

*Perspectives on Multiculturalism, Migration and Interculturality:
The Cultivation of Belonging in African Migrant Communities in Taiwan*

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Abstract

Cultural and immigration policies and public attitudes toward migrants often contribute to the practices of multiculturalism. Under the extremely monocultural conditions in Taiwan, African migrants in particular are a severely underrepresented minority group. As a result, they face constraints and obstacles that affect their ability to adapt, integrate, and cultivate their sense of belonging. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to help African migrants in Taiwan develop a sense of belonging by identifying their psychological, cultural, and social concerns. Using mixed research methods that include a literature review, survey, semi-structured interview, and web content analysis, this study addresses the following issues: (I) The role of Taiwanese policy in supporting, framing, and assisting African minority migrants. (II) The challenges experienced by African minority migrants in integrating into their new lives, (III) The need for social enterprises that recognize the specific social and cultural needs of African migrants. (IV) The obstacles social enterprises face when trying to assist and support them in fostering community. To address these issues, this study examines active social enterprises in Taiwan that are dedicated to supporting African migrants but have difficulty recognizing the diverse and varied needs of African migrants due to their limitations. In addition, this study demonstrates the importance of cultivating intercultural strategies in multicultural enterprises to promote communication, respect, and understanding of other cultures through cross-cultural exchange. Ultimately, this study contributes to the development of a social enterprise model and provides new insights into the process of community building for African migrants seeking to cultivate their sense of belonging.

Keywords: Sense of Belonging, Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Social Enterprise, African Migrants

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INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism is a long-standing ideology that promotes diversity and the coexistence of different cultures. It is both a sociological and philosophical concept, advocating for the accommodation of cultural minorities in legal, political, and public policies. However, there are two main objections to multiculturalism: it can prioritize the interests of certain groups over the common good and undermine equal individual rights (Eagan, 2022).

Taiwan on the other hand, has self-identified as multicultural for decades, yet its early immigration policies reflected a belief that the country is fundamentally monocultural. Public discourse on diversity has mainly focused on indigenous peoples, Chinese mainlanders, Hokkien, and Hakka people, and Taiwan's isolated political environment has hindered its development (Wang, 2014). Despite evolving policies to address migration trends, this research aims to address gaps in knowledge by examining the challenges of multiculturalism and migration in Taiwan.

Alternatively, **interculturalism** is a suggested approach that emphasizes a shared commitment to active dialogue and development among diverse cultural subjects (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). Applying intercultural communication to multiculturalism encourages cultures to move beyond simple coexistence by emphasizing cross-cultural discussion. While Multiculturalism focuses on policies, cultural rights, assimilation and acculturation Interculturalism supersedes it by valuing the interactions between cultures, fostering mutual understanding, social integration and deeper cultural belonging.

Belonging is a complex term that can be very personal and hard to quantify; however, the need to belong is inherent to human beings and serves as the foundation for subjective well-being. What does it mean to belong? It means knowing that you are an integral part of a community, feeling safe within that community, and being recognized as an individual (Taylor, 2022). For migrants, belonging relates to identity, connectivity and inclusion, connection, fitting in, and feeling a sense of place and home (Albert & Barros, 2021). Simply put, a sense of belonging refers to the emotional state experienced when an individual feels a strong bond to the people and communities in which they reside (Hurtado and Carter 1997; Soto, 2021).

Although belonging is determined both by the individual and the culture they wish to integrate in, there are significant factors that influence whether or not it can be cultivated. For minority migrants, those factors include multicultural policies, media projections, local perceptions and the ability to engage in intercultural exchange. This study explores migrants' sense of belongingness through their self-perception of societal relationships and their ability to integrate and contribute to their host nation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Immigration policies and public perceptions of migrants in Taiwan contribute to multiculturalism, but the lack of local communities and resources for African migrants hinders their cultural identity and sense of belonging. To help minorities and underrepresented migrants cultivate their belonging, Taiwan should introduce new alternatives that strengthen their multicultural practices.

One such option is to integrate interculturality into multicultural practices and promote cross-cultural engagement between minority migrants and locals. For African migrants, cultivating an inclusive environment means reaching out to organizations and communities that support them and figuring out how they nurture African communities through interculturality. This helps them tell authentic stories, understand their unique needs, and build communities based on cultural belonging.

