

Personal epistemologies and competitive debate: An interpretive study of international competitive debaters in the MENA region

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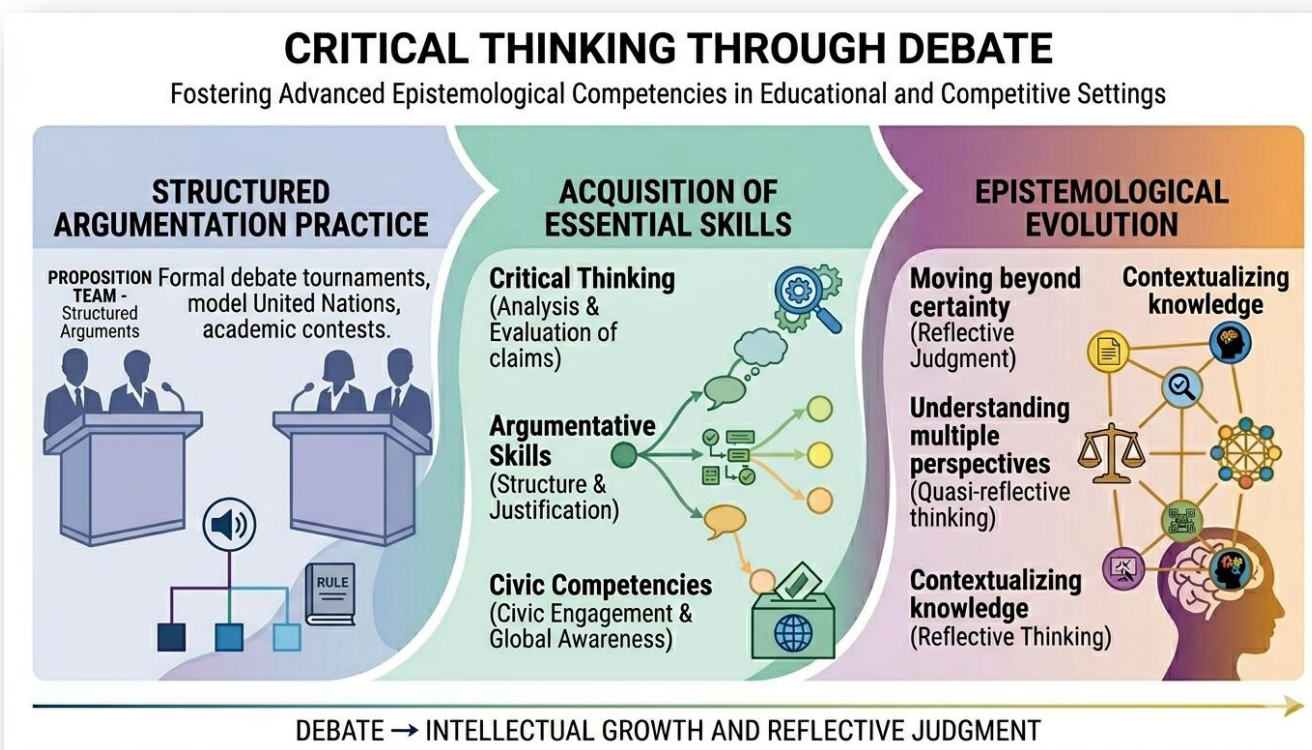
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INTRODUCTION & AIM

