity in workplace environments where emotional intelligence was emphasized. It was observed that, when they were emotionally supported and esteemed, they could be less resistant to going the extra mile in their jobs.

The motivating factors were noted as EI practices, regular feedback and positive reinforcement, which motivated the employees to work on the higher level and decreased the level of job dissatisfaction.

### **Challenges in Implementing EI Practices:**

The general feedback was positive although challenges were also noted by the employees on the implementation of EI practices throughout the entire organization. According to some employees, the EI practices in some departments were high whereas in others, it was not so common.

It was also realised that, to make EI practices effective, the leadership must put in constant effort to make sure that the culture of the company was based on emotional intelligence and this was not only at the times of high stress or at a particular training session.

## **5. Discussion of the study**

### **5.1 The Role of Leaders in Promoting Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

Textile unit leaders are important in nurturing emotional intelligence (EI) among the employees. Employees who scored highly in EI could add towards a better working culture and enhanced productivity as indicated in the findings. Nonetheless, such outcomes are mostly directly determined by the behaviors of leaders and organizational climate established by managers.

With high EI, the leaders are able to be role models to their employees. Leaders can also influence their teams to embrace the same behavior by engaging in certain behaviors like empathy, self-regulation, and effective communication. As an example, a leader who is able to empathize, show understanding in very difficult circumstances will be able to establish the atmosphere where employees will feel freer to express their issues and emotions, which, in its turn, will facilitate a more effective cooperation and teamwork processes.

### **5.2 Training and Development Programs**

The findings of the study are quite compelling that Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be effectively improved by means of appropriate training and development initiatives. Although certain people may be born with a great amount of EI, the findings of the study underline that EI remains a group of skills, which can be acquired throughout the course of time. Through EI workshops, firms will be able to empower their employees with the necessary skills to handle their emotions better, enhance their interpersonal relationship, and enhance their overall performance in the workplace.

Employees can have various positive results due to the training programs aimed at paying attention to the main aspects of EI, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation. As one example, through the enhancement of self-control, workers can learn to negotiate their emotions when in stressful situations thereby eliminating stress and increasing tolerance to their adaptation to evolving work-related situations. Empathy training would bring understanding among the colleagues, which would result in better teamwork and supportive working environment. In the same manner, social skills training may assist the

employees to communicate better, eliminate conflicts, and work in collaboration with others more effectively.

### 5.3 Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study provided the basis on which additional research on the application of emotional intelligence in the manufacturing context can be conducted. It may also be the focus of future study to examine the long-term effects of EI training regarding employee retention, engagement, and organizational results. Secondly, research may also focus on the efficacy of particular EI interventions on enhancing the safety of a workplace, innovation, or leadership performance in the textile plants and the like.

Moreover, it might be also possible to conduct research on the effect of emotional intelligence on other work-related well-being areas, including the mental health of employees, work-life balance, and organizational culture. The discussion of these issues might give more information about how the training of emotional intelligence and leadership development can be used to make the work environment in various industrial organizations more positive and productive.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this research, it is evident that emotional intelligence (EI) would be important in creating a good working culture in the textile units, which would eventually contribute to the improved employee productivity. As identified by the findings, EI helps to enhance interpersonal relations, better stress management, and more employee motivation, which are major factors that can help to enhance workplace dynamics and performance. These are especially important in the industries such as textile where the work environment may be very stressful, busy and intense.

Textile units will be able to develop a more amiable and cooperative workplace by incorporating the EI principles into the organizational strategies. This may result in an increased engagement of the employees, less conflict, increased morale, and eventually, increased productivity. Also, emotionally intelligent leaders and managers may be role models, able to lead with empathy and social awareness, which will also contribute to the further development of trust and mutual respect.

The paper indicates that incorporation of EI training programs in textile units can be of great benefit to the employees and managers. This could help to better control emotions, work better in a team and to become more satisfied with the job. Through investing in the growth of EI, the textile units can be used not only to improve the well-being of each individual employee but also help the whole organization to be successful and sustainable.

Going ahead, the effect of EI training programs on employee retention, job satisfaction and organizational success over the long term can be studied in future. It would also be advantageous to look at the influence of EI integration in the leadership development programs on the leadership performance and organizational performance. Research into these features will result in a more in-depth insight into the role of EI in long-term success and development in the manufacturing environment such as textile facilities.

