

Construction, Communication, Co-existence: A Phenomenological Study of African Minority College Students' Academic Journey in the Sultanate of Oman

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

- **Swiss Society for African Studies**
- **Swiss Sociological Association**
- **Swiss National Science Foundation**
- **World Society Foundation**
- **University of Neuchâtel**
- **Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences**
- **Carl Schlettwein Stiftung**



Presentation Outline

Introduction

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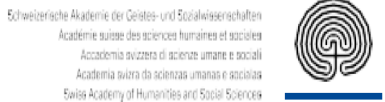
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Source: <https://www.bizbilla.com/country-maps/oman.html>



Introduction

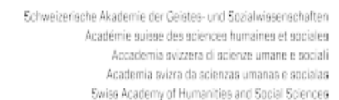
Oman has well-established socio-economic, cultural, and political relations with Africa and the rest of the world.

Extant literature on the lived experience of African college students echoes either silent or muted voices.

To thicken the theoretical and discursive discussions on the phenomenon being studied

Research Questions

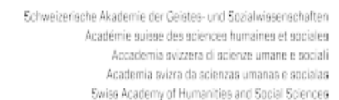
1. What does it mean to be an African college student in the Sultanate of Oman?
2. What are the epistemological meanings constructed by the African college students of their lived experience in Oman?



Research Questions

3. What are the roles of intercultural communication in the lives of these African college students while studying and living in Oman?

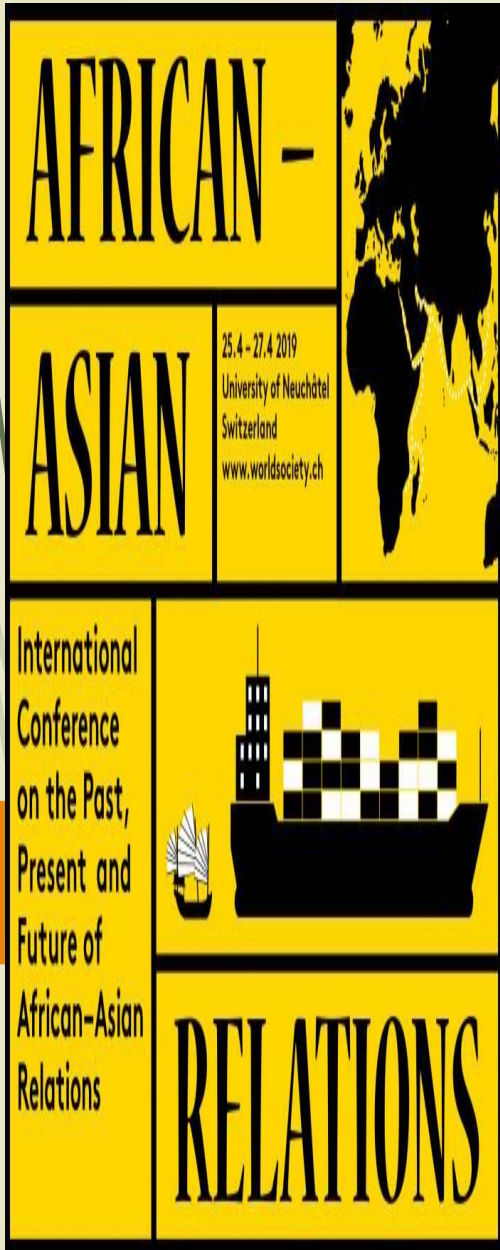
4. What are the implications of the findings to Oman-Africa relations?



Methodology

Phenomenology as Analytical Frame

- Inspired by Edmund Husserl (German philosopher, 1859-1938).
- Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain, and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Husserl, 1970, in Lester, 2016).



Methodology

Phenomenology as Analytical Frame

- There is no directive in interpretive research to prove or generalize, so the idea of validation is illogical... phenomenological research is to develop a comprehension of what it is like to live experiences (Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011, p. 30).





Methodology

Participants:

12 African College students studying undergraduate degree programs in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Sultanate of Oman

Data Source: Written narratives collected during Fall 2018-2019 semester

Table 1: The Participants

No.	Country of Origin	Gender	Program of Study	Location of HEI
1	Algeria	Female	Information Technology	Muscat
2	Benin	Male	International Business Administration (IBA)	Rustaq
3	Egypt	Female	IBA	Rustaq
4	Egypt	Male	Engineering	Muscat
5	Kenya	Female	English Language Teaching	Muscat
6	Sudan	Male	Engineering	Sohar
7	Sudan	Male	Information Technology	Muscat
8	Tanzania	Male	IBA	Rustaq
9	Tanzania	Male	Information Technology	Sur
10	Tanzania	Female	Engineering	Sohar
11	Tunisia	Male	IBA	Muscat
12	Tunisia	Male	IBA	Muscat

Methodology

Sample size in pheno. research

- At least six (Morse, 1994)
- 5-25 participants (Creswell, 1998)
- 2-10 participants (Boyd, 2001)

Saturation: the point at which “additional data do not lead to any new emergent themes” (Given, 2016, p. 135).



