Goal-Setting and Task Performance among Nigerian Managers in a Cross-Cultural Context

Andrew A. Mogaji

(a_mogaj@yahoo.com)

Benue State University, Nigeria

Abstract

This study assessed goal-setting and task performance among Nigerian managers. Data were collected from 521 subjects including 176 Yoruba, 147 Igbo and 198 Hausa/Fulani managerial employees in Lagos, Nigeria. The relevant scales of the 57-item questionnaire designed by Mendonca and Kanungo (1994) were used to obtain measures of the dependent variables. Mean scores in goal setting and performance-intrinsic reward contingency were highest among the Yoruba managers followed by Hausa/Fulani and Igbo managers respectively. Mean score in task significance was highest among the Igbo managers followed by Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani managers respectively. Mean score in performance-extrinsic reward contingency was highest among the Hausa/Fulani managers followed by Yoruba and Igbo managers respectively. One-way ANOVA showed cultural differences in performance-intrinsic reward contingency ($p < .05$) and task significance ($p < .01$) but not in goal-setting and performance-extrinsic reward contingency respectively. The results were discussed in terms of the influence of culture on human resources management practices and that managers who value performance-intrinsic reward allocation should engage in goal-setting more than the others.

Introduction

Organizations do not exist in a vacuum but in a specific culture or socio-cultural environment (Aluko, 2003). Relating Nigerian organizations to their specific cultural settings in order to understand Nigerian managers' perception about goal-setting and task performance is the aim of this study. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with more than 300 ethnic groups. The country is culturally diverse in such features as language, religion, food, marriage systems, trading systems and ethnic tribes (Mogaji, 2007). The three dominant tribal groups used in this study are the Hausa/Fulanis who dominate the north, the Igbos who dominate the south-east and the Yorubas who dominate the south-west.

The findings of this study will be useful to provide solutions to the problem of work motivation in Nigeria. This can be achieved by looking at cultural differences in the perception of goal-setting and task performance.

Performance is a multidimensional construct, the measurement of which varies depending on a variety of factors (Esu & Inyang, 2009). According to these researchers, the desired performance is closely related to the organization's vision: social responsibility, customer orientation and profitability. Establishing standards of performance is not a new concept or process. Standards exist whether they are discussed or put in writing. The philosophy behind establishing performance standards is whether to accept or reject the task or job performed by the employees in the organization. Armstrong (2004) defines objectives or goals (the terms are used interchangeably) as "what organizations, functions, departments and individuals are expected to achieve over a period of time" (p. 488).

Theoretical Framework

The model of performance management system offered by Watkins (2007) was used in this study. According to him, a performance management system enables individuals and organizations to achieve strategic ambitions through processes that are both systemic and systematic. Moreover, performance improvement management systems seek to achieve goals. Armstrong and Baron (1998) and Armstrong (2004) described performance management "as a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capability of teams and

individual contributors"(p. 477). Akata (2003) considers it as "a systematic and holistic (all-embracing) process of work planning, monitoring and measurement aimed at continuously improving the teams and individual employee's contribution to the achievement of organizational goals" (p.14). Oladimeji (1999) defines performance management as "a means of getting better results from the organization, teams and individuals by understanding and managing performance within agreed framework of planned goals, objectives and standards" (p. 51).

According to Esu and Inyang (2009), the concept of performance management is theoretically under-pinned on the theory of motivation. There are several motivational theories in the literature. Of all these theories, the goal setting theory fits the performance management concept best. This is because performance standards are antecedent situations in the employee's work environment. Goals are performance levels which individuals and organizations have agreed upon as performance standards. Philosophically, the goal setting theory is based on the assumption that people set conscious goals that energized them and direct their thought and behavior towards the achievement of the goal (Bateman & Zeithaml, 1993). Lessons from researchers in goal setting theory show that properly conceived goals trigger a motivational process that improves performance (Locke, 1981).

Locke & Latham (2006) described the goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002), which was developed inductively within industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology over a 25-year period, based on some 400 laboratory and field studies. These studies showed that specific, high (hard) goals lead to a higher level of task performance than do easy goals or vague, abstract goals such as the exhortation to "do one's best". So long as a person is committed to the goal, has the requisite ability to attain it, and does not have conflicting goals, there is a positive, linear relationship between goal difficulty and task performance. Goals are related to affect in that goals set the primary standard for self-satisfaction with performance. High, or hard, goals are motivating because they require one to attain more in order to be satisfied than do low, or easy goals. Feelings of success in the workplace occur to the extent that people see that they are able to grow and meet job challenges by pursuing and attaining goals that are important and meaningful.