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## **EQUITY IN ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY ASSESSING BARRIERS FACED BY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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**DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00009.1**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the persistent inequities in access to higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom, focusing on underrepresented groups over a 15-year period. Drawing on longitudinal data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Office for Students (OfS), and qualitative interviews, the research identifies structural, socio-economic, and institutional barriers that continue to shape participation patterns. The study finds that despite policy interventions aimed at widening participation, disparities remain stark for students from low-income households, ethnic minorities, care-experienced individuals, and disabled students. The paper argues that equity in access is not merely a matter of entry but of sustained inclusion, progression, and success. It concludes with policy recommendations grounded in empirical evidence, calling for a shift from access-focused metrics to holistic equity frameworks that account for lived experience, intersectionality, and systemic disadvantage.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Equity in Higher Education Underrepresented Groups, Access and Participation, Intersectionality, Longitudinal Study.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Access to higher education in the UK is not equal. Despite decades of policy aimed at widening participation, the data tells a different story. Students from affluent backgrounds continue to dominate the most selective institutions, while those from underrepresented groups, particularly low-income, ethnic minority, disabled, and care-experienced students, face entrenched barriers at every stage of the HE pipeline (Boliver, 2013 & UCAS, 2022). This research sets out to do two things. First, it tracks how these barriers have evolved over time. Second, it examines whether the interventions designed to address them have actually worked. The study is longitudinal, spanning 2008 to 2023, and draws on both quantitative and qualitative data. It focuses on England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with particular attention to regional disparities and institutional stratification.

This is because higher education is not just about individual advancement. It's about social mobility, economic justice, and the kind of society we want to build. If access is skewed, so too is opportunity. And if opportunity is skewed, then the promise of meritocracy is hollow.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on equity and access in UK HE. Section 3 outlines the methodology, including data sources and analytical frameworks. Section 4 presents the empirical findings. Section 5 discusses the implications, and Section 6 concludes with recommendations for policy and practice.

## **Literature Review**

The question of equity in access to higher education has long occupied UK policymakers, researchers, and institutions. But the term equity itself demands clarity. Unlike equality, which implies uniform treatment, equity recognises that different groups require different forms of support to achieve comparable outcomes (Reay, 2017). This distinction is central to understanding the barriers faced by underrepresented groups.

## **Widening Participation: Policy and Practice**

The UK's widening participation agenda formally began with the Dearing Report (1997), which called for increased access for non-traditional students. Since then, successive governments have introduced measures such as the AimHigher programme, National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), and the current Uni Connect initiative (DfE, 2021). While these schemes have increased awareness and outreach, their impact on actual enrolment and progression remains uneven (Gorard et al., 2006).

## **Socioeconomic Status and Access**

Students from low-income households remain significantly underrepresented in higher education, particularly in Russell Group universities. According to the Office for Students (2023), only 5.9% of students from the most disadvantaged quintile entered high-tariff institutions in 2022, compared to 29.3% from the most advantaged quintile. This disparity is not simply about academic attainment; it reflects differences in cultural capital, institutional habitus, and access to guidance (Bourdieu, 1986 & Ball et al., 2002).

## **Ethnicity and Institutional Stratification**

Ethnic minority students face complex and layered barriers. While entry rates for some groups (e.g. Black African students) have increased, they are disproportionately concentrated in lower-tariff institutions and less likely to progress to postgraduate study or high-status employment (Shiner and Modood, 2002 & Stevenson, 2012). The issue is not just access but stratification, who gets into which university, and what that means for future outcomes.

## **Disability and Care Experience**

Disabled students and those with care experience face unique challenges. Despite legal protections under the Equality Act, 2010, disabled students report lower satisfaction, higher dropout rates, and limited access to tailored support (HEPI, 2022). Care-experienced students, meanwhile, represent less than 1% of the student population and face significant financial, emotional, and academic hurdles (Harrison, 2017).

## **Intersectionality and Structural Disadvantage**

Recent scholarship has emphasised the importance of intersectionality, how overlapping identities (e.g. race, class, gender, disability) compound disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991 & Arday, 2021). This lens is crucial for understanding why single-variable interventions often fail. For example, a low-income Black female student may face barriers that are qualitatively different from those faced by a low-income white male student, even if both are technically "disadvantaged."

Most importantly, the literature shows that access is shaped by a web of structural, institutional, and individual factors. Equity demands more than outreach, it requires systemic change.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods longitudinal design, combining quantitative analysis of national datasets with qualitative interviews. The aim is to capture both the macro-level trends and the lived experiences behind them.

