

Towards African Work Orientations: Guide from Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

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Abstract

Work orientation is the meaning an individual gives to work and the relative importance assigned to work in one's life. This study assesses and predicts work orientations of employees of Sub-Saharan African – countries with diverse but similar cultural consequences. Scores of Hofstede's study on his five cultural dimensions, and review of some major and enduring African cultural and social values are the two main categories of data for analysis. Organised under ten work-related factors, the paper produces what guide and shape the behaviour of the African based on his/her enduring cultural and social values. These work orientations could be guide to employers, especially multinational ones, to understand what influence the behaviour of the African at work. This is because the African will always be influenced by his/her cultural values, and their recognition of these values could enhance effective management of the employment relations.

Key words: Hofstede, cultural dimensions; Africa; work orientations; cultural values; African worker

1. Introduction

Work orientation is the meaning that individuals give to work and the relative importance and function they assign to work within their lives as a whole (Bratton et al., 2007). This corroborates Reyes' (1990) earlier definition of work orientation as what guides and shapes the behaviour of the individual at work. While Bratton et al. see work orientation as meaning individuals give to work, Reyes looks at what shapes and guides the meaning individuals give to work. Bratton et al. (2007) continue that understanding this perspective about work behaviour illuminates awareness of the connections between work attitudes, values and behaviour patterns on one hand and the structure and culture of society on the other. This means there is direct link between cultural and social values of the individual and his/her work orientations. The work of Halman and Muller (2006) argues that work orientations depend on the stage of economic development. This explains why people management models of some advanced countries are quite established and emulated. Other considerations are levels of technology, stage of industrial development and income differentials. Halman and Muller (2006) term these as structural factors and point out that apart from these, cultural characteristics play significant role in explaining the differences or similarities in work orientations between countries. The

Tayeb (2005) observes that HRM and other employee management issues in Western countries have been explored, therefore always tagging them as models to emulate. Gbadamosi (2003) explains the situation from the point of view of domination of Western management concepts and writings in the thinking of academics and managers in Africa without showing how culture could be taken into account in managerial practices, therefore not paying much attention to African culture and its impact on work orientations of the African. Seeing Africans as skilful managers with systemic approach based on historic and practical experience to solving human problems, Gbadamosi (2003) reveals that Africans have their own values which are strong enough to shape the continent's work practices. These enduring values might account for why European imprints have not been able to permanently remove these values and ideals even after centuries of colonisation. This also supports the conclusion of Wood et al. (2011) that even though there are many common external pressures, African work orientations are unlikely to respond directly to other foreign models as national differences (of colonial countries) are likely to persist. However, meaning the African attaches to work and what guide and shape this behaviour are interpreted from Western context regardless of the enduring African cultural and social values.

This paper explores how the African cultural and social values could guide and shape the behaviour of African worker, drawing lessons from Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The rest of the paper is organised under five headings. The next section expands on the purpose of the study and data for the study; followed by description and understanding of Hofstede's cultural dimensions which are applied as the main tool for this study; and then consideration of some major African cultural and social values as they are believed to shape the behaviour of the African worker. The section that follows looks at the predicted individual work orientations organised under ten work-related factors.

2. Purpose and Method of Study

This paper attempts predicting African work orientations based on converging cultural practices and social values of countries south of the Sahara and informed by results of Hofstede's study on his five cultural

dimensions. Application of Hofstede's framework for this paper is deemed appropriate as the framework has provided the theoretical foundation upon which much cultural context research has been based (Blodgett, Bakir & Rose, 2008). The main tenet of Hofstede's work is his argument that several national differences in work-related values, beliefs, norms and self-descriptions including societal variables could be explained in terms of their statistical and conceptual assumptions with five dimensions of national culture (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011). The paper builds on Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions to determine how common African countries are in their cultural orientations as culture influences the way people live and behave, including work. Therefore, Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions are operationalised using country scores from his original database. Using this secondary data, the predictive power of the cultural value dimensions is believed to be strong as proved in many similar studies (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010). A twin-force behind this study is (1) understanding this predictive power as main influence of work orientations; and (2) informed by African cultural practices and social values, predict the Africa work orientations.