RESEARCH MOTIVATIONS

Growing up as a third culture kid, I understood the complexities of values, customs, and practices that differed from those of the majority. My accent was distinct and foreign to my native peers, and I struggled to understand the source of the false narratives that portrayed Africa as such. In the United States, it was easy to blend in and often go unnoticed, but in trying to assimilate, I lost parts of my former self so that I felt neither Zimbabwean nor American.

The concept of identity was a constant in my subconscious as I moved through daily life. Moving to Taiwan brought the issue of identity to the forefront, especially when trying to navigate a new environment without the benefit of speaking the majority language and having close access to family and friends. I began to understand that building my cultural identity and cultivating my belonging meant more than trying to blend in or assimilate as best I could. I understood the value of my native culture and the privilege of being an ambassador of that culture to some extent, especially in a place where there are not many like me.

The absurd questions about my Africanness that I despised when I was younger are an indication of where the knowledge gap lies, and an invitation to engage in dialogue to change narratives and provide the most authentic and true African story.

RESEARCH OBJECTS & QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to critique the roles of imposed government regulation, analyzing their contributions to the attitudes and perceptions of locals towards African migrant communities. Secondly, this study explores the globally recognized definitions of multiculturalism, and contrasts those definitions to the manner in which Taiwan interprets and practices it. Lastly, this study identifies key elements that help African migrant communities in Taiwan develop their sense of belonging, by analyzing various models of social innovations already put to practice in countries embracing migration and multiculturalism practices. In other words, by focusing on significant concepts of migration studies, this paper explores a sense of belonging under the scope of multiculturalism. As a result, this study explores the different contributing factors that allow African immigrants to feel a sense of belonging, even in environments that complicate it.

	ROs	RQs
1	Examine policy discourse to develop an overall understanding of multiculturalism, migration, and minority migrant identity structures.	How have policies and been framing immigration? In what ways have multicultural policies been responsive to migrants' distinct needs?
2	Identify the social, cultural, and psychological needs of African migrants, examining elements they consider most important in cultivating their sense of belonging.	How can the cultural, psychological, and social needs of African migrants in Taiwan be addressed to help them foster a sense of belonging?
3	Investigate existing strategies used by social enterprises, examining to what extent interculturality can be employed to help African migrants build community and cultivate belonging.	What strategies and practices have social enterprises used to target and assist African migrants in building community? What are the limitations, inadequacies, or unmet needs, if any?
4	Formulate insights on community building benefiting both the migrants and the social enterprise	In what ways can social enterprises evolve to effectively address and meet the individual and cultural needs of African migrants in Taiwan?

Table 1: Research Objectives and Questions
Source: Researcher

RESEARCH METHODS & PHASES

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
LITERATURE REVIEW	SURVEY	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	WEB-CONTENT ANALYSIS
Phase 1 - RO 1 Document Analysis of Immigration Policies	Phase 2 - RO2 Surveying of participants under PEACE framework and The LizNZ Study	Phase 3 - RO 3 Semi-Structured Interview of African Migrants currently residing in Taiwan	Phase 4 - RO 4 Web-Content Analyses of African Social Enterprises in Taiwan.
RQ1 - How have policies and been framing immigration? • In what ways have multicultural policies been responsive to immigrants' needs and helped them feel they belong?	RQ2 - How can the cultural, psychological, and social needs of African migrants in Taiwan be addressed to help them foster a sense of belonging?	RQ3 - What strategies and practices have social enterprises used to target and assist African migrants in building community? • What are the limitations, inadequacies, or unmet needs, if any?	RQ4 - In what ways can social enterprises evolve to effectively address and meet the individual and cultural needs of African migrants in Taiwan?

Table 2: Research Methodology framework
Source: Researcher

Regarding the methodology and frameworks used in the paper, there are two different theories that contribute to the outcome. The first theory is found in the paper "Attitudes towards Immigrant, Immigration, and Multiculturalism in New Zealand: A Social Psychological Analysis" by Colleen Ward and Anne-Marie Masgoret proposes direct paths connecting five underlying variables: Multicultural Ideology, Intercultural Contact, Perceived Threat, Attitudes towards Immigrants and Endorsement of Immigration Policy. Attached are the questions raised in correlation with each variable.

