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Effect of employees national cultural dimension on the performance of the multinational construction firms in Nigeria

¹Danjuma, I. and ²Mukhtar, M. M.

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Abstract:

Multinational construction companies had become of significant interest as the global construction market continues to be integrated into a more competitive and turbulent business environment. However, complicated and multifaceted nature of international business and multiculturalism brings new challenges to project execution in a globalized market. Consequently, the performance of multinational construction firm has been berated consistently over the years and several studies have been conducted towards engendering performance improvement. The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of national cultural dimension on the performance of multinational construction firms in Gombe State. The study was conducted by means of questionnaire survey. Sixty-Five (65) questionnaires were distributed to various construction workers (civil engineers, services engineers, architects, quantity surveyors, builders, plant operators, accountant and electrician) working in multinational construction firms in Gombe state using Simple Random sampling. Fifty-Nine (59) Questionnaires were filled and returned representing 91% response rate. Data collected through questionnaire was analyzed by Mean score and Multiple regression. The Findings of this studies shows that there is agreement among the respondents that the performance of multinational Construction firms in Gombe is satisfactory. The of multiple regressions analysis shows that, National cultural dimension (NCD) had a significant effect on multinational organizational performance with R2-Value of 0.854. The study recommended that; Multicultural firms should organize Training on the cultural values to reduce any conflict among workers that may arise due to differences in cultural value system. This will enhance unity and cohesion at the work place. The findings of this studies will help project managers in multinational companies to understand the attributes that the project team members should possess for successful project delivery.

Corresponding author Danjuma, I. Ibdanjuma2010@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The past decades have witnessed the trade liberalization and globalization of the world's economy. As a result, the internationalization of construction businesses has gained a rapid growth. Due to its grand scale of production and operation activities, the global construction industry contributes significantly to the economy, society, and environment [1]. Benefiting from the booming construction industry around the world, especially massive investments in infrastructure, a growing number of multinational companies operate in two or more countries, making some of their profits from their activities abroad, and with some assets in other countries [2].

Multinational firms have workforces composed of people from different geographical, religious, linguistic, and political backgrounds – in short, from different cultures – cultural differences are more prominent than homogeneity and similarities. Culture issues have been frequently a

cause of concern in international businesses. Cultural conflicts, which are a common issue in multicultural organizations, may cause risks and negative outcomes to the organizations [3]. Thus, in a multinational firm where cultural differences are ignored, they can lead to an unfruitful organizational climate and culture. However, in organizations where such differences are considered important and effectively managed, they can contribute to a culture of synergy [4].

Multinational construction companies had become of significant interest as the global construction market continues to be integrated into a more competitive and turbulent business environment [5]. However, complicated and multifaceted nature of international business and multiculturalism brings new challenges to project execution in globalized markets [6].

Generally, the flows of labour between developed and developing nations have always been a feature of the

¹Federal Capital Development Authority,

²Quantity Surveying Department, Faculty of Environment Sciences, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi

construction industry (International Labour Organization, 2001). In such a context culturally, diverse teams are expected and required to work in an integrated manner while struggling to overcome differences stemming from their diverse cultures. Diversity has posed a lot of challenges to governance in Nigeria manifested by many religious and ethnic conflicts which extended to construction industry [7].

Most of the previous researches on national cultural dimension (NCD) in relation to multinational construction firms were done on the team performance and conducted abroad including Zahira and Naziha [8], Irfan [9], Gerhart [10], Macheo [11], and Wu, et al. [12] etc. Limited researches such as Mba [13], Oni, et al. [14], and Ogunsemi and Jagboro [15], focused on Nigerian perspective and those studies failed to determine the effects of cultural dimensions on the performance of multinational construction firms.

Therefore, this research work is aimed at filling the gap by identifying the effects of NCDs on the performance of multinational construction firms in Nigeria.

1.1 Concept of culture

The word 'culture' derives from a Latin word 'colere', which means to tend to the 'earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture [6]. A culture is a way of life of a group of people the behaviours, beliefs, values, way of thinking, feeling, reacting, dressing, eating, greeting, and so on. It is referred to the increasing deposit of knowledge, experience, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, society, roles, and spatial relations.

