

Investigating the Impact of National Cultures on Performance Management: A Two Country Review

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ABSTRACT

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This research investigated the role that national culture plays in performance management when viewed from the prism of performance appraisal. This became necessary in today's business world as corporations now play more within a global stage. In so doing, the challenge that faces employees and business leaders alike is the ease of applying policies and processes developed from countries of origin to areas of operation across the world. Some have argued for standardization of such practices across the world, particularly to address business challenges of cost efficiency and take advantage of economy of scale. Some others that may have harkened to the voice of cultural studies and international business scholars that culture affects every business process (House et al, 2001; Hofstede, 2005) have called for adaptation of such organizational processes as businesses transcend international boundaries.

Using the experience of performance management exercise of a multinational corporation with country of origin being Netherlands and country of active operation being Nigeria – two countries viewed as operating from two different national culture poles of individualism vs communalism (Hofstede, 2005), this research outcome helped to reaffirm and establish the link between national culture and performance management as viewed from the lenses of performance appraisal. The qualitative research methodology followed extensive interviews with twenty nine Managers and employees of different nationalities with experience working in both Nigeria and Netherlands among other countries they have worked, the findings of the study indicate that National culture within the context of individualism and communalism influence the activities of performance management. In other words, this study helped to confirm the fact that national culture as seen from the dimension of individualism and

communalism influences appraisal outcomes of organisations operating in different countries. This finding is also confirmed to include the national culture of West African countries, including Nigeria for which research has been hitherto limited.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Thesis.

1.0. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of my thesis building on what inspired the research and the problems that the project is expected to address. Following some introduction on the concept of national culture and performance management as viewed from the lenses of performance appraisal, the chapter also highlights the contribution of my study to the field, including the stakeholders that will benefit from same. Finally, the chapter addresses the research structure and research questions.

1.1 Background to the Research and Research Problem

With the accelerating globalization of business and interconnectedness of people across the world, the degree of effectiveness in successful application of any management policy or practice in different countries has become even more challenging. The challenge has been inspired by equally increasing availability of evidence that people from different countries have diverse work-related national cultures (Adler et al, 1986; Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 1995) and that people of different cultural origins have different ways of reacting to the same management policies, practices and control framework

(Chow et al., 1991, 1994; Harrison, 1992, Hofstede, 2005). It follows from these studies that due to cultural differences, management policies that are effectively implemented in one country may not be equally effective in another. In some situations according to the studies, it may actually be totally misaligned and dysfunctional (Chow et al, 1994). Such differences arising from culture can emanate from internal (e.g. due to work-related behaviours of employees) and externally from relationship between such organisations and labour market. In the same research, the authors looked at different research outcomes that studied the relationship between national culture and different aspects of management policies and control framework and determined that only a few of such available studies have addressed the link between national cultures and key human resource management control frameworks such as performance management including reactions to applications of same across national boundaries. It is this gap that this thesis addresses and fills.

For reasons such as cost efficiency, speed in decision making, mobility of human resources and exercising control across such boundaries, many writers (Gelfand et al, 2007; Caliguiri and Stroh, 1995; Browaeys and Price, 2008; Harzing and Sorge, 2003) have observed that universal application of policies and practices across different cultural boundaries, otherwise referred to as standardisation is a more popular option than local adaptation by a number of such Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). In application of the universalism principle, it has been observed that deeper understanding of national culture differences represent a key area of opportunity for

such MNCs if they are to be successful in operating across national boundaries (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003; Browaeys and Price, 2008; French, 2010) and by so doing, resolve the tension between standardisation versus adaptation. Research by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1998) indicates that key to weakening the challenge is whether there are push for cost reduction (standardization) as against response to market requirements (adaptation) or both (transnational strategy). Related contribution by Nakata and Sivakumar (1996) is that cultural differences are at the heart of drivers for the standardization versus adaptation choices. To this end, writers in cross-cultural research such as Hofstede (1995), Schneider and Barsoux, (1998) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, (1998) have observed that application of MNC processes such as performance management may not be universal and therefore not applicable in every country or culture in the same way.

What then is culture? According to Throsby (1995:202), culture is ‘a set of attitudes, practices and beliefs that are fundamental to the functioning of different societies’. According to him, it is about ‘society’s values and customs, which evolve over time as they are transmitted from one generation to another’. National culture therefore represents the ‘collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another’ (Hofstede 2001: 9).

Conversely, **performance management** is a ‘systematic process for improving organisational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams; getting better results by understanding and managing performance within an agreed

framework of planned goals, standards and competency requirements' (Armstrong, 2009:618). Performance appraisal is the vehicle for delivering performance management. According to Armstrong (2009:618) performance appraisal can sometimes be assumed as performance management but it specifically refers to the 'assessment and rating of individuals by their managers at or after a review meeting' in a retrospective manner.

The question that arises is why the interest on performance management and the answer lies in the fact that a number of scholars have found it to be the lever that drives productivity in organisations and therefore competitive edge of such companies (De Waal, 2002; Fletcher, 2001; Lowman and Rees, 2005 and Armstrong 2009). To illustrate the challenge of deploying such policies such as performance management in a MNC that applies universal principles, authors such as Schneider and Barsoux (2003), Browaeys and Price (2008) and French (2010) have observed that when organisations operate in a country such as United States of America or Western Europe, outcome of performance appraisal enables strong differentiation and affirmation for employees. However, as the same Company steps into other national host countries such as Asia or Africa, the outcome may be different. The question that therefore follows is if there are differences in application and delivery of performance management tools of MNCs as developed in country of origins or home countries and in some host countries and if so, why?

While scholars such as Marchington and Wilkinson (1996) may attribute different reasons for this situation, such as the maturity and stage of developments of such markets (including quality of business leaders), organisational culture, competence of key players (including training and development) etc, a number of others (Hofstede, 2005; Hui and Yee, 1999; Triandis, 1989, Browaeys and Price, 2008; French, 2010 and Schneider, and Barsoux, 2003) have attributed the reason to national culture. As have been highlighted earlier, the focus of this thesis is to investigate the part that national cultures play in organisations that apply the principle of universalism across countries (of origin and host) where the cultures of each country are different with an intention to recommend appropriate policy adaptation for national cultures different from the country of origin where the policies have been formulated. While it is observed that significant literature on cultural impacts of MNC practices and policies across their countries of origin and hosts mainly in the West – Europe and United States of America, gaps still remain particularly with West African countries playing host to the MNCs (Fletcher, 2001).

To achieve the goal of better explaining MNC actions in this regard and thus narrowing the knowledge gap, I reviewed the performance management practices of a multinational Company that applies standardised/universal processes across countries where it operates, using examples of two countries - country of origin in Europe (Netherlands) and subsidiary host in West Africa (Nigeria).

1.2 Research Questions:

As highlighted above, there have been observed differences in deploying performance management policies by multinational organisations in the same way across national boundaries using the specific framework of performance appraisal. In this research, the relationship with respect to how performance differentiation is attained across national boundaries and the impact that national cultures play is investigated. National culture being a broad subject, focus is on the relationship with individualism and collectivism aspects of national culture and which has been found to possess more links with performance management (Triandis et al, 1993; Adler, 1997; Noe, et al, 1997; Hofstede, 2005). Theoretical details of these cultural dimensions are discussed as part of the literature review in chapter two.

Taking the performance management and appraisal practice in one global MNC, some of the questions that would underpin the investigations in addressing the identified research problem would be:

- What performance appraisal systems are in place in the Company?
- How are the performance appraisal systems applied in different countries?
- What are the factors that shape the outcomes of the performance appraisal exercises?
- What dilemmas, issues and challenges face leaders and practitioners that carry out the exercise? How are such addressed?
- What roles do differences in national cultures play in such? Viewed differently, what impact do national cultures have on application of the performance appraisal systems?

- Does such impact really matter when the overall outcome is analysed? If so, is there a better or different way to drive performance?
- What are the recommended “culturally-fit” models (if any) that can be universally applied to address national culture influences?

1.3 Contribution of the Research

From the foregoing, this research is intended to focus on the link between national culture and performance management using two countries - Netherlands and Nigeria as reference points, with emphases on performance appraisal. The work widens understanding in this field because even though a lot has been written on effect of national culture on performance appraisal and management, the amount of empirical work, mainly outside Western economies is still limited (Fletcher, 2001). In addition, attempts to deepen understanding of the relationship as it affects impact on counties in West Africa, for which Nigeria is at the heart, is the main driver of this research. Details of the means of achieving this goal are addressed as part of the methodology.

This research therefore is among the few that specifically focuses on establishing the link that national culture plays in shaping performance management outcomes mainly in globalised multi-national corporations. In essence, and following from above, the contribution of this research is mainly on two fronts:

1. Broadening and reconfirming that national cultures influence performance appraisal and management outcomes of organisations operating in different countries
2. That the above is also true when the impact is viewed from the national cultural lenses of West African countries including Nigeria and for which research has been hitherto limited.

Consequently, this study should interest a wide range of stakeholders such as:

1. Human Resources practitioners whose key license to earn their professional rights lie in designing and deploying effective performance management tools that can be seamlessly used across the business in different locations to achieve intended productivity improvement outcome. That way, globally mobile professionals can readily apply the same tools across different locations that the business operates and expect the intended culturally-compliant or culturally-friendly outcome.
2. Business leaders, line managers and employees (most of whom may be of diverse nationalities), to recognize that they (themselves) may be children of their own cultures and therefore conscious of how their behaviours impact performance appraisal in cultures that are identical, similar or different from their own.
3. Scholars, educators and writers alike who would use the fresh insight to expand the sphere of knowledge to their audience. They will also apply the research outcome as building block in their subsequent theory building or theory testing journeys that

relate to national cultures and performance management. This is particularly so, as some aspects of highly salient national culture dimensions are largely under-researched in existing literature (Aycan et al, 2000, Denison et al, 2004).

4. International investors and business leaders who wish to start or expand their businesses across national cultures, particularly to West Africa that has now been seen as a major business destination. Recent studies on emerging fast growing economies with the most foreign direct investments (FDI) includes Nigeria – the largest country in West Africa among the MINT economies - Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey (Akpan, U.S et al, 2014, Adeolu, D, 2014). Specifically, according to Akpan, U.S et al (2014), the MINT countries along with BRICS economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa in 2011 attracted 30% of global FDI and contributed 19% of global GDP.
5. National governments and policy makers alike who grapple with the challenge of whether to preserve their national cultures or encourage “importation” of other national cultures that may distort their ways of life, particularly where such assimilations are unstructured and arbitrary.

1.4 Thesis Structure and Chapter Outline.

This thesis has been divided into five main chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the research while Chapter Two provides theoretical and conceptual overview in the form of Literature Review. It thus presents detailed account of relevant and recent literature on national culture, dimensions of same and application in work processes with particular reference to performance appraisal and management.

Chapter Three discusses the methodological approach and methods used to conduct the study including research methodology and the qualitative data analysis process. It further provides justification for the research methods employed as underpinned by the theoretical overview presented in Chapter Two. The chapter also includes data collection process and phases as well as qualitative data preparation.

Chapter Four presents reporting and interpretation of qualitative data and analysis of same. Finally, Chapter Five identifies the key themes that emerge from the research findings and analysis as well as implications for work, limitations and opportunities for further research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides theoretical and conceptual underpinning of the issues relating to national culture and performance management, the latter being viewed from the lens of performance appraisal. This chapter brings therefore brings into sharper focus, the theoretical underpinnings establishing the link between national culture and organisational processes such as performance management. As established by Hofstede (1995) and GLOBE Project (e.g. House et al., 1999), ‘national culture has a strong impact on organisations that can override other organisational (e.g. size, sector) and environmental (e.g. market) influences’ (Peretz and Fried, 2011:2). A number of other scholars have equally confirmed that organisations are largely coated and undeniably influenced by particular national cultures (Dickson et al 2000; Gelfand et al 2007; Lee & Barnett, 1997; House et al 2004). To undertake this research, I reviewed the performance appraisal practice in a multinational corporation operating in Netherlands and Nigeria with a view to reconfirming the link between both variables particularly as it applies to an under-researched cultural area such as West Africa.

In order to provide adequate academic grounding of the subject, this literature review addressed four salient questions:

- a) What theories of national culture exist and which part or approaches (if any), has impact on performance management and appraisals in organisations?
- b) Are there differences in appraisal outcomes where the national cultures in countries of origin and host are the same or different?
- c) What aspects of national culture dimensions are more relevant to performance management?
- d) What theories of performance management exist and what principles and practices apply in organisations, particularly multinational corporations?

2.1 Overview of Culture

The concept of culture and its application is one that has been of central focus for several decades and continues to evolve, leading to aspects that have come to be widely adopted today in social science studies. Early contributions on the subject from anthropological perspectives can be traced to the work of Ruth Benedict (1934) where culture was viewed along the line of societies' ways of life, symbols and meanings of systems in place. Notable documentations on the anthropological conceptualization have also been found in the work of Clifford Geertz (1994), Johnathan Friedman (1994) and Robert LeVine (1984). The account from Geertz (1994) particularly helped to break down the concept of culture into different parts from what was largely a broad view. Culture also grew into an area of interest in sociology as made popular by Max Weber (1930), Parsons and Shils

(1951) and Durkheim (1974) in trying to investigate how economies are impacted by societal values. The view of culture transited into management realm as exemplified, pioneered and accelerated by Geert Hofstede (1995, 2005), whose work brings more clarity on employee behavior at work. More recently is the work of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness research programme) as championed by House et al (2001:499) who opined that cultures affect the actions and behaviours of leaders; just as national cultures also affect organisational practices such as performance management.

The definition of culture itself has also followed the same trajectory that ranged mainly from anthropological, historical, philosophical and sociological perspectives to the extent that it is devoid of consensus among scholars in the field - a demonstration of which is reference to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) that there are over 164 definitions of the subject. An equally dominant observation is that a number of the scholars tended to use it to explain differences in the way things are done, making it difficult to isolate the role of culture ex ante (Child, 1981; Negandhi, 1983). Browaeys and Price (2008:9) summarized the frustration of having a common definition of culture in pointing out that ‘one can never use the term “culture” without being obliged to give a range of definitions that contradict each other’.

For example, Throsby (1995:202) defined it as ‘a set of attitudes, practices and beliefs that are fundamental to the functioning of different societies’. He noted that culture is

about 'society's values and customs, which evolve over time as they are transmitted from one generation to another'.

Tayeb (2003:10) observed that culture is 'historically evolved values, attitudes and meanings that are learned and shared by the members of a community and which influence their material and non-material way of life'. Similar sentiment was shared by Aykan et al (2000) and Sunder (2002). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997:6) saw it as 'the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas' even as LeVine (1984:67) examined that culture is a 'shared organisation of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meanings of communicative actions'.

Another related definition is that 'culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core culture consisting of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values' (Kluckhohn, 1951:86). Kluckhohn (quoted in Geertz, 1993: 4) further summed up that it is 'the total way of life of a people'; 'the social legacy the individual acquires from his group' and 'a way of thinking, feeling and believing'. For Geertz (1993:4), culture is 'the publicly accessible text of a people, a symbolic programme inscribed in the time and space of social life and their true essence'. This may have inspired Hofstede to view the concept as the 'collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of

people from another’ (Hofstede 2001: 9). In this definition, recognition was made of individual programming that allows for individual personalities and abilities as well as collective programming made up of commonly applicable behavioural patterns for all humans.

Given the above difficulty in agreeing a one-shoe fits all definition, scholars such as Browaeys and Price (2008:10) have counselled on the need to adopt a ‘meaning that is blurred but which somehow addresses the rather abstract idea of culture’. Accordingly, they viewed the definition espoused by Hofstede above as being ‘blurry enough to encompass other definitions but sharp enough to reflect key elements of a culture’ Browaeys and Price (2008:10). For instance, reference to collective programming of the mind indicates that different groups of people are programmed to view the world in a particular way; that culture is learned and is transmitted from generation to generation. In addition, there is the implication from the definition that there is no cultural “gold standard” that makes one culture superior to the other.

In addition and with respect to areas of relevance to my research, an observable trend is that a significant number of the different authors aligned their definitions across different layers comprising of national (Hofstede 2001), community/society (LeVine, 1984; Throsby,1995; Aycan et al, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Sunder 2002; Tayeb, 2003) and personal/individual/groups (Kluckhohn, 1951; Trompanaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Hofstede 2001). An immediate evaluation from the foregoing is that Hofstede’s definition clearly explains cultural behavioural boundaries covering nations, societies

and persons – individual or in groups as well as human nature and personality, including the characteristics around symbols, systematic patterns, learned transmissions, meanings and societal grounding, making it the most obvious choice for scholars in business related and psychological research (Baskerville, 2003). These scholars have included the principal authors involved in the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness research programme) project as well – House, Javidan and Dorfman (2001:492). As also earlier pointed out, culture occupies some application space in anthropology, sociology and business – the area of my research and for which significant work was done by Hofstede. Consequently, out of the many definitions reviewed above, this research has been guided by the context provided by Hofstede and by extension, the GLOBE project.

2.2 Approaches and Dimensions of National Culture

There are quite a number of national culture dimensions as seen by different scholars but the approach by Hofstede and as further stretched by the GLOBE project are of most relevance to the research work. Parsons and Shills (1951) were among the early writers on the subject and observed that values of culture could be pinned down along dimensions relating to universalism vs particularism; self vs collective orientation; specificity vs diffuseness; effective vs neutral and finally, achieved vs ascribed. Detailed definitions of these dimensions are provided later in this chapter in reference to the work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 2004). The effort from

Parsons and Shills was followed by the work of two anthropologists – Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961) who viewed the dimensions in six value orientations that derives from how societies ordinarily deal with vital issues of culture such as association with nature and opinions of human nature and activities; approaches to time as well as connection between space and people. Inkeles and Levinson (1969) followed from this premise in identifying three dimensions with respect to relationship to authority, self and gender conceptions and ways of addressing dilemmas and conflicts.

Schein (1990:114) identified seven dimensions which he explained in the form of questions that each approach seeks to provide answers to. The first of the dimensions is the institution's relationship to its environment and the associated question relates to how it sees itself to be 'dominant, submissive, harmonizing, searching out a niche'. The second dimension relates to the nature of human activity, the question being whether the appropriate way for humans to behave should be 'dominant/pro-active, harmonizing, or passive/fatalistic'. Following this is 'the nature of reality and truth' leading Schein to pose questions on how we 'define what is true and what is not true; and how truth is ultimately determined both in the physical and social world' – by 'pragmatic test, reliance on wisdom, or social consensus?' The next dimension is 'the nature of time', being people's 'basic orientation in terms of past, present, and future, and what kinds of time units are most relevant for the conduct of daily affairs'. The fifth dimension is 'the nature of human nature' itself leading to the question of whether

‘humans are basically good, neutral, or evil, and is human nature perfectible or fixed?’

The sixth relates to ‘the nature of human relationships’ where Schein asked the question as to ‘what is the "correct" way for people to relate to each other, to distribute power and affection? Is life competitive or cooperative? Is the best way to organize society on the basis of individualism or groupism? Is the best authority system autocratic/paternalistic or collegial/participative?’ Finally, there is the dimension of ‘homogeneity vs. diversity’ which elicits answers as to whether or not the ‘the group is best off if it is highly diverse or if it is highly homogeneous, and should individuals in a group be encouraged to innovate or conform?’. In Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997:8), they noted that ‘every culture distinguishes itself from others by the specific solutions it chooses to certain problems which reveal themselves as dilemmas - ‘those which arise from our relationships with other people; those which come with the passage of time; and those which relate to the environment’. In deepening the thought and in what appears to have been inspired by the work of Parsons and Shils (1951), they located societies also along seven dimensions of ‘universalism v particularism’ – the relative observed importance of rules that can be universally applied as against those that can be applied in specific situations based on strength of relationship. The second dimension of ‘neutral v affective’ relates to the degree to which emotions are openly displayed and those where it is hidden.

The dimensions of ‘individualism and communitarianism’ focuses on the degree to which people act independently as against deep loyalty in closely bonded communities.

The fourth dimension of 'specific v diffuse' refers to the extent to which people can separate actions between what happens in a formal and informal setting. In certain 'specific' societies, actions can be compartmentalised, while in diffuse societies, such separation is difficult to attain. The fifth dimension of 'achievement v ascription' applies to connotation of achievement to status whereas in an ascription society, status is more linked to other factors such as connections, age, education etc. Inner v outer-directed dimension also referred to as 'internal v external control' relates to the degree to which people can control their environment or simply live with it. The final dimension is 'sequential v synchronic' – the aspect that relates to time. Sequential dimension sees time in a linear form of isolated events whereas, synchronic situation is the contrast – time seen as circular with relationship between the past, present and future.

Hofstede (1993, 1994, 2001, 2005) whose research was more specific on national culture, established five dimensions – power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity and short v long term in what may have been also inspired by the work of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997).

He defined power distance as the 'extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede, 2005:45). Using Power Distance Index (PDI), he argued that within institutions, organisations and societies, power is distributed

unequally and based on data from 74 countries, he ascribed values that support how different countries deal with inequalities relative to one another. He observed that high power distance score values as recorded in most countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Arab-speaking and African countries, connotes prevalence of autocratic and paternalistic practice and in which the emotional dependence and distance between unequal classes (such as bosses and subordinates, parents and children etc) is high. Conversely, low power distance scores were ascribed to countries in German speaking regions, Israel, Nordic areas, United States of America, Great Britain, the Netherlands, etc. and the low scores were interpreted to mean that there is relative low emotional dependence between groups and that rather than autocratic and paternalistic practices, their nationals are more inclined to behaviours that promote consensus and consultative styles of decision making. The concept of individualism and collectivism is another of the five model dimensions of national culture that Hofstede (2005:76) investigated. Individualism was defined as pertaining ‘to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family’. Conversely, collectivism was seen as relating to ‘societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty’.

Masculinity vs femininity is another cultural dimension by Hofstede, referring to the desirability of assertive masculine behaviours versus those of modest (feminine)

behaviours. Hofstede (2005:120) described a masculine society as one where 'emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life'. On the other hand, a society is referred to as feminine, 'when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life'. Using the masculinity index (MAS), Hofstede noted that unlike the individualism index, there is no direct relationship between the wealth of countries and their masculinity behaviours and therefore, the behaviours that are manifested in any society are mixed such that cultures in a poor country can be inclined to masculinity and those in a rich one, femininity and vice versa.

The fourth dimension, uncertainty avoidance is used to classify 'the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations' (Hofstede, 2005:167). The expression of these feelings usually come in the form of stress such that the individuals in those cultures typically have preference for predictability and rules – be they written or unwritten. Using the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Hofstede demonstrated that countries with high scores exhibit higher levels of tendency to avoid uncertainties relative to those with lower scores. The countries with higher scores are mainly Latin America, Latin European countries and Mediterranean regions. Conversely, except for Japan and Korea, the Asians generally score low on this index.

The West Africans and the Nordic areas of Europe were mainly in the middle, except Denmark and Sweden that were relatively with very low scores.

The fifth dimension is Long Term Vs Short Term Orientation, with the former defined by Hofstede (2005:210) as the ‘fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards – in particular perseverance and thrift’. Short-term orientation on the other hand, refers to the ‘fostering of virtues oriented towards the past and present – in particular respect for tradition, preservation of “face” and fulfilling social obligations’. Like other dimensions, the LTO scores were also classified across different countries where it was noted that countries mainly from East Asia had relatively high scores and were therefore more inclined to long term values of perseverance, thrift, willingness to subordinate oneself for a higher purpose and having a sense of shame. Conversely, countries on the short-term side of the equation were noted to be mainly from Western Europe, West Africa and United States of America, who appeared to be more relatively inclined to expecting quick results for their efforts, social pressure towards spending, concern with social and status obligations as well as concern with “face”.

Triandis (1995) is another scholar with significant contribution to the subject of cultural dimensions and his perspective further broke down Hofstede’s dimension of individualism/collectivism into four dimensions - comprising of interdependent versus independent self; alignment of personal and communal goals; obligation to others versus personal rights and needs and finally, unconditional emphasis on relationships versus rational analysis about maintaining relationships.

Other views on cultural dimensions relate to the work of Shalom Schwartz (1992) which throws more insight on work values and motivation. The first element relating to values is his view on “value types”, leading him to identify ten value types as follows: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction and universalism. Others are benevolence, tradition, conformity and security. While linking these values to cultural dimensions, he identified the bipolar value dimensions to include, “self-transcendence and self enhancement”, referring respectively to acceptance of others on their individual merits and expressing concerns for other’s well-being as well as pursuit of self-interest and to some extent, the display of dominance over others. The dimension of “conservatism and openness to change” is such that conservatism focuses on conformity and security and openness to change being action, stimulation and independence. There is also the dimension of “hierarchy and egalitarianism” such that a hierarchical culture emphasises social power and authority while the other is about distributed responsibility and social justice. The dimension of “embeddedness versus autonomy” is such that embeddedness is a focus to avoid disintegration of established social order or the way of doing things while autonomous society preoccupies itself with freedom of expression. Finally, the dimension of “mastery versus harmony” reflects the desire to control the natural order of social environment while harmony reflects desire to understand and look after the environment.

Minkov (2007: 18) in his own contribution, sought to link relevance of the cultural dimensions to real life issues such as crime rates, educational achievement etc. He

identified three additional dimensions of “exclusionism v universalism; indulgence v restraint and monumentalism v flexumility”. On the dimension of exclusionism v universalism, he defined exclusionism as treating people in a special way due to their group affiliation such as family and friend. This special treatment is not extended to others. Conversely, universalism involves treating people based on who they are. Minkov sought to relate this categorisation on the strength of global enrichment and globalisation that is leading the western world to apply “universal” principles in a number of situations. On the dimensions of indulgence v restraint, Minkov differentiates societies that allow for a high degree of expressing feelings and desires in the form of indulgence (such as Anglo societies) versus those that exercise restraint in life situations of freedom, happiness and leisure such as countries of Eastern Europe. Finally, the dimension of monumentalism v flexumility is such that in monumentalism cultures, there is very high degree of people’s feeling of self-worth, inter-personal competition and educational attainment while flexumility societies display more humility, self-regard and limited inter-personal competition.

One of the most recent contributors to the debate is the work of the GLOBE Project. Project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness research programme) is traceable to the work of Robert House who proposed a hypothesis that the charismatic style of leadership and related behaviours can be successfully deployed across the world. By the same context, the researchers noted the

place of national cultures in organisational processes (House et al 2001:3) adding further that ‘the meta-goal of GLOBE is to develop an empirically-based theory to describe, understand and predict the impact of specific cultural variables on leadership and organisational processes and the effectiveness of these processes’ (House et al 2001:492). In deepening this thought and inspired by the work of Hofstede, the GLOBE researchers identified nine dimensions which they referred to as ‘culture construct definitions’. The first is ‘power distance’ which refers to the extent to which a group expects equal or unequal distribution of power. It also includes the degree to which individuals agreed with existing power relations or wished that they are different. The second dimension is ‘uncertainty avoidance’, relating to the extent to which groups accept unusual events and uncertainties in contrast to avoiding them. The third and fourth dimensions is ‘collectivism I and collectivism II’ respectively referring to the degree to which the society appreciates collective rewards and action as well as the extent to which an individual is loyal to a subgroup such as family or employment organisation.