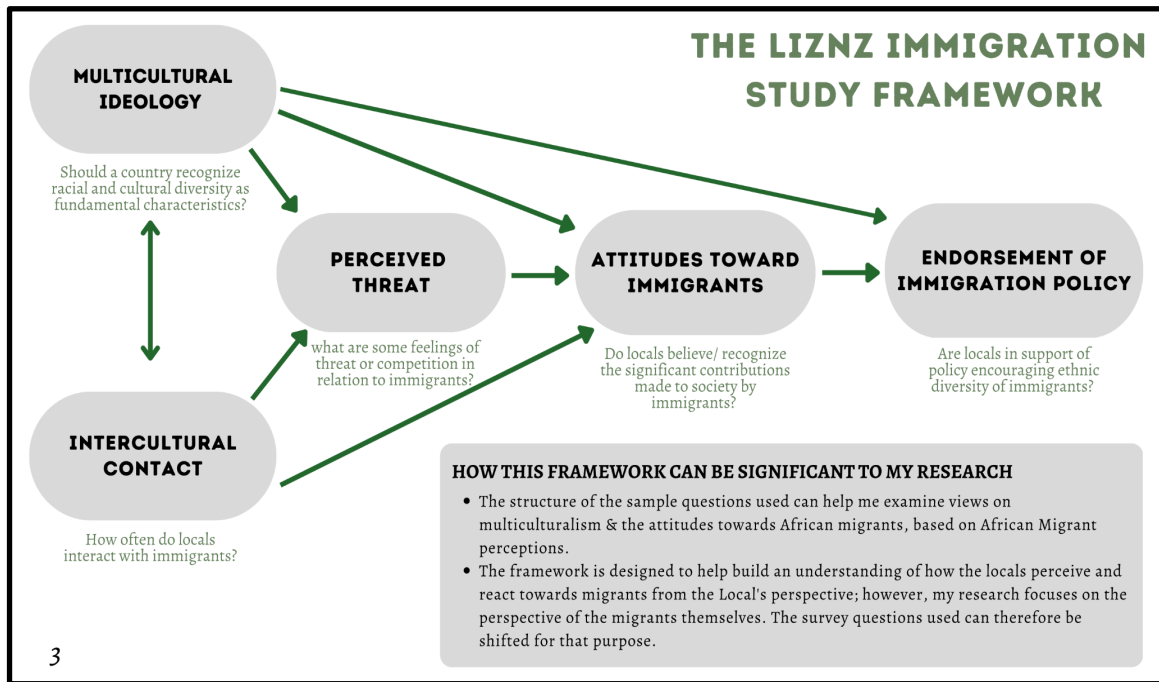


Figure 1: Linz Immigration Study Framework
Source: International Immigration Review

The second theory is introduced by Chief Diversity Officer Carin Taylor during her TedTalk "Belonging, a critical piece of diversity, equity and inclusion" illustrates the key conditions that need to exist for belonging. PEACE represents Psychological safety, Empathy, Acceptance, Connection and Embrace. This model explores the significance of community in belongingness, and it begs the question "How are you creating the conditions for belonging?"

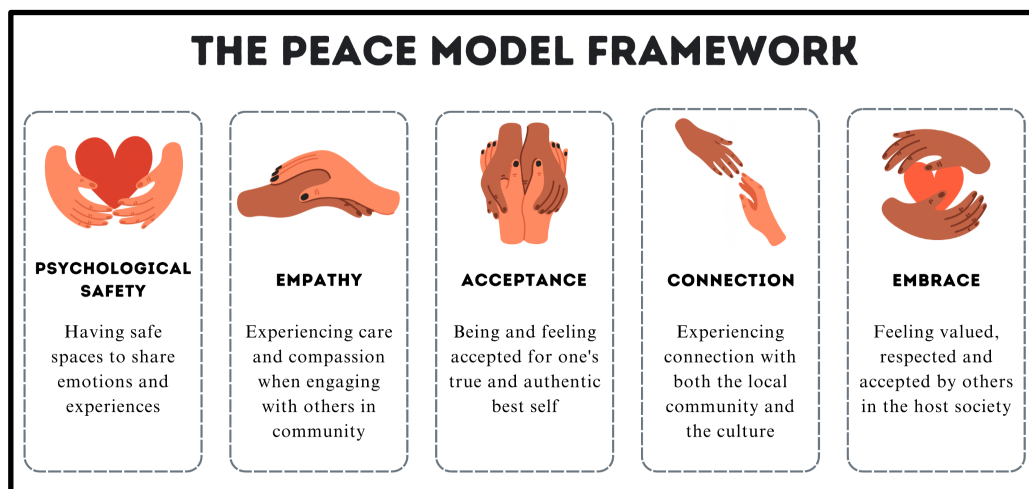


Figure 2: The PEACE Model
Source: Researcher (adapted from Carin Taylor)

RESEARCH METHODS

Literature & Desk Review

A desk review is a secondary research method that analyzes published materials and existing data to obtain information on a specific topic. This research used this method in Phase 1 to analyze policies on multiculturalism and migration. Data from government websites, public libraries, educational institutions, and commercial sources will be analyzed, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research's fit into a larger field of inquiry.