Review of Literature

No previous pattern of relationships or differences were found between goal-setting and task performance among the Nigeria's three ethnic groups. Therefore, a review of the ethnographic and historical analysis of the characteristics of these three groups, was carried out, to determine the hypothesis formulated and tested in this study.

The historical factors' model propounded by Eze (1995) was developed out of extensive investigations and observations (Eze, 1981a, b, 1984). He reported that certain crucial events or factors in the historical developments of black Africans are individually and collectively responsible for the development of their motive structures, motivators and needs. Eze (1978) collected data from 170 managers including Yoruba, Edo, Igbo and White subjects to investigate the effect of ethnic group's affiliation on the motivation and satisfaction levels of Nigerian workers. He found that ethnic group background, not nationality, has differential effects on workers' motivation. Fagbemi (1981) conducted a similar study using 60 management personnel of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo origins as research subjects. His data and results supported Eze's findings. Eze (1995) reported the incompatible work ethics model described by Ocho (1984) who stated that low motivation and negative work attitudes may have developed among Nigerian workers as a result of their lack of identification with organizational goals.

Obasan and Sotunde (2011) examined the relationship between goal-setting and performance appraisal. They used a self-designed questionnaire to collect data from 1000 public servants working in the human resources department of government ministries and parastatals in Abeokuta, a Yoruba-speaking area of south-western Nigeria. Analyzing the data with descriptive statistics, the results showed that goals are hardly set in public service in Nigeria. The study recommended that appreciable and attainable goals should be set for organizations and individuals so that such can form the basis for assessment.

Peterson, Fanimokun, Mogaji, and Smith (2006) collected data from 581 Nigerian managers to illustrate national subculture differences by developing and testing hypotheses based on the characteristics of Nigeria's

three major subcultures- Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo tribal groups. The theoretical basis for the study is that norms, rules and roles in societies and organizations provide people with sources to guide the way they handle work situations. The managers' use of these social structures differs among nations and subcultures depending on the cultural values in each. Their findings show theoretically meaningful subculture differences in the sources of guidance most frequently reported and in the relationships between sources used and effectiveness. A number of these qualities held in common, do in fact appear in international comparative research (e.g., Smith et al., 2002).

While studying the differences in entrepreneurial drive and emergence among the Nigerian tribes, Akpor-Robaro (2012)conducted a theoretical survey and found the differences in the socio-cultural features of the tribes to reflect the socio-cultural features of Nigeria in time. He found that Ibo culture contains a high value for economic power and independence followed by the Yoruba and Hausa cultures respectively. He also found uncertainty avoidance to rank highest in the Ibo culture followed by the Yoruba and Hausa cultures respectively. The degree of collectivism is highest in the Hausa culture followed by the Yoruba and Ibo cultures respectively. Hence, the Ibo culture is most individualistic followed by the Yoruba and Hausa cultures. According to Akpor-Robaro (2012), the present Nigerian collective culture, however, can be described as an achievement-oriented culture. He found the Ibo culture to rank highest in achievement orientation followed by the Yoruba and Hausa cultures respectively. He also found the Ibo culture to rank highest in masculinity followed by the Yoruba and Hausa cultures respectively.

Aluko (2003) posited that there are not many studies that have focused on how organizations perform in the different ethno-cultural and geographical locations in Nigeria. He went further to say that cross-cultural studies dealing with organizational performance in Nigeria remain largely an uncharted course. He collected data from 750 Nigerian workers from Ikeja (Yoruba culture), Asaba (Ibo culture) and Kano (Hausa culture) with 250 subjects from each of the three areas to study the impact of culture on organizational performance. In his analysis of cultural variables, the results showed no significant cultural differences among the workers. However, the findings revealed that the Ibo workers were more aggressive and tended to be individualistic. The Yoruba workers tended to be averagely aggressive but not individualistic. The Hausas are at the rear, with very little aggression and are largely collectively oriented. However, the Hausa workers exhibited more religious values at work as they appear to be more inclined and attached to their religion- Islam. In general, the workers are largely extrinsically oriented as the premium placed on monetary reward is very high. The emphasis and premium on money, is highest among the Ibo workers followed by the Yoruba and Hausa workers respectively. The findings of this study suggest that Nigerian culture emphasizes low individualism and high collectivism. It also emphasizes low power distance, since the workers expressed a preference for consultative management. He concluded by saying that analyses made by a single scholar should be susceptible to replication, amplification and modification by others since there is the absence of comparative studies measuring the variables of interest across the ethnic groups in Nigeria like the present study.