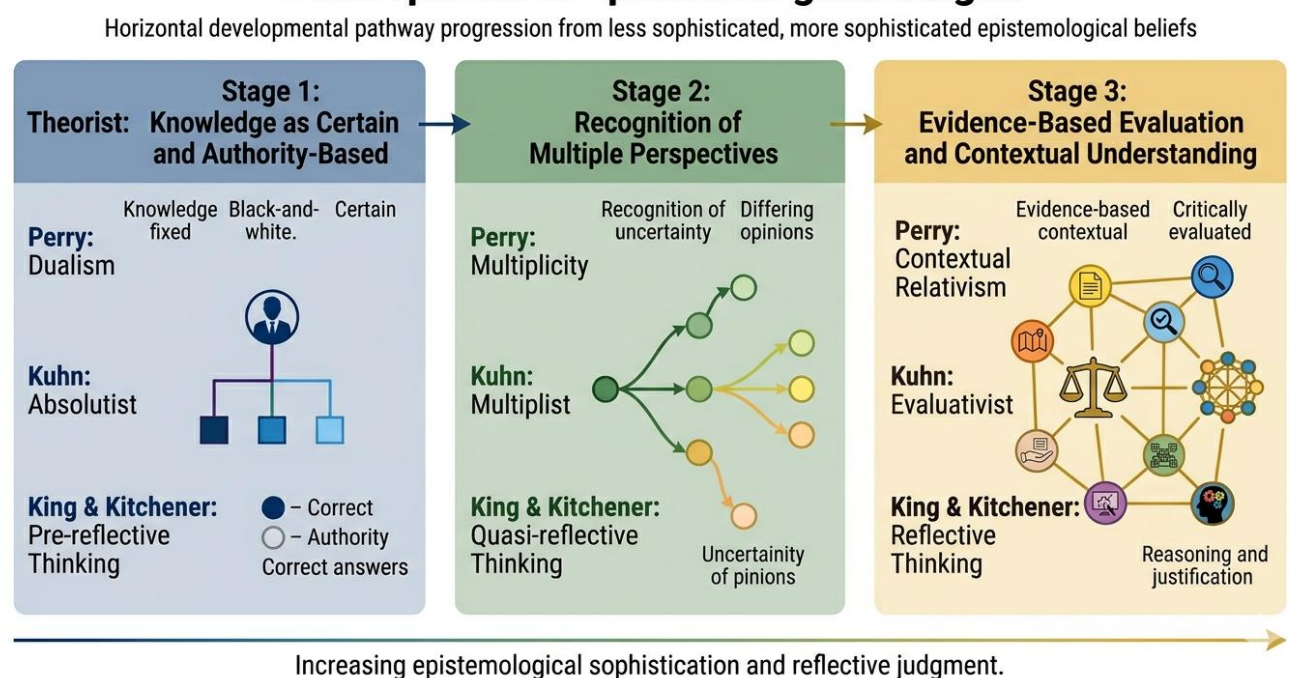
How do academic debaters represent their personal epistemologies in relation to debate education, higher education, and *munāẓara* traditions?

Debate as a formative practice

Debate is a structured argumentative practice used in competitive and educational settings, widely recognized for fostering critical thinking, argumentative skills, and civic competencies associated with more sophisticated personal epistemologies.