Survey Questionnaire

The researcher's distributed a survey questionnaire during Phase 2. The survey aimed to assess cultural identity, needs, and feelings of belonging among African migrants in Taiwan, aiming to meet specific objectives and determine if specific objectives have been met.

Story-Sharing Interview (Semi-Structured)

Story-sharing in qualitative research involves the reciprocal exchange of relevant stories between participants and researchers, aiming to provide higher quality data (Heyman, et al, 2011). This methodology involves self-disclosure and storytelling, allowing for deeper understanding of social and cultural needs. The researcher implemented the Storytelling method during Phase 3, which involves semi-structured interviews with participants. It aims to capture the richness and complexity of their experiences, capturing the richness and complexity of their stories (Bryman, 2016). This method is beneficial for exploring identity, culture, and belonging in qualitative research. Ultimately, the method allows for a deeper exploration of participants' experiences and points of view, as well as a space for genuine and thoughtful storytelling.

DATA ANALYSIS AND CASE SELECTION

Selection Criteria of Survey Participants and Interviewees

Survey Participants and interviewees were selected based on various criteria to gain a holistic understanding of experiences and perspectives of African immigrants in Taiwan. These criteria included different residential areas, age groups, residence length, gender, and PEACE principles chosen to examine cultural belonging needs and organization roles. The selection of diverse participants allowed for a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of African immigrants in Taiwan.

Structure of Survey Questionnaire

The survey was divided into four main themes, addressing all dimensions of the second research objective and question. The structure is as follows:

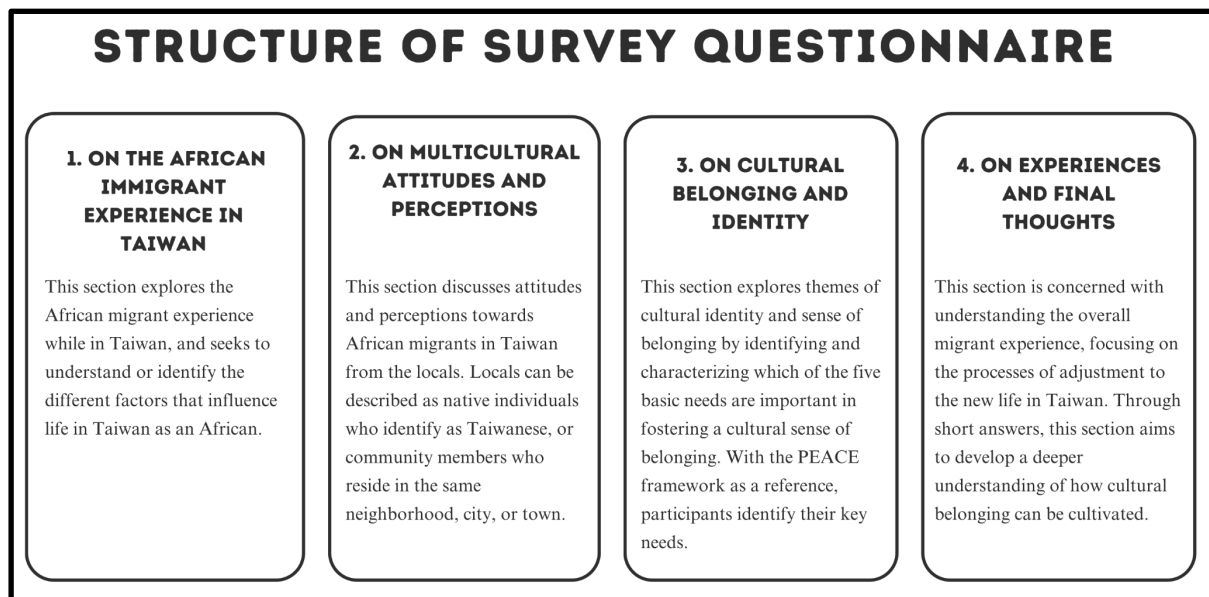


Figure 3: Structure of Survey Questionnaire
Source: Researcher

Structure of Storytelling Interview

The Interview was divided into 3 main themes drawn from the survey responses. The themes were selected as they stood out in the survey, thus the interviews sought out to extract deeper and more personalized information from the respondents. The structure is as follows:



Figure 4: Structure of Storytelling Interview
Source: Researcher

Criteria for Case Selections

There are a number of associations, organizations, and groups targeting and serving African migrants in Taiwan, each with their own unique services, purposes, and practices. The study analyzed these organizations' structures, aims, purposes, strengths and weaknesses, and communities they foster for Africans. The information on these organizations was mainly collected during surveying and interviews, as named by the African migrants themselves. Nevertheless, the selected organizations are as follows:

Case Identities, Background and Objectives

Name	Type	Objective
SATAI	A non-profit public welfare social organization	To promote Taiwan-South Africa connections through business, education, cultural, performing arts, and sports exchange programs.
NASA	A non-profit student-run association	To represent the academic and social interests of African students , and to assist them in their transition in Taiwan
USR	Government-run University Program	To encourage universities to engage and collaborate with the community through various initiatives.
WowAfrica	News and Media Information Hub	To share and contribute information on Africa, in hopes to reshape the narratives by dispelling stereotypes and misinformation , and building better understanding of the continent and its people.

Table 3: Case Identities, Backgrounds & Objectives

Source : Researcher

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Thematic analysis (TA) is a crucial method in qualitative research, allowing researchers to identify themes within a dataset. Braun & Clarke (2012) emphasize the importance of TA in observing communal experiences and meanings. This method allows for freedom in selecting and applying different theoretical frameworks, allowing for a rich, detailed, and sophisticated characterization of data. Thematic analysis is a versatile and adaptable approach to understanding the meanings and patterns within a dataset.

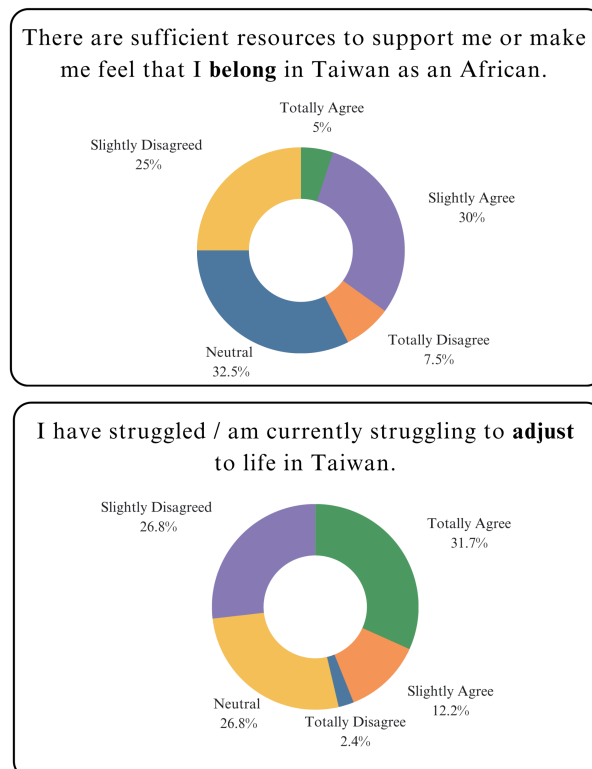
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multiculturalism and Policy

The researcher analyzed official government sources and websites to develop an understanding of multiculturalism, immigration, and minority migrant identity structures. They found that policies rarely addressed multiculturalism in Taiwan, and they mainly targeted migrant worker groups from South East Asia and highly skilled professionals. This lack of multiculturalism in the policies suggests that the concept of multiculturalism is absent in the specific issues addressed. Additionally, immigration policies primarily serve the purpose of boosting the Taiwanese economy and enhancing domestic workforces, with the main targets being foreign professionals and intermediate skilled workers. This results in foreign residents who fall short of these requirements not receiving the full benefits of most immigration policies.