The fifth dimension on the other hand is ‘gender egalitarianism being the degree to which males and females are equally or not equally treated and whether differences in gender related roles are significant. The sixth dimension of ‘assertiveness’ refers to the presence of and acceptance of assertive behaviours of individuals in a society.

Similarly, the seventh dimension of ‘future orientation’ is meant, the degree to which individuals assess the future implications of their actions, while the eight dimension of ‘performance orientation’ refers to availability of signals and outcomes aimed at encouraging high performance. Finally, there is the dimension of ‘humane orientation’ that describes presence of qualities of kindness and generosity in a society.

In terms of analysis and as alluded to by the GLOBE authors, ‘collectively, the nine dimensions reflect not only the dimensions of Hofstede’s theory but also David McClelland’s theories of national economic development (McClelland, 1961) and human motivation (McClelland, 1985). The humanism, power distance and performance orientation of cultures, when measured with operant behavioural indicators, are conceptually analogous to the affiliative, power and achievement motives in McClelland’s implicit motivation theory. ‘We believe that the nine core GLOBE dimensions reflect important aspects of the human condition’ (House et al, 1999:16) just as they remarked that GLOBE group possess the requisite dataset to replicate Hofstede’s extensive work on cultural dimensions. In specific terms therefore, it follows that ‘power distance and uncertainty avoidance’ as well as ‘gender egalitarianism and assertiveness’ emerged from Hofstede’s work, the latter, being adaptation of masculinity/femininity dimensions. Similarly, Hofstede’s dimensions of individualism and collectivism gave birth to GLOBE’s ‘collectivism I and collectivism II’. In the same manner, key conclusions of the GLOBE research in House et al (2001) can be assessed as being offshoots of Hofstede’s work as follows; that values and

practices of societies affect leadership, organizational practices and culture just as strategic organisational contingencies including organisational form, culture and practices are also affected by culture – the latter, inspired by Hofstede’s assertion that individuals bring their own culture to the workplace and are in turn influenced by them. The additional aspect relates to use of IBM as main focus of his study, which GLOBE project also adopted by positing that culture can be used as a contingent factor (House et al, 2001). Finally, it is important to observe that the GLOBE project also draws from the practice seen in most cross-cultural studies in drawing from society clusters. Gupta et al (2002) observed ten clusters from the GLOBE research work aimed at identifying policies and practices that correlate with institutional and cultural inclinations of the society. These are also similar to that observed by Hofstede with respect to power distance and individualism/collectivism.

From the above catalogues of dimensions, a few additional conclusions begin to emerge. Notable among them is that the approach from Adler (1997) and Hall (1990) is closely linked to the work of Schein, Trompenaars and Hofstede just as some patterns emerge that the dimensions from different scholars generally followed from their definitions of culture itself. Another clear observation is that although Trompenaars work appears to find popular application in the business world, it was not delineated in country scores, unlike that of Hofstede and GLOBE Project. Similarly, it will appear that Hofstede may have been inspired by the foundation laid by Parsons and Shills (1957), Karl Popper (1959), Inkeles and Livinson (1969) and then Trompenaars and

Hampden-Turner (1997) just as I see areas of alignment with some aspects of the work by Schwartz (1994) and Triandis (1995). For instance, I note that Hofstede's dimension of power distance is related to Triandis' horizontal-vertical elements which is inversely correlated to individualism (Hofstede, 2005) – Triandis appearing to build from the work of Hofstede. Another body of analysis is that the dimensions were extensive ranging from four (later five) by Hofstede (2001) to eleven by Schwartz (1992). A closer review of the cultural dimensions however indicate some commonality and convergence such that the eleven dimensions as viewed by Schwartz (1992) and GLOBE Project link closely with Hofstede's five dimensions. To illustrate this view, most of the scholars used various descriptions to connote individualism vs communalism such as GLOBE Project as already described and Minkov (2007) on universalism being linked to Hofstede's collectivism v individualism, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997:8) on individualism and communitarianism and Schein (1990:114) on individualism vs groupism. In addition, it will appear that Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) as well as Schein (1990) largely adopted the initial dimensions as proposed by Parsons and Shills (1951).

2.3 Why the Reliance on Hofstede's Work?

In the preceding section, indication had been made on the fact that discussion of this work has been tilted towards the approach of Hofstede. This section therefore appraises the criticism levelled against Hofstede's work on national culture dimensions with the

goal of demonstrating why it remains central and credible building block for my research work.

The starting point of the criticism relates to observation by Baskerville (2003) that Hofstede's work lacks theoretical grounding. She summarised this flaw as it relates to "equating culture and the nation, quantification of differences in terms of measurable cultural dimensions and the issue of how culture is recorded when the observer is an outsider to that culture"

This criticism is quite pertinent and lies at the heart of my research work to the extent that my investigation is around the role of national culture on performance management – the former having been premised around this "equation of culture and the nation". In my review of the several studies on application of cultural understanding in the area of business, this has been the premise bearing in mind that even Baskerville did not offer alternative ways of applying understanding of culture across countries. Consequently and in the absence of any other unit of comparison across countries, such equation of culture and the nation is used to connote the relative tendencies within reference societies.

The above aligns with the view of Hofstede (1991) himself who as supported by Trompenaars (1993) and Tayeb (1987), argued that there is usually strong tendency towards a shared or dominant culture of larger groups as well as the fact that reference to national cultures is more a matter of data collection expediency. They opined that the dimensions as described do not represent absolute connotations of behaviours but more

of relative behavioural tendencies for majority of groupings in normal situations. Accordingly, relating countries and nations as having one culture is an argument of ‘average or central tendency’ as well as that of more or less rather than either/or in terms of the dominant observed cultural behaviours which is an acceptable premise in studies of culture (Hofstede 2001: 73) and as also established by a number of replication efforts (Sondergaard, 1994). Tayeb (1987) for instance, did not only share this view in addition to the fact that it represents the only kind of available units of comparison across countries, but went ahead to depict different layers of culture as comprising global, national, regional, community and personal. It is this delineation and mapping of culture along nations that better helps in explaining the impact that it plays on organisational processes and across countries (Williamson, 2002). It follows therefore that the ability of researchers to understand impact of national culture across countries is underpinned by this equation of nations and societies. Consequently, this position rather aides than weakens the basis of my research work.

While the warning provided by Baskerville (2003) is useful especially in recognizing that culture is a construct that enables situation of Hofstede’s work as manifestations of national culture as against being direct measures of national cultures, it becomes important to highlight that the theoretical grounding of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions have relationship with similar work by such scholars as Parsons and Shills (1957), Trompanaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 2004) as well as the numerous replication work on same subject (Mouritzen and Svara, 2002; Van Nimwegen, 2002; Bond, M.H,

1992; Earley, P.C, 1989; Merritt A, C, 1998; Minkov, 2007) most of whom adopted different theoretical and analytical rigour but still ending up validating Hofstede's work.

The above notwithstanding and with particular reference to my research work, Baskerville's criticisms calls for some level of moderation in assuming that all members of a culture possess the same cultural attributes in a homogenous way whilst also recognizing that nation states does not equate to national cultures. This is particularly as I used reference to Nigeria to expand application of this research to entire West African countries.

Similarly, McSweeney (2002) also offered critique of Hofstede's work based on the research methodology, anchored on five assumptions that underlie Hofstede's model. The assumptions include the fact that 'national, organisational and occupational are discrete levels of culture; that national culture is identifiable at the micro-level of IBM samples – the organisation used as basis of Hofstede's work; that national culture creates questionnaire responses; that national culture can be identified from questionnaire and finally, that Hofstede's dimensions are not situation specific'. In reacting to the criticisms, Williamson (2002) while pointing out that McSweeney's critique is from the standpoint of research methodology rather than research methods of Hofstede's work, observed that Hofstede's work derived from functionalist paradigm, while the basis of McSweeney's critique was largely seen as being unclear even though mainly within evaluative criteria which when used together (with functionalist view) are incompatible. He defined research methods in this context as techniques used to

gather and analyse data while methodology is choice and justification of adopted methods. According to him, even though some functionalist paradigm leanings were deployed by McSweeney, the overall argument accordingly still failed to falsify Hofstede's model. In Williamson's further view, notwithstanding that some warnings emerge for scholars who rely on Hofstede's work such as the danger of assuming that all members of a culture possess the same attributes, expecting individual's values to be solely decided by their cultural backgrounds and mixing up cultural dimension scores rather than seeing them as mainly approximations, McSweeney's criticisms does not still diminish the validity of Hofstede's work and the valuable insights it offers to scholars (Smith 2002; Sondergaard, 1994; Wooliams, 1997). While also noting that surveys represent one of the several methods that Hofstede used in the original IBM work, as earlier pointed out, the result of several replication efforts of other numerous scholars who themselves used different analytical models (Bond, M.H, 1992; Earley, P.C, 1989; Merritt A, C, 1998 and more recently Minkov, 2007), confirmed robustness of the methods used in arriving at the dimensions.

Another area of evaluation, is whether subjection of the cultural dimensions to different cultural biases has any implication on the validity of the models. In reviewing this view, a number of replication efforts suggest other cultural biasedness does not arise in arriving at the dimensions. For instance, Bond (1988, 1992, 1998), using similar questionnaire pattern that Hofstede had used in his IBM work, eliminated the western biasedness of the work and using questionnaires that were skewed towards Asian values, arrived at largely

the same conclusions that Hofstede did with respect to the earlier four dimensions and in the process, adding a fifth dimension – long-term vs short-term orientation.

Further areas of scrutiny within the cultural dimensions is the validity of the cultural dimensions itself ranging from four (later five) by Hofstede (2001) and actual testing of the validity of the dimensions by a number of scholars.

A closer review of the cultural dimensions indicate a high degree of commonality and convergence with those of a number of other scholars, some of which with strong link with the work of Hofstede. Examples include the eleven dimensions as viewed by Schwartz (1992) linking closely with Hofstede's five dimensions. Added to this, is the work of numerous replication efforts of Hofstede's work on the four dimensions (excluding short vs long term) such as Sondergaard (1994) in his review of about 19 replication initiatives that confirmed the four-dimensional model as being true, valid and capturing the core elements of the literature that other scholars have described in different forms. Similar conclusions were separately and severally reached by Hoppe (1998), Shane (1995) and Van Nimwegen (2002). Others that have not only endorsed but confirmed the theoretical robustness of Hofstede's work relative to others include Earley (1989), Shackleton & Ali, (1990), Hoppe (1990), Merritt (1998), Jones and Alony (2007), Schwartz (1994), Smith et al (1995, 1996, 2002), Chui et al, (2002) Smith and Bond (1998), Gupta and House (2004), Sarros and Woodman, (1993), Leung et al, (2005) and Bhagat and McQuard, (1982), referring to it as 'undoubtedly, the most significant

cross-cultural study of work-related values' just as Schneider and Barsoux (2003) noted that 98 out of 134 studies between 1981 and 1998 used Hofstede's work on the four dimensions as reference. Leung et al (2005) particularly noted that 'despite the use of different items to identify cultural dimensions, the results are consistent with previous results and that the results are related conceptually and correlated empirically with Hofstede's dimensions' leading to their conclusion that notwithstanding the controversial work, Hofstede's research has provided framework that has inspired much international business research. Yet again and as at June 2010, it was reported in Tung and Verbeke (2010), citing (Harzing, 2010) that over 54,000 citations made reference to Hofstede's work.

Reliance on Hofstede's work has been strengthened by the method of analysis deployed, including use of factor analysis as well as the fact that validity of these measures have been supported through their correlation with indices of other researchers (Gordon, 1976; McClelland, 1961; Kogut & Singh, 1988; Shane, 1992, 1994) and replication in two other studies already cited. In addition, one area of challenge would have been the work of GLOBE project (House, Javidan and Dorfman (2001), but it is instructive to highlight that the cultural dimension of communalism and individualism that is the anchor of my review work is one where both study outcomes fully align. For instance and as noted by Hofstede (2010), 'the only dimensions for which "as is" and "as should be" were positively correlated were Gender Egalitarianism and In-Group Collectivism. To this

extent, literature is limited or largely non-existent on divergent views between GLOBE project and Hofstede on this cultural dimension.

Finally and notwithstanding the above, it is important to observe that critiques such as Baskerville (2003) still observed that her criticisms are more applicable within the context of anthropology and sociology where Hofstede's work is less cited and less so in business related and psychological research where the work is a common reference material. In other words, there is sufficient evidence in theory and practice to demonstrate that the cultural dimensions particularly the one by Hofstede can be used in researching culture and the role that it plays in the transfer of work practices from one culture to another in the world of work. It is on the strength of this, that my research which is within the context of work practices in MNCs, is hugely anchored on the work of Hofstede, although not without exercising appropriate cautions around the criticisms that have been levelled against his work.

2.4 Application of Cultural Dimensions at Work

As has been discussed above, a number of cultural perspectives exist and which for the purpose of this research, has been narrowed to the dimensions used by Hofstede – power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity and long term vs short term. Understanding application of cultural dimensions in the world of work is therefore discussed within the contexts provided by Hofstede.

It is noteworthy that renowned scholars (Hui and Yee, 1999; Campbell, 1965; Barkow et al, 1992; Trompenaars, 1993; Adler,1997; Hui and Yee, 1999; Triandis and Suh, 2002; Hofstede, 2005) have established a positive link between different cultural dimensions to different work behaviours, workgroup relationships, employee motivation and job satisfaction, for which performance management is seen as being at the heart of such assessment. Some of the deductions reached are such that a number of factors may underpin the observed contrasting behaviours associated with the dimensions, for which national culture influences are understood to play a significant part (Hofstede, 2005; Hui and Yee, 1999; Triandis, 1989).

In specific reference to the application of the approaches, a number of scholars have used the dimensions to investigate impact on different work practices including Jeanquart-Barone and Peluchette (1999) on uncertainty avoidance (UAI). Specifically, uncertainty avoidance was noted to have more application in such practices as decision taking (Jeanquart-Barone and Peluchette, 1999), recruitment (Dessler, 1994) and career planning and security of employment (Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998; Hofstede 2005). Jeanquart-Barone and Peluchette (1999) particularly observed that countries with higher levels of uncertainty avoidance will take measure to minimise risks in their staffing decisions such as adopting more training and using more structured interview techniques. They noted that these practices would raise eyebrows when practiced in cultures with low levels of uncertainty avoidance.

For Hofstede, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance index would typically indicate relatively high degrees of nervousness and more often than not, changing of jobs at the instance of the employees is not the norm for fear of the unknown in a different company. The same sentiment is expressed when it concerns violations of work rules for fear of the implications of the consequence management action that may be applied. This according to him explains why countries with higher scores typically have more rules and regulations in their work places. They are also typically known to work harder (or busier) than their counterparts from countries with lower scores; so also is the strong beliefs in expertise and specialisations as against those from low scores who are more inclined to accepting generalists and the expectation to apply common sense to a number of issues, leading to tolerance for ambiguity and disorderliness. By the same principle according to him, Managers from cultures that better accepts uncertainties are able to be more involved in strategies against their counterparts from high uncertainty-avoiding areas that often micro-manage. It was also demonstrated that workers from cultures with high UAI have more self-employed people, are great at execution of ideas (even though weaker at generating the inventions) and are hugely motivated by job security, self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Conversely, their counterparts that show more acceptances for uncertainties are more motivated by sense of achievement and are more likely to focus on decision process as against decision content. In summary, it follows that people from high UA societies prefer predictability and therefore tend to rely on societal norms, procedures and rules to guide against the unpredictability of the events happening again in future (House et al., 2004, 2002; Ryan et al., 1999; Triandis, 1994).

Power distance principle manifests in a variety of ways in the work place including employee relations (Adler 1997), organisational structure (Hofstede, 1991, 2005) and Sekaran and Snodgrass (1986) in decision making. Hofstede (1991, 2005) specifically posited that in large power distance conditions, subordinates and their superiors see each other within the realm of unequal status and the organisational structures whilst systems and processes are generally designed to reflect same. So also is the communication channels that largely flow from the direction of superiors to subordinates and hardly the other way round such that there are often significant challenges in successfully exporting management models of western origin such as Management by Objectives (MBO). In the smaller power distance scenarios on the other hand and according to the author, the reverse is the case; subordinates and superiors view differences in the hierarchies only to differentiate roles and to that extent, the employees generally see themselves as equals. In these organisations, decisions by consultation and consensus is the rule of the game and structures are largely decentralised while there are little or no segregation on use of amenities and facilities around seniority and classes. In essence and unlike the polarisation characteristic that is the general norm in large power distance countries, there is a greater degree of interdependence between less and more powerful people in smaller power distance societies.

Deployment of cultures using the masculinity dimension at work according to Hofstede (2005) manifests in a way that such workers are seen to value recognition, opportunity for high earnings and advancement in their jobs as well as the challenges that come with it. By contrast, those exhibiting feminist behaviours prefer good working relationship, living areas that are family-friendly and security of employment. In addressing employee relations problems, masculine cultures deal with issues by confrontation while consensus and compromise is more applicable in feminist cultures. Similarly, reward management in masculine cultures support equity and pay for performance while the feminist societies appreciate reward systems that promote equality and sameness. Other areas of distinctions include the preference for more leisure opportunities in feminist societies, a higher share of working women in professional jobs and general preference for smaller organizations. Within the masculine society, the reverse is the case as the result is fewer women in professional jobs, more preference for opportunity for higher earnings and preference for very large organizations. Hofstede summarised that the dimension of masculinity/femininity is more deployed in such situations as conflict management, reward management within the context of equity versus equality (Hofstede, 2005) whilst Adler (1997) observed that its application is in relation to nature of work itself.

Application of individualism and collectivism in the work place is such that using Hofstede's Individualism Index (IDV), cultures with high scores and from mainly western countries are more inclined to individualism. According to the study, these

people are less dependent on the organisation and therefore more likely to value their personal time, freedom to adopt their approach to their job and challenging work that offers personal levels of accomplishment and fulfilment. On the other hand, employees from collectivist societies have relatively low IDV scores and are mainly from non-western countries. Therefore they have more dependence on the organisation such that personal time, freedom and work challenges are luxuries and higher level needs in the work place. Accordingly, such employees from collectivist societies are more driven by training opportunities, physical conditions of work such as adequate work office and opportunities for them to fully use their skills at work. He argued on the strength of the foregoing that in collectivist societies, employees are viewed in relation to the group that they belong to and the interest that the group holds. The same applies to such practices as making promotion and hiring decisions as well as performance appraisal discussions where difficult conversations are typically avoided. By contrast, the situation with individualists is such that the relationship between the employee and the company is expected to be governed by rules, employment contracts and acknowledgement of the fact that performance of tasks takes precedence over relationships.

In specific application, Venter (2002) observed that in collectivist societies, the situation is such that career women enjoy a network of support from family members as they pursue their careers, while this is not often the case in more individualist countries, where women's careers are often sacrificed at the altar of their family roles. In the light of this

and without paying attention to this cultural difference, she observed that it becomes difficult to explain the career situations of women in Asia and Western Europe and attempting to transfer the observations. In a related work (Venter, 2003), she observed that based on cultural differences, there is the need to tailor teaching methods because distance and studying alone are typically more challenging in collectivist than in individualist cultures and vice versa. In other words and other assumptions remaining the same, that distance-learning practices (including blended learning at work) could work in individualist cultures is not a guarantee that it would do in collectivist cultures.

In applying Long vs Short Term orientation to work, Hofstede (2005) noted that high LTO cultures are known to exhibit behaviours that reflect owner managers and workers sharing the same aspirations; leisure time is not important and main work values include continuous learning, honesty, adaptation, self-discipline and accountability for one's roles and responsibilities. Conversely, workers in low LTO (short-term orientation) generally exhibit preference for work freedom, rights, achievements and thinking for self only. Leisure time is critical to them and managers and workers see themselves as belonging to different camps.

It follows from above that the above applications of cultural dimensions to work processes may have influenced Jones and Alony (2007) to advise systems designers to adopt the cultural perspectives and accommodate the cultural differences that exist across the globe. They warned that without making room for cultural work differences, systems

designers of particular cultural biases should not expect the systems to work successfully across countries. Blanchard and Frasson (2005) equally applied this principle in their earlier research on the impact of culture in e-learning. While stressing the importance of learner's cultures for an e-learning system, they posited that not paying attention to cultural dimensions could affect adaptation of the tools to learner's needs. In their own contribution, Nath and Murthy (2004) and Marcus and Gould (2001) highlighted the extensive relationship between cultural dimensions and penetration rate of various information technology tools across cultures such as new products including software, website quality expectations, e-mail vs fax acceptance etc.

They accordingly recommended that scholars involved in international information systems research need to specially take into consideration, cultural dimensions as it affects different countries because the ways and manner that such information science-induced work practices in one culture need to be tailored to meet the cultural leanings of other countries.

2.5 Cultural Dimensions and Performance Management.

As has been described in prior sessions, empirical studies have shown that identified cultural dimensions find application in the work place, with power distance, future orientation, uncertainty avoidance and individualism vs communalism dimensions explaining observed behaviours in performance management due to the fact that they

represent the aspects of national culture that help in predicting organizational processes and management practices such as performance appraisal (Communal & Senior, 1999; Hofstede & Peterson, 2000). On the strength of the above, this research work on national culture and performance management has been viewed from the cultural dimension lenses of power distance, future orientation, uncertainty avoidance and more deeply, that of individualism vs communalism. In other words, the link between performance management and national culture has been found to align with the four dimensions albeit stronger with individualism and collectivism (Triandis et al, 1993; Adler, 1997; Noe, et al, 1997; Schneider and Barsoux, 2003; Fenwick, 2004; Hofstede, 2005).

In a study of Japanese companies operating in the United States of America, Tung (1993) posited that the greatest challenge of the Japanese Managers in managing American employees is reconciling the significant mismatch between the intentions and outcomes of performance appraisals. They were to conclude the research by noting that at the crust of factors affecting such challenges is (national) culture. Accordingly, it has also been established that organisations that adopt appraisal practices that align with their cultural dimensions are more likely to experience reduced turnover, improved performance and ultimately, increased employee engagement (Erez, 2000; Shipper et al 2007). In establishing how the dimensions play out in organisations, Hofstede (2005:242) noted that within the context of aligning organisational behaviours to cultural dimensions, two key questions need to be answered – questions around who has the power to decide what and the applicable rules required to achieve the desired goals. He observed that answer to

the question on power to decide lies with the dimension of power distance, while uncertainty avoidance addresses the second. He added that individualism/communalism and masculinity/feminism relate to ‘people in organisations rather than about organisations themselves’. Along this line, the concept of performance management is a tool applied to people in organisations and therefore studies relating to it on culture are addressed within the dimension of individualism/communalism.

In achieving the above and within the context of uncertainty avoidance and performance management, it has been established that organisations operating within high UA societies typically rely more on structured and standardized processes and procedures, performance appraisal, inclusive and vice versa (House et al., 2004, 2002; Ryan et al., 1999; Triandis, 1994).

In the same vein, the link between performance management and power distance is such that organisations in high power distance societies design performance appraisals in such a way that supervisors of subordinates are the evaluators rather than other sources such as peers whilst in low power distance situations, multiple appraisal sources involving supervisors, peers, subordinates and even employees themselves are applied (Aycan, 2005; Shipper et al, 2007). It is instructive to note that the countries used for my research feature in the assessment made by Hofstede (2005) with Nigeria (West Africa) being rated within the rank of 17-18 with a score of 77 indicating high level of power distance and Netherlands being rated within rank of 61 and a score of 38, indicating a low level of power distance.

For long vs short term, otherwise referred to as future orientation, House et al, (2002), posited that organisations in societies inclined to long term cultures are more amenable to future oriented behaviours such as planning and goal setting to the extent that within the context of performance management, they are more open to formal performance appraisals. The appraisals typically focus on performance related information that support future organizational growth including human resources planning, training needs analysis etc; just as they are more likely to be open to deployment of multiple rating appraisal tools.

Within the dimension of individualism/collectivism and performance management, research has found that organisations in collectivist societies typically avoid personal based appraisal processes because of its tendency to negatively impact intergroup harmony (Kpavach, 1995; Valance, 1999). Conversely, personal based assessments are preferred by those in individualistic societies because it helps in differentiating performance and reaching decisions such as pay and career development (Aycan, 2005; Harris & Moran, 1996; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). In addition, organisations in collectivist societies tend to apply appraisal processes that will generally be of benefit to generality of employees. Accordingly, they may be less open to use of multiple evaluations sources such as 360-degrees system because of the high value that employees from collectivist societies place on shielding their reputations and harmony in such a way that they are not comfortable receiving and accepting feedback that is perceived as not being positive (Aycan, 2005; Gibson, 1997). It follows that those from individualistic

cultures will better embrace appraisal tools that deploy multiple feedback sources from peers, subordinates, supervisors and themselves with a view to enhancing feelings of fairness and acceptability of differentiated rewards. Edwards et al, (2007) along the same line of argument highlighted that communalistic nations are more likely to adopt pay and performance management practices that discourage individual recognition, while more individualistic nations are more likely to focus on rewarding individuals. In other words, the performance appraisal framework that will better suite organisations in a communalistic society is the one that is team based, while the more appropriate practice for individualistic nations will be ones that are focused on individual differentiation and affirmation. To further lay credibility to this, a number of scholars have found strong relationship between collectivism and individual dispositions to team work as well as direct (individual) performance feedback being less acceptable in collectivist societies (Kirkman and Shapiro, 2000; Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001, Fletcher 2001 and Elenkov 1998). Fenwick (2004) and Schneider and Barsoux (2003) further point to evidence that performance appraisal, including use of multi-raters and 360-degrees feedback and character assessments are more welcomed in individualistic nations than collectivist countries. Aguilera and Dencker (2004) strengthened the above foundation by positing that national cultures affect an organisation's practices such as individual performance awards, including pay-for-performance related systems, even as Hofstede (2005) called for adaptation of performance management programs across national boundaries to align with the cultural leanings of such societies. This according to him is driven by the view that performance management framework that disrupts team work and

social harmony - that is at the heart of collectivist societies, damages such organisations in more ways than the introduction of performance management is intended to address in the first place.

It is important to highlight that with particular reference to the countries used for the purpose of this research, they both feature prominently on the assessment made by Hofstede (2005), who placed Netherlands within the rank of 4-6 with a score of 80 indicating high level of individualism. On the other hand, West Africa, with Nigeria as the prominent country ranked 56-61 with a score of 20, indicating a low level of individualism and thus, being more inclined to communalism.

