



Biographical narratives of African post-doctoral fellows in a global academy

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Sources of data

- Draws data from the Global State of Young Scientists (GloSYS) Africa Project, a Global Young Academy initiative which involved Early Career Researchers from 14 African countries
- GloSYS Narratives: McAlpine, Chiramba, Keane, Abdeslam and Kareem (2020)
- McAlpine, Keane and Chiramba (2022)
- McAlpine, Chiramba and Keane (2022)


Core argument

- While there is growing research on the experiences of early career researchers, we lack research that specifically focuses on African post doctoral fellows.
- We also lack knowledge about how African post-doctoral fellows navigate the PDRF terrain at outside their countries and become successful.
- Biographical narratives help us understand the uniqueness of post-doctoral experiences and then draw commonalities in the experiences that will help to keep and/or improve the experiences in a holistic manner .


Research questions

- What structural factors did Post Doctoral fellows report as having impacted on their experiences as they navigate their fellowships?
- How do they describe their futures?
- What interventions might improve their experiences?

Defining concepts

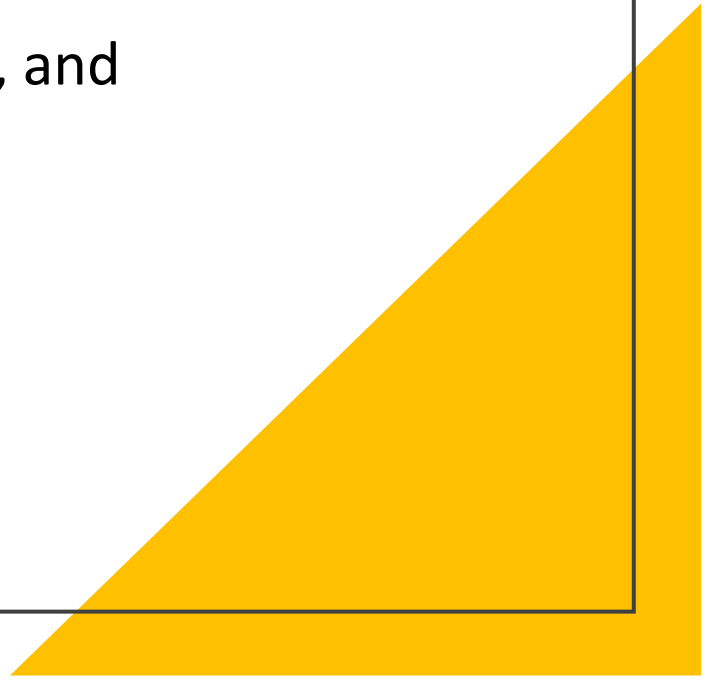
- Post Doc Research Fellow: someone who has received a time-limited post-PhD fellowship; not always a staff position; usually no institutional affiliation beyond acceptance by host institution
 - Post-PhD researcher: someone hired by a PI to work on a contract, not staff; no institutional affiliation
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The Push Pull theory (Lee 1966, Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, Maringe & Carter, 2007)

- What pushed these participants out of their countries? (economic climate, political climate, home research capacity, Unavailability of desired programmes)
 - What pulled them to their host nations? (Economic and political stability, educational reputation, funding, availability of research infrastructure)
 - Easy access to information about the host nation
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Cameos from three post doctoral fellows

- Cameos encompass the fullness of participants' lives
- Its always useful to gather unique individual trajectories, and then sought patterns across individuals



Personal factors and impact on individuals' careers

- Work life balance: individuals report trying to manage their work alongside families and related responsibilities, likely partner and children, perhaps extended family
- Reports on missing family
- Missing international conferences and opportunities because of family



Home factors and impact on individuals

- There is interaction of individual and structural factors in individuals' career trajectories
- political unrest and upheaval
- The Post Doc Fellows view home national policies and research conditions as unsupportive of high-quality research and collaboration
- Many individuals wish to contribute to their home countries but almost impossible when based abroad.




Host Institution factors and impact on individuals


- Conditions of work
- Job insecurity
- Supervisor-supervisee relationship
- They saw their work as conditioned by race and nationality and were expected to work more and had less freedom to engage in personal activities than their white peers.
- They accepted the situation given their own motivations to advance their careers and the sense that efforts to challenge the situation would not be productive.



Host institution factors and impact on individuals' careers


- Experienced racism in successive interviews, for instance, being told they never hired Africans since they are 'not qualified enough.'
 - linguistic difficulties (world and local languages) that limited applying for grants, constrained by lack of fluency, feeling treated differently
 - Xenophobia
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Future progression intentions

- Find permanent positions in academia
 - Building their own labs to create job opportunities for other young researchers back home
 - Keep international collaboration
 - Advocate for funding for young researchers in Africa
 - Advocate for women advancement in STEMM
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Towards impactful interventions for Post Doc Research fellows

1. Host institutions should rethink the Post Doc Research model

- Defined roles and responsibilities for post Doc Fellows
 - Training supervisors on how to make the experiences of these individuals more beneficial
 - Create opportunities to research more their areas of interest
 - Mentorship
 - Acknowledge and respect them
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Thank you!