#### 3.1 Data Sources

Quantitative data were drawn from:

HESA Student Records (2008–2023): covering enrolment, progression, and completion rates by demographic group.

UCAS Application Data: focusing on offer rates and acceptance patterns.

Office for Students Access and Participation Plans: detailing institutional commitments and outcomes.

National Pupil Database (NPD): linking school-level attainment to HE entry.

Qualitative data were collected through:

Semi-structured interviews with 42 students from underrepresented backgrounds across 12 UK universities. Focus groups with widening participation officers and academic staff.

Document analysis of institutional policies and outreach materials.

#### 3.2 Sampling and Ethics:

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and care experience. Ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided informed consent, and pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity.

#### 3.3 Analytical Framework:

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, regression modelling, and trend analysis. Key variables included POLAR quintile, ethnicity, disability status, and care experience. Qualitative data were coded thematically using NVivo, with attention to recurring patterns of exclusion, resilience, and institutional response.

The longitudinal design allows for tracking changes over time, identifying not just static disparities but evolving dynamics. This is crucial for assessing the impact of policy interventions and institutional reforms.

### 4. Empirical Findings

This section presents the results of the longitudinal analysis, drawing on both quantitative datasets and qualitative interviews. The findings are grouped into five core themes: socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, care experience, and intersectionality.

#### 4.1 Socioeconomic Disparities

Between, 2008 and, 2023, students from the lowest POLAR quintile consistently lagged behind their more advantaged peers in HE participation. In, 2023, only 18.2% of students from Quintile 1 entered higher education, compared to 47.6% from Quintile 5 (Office for Students, 2023). The

gap was even wider in high-tariff institutions, where just 6.1% of Quintile 1 students were admitted.

Regression analysis controlling for prior attainment showed that socioeconomic status remained a significant predictor of HE access ( $p < 0.01$ ), even when GCSE and A-Level results were held constant. This suggests that structural factors—such as school quality, parental education, and geographic location—play a decisive role (Gorard et al., 2007).

## 4.2 Ethnic Stratification

Ethnic minority students showed mixed patterns. While overall participation increased, particularly among Asian and Black African students, their distribution across institutions was uneven. In, 2023, 72% of Black students were enrolled in post-1992 universities, compared to 38% of white students (UCAS, 2023). This stratification has implications for access to resources, networks, and graduate outcomes (Boliver, 2016).

Qualitative interviews revealed a recurring theme: ethnic minority students often felt “steered” towards certain institutions or courses, sometimes by teachers or advisors who assumed they would not “fit” in elite environments. One participant noted, “I was told Oxbridge wasn’t for people like me” (Interview, Female, Black Caribbean, London).

## 4.3 Disability and Institutional Support

Disabled students represented 14.3% of the HE population in, 2023, up from 8.9% in, 2008 (HESA, 2023). However, progression and completion rates remained lower than average. Students with mental health conditions had the highest dropout rates, at 18.7% within the first year.

Interviews highlighted inconsistent support across institutions. While some universities offered tailored services, others relied on generic adjustments that failed to meet individual needs. One student described being “passed around departments” without receiving meaningful help (Interview, Male, neurodivergent, Manchester).

## 4.4 Care-Experienced Students

Care-experienced students remain one of the most underrepresented groups in UK HE. In, 2023, fewer than 7% of care leavers entered university, and only 2% attended high-tariff institutions (Harrison, 2021). Financial instability, lack of family support, and housing insecurity were cited as major barriers.

Focus groups with widening participation officers revealed that many institutions lacked dedicated policies for care-experienced students. Where support existed, it was often underfunded or poorly communicated.

## 4.5 Intersectionality and Compounded Disadvantage

The most striking findings emerged when variables were combined. For example, Black female students from low-income households had the lowest offer rates from high-tariff universities, even when controlling for academic achievement. Similarly, disabled students from rural areas faced compounded barriers due to transport, digital access, and isolation.

Thematic analysis of interviews showed that intersectional disadvantage was often invisible to institutions. Policies tended to address single categories (e.g. ethnicity or disability) without

recognising how these identities interact. As one participant put it, “I’m not just one thing. I’m all of it, and that’s what makes it harder” (Interview, Female, disabled, mixed heritage, Birmingham).

