

UNVEILING UBUNTU WITH EVIDENCE FROM GHANA: A RESOURCE-BASED VIEW OF AFRICAN CULTURE'S IMPACT ON FIRM CAPABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT:

The extant literature has established that firm culture is an integral factor for organizational success namely learning, and collaboration. Nevertheless, there is a lack of literature explaining the role of Traditional African cultures and values on firm outcomes. Therefore, we engage in this empirical study to explore the relationship between traditional African culture, firm capability, and performance. Traditional culture on the African continent is diverse, heterogeneous, and rich in nature. Additionally, this cultural concept of 'humanness' or 'oneness' is traditional to African culture and is manifested in the overarching Ubuntu philosophy and Biakoye concept local to Ghana. After reviewing the literature, and building a theoretical model, we examine these salient constructs and posit a theoretical framework ready for empirical testing. Quantitative data was collected via Qualtrics survey from managers of small to medium sized enterprises in Ghana to investigate how leadership implement these cultural values in pursuit of success in the oil and gas industry. Our empirical findings were interesting and robust and help to extend theory in the discourse on small business growth in Sub Saharan Africa. The contributions of our findings to theory and research, practical implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: African traditional Culture, Ubuntu, Resource based view, Firm Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

"In Africa, there is a cultural concept known as 'ubuntu' – the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will be in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others".

~ Nelson Mandela.

Ubuntu is defined as "the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring. It calls upon Africans to feel and believe the phrases: your pain is my pain, my wealth is your wealth, your salvation is my salvation" (Nussbaum, 2003, pg. 2). The origins of *ubuntu* are from the Zulu group of people from South Africa, however, the cultural concept behind *ubuntu* can be seen practiced across Africa (Idang, 2015). The oneness and humanness embodied in *ubuntu* is unique to the African culture and its widespread application, including its manifestation in the workplace has provided many benefits and served as a competitive advantage for African entrepreneurial ventures and organizations (Mangaliso, 2001; Jean-Denis, 2018)

In organizations, culture is a resource stemming from patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior inherited and transmitted by symbols, comprised of the unique achievements of different groups of people, as well as their incorporation of artifacts (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Hardcopp & Shah, 2014). The indispensable core of culture is comprised of traditional (historically selected and passed down) concepts, ideas, and values (Adler, 1997; Spencer - Oatey, 2008). Culture systems are viewed both as products of action and conditional elements of future actions (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Recent studies have found linkages between traditional African culture and entrepreneurship (Darley &