Development of Epistemological Stages



Personal epistemologies

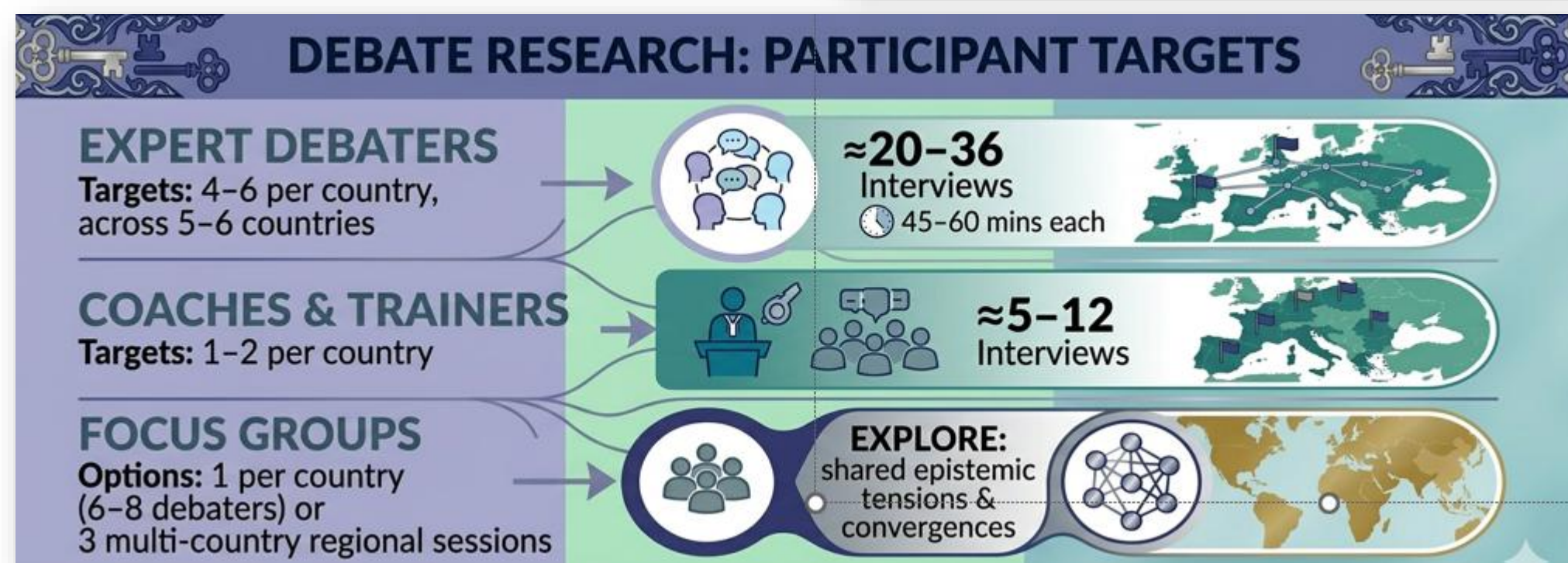
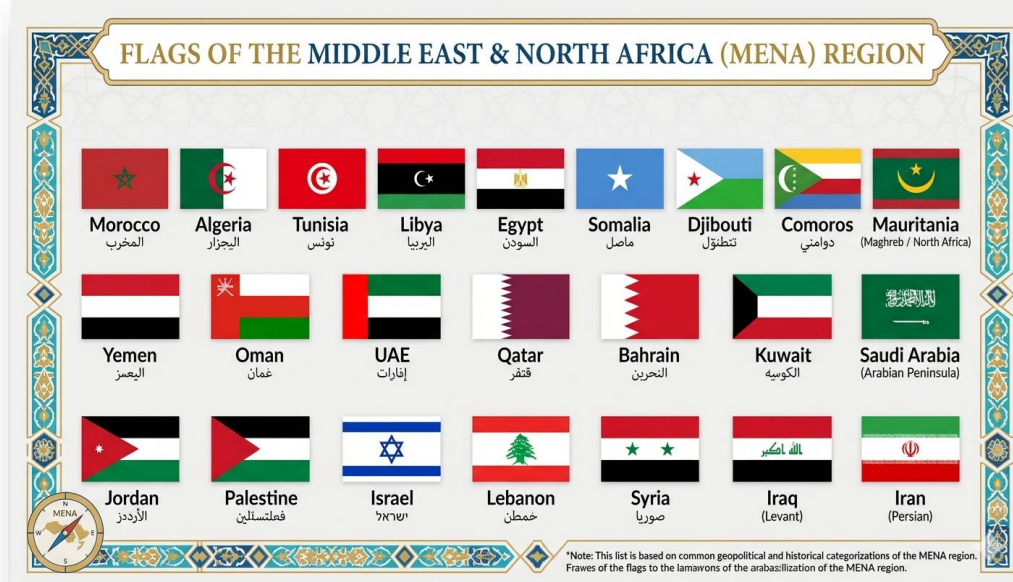
Personal epistemologies refer to individuals' beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the processes through which it is acquired, justified, and evaluated. They shape how people construct their own understanding and judgment.

METHOD

Design and approach

Qualitative interpretive study of personal epistemologies among university students engaged in competitive debate in the MENA region.