**Table 1. Summary of Disparities in Access to Higher Education in the UK**

Category	Access Rate (%)
Socioeconomic Status - Quintile 1	18.2
Socioeconomic Status - Quintile 5	47.6
Ethnicity - Black	28.3
Ethnicity - White	45.2
Disability - Disabled	14.3
Disability - Not Disabled	85.7
Care Experience - Care-experienced	7.0
Care Experience - Not care-experienced	93.0

## 5. Discussion

First, the persistence of socioeconomic inequality suggests that widening participation policies have not addressed the root causes. Outreach alone cannot compensate for decades of structural disadvantage. If students from low-income backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in elite institutions, then the promise of social mobility through education remains unfulfilled (Reay et al., 2005).

Second, ethnic stratification reveals a hidden hierarchy within the HE system. It’s not just about getting in, it’s about where you get in. The concentration of ethnic minority students in lower-tariff institutions limits their access to prestige, networks, and opportunities. This is not accidental; it reflects deep-seated biases in admissions, guidance, and institutional culture (Shiner and Modood, 2002).

Third, the experiences of disabled and care-experienced students show that legal protections are not enough. Inclusion requires proactive, personalised support. The variability in institutional responses points to a lack of accountability and standardisation.

Fourth, intersectionality must become central to policy design. The current siloed approach, treating ethnicity, class, disability, and care experience as separate issues, fails to capture the reality of compounded disadvantage. Institutions must develop frameworks that recognise and respond to complexity.

Findings: equity in access to higher education is not a box-ticking exercise. It’s a systemic challenge that demands structural reform, cultural change, and sustained investment.

### Implementation Plan: How to Put These Policies into Action

Policy Brief and Recommendations:



## Policy Recommendations

### 1. Shift from Access to Equity Frameworks

Universities must move beyond simply increasing numbers. Equity means ensuring underrepresented students not only enter but thrive academically, socially, and economically.

### 2. Embed Intersectionality in Policy Design

Stop treating disadvantage as one-dimensional. Policies must account for how race, class, gender, disability, and care experience interact to shape outcomes.

### 3. Reform Admissions Practices

High-tariff institutions should audit their admissions processes for bias, especially in predicted grades, personal statements, and interview formats. Contextual admissions must be standard, not optional.

### 4. Standardise Support for Disabled and Care-Experienced Students

Support varies wildly across institutions. There must be national benchmarks for disability services and guaranteed financial, housing, and pastoral support for care-experienced students.

### 5. Improve Data Transparency

Institutions should publish disaggregated data on access, progression, and outcomes by demographic group. Without transparency, accountability is impossible.

### 6. Fund Long-Term Outreach, Not Short-Term Projects

Outreach must be embedded in institutional strategy, not outsourced or dependent on short-term funding cycles. Relationships with schools and communities take time.

### 7. Train Staff in Cultural Competency

Bias in guidance, teaching, and support services undermines equity. All staff, academic and administrative, should receive training in cultural awareness and inclusive practice.

### 8. Create Inclusive Campus Cultures

Representation matters. Universities must invest in diverse curricula, inclusive student societies, and visible role models to ensure underrepresented students feel they belong.

**Table 2. Visual Summary of Policy Recommendations**

Policy Recommendation	Steps	Stakeholders	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes
Shift from Access to Equity Frameworks	Redefine institutional KPIs to include progression and success metrics; integrate equity goals into strategic plans.	University leadership, Office for Students (OfS), HE policy makers	6-12 months	Equity-focused KPIs adopted, annual equity audits conducted
Embed Intersectionality in Policy Design	Develop intersectional data dashboards; revise policies to reflect overlapping identities.	EDI teams, data analysts, student unions	12 months	Intersectional metrics published; policies revised to reflect complexity
Reform Admissions Practices	Implement contextual admissions; audit selection criteria for bias.	Admissions offices, UCAS, academic departments	6-18 months	Increased admissions from underrepresented groups bias-reduction in offer rates
Standardise Support for Disabled and Care-Experienced Students	Create national benchmarks; mandate minimum support standards.	DfE, OfS, disability services, care leaver networks	12-24 months	Improved retention and satisfaction rates; compliance with benchmarks
Improve Data Transparency	Publish disaggregated data on access, progression, and outcomes.	HESA, OfS, institutional research offices	6 months	Public dashboards available; offices increased accountability
Fund Long-Term Outreach, Not Short-Term Projects	Secure multi-year funding; embed outreach in institutional strategy.	DfE, university finance teams, outreach departments	12-36 months	Sustained partnerships with schools; improved application rates
Train Staff in Cultural Competency	Develop mandatory training, evaluate impact annually.	HR departments, EDI teams, external trainers	6-12 months	Staff trained; improved student feedback on inclusion
Create Inclusive Campus	Diversify curricula; support	Academic boards, student unions,	12-24 months	Increased sense of belonging; higher

