

PGR VOICES: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF DIVERSE DOCTORAL SCHOLARS THROUGH EDI NETWORKS

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Presented By:

Dean Smith - University of Stirling

Ebenezer Ishola - University of Dundee



INTRODUCTION

Research show several factors impact the Doctoral experience/journey. These include:

- Peer Connections
- Stress
- Healthy and Wellbeing
- Isolation
- Systemic inequities
- Post-PhD career
- and many more.....



INTRODUCTION

Literature on stress and wellbeing in the doctoral journey

Byrom et al., 2022 - some doctoral students could experience low mental wellbeing and stress in PhD in UK

Literature on systemic inequities for PhD students

Bishop, 2018 - commercialisation motive of higher education with students treated as customers, and argues for more inclusion of students in higher education system (a change in culture and perception)

Mattocks & Briscoe-Palmer, 2016 - systemic inequities faced by UK PhD politics students based on gender (women), ethnicity (black and minority ethnic) and disability.

These include lack of institutional support, financial, confidence and self-esteem, external responsibilities, health and wellbeing, future professional life, isolation, exclusion and disadvantage



INTRODUCTION

Literature on PGR Communities and their importance

Cai et al., 2019 - PGR communities as communities of common interests and needs, providing benefits including sense of belonging, wellbeing, stress alleviation, better self-esteem (direct), and socialisation, intercultural engagement (indirect)

Elliot et al., 2020 - meeting peers, building personal and professional networks as part of the value doctoral students highlight from the doctoral journey.

These are considered to be part of 'extracurricular' activities

Metcalfe et al., 2018 - recommends PGR peer support networks, more structured PGR cohorts or communities and PGR champions that specifically focus on wellbeing and mental health

Watson & Turnpenny, 2022 - discusses the role of PGR community in improving wellbeing



INTRODUCTION

Literature on PGR Voice and Inclusion

Sutherland et al., 2019 - the need to treat students as partners in higher education (fully involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the different aspects of learning)

Dowle et al., 2019 - different mechanisms for PGR voice (e.g. postgraduate research experience survey), fora, representative committees and representation on committees within the university governance structure. Explains that these options enable the loudest or most concerning voices; Other means of expressing PGR voices are through their supervisors and informal methods such as blogs and social media

The need to make doctoral researchers true partners in the decision-making processes; acknowledge multiple and diverse doctoral researcher voices rather than a single voice (EDI imperative); need to empower doctoral researchers to have a voice by creating safe space (PGR Networks)



VISION AND MISSION



Vision

This SGSSS/SGSAH project partners EDI and PGR leaders. Co-designed activities build leadership, strengthen four networks, and foster supportive environments.



Mission

Widening participation
Co-Partnership Model
Community Building

DOCTORAL EDI NETWORKS



Disabled

45+ Members



International

86+ Members



Part - Time

45+ Members



Global Majority

50+ Members



<https://www.sgsss.ac.uk/pgr-networks/>

DISABLED NETWORK - VOICE

Supervision and Communication

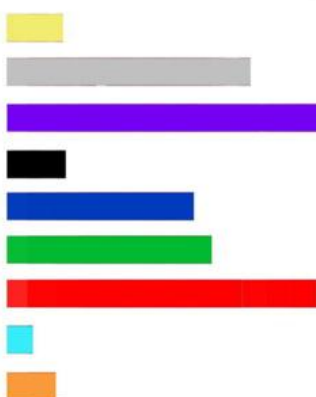
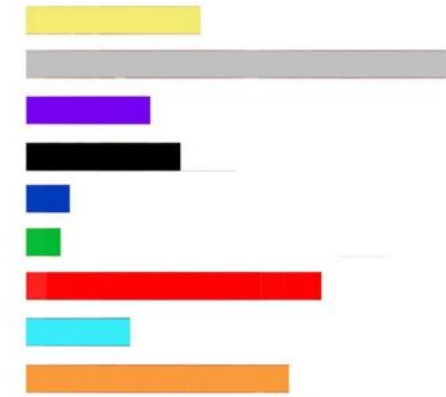
- Experiencing awkwardness when discussing disabilities with supervisors.
- Experiencing a lack of formal support from the university.
- Needing better communication and resources for disabled students.

Health and Personal Navigation

- Managing illness while pursuing a doctoral program.
- Navigating a PhD program while adjusting to a new autism diagnosis.
- Finding the right pace for doctoral studies.

Academic Progress and University Life

- Navigating the Annual Progress Review (IPR) without formal guidelines for autistic students.
- Joining student clubs and university extracurricular activities.



BENEFITS OF DISABLED NETWORK

Our Members Value:



Increased Visibility



Knowledge Sharing



Support System



Expert Discussions

PART TIME NETWORK - VOICE

Academic & Institutional Challenges

- Account management: Managing multiple institutional accounts.
- University planning: Lack of consideration for part-time students in institutional planning.
- Doctoral training disconnect: A disconnect between doctoral training providers and universities.
- Supervision: Difficulties regarding supervision and support.
- Limited support: Lack of institutional support, even for students with caring responsibilities.

Scheduling & Logistics

- Work-study balance: Balancing employment with academic study.
- Remote study: Facing logistical difficulties due to studying remotely.
- Event clashes: Event scheduling (like drop-in sessions) clashing with work commitments.
- Rigid planning: Lack of consideration for part-time student availability in event planning and communication.

Isolation & Engagement

- Isolation: Experiencing the isolating nature of part-time study.
- No cohort building: A lack of cohort-building activities for MD students.
- Engagement options: A general lack of flexible options for student engagement.
- Advocacy gaps: The ongoing necessity and struggle of advocating for student rights and needs.



BENEFITS OF PART TIME NETWORK

Our Members Value:



Tailored Timing



Knowledge Sharing



Support System



Expert Discussion

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK - VOICE

New experience and environment

- Different educational system.
- Advanced form of education and possible inexperience.

Isolation and need for belonging

- Physical distance from family and loved ones.
- Struggle to integrate into new community.

Financial burden

- Challenges with financial support in the absence of adequate funding.
- Competing financial demands from 'back home'.

Diversity in the academia

- Absence of diversity in the faculty.
- Lack of awareness/understanding of cultural and related experiences.



BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

Our Members value:



Community Building



Knowledge Sharing



Providing Support



Career Advancement

GLOBAL MAJORITY NETWORK - VOICE

New experience and environment

- Different educational system.
- Advanced form of education and possible inexperience.

Isolation and need for belonging

- Physical distance from family and loved ones.
- Struggle to integrate into new community.

Financial burden

- Challenges with financial support in the absence of adequate funding.
- Competing financial demands from 'back home'.

Diversity in the academia

- Absence of diversity in the faculty.
- Lack of awareness/understanding of (neo)colonial and related experiences.



BENEFITS OF GLOBAL MAJORITY NETWORK

Our Members Value:



Community Building



Knowledge Sharing



Providing Support



Career Advancement

CONCLUSION

EDI Networks:

- Creates space for collective growth, reciprocal support and camaraderie.
- Strengthen confidence and understanding of issues, courage to speak and lobby for what is needed.
- Fosters a sense of ownership and shared learning.
- Is a platform for nurturing greater peer connection.



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EDI DOCTORAL NETWORKS

ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE YEAR

Thank You

Dean Smith - University of Stirling
d.p.smith@stir.ac.uk

Ebenezer Ishola - University of Dundee
2657963@dundee.ac.uk