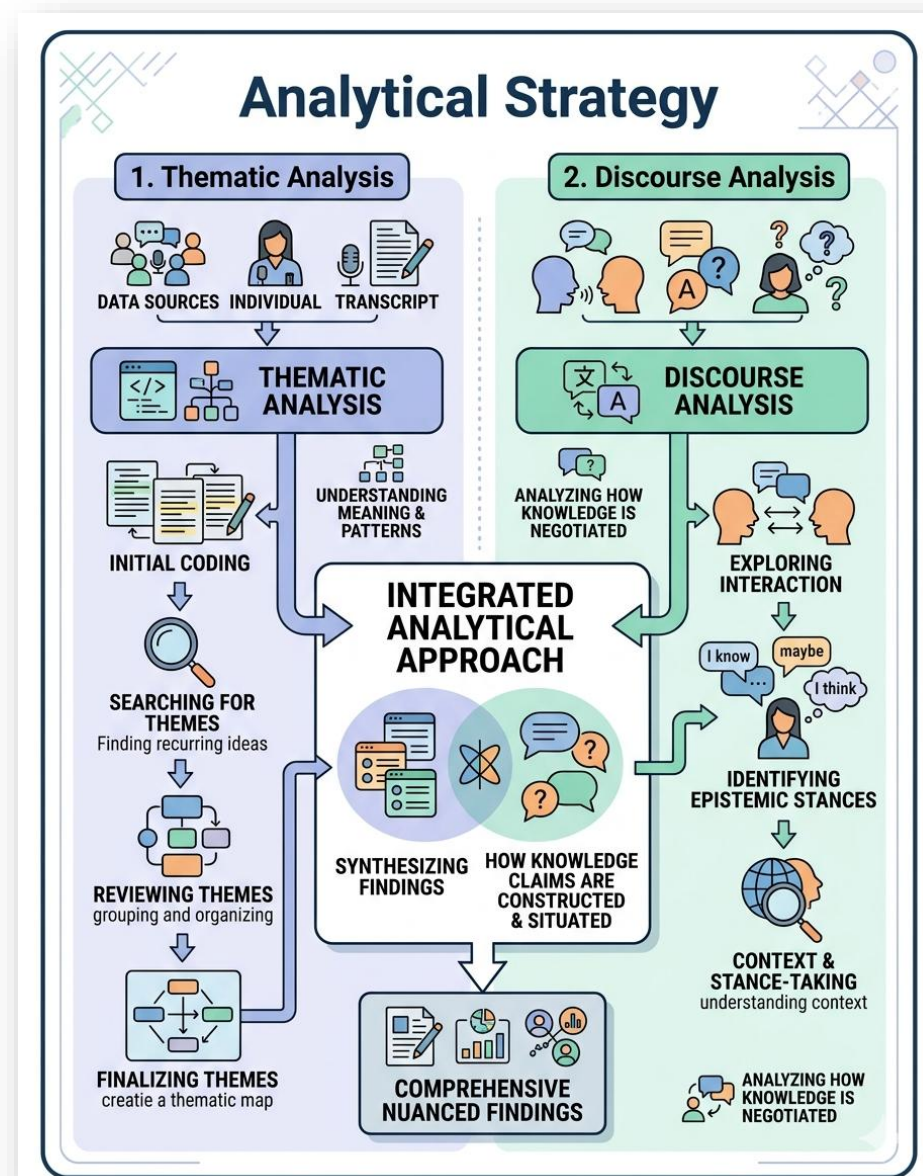
Multi-layered sampling combining individual interviews, focus groups and supplementary materials.



Data collection

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with debaters and coaches exploring epistemic beliefs, meaning-making processes, pedagogical aims, and strategies for handling complexity and uncertainty in debate, including collective knowledge construction.

Supplementary documentary data from training materials and team/league narratives to contextualize practices and institutional perspectives on debate learning.