Examining how both the socio-cultural environment and the enterprise environment, affect internal work culture and Human Resources Management (HRM) practices, the model of culture-fit as proposed by Kanungo and his associates (Kanungo & Jaegar, 1990; Mendonca & Kanungo, 1994) was tested. The model was partly tested by Aycan and Kanungo (1996) and Aycan, Kanungo, Mendonca, Yu, Deller, Stahl and Kurshid (2000) to examine the way in which managers' perception of socio-cultural environment affected their assumptions about employees in their organizations and HRM practices. They collected data from 1954 employees from business organizations in 10 countries. The instrument used was a 57-item questionnaire which measured managerial perceptions of socio-cultural environment, internal work culture and human resource management practices. The multiple regression analyses of data revealed national culture differences in patterns of relationships among the three sets of variables. For example, managers who perceived paternalism and high power distance in their socio-cultural environment assumed employee reactivity, and furthermore, did not provide job enrichment and empowerment. Managers who characterized their socio-cultural environment as fatalistic, were also found to assume that employees by nature, were not malleable. These managers did not administer job

enrichment, empowering supervision, and performance-reward contingency. Moreover, managers who valued high loyalty assumed that employees should fulfill obligations to one another, and engaged in empowering HR practices. Nigeria was not among the countries studied.

Distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Eze (1995) studied 172 Nigerian managers and supervisors, and found out that they attached more importance to higher-order (intrinsic) motivators than, to lower-order (extrinsic) motivators. There was a significant difference in the managers' responses due to age but not as a result of length of service and education. The results suggested that the Nigerian managers studied were extrinsically motivated. Ethnicity was not considered as a factor in that study.

Hypothesis

There will be significant ethnic differences in goal-setting, task significance/performance, performance-intrinsic and performance-extrinsic rewards contingency among the Nigerian managers.

Method

Participants

The subjects for this study comprised 521 employees drawn from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The sample included 176 Yoruba, 147 Igbo and 198 Hausa/Fulani managerial employees. There was an equal sample of 50 female managers in each group. 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 organizations.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection is the 57-item questionnaire designed by Mendonca & Kanungo (1994). The entire questionnaire has 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 by using a six-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). One- third of the items were reverse-coded to minimize response bias. Subscales were coded in such a way that high scores reflected the variable name (for example, a high score on a particular subscale shows that the sample is high on that subscale). Psychometric properties of the measures were reported by Mathur, Aycan & Kanungo (1996). The adequacy of the psychometric properties of scales (especially internal consistency) was tested and confirmed by Aycan et al. (2000) who carried out factor analysis which produced the following results. Task significance is a dimension of job design scale which produced a Cronbach's alpha of .66. A sample item of this dimension is, "my job requires me to do the same routine, repetitive tasks"(reverse coded). Goal setting is a dimension of supervision and control scale which produced a Cronbach's alpha of .72. Sample items are, "my supervisor and I jointly set specific goals (what and how to do my job)", "my supervisor encourages and provides me with support to handle difficult assignments." Performance-intrinsic reward contingency and performance-extrinsic reward contingency are dimensions of the performance-reward contingency scale which produced a Cronbach's alpha of .52. A sample item of this dimension is, "although I put in more time and effort in my job than my peers, I am paid the same as my peers"(reverse coded).

Participants evaluated their perception of goal-setting by the goal-setting subscale of the questionnaire and task performance, by the task significance and performance-reward contingency subscales of the questionnaire. A single item was used to assess task significance. Two questions were used to assess goal setting. The performance-reward contingency scale has three questions. Two questions were used to assess performance-intrinsic reward contingency and one question was used to assess performance-extrinsic reward contingency.

Research Design

A randomized three groups' design was used in this study.

Procedure

The questionnaire, developed in English, 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. Respondents did not report any difficulty in understanding the statements because English Language is the official language in Nigeria.