It follows from the foregoing that my research questions that drove investigation of the relationship between performance management and national culture focus more on individualism/collectivism. This is as Schneider and Barsoux (2003:162) have linked individualism and collectivism as having the most impact on performance management, leading them to advise MNCs to not strictly apply the same performance criteria across the different cultures from the one used in the country of origin. In addition, the focus on individualism/communalism is to enable a more targeted research and thus minimise confusion of interview respondents, particularly given the observation by Greenfield (1999) and Triandis and Suh (2002) that the dimension equates to the deep structure of cultural differences just as Triandis (2001) also identified them (individualism/collectivism) as having the most significant impact and difference among

the cultural dimensions. Consequently, a deeper understanding of the relationship between performance management and this aspect of cultural dimension better helps scholars extend the correlation to other cultural dimensions. Finally, the individualism/communalism dimension was also observed as having the strongest confirmation from the replication researches as well as being the least controversial of the five dimensions (Hofstede, 1995).

Notwithstanding the insights gained from existing literature with respect to relationship between national culture and performance management, this study helps to deepen existing effort to include such links as practiced in countries of origin of MNCs and deployed to other countries, often with different cultural leanings. More specific is the reference to a country in West Africa (Nigeria) - location for which available research on the subject has been limited.

2.6 National Culture and Multinational Company (MNC) Operations

In line with the analytical building block established in earlier sections, a key area of interest in the literature relates to separating the impact that national cultures play in MNC's offices in host locations with policies developed from the home office. In the search for cost efficiency as well as drive for nationalistic spirits, MNCs sometimes allow local laws and practices to take a superior position, particularly where there are conflicts between home country policies and host country practice (Edwards et al, 2007). Edwards

et al (2007) further observed that where cross-fertilisation of professionals from different countries is the hallmark of MNCs, evidence on ground is that locals still constitute about 90% of workforce in host countries. This factor is not only driven by cost consideration surrounding the high wage bill of expatriates relative to local nationals but by national regulations and strength of local unions (Fichter, 2011) that also aim to promote local employment and national sovereignty as well what the country managers consider as rational decisions in the interest of the society (Almond et al, 2005). This factor makes it imperative for MNCs to take cognizance of cultures in host countries.

Along this line, several writers such as Edwards and Ferner (2004), Anne-Wil Harzing and Arndt Sorge (2003) have also observed that local institutions and culture do indeed facilitate international organisational practices of multinationals, the policies of which often have to be aligned with local cultures. It can also be inferred from the works of Edwards and Ferner (2004), Ferner et al (2005) and Almond et al (2005) that the operation of MNCs becomes a matter of natural course of action for them to adapt local cultural characteristics in ways that either blocks or alters practices of MNCs as developed from home countries. In similar vein, Tihanyi et al (2005) have observed that differences in the national cultures of originating countries of MNCs and their foreign countries of operation affect the company's ability to transfer some core competences to those foreign countries. In other words, their research indicated that the more cultural differences that exist between countries in terms of whether they are for instance

individualistic or communalistic, the higher the level of complexity in decision making by managers and therefore the lesser the degree for a MNC to operate effectively due to limited understanding of the cultural norms and values across the countries where they operate. In deepening this debate, Caliguiri and Stroh (1995) added that MNCs that adapted to local cultures, conditions and context of host countries were found to have more successful bottom line as well as more acceptances (Child 1991, 1994; Goodall and Warner, 1997, 1998; Laurent, 1986).

Other writers in international Human Resources Management (including Hofstede 1980, 1991; Clark and Mallory, 1996; Dastmalchian and Blyton, 1998, Taylor, 2001) have added that although practices and theories may reflect the cultural conditions of MNC country of origin, they cannot and should not be applied from one culture to the other in the same way. This according to Verburg et al (1999) is because national culture more than other institutional and organizational strategy-level factors, explains why there is no evidence of universally applicable Human Resource practice and that there are immensely significant barriers to ‘the combined push for uniform policies based mainly on home country lines’ (Almond et al, 2005:300). It is in recognition of the foregoing that Almond et al (2005) advised that based on national culture and institutional pressures, some deviations should be permissible for MNCs in operation of corporate policies as intended in countries of origin and applied in host environments. This is equally so as Denison et al (2004) have pointed out that a key challenge in the area of international management is the ease of applying models developed from one end of the world in

another, attributing a major reason for this challenge to cultural differences. Along this line, other writers (Aycan 2005; Adler 1986, Aycan et al 2000) have argued that management practices such as performance reviews and evaluation are impacted by cultural and value systems in different countries, observing that as globalisation takes stronger foothold and plays the role of key differentiator between successful companies, more attention needs to be paid to the impact that culture plays in business. In so doing, further arguments advanced point to the realisation that techniques developed within the context of western cultures can be a challenge replicating same in other cultures, leading to the search for ‘culture-fit models’ that universally explains the degree of effectiveness in deploying Human Resources Management (HRM) practices across different countries thus leading to conclusion that culture affects every aspect of human resources management and that the profession would be better off if the impact that such cultures play are more deeply understood (Aycan 2005).

Leung et al (2005) also observed that multiple nature of identity - global, national and to some extent organisational do indeed present some operational challenge to the running of MNCs, adding that introduction of change initiatives by MNCs such as individualistic rewards in host countries are disruptive to the collectivist’s culture of harmony, leading the latter to always aim to implement those initiatives in ways that retain local situations (Levine and Nwenzayan, 1999; Steensma et all 2000; Erez and Gati, 2004).

To summarize the above, some scholars in international human resource management have observed that management theories and practices tend to reflect the cultural

conditions under which they were originally developed and therefore cautioned that they should not be applied from one culture to another in much the same way, particularly where there are cultural differences between the countries (Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Clark and Mallory, 1996).

It is in helping MNCs explain or alter their policy implementation actions as it relates to performance management as applied in their countries of origin and hosts (often with different national cultures from the former), that has driven the need for this research.

2.7 Performance Management in Context.

The degree of effectiveness and efficiency of an organization is not so much on the strength of its financial resources, advancement in technology or corporate strategy, but largely the degree to which it is deploying and utilizing its employees (Hosain, 2015). To achieve this, the organization needs to determine the performance of its employees to the extent of what needs to change in order for them to continue to raise their performance game. By performance in this context, is meant ‘the potential for future successful implementation of actions in order to reach objectives and targets’ (Lebas M.J, 1995:23). Within the functional concept of human resources management, performance of an individual employee represents the record of outcomes produced as specified job functions or activities within a specified period of time (Bernardin, 2007). Performance management therefore is a term that has been used to describe the link between

contribution of individual employees and the strategic goals of the business. Mabey and Salaman (1995) defined the concept as a basis for giving direction, monitoring and driving performance of individuals towards achievement of organizational goals. In his contribution, Armstrong (2009:618) viewed it as a 'systematic process for improving organisational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams; getting better results by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and competency requirements'. Making reference to the works of Weiss and Hartle (1997), he added that performance management is a process for establishing a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved and an approach to managing people that increases the probability of achieving success' (Armstrong (2009:618). Achievement of the goals of performance management requires presence of an effective system, described by Marchington and Wilkinson (1996) as having the following key characteristics:

- Clearly communicated mission statements that help to reinforce expectations.
- Regular communication of corporate scorecards that show the link with expected contributions from employees, including link with appropriate corporate-wide initiatives.
- A clear expression of link between performance expectations of senior leaders including their compensation packages.

- Agreed and regularly reviewed performance expectations between Supervisor and employee expressed in SMART terms – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/relevant and Time bound.
- Appropriate appraisal process linked to the above, including correlation with pay, competence and development needs of employees.

Against the backdrop of the above, the authors further identified four components of an effective performance management tool as one that link performance planning, supervisory support, reviewing of progress and management of the appraisal standards.

The components are further described as follows:

1. *Determining performance expectations.* This refers to the stage where performance expectations are derived, usually in a discussion with own Supervisor and based on agreed corporate scorecards. This agreement is documented in a performance contract in ways that enables the employee to see the link between own contribution and the wider organisational goal. The SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) criterion plays a significant part in setting these performance goals.
2. *Supporting performance* is the next crucial stage, involving regular interaction between the employees and their supervisors on resources and performance reviews, most of which are informally carried out. It is at this stage that earlier agreed targets are reviewed for relevance and where employee is deemed to be going off-track, support is provided, usually in the form of resources, feedback, coaching,

mentoring, formal training etc as well as having performance barriers removed. Similarly, where earlier agreed targets are deemed to be inappropriate – sometimes too much or too little, it is at this stage that adjustment is made. It is considered as better practice for a formal review to be carried out by the middle of the performance cycle, albeit for less experienced employees (or those with performance issues), more regular reviews, such as quarterly, monthly or bi-monthly, may be appropriate.

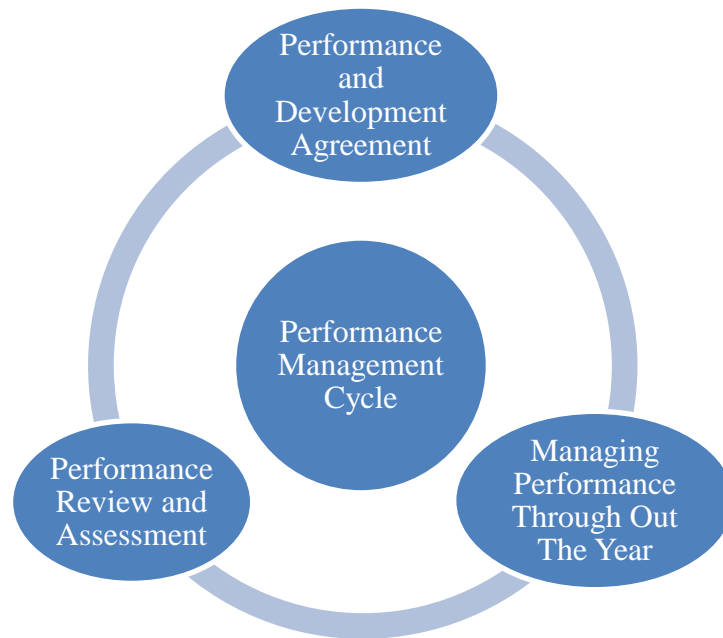
3. *Review and appraisal* is the third phase where the performance for the period is formally reviewed in what amounts to a stock-taking exercise. This phase is at the heart of the appraisal system where the employee and supervisor discusses the status of achievements and uses it as a springboard for the next phase. In most organisations, it is at this stage that the employee is formally given performance feedback, leading to appropriate reward – positive (in terms of pay, promotion) or negative in the areas of performance improvement plans or disciplinary actions as appropriate.
4. *Management of performance standards* is the fourth and final phase of the loop where actions arising from performance reviews are taken. These actions can be in the form of determining performance related pay and bonuses, training and development targets, performance improvement actions, career developments, including promotions etc.

Like above, Armstrong (2009:619) enumerated five key elements of performance management as comprising of ‘agreement, measurement, feedback, positive reinforcement and dialogue’. He noted that performance management agreement is anchored on ‘role requirements, objectives and performance improvements and personal development plans’ Armstrong (2009:620). According to him, it is this agreement that provides the platform for continuous conversation about performance that equally involves ‘joint and continuing review of achievements against objectives, requirements and plans’.

Relating to the above is that performance management involves inputs of the knowledge, behaviours and skills that are needed to deliver expected results. It is through this process that development needs are identified to support closing of gaps between the competence of employee and the expected competence standards required to deliver the level of performance. It is this element that supports continuous future improvement of the employee and the organisation, through the process of continuous feedback, self-assessment and application of actions to address gaps – leading credence to the fact that core emphasis is development and improvements. The effectiveness of this process is such that it is not a once-off tick-of-the-box process, but one that requires management throughout the year in a conversation between employee and supervisor. This leads to final review typically by end of the appraisal year, following which assessment is done in ways that clearly enables the employee and the company to know

their status and resultant reward. This framework of continuous ‘self-renewing cycle’ is illustrated below:

Fig. 2.1: The Performance Management Cycle



Source: Adapted from Armstrong (2009:621)

It is instructive to note that a key aspect of performance management is *performance appraisal*, defined by Randell (1994:221) as ‘the process whereby current performance in a job is observed and discussed for the purpose of adding value to that level of performance’. Related definition from Armstrong (2009:618) is that appraisal is a ‘formal assessment and rating of individuals by their managers at or after a review meeting’. Even though effective performance management includes activities that are additional to performance appraisal such as training, pay for performance,

succession/career planning etc, appraisals are necessary for any effective performance management program (Banks and May, 1999; Bulger, 1995; Mohrman and Mohrman, 1995). Performance appraisal according to Scott and Einstein (2001) can be of three types – outcome based, behaviorally driven or competence based – all addressing official requirements of the jobs. Notwithstanding the types and methods as well as target – individuals or teams, they added that different sources are typically deployed for the purpose of gathering assessment information such as reports from customers (within and without the immediate areas of operation), peers and colleagues, employees themselves, subordinates, supervisors for which 360-degrees feedback mechanism acts as a useful tool.

The question that follows is what is the purpose of appraisal and what happens at the operational level of appraisal? Lowman and Rees (2005) noted that appraisal is deployed for the purpose of performance improvement, employee motivation and rewards allocation. This view was generally shared by Scott and Einstein (2001), who added that performance appraisal connects individual contributions to effectiveness of organisations. In contributing to the theory, Marchington and Wilkinson (1996) observed that performance appraisal assesses three key areas such as achievement drive, contribution to team objectives and deliveries even as Randell (1994) believes that it serves to provide performance feedback to an employee from the line manager. The feedback comes in three buckets – ‘what and how observations are made, why and how are these observations discussed and what determines the level of performance in a

job?’ (Randell 1994:221). Achievement of this objective can also be done in one of several of three ways: ‘by use of trait scales, by objective outcome measures or by behavioural observation scales’ (Locke and Latham, 1984:89). Prusty and Toppo (2012) summarized the purpose of appraisal as including the following:

1. Provide inputs to reward and salary administration
2. Means of generating feedback to from the appraiser to the appraisee
3. Means of improving employee’s overall effectiveness by reinforcing positive contributions and addressing identified improvement areas.
4. Used as a basis for driving development, training and general motivation of employees
5. Used to generate relevant information about an employee.

It will however appear that underneath these operational purposes are some significant theoretical issues bearing in mind that a review of typical appraisal of an employee can sometimes appear as how such employees are seen by the company and to that extent, how they should be developed and managed. This may have led Randell (1994:231) to argue that ‘in practice, the format on an employee appraisal system is perhaps determined more by how senior managers design the system and see the causes of work performance than by specific objectives for the scheme’.

Notwithstanding the above, research has also linked appraisal to happiness and well-being of employees at work (Layard, 2006; Blanchflower and Oswald, 2011) to the

extent that employee well-being impacts long term performance of an organization. In contributing to the well-being debate, Juniper et al, (2011) noted that the performance efficiency manifests in employee turnover, recorded absences and employee engagement leading Van De Voorde et al (2012) to observe that appraisal brings mutual benefits for both employees and organisations. Robertson and Cooper (2010) concluded that the discretionary effort that follows employee engagement rubs off on the wellbeing of both the employee and the organization in terms of enhanced competitive advantage.

2.8 Factors Affecting Performance Appraisal.

Given the above, what then are the factors affecting performance and performance management? Lowman and Rees (2005) have enumerated the following:

1. Personal/individual characteristics such as intellectual ability and skills, training, emotional stability, physical ability and health. Others are self-motivation, personal circumstances, beliefs and psychological contract towards work among others.
2. Job related factors such as role clarity, leadership/management support, team work and team dynamics, recognition, achievement and role responsibility, career advancement and empowerment.
3. Performance management system itself including possession of SMART criteria, training on use of tool, fairness of the process, linkage to reward etc.

4. Organisational factors including commitment from senior leaders and workforce, work conditions and organisational culture, including organisations' mission and vision.
5. Extra organisational factors such as shareholder expectations, key benchmark standards such as compensation and remuneration philosophy and national culture.

In adding to the above, Randell (1994) has argued that performance appraisal rises and falls with effectiveness of feedback. In other words, the effectiveness of appraisal is to the extent that the person providing the feedback, usually the line manager possesses the right interpersonal and facilitation skills required to communicate the message.

2.9 Criticisms and Challenges of Appraisals

As valuable as performance appraisal is in helping to raise the performance game of organisations, it has a number of challenges that human resource managers in such organisations continuously focus on if the appraisal system itself is to deliver its intended objective. According to Ghorpade and Chen (1995), performance appraisal has some consequences for both the employee and the organization. For the organization, a poor assessment can lead to inappropriate reward for both strong and weak performers alike, thus leading to promotion of undesirable behaviours. For the employee, appraisal outcome impacts the long term relationship with the organisation. Based on CIPD research (2012), this relationship comes in the form of employee perception of organisational justice bearing in mind that processes seen as unfair will result in

unrealized enthusiasm and engagement of the impacted employees. By organizational justice is meant how benefits accruing to employees are distributed; the fairness of processes and interpersonal treatment and information (Greenberg, 1987, 1990; Folger and Bies, 1989; Beugre, 1998). It follows therefore that assessment and understanding of the challenges of performance appraisal is better appreciated when viewed from the lenses of organizational justice.

At the heart of understanding instances of organizational justice is procedural inconsistency and unfairness in application of appraisals attributed by Guest (1997) as the reason why there might not be direct link between performance management strategies and organizational effectiveness. For this, Folger and Bies (1989) observed a number of procedural elements that will enhance consistency and thus impact organisational justice:

1. Opportunity for consideration of appraisee's points of view.
2. Dealing with biases
3. Consistent application of decision making toll-gates across every employee
4. Timely provision of feedback to appraisees including justification for same
5. Transparency in communicating the process and outcome
6. Respect for employees.

Further illustration of the organisational justice challenge relates to the process integrity where objective assessment is expected to be carried out on an employee by other

employee(s). In practice, this review boils down to assessing perceptions of people, the result of which ends up being seen as subjective rather than being objective. A number of scholars such as Hogan (1987) and Mitchell et al (1982) have established that these perceptions have impact on the assessment outcome in the form of grades. In their view, higher grades are often awarded to subordinates that exhibit high motivation and effort as against those whose deliveries have been based on their experience and talent. Similarly, Heneman et al (1989) and Salaman (1987) observed that appraisal outcome is also influenced by relationships between appraiser and appraisee rather than actual performance.

In addition to the above, the probability that the measurement process of performance assessment is inept and unfair is also high because the technical problems involved in using them are considerable. This makes it virtually certain that the assessment process will be seen as uncertain by the appraisees. (Randell 199:236). The foregoing was seen as another significant challenge of performance appraisal particularly when being used for other reasons such as employee reward, promotion etc other than employee development. Accordingly, he advised managers to ‘see an employee development scheme as a means to organisational development’ (Randell 1994:236), leading him to further advocate that performance appraisal should be development focus instead of assessment.

Another area of challenge comes from what has been termed as emanating from “orthodox” approach which Strebler et al, (2001) and Bach (2005) have traced to the

conflict that arises when performance appraisal that is designed to motivate staff through clarification of objectives and setting of clear future objectives through training and development is at the same time used to assess past performance and distribution of rewards based on outcome of the appraisal itself. By this, it becomes difficult for employees to be open to divulging their limitations and concerns in view of the impact the appraisal has on their pay and progression in the organisation (Newton and Findley, 1996).

Another challenge is the tendency for managers to avoid difficult conversation that comes from providing negative feedback which can demotivate employees and which such employees can cite as evidence of limited management support (McGregor, 1957). This leads such managers to rate employees within the middle in what is referred to as central tendency.

Related to the above is the issue of organizational politics that comes in the way of unbiased assessments, “halo effects” through over-rating of some competencies and in some instances, below rating of competencies in what is referred to as “horn effect” (Longenecker and Ludwig, 1990; Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, 1996). Also in this group is “recency effects” where only recent events are noted as against use of historical evidence of performance within the appraisal period just as issues of equity has been observed as it relates to biases due to such factors as gender, ethnicity etc (Alimo-Metcalf, 1991; White, 1991, Geddes and Konrad, 2003).

Despite the challenges highlighted, it can be summarized that at the heart of addressing them is organizational justice and steps aimed at improving the judgment that comes from appraisal, even though this view assumes that job requirements can be stated very clearly, that judgments are value-free and that organization can be quite “rational” with its objectives (Folger et al, 1992). There is also the issue of subjectivity which traces the prevalence of bias to lack of training for appraiser and appraisees alike (Hartle, 1992). The training is not just for the appraisers to be trained in one instance, but to be supported by regular and constant refresher sessions year on year.

Effective appraisal requires that employees have the opportunity to make input (Weick, 2001). The inputs can include opportunity to challenge the evaluation and generally giving the employee a voice. That way, the employees are better able to see the process as fair since as noted by Gilliland and Langdon (1998), without the feeling of fairness, the performance appraisal that is intended to motivate employees and drive organizational performance can deliver the opposite effect.

The use of 360-degree feedback involving multiple raters have also been found to help in resolving subjectivity, including incidents of bias relating to gender (Fletcher, 1999), even though studies by Walker and Smither (1999) have also established that 360-degree feedback does not altogether resolve the subjectivity concerns. It is also instructive to note that as highlighted earlier, national culture impacts effectiveness or otherwise of the application of 360-degree rating.

The reality is that despite the challenges of using appraisal to improve organizational performance, companies still end up creating, reviewing, changing or even discarding appraisals if they fail to deliver its intended goal (Kessler, 2000). Unfortunately, critics of appraisal have yet been unable to come up with alternative process that can be used to provide feedback, develop motivation, identify training needs and growth potentials and thus empirically justify career development and applicable reward (Hartle, 1997).

2.10 Conclusion

As has been discussed in prior sections, this research focuses on the link between national culture and performance management using two countries - Netherlands and Nigeria as reference points and using the performance appraisal practices in a multinational corporation that operates in both countries. Performance appraisal is the anchor under which performance management has been discussed. The work widens understanding in this field because even though a lot has been written on effect of culture on performance appraisal and management, the amount of empirical work, mainly outside Western economies is still limited (Fletcher, 2001). Attempts to deepen understanding of the relationship as it affects impact on countries in West Africa, including isolating the part that culture plays is the main driver of this research. As also discussed, national culture has been viewed from the particular lenses of communalism vs individualism. Details of the means of achieving this goal is addressed as part of the methodology as the literature reviews done in this section indicates that there is sufficient theoretical foundation that

guides data collection, analysis and recommendations in line with the objective of the research.

In the same manner, the literature on performance management has been largely skewed towards practical business application and less of sociological dissonance with respect to different views and understanding of performance and different interests aimed at achieving the goals as desired by organisations. This is because, the context of this research is more of trying to understand the practical application of performance appraisal and the impacts national culture may have in effective implementation of the exercise.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This research is about the relationship between national cultures and performance management and as described in earlier sections, existing theories and research outcomes have helped to lay the foundation in understanding the link that exist between them (Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1995). The background to this has also been described in literature reviews and other aspects that relate to research methodology has been shared in this section. In this Chapter, approach to be followed in the search for answers for my research questions has been explained. The first part of this section focuses on possible methods that aid the research, followed by overview of the conceptual framework on the core research techniques of qualitative method that has been deemed as more appropriate for the study. Accordingly, the overview is provided to enable understanding of the qualitative research methods deployed in addressing the research purpose of investigating the impact that culture plays in performance management.

The follow up parts feature research methods and analysis as a way of bringing home the application of the research techniques to this project work, including the research questions and methods for recruiting and accessing research participants as well as how I addressed the ethical issues that arose in the course of the research work. The chapter also includes data collection process and the phases adopted as well as issues relating to data saturation, density and reduction as well as steps taken for preparing the qualitative data.

3.1 Research Methods

In this section, focus is on understanding the available research methods with a view to providing reasons for leaning towards the qualitative research method. The starting point of the review is a recap of the essence of this thesis, being to understand the role that national culture plays in performance management. The effort involves capturing of research contexts and interpretation of perceptions of respondents in ways that enables understanding of their views on the subject. It is in essence, an issue of theory building that comes from qualitative research as against theory testing that is at the heart of quantitative research method. Situating the foregoing with existing literature, it became clear that qualitative technique more than any other method, better helps in capturing the required research contexts and interpreting perceptions of respondents as well as providing opportunities to explore issues in greater details (Mason 2002). This picture of applicable and adopted method became clearer when the objective of the research

was viewed from the research lens of quantitative method and the challenges that come with it.

In general, quantitative technique typically allows for hypothesis formulation, leading to empirical analysis of findings and outcome but with the danger that it misses out the richness of context relating to behaviors and interactions that arise therefrom (Bryman, 2004). Accordingly, adoption of quantitative method enables researchers to translate contextual factors into variables (exogenous or endogenous) through their re-conceptualization at higher levels of generalization or abstraction. By so doing, validation of the relationships between variables is established through the deployment of statistical tools in testing for established hypothesis with the outcome that it sacrifices in-depth understanding of the issues (Ragin and Zaret, 1983; Bryman, 2004)

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have identified what will be missed out from behaviorally rich research such as this if quantitative technique is adopted. The first relates to *Internal (intra-paradigm) criticism* which highlights that the requirement of the technique to isolate and limit the variables under considerations from its most pure form, robs the research process and outcome of the robustness of the research context which qualitative method brings and which deepens understanding of the social world.

This is also the view shared by Bryman (2004), who noted that such a mechanical use of research instruments and manipulations of variables makes it difficult to gauge the differences in the personal feelings of the respondents to the research questions, thus diluting the unbiased expectation of the technique. Another aspect of the internal criticism according to the writer, relates to “exclusion of meaning and purpose” that arises due to the challenge of fully understanding human behaviour, without seeking to gain more insight into how each individual relates to their everyday activities in the real world. It is instructive to point out that ordinarily, the quantitative technique is normally seen as allowing greater representation. However and given by this intra-paradigm criticism, the limitation of not providing sufficient insight that comes from qualitative scenario for instance, is such that the research results are not seen to be representative enough (Bryman, 2004). There is also the challenge of personalizing general data which arises out of the recognition that the strength of quantitative method is in the researcher’s ability to generalize the outcome in a statistically meaningful way. Finally, there is the “absence of inquiry” that arises when conventional emphasis in quantitative research methods on verification of specific, apriori view glosses over the source of those hypotheses, usually arrived at through the process of discovery and inquiry that a qualitative method so richly harnesses.

Another challenge according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) is the *external (extra-paradigm) criticism* which recognizes that when viewed from the external perspective, use of quantitative technique has not been seen to offer pure and unbiased outcome due

to a number of factors that includes “the theory-ladenness of facts” (Bernstein, 1988; Reason & Rowan, 1981; Guba, 1990; Hesse, 1980; Lincoln & Guba, 1989). This is given that traditional approach to research involving the verification (or falsification) of hypothesis assume the independence of theoretical and observational languages. If an inquiry must be seen to be objective, the hypothesis arising therefrom should be separated from how the facts needed to test them are collected. As it is clear that facts are only facts within some theoretical framework, it follows that theories and facts are also quite independent, otherwise, the objectivity strength of quantitative method becomes questionable (Cresswell, 2007).