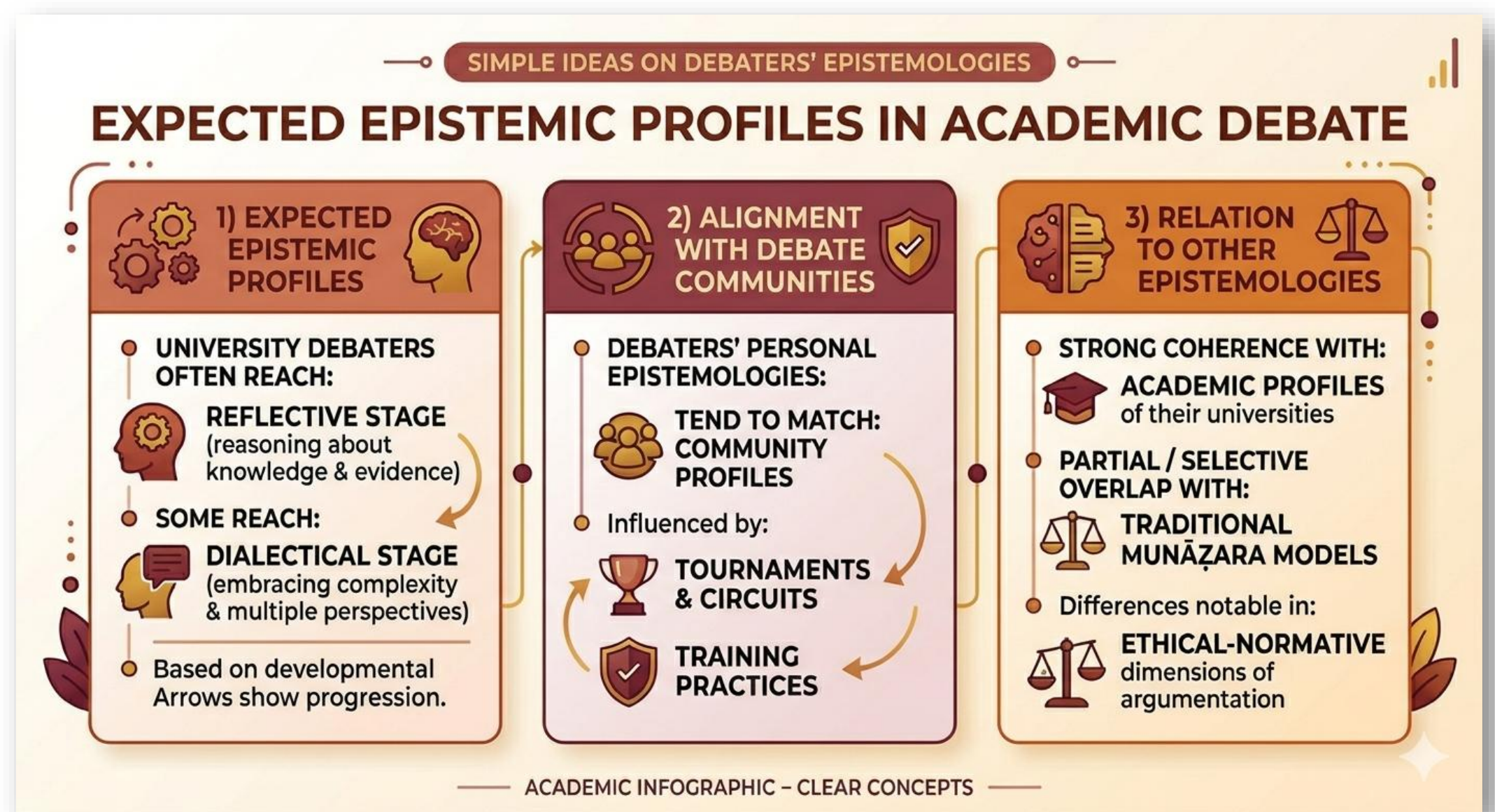
RESULTS & DISCUSSION



Due to the recent geopolitical situation involving Qatar in the Iran–USA conflict, data collection with debaters and coaches in the MENA region has not yet been completed.

The study therefore presents an ongoing, qualitative and exploratory investigation of personal epistemologies in competitive university debate.

Expected results



Hypothesized epistemic profiles of debaters

Drawing on developmental models of personal epistemology, we expect most university debaters to position themselves at least at a reflective stage, and in some cases at a dialectical stage, when reasoning about knowledge, evidence and controversy in debate.

Alignment with debate communities

A key expectation is that debaters' personal epistemologies will broadly align with the epistemic profiles promoted by their debate communities (tournaments, circuits, training practices). In particular, we anticipate convergence between individual epistemic stances and the pedagogical ideals of competitive and educational debate.

Relation to academic and traditional epistemologies

We expect substantial coherence between debaters' epistemologies and the academic profiles of their universities, but a more partial or selective overlap with traditional *munāẓara* models, especially regarding the ethical-normative dimension of argumentation

CONCLUSION

This study addresses debate as a meaningful context for exploring personal epistemologies in higher education.

Although data collection is still pending, the project is expected to clarify the epistemic profiles developed by university debaters and their relationship with debate communities, academic contexts, and *munāẓara* traditions.

The findings may contribute to understanding debate not only as an argumentative practice but also as a formative space for reflective and dialogical ways of knowing, challenging long-standing stereotypes that associate debate with dualism or relativism.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

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