This study assesses work orientations for the African despite Hofstede's dimensions relating to countries. Africa appears to be too large a group to effectively assign the dimensions to. However, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), unit of the study, exhibit similar national cultural characteristics that can conveniently be grouped for the purpose of this study. After all, in his original study, Hofstede grouped countries including those in Africa – West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone); East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia); and North African countries (outside this study) grouped among the Arab World which includes countries outside Africa such as Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. This explains why Egypt, Lybia, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (the African portion of the Arab World) are not covered in this study. These countries have similar characteristics as the Arab World and were scored as such and are therefore excluded. Though East Africa and West Africa were scored separately, the results were so close that they can conveniently be combined. This means that though these countries have diverse cultures they have striking similar cultural characteristics across ethnic groups that homogenise the people in terms of beliefs and values, which are also similar to the region sandwiched by the two regions scored. The scores used in this study are therefore the average of the two African regions scored (with no significant differences). For the purpose of this study however African means SSA and excludes South Africa, which Hofstede's survey results portray cultural characteristics closer to the West than to Africa, probably due to when the survey was conducted and respondents who might have been mostly whites due to the apartheid regime. The author however speculates that outcome of this study could apply to South Africa with a high level of acceptability due to the shift from Western domination to increased indigenous participation in the world of work.

3. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Three decades ago, Geert Hofstede (1980) published his groundbreaking book, *culture's consequences: international differences in work-oriented values on cross-cultural differences*. This, and the updated work, *culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviours, institutions and organisations across nations*, published in 2001 have encouraged many studies on cross-cultural issues. For instance, Taras, Kirkman & Steel (2010) trace quantitative reviews of about 200 empirical studies by Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson (2006) that applied Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Many others, including the popular GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) have carried out several qualitative and quantitative studies applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Hofstede developed his cultural dimensions using data from about 116,000 surveys by 88,000 IBM employees speaking 20 different languages from 72 countries. By this work, Hofstede created "a new paradigm for the study of cultural difference: a four dimensional model of national culture" (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011: p.10). The model was later expanded and updated based on his analysis of a wide range of other cross-cultural data. The study itself being cross-cultural in nature, its influence on subsequent understanding of cultures is hard to underestimate (Taras, Kirkman & Steel, 2010), as virtually all later models of culture include Hofstede's dimensions or have conformed to his approach. Although there is a competing model (see Trompenaars, 1993), Trompenaars acknowledged Hofstede for opening the eyes of management to the importance of cross-cultural dimensions of the subject. Blanton & Barbuto (2005), on their part, view Hofstede's dimensions "as a lens for looking at different cultures" (p.658); while Blodgett, Bakir and Rose (2008) commend Hofstede for his pioneering work in bringing the concept of culture to the forefront of the various behavioural science disciplines. McSweeney (2002) however criticises Hofstede's cultural dimensions and wonders the basis for the claim that influential national cultures exist, and emphasises that nations are not the best units for studying cultures. Hofstede in his reply to McSweeney (refer to Hofstede, 2002) explains that nations are usually the only kind of units available for comparison and better than nothing. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are however supported by Williamson (2002) who warns that "to reject Hofstede's ...models of national culture, before more satisfactory models have been developed, would be to throw away valuable insight" (p.1391). Chapman (1997) also hails Hofstede's cultural dimensions and says that although they draw criticisms, there is no other contemporary

framework in the general field of business and culture that is so general, so broad, so alluring, and so inviting as Hofstede's.

Hofstede's work has become a foundation for the study of cross-cultural characteristics as most textbooks and journal articles examining the concept refer to it (Blanton and Barbuto, 2005). Hofstede identified four, and later five, cultural dimensions which include power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Each of these cultural dimensions has an opposite, thus creating 'high' and 'low' polar positions. These five dimensions are summarised (defined) in Table 1. Although the original dimensions, as given by Hofstede are presented here, Blanton and Barbuto (2005) propose that to avoid the stereotypical bias associated with the term *masculinity and femininity*, this should be substituted with *quality of life versus quantity of life*.

Hofstede's doctrine has a number of characteristics which go to support its appropriateness in predicting work orientations based on countrywide culture and, in this study, group of counties with similar cultural characteristics. The salient of the characteristics, as identified in the work of Minkov and Hofstede (2011), are summarised below.