There is also the “under-determination of theory” which is illustrated by the fact that the quantitative method is too skewed towards quantification of data and as such does not give sufficient room for determining the impact that deeper understanding of theories play in research. This difficulty has led philosophers such as Popper (1968) to show preference for the notion of “theory verification” as against “theory falsification”. Bryman (2004) placed this challenge in a different perspective by stating that the measurement process of quantitative technique when deployed in social setting is at best deceptive and unreal if it claims that the research outcome is accurate and precise.

Added to the above is the criticism of *value-ladenness of facts* as made popular by Bernstein, (1988), Reason & Rowan (1981), Guba (1990), Hesse (1980), Lincoln & Guba (1989) and Denzin & Lincoln (1994) among others, which is explained by the fact that just as theories and facts are not independent, neither are values and facts. With

the additional implied argument that theories themselves are value statements, the value-free posture of the received view of quantitative method becomes compromised.

In contrast, qualitative method refers to research approaches that do not involve collection or generation of quantitative data (Bryman, 2004). This definition implies that theoretical based approaches are utilized in qualitative researches leading a number of writers to view the method as focusing on interpreting, experiencing and understanding the social world using theory based data generation methods that are in tune with the social context under which the research is carried out (Mason, 2002). Accordingly, it is by so doing that qualitative research methods produce very rich data and robust research window under which the social world is viewed. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008) and to achieve the above, the world is turned into a laboratory and fieldwork of some sorts, in which the utilized raw materials are interviews, observations, photographs, recordings, jotted notes and other interpretive procedures. Mason (2007:3) further enumerated three working definitions as being ‘concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted’. She added that qualitative techniques are ‘based on methods of data generation which are both flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced ‘rather than rigidly standardized or structured, or entirely abstracted from real life contexts’.

Finally, Mason (2007:3) saw the technique as being ‘based on methods of analysis, explanation and argument building which involve understanding of complexity, detail and context’. To achieve this according to the writer, the technique ‘aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data’; the emphasis being more on total forms of ‘analysis and explanation in this sense, than in charting surface patterns, trends and correlations’ Finally, the author noted that the technique sometimes adopts some level of quantification, but for which reliance on statistical techniques for analysis are not seen as crucial. Researchers who adopt this approach argue that no two situations are the same and every phenomenon is unique such that the guidelines that pertain to sampling and analysis are different from those, which govern quantitative techniques, but they can be applied just as rigorously to ensure the validity of the results (Goering and Streiner 1996). This according to Firestone (1987), is to enable the harnessing of the persuasive power of such method through rich depiction and strategic comparison across cases.

The question that follows from above, is what qualitative technique can and should be used in a given research and under what circumstances may they be deployed. Mason (2002:7) highlighted quite a number of situations, the first being that it should be ‘systematically and vigorously conducted’ such that researchers should then be able to ‘think, plan and act in systematic and rigorous ways in the research process’.

Secondly, the writer added that qualitative research should retain accountability for whatever it claims as well as its quality such that its methods and outcome should not

be seen to be error-proof. The third quality of a good qualitative research technique is one that should be ‘strategically conducted, yet flexible and contextual’, meaning that expected decisions should not only be a matter of solid strategy, but also one with some degree of sensitivity to the changing environment under which the research is conducted. The fourth characteristics include the fact that the qualitative research should involve some level of internal scrutiny by the researcher, including constant stock-taking of actions and roles in the research journey. This according to the writer is bearing in mind, long held views that researchers cannot ‘be neutral, objective and detached from the knowledge and evidence of the knowledge being generated’. The follow up characteristic is that qualitative research should ‘produce explanations or arguments’ that the researchers wish to explain rather than the long held view of offering descriptions only. Related to the above is the requirement of ensuring that the research is able to produce generalizable explanations or argument, driven by limited use of empirical data.

It follows from above that qualitative research methodology focuses on unravelling of social events as well as description of the context under which societies work. Consequently, deployment of this approach is not one that searches for causal explanations and patterns of given variables but one that seeks to understand isolated combinations of the causes – spatial or temporal, in ways that leads to better explanation of the phenomenon being studied (Bryman, 2004; Ragin and Zaret, 1983; Morse, 2010; Adcock and Collier, 2001). In doing so, researchers do not treat the

observed causes as permanent; neither do they force categorization of individual actions. In the same way, researchers do not necessarily accept previously held hypotheses around the causal relationships of the given variables but instead look at reality by embracing the actor's view and evaluation of the world under which meaning can be ascribed subject to its validation as viewed from researchers' lenses. Validation of the outcome in this case does not depend on quantification of the causal relationships and the given explanations are accepted so long as they meet the researcher's assumptions of social reality – be they implicit or explicit or that the researcher is able to account for them (Rosen, 1991). In addition and according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), qualitative researchers focus on reality that is socially constructed, the deep relationship between the subject and the researcher and the constraints that challenge the process of enquiry on the given situation.

Through this process of enquiry, researchers using qualitative technique constantly embark on a journey that seeks to explore how social experiences are created, shared and given meanings in a very robust and interactive way, in a journey that takes the form of theory building.

By theory building in qualitative research, is meant the process of data generation as against data collection that arises from the relationship between the researcher, the social environment being studied and the raw data that comes from the process of qualitative research effort (Mason, 2002). Theory building takes the form of questions

for investigation, design of the research work, collection of data and analysis of same. Also critical in theory building is interpretation of the data, followed by drawing of relevant conclusion in what Marshall and Rossman (1999) refers to as conceptual funnel of inquiry conduction, data interpretation and construction of the final narrative. It follows therefore that under qualitative research situation, scholars embark on theory building because the required research data may not already exist such that asking people for their accounts or observing them is the most appropriate way to generate the required data. According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), this theory building process of qualitative research methods occur through continuous cycling among the different sub-methods such as case studies or interviews.

In other words, the theories get built up as the research efforts mature from ground zero up to when significant research senses are made of the phenomenon being investigated. This process of generating this data and theories via qualitative research is done using six key phases or steps in a sequential process of collection and analysis of data as follows:

Level one involves the researcher posing some academic questions that the research is intended to focus on. Bryman (2004) refers to this stage as the process of asking broad research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) views this phase as that belonging to the researcher, wadding through the murky waters of prior work that has been done in the field while also overcoming the politics and ethical considerations that come with it. The

importance of this effort is that it helps in defining the boundaries and etiquettes under which the entire research is to be undertaken. For effectiveness, this is the stage where researchers must take the added step of showing that the phenomenon is better addressed by theory-building research. In doing this, researchers need to show that no existing theory addresses the issue at all, or where existing research provides some response, showcase that the existing research addresses the issue in an insufficient or questionable way. This way, it becomes clear that qualitative research technique is the only natural route to follow.

Level two entails identifying the research location and it is otherwise referred to as selection of relevant interpretive paradigms, sites and subjects (Bryman, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The step seeks to highlight the location that the research would take place as well as the main players that would be involved. In the choice of sites and subjects, Denzin and Lincoln (2008), advised that the researcher should be guided by such paradigm inclinations as positivism/post-positivism, constructivism, feminism, ethnicism or Marxism among others. This is important in theory building because each of the paradigms exert different demands and expectations from the researcher, including but not limited to the questions asked and the meanings attributed to them. This is what gives the entire theory building character of qualitative research the much-needed context that shapes the way and manner that generalisation of research outcome is established (Mason, 2002).

The *third level* includes data generation (Bryman, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) for which the process generally includes notes that come from interviews. As this involves a transition from paradigm to empirical environment, the theory building character of this level is enriched if the researcher adopts appropriate skills, such as that of listening, remembering what has been said, enquiry and facilitation. Other important skills include achieving a good balance between talking and listening and keen observation, including picking up relevant body language signs.

Level four, otherwise referred to as that of data interpretation, is at the nucleus of theory building character of qualitative research methods. Following from field reports and notes, the researcher uses different techniques such as coding, indexing and file-work (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) to make sense of the piles of materials. Mason (2002) has also included the use of diagrams and charts either in their own rights (or to complement the other forms of data interpretation) of getting the materials organised and sorted.

The *fifth level*, referred to by Bryman (2004) as conceptual and theoretical work, need not contain new and groundbreaking concepts, but instead enables the researcher to bring together the academic thoughts being advanced, thereby fully forming the key findings from the study. The effectiveness of the follow-up phases depends on the dexterity with which this phase is addressed and therefore, the need for skilled and detailed effort is paramount.

Finally, *level six* enables documentation of key findings and drawing up appropriate conclusions arising from the data obtained, in ways that are in touch with the sensitivity

of the social context under which the information have been generated (Mason, 2002). Depending on the nature of the findings, conclusions can take the form of arguments based on evidence and those based on interpretive link with the information available. In addition, conclusions can also take the form of reflexive argument based on the different perspectives and experiences that are being brought to bear by the researcher.

Where the findings have implications on policy and on better understanding of existing body of knowledge, it is at this crucial stage that they are highlighted.

When the above steps are followed in qualitative research, theory building would have successfully gone through its full course. This is not without challenging views particularly from those who are more inclined to using quantitative techniques and which are mostly addressed through the use of unambiguous language and well thought-out research design including but not limited to robust justification of the use of theory building technique in *phase one* above, conducting interviews in ways that there are minimal biases, very rich presentation of evidence (in the form of tables, charts and appendixes) and lucid illustration of arguments from research findings. The result arising therefrom would usually be a brand-new theory that blends from rich qualitative facts (from the research effort) to existing standard deductive research.

In addition to the above challenge, other shortcomings come with qualitative method, which includes but not limited to the fact that data collection can be time consuming, based on requirement for wide-ranging interviews. Relating to this is the challenge of data analysis which arises because the data collection can be somewhat unstructured and

thus requires significant effort to make meaning out of the data collected. This leads to the next weakness of the methodology, being reduced likelihood of clear patterns emerging as a result of the difficulty of data collection and analysis.

In all this, the qualitative researcher's reaction is always to demonstrate that personal interest and non-use of quantification would not bias the study (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

The question that follows is, will qualitative method be used in my research work and if so, how? The application of qualitative techniques involves deployment of semi-structured interviews to deepen respondent's response on the relationships between national culture and appraisal outcome. Among the questions include respondent's reaction on the factors that influence the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises and where national cultures is seen as one of such factors, solicitation of recommendations on how the impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective of appraisal process. Further details are discussed in the course of this section.

3.2 Biases in Deploying Qualitative Methods.

The overview provided in previous sections has highlighted that deployment of qualitative research methods are not without criticisms and biases. For example, White

(2000) noted that with interviews, there are problems of bias where for instance, an interviewee may want to please an interviewer and in so doing, may not tell the truth. Also, the personal views of the interviewer may creep in when the interview information are being evaluated and interpreted.

Mason (2002) in evaluating same phenomena, reasoned that as interviews are social interactions, however structured or unstructured the researcher tries to make them, biases are natural outcomes. This is because it is a significant challenge dissociating interviews from the real world and the social interaction in which it was produced. During data gathering from interviews for instance, Mason (2002) further observed that it also remains a challenge as to how the researcher can be sure that the respondent's views have been properly represented such that the researcher is also not generating own thoughts that are misaligned with those of the respondent. The author further pointed out that no matter how the researcher tries to be objective in records management for example, the researcher is continuously making judgments about what to record, what has been observed, heard and experienced, what he/she thinks it means etc. The same applies to accuracy of the researcher's memories and validity of his/her perceptions. White (2000) summarized the ways biases can happen as comprising of *sampling frame bias* which occurs due to poor, out of date and inaccurate sampling structure. For instance, if a researcher uses a telephone directory to construct a sampling frame, potential respondents who do not have a telephone or may not be in the directory

may be left out. Another one relates to *researcher bias* where the researcher may inadvertently introduce bias.

For instance, the research questions may be too narrow and as a result, respondents may not have the opportunity to fully express themselves. On the other hand and where the questions are too broad, the answers become so general that the final interpretations may also become diffused and unfocussed. The final aspect relates to *no response bias* that occurs when respondents do not respond to the questionnaires. By this situation, the researcher has no way of knowing how respondents would have answered the questions. In contributing to the foregoing and with more reference to qualitative technique, Bryman (2004) noted that findings are generally seen to be significantly unrepresentative and therefore biased in a number of ways that includes being prone to *subjectivity*. According to him, for a researcher utilizing qualitative method, it is appropriate to use own judgment to determine what is significant or important and to what extent. This is because, it is not unusual for the research outcome to be influenced by such decision and the personal relationship that may have developed between the researcher and the participant. Given this scenario, a different researcher undertaking the same exercise would be unlikely to reach the same outcome given the absence or inadequacies of structured roadmap for achieving the result.

The second aspect of Bryman's observation (Bryman, 2004) relates to *difficulty in replicating* qualitative methods by different researchers (or even the same researcher) at different times, place or circumstances. There is also the *problem of generalization*

where it is sometimes argued that the scope of findings from qualitative research methods is largely limited to the population being studied and therefore result cannot be universally applied. Finally, there is the challenge of *lack of transparency* where unlike the quantitative technique, it remains a challenge to be clear on what the researcher utilizing qualitative method actually did in navigating through the research journey. Such limitation in clarity sometimes leaves the research methods, analysis and conclusions with a lot of unanswered questions.

The above analysis would largely suggest that qualitative research is often heavily laden with bias. In dealing with them, it becomes important to acknowledge the wisdom of White (2000) in stating that the researcher's judgment as an independent researcher is important. This is bearing in mind that research results, presented in the appropriate format, are the evidence to support the researcher's views and ideas. Mason (2002) echoed this view in stating that researchers themselves contextually make most of the key decisions about their research. This is why, in this research and despite not using quantitative technique, I have been guided by these recognized practices in dealing with the biases. Some of the planned actions are described as part of ethical considerations.

3.3 Research Questions

In chapter one, a number of questions were highlighted and which drove the essence of this research. As also discussed in preceding section, the research involves investigating the role that national culture plays in performance management with focus on

individualism/communalism dimensions of culture and performance appraisal in a multinational company being used to explore the impact. This is as multi-national organizations grapple with dealing with how to achieve optimal performance from the employees operating all over the world and for which cracking the national culture impact code has been seen as the heart of efforts to unleash the performance potentials of the employees (French, 2010). As also discussed, the investigation has been pursued through deployment of qualitative research technique that involves interviews with targeted respondents as follows:

- a) What performance appraisal systems/processes are in place? How are they applied across different operating locations and regions? The goal of this is to test common understanding of the Company's performance management and appraisal framework.
- b) What are the factors that shape the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises?
- c) What dilemmas, issues and challenges face leaders and practitioners that carry out the performance appraisal exercise? How are such addressed?
- d) If national cultures influence appraisal outcome, is there a better or different way to drive performance?
- e) What are the recommended "culturally-fit" model (if any) that can be universally applied irrespective of the national culture influences? What effect would such universal models have on the performance appraisal framework?

These were framed into structured questions that guided the discussions.

3.4 Research Design and Method

Prior sections in this chapter have been used to lay the theoretical framework and foundation that guides the methodology associated with this research. In other words, the overview and analysis on the qualitative research method have been provided to offer understanding of why it is used in this research with focused on the role of national cultures, with emphasis on the cultural dimension of individualism versus communalism on performance management. In the research, the appraisal practice in a multi-national company across its operating locations in West Africa (Nigeria) and Europe (Netherlands) has been used. The reasons for the use of these locations are not far-fetched. Based on the work of Hofstede (2005) and the different replication efforts associated with the dimensions of national culture, as well as Triandis on individualism/communalism (1995, 2005), these countries have been found to possess different individualism index.

For instance, Netherlands as well as most of Western Europe, including North America have been found to possess high individualism index score. Conversely, West African countries (for which Nigeria is one) have been found to enjoy low individualism index scores – meaning that they are communalistic in nature. Although specific mention of Nigeria may have been limited, studies by Chan and Pearson (2002) and Hofstede (2005) have highlighted that West African countries share common features and therefore representative, notwithstanding that Nigeria constitutes more than 60% of the

population. Another reason why the locations have been chosen is that the reference MNC has strong operational presence in these countries and to that extent, aids ease of data collection. This includes the fact that there are significant numbers of nationals of both countries that have worked in the two different countries, meaning that there is no dearth of respondents that have immersed themselves in the cultures of both countries. While this situation might be seen as an opportunity, I am equally mindful of the fact that the reference respondents may have immersed themselves in acquired culture which might be difficult to disentangle. The mitigating factor however is that a typical average assignment by the reference expatriates is no longer than four years – a duration that is not long enough for acculturation to occur. Acculturation as a concept is seen as how members of one cultural background adapt to the culture of a different group Rieger and Wong-Rieger (1991). According to Hofstede (2005), this typically applies to when visitors have gradually learnt and adapted to new conditions and local values of a new place and social network. He argues that although people may adapt to different cultures, this does not equate to having the underlying values being embedded in them. Conversely, he noted that little evidence exists to support international cultural convergence over time, except some level of increase in individualism for countries that have become richer. Leung et al (2005) added that shifts in cultures may exist slowly overtime but does not dilute the absolute difference between countries as people still largely keep their national identities. Yet another reason for use of the locations includes the fact that there exists very limited review on the impact that national

cultures play as it affects practices of multinational companies in West African countries.

The starting point of the analysis involves quantitative review of documentary examination and statistical review of existing performance records for a period of the last five years. The records featuring average performance appraisal outcomes in both reference locations is therefore recorded to establish the trends across the reference locations and thus used as basis to understand the role that national culture plays in the outcome.

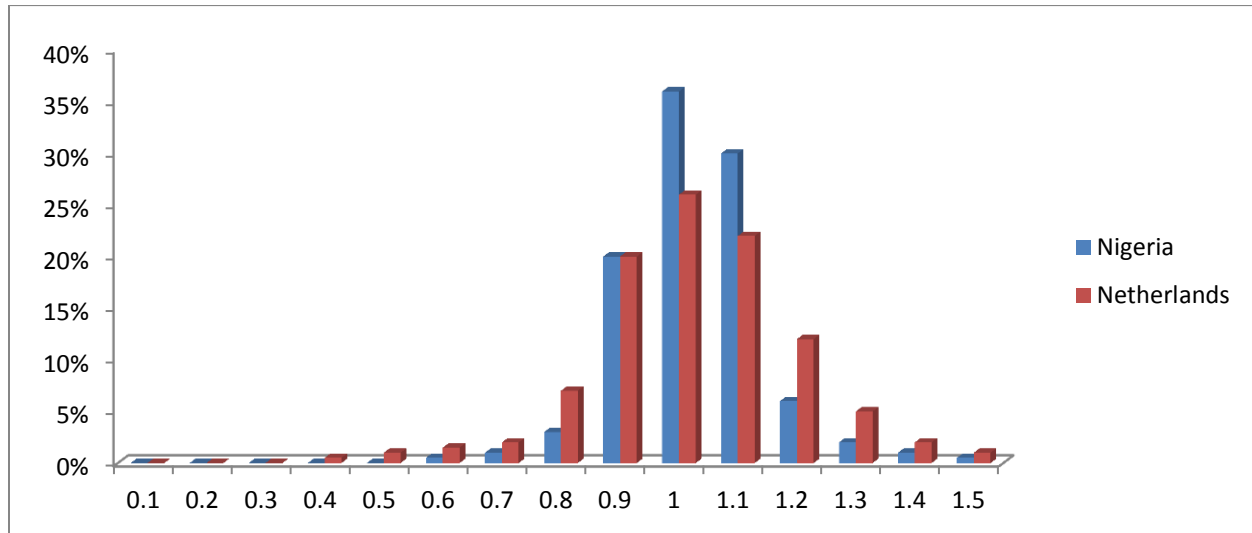
As a background, a typical performance assessment outcome in the MNC is recorded in individual performance factors (IPF) that range from 0 to 1.5, where 1.5 is the highest level of performance and zero, being the lowest. Within a ranked population and based on budgetary constraints, an average factor of one (1.0) need to be attained.

Table 3.1 – Summary of Average Individual Performance Factor from 2008 to 2012.

IPF	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5
Nigeria	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.5%	1%	3%	20%	36%	30%	6%	2%	1%	0.5%
Netherlands	0%	0%	0%	0.5%	1%	1.5%	2%	7%	20%	26%	22%	12%	5%	2%	1%

Source: Internal records of the Company

Fig. 3.1: Graphical Representation of Average Individual Performance Factor from 2008 to 2012



The immediate observation from the table and graph is that the ratings from the Netherlands utilize the full spectrum of the range, thus suggesting better ability to differentiate performance. The outcome from Nigeria on the other hand, suggests more tendencies to cluster within the middle, which in contrast to the outcome from Netherlands, suggests more inclination to reward employees almost equally. Consequently, on the surface of the observation is that outcome from both countries is truly representative of the cultural inclinations in both countries. Such conclusions will however be suspended until the full spectrum of the research is applied.

In terms of the research structure itself and as highlighted as part of review of the qualitative research methodology, the analysis above was used as foundation to deploy

semi-structured interviews that sought to understand the degree of relationship between national culture, using the individualism and collectivism index and performance appraisal outcome. Participants target of 40 has been used or upon attainment of ‘theory-saturation point’ (Mason, 2002), particularly when consideration is made of the fact that maximum doctoral thesis requirements is recommended to be five or six (Ellis and Bochner (2003:238). In aiming to achieve the foregoing, the interviews have been largely done on face to face as much as practicable. This is because, face to face interviews are still more “customary in academic social research” (Bryman, 2004) and enhances outcome particularly on sensitive subjects, situations requiring observation of body language that may be necessary as well as the generally held view that the quality of data from face to face interviews is generally superior to those from telephones (Holbrook et al, 2003). However, for considerations such as logistics, cost and to maximise available time for the interviews, I sparingly used telephone on exceptional basis particularly in situations where removal of biases associated with characteristics of the interviewer such as class is necessary (Bryman, 2004). Modern technological support tools such as video conference, Microsoft Lync and Skype was also deployed to facilitate virtual “face to face” interaction with respondents. This has been particularly helpful as it comes closest to personal or physical interview. It is instructive to point out that participants includes staff, supervisors, line Managers and Human Resources professionals alike that have experienced performance assessment in the MNC locations in Nigeria and Holland.

3.5 Method of recruiting research participants

The pool of my respondents includes employees who work and or have experienced performance appraisal exercise in both Nigeria and the Netherlands and who have previously worked in both countries. In other words, although the focus is on respondents that have experienced performance appraisal in both Nigeria and Netherlands, the pool of respondents featured different national blocks such as Africa, North America, Asia, Europe and South America. A number of the respondents have also worked outside of Nigeria and Netherlands. The reason for this is to minimize the bias that may arise in focusing on nationals of only Nigeria and Netherlands for instance or situations where the experiences of the respondents were limited to both countries only. This is particularly as the researcher is also from Nigeria, thus benefiting from the perspectives of views of different participant and not be affected by own cultural leaning.

It is instructive to note that in drawing up the sampling list, no other person in the reference company was involved neither was anyone else in the organization informed on whom has been selected and requested to participate in the research.

It follows therefore that following receipt of this information, the respondents were individually contacted by email and meetings set up as appropriate using the same channel. Participants profile consists of a significant mix of the following:

- a. *Human resources professionals* (HR Managers) with experience across the MNC locations in Nigeria and Holland. This is because they have professional

responsibility for facilitating the performance management process and to that extent, in a position to share deep insights as it relates to the factors that affect such exercise.

- b. *Skill Pool Managers, Capability Coordinators and Discipline Leads*. These are typically from the businesses, but with rich understanding of human resources processes, performance appraisal inclusive. Their role is essential because, detailed understanding of the performance appraisal processes is crucial in order to allow for extraction of the contribution that national cultures would make among other variables affecting performance management.

In addition, the a large proportion of the Skill Pools Managers themselves hold the unique position of sitting in the central office and looking after employees within their respective skills pools in different regions of the world.

- c. *Selected employees and Supervisors* across the different locations, gained from random sampling was also be used in support of a full view of the subject and research. Attempt was be made to optimize use of employees who have worked in both locations and experienced the execution of performance appraisal. Views from Supervisors were particularly helpful in understanding what drives them as they carry out performance discussions with their employee, including offering feedback. This is also helpful as the Supervisors are themselves employees who are also appraisees themselves in other situations.

3.6 Accessibility.

The starting point of gaining access followed approval of relevant management department including support for the reference MNC to be used for the research, access to the required information on pool of respondents, historical information on the appraisal data and for interview to be carried out with the target respondents. Each participant for the interviews was invited or contacted and the interviews followed after their acceptance. All the relevant ethical etiquettes were obeyed and respected, including ensuring that all respondents sign-up to the University's data protection and informed consent requirement.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In the course of this research, I anticipated some ethical challenges and which I successfully addressed in a variety of ways.

Firstly, as the topic itself is an investigation of national cultural impact to performance management, it was expected that I might be drawn onto controversial issues around superiority of one nationality against the other. In other words, as the generally held myth is that western cultures are superior to the rest and therefore the cultural “gold-standard”, there was a tendency for misunderstanding of my research objective to the effect that comparison is being made on the different productivity levels across cultures and that the practice of performance management in West Africa for example is being called into question. Allowing this misconception to take a foothold had the

unintended consequence of impacting the co-operation of respondents as well as users of the research outcome itself such that the risk of obtaining relevant and authentic data to support the relationship between national culture and performance management could be compromised.

In dealing with the above issue, I indicated a disclaimer clause as part of the questionnaire and in the course of the interviews and discussion sessions. In doing so, I emphasized the research objective and clarified that it is not about cultural superiority contest while also offering sufficient clarity upfront prior to commencing the discussions.

Secondly, my observation at the MNC is that some regional offices as a matter of national policies are often unwilling to share personnel data with the rest of the companies within Group, performance records, inclusive. In addition, the reference MNC's data privacy policy also limits sharing of information such as historical performance information. As historical performance records trend is supposed to help better understand the part that national cultures play in the performance outcome, ethical challenges exist in terms of how the records would be obtained. Do I use my official position to obtain the required data and not formally seek to obtain the data or should I formally apply for same, with the risk of having the request declined?

To overcome the problem and notwithstanding that I have primary and secondary access to the data and respondents, I formally applied for the information, which came in aggregated form in such a way that there is no link to any individual employee or

department. This assured anonymity and thus helped to avoid linking the records with particular employee populations.