Results

The results of this study are presented in Table 1 below. The results in Table 1 show that Yoruba managers had the highest mean score in goal-setting and performance-intrinsic reward contingency followed by the Hausa/Fulani and Igbo managers respectively. Hausa/Fulani managers had the highest mean score in performance-extrinsic reward contingency followed by the Yoruba and Igbo managers respectively. However, Igbo managers had the highest mean score in task significance followed by the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani managers respectively.

Table 1

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Measures According to Ethnic Group

Measure	Yoruba		Igbo		Hausa/Fulani	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Goal Sett	3.86	1.44	3.69	1.35	3.72	1.43
Perf-Extr	3.53	1.21	3.44	1.18	3.67	1.02
Perf-Intr	4.12	1.61	3.78	1.53	3.94	1.61
Task Sign	4.13	1.45	4.14	1.34	3.51	1.36

The results in Table 2 below show that significant differences were found among the three major ethnic groups in Task significance ($p < .01$) and performance-intrinsic reward contingency ($p < .05$) and not in goal setting and performance-extrinsic reward contingency, respectively. The results in Table 1 show that task significance is highest among the Igbo managers followed by the Yoruba managers but lowest among the Hausa/Fulani managers. Moreover, performance-intrinsic reward contingency is highest among the Yoruba managers followed by the Hausa/Fulani managers but lowest among the Igbo managers. The results in Table 2 show that there is partial support for the hypothesis as there is a significant ethnic difference in task significance and performance-intrinsic reward contingency.

It was found that managers who are intrinsically motivated to perform their duties would also be willing to significantly perform their tasks. This result is supported by Akpor-Robaro (2012) who found the Ibo culture to rank highest in achievement orientation followed by the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani cultures respectively. The results in Table 1 show that goal setting is highest among the Yoruba managers followed by the Hausa/Fulani and Igbo managers respectively. Moreover, performance-extrinsic reward contingency is highest among the Hausa/Fulani managers followed by the Yoruba managers but lowest among the Igbo managers. The results in Table 2 show that there is no support for the hypothesis in the sense that there is no significant ethnic difference in goal setting and performance-extrinsic reward contingency.

Table 2
One-way ANOVA Summary Table Showing Differences in Measures According to Ethnic Group

	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Goal Setting	Between Groups	3.50	3	1.17	.57
	Within Groups	1092.37	533	2.05	
	Total	1095.87	536		
Perf-Extrinsic	Between Groups	4.86	3	1.62	1.23
	Within groups	700.73	533	1.32	
	Total	705.59	536		
Perf-Intrinsic	Between Groups	26.77	3	8.93	3.50*
	Within groups	1359.10	533	2.55	
	Total	1385.87	536		
Task Significance	Between Groups	48.97	3	16.32	8.46**
	Within groups	1028.77	533	1.93	
	Total	1077.74	536		

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

The lack of significant ethnic difference is in consonance with Aluko (2003) who found no significant cultural difference among Nigerian workers who are largely extrinsically motivated.

Discussion

There was a significant ethnic difference in task significance/performance but not in goal setting among the Nigerian managers studied. The results are supported by the findings of Eze (1978) and Fagbemi (1981) who found that ethnic group background has differential effects on workers' motivation.

There are various approaches that allow management to design jobs for employee motivation, to increase productivity and to achieve future growth. In order for the job design to be effective, management needs to look at what aspects of the jobs that are important and better fit the organizational goals. Thus, one of the major purposes of job design is to be able to discuss what is needed from the job and the employees. It is of current interest in establishing a link between human resource management (HRM) or high involvement practices and organizational performance with an increase in intrinsic motivation. An individual experiences this state when there is a match between an individual's perceived skills and tasks. Thus, effective job design has become one of the salient aspects of human resources management and organizational behavior so as to survive in the global workplace.

The study has important implications for human resources practitioners, who desire to ensure that employees obtain accurate feedback in perceived good or poor performance situations, to maintain or enhance future performance. Organizations should ensure that supervisors have adequate reward power and also trained to acquire expertise necessary to deliver feedback accurately. Supervisors should also be encouraged to maintain quality relationship with their subordinates, so as to enhance quality interaction that can enhance participation in goal-setting and decision making.

References

Akata, G.O. (2003). *Strategic performance management: Your key to business success*. Ibadan,Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited.