- There is statistical difference between two populations from two nations or ethnic groups. Before Hofstede's work cross-cultural researchers had treated culture as single variable;
- The dimensions are underpinned by variables that correlated across national, not across organisations or individuals i.e. the cultural dimensions are built at national level;
- The dimensions are formed in a way that they address basic problems that all societies have to deal with. It is believed that the five dimensions are applicable to all societies;
- The dimensions reflect stable national difference and therefore ever applicable as cultures tend to move together in more or less the same cultural direction;
- The work makes available the first large collection of data evidencing that national culture constrains rationality in organisational behaviour and practices in society at large. The work brings to the fore that culture matters in international business.

4. African Cultural Practices and Social Values

It is observe that there is a growing amount of research that highlights different ways that organisations around the world make decisions, allocate resources, train and develop employees, and negotiate. All these studies have demonstrated the need for cross-national management which has been focused on advanced countries with the developing ones given little attention. In their discussion and empirical assessment of culture and HRM practices, Ali et al. (2001) found that countries such as the USA and Western European countries have been given much more attention in spite of the rich and diverse cultural practices of African communities. As a result, while African organisations operate in a global environment, their orientations are typically Western.

As noted by Ali et al. (2001) in their study of the socio-cultural perceptions of indigenous employees working within organisations in Tanzania and Malawi, many contemporary management practices rooted in Western notions are constraining. Similarly, in their study of management and organisational behaviour as they relate to less developed countries (LDCs), Zeffane and Rugimbana (1995) find that in most cases socio-cultural mishaps have caused delays in completing projects and a wastage of resources, and therefore advocate for appropriate framework to study the effective management of culturally diversified groups in modern organisations. These strengthen the observation by Lubatkin et al. (1999) that the issues of applicability, transferability and utility of advanced management know-how in African organisations have remained cloudy, if not controversial. As a result, Swartz and Davies (1997) warn that organisations in Africa must draw on indigenous cultural practices in order to improve the management of companies, effect transformation (emphasising cultural transformation) to make the organisations more competitive.

Advising on what to be done to achieve transformation and competitiveness, Swartz and Davies (1997) entreat companies in Africa to use the concepts, ideas, practices and metaphors drawn from African cultures. Many researchers including Mthembu (1996); Gardiner (1998); Budhwar and Debrah (2005); Marais and Marais (2007); Fenelon and Hall (2008) identify a few of such traditional practices and institutions that guide and shape the behaviour of the African worker. Some of the major African cultural and social values are discussed below.

4.1 Group Identity

The individual derives his/her identity from being a member of a family, a clan, a community or ethnic group, whose norms and values take precedence over those of an individual (Nyambegera, 2002). This is what Schwartz (2006) terms as 'embedded' culture, where people are viewed as entities embedded in the collectivity. People are expected to find meaning in life mainly through social relationships. This enables them to identify with the group and participate in its shared way of life towards a common goal. The idea behind this enduring togetherness is the belief that because they are social animals their needs to belong are in conflict with their individual needs which have to be sacrificed for the good of the group (Swartz and Davies, 1997). For instance, as observed by

Nkansa-Kyeremateng (2010), this bond is so strong that one is not allowed to marry from the same clan because they are seen more of brothers than group members. This is the spirit of *Ubuntu* – a sense of solidarity or brotherhood which arises among people within marginalised or disadvantaged groups (Mthembu, 1996). Ali et al. (2001) for instance have found that the most outstanding feature of organisational values in societies is the prominence of the group. Testing the practicality of the sense of belongingness, Ali et al (2001) used scenario building based on the extensive experience of personnel manager and marketing manager and depicted an individual worker who was performing very well and regularly earning a personal bonus. The participants in the survey were then asked to estimate whether fellow employees would react with discouragement (e.g. social isolation) or with encouragement (e.g. praise). The participants made clear predication that the individual concerned was extremely likely to receive active discouragement from both superiors and peers, indication that individualism is not encouraged.

The sense of belongingness and the desire to be in groups exist today despite mass modernisation partly because it has enabled survival during years of oppression and suffering (Swartz and Davies, 1997). A respondent, according to Marais and Marais (2007), considers individualism as “associated with a lack of caring and generosity because people are perceived to be alienated from their traditions, culture and each other” (p.817). This explains why behaviour and feelings which do not fit the cultural norm of a group, society or nation and seen as individual-centred are hidden, disowned or denied, and this obviously inhibits an individual potential which becomes a cause of dysfunctional interactions. Relating to group identity is group polarisation which is a process by which group discussions strengthen any pre-existing attitudinal tendency within a group (Ali et al., 2001). As simply but strongly put, the African is co-operative, not individualistic as, “we, and not I, is the law of African life” (Ahiauzu, 1986, p.40).