Cultures	inclusive societies and mentoring.	curriculum committees		retention among underrepresented students
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Visual chart above shows mapping each UK higher education equity policy recommendation to a real-world case study, along with detailed implementation steps:

Way Forward:

**1. Shift from Access to Equity Frameworks**

Mapped Case Study: University of Birmingham – Charter Marks  
 How it fits: Birmingham used the Race Equality Charter and Athena SWAN to embed equity into institutional strategy, moving beyond access metrics to structural change.  
 Implementation Tip: Tie equity goals to funding and leadership accountability.

**2. Embed Intersectionality in Policy Design**

Mapped Case Study: University of Edinburgh – Intersectionality in Practice  
 How it fits: Edinburgh built cross-strand coalitions and applied intersectionality to policy and service delivery.  
 Implementation Tip: Use intersectional data dashboards and collaborative policy design.

**3. Reform Admissions Practices**

Mapped Case Study: London Metropolitan University – Racial and Social Justice Framework  
 How it fits: London Met revised admissions guidance and embedded racial equity into institutional processes.  
 Implementation Tip: Audit admissions for bias and standardise contextual offers.

**4. Standardise Support for Disabled and Care-Experienced Students**

Mapped Case Study: York St John University – Inclusive Education Framework  
 How it fits: York St John designed systems that anticipate diverse needs, rather than relying on reactive adjustments.  
 Implementation Tip: Create national benchmarks and proactive support models.

**5. Improve Data Transparency**

Mapped Case Study: University of Birmingham – Charter Marks  
 How it fits: Birmingham’s equity audits required disaggregated data reporting and transparency.  
 Implementation Tip: Publish equity dashboards and track progress annually.

**6. Fund Long-Term Outreach**

Mapped Case Study: London Metropolitan University – Community Partnerships  
 How it fits: London Met embedded outreach into its strategic plan, building sustained relationships with schools.  
 Implementation Tip: Secure multi-year funding and integrate outreach into core operations.

**7. Train Staff in Cultural Competency**

Mapped Case Study: University of Edinburgh – Intersectionality Training  
 How it fits: Edinburgh trained staff across departments in inclusive practice and intersectional

awareness.

Implementation Tip: Make training mandatory and evaluate its impact annually.

**8. Create Inclusive Campus Cultures**

Mapped Case Study: Shrewsbury Colleges Group – Disability Inclusion Through Sport

How it fits: The college used sport to build community and belonging for disabled students.

Implementation Tip: Invest in inclusive extracurriculars and diverse curricula.

**Implementation Plan: Policies Actions – Real World Case Study.**

**Table 3. Visual chart mapping each UK higher education equity policy recommendation to a real-world case study, along with detailed implementation steps:**

<b>Policy Recommendation</b>	<b>Mapped Case Study</b>	<b>Implementation Steps</b>
Shift from Access to Equity Frameworks	University of Birmingham - Charter Marks	Redefine KPIs to include progression and success; embed equity in strategic plans
Embed Intersectionality in Policy Design	University of Edinburgh - Intersectionality in Practice	Build intersectional data dashboards; revise policies to reflect overlapping identities
Reform Admissions Practices	London Metropolitan University - Racial and Social Justice Framework	Implement contextual admissions; audit selection criteria for bias
Standardise Support for Disabled and Care-Experienced Students	York St John University - Inclusive Education Framework	Create national benchmarks, mandate minimum support standards
Improve Data Transparency	University of Birmingham - Charter Marks	Publish disaggregated data on access, progression, and outcomes
Fund Long-Term Outreach	London Metropolitan University – Community Partnerships	Secure multi-year funding; embed outreach in strategy
Train Staff in Cultural Competency	University of Edinburgh - Intersectionality Training	Develop mandatory training, evaluate impact annually
Create Inclusive Campus Cultures	Shrewsbury Colleges Group - Disability Inclusion Through Sport	Diversify curricula; support inclusive societies and mentoring

The chart above is presentation-ready and clearly shows:

What needs to be done (Policy Recommendation)

Where it’s already working (Mapped Case Study)

How to do it (Implementation Steps)

**Case Studies**

**Case Study 1:** University of Birmingham – Charter Marks as Catalysts for Institutional Change

Policy in Action:  
 The University of Birmingham implemented both the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter (REC) marks to drive gender and race equity. These frameworks required the university to

collect disaggregated data, conduct internal audits, and develop action plans tied to funding and leadership accountability.

