**University of Leicester**

**Future 50 PhD Scholarship**

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| **Project Reference** | PVS Lakhlani |

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| **Additional Supervisor** | Dr Diana Pinto |

**Section 2 – *Project Information***

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| **Project Title** | Understanding and supporting the wellbeing and sense of belonging for BAME community students. | |
| **Project Highlights:** | 1. | Aims to develop educational polices to promote greater inclusion for students from diverse backgrounds and reduce disparities in academic performance. |
| 2. | Determine how sense of identity and adaptability of meeting new cultures can help support the learning and wellbeing of HE students. |
| 3. | Using psychological measurements and qualitative methods to assess the effectiveness of educational interventions to enhance student belonging, sense of identity and achievement in HE students. |
| **Project Summary** | | |
| Across the Higher Education (HE) sector, students from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds experience studying in university differently. Students from Black and Minority Ethnic groups typically perform less well academically and are less happy with their time at university as compared to white students. Additionally, students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds perform worse in their studies than economically advantaged students despite entering university with comparable grades. This PhD project aims to understand why these differential experiences occur in the same learning environment, to reduce this academic inequity, and to promote positive experiences in HE.  The university is a multicultural environment, where there is a need to adapt to new cultures (acculturation) and interact with people from different cultural groups. Research from this university has found that one’s ability to acculturate is predictive of neuropsychological performance. Psychological stress caused by difficulties in acculturation, cultural values, and self-identity has been shown to influence students’ academic performance and sense of belonging. These issues are underexplored in the UK HE context. Therefore, this PhD project aims to explore how individual factors such as personality, cultural identity, educational issues, and interaction in diverse groups affect students’ attainment and satisfaction.  This PhD project will adopt a mixed methods approach. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups will be used to explore in depth the lived experiences of those from different backgrounds in their university studies and the challenges they face in academic environments. Psychometric questionnaires and statistical methods will examine both psychological factors such as belongingness, self-efficacy, wellbeing, and personality in how well they predict academic performance and sense of belonging as well as evaluate the effectiveness of educational inventions on these outcomes. With this information, the PhD project will design, implement, and evaluate an intervention to enhance inclusivity and belonging in these diverse student communities.  The PhD student will learn advanced experimental and statistical analysis methods while also developing their ability to evaluate research at an advanced level. The applicant would gain a deeper theoretical understanding of pedagogical research and undertake empirical investigations by using focus groups and designing interventions. The student will also enhance their oral and written communication skills by disseminating their findings at conferences and writing up their research findings in their thesis and in publications.  The findings of this PhD project would inform the development of educational strategies and policies promoting greater inclusivity in HE for all students to flourish. | | |