4.2 *Attitude towards Authority*

A feature of the African culture that is likely to manifest itself in the workplace is the general attitude to those in authority (Gardiner, 1998) and this attitude could be described as “almost subservience – certainly a little more than just respect” (Gardiner, 1998, p.496). The tendency is not to question those in authority (at home, at social gathering, etc.). Describing it as ‘filial piety’, Oppong (2006) reveals that respect for parents and grandparents (either one’s own or classificatory) and cooperation and reciprocity within and between generations have been pervasive and important values in African socio-cultural systems. During his one-week tour of Africa in March 2009, Pope Benedict XVI summed up the impression gathered about Africa as stunning sense of family and respect (Hansley, 2009). Terming it as ‘deference to rank’, Jackson (2004) reveals that this is done for people to take their proper place in the social scale as important aspect of the virtue of humanity. In African society leadership is not separated from authority be it leadership derived from old age, wisdom or derived from status or formal position. This is explained by Gyakye (2003) that it is because holders of high office are often perceived as exercising or supposed to exercise leadership, which can lead to success of group performance.

Traditionally, age is the basis for authority and this may explain why most African societies may frown at a lady who attempts to marry a man younger than her because it is believed that the man should be the head of the family which presupposes that he should be the older. A son or daughter dares not oppose the instructions (authority) of the father, not even the mother should do so. Gardiner (1998) believes that autocratic tendencies of many African governments have served to reinforced this behaviour and have also drawn people to be cautious about expressing their disagreement with those in authorities or with power. This forms integral part of the upbringing of a child in the African society – to be polite and respectful to the elderly in society, which equates respect with authority. Highlighting this cultural value, and in reference to Ghana, Gardiner (1998) says that “the fact that Ghanaians are brought up to be polite and courteous makes it even more difficult to be blunt when necessary” (p.147).

4.3 *Communal Relationships and Responsibilities*

Community is a strong and binding network of relationships (Mthembu, 1996). In traditional Africa, children belong not only to their biological parents but are under authority control of any adult in the community. This communal network becomes a system regulating the behaviour of both children and adults. The child matures through experiential learning – going to initiation school and qualifying in terms of knowledge about behaviour, respect, discipline, role playing, sex education and other responsibilities. Festivals expose one to offerings (spilling of blood), communication with the spirits and protocol; greetings and serving people. For instance in Ghana, it would be learnt that when serving drink, one should start from the right end of a row and serve leftwards (Gardiner, 1998).

As a member of the community, it is one’s responsibility to mediate for another community member. For instance, the habit of begging for forgiveness is acceptable mode of behaviour in the African culture and forgiveness is more likely to be received if the transgressor brings along or sends another person especially an elderly person (Gardiner, 1998). It is believed that an elderly person accepting to mediate, out of his wisdom, might have advised the transgressor. As noted by Anakwe (2002), age is a determining factor in the choice of

person for leadership position and authority is largely based on wisdom, which is inferred from age. In the spirit of communal responsibility Africans build collectivism by normally initiating work rhythm through songs and dances which creates team spirits. A loud and long shout of *Tshoobui* in Ghana, for instance, is a call on community or team members to get hands on deck. This is similar to the song, *Shorosholaza* composed in the mines in South Africa for this purpose, which has been adopted by the South African rugby team for trust in African-based solidarity, and it works.

4.4 *Commitment to the Land*

Africans are connected to the land – where they hail from and where their ancestors have always lived (Marais and Marais, 2007). The land is seen as the home of their ancestors and alienation from the land is considered as ignoring one's traditions and culture. The Ghanaian for instance will try to visit the home village during festive seasons such as Christmas and other traditional festivals to renew their ties with their communities and ancestors. The typical African does not believe in God but in their ancestors and will slaughter animals as sacrifice to the ancestors. The deities or gods, who communicate their intentions through dreams, spiritual leaders and natural happening (e.g. lightning) are believed to be very powerful, capable of punishing transgressors with death and diseases.