Akpor-Robaro, M.O. M. (2012). The impact of socio-cultural environment on entrepreneurialemergence: a theoretical analysis of Nigerian society. *International Journal of Business and Management, 4,* 172-182.

Aluko, M.O.A. (2003). The impact of culture on organizational performance in selected textile firms in Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies, 12*, 164-179.

Armstrong, M. (2004). *Handbook of human resource management practice* (9th ed.). London, United Kingdom: Kogan Press.

Armstrong, M.,& Baron, A. (1998). *Performance management: The new realities*. London, United Kingdom: IPD.

Aycan, Z., & Kanungo, R.N. (1996,August). *Paternalism: Towards conceptual refinement and operationalization.* Paper presented at the 14th International Congress of the Cross-Cultural Psychology, Bellingham, Washington, USA.

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*, 192-221.

Bateman, T.S., & Zeithalm, C.P. (1993). *Management: Function and strategy* (2nd ed.). Homewood, IL: Irwin.

Esu, B. B., & Inyang, B. J. (2009). A case for performance management in the public sector inNigeria. *International Journal of Business and Management, 4,* 98-105.

Eze, N. (1978). Ethnic group affiliation and work motivation in the third world nations. *Management in Nigeria, 14,* 8-23.

Eze, N. (1981a). Motivation and work productivity among Nigerian workers. In D. C. E. Ugwuegbu (Ed.), *Organization behavior and management*: A psychological perspective. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.

Eze, N. (1981b). Psychological analysis of the major obstacles to Nigerian industrialization and self adequacy. In G. C. M. Bakare & M. O. A. Durojaiye (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Annual National Conference of Nigerian Psychological Society.* Paper presented at the Conference of the Nigerian Psychological Society, University of Jos. Jos, Nigeria: Nigerian Psychological Society

Eze, N. (1984). Identifying sources of management motivation in Nigeria: The key in Management effectiveness. In P. N. O. Ejiofor & V. S. Aniagoh (Eds.), *Managing the Nigerian worker*. Ikeja, Nigeria: Longman Nig. Limited.

Eze, N. (1995). *Human resource management in Africa: Problems and solutions*. Lagos, Nigeria: Zomex Press.

Fagbemi, O. (1981). Cultural background and the motivation of Nigerian managers. In J.Y. Opoku (Ed.), *The use of psychology in modern Nigeria*. University of Ibadan, Nigeria: NigerianPsychological Society.

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, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Locke, E. A. (1981). Goal setting and task performance: 1969-1980. *Psychological Bulletin, 90,* 125-152.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal-setting and task performance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal-setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist, 57,* 705-717.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2006). New directions in goal-setting theory. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 15*, 265-268.

Mathur, P., Aycan, Z., & Kanungo, R. N. (1996). Indian organizational culture: A comparison between public and private sectors. *Psychology and Developing Societies, 8*, 199-222.

Mendonca, M., & Kanungo, R. N. (1994). Managing human resources: The issue of culture-fit. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 3*, 189-205.

Mogaji, A. A. (2007). School psychology in Nigeria. In S. R. Jimerson, T. Oakland & P. Farrell (Eds.), *The handbook of international school psychology* (pp. 275-282). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Obasan, K. A., & Sotunde, O. A. (2011). Goal setting and performance appraisal in public sector of Nigeria: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Business Management and Economics, 2*, 116-124.

Ocho, L. A. (1984). Cultural and environmental influences on work attitudes. In P. N. O. Ejiofor & V. S. Aniagoh (Eds.), *Managing the Nigerian worker*. Ikeja, Nigeria: Longman Nig. Limited.

Oladimeji, A. (1999). *Human resource management in Nigeria*. Lagos, Nigeria: Business and Institutional Associates Limited.

Peterson, M. F., Fanimokun, A., Mogaji, A., & Smith, P. B. (2006, August). *National subculture differences in use of*

social structures: A comparison of Nigerian Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo managers. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Atlanta, GA, USA.

Smith, P. B., Peterson, M. F., Schwartz, S. H., Ahmad, A. H., Akande, D., Mogaji, A.A., et al. (2002). Cultural values, sources of guidance and their relevance to managerial behaviour: A 47-nation study. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology, 33,* 188-208.

Watkins, R. (2007). Designing for performance, part 3: Design, development, and improve. *Performance Improvement, 46*, 42-48.