Met and Unmet Needs


The researcher aimed to identify the social, cultural, and psychological needs of African migrants in Taiwan and examine their priorities in developing their sense of belonging. An online survey with 41 participants revealed that the struggles faced by African migrants to cultivate cultural belonging stem from barriers connecting with local communities. Language barriers were identified as the biggest problem, but even fluency in the local language hindered their connection. As a result, African migrants struggle to feel belonging and envision staying in Taiwan long term. Addressing these cultural, psychological, and social needs can help foster a sense of cultural belonging and identity for these migrants.



Figures 5 & 6 : Survey Responses on Belonging in Taiwan
Source : Researcher

Telling the African Migrant Stories

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with African migrants living in Taiwan to share their personal stories and experiences. The structure was derived from the survey, focusing on African Migrant Experiences, Principles of Cultural Belonging, and Nurturing Intercultural Communities. Each interviewee provided a unique perspective, influenced by demographic factors like gender, age, and location. The researcher created individual profiles to help readers understand the full scope of their experiences and stories.



NATHAN

BIO
Nathan is a Master's student currently studying at National Taiwan University in Taipei. He initially moved to Taiwan for his Bachelors at Chang Jung Christian University. He is also the founder of the student association NASA, aimed at assisting African students in Taiwan adjust to life in their new host country, but providing various resources and building a community that connects them. He is an avid christian, serving and participating passionately in the church; his religious beliefs play a large role in whoc he is, and in the communities he is a part of.

QUOTE
"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."
John 16:33 NLT

INTERESTS

- Music
- Travel
- Community engagement
- Volunteerism
- NPOs / NGOs
- Cross-cultural connections

PROFILE

AGE : 25 - 34
GENDER : Male
FROM : Tanzania
BASED : Taipei / Tainan
DURATION : 6 - 10 years

PRINCIPLE OF BELONGING
Embrace

Figure 7 : Interviewee Participant Bio
Source : Researcher

When asked the question:

Do you feel a sense of belonging in Taiwan? If so, how have you cultivated that sense of belonging? If not, what factors contribute to your sense of disconnection?

Nathan responded:

First, I would say, if you want to get into the culture here, you have to sacrifice or forget a bit of your culture first, because if you want people to understand you, then you will need to understand them first. So first, the more you try to let them understand your culture, the more you have to first, forget it. And get into their hearts and their kindness first so that they will be able to listen to what you are used to in your country, and to what your culture is. Then you can now try to show you culture slowly.

CONCLUSION: INSIGHTS

Economic Growth

While cultural policies emphasize the wellbeing and protection of immigrants, immigration policies in Taiwan tend to focus on economic growth, targeting skilled professionals, intermediate skilled workers, foreign investors, and mid-level technicians. These policies aim to retain talent in desirable fields, but often overlook those outside these categories, causing challenges in adapting and cultivating belonging.

Belonging Means Listening First

African migrants prioritize listening first to be heard and embraced by Taiwanese culture. This often involves neglecting their own cultures and fully embracing Taiwanese culture. The intercultural community emphasizes openness to listening, understanding perspectives, and

approaching from a common familiar place. African migrants understand that sharing their identity requires fully embracing Taiwanese people's language, customs, and traditions.

The researcher aimed to identify the social, cultural, and psychological needs of African migrants in Taiwan and investigate existing social enterprises. The study found that African migrants face challenges in maintaining their cultural identity and sense of belonging due to various barriers.

The Fluidity and Impermanence of Community

African migrants often view Taiwan as a temporary place for personal benefits, rather than a long-term settlement. Factors such as struggles, lack of belonging, underrepresentation in media, stereotypes, and language barriers influence this mindset. To fully cultivate cultural belonging, African migrants should adopt a community structure based on impermanence, allowing them to reconnect with their culture and share their stories without neglecting themselves.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study faced several limitations, including limited access to the target group of African migrants in Taiwan, the subjective nature of the Story-Sharing interview method, and language barriers.

- I. The researcher aimed to secure between 50-100 survey participants, but faced challenges in securing the required resources.
- II. The method's subjective nature may not accurately depict the experiences of the whole group, as factors like gender, location, linguistic ability, and personality contribute to the unique findings.
- III. Additionally, the study's one-sided perspective, limited to only African migrants, made it difficult to bridge the gap between African migrants and Taiwanese locals through intercultural studies.

Overall, these limitations hindered the success of the study in addressing the challenges faced by African migrants in Taiwan.

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