As a matter of fact, but for the clear indication that the reference countries will be Netherlands and Nigeria, the aggregated data would not have been traced to either location. In terms of reporting, I also used coded name to represent the reference MNC. Again being open and transparent on my intention and research objective helped in obtaining permission. In addition, I demonstrated to the Company, how the research would be useful to them as they engage in globalization game and as final recommended universal performance management framework would also be of value to them even as I also informed access giver and respondents how I will publish interview descriptions and expressed points of view, highlighting anonymity and aggregation of responses. Above all, I made all respondents sign-up to the University's data protection and informed consent requirement which also helped in buttressing the points and establishing appropriate ethical code with respondents in ways that enhanced respondent ownership of the findings.

The third challenge has to do with the technical resource for facilitating the interviews. For instance and during interviews, do I record the discussions? Recording the proceedings would no doubt ensure that the discussion outcome is fully documented and evidence duly archived.

My observation is that people are hardly natural when formal and conspicuous recording of any sort is involved and as already demonstrated above, any indication of unnaturalness is an outcome that the research does not need. In addition, question focus is on general experience of respondents rather than specific focus on individual employee and in the context of this interview, recording might deter people from being open or being interviewed in the first place.

However, by not recording, there is an ethical risk here that the participant may contest written recording of the interview. There is also the possibility that in view of the importance of the data from the qualitative interviews and should I rely on written documentation of the interviews alone, there is the possibility that the views from the respondent may not be properly represented with the potential unintended consequence of offence or psychological distress to participants by an analysis derived therefrom.

To address the foregoing concern, I recorded the interviews and transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim in ways that also retained the anonymity requirements. In addition, to address the potential limited openness of respondents on their knowledge that the interviews were being recorded, I stressed the reasons for the recording whilst also assuring them that the anonymized aggregated nature of the output will ensure that they are not traced by other parties, whilst assuring them that the verbatim transcription is to ensure that their views are more accurately represented.

It is instructive to note that various management literatures show that interviewees are willing to disclose person and sensitive information as long as they are assured of

anonymity, although I note that disclosure of persons was not expected in this instance. Nonetheless and despite the anonymity assurances, I assured respondents that were not comfortable holding the interviews on the strength of the recordings to decline whilst focusing on those that freely granted their consent, bearing in mind that the advantages of recordings outweigh the potential reduction in respondent pool.

The fourth dilemma relates to the fact that performance appraisal is a very emotional subject. In my experience of having difficult conversations on the subject, it would not be out of place to have respondents sharing their personal and even painful information. Should this happen and recommendations arising therefrom are taken seriously, it would no doubt affect the research outcome.

To address the above, I ensured that I offered sufficient airtime to respondents in such a way that I built trust and assured security of information. I also ensured that the reporting of proceedings was done in ways that did not expose individual employees in an undesirable manner, particularly as my interest is more on aggregated information. Consequently, I highlighted the focus as being that of group outcomes instead of personal performance appraisal outcomes. The fact that used structured interviews also helped in minimizing such scenarios.

The fifth consideration relates to the professional duty to do the right things as it affects use of relevant resource materials for the research. Do I properly acknowledge

contributors to this research including different literature review sources? What is the level of intellectual honesty that I should deploy in the entire research process?

To overcome the above and even though it goes without saying, I maintained the professional requirement of ensuring that due recognition is given to authors that have been cited in my research. I also ensured that every source of my information was acknowledged. As a first principle, I noted that the University has zero-tolerance level for plagiarism or any such breach. In addition to the fact that I upheld such standards in the course of this work, the expressed institutional standpoint in itself served as a significant deterrence.

As I enumerated the purpose of the research, there was a chance that respondents may begin to respond in a certain way in order that their performance appraisal practice is not deemed inferior relative to another. This is driven by the realization that natural behavioral instincts dictate that everyone wants to be winners and that no one or group of person want to be associated with what is perceived to be inferior.

To address the above involved a clear demonstration of the how and what the result of the exercise would be used for; pointing out that emphasis is on group rather individual behavioral measurements.

The seventh ethical concern is sharing the research findings with relevant respondents. Because of the aggregated nature of the data collected, the qualitative interviews were

carried out to retain the same anonymous intent such that questions focused on general experience of respondents rather than specific focus on individual employee.

In the course of the research and in the course of my work, I had used my official laptop. The information on the research was therefore available in my company's server and consequently not as somewhat 'private', thus affecting data integrity, albeit it is to be understood that the data in question exists in Company website but often with limited access.

A way out involved encrypting the document files. This is of little risk however given that focus of the interview is not on individuals but groups. For the research exercise, I focused on only using my personal and not company laptop.

In addition, the crux of the research is related to my work where in the course of research findings and analysis, there might be temptation to use company official time for own personal affairs. For instance, at what time would I interview the respondents? My own time when I am on vacation or at Company time? To overcome the challenge involved the highest degree of discipline and to ensure that the research work did not interfere with my official roles.

Notwithstanding the above and bearing in mind that I am an insider researcher, I noted that a few situations such as interviewing colleagues may pose some challenges, including both appraisers and appraisees alike, such as not probing respondents enough due to impression that I already knew enough of the situation. It is also

instructive to note that my interest in the investigation is not so much on the process of performance appraisal, but on the appraisal outcome. Therefore and except where I had unreserved permission, I relied largely on appraisal outcome, built around historical data and exercised required discipline of avoiding the conflict inherent in my role and the data gathering exercise as well as carrying out appropriate probings.

Relating to the above is how respondents may react to the impression that I know the situation and therefore in an authority position to both appraisers and appraisees, given that I work in Human Resources. In dealing with this, I declared this upfront to the respondents and highlighted that the focus is not on the appraisal facilitation (which is the key role of HR), but essentially on what drives the behaviors of respondents in determining the appraisal outcome.

There is also the question of dealing with the aggregate appraisal outcome data obtained from the Company. The first arises from the fact that the data was obtained via securing of appropriate approvals while manipulation will be carried out using descriptive statistics that did not distort the original data.

In other words, the use of descriptive statistics to further explain the data was intended to help respondents better understand the impact and comparison of the outcomes from both reference locations.

Finally, I heeded the ethical recommendation by Bryman (2004) in terms of best practice research protocols and as it relates to the “principle of informed consent” that includes but not limited to declaring the following: What the research is about, the benefits or exposures; the nature and degree of their participation in the research efforts, including duration as well as declaration of their right to withdraw (at any time) if they do not feel comfortable with their participation; the opportunity for respondents to have access to transcribed interview notes as well as grant their consent that the information can be used; a declaration that their involvement is not involuntary whilst highlighting right to not participate in the research and how the data is going to be handled, including security. Above all, I sought for and obtained the University’s approval of the steps being taken to address ethical issues that emanated in the course of the data gathering phase of the research work

3.8 Survey Report

The starting point of the research endeavor aimed at understanding the link between national culture and performance management involved review of historical documentation of average performance appraisal outcome of the reference multi-national company in the two reference countries – Nigeria and Netherlands for the period of five years from 2008 to 2012.

This data was obtained from the company’s internal records. In terms of the research structure itself and as highlighted as part of review of the research methodologies, the

analysis was used as foundation to deploy semi-structured interviews that sought to understand the degree of relationship between performance appraisal outcome and national culture as seen from the prism of individualism and collectivism index. As indicated earlier and guided by generation of questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews were done face to face as much as practicable as well as via use of technology such as Microsoft Lync that facilitated virtual “face to face” interaction with respondents. The result of the exercise was aggregated and appropriate interpretation and summary made of the findings.

3.9 Data Collection Process and Phases

This has been achieved using a multiple of sources. The starting point of the data gathering exercise involved the sourcing of the primary performance appraisal outcome information from the company’s records for both reference countries of Netherlands and Nigeria respectively for the period 2008 and 2012. As explained and as part of research design and method, a typical performance assessment outcome in the reference company is recorded in the form of individual performance factors (IPF) that range from 0 to 1.5, where 1.5 is the highest level of performance and zero, being the lowest.

The depicted data therefore represents aggregation of average yearly appraisal outcome for the respective reference countries. The average outcome was recorded in the form of a

table and translated in graphical representation in order to establish the trend. This was reflected in Table 3.2.

The second source involved using the data above to lay the foundation in developing the semi-structured interviews with sample of participants purposively targeted at employees with performance appraisal management experience in Netherlands and Nigeria. In generating data, a set of respondents was set a priori and served as the sample frame, namely – (1) Human Resource professionals (2) Skillpool managers, capability coordinators and discipline leads (3) supervisors and unit heads, all of whom are senior staff of the target company. A total of twenty nine interviews were successfully carried out using semi-structured questions aimed at eliciting information on the prevalence, association, functionality and nature of the variables as experienced by the participants in the course of the interviews. Some of the limitations encountered in the course of data generation include the busy schedule of some of the participants as regards time for an oral interview as well as the spatial and geographical locations of the participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005), spread across Nigeria and Netherlands.

The entire research endeavour is aimed at addressing the issue of National culture and its influence on performance appraisal outcome.

This is further examined using the four point specific questions as follows:

1. What are the factors that shape the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises?

2. What dilemmas, issues and challenges face leaders and practitioners that carry out performance appraisal exercise?
3. What impact do national cultures have on application of the performance appraisal systems?
4. What are the recommended “culturally-fit” models (if any) that can be universally applied to address national culture influences?

The above four questions framed the entire process as interviews were structured relative to these questions. Interview question one (**Q1**) was structured for specific response, while the other three (**Q2**, **Q3** and **Q4**) interview questions are semi-structured to allow for illustrations based on experience and actual events. The comprehensive interview questions adopted are outlined below:

- A. National culture is believed to affect performance appraisal exercise including observed differences in outcome of appraisal exercise in Nigeria and Netherlands respectively. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with this view (structured and ranked on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree... to (5) strongly agree).

The point of this interview question is not statistical inference but an evaluation of opinions based on research question one (**R1**), and three (**R3**).

B. In your experience, what are the factors that influence the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises? The sub-questions includes seeking to understand the specific role of national culture as well as the issues and challenges faced by appraisal panel members, including soliciting observation of respondents in understanding what they considered as factors that explained the performance outcome for Nigeria and Netherlands as depicted in graph.

The above interview question (**Q2**) sought to evaluate respondents view as regards research questions one (**R1**) two (**R2**) and three (**R3**).

C. If national cultures influence performance appraisal outcome, what are your recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective? The sub-questions used to elicit more information includes whether or not any of the reference companies in either of the reference countries were more productive than the other. Finally, additional sub-question was asked if the outcome of the performance appraisal as highlighted was in a position to either hurt or help the multinational company.

The above interview question sought to ascertain opinions as regards possible answers to the issue of national culture and its effect on performance management. This is in regard to the fourth (**R4**) research question.

D. What recommendations (if any) do you have on how the appraisal process can be applied in all national cultures? Finally, additional sub-question was asked

regarding whether or not there is a basis to develop a framework that can be applied the same way across all cultures.

The fourth interview question (**Q4**) as stated above is yet focused on answering the fourth (**R4**) research question as it yet emphasizes on opinions with regards to a “universal solution” or process which can be applied across all national cultures.

The interview was executed first by getting respondents to show their degree of agreement or disagreement to the relationship between National Culture and Performance Appraisal outcome using the cultural dimension of individualism versus communalism. The second part of the interview involved asking the same respondents the three broad questions with reference to the factors that they believe influence performance appraisal and instances where national cultures are perceived as having impact. Respondents were asked to offer their recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the productivity improvement goals of the organisation and finally, additional recommendation on whether or not an appraisal system can be developed that can be applied the same way in all national cultures.

The detailed questionnaire is in the appendix. The data collection phases have accordingly been depicted below:

Table 3.2 Data collection phases

S/n	Phases	Fieldwork Timeline	
1	Appraisal information collection from company	2008 to 2012	
2	Interviews with respondents	Period: May and June 2015	Location in Nigeria and Netherlands
		Interview Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 40 invitations sent out• 29 interviews held• Interviews with respondents in Netherlands and some in Lagos, Nigeria held via Microsoft Lync.• Interviews with respondents in others in Lagos and all in Port Harcourt, Nigeria held face to face.• Average duration of 45mins• Interview guidelines sent out and data protection and informed consent obtained in advance• I recorded the interviews and took notes• Some respondents preferred to write down their responses on notes provided.

Source: Author

It should be emphasized that as a condition for gaining access to the respondents, a data protection/informed consent form was signed (see appendix) with a pledge made to the respondents that their answers will be unattributed to either themselves or to any

organisation which they work for or have worked for. In addition, it was pointed out to them that their own data will be completely anonymous and that they will not be identifiable either by name or reference to any information that is specific to their person and the data will be aggregated, so that no individual data are presented. It is on the strength of the foregoing that the summary profile of respondents is depicted below:

Table 3.3. Nationality and Job Related Variables of Respondents*

Respondent Number	Nationality	Level in Organisation	Current Work location	Where also worked
1	African	Manager	Nigeria	Asia
2	African	Supervisor	Nigeria	
3	African	HR Professional	Nigeria	
4	African	Senior Manager	Netherlands	Middle East
5	European	Manager	Nigeria	Asia and USA
6	North America	Manager	Netherlands	Asia and Canada
7	African	Manager/Discipline Lead	Nigeria	
8	African	Supervisor	Nigeria	UK
9	African	Supervisor	Netherlands	Canada
10	African	Supervisor	Netherlands	South Africa and USA
11	African	Supervisor	Nigeria	
12	European	HR professional	Netherlands	Mid. East and UK
13	North American	Manager	Nigeria	US and UK
14	Asian	Supervisor	Nigeria	Middle East
15	Asian	Supervisor	Netherlands	Asia
16	European	Manager	Nigeria	

17	European	Discipline Lead	Nigeria	US, Asia, UK
18	African	Manager	Nigeria	
19	European	Manager	Netherlands	Norway
20	Asia	Manager	Nigeria	Asia
21	North American	Manager	United Kingdom	US
22	African	HR professional	Netherlands	
23	African	HR Professional	Nigeria	
24	South American	Supervisor	Netherlands	Venezuela
25	Asia	Discipline Lead	Nigeria	Asia
26	North American	Supervisor	United Kingdom	Asia
27	European	Supervisor	Netherlands	
28	African	Supervisor	Netherlands	
29	African	HR Professional	Nigeria	

*. They have all worked in both Nigeria and Netherlands.

Source: Author

It is instructive to note that the questionnaire and the informed consent form were sent to respondents along with the meeting invitation note and ahead of the interview sessions. This allowed for preparation by the respondents, deepened by the explanatory notes contained on the questionnaire. Each interview lasted for average of about 45minutes in view of the busy schedule of the respondents, most of whom are busy Supervisors and Managers. While all the interviews were recorded, a number of the respondents had taken time to write down their responses before and during the interviews, thus making data analysis easier. On completion of the notes, I checked back with each respondent that my summarized notes captured their statements and responses. From a methodological

perspective, it is important to highlight that getting participants to review the statements helps improve quality of responses (Yin, 1994).

3.10 Data Saturation, Data Density and Data Reduction

Data saturation refers to a process wherein data collection and analysis no longer yields any new or different information. Data saturation for this study was achieved through a cross-examination of responses based on particular interview questions. References are therefore structured with regards to identified themes and opinions sourced, sorted and evaluated based on those themes. This activity is in line with Gibbs (2002) description of data saturation as being concerned with the dimensional characteristic (horizontal) of the data. Horizontal is in the sense that those responses to particular questions are cross referenced, contrasted and compared. The choice of twenty nine (29) participants was premised on this concept as further sampling failed to reveal any additional information. More information on this was made during coding of interview transcripts and further revealed in Chapter Four – Reporting and Interpretation of Data, where it became clear that respondents were providing identical responses to the interview questions. This situation is also in line with the observation of Miles and Huberman (1994) who argue in support of a process of interweaving data collection and analysis from the start as this would enable comparisons between existing data and the methods in which new and better data can be collected, stating the advantage of feedback, and corrections to built-in

blind spots, thus facilitating the production of interim reports as required in most evaluation and policy oriented studies.

Data density on the other hand, according to Strauss (1994) refers to the dimensional characteristic (vertical) of the data. It describes the richness, detail or theoretical sensitivity of the outcome as a result of the analytical process. Data density embodies and takes cognizance of the various data generation and survey design, sampling, coding and categorizing procedures as well as the ultimate integration of the entire analysis. The data density in this research applies to the implied application of the grounded theory methodology and the use of the NVivo (Nudist Vivo) computer assisted qualitative analysis software in the data reduction, coding and analysis of generated data. It is instructive to note that following the extensive interviews and the amount of data, NVivo was used to make condense the information and make sense out of the views from the respondents. Details of the outcome have been provided in subsequent sections of this chapter as part of data preparation.

Data reduction manifests in the generation of labels (codes) which served to categorize passages, texts and other related materials. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), it is the activity concerned with the selection, focus, simplification, abstraction and transformation of the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcription. As an on-going process, it is expected that data reduction is carried out concurrently with data

collection, for as data is being generated, further episodes of data reduction (e.g. clustering, summary writing, categorizations and coding, partitions and memos) take place. This process is continuous throughout the process of analysis until the final report.

Like data density above, data reduction was achieved initially by transcribing volumes of interview responses, aligning them with notes taken including inputs made by some of the respondents in writing and clustering responses in themes as well as using NVivo to code them through the process of initial coding referred to as “open coding” and thereafter through final coding. Again, details of the data reduction efforts have been described as part of qualitative data preparation section.

3.11 Qualitative Data Preparation

In this section, the thinking behind adoption of hybrid of manual and computer assisted methods in data analysis has been made. This approach receives support from Mason (1996) who noted that it is a preferred approach by a number of qualitative researchers. Given the significant amount of information from respondents, it became apparent that isolation of common and identified themes will benefit from Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDA).

Granted that a number of researchers have expressed concern that use of software tend to point researchers in particular directions (Seidel, 1991) whilst others have pointed out that software usage could bring some distance between researcher and the research data, there has been overwhelming encouragement to deploy same as it supports more

transparent and reliable analysis of the data as well as providing easy and quick auditable trail and process (Morison & Moir, 1998; Richards & Richards, 1994).

The foregoing result is achieved by the "memoing" tools available in the software which helps the researcher in drawing theoretical conclusions from the data. This feature is what makes NVivo very popular with qualitative researchers (Richards & Richards, 1991, 1994).

It is instructive to note the observed drawback in use of NVivo to the extent that interrogating text in more detail can sometimes be a challenge, leading to missing out of certain information (Brown et al,1990). This explains why researchers have also recommended that this is supported by additional manual scrutiny to aid more detailed interrogation of the research data.

In this section therefore, the steps and processes applied in the categorization, coding and data integration is presented using NVivo. The study adopts the issue-focused approach in which responses from interviews were transcribed into text formats for ease of coding, categorization and analysis following observed patterns based on the research questions. The choice of the NVivo software in this study is based on Gibbs (2002:165) observation that "the design of the NVivo was strongly influenced by the grounded theory and therefore the program gives good support for the method". In other words, the characteristics of the NVivo software allows for the storage and manipulation of data in the form of transcribed interviews, notes, texts through various coding processes known in the software as nodes.

The coding process entailed two main stages, namely – **The open coding** which entailed the initial categorization stage involving the identification of patterns within each transcribed interview question with reoccurring concepts in responses which appeared prevalent, identified and relative responses coded. Coding in this stage focused on the questions asked and draws on the concepts inherent in such questions; this process can also be referred to as the open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Gibbs, 2002). Table 3.4 below is used to depict the initial coding process.

Table 3.4. Initial Coding Process (Open Coding)

Examples of Interview Transcripts For the Question: Q2 - In your experience, what are the factors that influence the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises?	Initial Categorization and Coding Process
<p>I think there is even more culturally but not sure how to phrase it other than the average Nigerian puts a greater emphasis of pride on these kind of performance factors also. They care much deeper what others think of their performance. The average Dutchman getting a poor performance rating from his supervisor would shrug his shoulders and say “humph that’s your opinion and doesn’t mean a damn to me” and so the kind of “difficult conversations” wouldn’t arise that you would get here. Nigerians almost take performance ranking personal such that the exercise is seen as assessment of their person (for life) rather than performance for a given period. I guess that’s one element of an individualist compared to a collective culture.</p>	Culture Factor
<p>Divestment that has taken place in Nigeria over the years that has led to severance of staff. The result is that employees with performance factors in the range of 0.8/0.9 considered as satisfactory performance in Netherlands were viewed otherwise in Nigeria. Given this, Supervisors (in Nigeria) generally take the comfortable position of granting ratings within the median to avoid difficult conversation of having to be held responsible for loss of jobs of personnel in a high</p>	

unemployment country like Nigeria.	
Perception of panel members	Perception Factor
Perception of performance/attitude by Supervisor	
Competence levels of those involved	Training and Competency Factor
Competence of Supervisors in handling difficult conversations.	
Personal relationships	Relationships and Sentiment Factor
Social Clubs – religion, family events and familiarity – deeper knowledge of the staff beyond the office could add to mitigating circumstances on poor performance	
Clarity of tasks	Misinterpretation Factor
Non clarity of employee roles or defined tasks and targets	
Q3 - If national cultures influence performance appraisal outcome, what are your recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective?	Initial Categorization and Coding Process
I believe that for both cultures, the performance appraisal system is delivering the expected productivity outcomes. In Netherlands, the staff realize that performance assessment can improve in future based on improved deliveries but for Nigeria, there is the tendency to permanently label a staff as non-performing irrespective of changes in future performance levels	Culture Recognition
Be aware of the national cultures in the host countries and reflect same in the performance appraisal. This is because, I see national culture recognition as an enabler of productivity.	
Train, train, train leaders on all the biases including national culture. Empower lower level Managers to make decisions. In other words, train and trust Supervisors at lower levels to make decisions and take accountability.	Training of Staff

Elimination of biases via regular training delivery, use of case study examples	Participation
Human Resource participation	
More participation of employees should be encouraged such that employees are allowed to carry out self-assessment along with management assessment process	
Supervisor to also provide very clear tasks and targets, effective communication of expected results and frank/constant feedback in the course of the year.	Performance Feedback and learning
Effective monitoring of performance, quality feedback and learning from performance	

Source: Author

From the above table, a total of nine (9) sub-codes were generated from the responses to the three questions asked in the questionnaire. It is important to note that the extracts contained in the table came from random selection of interviewee responses while the coding categorization represents the themes as extracted by the coding methodology from all the responses to the questions. The codes created are not dimensions of National culture neither do they serve as operational definitions of performance management, but are labels within which passages, texts and opinions are grouped and categorized as regards the theme of the interview question. It also represents labelling with reference to data sorting, reduction and analysis. Labels or codes are herein tagged with names specific to the nature of the issue or factors identified. The basis for this step is to identify, as specified in the interview question (**Q2**), the factors which influence the outcomes of the performance appraisal exercise from the qualitative data generated and

does not assume any theories prior to this process. The interview question (**Q2**) is in line with research questions one (**R1**), two (**R2**) and three (**R3**). Table 3.4 gives instances of responses to particular interview questions wherewith codes are generated from the identified recurring factors relative to the theme of the question. The created codes in the initial coding stage is depicted below and further described.

3.12 Culture factor

This category captures cultural issues as one of the prevailing factor in respondents' opinions and as regards the first interview question. It encompasses a comparison of corroborations and contradictions in opinions with regards to the cultural factors influencing outcomes of performance appraisal. Culture was observed to be a recurring factor as put forward by the respondents.

3.13 Perception factor

Respondents also identified perceptions of the performance appraisal process as a major influence on the management and outcome of the performance process. This could be perception of panel members or supervisor of the appraisee's performance or even what the performance appraisal outcome will be used for as well as how the outcome will be received. Perception was therefore identified as a recurring factor in the opinion of most respondents with regards to influences on performance appraisal exercises.

3.14 Training and competency factor

Training and competency, especially on the part of the supervisor or panel members, was also identified by respondents as having a major influence on performance appraisal exercises. It was observed that presence of or lack of training on the appraisal process or even recognition of biases by Supervisors or panel members had impact on the appraisal outcome. It was therefore labelled accordingly.

3.15 Relationships and sentiment factor

Relationships, social affiliations and other sentiments were also opined to influence performance appraisal exercises. These were seen to include personal relationships that may exist between the appraisees and appraising supervisors and could be in form of same place of religious worship, ethnic groups, same places of previous employments or school. This code is thus labelled as it captures opinions in that regard.

3.16 Misinterpretation factor

Respondents also identified the non-clarity of intent and misinterpretation of expectations as a major influence on the performance appraisal process. The code is thus labelled as it captures respondents' experience of such events.

The next set of codes or labels are derived based on responses to the third (Q3) interview question which evaluates recommendations to the impact of National culture on performance appraisal productivity improvement objective. This follows with the fourth (Q4) interview question which assesses recommendations as to the possibility of a

universal approach to the application of the appraisal process in all National cultures. The interview question three (**Q4**) which asked **“What recommendations (if any) do you have on how the appraisal process can be applied in all national cultures?”** was observed to share similar characteristic with question two (**Q3**) which asked

“If national cultures influence performance appraisal outcome, what are your recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective?”

This was done purposively as a form of within-method verification of response with most respondents stating “as answered above” or “as previously recommended” with reference to their answer to question two. This implies a good understanding of the question. Therefore in coding, both questions were integrated into one with shared categories. Both interview questions are in line with answering the fourth research (**R4**) question. The following codes are as a result of recurring recommendations to the interview questions (**Q3** and **Q4**).

3.17 Culture recognition

This label draws on the various opinions about recognizing distinct cultural values within each nationality. It examines recommendations relative to the uniqueness of each cultural setting, comparing and contrasting views with regards to either aligning cultures into a

universal fit, or further enhancing existing cultural values based on the National context of business operations.

3.18 Training of Staff

Training of staff, especially supervisors and appraisal panel members regarding effective handling of performance appraisal exercises is a recurring recommendation observed in the opinion by the respondents. Emphasis here is on the level of skill, knowledge and exposure of supervisors and panel members with regards to what is required in the entire appraisal formwork itself including recognition of biases that may influence the exercise.

3.19 Participation

This label participation is used herein to refer to the category of responses which assesses recommendations for a participatory system in the target organizations. In other words, this was around how employees being appraised can play more active roles in their own individual assessments.

Responses within this category identify participation as an alternative to enhancing the performance appraisal exercises within the organization.

3.20 Performance Feedback and Learning

This label categorizes recurring recommendations based on performance feedback and learning as a means to enhancing performance appraisal exercises.

Particular issues here relate to managing difficult conversation, providing regular feedback to the employee to minimize surprises that arise if feedback is left until end of the year as well as the art of providing the feedback itself in ways that are constructive in nature.

The second stage (2) involved the linking of sub-categories and concepts with shared themes or ideas at a parent node or parent code (axial coding) in which similar codes portraying a function, practice or trend are identified, linked or grouped into a parent code. There are two major forms of axial coding namely; the hierarchical and the non-hierarchical. The hierarchical describes a tree-like coding structure with code branches following context and content priority categorization, while the non-hierarchical is a flat structure with codes all lumped together (Gibbs, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The study adopts the hierarchical coding with the use of tree-nodes for parent codes and free nodes for sub-categories. Table 3.3 below is used to depict the final coding process.