4.5 *Attitude Towards Female and the Disabled*

Another significant characteristic of the traditional African society is attitude towards females and their roles in communities. Females are regarded inferior (both in strength and in reasoning) and are therefore side-lined when it comes to decision-making (such as settling disputes and planning an event) and formal activities including mining, hunting, going to war. Marriage being a revered institution (Oppong, 2006), this explains why it is the father that looks for a man for the daughter or presents the daughter to the bridegroom because the mother is considered 'too weak' to make such important societal decision. In Southern Ghana queen mothers (female chiefs) are not accepted to the National House of Chiefs and women are never allowed to be chiefs in Northern Ghana despite the modernisation of the chieftaincy institution, now recognised as integral part of the country's constitutional rule. Considering the fact that kings are the pivot of traditional rites and the embodiment of cultural values (Nkansa-Kyeremateng, 2010), this cultural practice means the roles of queen mothers are less recognised in their communities.

Also, communities are demonstrated by escalating accusations and continuing widespread beliefs about gods and ancestors. Customarily, causes for any death, sickness, deformity, etc. are explained within the prevailing social system, and suspected witches in the family (Oppong, 2006) or as punishment on the family. There is widespread belief that someone born with deformity – physically or mentally, is a result of anger of the gods and ancestors and therefore considered as misfit who should not be part of the mainstream society in fulfilment of the wishes of the gods. This highlights the African's respect for the supernatural who have the power to curse and to shower fortunes on the community.

4.6 *Traditional African Education*

The traditional African mode of education is the oral tradition which involves collective testimonies and recollection of the past inherited from earlier generations (Omolewa, 2007). Fasokun (2005) believes that because most African societies have oral, non-literary traditions, they have been able to develop complex and striking webs of eyewitness account, folklore, stories, proverbs, idioms, legends and myths for all imaginable circumstances. Most of the teachings are in the form of stories by elders (teachers) who congregate with the youth (learners). Such mythological stories are loaded with philosophical issues – beliefs, values, ethics, morals, good and evil etc. (Boaduo, 2011). Connotations of such stories are centred on obedience, devotion, love for strangers and hard work. These have psychological implications of preparing children for responsible, appreciative and respectable lives during adulthood.

African myths therefore form the ideals and beliefs of cultural practices. Stressing the importance of this oral tradition, Omolewa (2007) says that this continues to be a reservoir of inexhaustible wisdom where Africans learn about their origin, history, culture and religion; about meaning and reality of life; about morals, norms and survival techniques. Based on *ubuntu*, learning and work in traditional African societies are accomplished through interaction with older people who have orientation towards various aspects of community laws, values and morals, and through peer (age) alliances (Nafukho, 2006).

5. African Work Orientations

The paper proposes African work orientations informed by scores of Hofstede's study on the five cultural dimensions (Table 2), complimented by African cultural and social values. These proposals are made under ten work-related headings.

5.1 *Attitude towards Company and organisational members*

Mixed attitude is perceived towards one's company. With dedication to ancestors and the land (usually referred to as ancestral land), workers are more likely to be committed to their employers if the companies are in their

communities where they have special attachment to the land. Employees may however consider company as just means of survival if they are alienated from it, as this is contrary to their collectivism orientation (as portrayed by the low score for individualism), which manifests in long-term commitment to the group that they belong.

With regard to commitment towards organisational members, Africans see themselves as social animals whose needs are better satisfied as a group instead of as individuals. With low score for individualism dimension, Africans are considered collectivists whose self-image is defined as 'we' instead of 'I'. Individual needs are to be sacrificed for the good of the group. May consider organisation members as yet another set of community members and therefore likely to be committed. Kinship and relationships could play a major role in the recruitment process. However, e.g. a group-oriented personnel manager, although may tend to hire those qualified, the prime consideration could be for loyalty and compatibility with co-workers and more likely to hire friends and relatives of people already working for the organisation in the spirit of *ubuntu*. With respect for their leader who they believe is wise and efficient and also a member of their community, employees will accept a leader from within them who they believe has the wisdom and who can give instructions the way they have been trained to receive and believe in information from elders (leaders).