Methodology

Purposive sampling

- “based on the researcher’s judgement and the purpose of the research” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 45)
- looking for those who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988, p. 150)

Snowball sampling (chain-referral sampling)

- expanding the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing (Groenewald, 2004, p. 46)

Findings

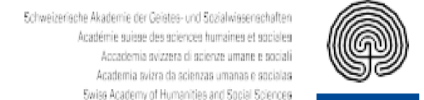
RQ1: “What does it mean to be an African college student in the Sultanate of Oman?”

Theme 1 – *Constructions*: Being an African College Student in Oman

Sub-Theme 1: A Privilege Like No Other

Sub-Theme 2: Coping with the New Environment

Sub-Theme 3: Social Expectations for Behavior Modification



Findings

RQ2: “What are the epistemological meanings constructed by the African college students of their lived experience in Oman?”

Theme 2 – *Co-existence*: African Students’ Lived Experience in the Sultanate

Sub-Theme 1: Sultanate as Bastion of Peace

Sub-Theme 2: Liveability as Embodiment of Suitability

Sub-Theme 3: Quality Higher Education

Findings

RQ3: “What are the roles of intercultural communication in the lives of these African college students while studying and living in Oman?”

Theme 3 – *Communication*: Intercultural Communication in African Students’ Lives

Sub-Theme 1: Communication as Genderized Phenomenon

Sub-Theme 2: Intercultural Communication as Values-laden Process

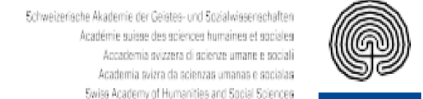
Sub-Theme 3: Communication as a Vehicle to Understand Others

Implications to Oman-Africa Relations

Political Relations

Economic Relations

Socio-cultural Relations



Political Relations

It seems that Oman wants to build strong relationships with African countries by providing scholarships to study in this country for the purpose of obtaining positive impacts related to Omani's vision. The impacts of these relationships to Oman include;

- *Facilitating trade barriers between Oman and African countries in terms of exports and imports*
- *Cultural exchanging between them*
- *Acquiring skills, experiences and knowledge between them for potential employees*
- *Spreading Oman culture to these countries*
- *Increasing awareness of Oman to those countries for the aim of increasing tourism sector*

(Participant 10, from Tanzania)

Economic Relations

- ❖ **Oman and Tanzania have signed trade and investment agreements in order to construct complimentary environment and build the confidence of business professionals and investors.**
- ❖ **Africa is an economic powerhouse waiting for exploration.**

Socio-cultural Relations

The main roles of Omani government and my country's government in my college education in Oman are;

- *To provide better education to the international students that can help both governments in terms of trade, economical, educational, standards of living, technological improvements and etc.*
- *Providing health care and safety for students of both countries*
- *Encouraging students of both countries to improve their talents, knowledge, skills and experiences related to their fields (majors).*
- *To listen to the students problems related to their academic lives and find suitable solutions regarding to those problems and challenges.*

(Participant 6, from Sudan)

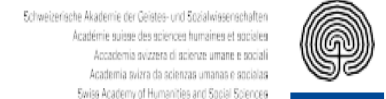
Recommendations

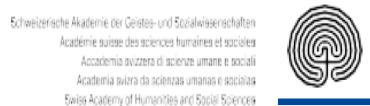
1. The findings shall be presented to the participants of the research; this hopes to ascertain applicability of the research outcome and establish further data trustworthiness. Likewise, it will also provide theoretical knowledge to them as regards the phenomenon examined.



Recommendations

2. The research shall be discussed with the policy makers and key educational leaders in order to sustain a gratifying experience among African minority college students in the Sultanate of Oman. Holding dialogues with them will inform decisions, policies, and programs.





Recommendations

3. It is also recommended that other qualitative methodologies such as ethnography and grounded theory be used in understanding further the academic journey of African students in Oman.

Conclusion

The research was able to surface epistemological meanings from the “stories” (i.e., written narratives) of participants in their everyday affairs and socially constructed realities as they interact with various communities in Oman.



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RELATIONS

Nothing in life is to be feared; it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

-- Marie Curie



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