Table 3.5. Final Coding and Categorization Process

Final Codes	Factors Opined to Influence Performance Outcomes (Initial Codes)
Performance factors	Culture Factor
	Perception Factor
	Training and Competency Factor
	Relationships and Sentiment Factor
	Misinterpretation Factor
	Recommendations to issues of National culture and its influence on performance management (Initial Codes)
Recommendations	Culture Recognition
	Training of Staff
	Participation
	Performance feedback and learning

Source: Author

The table 3.5 above illustrates the process of axial hierarchical coding in which initial labels are further coded into categories which furthermore reflect concepts and themes inherent in the interview questions. This process is also necessary in answering the postulated research questions as interviews were thus structured bearing the same theme comprising of the identification of performance factors and recommendations to the identified issues. Two axial codes were thus created, namely – performance factors and recommendations.

3.21 Performance factors

This code serves as a label and group for all identified factors which according to respondents influence performance management processes and outcomes. As already described, five notable factors were identified namely – the culture factor, perception factor, training and competency factor, relationships and sentiment factor, and finally the misinterpretation factor.

3.22 Recommendations

This code serves as a label and group for all identified forms of recommendations put forward by the respondents in handling the issue of national culture and its influence on performance management. Four major recommendations were identified, namely – culture recognition, training of staff, participation and performance feedback and learning.

The summary of these is depicted below:

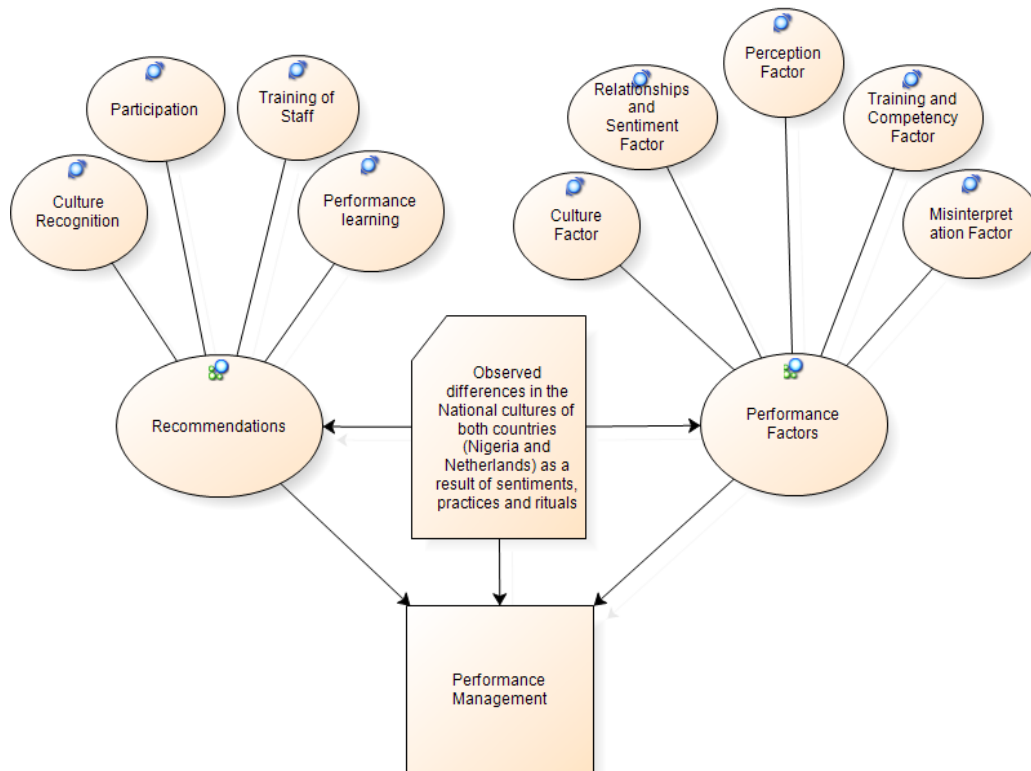


Fig 3.2 NVivo diagram depicting relationship nexus of the study

3.23 Conclusion

In this Chapter, the case to deploy qualitative research method to investigate the impact of national culture on performance management was made. This is because, more than the quantitative technique, the method allows for more engagement with respondents in understanding and explaining social phenomena. Using historical outcome of performance appraisal record of reference MNC in the reference countries of Nigeria and Netherlands and guided by adherence to identified ethical standards, 29 interview respondents were asked to offer their perspective of the outcome, guided by interview questions that spoke to the research questions and underpinned by administered questionnaire. NVivo tool was thereafter used in aggregating and clustering the feedback from the respondents based on which the following factors were isolated as having impact on performance management – culture, perception, training and competency, relationship and sentiment as well as misinterpretation factors. Similarly and in response to research and interview questions on recommendations to help MNCs live with impact of national culture on performance appraisal, respondents viewed recognition of culture in itself as a factor, just as they also made the following additional recommendations - training of staff on appraisal framework including the role of culture, active participation of all parties involved as well as offering appropriate feedback to staff.

The foregoing provided the appropriate building block of more detailed analysis of data, details of have been addressed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

Reporting and Interpretation of Qualitative Data

4.0 Introduction:

In this chapter, I have elaborated more on the methodology work done in previous chapter with a view to generating more meaning to the field aspect of the research work and in so doing generating emerging conclusions.

As highlighted in Chapter three and in achieving the foregoing, I adopted a process where I used a number of closely aligned interview questions to address research questions posed.

Closely related to the above is the deliberate step to link responses to the interview and research questions to existing literature in ways that did not just confirm that a number of the responses reflect existing thinking and research findings but also lead to confirmation of this research essence which is establishing the link that national culture has with performances management when viewed from the lens of performance appraisal.

While aggregation of the interview responses has been carried out using NVivo, I have also extracted specific interviewee responses that speak to the themes that emerged. For example, whilst national culture has been mentioned by a number of respondents as affecting performance management and thus emerged as a standout view from the NVivo analysis, I have also extracted specific respondent statement from particular interviewees

and as much as possible, matched same to similar position that exists in literature. The same principle and process has been adopted in explaining responses to all the research questions in ways that helped to further clarify that beyond what has been done in linking existing literature to contributions from respondents, there is also value in discussing the contributions in relation to how they contribute to existing knowledge. The chapter is concluded by summarizing key findings that followed the analysis.

4.1 Data Reporting and Interpretation

In the reporting and interpretation of the qualitative data, reference is here made to the research questions which serve as guide and a framework within which this research endeavor is encapsulated. As emphasized in earlier in chapter three, a total of four research questions were asked in the course of the study as follows:

- R1 What performance management systems/processes are in place? How are they applied across different operating locations and regions?
- R2 What are the factors that shape the outcomes of performance management exercises?
- R3 What dilemmas, issues and challenges face leaders and practitioners that carry out performance management exercise? How are such addressed?
- R4 What are the recommended “culturally-fit” model (if any) that can be universally applied irrespective of the national culture influences? What effect would such universal models have on the performance management framework?

Consequently, data reporting within this context attempted to answer them as the study proceeds. Although certain singular points with respect to the interview questions may have been identified in the course of characterizing opinions and sorting data into groups and labeling such, they contained what could be termed “isolated cases” and are treated as such herewith. This is because, the aim was an examination of the congruence of opinions compared and contrasted relative to the theme of the interviews which was structured following the nature of the research questions that also focused on the problem of the study. The specific aim of this research report is to (1) identify the factors, challenges and issues which influence performance management exercises, outcomes and its practitioners (research question – **R1, R2, R3**) and to proffer recommendations to the identified issues (research question – **R4**).

As highlighted in chapter three, interview **question one** sought to indicate respondent level of agreement or disagreement with the view that national culture affects performance appraisal exercise including observed differences in outcome of appraisal exercise in Nigeria and Netherlands respectively. It is instructive to point out that the point of this interview question is not statistical inference but an evaluation of opinions based on research question one (**R1**) and three (**R3**). Similarly, interview **question two** sought to tap into the experience of respondents in enumerating the factors that influence the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises. This was followed by sub-questions that sought to understand the issues and challenges faced by appraisal panel members as well as soliciting observation of respondents in understanding what they considered as

factors that explained the performance outcome for Nigeria and Netherlands. In so doing, the question addressed research questions one (**R1**) two (**R2**) and three (**R3**).

There is also interview **question three** that set out to obtain recommendations on how identified impacts that affect performance management can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objectives. The sub-questions used to elicit more information includes whether or not any of the reference companies in either of the reference countries were more productive than the other. Finally, additional sub-question was asked if the outcome of the performance appraisal as highlighted was in a position to either hurt or help the multinational company. This question directly spoke to research question four (**R4**). Finally, the fourth interview question that was largely a “confirmatory test” of some sort in that it also focused on research question four (**R4**), requested for recommendations (if any) from respondents on how the appraisal process can be applied in all national cultures. The additional sub-question was whether or not there is a basis to develop a framework that can be applied the same way across all cultures.

R1: What performance management systems/processes are in place? How are they applied across different operating locations and regions?

R2: What are the factors that shape the outcomes of performance management exercises?

These questions focused on testing understanding of respondents on the performance appraisal framework in place in Nigeria and Netherlands within the reference MNC (**R1**)

and the associated follow up question (R2) sought to identify the factors, which from the personal opinions and experiences of the participants can be said to influence the results of the performance management exercises. Based on the analysis on the data and in response to interview questions one and two as already highlighted, it became clear that the understanding of the performance appraisal system in place for both reference countries is the same. In addition and as aggregated in chapter three, several factors were identified as affecting performance management with most centered on cultural factors, the perceptions of interest parties, the training and competency of supervisors and panel members, relationships and sentiments and the misinterpretation of roles and expectations.

In line with above, most of the respondents identified the role of national culture and other cultural facets peculiar to practices in the respective locations of Nigeria and Netherlands as a micro-organism within a larger macro socio-economic and socio-cultural context as a major factor that affect performance management exercises and outcomes. Schneider (1994) describes this cultural effect in terms of four major factors namely - collaboration culture, cultivation culture, control culture, and competence culture. A control culture refers to power, a collaboration culture is concerned with teams and teamwork, a competence culture dwells on achievement, while the cultivation culture is concerned with growth and potential. This is equally as Hartung (2000) opines that just as there are changes in the labour market as a result of cultural diversity, so also the individuals who make up these market and workforce change in correspondence with

their environment; pointing to a future of corporations characterized by unique attributes and operations based on cultural diversity. Furthermore Hartung (2000) notes that each cultural world is a reflection of its internal workings and dynamics which tends to modify, structure and format social and economic interactions within its shared psychological framework.

The question that arises therefore is determining how this effect manifests as well as strength of this cultural impact on performance management, notwithstanding the different aspects of culture as observed by researchers, but specifically, within the context of the dimensions of individualism vs communalism. The estimate of views with reference to the influence of national culture as well as observed differences in outcome of appraisal exercise in Nigeria and Netherlands respectively is illustrated in Fig. 4.1.

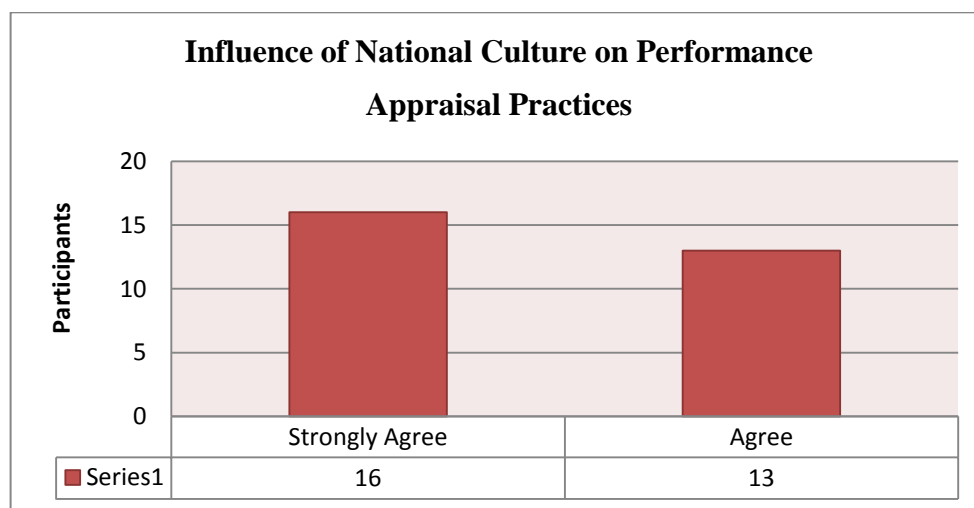


Fig.4.1 Distribution of responses on the influence of National Culture on Performance Appraisal Practices

The chart shows that most of the respondents to interview question one, affirm to the influence of national cultures on performance appraisal practices within the context of communalism and individualism. It is important to highlight that even though the options of “undecided, disagree and strongly disagree” were available, none of the respondents opted for these. Within the frame of national culture, factors such as traditional values and beliefs encompassing concepts such as respect for elders, recognition and acceptance of authority, trust, official work hours and break time, superior – subordinate relationship at the workplace etc. are taken into consideration. This also is as Hartung (2000) observes that the formation of groups, given specific purposes, are usually composed of individuals which, when they share similar cultural and national backgrounds, eases work processes, facilitates understanding and tolerance. In the evaluation of distinct values of each national context with particular reference to the structure of their workplace relationships, emphasis is laid on the norms and acceptable practices which over time can be considered to contribute to the uniqueness of each people and their working relationship.

Subsequently, owing to the diversity of backgrounds and long-drawn traditions which has over time shaped work units within each cultural system, literature indicates a growing acknowledgement of the pervading influence of culture as it affects intra-organizational and inter-organizational relationships and member exchange (Hofstede, 2005).

In specific terms and when asked about the role of national culture with regards to performance appraisal exercises and outcomes, one respondent opined that:

“There is even more culturally but not sure how to phrase it other than the average Nigerian puts a greater emphasis of pride on these kind of performance factors also. They care much deeper what others think of their performance. The average Dutchman getting a poor performance rating from his supervisor would shrug his shoulders and say “humph that’s your opinion and doesn’t mean a damn to me” and so the kind of “difficult conversations” wouldn’t arise that you would get here. Nigerians almost take performance ranking personal such that the exercise is seen as assessment of their person for life rather than performance for a given period. I guess that’s one element of an individualist compared to a collective culture” (Respondent 6).

The foregoing observation, coming from a respondent with deep experience in carrying out performance appraisal exercises in both reference countries, demonstrates how deep-seated, cultural differences play a part in the outcome, thus following the view of a sort of mental programming and cultural dispensation towards the process and its outcomes (Hofstede, 2005).

Rajput and Novitskaya (2013) observed that in evaluating organizational processes, it is necessary to examine the “state of affairs” through the lens of culture. In their assessment, Rajput and Novitskaya (2013) assert that culture influences the pattern of actions within an organization, penetrating through all facets of the organization and its activities. As observed from the opinion and experience of the respondent, what is clearly at play is strong indication of the influences of individualistic (stemming from a Dutch

cultural background) as well as a collectivist (stemming from a Nigerian cultural background) cultures on the attitude of subjects in the performance appraisal process.

According to Deal (2005), the cultural influences determine the position of the organization with regards to performance factors, describing same as being the epicenter of change. Deal (2005) further emphasized on the role of member attitudes and beliefs as regards change as being pertinent to successful pre-change procedures, change implementation and post-change organizational performance. This argument however, makes no claim herewith as to the superiority of cultures and as to which facilitates a more effective performance management system. The point however is laid on the distinctive attributes unique to each culture and its influence on the performance appraisal process.

Another respondent stretches the influence of national culture in explaining the performance appraisal outcomes to include the *“reward mechanism as a culture for those who do well, impact of religion as well as the Dutch belief of justice system”* (Respondent 17).

Same respondent remarked thus:

“Yes, there is a cultural dimension to reward that comes with ranking outcome. My experience is that when employees in Nigeria want reward, they are not necessarily asking for more pay, but rather requesting that the value they add to others in

furtherance of team work, relationships and company's leadership attribute of collaboration be acknowledged at least in the process of feedback"

Another related opinion of a respondent is the disposition of the hosts – Nigeria or Netherlands *"trying to have and maintain their identities, which happens to only manifest in National Cultures"* (Respondent 25)

A question that comes to mind from above is the suggestion that full stretch of the appraisal tool is seen as being more equitable and that this outcome is supported by religious inclinations and identities of the reference countries. However, there is also a strong view that in recognizing culture as a factor and the reward that comes with performance appraisal, such reward need not be in monetary form but in the acknowledgement that comes with feedback that contributions of staff in furtherance of teamwork and the company's leadership attribute of collaboration has been accounted for.

This position has some alignment with the observation of Ahiauzu (1999) that religion and culture of indigenous Africans have impact on the system of work of the nationals and that reference to reward may not always be about pay, but in the acknowledgement of contributions.

Another respondent however observes differently, basing performance outcomes on the nature of actual projects within the geographical settings of both countries. In the respondent's view, differences in performance outcomes are as a result of:

“The wide spectrum of projects and jobs being done in Holland because they oversee major projects being undertaken globally. This makes it easier to evaluate what has been done by an employee and this applies strong differentiation” (Respondent 28).

While it is instructive to point out that this respondent actually “agreed” that national culture affects performance management, the foregoing observation also identifies actual employee contribution and job characteristic as a means to evaluating performance. This is in emphasizing rather on the characteristic of the job and evaluations based on such, with performance outcomes attributed to results of such projects or jobs. This view is further reiterated by another respondent who opined that:

“Deliveries as Netherlands targets are easier to achieve on the strength of individual contributions. This plays out in the performance outcomes. Nigerian targets on the other hand tend to be tied to others and various groups” (Respondent 18)

The same respondent further points to *“national culture and interfaces that affect deliveries in Nigeria such as Communities that constitutes a significant part of non-technical risks that businesses in the country face in contrast to what obtains in Netherlands”*.

This view further supports the notion of performance outcomes based mostly on the nature of the target or project itself or the degree to which assignment of tasks are more to individuals or to teams as well as factors external to the organization, for which resolution may pull from efforts of different groups of employees as against specific

individuals. As observed, particular instances indicate that respondents tie performance outcomes to achievements within both countries but another respondent observes that:

“The culture of the people – both the panel members and the candidates; some candidates in Nigeria better showcase their team accomplishments while Netherlands focuses on individual achievement.” (Respondent 25)

Yet another respondent observes the *“reluctance of Nigerian Supervisors to differentiate widely due to disruption of harmony that may occur should some staff fall under poor performance scales”* (Respondent 29)

The foregoing is in line with the stance of a majority of the respondents who consistently point to the pervading characteristic of culture within the context of individualism/communalism and its influence on performance appraisal and the outcomes of such exercises. Of particular note is the concern shared by a number of respondents that attempt to force differentiation in Nigeria as would be done in Netherlands would hurt rather than help team effectiveness, thus supporting the literature of strong relationship between collectivism and individual dispositions to team work (Fletcher, 2001). As one respondent asserted:

“It is possible that differentiation may give rise to performance improvement. While this was easier and infact encouraged in Netherlands, my attempt to replicate same in Nigeria brought more harm to the extent that productivity improvement that comes from

team work and harmonious working relationships tended to suffer and thus became sacrificed". (Respondent 11).

Similar view held that any performance management framework that disrupts social harmony which is at the heart of collectivist societies damages such organizations in more ways than the introduction of performance management is intended to address in the first place (Hofstede, 2005; Steensma et al, 2000; Erez & Gati, 2004).

This situation, described by Ahiauzu (1999) as the unitary ideology of work organization of the indigenous African system of work organization is as seen by Onyemelukwe (1973) work organized in the form of community 'built on close interpersonal relationships and group interactions welded by a feeling of security and harmony on the part of all its members' and where 'relationships prevail over tasks' (Browaeys & Price, 2008). The question that will therefore arise in process of performance management is, shall or does superior performance of task get sacrificed in preference for harmony and team work? Or can a balance be achieved?

Irrespective of the answer to the above, what is clear is that most of the respondents are of the opinion that National Culture is a major factor with regards to organizational practice of performance management. In certain cases, examples are used to further illustrate the effect of culture and what can be considered a "norm" within national boundaries when it comes to performance evaluation and appraisal management.

In the view of majority of the participants, the culture defines the organization and is key to how it relates with the external environment as well as how internal relationships are managed. Stated differently, there is significant alignment with the outcome of a review of international business literature and practice among multi-national companies that there are not many situations where culture impact does not exist (Kwok Leung et al, 2005). Gersick (1989) argued that the duration of performance feedback exercises played an important factor especially given the lifecycles of such processes. From this point of view, the differences in performance outcomes as a result of individualistic and collective cultures are argued to diminish over time when performance evaluation feedbacks are carried out periodically and at specific intervals. However, data yet shows that most of these outcomes are yet still tied to situations such as perception as regards performance appraisal exercises, nature of superior-subordinate relationship and communal or individualistic cultural tendencies. This is pointed out by Hartung (2000) in the examination of individual vs. group reports on self-orientation, feedback on task performance, as well as interpersonal processes. The argument here is that groups achieve more over time as a result of member identification with group actions – failure and success whereas the individual may achieve a greater sense of self orientation in the long run. According to one respondent, a major impact of national culture on the performance appraisal process is *“the level of assertiveness of facilitators to utilize full scale”* (Respondent 19) resulting probably from the mentality of the group. This stance is further corroborated by another respondent who opines that culture affects the: *“Level or degree*

of benevolence of supervisors and their degree of averseness to managing difficult conversation.” (Respondent 23).

In view of this, it is possible that such aversion to difficult conversations or a higher degree of benevolence could be as a result of various communal, ethnic or even tribal relations outside the workplace which as observed by Drory & Vigoda-Gadot (2010) could be premised on the influence of culture on the perceptions of individuals and their choice between actions which is based on the consideration of what may be viewed as negative in a certain culture but considered otherwise in another. Within this frame, Triandis (1995) observes that most often what is considered right, fair, ethical or just is determined by the members of a collectivist culture, with severe and strict penalties for behaviour which seem to deviate or fail to correspond with what is accepted or considered the norm in such cultures.

This follows the opinion of Beyer (1993) who observes that by belonging to a culture, it is required that members identify, respect and believe what others believe and also do as they do. In the description of the collectivistic attribute of culture, it is noticeable that members share a common identity and most often think alike – judgements and opinions about events, subjects and circumstances are most often based on a point of reference which is held to be ideal and authoritative (Vadi, Allik & Realo, 2000).

Most often, individuals find themselves attending same churches, social and community meetings with either their superiors or subordinates thus effecting bonding relationships which are transferred into organizations. In this regard, Chatman et. al (1998) observes

that the feelings of similarity and a shared state or fate, endears members of a collectivist cultural dispensation to each other, hence members tend to include each other into various in-groups thus facilitating various forms of social categorization. This is as one respondent observes that: *“Social clubs – religion, family events and familiarity – deeper knowledge of the staff beyond the office could add to mitigating circumstances on poor performance. This is more so in Nigeria and less in Netherlands.”* (Respondent 10)

Just as another respondent points out that: *“Culture including personal relationships – same place of worship, ethnic groups, same places of previous employments or school.”* (Respondent 11)

This situation has also been observed by Ahiauzu (1999) as being typical fertile grounds for work effectiveness in African cultures. However, such events could also have serious outcomes especially as it could further the course of particular informal groups and cliques within the organization and lead to the negative tendencies such as the ill treatment and low rating scores for non-members and high rating scores for ill-equipped, poor performing members. In this regard, it was observed that most appraisal exercises were duly adjusted and structured to suit various interest groups based on perceived *“interests, ethnicity, affinities, relationships and sentiments and even potential benefits of reward.”* (Respondent 14)

Following this line of argument, Vadi, Allik and Realo (2002) argue that a society based on collectivism impacts on the culture of the organization and the individuals within it since the contextual environment is dominated by mental programming of the society at

large. Collectivism could be considered as one of the major and primary attributes of culture or environment within which the organization is encapsulated. Meanwhile, the environment is regarded as one of the factors forming culture.

It is therefore in this regard that organizational practices is affected by the general national cultural environment as the organizational members transfer values into the organization from the external cultural environment with instances however where these values vary. In view of the outcomes of performance appraisal with regards to the context of culture, a respondent opines that: *“No appraisal can be culture-proof. Just as other performance appraisal biases need to be highlighted and worked on, the same is expected in national culture, although I personally do not consider that cultural impact should not be considered as a bias.”* (Respondent 19)

Nonetheless, performance most often is tied to project delivery with regards to available technology, infrastructure and information and as such performance exercises tend to premise on the state of affairs unique to each country. In the 1984 survey conducted by Hofstede, individuals from 40 different countries were examined in a bid to assess the relative impact of culture as a predictor in determining an individualistic or collectivist culture in the organization (Hofstede, 2005). The results of the study showed that the interaction of individuals in the workplace was guided and moulded by the prevailing national cultural beliefs and norm and that for organizations to be effective and succeed, such cultural diversity must be embraced, without incidence of stereotyping, but with reference to understanding and cooperation (Hartung, 2000), for as a respondent opined:

“Cultural influences – reluctance of Supervisors in Nigeria to differentiate widely as this will cause some staff to fall into poor performance scales.” (Respondent 29). The respondent also added: “Nigerians are Nigerians and the Dutch are the Dutch. I have come to realize that people do not leave who they are at the work door.....these identities make us who we are and affects everything and anything that we do at work. I truly do not know why performance management will be different”.

It remains therefore from the opinion of the majority that national culture is a major factor and explanation with regards to most performance appraisal processes and outcomes as it defines workplace relationships, participation and structure which are often times miniature versions of the external environment. Performance outcomes are as revealed by the data, premised on the state of affairs and on the patterns observed to work within the socio-economic context within which the organization finds itself, notwithstanding, certain negative effects such as bias and the tendency to discriminate are issues which should be given due consideration.

The foregoing notwithstanding and earlier enumerated, a number of scholars have also established that in line with opinions of respondents, it is not out of place for other variables to also have impact along with culture (Peterson et al, 1995; Brett and Okumura, 1998; Gibson, 1999; Clugston et al, 2000; Mitchell et al, 2000; Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001). This explains why as also earlier observed, respondents equally found other factors that affect performance management as including **perception, training and competency, relationships and sentiments, and the misinterpretation of roles factors.**

As one respondent put it, **misinterpretation** could also result from a cultural disposition based on “*A limited shared understanding on how performance appraisal is done*” (Respondent 9). A view further corroborated by another respondent who observed that “*degree to which line managers understand the process*” (Respondent 3) was also an undermining factor in terms of performance outcomes. This dimension of misrepresentation that anchors on role clarity also finds support in existing literature that significantly explain why there is general reference to use of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) attributes in defining tasks and targets bearing in mind that degree of goal difficulty has been found to be associated with performance outcome (Chhokar and Wallin, 1984; Kim, 1984; Locke et al., 1981). This echoes another aspect of this misrepresentation factor being the inability of raters and ratees to handle the very often complex information that is required to synthesize what has been done. This according to Lepsinger and Lucia (1997) has been found to also play a significant part in the lack of agreement between both parties as it regards the appraisal outcome and what is required to effectively deliver the job.