5.2 Behaviour towards work rules

Africans emphasise orderly way of doing things especially when there are established values. The low score for masculinity indicates that Africans are driven by competition, achievement and success. Loyalty in collectivist society is paramount and tops all other societal rules and regulations. With respect for authorities African would work to rules especially with established values, knowing that non-adherence will lead to punishments either by authorities or deities. The African therefore is rules-abiding, and is likely to improve performance if rules are well defined with related disciplinary actions. This work orientation is also as result of the high uncertainty avoidance (high score for the dimension) which enjoins them to work to rule in order to avoid failure, which they believe comes from initiative and unprogrammed courses of action.

5.3 Decision-making process

Despite the established group identity, decision-making is likely to rest with managers as respect for authority may make employees less willing or even not permitted to participate in decision-making process. High score for power distance means Africans accept individuals in society as being at different levels, and that power is not equally distributed. Managers may therefore resist involving subordinates as this could mean bridging the gap, usually considered as 'weak management'. Women could also suffer discrimination as they are considered weaker and less capable of making important organisational decisions, especially strategic ones. Conflict could therefore arise when there is a female boss to spearhead the decision-making process as this may draw resistance from the men. Likewise, young male bosses could face resistance from older subordinates due to the culture of respect for the elderly, who is regarded as the wiser

5.4 Life-long employment

Influenced by the satisfaction of lower level needs and work considered as 'necessary evil to survival', the African is expected to remain with one company for greater part of their working live. More especially so if the organisation is on their traditional land and/or upholds their traditional cultural values, which make them more attached to the company. The African could however resist innovation as high score for uncertainty avoidance means rigid codes of behaviour and intolerant to unorthodox ideas or behaviour whilst he remains with the organisation. This orientation is informed by the low score for uncertainty avoidance dimension identifying the African as exhibiting great respect for tradition and resistance to change, which they consider as risky and not in conformity with their expectations especially if negatively affects members of the community

5.5 Trade unionism

Traditionally, Africans are interested in forming and belonging to groups inasmuch as it is for the interest of the group members. The collectivism orientation (low score for individualism) signifies working in order to live and group members will foster strong relationship to achieve this. They may want to form unions to press management for conditions that take care of well-being of members. The collectivism orientation may however influence disciplinary procedures where employee may want to defend fellow member to ensure he remains in business and remains member of the community. The employee may prefer to lie to protect the job of a fellow employee regarded as community member.

5.6 Pay and promotion

To uphold the values of respect for age and the elderly, promotion is more likely to be based on seniority. As a collectivist society, promotion is likely to take into account employee/manager's in-group. Women are likely to be discriminated against in positions, promotions and remunerations because of the perception that women are inferior and less capable to compete with men, even when doing the same job. Normally, moderate pay rates will be acceptable for survival. Low score for masculinity indicates that the African society is feminine which is characterised by caring for others and quality of life. Pay increases and promotions for selected few may be

detested as standing out of the crowd is not a feature of the feminine dimension. What is good is good for all and will fight together to prevent undesirable happenings.

5.7 Employee Motivation/Commitment

Commitment to company is expected to be high once realised as not just contractual relationship but a real commitment to a new community from where one derives his survival. The indigenous African wants to share, including seeing the co-employee as 'community brother'. Hofstede's low score for individualism means collectivism orientation which makes the African committed to community/society that one belongs to foster strong relationship where everyone takes responsibility for fellow member of the group. Due to the sense of belongingness, it is felt that the have-nots should be supported. Therefore, incentives and enjoyable work for continuous earnings for one's livelihood, and good work relations are strong motivators. As an aspect of Maslow's need hierarchy theory, security is an important element of individual motivation. Social pressure are therefore brought to bear to ensure organisational commitment.

5.8 Teamwork and consensus building

Teamwork and consensus building influenced by the strong group identity, members responsibilities are derived from the work group activities and therefore offering helping hands to group members to accomplish tasks. With high score for collectivism, the African places social achievement above personal achievement as there is strong disapproval of the individual placing him/herself above fellow community members Consensus building is in line with the high score for power distance. This discourages subordinates from contributing especially when they are younger than their managers and supervisors. Managers are likely to define roles as exercise of authority. This cultural value makes it difficult for employees to disagree with their seniors on business issues because the belief of respect for old age does not permit them to take decisions or make suggestions to the superior.

