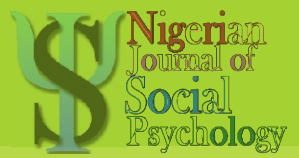


2025



NIGERIAN JOURNAL

OF SOCIAL

PSYCHOLOGY

Online ISSN: 2682-6151 Print
ISSN: 2682-6143

Volume 8, Issue 1, 2025

Editor-in-Chief

Prof. S.O. Adebayo

Managing Editor

Prof. B.E. Nwankwo

Published by

Nigerian Association of Social Psychologists

www.nigerianjisp.com

Perceived Ethnic Effect on Paternalism, Power Distance and Fatalism among Nigerian Workers

Andrew A. Mogaji

Department of Psychology
Benue State University
Makurdi, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study was aimed at finding the perceived ethnic effect on paternalism, power distance and fatalism among Nigerian workers. Data were collected from 521 workers drawn from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The relevant scales of the Work Opinion Survey (WOPS) designed by Mendonca & Kanungo (1994) were used to obtain measures of the dependent variables. Analyzing the data with the One-way ANOVA, revealed significant differences among the three ethnic groups in paternalism at $p < .05$ and in power distance and fatalism at $p < .01$ respectively. The results were discussed in terms of the historical background of the subjects and that their work behavior was influenced by their traditional value orientations.

Keywords: employees, fatalism, paternalism, power distance,

INTRODUCTION

Both researchers and practitioners have started paying more attention to the study of culture as an explanatory variable because of the increasing demands of the globalized and liberalized (hence competitive) business environment. Another reason is that they have also come to realise that the uncritical adoption of human resource management (HRM) practices and techniques evolved in the context of Western cultural values may not be effective in other socio-cultural environment (Aycan et al., 2000).

The model of culture-fit as proposed by Kanungo and his associates (Kanungo & Jaeger, 1990; Mendonca & Kanungo, 1994) asserts that both the socio-cultural environment and the enterprise environment affect internal work culture and HRM practices. Organisational culture or the internal work culture operating within the organization is construed as a pattern of shared managerial beliefs and assumptions about employees' nature and behaviours (Schein, 1992) that directly influence HRM practices. The socio-cultural environment refers to managerial perceptions of shared values among people with respect to how a society is structured and how it functions.

This model was partly tested by Mathur & Kanungo (1996) and Aycan et al. (200). The purpose of their study was to examine the way in which managers' perception of socio-cultural environment is related to their assumption about employees in the organization and HRM practices. In order to accomplish this objective, the several cultural characteristics of the 10 countries included in their study, were identified.

Aim: In this study, the Nigerian managers' perception of their socio-cultural environment was examined. Then, the differences among the three Nigerian major ethnic groups with respect to this perception were predicted and tested.

METHODS

Participants

The subjects for this study comprised 521 employees drawn from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The sample included 176 Yoruba managerial employees, 147 Igbo managerial employees and 198 Hausa/Fulani managerial employees. Participants were randomly selected from among the MBA executive part-time students in Lagos, Nigeria. They were employees of various public and private sector business organisations.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the Work Opinion Survey (WOPS) designed by Mendonca & Kanungo (1994). The questionnaire had four parts. The first part asked for demographic information. In the second, third and fourth parts, dimensions of socio-cultural environment, internal work culture and HRM practices were assessed, respectively, using a total of 57 statements. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a six point Likert –type scale (1= strongly disagree; 6= strongly agree). One third of the items were reverse-coded to minimize response bias. Subscales were coded in such a way that scores reflected the variable name (for example, a high score on the paternalism scale indicate high paternalism). Psychometric properties of the measures were reported by Mathur, Aycan, & Kanungo (1996). For this study, adequacy of the psychometric properties of scales (especially internal consistency) was tested and confirmed for each of the 3 samples by Mogaji (2006). Among socio-cultural dimensions, paternalism was assessed by five questions. Sample questions were “the ideal boss is like a parent in our society” and “people in authority in our society should take care of their subordinates as they would take care of their children”. Power distance was assessed by four questions such as: “there needs to be a hierarchy of authority in our society” and “inequality of status among individuals is not acceptable in our society” (reverse coded). Finally, Fatalism was assessed by five questions such as: “when bad things are going to happen, they just are going to happen no matter what you do to stop them”, “the wise person lives for today and lets tomorrow take care of itself”.