The foregoing aspect of the **misrepresentation factor** thus relates to the degree to which employees find a match between their contributions and assessment outcome. Some respondents have classified such mismatch as “assessing fairness” of the appraisal process.

This has also been long recognized as an important concern in view of the critical role fairness of appraisal process has on acceptance of outcome (Dipboye and De Pontbraind, 1981; Lawler, 1967). Additional studies have shown that some employees determine such appraisal fairness by matching their relative work deliveries and the relative appraisal ratings in what is referred to as distributive justice (Greenberg, 1982). Another aspect, referred to by same writer as procedural justice, questions the fairness of the procedure and process used in determining the appraisal outcome. This captures process variable discontent such as evidence of lack of opportunities for appraisees to express own feelings and this always happen irrespective of the appraisal outcome.

As a respondent stated:

“Most of the grievances that have been expressed by employees and brought to my attention relate to the degree to which they are convinced that their Supervisors have fully represented their interests to the extent that their delivery contributions have been made visible to other panel members and therefore duly recognized in award of performance ratings. My experience is that this has some truth as I have seen several occasions where Supervisors could have been better prepared for the exercise, for example in holding the simple task of carrying out performance conversations with their staff prior to the panel sitting”. (Respondent 8)

A review of reference to **competency and training** factor point to some link with aspects relating to misrepresentation factors. Conceptually, competency is the language of performance management defined as ‘an underlying characteristic of a person that results

in effective or superior performance (Mansfield, 1999). Rankin (2002) views it as combination of ‘skills and behaviours that organizations expect their staff to practice in their work’. In performance management exercises, competence reviews help to ensure that focus of performance appraisal is not just on work outcomes but on demonstration of technical and behavioural aspects of the work (Armstrong, 2009). This way according to the author, performance review exercise is used to drive conversations on personal improvements, individual development plans of the employee as well as other associated development and learning initiatives. As observed by Rankin (2004), ‘employers are extending their performance management systems to assess not only objectives but also qualitative aspects of the job’.

It is instructive to note from the view of respondents that the foregoing reference to competency and training as a factor that affects performance management is not strictly with recognition of competence as a performance differentiator for employees but are rather requesting that the competencies of the raters themselves in the “technical skill” of performance management be improved as a way of improving performance review exercises.

This conclusion finds some alignment in the misrepresentation factors pointed out by respondents (9), (8) and (3) quoted above and in the direct view of a respondent that:

“As I have said repeatedly, our greatest challenge is the degree to which line managers understand the appraisal process and guiding principle of the company performance management philosophy”.(Respondent 3).

Another respondent linked his experience as follows:

“what I have also seen as having strong influence on performance management relates to appraisal process competence level of the HR facilitator and that of panel members. Having combination of HR facilitator with solid grounding and experience in facilitating appraisal process and poor competence of panel members is not too bad, but when both players are inexperienced and not competent, are a recipe for disaster”. (Respondent 27).

A number of the respondents also stretched the competence need to not just on the appraisal process itself but on managing the feedback that is associated with outcome of the exercise. A respondent remarked as follows:

“My observation is that a number of Supervisors work from answer to question. This happens when Supervisors who are not competent in managing difficult conversations that may arise in the event of poor assessment, pushes the rating of the staff beyond what has been earned as a way of avoiding the discussions”. (Respondent 29).

The foregoing finds support in a number of respondents who added as follows:

Ability to carry out difficult conversation that comes with a bad performance appraisal is a factor in Nigeria and less so for Netherlands. In Nigeria, supervisors are reluctant to have the discussion. (Respondent 6)

“What a number of Supervisors lack and require is courage in dealing with under-performance. Courage comes from having the right competence and professional confidence as a Supervisor” (Respondent 1).

“Quality of the Leaders involved in the process also counts. Are they courageous and people of integrity?” (Respondent 3).

“Lack of courage by Supervisors in Nigeria to utilise the full spectrum of the appraisal assessment range” (Respondent 7).

“Management of difficult conversation and feedback to staff for me remains a critical factor. Easy option of rating everyone within the median is followed in Nigeria in majority of situations” (Respondent 12).

“The reason why implementation of directives is difficult to implement in Nigeria is not because of lack of courage or will by Nigerian Supervisors but because of their realisation that it will negatively impact team dynamics, team work and relationships” (Respondent 22).

The foregoing focus on training and improving the competence levels of Supervisors that carry out the appraisal exercise has found advocacy in Armstrong (2009) who posited that such training ‘should take place in the form of consistency workshops for managers who discuss how ratings can be objectively justified and test rating decisions on stimulated performance reviews data, as a way of also building common understanding about rating levels’. In addition and to exercise cautious view of suggestions that Supervisors in Nigeria may be less courageous in holding difficult conversations can be found in existing literature that offering direct feedback and holding difficult conversation are generally perceived to be less acceptable in collectivist cultures (Elenkov, 1998). To confirm this model of training as a driver of the factors seen by a number of respondents as affecting performance appraisal outcome can also be found in the competence development philosophy of the reference MNC that was used for this research work. The company deploys the use of 70-20-10 model in improving competence. According to the model as found in their internal communication, 70% of the ways learning occurs in the organization should be on the job and work activities. This is referred to as in-role development. In the same way, 20% of learning in any competence area is through learning from others which can be in the form of coaching, mentoring and observation. The other 10% happens through formal classroom training, aided by courses and support materials. This principle manifests in raising competence levels of raters. A respondent remarked:

“From my experience, HR does a good job of organizing workshops to beef up appraisal competencies of Supervisors. As we know, it is a necessary but not often sufficient step to enhance the abilities of Supervisors to carry out this all important aspect of staff work. What happens to new Supervisors that require hand-holding? How much opportunity do people have to observe, grow and learn the process? How much do they have opportunities to practice the act of evaluating appraisal of their staff before being thrown into the lion’s den of defending ratings for their staff in the presence of colleagues, some of whom may be more assertive? I’m afraid that it has not been a surprise for such Supervisors to just reward every team member equally”. (Respondent 26).

What about impact of **perception, relationships and sentiment** factors? These also find some correlation with responses given by a number of respondents in linking national culture as impacting performance management. That notwithstanding, this factor found specific advocacy in a number of respondents. For example, a respondent was strong in stating as follows:

“I have personally seen Supervisors use relationships with staff to argue for/against awarded ratings. In a particular situation that happened while I was in Nigeria, this manifestation was such that but for the quality and experience of the HR facilitator, the rest of the panel would have been fooled.

We later found that the Supervisor was using personal relationships with staff in not only showcasing what was achieved but also in alluding contribution of other members of the team to this individual". (Respondent 8).

As another respondent reacted "some appraisal ratings can sometimes be linked to recognition of the employee by the panel members. It happens both ways to the extent that an employee that has positive relationship with panel members will receive favourable ratings while the contrast may happen to the one that is not positively visible. I acknowledge that behaviors are also key elements of appraisal but when an employee's conduct in external social functions is being indirectly used as inputs into a company process, one cannot but raise concern on outcome of the exercise". (Respondent 17).

The above is not an unusual occurrence and a number of literature has viewed it more in form of bias which can be addressed by training and introduction of reward system for Supervisors involved in appraisal process (Armstrong, 2009; Varma et al, 1996). This view also finds some ally in Wayne and Ferris (1990) that political influence behaviours has impact on supervisor assessment of performance than would ordinarily be normal. In addition, the influence of liking that comes from perception and relationships has been established to provide more lenient appraisal outcomes, increased halo effects, reduced in accuracy levels and reduced inclination to sanction weak performance (Lefkowitz, 2000). These align with the twin factors of perceptions and relationships as highlighted in chapter two and as observed by Hogan (1987) and Mitchell et al (1982) on perception and Heneman et al (1989) and Salaman (1987) who observed that appraisal outcome is

influenced by relationships between appraiser and appraisee rather than actual performance. Much as the respondents have pointed out the influence that relationships have on performance appraisal – being more pronounced in more communalistic cultures such as Nigeria, Varma et al (1996) have equally observed that such an impact is less pronounced where there are clear standards and observable performance data.

Notwithstanding the above, several responses also seemingly show strong support for the identified factors with very few pointing otherwise. A good instance is the comparison of outcomes from both National cultures in which a respondent observes that:

“It is not unusual for local management to analyze local versus expatriate outcome and elevate performance outcome of locals to manage local sensitivity. This was observed mainly during my assignment in Qatar.”(Respondent 12)

The same respondent pointed to observation that *“locals whether Nigerians or Dutch without the benefit of working in cultures different from their own do not often see the cultural biases because they are in the ‘picture frame’ of their respective national cultures”*

In general, the observations point to how significant impact of national culture is on performance management relative to other factors highlighted. It therefore follows as noted by most of the respondents, that this impact is quite apparent owing to the difference in value and belief systems within each nationality with data indicating that about 70% of respondents hold strongly to the opinion that culture amongst other factors

such as perceptions of interested parties, workplace affinities as expressed through relationships and sentiments as well as the misinterpretation of expectations, to a great extent influences the management of performance appraisal exercises. In addition, the outcomes of such exercises are mostly affected by culture- unique factors which could take the form of the competency of the appraisal team or supervisor, perception and sentiments as a result of familiarity with staff to be appraised and even the attitude of most employees towards the performance appraisal process based on misconstrued appraisal intent or other related issues.

In other words, within the collectivist culture such as Nigeria, emphasis appears to be laid on prevailing traditional values and a sense of community belongingness which stresses on harmony of team, brotherhood, respect for elders and ethnicity as against the strict differentiation of individual performance deliveries, individual responsibility and accountability to performance of tasks in line with what is individually expected in fulfilling the goals of the organization as mostly obtainable in the Netherlands.

In summary and in the view of respondents, national culture affects performance management as with other factors such as perception, training and competency, relationships and sentiments, and the misinterpretation of roles factors. These generally find alignment with the factors that affect performance management as observed by Lowman and Rees (2005) as follows:

- a. Personal/individual characteristics such as intellectual ability and skills, training, emotional stability, physical ability and health. Others are self-motivation, personal circumstances, beliefs and psychological contract towards work among others.
- b. Job related factors such as role clarity, leadership/management support, team work and team dynamics, recognition, achievement and role responsibility, career advancement and empowerment.
- c. Performance management system itself including possession of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) criteria, training on use of tool, fairness of the process, linkage to reward etc.
- d. Organizational factors including commitment from senior leaders and workforce, work conditions and organizational culture, including organizations' mission and vision.
- e. Extra organizational factors such as shareholder expectations, key benchmark standards such as compensation and remuneration philosophy and national culture.

R3: What dilemmas, issues and challenges face leaders and practitioners that carry out performance management exercise?

This research question (**R3**) is distinct from research question one (**R1**) in the sense that it attempts to identify specific issues and challenges which not just affect the performance management exercise but affects the leaders, supervisors and panel members who carry out and manage such exercises. The response to this arose mainly from sub-question to interview question two and data from the study draws still from the same factors which

were identified to affect the performance process and outcomes as it was discovered that such challenges and issues affecting the practitioners lie inherent in the same factors. In offering such feedback, a number of respondents provided solutions that have helped them to deal with the observed dilemmas. Interestingly, some of those solutions also spoke to response to research question 4 (R4) that sought for specific recommendations on how to better live a performance appraisal world that is affected by national culture.

The identified factors are as earlier illustrated in table 3.4, given as premised on the cultural, perceptive, sentimental, competency and level of understanding with regards to the process and objective of performance management. These factors have been revealed by the data to mitigate the performance levels of practitioners and thus the outcome of the process. One respondent opines that:

“The ability to carry out difficult conversation that comes with a bad performance appraisal is a factor in Nigeria and less so for Netherlands. In Nigeria, supervisors are reluctant to have the discussion.” (Respondent 6).

The foregoing is a statement which identifies the role of culture on levels of averseness to confrontational discussions. This is further corroborated by another respondent who argues that:

“Cultural bias, leading to unwillingness to rank staff too low in Nigeria. Team leaders have tendency to defend low performing staff and push their assessments up. Not unusual

to hear such statements as “too high? Is there no room for improvement?” (Respondent 7).

This according to most of the respondents is a classic case of supervisors avoiding to hold difficult conversation in Nigeria, a situation that aligns with the view expressed by Hofstede (2005) that people in collectivist cultures avoid difficult conversations.

Although most respondents view culture as a major factor affecting the attitude of performance management practitioners, some others are of the opinion that most supervisors, panel members and performance management practitioners lack the required training and skills necessary for quality performance appraisal processes. Culture cannot be a barrier, as opined by some respondents if the necessary knowledge and competency is in place. One respondent with regards to the process identifies “*Process facilitation capability of the human resource department*” (Respondent 27) as being a major challenge to performance appraisal exercises.

This line of argument follows that despite prevailing cultural tendencies, supervisors and performance appraising panel members can be trained to effectively manage such processes in line with what is universally acceptable. In this regard, one aspect of this training requirement is whether the facilitators lack the competence in facilitating performance appraisal process itself or that what may be lacking is that of cultural enlightenment that enables placing consideration on the impact of national culture on performance management. This may well have been answered by a respondent who opined that:

“Facilitators need to understand that national cultural differences between Nigeria and Netherlands should not be swept under the carpet in the name of globalization. Supervisors and HR need to be competent and bold enough to recognize this rather than implementing the voice of leaders from Holland.” (Respondent 12)

Another respondent notes thus:

“The spirit of the performance appraisal exercise is to maintain a delicate balance. This in my view is because clear differentiation rewards star performers while clustering within the median over compensates low contributors to team and the company whilst also under-rewarding high performers. While achieving this goal remains the greatest dilemma for me, at the end, the answer may well lie in adequate training of role players”
(Respondent 1)

This largely agrees with the view of Schneider and Barsoux, (2003) on the role of training for global managers in addressing challenges that they face in being on top of their globalisation game. The question that arises therefore is, if level of competency in performance appraisal is more in Netherlands than in Nigeria within the reference MNC. This did not seem to be the case in the view of the respondents as training on appraisal is widely carried out across the company’s areas of operations across the globe in the same way and refresher modules launched prior to commencement of any appraisal cycle. Another respondent supports this argument as he opines that *“the degree to which line managers understand the process as well as the non-clarity of tasks”* (Respondent 3) poses a challenge as well but in the view of some other respondents who tie most

challenges inherent in the performance appraisal exercise to environmental and situational factors, the effect of the external business environment which serves as the local context for the company's socio-economic activities strongly influences the practices within the organization as it is imperative for the organization to adapt and adjust to these effects using features designed uniquely to achieve success within such a context. In line with this, one respondent observes that:

“Fear of severance as a result of cumulative 3years low performance assessment as input determining low performing staff is proving to be an unintended consequence of using performance rating as input in reaching decision of those to be made redundant”
(Respondent 5)

Another respondent shares similar sentiment as follows:

“Divestment that has taken place in Nigeria over the years that has led to severance of staff. The result is that employees with performance factors in the range of 0.8/0.9 considered as satisfactory performance in Netherlands were viewed otherwise in Nigeria. Given this, Supervisors generally take the comfortable position of granting performance factors within the median to avoid difficult conversation of having to be held responsible for loss of jobs of personnel in a high unemployment country like Nigeria.” (Respondent 28)

The above is in line with the challenge expressed in Chapter Two which Strebler et al, (2001) and Bach (2005) have traced to the conflict that arises when performance

appraisal that is designed to motivate staff through clarification of objectives and setting of clear future objectives through training and development is at the same time used to assess past performance and distribution of rewards based on outcome of the appraisal itself.

Arguing further the respondent (28) observes that:

“A wide spectrum of projects and jobs being done in Holland because they oversee major projects being undertaken globally. This makes it easier to evaluate what has been done by an employee and this applies strong differentiation.”

Notwithstanding these points, data reveals that most of the respondents yet tie all this factors to the prevailing norms and value systems particular to the nationality of interest. This is as it is observed that the individualist culture grants social status rewards to certain individuals who have through various means been able to distinguish themselves, hence it could offer and motivate in a cultural way, the incentive for innovation that is separate from the standard monetary incentive. However, individualistic culture can also present itself as a stumbling block as regards collective actions due to the fact that individuals set and pursue personal goals and interests without internalizing collective goals and interests.

Whereas, a collectivist culture, in contrast, allows for the ease of collective actions and team work as a result of the internalization and regard of group and team objectives and interests which is held in higher regard and esteem as compared to that of the individual

or personal thus encouraging conformity and the maintenance of status quo thereby discouraging individuals from standing out. Based on this assertion, it can be argued that an individualistic culture encourages innovation, while a collectivist culture dwells more on coordinating production processes and in various forms of collective action (Hofstede, 2001; Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011), for as one respondent opines that:

“National culture where for Nigeria, people are trying to be nice and cluster around the median of the performance range. Examples include employees sending their spouses to supervisors as a way of influencing relationship and appraisal outcome.” (Respondent 1)

The above identifies with the prevailing root of culture in these challenges which is further supported by Azhar (2003), who opines that culture not only affects the way members within an organization behave but also the kind of decisions they take regarding the organizations relationships with its environment and the nature of the strategy to be adopted. This is as another respondent specifically observes that *“Nigerians are more comfortable with middle of the road outcomes.”* (Respondent 22). Majority of the respondents identify most of these challenges and issues as stemming from the cultural tendencies of the nation. These are not out of correlation with the view conversed in chapter two on organisational politics and such relationship-induced biases that come in the form of “halo effects”, “horn effects” (Longenecker and Ludwig, 1990; Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, 1996), and “recency effects” including those biases due to such factors as gender, ethnicity etc (Alimo-Metcalf, 1991; White, 1991, Geddes and Konrad, 2003).

Also studies show that individuals or workers within the framework of an individualist culture have a tendency to strive for greater and bigger objectives as a result of the desire for self-enhancement and also express a stronger sense of self-serving bias than workers or individuals from collectivist cultures (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011).

The desire to be more than another worker, or staff, and the need to rise above the flock is often times tied to the need for self-enhancement as the individual sees him/herself from a more promising and positive angle given the prevalent opportunities and independence such a cultural dispensation offers. Furthermore this need as expressed by the worker in an individualistic culture is further encouraged by the competition and available rewards of success offered by the system. On the other hand, the need for self-growth, the attainment of personal goals and self-enhancement is not as significant for the worker or individual within the collectivist culture who is most often prone to seeing him/herself as much more malleable (Mezulis et al. 2004; Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011) with most respondents holding unto the belief that despite efforts in actualizing particular standards upon which practitioners can effectively build and develop performance management measures and enhance its practice, culture is evidently the frame within which such standards would be placed.

An interesting aspect of this dilemma albeit not a direct outcome of the research question points to less acceptance of the performance appraisal framework in Nigeria than in Netherlands, particularly within the policy framework of stretching and really forcing clear differentiation. One view may be that acceptance is more in Netherlands because the model aligns more with their individualistic national culture - position that aligns with the view of Lucas et al (2006) that ‘mainstream approaches to Human Resources Management, performance management inclusive, are Anglo-Saxon in nature’. In this regard, data shows that the appraisal context possess unique features with roots deeply entrenched in cultural values and norms which influence the methods, attitudes and approach of performance appraisal practitioners with regards to the practice. These challenges and issues as identified from the analysis, draw mainly from the perceptions, level of training and orientation as well as the clarity of role expectations.

R4: What are the recommended “culturally-fit” models (if any) that can be universally applied to address national culture influences?

The fourth research question addresses the issue of the possibility of a culturally fit model which could possibly be universally applicable in all instances and which could serve as a standard for reference in both countries (Nigeria and Netherlands) and elsewhere. As observed in methodology section, this question came to respondents in the form of interview questions 3 and 4 respectively – “if national cultures influence performance

appraisal outcome, what are your recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective?” and “what recommendations (if any) do you have on how the appraisal process can be applied in all national cultures?” As depicted in Table 3.4, a number of recommendations came from respondents that includes culture recognition, training of staff, participation and performance feedback learning.

On performance feedback learning, a respondent advised thus:

“carry out a post appraisal culture diversity check before the appraisal outcome is declared final to ensure respect of the national culture impacts..... whilst paving way for corrections and appeals. In addition, there should be focus on communication, education and coaching of managers on cultural biases such that the exercise is not only fair but seen to be so” (Respondent 3).

Another respondent added thus:

“For MNCs and while a global process is encouraged as a framework, in working it, each entity should develop an inclusive appraisal that is based on value and impact of individual performance to the business and demonstrated leadership anchored on cross-functional collaboration that enables integrated end-to-end delivery. The strength of this recommendation is anchored on feedback and communication”. (Respondent 4)

Comments on feedback and communication from respondents (4) and (3) are not surprising as researchers such as Greenberg (1986) have found out that degree of

perception of fairness of performance appraisal exercise is linked to ‘presence of procedural characteristics’ such as communication, appeals process etc. These also align with views expressed in Chapter Two on procedural and organisational justice which is at the core of challenges associated with performance appraisal (Guest, 1997; Folger and Bies, 1989; Folger et al, 1992).).

On participation, there is recommendation from respondents for actions that will support more involvement of employees and others in the process such as in training them on expectations and in encouraging more independent assessments. As a respondent remarked:

“More participation of employees should be encouraged such that employees are allowed to carry out self- assessment along with management assessment process. In addition, more training should be organized for employees themselves on their roles and responsibilities in the process just as Managers should be held accountable for success or failure of the appraisal process”. (Respondent 9)

“One good idea being used in some teams is for assessment to be made by more than a single individual, independently. This is from project lead, team leads and heads of departments who although may exhibit their own cultural biases, the consolidation from the different parties helps to dilute the influence”. (Respondent 10)

Allied to this, another respondent recommended as follows:

“Empower lower level Managers to make decisions. In other words, train and trust Supervisors at lower levels to make decisions and take accountability. Finally, communicate, communicate and communicate how everyone gets involved. (Respondent 12)

Recommendation for participation of appraisees in deciding the rating that they should be awarded is one that doesn't appear to be widely practiced or referenced in literature. However when taken in the context of how a respondent above clarified the reason as being to hold Managers accountable, this easily finds alignment with the view of Bretz R.D et al, (1992:19) who observed that it is not common for raters to be evaluated on how they have effectively managed the appraisal process. According to them and in line with expectations of some of the respondents, such a practice is expected to enhance the motivation of supervisors and other raters alike to exhibit the right behaviours bearing in mind that people will only tend to behave in ways in which they are rewarded (Vroom, 1964).

Reference to participation of employees in appraisal process has thus brought into sharper focus, the observation that rater training programmes in organizations have been more focused on raters such as in conducting the exercise, providing continuous feedback, holding effective conversations with staff, avoiding errors and biases etc (Bretz R.D et al, 1992:19). As the writers equally observed, training received by appraisees in supporting them for their role in the appraisal relay process as well as in

helping them use the appraisal tool for performance improvement has barely existed. In the view of another scholar and as highlighted in Chapter Two, (Hartle, 1992), the required training in this instance is not just for the appraisers to be trained in one instance, but to be supported by regular and constant refresher sessions year on year.

Granted that participation has been found to increase involvement and acceptance of processes (O'Reilly, 2001), but it remains to be noted that such involvement leads to development of a sense of responsibility by employees who have been made to feel involved. The writer further noted from psychological perspective that participation can bring about commitment, enjoyment and ownership. However, this practice is one area where practical implementation application has lacked consensus.

It is in dealing with lack of agreement on performance, criteria deliveries and expectations between rater and ratee as a result of perceptions that has contributed in large part to development of 360° assessment framework as a way of better recognizing and addressing performance gaps to be filled (Lepsinger and Lucia, 1997). Pollack and Pollack (1996) have however cautioned that multi-rater processes when used for appraisal rather than for developmental discussions were seen to be 'more lenient, less reliable and less valid'.

In what should act as an early warning sign for those respondents advocating for more deployment of the multi-rater model, Fletcher (1998) have observed that organisations that deployed the framework for appraisal discontinued with it after 2years. In addition, while it may seem to be fairer as a result of representing multiple perspectives on an

individual employee performance, studies have equally showed that the different raters tend to use their respective subjective views in reaching appraisal decisions and to that extent, the data-laden qualities of the multi-rated model may not be superior to the result of the standard appraisal (Fletcher, Baldry and Cunningham-Snell (1998). Another warning sign for respondents rooting for deployment of the multi-rater assessment is that it has been found to be more prone to impact of national culture than the standard appraisal method (Fletcher, 2001:482)

The influence of participation as a factor in addressing perceptions of performance appraisal procedural justice also received critical analysis by Cawley, Keeping and Levy (1998), who made distinction between instrumental participation and value-expressive participation. By instrumental participation, the researchers referred to participation for the purpose of bringing influence on end result. Conversely, value-expressive participation is for the main purpose of allowing one's voice to be heard. Even though the researchers have concluded that the latter had a stronger impact on how appraisees react to appraisal, the summary from respondents tended to indicate that interest is on both dimensions.

In recommending the place of participation in the appraisal process and as highlighted above, a number of the respondents have also brought the essence of training to the front-burner in the same way as the recommendation is also rich in existing literature. For instance, although Research on rater training is one that has been somewhat limited, Hedge and Kavanagh (1988) have equally recommended that supervisor training on

performance appraisal should focus on observation and decision making aspects of the exercise as against attempting to lay emphasis on error reduction. This according to them is because whilst training efforts aimed at addressing error concerns may have contributed to dealing with leniency and halo effects, the accuracy of the appraisal exercise which should be of paramount importance was equally compromised.

A respondent have also called for such training to include cultural awareness within the context of the company's internationalization programme that enable deployment of staff across different countries where it operates. He remarks as follows:

“Prior to my assignment to Nigeria, I went through cultural awareness training but such was not extended to processes such as performance appraisal. I wish it did although I must add that such training prepared me for the experience. I recommend that this training is made a critical part of expatriation onboarding arrangements”.

(Respondent 22)

As if heeding to the above recommendation, Ashkenass et al (1995) has surmised that organisations should move beyond using boundaries to separate employees, processes and tasks but should instead work on breaking the divides. In reaching this position, they enumerated as a key challenge in breaking through global boundaries, what they classified as ‘learning to love cultural differences’ Ashkenass et al (1995:271), leading

them to recommend implementation of ‘cultural sensitivity training’ as well as ‘transnational training to reinforce the global mindset’

Interestingly, few of the respondents mentioned effect of such factors as gender and it is noted that this factor is also known in literature (Bretz R.D et al, 1992), although recognition of same was made as a recommendation by few respondents. An immediate reaction would be that this may be a result of the extensive diversity and inclusive (D&I) programme of the MNC that was used for this research, that clearly recognizes this as a bias and therefore Managers are trained to recognize same. This success may well give confidence to respondents who recommended training on recognition of national culture as a bias issue that when culture is treated as such, addressing same in the same way as D&I may well support its resolution.