Hofstede describes value theory to include five dimensions of cultural values and beliefs which are Power Distance (Stratification) versus Power Equalization, long term versus short term orientation, Individualism versus Collectivism, Tolerance versus Intolerance of Uncertainty, and Masculinity versus Femininity, as explained below.

1.1.1 Power Distance

Power Distance is the extent to which people in a society accept the often-unequal distribution of power [17]. Triandis [18] describes power distance as the extent to which power differences are expected and accepted by a society. A high score on power distance indicates the belief that there should be a well-defined order in which every individual has a rightful place; a low score indicates the belief that everyone should have equal rights and the opportunity to change their position in society. Hofstede [20] believes that employees are better judges of power than their superiors. Employees of high-power distance prefer the paternalistic style of leadership whereby they accept and expect to be told what to do. Low power distance employees prefer a consultative leadership style because they like to be consulted [19, 21].

1.1.2 Individualism and collectivism

Merritt [19] describes Individualism as a culture attribute that explains a loose-knit social framework in which people emphasize only the care of themselves and their immediate family. In cultures that uphold individualism, people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family, and remain emotionally independent from

the group [18]. According to Hofstede [20] individualistic employees prefer self-sufficiency. The individuals decide and take actions by themselves instead of with others. Independence, creativity, self-reliance, solitude, and self-actualization are valued in individualistic cultures [19].

1.1.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

Knippenberg [22] describes uncertainty avoidance as a culture attribute describing the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them. Hofstede [23] refers to it as the extent to which the society willingly accommodates risk and ambiguity. Employees who are risk averse are characterized with high scores of uncertainty avoidance. They prefer certainty and security. In contrast, employees characterized by low scores are motivated by risk taking and searching for novel solutions [20].

1.1.4 Masculinity and feminism

Chrisman [24] describes masculinity as the way in which people are motivated towards different types of goal, either concerned with the quality of life (feminine) or money and recognition (masculinity). Ringov & Zollo [25] describe the dimension of masculinity/femininity as a reflection to the degree to which the social gender roles are clearly distinct. In masculine cultures, males are expected to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, and females are expected to be tender and focused on quality of life [26].

Traditional masculine goals include: earnings, recognition, and advancement, valuing material possessions, assertiveness and money. Traditional feminine goals include: good relations with supervisors, peers, and subordinated; good living and working conditions; and employment security [25].

1.2 Theoretical framework

The social cohesion theory is adopted in this study. According to Maxwell [26] "social cohesion is the building of shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities.... and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community". A socially cohesive group or society is one in which "the members share common values which enable them to identify common aims and objectives, and share a common set of moral principles and codes of behaviour through which to conduct their relations with one another". Social cohesion, the outcome of social and physiological processes which link individuals into social system also occurs in group interactions in organizations.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed design approach. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, descriptive approach and explorative research design is used descriptive design is used because it suits the collections of primary data in respect to this research from wide range of respondent with experience in this particular study [27].

2.2 Study Area

The study area is Gombe State in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. This state was chosen because, there are multinational construction firms carrying out different projects within the states, high number of construction professionals and with respects of insurgency and insecurity problems within north eastern parts of Nigeria, the state is considered as relatively peaceful [28].

2.3 Population of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the population are construction professionals in the construction project firms which includes civil engineers, services engineers, plants operators, architects, builders, quantity surveyors, project managers, construction managers that are working in a multinationals construction firms in Gombe States.

2.3.1 Sample Size

A sample size is the group of people select to participate in the study area. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2013) an appropriate sample should be between 10-30% of the population. Owing to the size of the sampling frame, a thirty per cent (30%) sample size was selected for purposes of this study. This sample size was picked in relative proportions from each of the multinational construction firms. The sample size was considered appropriate and representative of the entire population. The population, sample size and sample frame is presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. The population, sample frames and sample size

Function	Sampling Frame	Sample size	The sample
Engineers	85	30%	24
Architects	25	30%	8
Quantity Surveyor	32	30%	10
Builders	11	30%	3
Plant Operators	33	30%	10
Project Manager	4	30%	1
Others	31	30%	9
Total	221		65

2.3.2 Sampling techniques

This study adopted a Probability method using Simple Random sampling techniques in selecting the required respondents from the population of the study.