**Impact:**

Created structural change beyond “tick-box” exercises.

Embedded equity into departmental strategies.

Encouraged senior management buy-in and resource allocation.

Lesson: Charter marks work best when tied to institutional funding and leadership accountability, not just symbolic recognition

**Case Study 2:** London Metropolitan University – Racial and Social Justice Framework

**Policy in Action:**

London Met developed a university-wide Equity and Inclusion Framework focused on racial justice, decolonising the curriculum, and improving outcomes for Black and minority ethnic students.

**Impact:**

Recognised by the Office for Students as a model of effective practice.

Created staff-student partnerships to co-design inclusive curricula.

Increased Black student attainment and retention rates.

Lesson: Embedding racial equity into teaching, assessment, and leadership structures can shift institutional culture.

**Case Study 3:** York St John University – Inclusive Education Framework (IEF)

**Policy in Action:**

York St John piloted the Inclusive Education Framework, a toolkit designed to move beyond individual “reasonable adjustments” and instead design systems that anticipate diverse student needs from the outset.

**Impact:**

Applied Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis to identify gaps in inclusion.

Addressed needs of commuter students, neurodivergent learners, and carers.

Highlighted the limits of one-size-fits-all inclusion models.

Lesson: Inclusion must be proactive, not reactive. Intersectionality must be built into the design, not patched on after

**Case Study 4:** University of Edinburgh – Intersectionality in Practice

**Policy in Action:**

The university partnered with third-sector organisations to explore how intersectionality can be applied in real-world policy and service delivery. The project focused on overlapping inequalities (e.g. race, gender, disability) and how they shape access to education and support.

**Impact:**

Developed shared definitions of intersectionality across departments.

Created coalitions between racial justice, feminist, and LGBTQ+ groups.

Shifted from siloed EDI work to collaborative, cross-strand strategies.

Lesson: Intersectionality is not just theory, it's a method for designing more just and effective policies

**Case Study 5:** Shrewsbury Colleges Group – Disability Inclusion Through Sport

**Policy in Action:**

The college launched a pan-disability football programme to promote inclusion, wellbeing, and community for disabled students.

**Impact:**

Increased participation and retention among disabled learners.

Built confidence and peer networks through sport.

Created a replicable model for inclusive extracurricular engagement.

Lesson: Inclusion isn't just academic, it's social, emotional, and cultural

**CONCLUSION**

Equity in access to higher education in the UK is not a distant ideal, it's a measurable, achievable goal that demands structural change, not surface-level reform. This longitudinal study has shown that despite decades of widening participation efforts, underrepresented groups continue to face entrenched barriers shaped by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, and care experience. These barriers are not isolated, they intersect, compound, and evolve.

The data is clear, outreach alone is not enough. Equity requires a shift in institutional mindset, policy design, and resource allocation. It means rethinking admissions, embedding intersectionality, standardising support, and creating inclusive campus cultures that go beyond compliance to genuine belonging.

The case studies presented from Birmingham to Edinburgh, York to London, prove that change is possible. These institutions have shown that when equity is embedded into strategy, culture, and practice, outcomes improve. But isolated success is not enough. What's needed now is national coordination, long-term funding, and accountability mechanisms that ensure equity is not optional, it's foundational.

On a final thought, equity in higher education is not just a moral imperative. It's a strategic necessity for a fairer, more dynamic, and more inclusive society. The UK has the data, the tools, and the examples. What remains is the will to act.

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## Review Process

Each research paper/article submitted to the journal is subject to the following reviewing process:

1. Each research paper/article will be initially evaluated by the editor to check the quality of the research article for the journal. The editor may make use of iThenticate/Viper software to examine the originality of research articles received.
2. The articles passed through screening at this level will be forwarded to two referees for blind peer review.
3. At this stage, two referees will carefully review the research article, each of whom will make a recommendation to publish the article in its present form/modify/reject.
4. The review process may take one/two months.
5. In case of acceptance of the article, journal reserves the right of making amendments in the final draft of the research paper to suit the journal's standard and requirement.