Procedure

The questionnaire which was developed in English language was administered in its original language. It was administered to the subjects in the classroom during their lecture in Business Organization and Administration. It took them less than 30 minutes on the average to complete.

RESULTS

Table 1

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Measures according to Ethnic Group

	YORUBA		IGBO		HAUSA/FULANI	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Paternalism	4.20	.85	4.07	.87	3.97	1.09
Power Distance	4.58	.94	4.55	.94	4.00	1.04
Fatalism	2.84	1.11	2.80	1.18	3.36	1.08

The results in Table 1 show that Yoruba managers had the highest mean score in Paternalism and Power distance. Hausa/Fulani managers had the highest mean score in Fatalism.

Table 2

One-way ANOVA Summary Table showing Differences in Measures according to Ethnicity

		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F
Paternalism	Between Groups	7.092	3	2.364	2.607
	Within Groups	482.511	532	.907	
	Total	489.604	535		
Power Distance	Between Groups	32.788	3	10.929	11.541**
	Within Groups	504.731	533	.947	
	Total	537.519	536		
Fatalism	Between Groups	35.265	3	11.745	9.344**
	Within Groups	669.940	533	1.257	
	Total	705.176	536		

The results in Table 2 show that significant differences were found among the three major ethnic groups in the measures: Paternalism, Power distance and Fatalism.

DISCUSSION

It can be extrapolated from the study that paternalism and power distance, are highest among the Yoruba managers followed by the Igbo and Hausa/Fulani managers. This means that managers who perceive paternalism and high power distance in their socio-cultural environment also value employees that accept and seek responsibility, provide feedback, have self-control and engage in empowering human resource management practices (Mogaji, 2006).

Fatalism is highest among the Hausa/Fulani managers followed by the Yoruba and Igbo managers. Managers who characterized their socio-cultural environment as fatalistic also

assume that employees, by nature, are not malleable and do not engage in performance – intrinsic reward allocation (Mogaji, 2006).

The results are supported by the historical, religious and economic backgrounds of the three ethnic groups. Eze (1978) investigated and explained that ethnic group affiliation and speaking of ethnic language in work situations in Nigeria breed inter-ethnic rivalries, mistrust and suspicions. He did not provide evidence of which group affiliates most than the others. But the results of this study have implications for determining factors that can enhance the management of inter-ethnic conflicts.

CONCLUSION

This study among the few attempts made to provide insights into the issue of how organizational culture and HRM practices show variance around the globe. The attempt is significant for a number of reasons. First, this research answers the question of how culture influences organizational processes. Second, findings show that the socio-cultural dimensions, namely: paternalism, power distance and fatalism provide significant difference among the three ethnic groups. Third, the ethnic groups included in this study have various historical, religious and economic backgrounds that supported the findings of this study. Since not much research had been conducted in this area, this study has contributed to the cumulation of knowledge in this area.

REFERENCES

- Aycan, Z; Kanungo, R.N; Mendonca, M; Yu, K; Deller, J; Stahl, G. & Kurshid, A. (2000). Impact of culture on human resource management practices: A 10-country comparison. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49, 192-222.
- Eze,N. (1978). Ethnic group affiliation and work motivation in third world nations. *Management in Nigeria* 14, (4), 8-23.
- Kanungo, R.N. & Jaeger, A.M . (1990). Introduction: The need for indigenous management in developing countries. In A.M. Jaeger & R.N. Kanungo (eds.), *Management in Developing Countries* (pp. 1-23). London: Routledge.
- Mathur, P; Aycan, Z; Kanungo, R.N. (1996). Indian organizational culture: A comparison between public and private sectors. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 8, (2), 199-222.
- Mendonca, M. & Kanungo, R.N. (1992). Managing human resources: the issue of culture-fit. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 3, (2), 189-205.
- Mogaji, A.A. (2006). Culture and human resource management practices: Model of culture-fit in Nigerian context. *Paper presented at the 7th IACCP European Regional Congress, San Sebastian, Spain (July, 11-15)*.
- Schein, E.H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.