2.4 Method of data collection

The method of data collection was determined by the methods adopted for the research; explorative (literature search), descriptive and explanatory (collective case study). The research data were collected primarily through the use of questionnaires. The postal method of questionnaire administration is said to be cheaper than other methods [28]. However, the inefficiency and unreliability of the Nigerian postal system, coupled with the poor response rate in the administration of questionnaires through internet (emails) and post office in Nigeria, necessitated a hand-to-hand administration of the questionnaires [28].

2.5 Method of Data Analysis

The findings from the field survey research are collected via questionnaires and analysed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS Version 23) from the results of targeted population about the variable of cultural diversity: NCD in the MNCFs which will be subjected to an ordinal scale. Also, using a mean score (MS) and standard deviation (SD) to further evaluate the level of their practices in the multinational construction firms in Gombe State. A multiple regression analysis is used in determining the effects of NCD and Cross-cultural communication competence practices on the performance of multinational construction firms.

2.6 Quality control

Controlling quality is a method of confirming acceptability of validity and reliability of the study through proper mechanism of extraneous variables [29]. In choosing quality control, there are two characteristics that you need to be aware of; reliability and validity. Both of these factors can influence the quality of the data you obtain [30].

2.6.1 Reliability test

The study adopted the use of internal consistency reliability test using Cronbach's alpha value. Field Cronbach's alpha (α) is used to measure questionnaire reliability index. Technically, Cronbach's α is not a statistical test [28]; it is a coefficient of reliability (or consistency). It measures the consistency of a questionnaire's construct (items) and indicates how a scale is free from random error. Pallant [30] indicates that, this statistic provides an indication of the average correlation among all of the items that make up the scale. The minimum acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha is from 0.5 to 0.6 [31]. The cut-off value for this study therefore is 0.70; in essence, for items to be used together as a scale in this study, the items must be above the cut-off value. Cronbach's α values interpretation within a scale of 0-1.is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach's α values interpretation within a scale

OT U-1.					
Reliability Values	Reliability Status				
<0.5	Poor				
0.5– 0.7	Sufficient				
>0.7	Good				

2.6.2 Validity test

The validity of a scale refers to the degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. Pallant [30] opined that, there is no one clear-cut indicator of a scale's validity. The validation of a scale involves the collection of empirical evidence concerning its use in either content validity, criterion validity or construct validity. The content validity used to ensure that the questionnaire contain the required information based on the study objectives through the use of some selected professionals that the researcher believe to have adequate knowledge in terms of research methodology and subject matter. The study subjected the questionnaire to some selected experience professional for validating the content and the outcomes used as the final contents of the questionnaire in the study.

3. Results and findings

3.1 Response rate

This study had a sample size of 65 respondents from the four multinational construction Firms recently working in Gombe State. 59 of the respondents gave a response while 6 of them failed to which represents a response rate of 91% as shown in Table 3 which implies that, the response rate was good.

Table 3 Response rate

Questionnaires	Number	Percentage
Filled and returned	59	91
Non-Return	6	9
Total	65	100

Table 4 and 5 represent the information on the measure and mean Ranking of the Performance of Multinational construction firm in Gombe state.

Table 4: Performance of multinational construction firms.

		Project Project Budget Schedu			Stakeholder's	Project team experience due to projects	
N	Valid	59	59	59	59	59	
IN	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	
Mean	1	3.32	3.22	4.15	3.97	4.54	
Std. E	Error of Mean	.182	.192	.093	.097	.078	
Std. [Deviation	1.395	1.475	.715	.742	.597	
Range		4	4	2	2	2	

Table 5 Mean ranking of the performance criteria

Performance Measure	Mean	SD	Rank
Project Completed within Budget	3.32	1.395	4
Project completed within time scheduled	3.22	1.475	5
Project completed within Quality Required	4.15	0.715	2
Project met with the satisfaction of the Stakeholders	3.79	0.742	3
Project enhance the experience and capabilities of the team members	4.54	0.597	1