However, the practice could have positive impact on work as group members' responsibilities are derived from the work group activities rather than from specific jobs and this therefore could lead to good teamwork and offering helping hand to colleagues to accomplish their tasks. The situation creates more awkwardness when a younger supervisor or manager has subordinates who are older than him/her but must give instructions and discipline the 'elder subordinates'. This cultural value makes it difficult for employees to disagree with their seniors on business issues and therefore makes the employee less willing to take initiative as they always look up to the 'elderly person' to give instructions only to be followed, because till one becomes elderly he should always be obedient. This should be well managed to defuse its negative impact on performance and organisational success.

5.9 Filling positions

Jobs may be defined with the required personal skills and other relevant requirements for recruiters to avoid the likelihood of failure, informed by the high score for uncertainty avoidance, recruitment is likely to be influenced by sense of group identity. Prime consideration could be applicant's loyalty and compatibility with co-workers who are considered as community members. Managers are therefore more likely to give consideration to friends and relatives of people already working for the organisation (to extend and grow the community). Kinship and relationship could play major role in recruitment process, as management is regarded as management of groups. Apart from the recruiter's influence as a result of being a community member, the high score for power distance means recognising hierarchy in organisations. Recruiters could therefore be detracted from laid down rules and procedures by their superior and this need to be respected. This could include asking for some applicants to be selected or presenting own candidates for the position.

5.10 Training and development

With the perceived attitude towards life-long employment and the level of development, the African needs to be trained to improve better and develop for higher roles. High uncertainty avoidance score portrays the African's anxiety to avoid future uncertainties and pride security as important element. Training and development are therefore critical for improved skills and capabilities to ensure that performance targets are not missed and/or deviate from performance standards. To be well integrated into the formal business organisation, training and developmental programmes are essential. Perceived as wise expert with experience in the trade instruction is taken without question or challenge, as informed by respect for old age and authority. Learners respect the master and senior apprentices because the learner is taught about respect and is made to pay dearly for non-conformity. Sanctions are established through culture and taboos and each member appreciates the danger of failing to conform (Omolewa, 2007).

6. Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Research

The paper, applying scores of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, complemented by review of some major African cultural and social values, has revealed some striking work orientations of the African. The author believes that the results will be of value to employers of Africans, especially multinational companies which are fast increasing in Africa. These enduring behaviours of the African employee need to be exploited to understand why

the African behaves the way he/she does to enable employers effectively manage these behaviours for optimum organisational results.

The success of predicting a set of salient African work orientations based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions adds weight to the popular view that Hofstede's framework has provided the theoretical foundation upon which much cultural context research has been based. Although this persuasive influence of Hofstede's framework on the success of this work could support the academic community's reasonable assumption that the validity of the framework is fully established, this article is just a theoretical exercise. There is therefore the need for empirical validation of the work orientations developed based on the cultural framework to test how they apply in practice in formal business organisations.

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Table 1: Hofstede’s Five Cultural Dimensions

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Power distance (high versus low)	The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.
Individualism (versus collectivism)	The degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members.
Masculinity (versus femininity)	The issue of what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).
Uncertainty avoidance (high versus low)	The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these.
Long-term orientation (versus short-term orientation)	The extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.

Sources: Extracted from <<http://geert-hofstede.com/west-africa-ghngsl.html#sthash.h8z2IBB9.dpuf>>

Table 2: Scores of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (SSA)

Power distance
Africa scores high on this dimension (score of 71) which make Africa high power distance society; means that people accept a hierarchical order. Subordinates expect to be told what to do and the boss demonstrates autocratic tendencies.
Individualism
With a score of 24 Africa is considered a collectivist society. A society of strong commitment to the group which one regards him/herself as a member.
Masculinity
Africa scores 45 on this dimension and thus considered a relatively feminine society. People focus on work as means for survival. People try to build consensus and try to resolve conflict by compromise.
Uncertainty Avoidance
Africa scores 52 on this dimension and thus have a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. People maintain rigid rules and beliefs. They strive for security, and innovations may be resisted.
Long-Term Orientation
A low score of 25, making Africa a short-term orientation society. Short-term orientation societies exhibit relatively small propensity to save; are truthful; and have high respect for tradition.

Sources: Extracted from: <http://geert-hofstede.com/west-africa-ghngsl.html>;
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