The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on the performance of construction projects in which they involved based on the following success criteria cost, time quality, stakeholders' satisfaction and experience gained using a five points Likert scale. The findings revealed that project enhance the experience and capabilities of the team members has the highest mean score (4.54), whereas, project completed within Schedule had the lowest mean score (3.22). Project enhance the experience and capabilities of the team members had the least SD (0.597) indicating that the respondents had minimal variations in their responses to this question while Project completed within time scheduled had the highest SD (1.475) indicating that the respondents had the highest variations in their responses in this question.

It is concluded that Project team members gain a diverse knowledge and experience when working with colleagues from different cultural and ethnic background.

Because it carries the highest mean among the performance variables and variation in the respondents' opinion (SD) on that is minimal compared to other variables. Most of the project are not completed within schedule, but the respondents' opinion varies high on that. Therefore, it is concluded that most of the projects executed ere not finished on already scheduled time. The project Completed with the required standard and met with the stakeholder's satisfaction came Second and third respectively. The overall Performance is positive.

3.2 NCD practices in the MNCFs.

In this section, the study sought to determine the extent of NCD practices in multinational organizational. Table 6 and 7 present a statistical model summary and ANOVA of the study which aimed to establish the relationship between NCD and organization performance.

Table 6 Model summary of NCD and Organization Performance

Model			Adjusted R	Std. Error of		Change St	atistic	s	
	R	R Square		the Estimate	D Callara	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.863a	0.854	0.847	0.146	0.854	22.843	4	54	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), masculinity femininity, power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance

Table 6 shows the results of multiple regressions. The value of R2 is 0.854 and a significance change of (p<0.000) which shows a relationship between the two variables indicating that NCD had an effect on organizational

performance. This means that 85% changes in performance can be attributed to the variations in NCD attributes. The remaining 15% is attributed to other factors.

Table 7: ANOVA^a of NCD and Organization Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	34.068	4	3.017	22.843	0.000b
1	Residual	0.101	54	0.037		
	Total	34.169	58			ľ

a. Dependent Variable: performance

The Table 7 shows the significant level denoted by significant F in the ANOVA table is 0.000 while the F critical is 22.843. The p value (sig) = (0.000<0.005) is significant

and therefore the entire model fits well. This shows that the model was significant indicating that NCD does affect organization performance.

Table 8: Coefficient^a of NCD and Organization Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
		В	Std. Error	Beta			
	(Constant)	2.980	2.373		8.840	.000	
	power distance	.152	.065	2.373	2.393	.026	
1	Individualism/collectivism	.374	.462	.065	.809	.422	
	uncertainty avoidance	.308	.078	.462	3.947	.000	
	masculinity femininity	.141	.049	.078	2.855	.007	

a: Dependable variable; performance

The results of the regression coefficients, t-statistics, standard errors of the estimates and p values are shown in Table 8. The variables were positively correlated. When performance was predicted on company respect for employee Power distance (Beta=.135, p=.026) and Individualism/collectivism (Beta=.110, p=.422), Masculinity and femininity (Beta=.173, p=.007 and Uncertainty Avoidance (Beta=.351, p<0.005) being a positive and significant predictor. This means that Power Distance and Individualism/Collectivism positively affect performance even though not in a significant way. Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity/Femininity on the other hand positively affects performance in a significant way.

This clearly shows that, an increase in the practices of NCD can negatively affect the performance; the performance will decrease significantly. If the practices are reduced or decrease to an insignificant level, thus, the performance among the team members will significantly increase which will therefore enhance the performance of the projects and the organization entirely.

Power Distance effects to the organizational performance are not much significant, however it can discourage subordinate to work effectively as expected if the manager refused to collaborate with team members in information sharing and set goals. So also, individualism/collectivism does affect performance not in significant way. Masculinity and Femininity affect organizational performance significantly, especially in some certain societies that refer women as weak and inefficient for the job. The more uncertainties arising from cultural diversity are avoided the lesser the conflict and disagreements and the more the team cohesion and understanding which will affect the organizational performance positively and vice versa.

4. Discussion

4.1 Performance of the MCNF

The variables "the projects executed enhance the experience and capabilities of the team members" (4.54). The respondents on "whether the project they executed were completed within schedule" had the lowest mean (3.22). Project enhance the experience and capabilities of the team members had the least SD (0.597) indicating that the respondents had minimal variations in their responses to this question while Project completed within time scheduled had the highest SD (1.475) indicating that the respondents had the highest variations in their responses in this question.

4.2 NCD practices and performance of MNCFs

On analysing the research objectives, it was revealed that employee NCD practices had an effect on organization performance. The respondents were asked to respond whether power distance influenced their performance. It was proved that managers required or expected workers to closely follow instructions and procedures in every task to execute, Failure in adherence to instruction will affect the workmanship which will therefore affect the entire organizational performance. When respondents were asked to respond whether Individualism/collectivism influenced their performance, the findings revealed that most of the respondents agreed with the variables and the variables with the highest mean was Group Success is more important than individual success, which positively affect organizational performance. And the result shows Nigerian or Gombe state NCD is high especially on masculinity/femininity, because most of the respondent agreed men are more preferable to take more responsibility than women. Ability of managers to foresee and mitigate conflict and misunderstanding arising from cultural diversity help in gluing the team which enhance organizational and team performance.

b. Predictors: (Constant), masculinity femininity, power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance

This is similar to the findings in Studies by Hofstede [20], Nelson and Gopalan [31], Johnsen [32] and Nazariana et al. [33] have all revealed that, national culture has effect on the activities of organizational culture-such that, national cultural norms, values and beliefs are forced on organizations through societal establishment as also reported in Hofstede, et al. [17], Dennis [34], Fitzsimmons and Stamper [35].

5. Conclusion

It was evident that NCD had an effect on organization performance. Only one variables didn't have a significant effect on organizational performance while three other variables such; Uncertainty Avoidance, power distance and individualism/collectivism had a positive significant effect on organizational performance. NCD had a negative impact on MNCFs performance, however they positively influenced on work commitment.

The study established that intercultural communication affected organization performance positively. Only cultural uncertainty among the variables did not have a significant effect on organizational performance while other three which were; Team effectiveness, Interpersonal skill and cultural Empathy had a positive significant effect on organizational performance.

The findings revealed that interpersonal skill emphasized on team work and that the company emphasized on positive cultural empathy and discouraged negative cultural Uncertainties which positively influenced its performance.

This research work will contribute positively to all project Stakeholders especially project and construction managers in managing conflicts and disagreement that arises due to cultural differences of various stakeholders in a multinational constructions companies in Nigeria. It will also ease the difficulties evolved due to poor interaction and communication between project stakeholders of different nationalities, culture and language, religion etc. The managers will have an unending solution to the management of multicultural project environment within the construction industry.

Recommendations

Base on the finding from the current study, the following recommendation were made:

- a. To have a high employee gross revenue, there is a serious need to ensure that all employees are strictly adhered to organizational culture not personal culture. Alternatively, in order to avoid conflict, the company needs to have its values in line with the employee cultural values.
- b. Training needs to be done on the cultural values to reduce any conflict that arises because of differences in cultural value system, and enhance unity and cohesion at the work place. A gap sometimes exists between a person's values and behaviour. The company can use strategies, such as a reward system, to close that gap.
- c. International teams, by default, have members from different parts of the globe. This means the members are likely to speak different native languages. These

- languages may have varied styles and contexts. However, for the team to be effective, it is important that the members use a common language for general communication. This often means that members are using a language that is secondary to their native language. The use of a secondary language can be challenging and can lead to frustration and mistrust within the team.
- d. The study focused only on the aspects of employees National Cultural, it is recommended that other studies be done to unearth more on the subject. This will ensure increased reliability of the statistics and effects for generalization. The study covered only Gombe State, this shows that the results of this study are skewed towards the perceptions and data from only one state of the federation and few organizations. It is suggested that such a study be done in other firms in other sectors to increase the statistical power of the study and more reliable results.

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