In terms of recommendation outliers, a respondent questioned why the MNC should not do away with the current appraisal system and focus on just personalizing performance reward.

He stated thus:

“The current method is quite becoming too old for my liking. Why pitch staff against staff? Why don’t we just reward people as is based on their contribution? I hear a number of companies are really considering their options” (Respondent 2).

It is instructive to note that in digging deeper regarding the above view, it was noted that the respondent may be referring to what appears to be an emerging practice by a number of companies such as Deloitte, Accenture and Microsoft. Other companies that have been mentioned include Adobe, Gap and Medtronic. In this practice, employees are evaluated in their roles rather than on relative ranking. Although these trends are yet to be tested, critics of the model have pointed to its lack of transparency and limited influence in encouraging competition, both being key ingredients in driving performance culture. The corporate culture of the MNC used for this research being largely conservative is such that consideration of possible adoption may not be anytime soon.

On culture recognition, most of the respondents disagree as to the option or possibility of a universal model of culture, emphasizing rather on the recognition of cultural differences and how the event can still be used as an advantage.

One of the respondents opined that:

“Appraisal should take into consideration and recognition, the national cultural inclinations of both countries and leverage it. I believe that clustering in Nigeria still leads to achievement of overall organizational performance goal.” (Respondent 1)

Another respondent added as follows:

“There is nothing really to change. Let’s just respect the cultures and there should be no issue with performance management..... after all we are always advised to think global and act local”. (Respondent 21)

In line with the above, the consensus among several other respondents is that instead of trying to adjust practices to suit any cultural standard, respondents should be trained on how best to identify and manage culture-bias situations and other seemingly negative aspects of national cultures. This according to most respondents would pave the way for a more result-oriented outcome rather than process-oriented outcome. In accordance with this argument, the respondent commented that:

“It is necessary to recognize the National Culture and leave them the way they are. A good example is where organizations are being encouraged to address people on first name basis. I don’t believe that such encourages barriers. On the contrary, I believe that for Nigerian culture, addressing a more senior colleague by first name is seen as disrespect and therefore discourages intimacy.” (Respondent 1)

This consequently followed the line of argument put forward by another respondent who argued that:

“An appraisal process, unique to all cultures? Very difficult to achieve, rather a conscious effort in making culture-specific appraisal should be the answer.”
(Respondent 10)

In the view of another respondent, training as a means to bridging the assumed gap

should be emphasized, not as a way of adopting cultures or trying to set uniform methods but as enumerated in response to **R1**, a process of enlightening supervisors and other personnel involved in performance appraisal to effective ways of recognizing and taking advantage of the uniqueness of each culture. In his comment he stresses *“train, train, train leaders on all the biases including national culture.”* (Respondent 12). Contrary to this observation, data reveals that some respondents are of the view that it is possible to actually harmonize performance appraisal systems through policies emphasizing on templates and uniformity. In support of this, the respondent further opines that the organization, in spite of national cultural differences should *“implement and follow one performance appraisal process and its sets of principles.”* (Respondent 12). A stance followed by another respondent who argues that the organization should *“Encourage a uniform ranking process across the different countries”* (Respondent 8)

While another stresses that the organization should

“Enforce the use of a standard template and descriptor such that each business location or country is not allowed to customize task and target format.” (Respondent 6). According to the respondent, the template should include *“a matrix descriptor on what constitutes average performance for instance as well as what constitutes high performance. That way, what is considered average rating in Nigeria is the same as what obtains in Netherlands”*

This approach tends to align with the school of thought that national cultures should be ignored as business should be business (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). However, as

argued by the same author, this would be suicidal for a company operating across national boundaries. This supports the position of most respondents who do not seem to agree to the possibility of a uniform standard or template for performance assessment.

This according to one respondent is such that:

“There is no need to develop a universal solution. Current system works as there is no evidence that overall business results in Netherlands with more pronounced differentiations is superior to Nigeria.” (Respondent 4)

To justify the above position, the respondent further supported the position by the following:

“take a look at the employee engagement level as seen by the recent employee survey outcome and you will see how Nigeria and Netherlands match up. My guess is that employees in both countries satisfy the targets. As you say that engaged employees are also top performers, it follows therefore that performance of employees in either country are not suffering from impact of the mode of performance appraisal differentiation”

This in itself is further in line with that of another respondent who argues that:

“Let people be their people but keep eyes on achievement of the company goals irrespective of their individual cultural leanings.” (Respondent 26)

Furthermore, it is evident that although National culture can be considered a major

factor with regards to performance management practices and outcomes, unique in both instances (Nigeria and Netherlands), there is however no substantial proof of the superiority of performance management results as respondents argue that such comparisons are yet still determined relative to expectations which are premised on actual tasks and projects.

This is as a respondent argues that:

“Having lived in both countries, I do not think that either culture encourages/discourages higher/lower productivity. Managers in the respective cultures should be encouraged to listen to the cultural heart beats of their subordinates in awarding performance ratings.” (Respondent 24)

This view corroborates the opinion of another respondent who argued that:

“Since productivity improvement drives organizations, the answer lies in focusing on behaviors that improve overall productivity in the different countries. In other words, companies should be encouraged to listen to cultural pulse of different countries and pull the lever that drives productivity improvements in the countries.” (Respondent 20)

Data from the study indicates that majority of the respondents do not agree to the adoption and application of a universal culture model for the performance management systems but rather opt for the recognition of individual cultures as applicable to each country. The argument here follows that cultures are uniquely designed based on the internal and external contextual factors within which each company or organization finds

itself. Consequently, any attempt to “copy” or adopt a foreign culture could be disastrous for the organization in the long run especially when such is not patterned to the socio-economic, socio-political and traditional way of business or life generally accepted by the interested constituents.

It is therefore in the view of the majority that instead of pushing for a standardization of methods and systems, more should be done as regards identifying ways of effectively boosting cultural strengths thus enhancing adaptability and achieving performance management outcomes geared towards unique National projects and tasks.

The foregoing supports existing literature as expressed by Browaeys and Price (2008) that people do not leave their cultural selves at the door as their national cultures remain with them even as they participate in globalization game. Schneider and Barsoux (2003) particularly advised MNCs to not strictly apply the same performance criteria across different cultures. As Hofstede (2005) also advised, there should be adaptation of performance management programs across national boundaries to align with the cultural leanings of such societies; just as French (2010) recommended a variation in application of human resources practices across national cultures, bearing in mind that countries in themselves are not culturally homogeneous.

4.2 Summary Of Findings

In summary, a total of twenty nine (29) respondents were interviewed and constituted the participants for the study which examined the relationship between national cultures and

the management of performance systems in two countries namely – Nigeria and Netherlands. Four research questions were postulated and formed the focus for the study, with semi structured questions patterned to address the questions.

The study reveals that all the participants believe that national culture plays a role in influencing performance management exercises in the target countries, although at varying degrees of expressed correlation. Based on the data generated, nexus consisting of five factors (as indicated by the codes using NVivo) were observed to be predominantly influential with regards to performance management practices namely: culture, perception, relationship and sentiments, training and competency, and misinterpretation factor.

As a result of the opinions of respondents with regard to the issue of national culture, data shows that most of the respondents support the notion of adapting performance management systems to unique national cultural practices and not to a universal model or standard. The arguments are supportive of performance management practices which follow culture specific features as the participants believe such practices would best serve the interest of the organization within its operational context. As a result of this, the recommendations of the respondents were coded to a node:

Therefore the specific findings of the study are summarized below:

- I. That all the respondents affirm to the strong relationship between national culture and performance management outcomes. Other factors were identified as

perception, relationship and sentiments, training and competency as well as misinterpretation. These findings correlated greatly with existing literature.

- II. The findings show that supervisors are as a result of cultural factors, faced with challenges ranging from inadequate training and exposure levels required to deal with various difficult appraisal events requiring firm decisions and actions due to sentiments and group expectations, to perceptions of what can be considered appropriate or inappropriate given the cultural dispensation. In pursuit of differentiation goal of appraisal framework, there is also the challenge of maintaining a delicate balance in rewarding star performers and low performing staff in such a way that none of the groups are either under-or over-compensated by the outcome. These issues as shown draw upon the nature of the practice of performance management within each cultural context and system.
- III. That given the majority of opinion, national culture can be regarded as a major contributing factor to the uniqueness and distinct characteristic which differentiates outcomes within each cultural and socio-economic context from that of others. That the impact of national culture defines the nature of relationships within and outside the organization with interactions within the organization consistent with those outside the organization.
- IV. That based on the majority of opinion, adapting performance management systems to a universal template or model could be detrimental to the functioning of

relationships within the workplace but that rather, culture should be strengthened and applied uniquely as obtainable within each national context while controlling for negative outcomes as a result of bias and victimization. Furthermore, supervisors and panel members should be trained and exposed to methods and ways of handling difficult conversations especially with regards to ethnicity, religious affiliations and informal groups within the organization. A core principle in dealing with this relates to adhering to organizational and procedural justice principles.

- V. There is also the view that competence improvement for appraisal participants which focuses on enhancing skills in appraisal process itself need not be limited to classroom interventions, but should also include on the job experiences and observations in line with similar model for closing learning gaps that occur in other functional and behavioral situations in the work place. In addition, it was noted that such training efforts have been too skewed in favor of supervisors, such that if participation of all players including employees are to be enhanced, the employees themselves will also benefit from such. It is important to note that participation training for appraisees and appraisers alike is to ensure that employee contributions do not just count in their overall assessment outcome but also seen to count. Accordingly, such processes such as 360-degrees or multi-rater tools was not seen to be helpful as it was seen to be more appropriate for developmental purposes just as required training is not just for the appraisers to be trained in one

instance, but to be supported by regular and constant refresher sessions year on year.

VI. That perceived reluctance for differentiation in communalistic culture could not be attributed to lack of courage by Supervisors in managing difficult conversations, but driven by equally compelling case to promote teamwork and harmony that is at the heart of productivity improvement initiatives within the culture. In essence, could this also mean that there is a rational reason for not being courageous in this sense as it might come with a lot of upheaval in the team and as such turning out as the right thing to do? Again continuous training on decision making has been found to be helpful in addressing this challenge.

VII. There was absence of consensus that full differentiation or moderation as found in Netherlands and Nigeria respectively, affected productivity in either country. Respondents used results of employee engagement levels in both countries to buttress this view bearing in mind that employee engagement has relationship with performance. In this respect, respondents tended to advocate delicate balance between individual and team reward. This is supported by suggestion that possessing the right competence by participants in not just performance assessment process but on cultural awareness as well as on observation and decision making aspects of the exercise will help strike this balance.

- VIII. It was also observed that specific events such as redundancies can influence performance ratings, particularly when the outcome is an input into exit decision considerations. Literature is not rich with information as to whether this occurrence is prevalent in either cultures of individualism or communalism, albeit the situation was not deemed as unusual when performance appraisal that is designed to motivate staff through clarification of objectives and setting of clear future objectives through training and development is at the same time used to assess past performance and distribution of rewards based on outcome of the appraisal itself.
- IX. There is also the position that reward that comes with appraisal need not be in monetary form alone but in the acknowledgement that comes with feedback that contributions of staff in furtherance of teamwork and collaboration has been accounted for even when clear differentiation is made. In other words, such feedback should highlight how team and collaboration behaviors have played a part in the appraisal outcome, differentiation notwithstanding. Absence of the acknowledgement tends to be a reason why the process can be perceived as unfair. Training for key players has been highlighted as possessing the lever that can help address the challenge.

X. Relating to above, differentiation is not seen as somewhat being anti-communalistic culture but that extra efforts are made to recognize team accomplishments as well as individual standout performances that in opinion of panel members makes such contributions clearly outstanding. In essence, while differentiation may be an overall outcome in both cultures, the quantum may be more in individualistic environments. This point summary also largely reflects the performance data that triggered the review in understanding the impact that national culture plays in the appraisal outcome of the reference MNC as it applies in Netherlands and Nigeria.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

5.0 Summary

This study investigated the impact of national cultures on performance management in two countries (Nigeria and Netherlands) using the practice in a multinational corporation as reference. The study examined the existing practices of performance management with emphasis on appraisal process and outcome, assessing the challenges and workings of performance management activities within each nationality as experienced by the respondents. This is with a view to espousing possible effects stemming from unique traditions or systems as a result of national culture. Furthermore, effort was also made to identify applicable processes and systems which based on the data, could be considered effective and universally acceptable in terms of standards and reference.

The findings of the study indicate that national culture does influence the performance appraisal outcome. This is as instances of collaboration based on communal relations was marked as attributes of the Nigerian performance appraisal exercise while individualistic tendencies were observed to characterize the outcomes in the Netherlands.

This follows the argument of Joynt and Warner (1996) in which national cultures are identified as predictors of individual and group behavior since it shapes and characterizes activities which are passed down from generation to generation and also transferred systematically through shared experiences, education and socialization processes. This is also as Hofstede (2001) observes that culture is deeply entrenched in the way of life of any group. Given the features of a nationality, it is a distinguishing factor and therefore shapes behavioral tendencies, values and belief systems in such a way that everyday lives, events, businesses, relationships and daily functions are framed within it.

5.1 Conclusions of the study

The study, based on the findings of the analysis, thus concludes that national culture anchored on the dimensions of individualism vs communalism impacts performance management activities. The conclusion has been drawn from response to the various research questions as summarized below:

R1: What are the factors that shape the outcomes of performance appraisal?

The views of respondents were analyzed with respect to factors which in their opinion grounded in personal experiences, can be said to influence the results of performance management exercises.

Based on inputs from respondents as aggregated using NVivo tool, the identified factors affecting performance appraisal includes culture as a major factor, the perceptions of

interest parties, the training and competency of supervisors and panel members, relationships and sentiments and the misinterpretation of roles and expectations. These correlated with existing literature such as Lowman and Rees (2005), Hofstede (2005), Peterson et al (1995), Brett and Okumura (1998), Gibson (1999), Clugston et al (2000), Mitchell et al (2000) and Kirkman and Shapiro (2001). With respect to impact of national culture itself, 100% of the respondents agreed that it does affect performance management exercises particularly when taken within the context of communalism and individualism dimensions. Related to this is the extent to which deliveries that feed into performance appraisal drive individual contributions and reward versus team contributions and reward. This is as was expressed that attempt to force differentiation in collectivist society like Nigeria as would be done in individualistically inclined Netherlands would hurt rather than help team effectiveness and relationships.

R2: What dilemmas, issues and challenges face leaders and practitioners that carry out performance appraisal exercise?

This follow up research question was generated to test and strengthen response to research question one above as well as identify specific issues and challenges which not just affect the performance appraisal exercise but affects the leaders, supervisors and panel members who carry out and manage such exercises.

Interestingly, similar responses were obtained including such factors relating to cultural, perceptive, sentimental, competency and level of understanding the process performance

management. Attributable to national culture and in line with existing literature (Hofstede, 2005) includes ability of leaders in collectivist cultures to hold difficult conversations relative to those in individualistic societies.

Relating to the above but in what was seen as an external dilemma is impact of such factors as redundancy and divestment exercises that have taken place in Nigeria within the review period. In this regard and with performance appraisal outcome as inputs into the redundancy decision considerations, it was observed that supervisors worked from “answer to question” such as to avoid rating employees too low as to meet criteria for exit out of the company. Further analysis indicated that this dilemma may not have been entirely out of tune with attributes of communalistic cultures who are more at ease with harmonious working relationship than the differentiation goal of performance appraisal. Nonetheless, analysis of this disposition of supervisors showed that rating employees in particular way to avoid being impacted by such staff exit exercises have little impact on the overall profile of employees that eventually get impacted. This is because, notwithstanding the appraisal ranking in communalistic cultures, overall appraisal outcome still shows differentiation in relative terms that eventually feed into the exit decisions. Similarly, is the observation that assignment of roles and responsibilities were more towards specific employees in individualistic societies and more team oriented in the collectivist cultures. This in its own provided its set of dilemmas for panel members.

R3: What impact do national cultures have on application of the performance appraisal systems?

This is somewhat similar to research question one with the goal being to isolate the impact that national culture itself possesses. In addition to the conclusions reached in response to (R1), such impacts as personal relationships also linked to culture was seen as adding another dimension to national culture impacts.

R4: What are the recommended “culturally-fit” models (if any) that can be universally applied to address national culture influences?

The goal of this question was to establish if there are recommendations on how performance appraisal can be applied across different cultures in much the same way that the impact that national cultures may have are addressed. A number of recommendations were made including enhanced participation by employees and raters alike with a view to improving how outcome is perceived as fair as well as assessment of raters themselves on how they have carried out the appraisal exercise. Related to this is recommendation for training of not just raters on the appraisal process as is commonly done, but enhanced to include cultural awareness in the realm of cultural sensitivity interventions, observation and decision making aspects of the exercise as well as ratees themselves in supporting them for their role in the appraisal process.

On culture recognition, it was a unanimous disagreement as to the option or possibility of a universal model of performance management that is sensitive to all cultures, emphasizing rather on the recognition of cultural differences as being a fact of life and how the event can still be used as an advantage such that requirement is to train players on how best to identify and manage culture-bias situations and other seemingly negative aspects of National cultures.

Notwithstanding the specific findings linked to the research questions, the general conclusions that can be linked to the research also includes establishment of the fact that national culture has very strong impact on performance appraisal, thus confirming the findings of Hofstede (1995) and GLOBE Project (e.g. House et al., 1999) cited in Chapter Two that ‘national culture has a strong impact on organisations that can override other organisational (e.g. size, sector) and environmental (e.g. market) influences’ (Peretz and Fried, 2011:2).

As also highlighted, although focus of the reviews appear to have been focused on individualism/communalism, based on the views argued in Chapter Two (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003; Triandis, 2001) that the dimension represents the strongest link with performance management, results of this investigation can also be used to extend impact to other cultural dimensions as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity and long term vs short term.

In conclusion therefore, it follows from above that the link between national culture and performance appraisal has been well and truly established. This is as factors such as

perception, training and competency levels, misinterpretation, relationships and sentiment – all primarily premised on prevailing cultural values or bias – are revealed to strongly affect the outcomes of performance management activities. Furthermore the study concludes, based on the findings of the data analysis, that there is no single standard appropriate enough to be applicable across cultures which can be considered most effective in actualizing optimal performance management outcomes but that a recognition and adaptation of prevailing cultural values and systems into work processes such as performance management activities would further enhance the outcomes of such activities given the possibility of cultural disparities.

Thus and as expressed in Chapter One with respect to establishing contribution of this research, it can be concluded that:

1. Researchers can now broaden and affirm that national cultures influence performance appraisal and management outcomes of organizations operating in different countries when viewed from the cultural perspectives of individualism vs communalism in major parts and by extension power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity and long term vs short term.
2. That the above holds true when the impact is viewed from the national culture lenses of West African countries, for which Nigeria is core and for which research has been hitherto limited. By this conclusion, researchers outside western economies that have been the focus of previous research efforts can also draw similar conclusions and extrapolations.

5.2 Theoretical implications of the conclusion

The findings of the study imply support for theories of national culture as a predictor and with mitigating effects on organizational, group and individual behavioral outcomes. National culture is identified as a pervading factor which structures relations within and outside the organization and as Inkpen and Beamish (1995) opine, the effectiveness and success of any strategy or practice depends heavily on the country-specific attributes of the organization and the distance of such an organization away from home. This is as performance is based on the adaptability and learning process of the organization as well as its ability to assimilate current situational and cultural systems. This argument corroborates that of Edward et al (2004) and their identification of four primary theoretical approaches in the diffusion of culture across borders namely – the rational, the institutional, the cultural and the micro-political approach.

George and Owoyemi (2012:5) opine that ‘it must be stated that these intercultural encounters do not usually bring about mutual understanding, as each group still hold on to their identities as well as their prejudices - for example the notion of all British are diplomatic and all Dutch are stingy while all Chinese look alike still prevail in the minds of people who are now forced to work together in a multinational company’. This is thus reiterating the extent to which cultural identities are framed even by members within the same organization. In adding to this view, Read (1993) observed that no single set of political policy prescription was adequate to suffice for the different socio-cultural and socio-economic systems but that an adaptation of policies based on the uniqueness of

cultural and economic dispensations would achieve better outcomes. Therefore the findings of this study conclusively draw on the identification of national culture as an impacting factor and effect on the activities of performance management within organizations across different nationalities (George and Owoyemi, 2012; Hofstede, 2005; Inkpen & Beamish, 1995). Consequently and as argued by Caliguiri and Stroh (1995:504), ability of MNC to respond to local cultural conditions has been found to have more successful bottom line. They therefore encouraged MNCs to ensure that organizational practices including performance evaluation are consistent with this strategic principle. This in their view, will help employee 'recognize that there are many culturally diverse and equally correct ways of doing things'.

This is not without recognizing the several factors which according to Redman and Wilkinson (2009) that have led managers involved in international business to assume that HR strategies of common principles can be implemented on a worldwide basis.

These factors include the following:

First is the perception of cultural homogeneity with citizens all over the world becoming increasingly westernized with respect to common ways of recruitment and other employee engagement factors.

The second relates to realization by MNCs that establishing operations in new countries is expensive leading to cost standardization and economies of scale. Consequently, there

is the temptation to implement HR processes the same way as other company processes across their global areas of operations.

The third factor involves the challenge in labor costs across countries being a barrier. There is therefore a unique pressure for HR to adopt common pay principles, policies and philosophies even where other functional areas are allowed national or regional adaptation.

Finally, well-known global brand philosophies mean that employees are expected to behave almost the same way and this includes where and what employees need to do to satisfy those brand management requirements.

Redman and Wilkinson also gaining support from Lucas et al (2006) urged managers to look beyond one cultural prism in addressing people process issues bearing in mind that core approaches to HR practice are largely western in nature whilst in reality, operations reflect more than what obtains in western economies (Lupton and Mathieson, 2006).

The foregoing counsel finds literature backing from Hofstede (2001:455) that there is ‘no international convergence cultural values over time’.....adding that ‘values differences between nations described by authors centuries ago are still present today, in spite of continual close contacts. For the next hundred years, countries will remain culturally very diverse’, In this regard and as added by French (2009:279), this view in international business studies ‘will most definitely maintain a key role, particularly as it provides a welcome counterpoint to the proliferation of supposedly universally applicable business

and management solutions.....which often turn out to be far from helpful in reality’. He summarized this view that ‘an awareness of culture as a factor within businesses can at the very least lead to an explicit engagement with the topic – many businesses and management models and theories appear to be culture-blind, their authors seemingly unaware that their ideas have emerged in a particular time and place’.

5.3 Practical implications of the conclusion

The conclusions of the study also bear practical implications for organizational practices especially as regards performance appraisal activities. The study supports a more uniquely cultured tailored application of performance appraisal within each nationality, while however, stressing on the objectives of the process.

This corroborates the argument that organizations operate within a larger cultural context which not only shapes relationships and activities within them but also affects value systems, beliefs and what can be considered acceptable or unacceptable within each structure (Hofstede, 2005; Hartung, 2000; Rajput and Novitskaya, 2013). This also follows the argument of Militaru and Zafir (2012:29) that ‘from both a social and a managerial point of view, each type of culture defines its own style of institutional structure. This is based on an original assembly composed of cultural elements related through specific relationships and they have organizational goals and principles. All these cultural elements form the company’s valorization directions. The structure of the

organizational culture derives from the integrated meanings which operate as a unitary whole and it is also a result of the coherency of the components' messages'. In line with the foregoing, the findings of the study therefore advocates for a more practical and culture sensitive approach in handling performance management activities premised on process learning through feedbacks, understanding and effective communication of intent.

In addition and as indicated during literature review, the research has been premised mainly on Hofstede's dimension of individualism vs communalism but extended to power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity and long vs short term. One of the reasons for adoption of this approach of focusing on communalism vs individualism relates to the fact that both Hofstede and GLOBE project found strong alignment in this area.

However, an interesting aspect of GLOBE project as championed by House et al (2001:499) confirm that national cultures affect the actions and behaviors of leaders; just as national cultures also affect organizational practices. This has been established in this research.

The specific action that therefore follows is in establishing what this research means for GLOBE Project and vice versa. For a start, performance management has been observed as a key organization process that drives employee engagement and behaviour. A number of respondents pointed to requirement of business leaders involved in performance appraisal to recognize the cultural biases and impacts of employees. Such cross cultural

sensitivity competence attribute as well as ability to handle feedback and difficult conversations are missing from the list of six leadership attributes highlighted by the GLOBE project (House et al, 2004) although other attributes as recommended by a number of respondents such as being ‘participative’ and ‘team oriented’, feature prominently. These cultural leadership competencies have been observed by Graen and Hui (1999) as development of global leadership through the improvement of the business leader’s ‘transcultural skills’ that come in the form of the leader being ‘sensitizer’ and ‘synthesizer’. By the former, the writers refer to the degree to which a leader is seen to be incorporating outsider’s opinion of cultural norms, embracing the behaviors from another culture, interpreting and being in conformity with new norms of culture.

Conversely, by a leader possessing the skill of a synthesizer is meant, the ability to incorporate key features of both cultures and generating an alternative culture that both members from the two groups can associate with. Another aspect to this relates to what Earley and Mosakowski (2004) refer to as ‘cultural intelligence’, being the ability of such leaders to read and decode new cultural behavior as clearly as the originators of that behavior. According to them, there are four aspects of this cultural intelligence, made up of ‘knowledge of new cultures, desire to persevere and a belief in one’s ability to succeed, development of culturally appropriate behavior mirroring that of another culture and learning strategies on how to interpret new and unfamiliar behavior’.

From a review of the GLOBE project, it is also clear that similar dilemma that was observed in the course of my study such as impact of factors as redundancies in

influencing employee behavior on organizational processes was also not highlighted. The richness of their study will benefit from further investigation of such factors. Another area of my work that will enhance the GLOBE project or even other cultural studies relate to the fact that emphasis appears to be placed more on role of managers in effective delivery of organizational processes within a cultural context. There is however limited view on the role of subordinates in improving organizational processes. These aspects featured lavishly as recommendation (what should be) by a number of respondents in the course of my research.

Conversely, what does GLOBE project specifically mean for this research? Synthesizing the work of the GLOBE project with outcomes relating to role of leadership effectiveness means those aspects of my work such as team orientation and participation also poses strong literature credibility. This is particularly as some of the research questions from House et al (2001:492) found commonality with what some of my research questions are intended to address. The reference questions by the GLOBE project relate to whether there are 'leader behaviors, attributes and organizational practices that are universally accepted and effective across cultures?' and whether 'the universal and culture-specific aspects of leader behaviors, attributes and organizational practices can be explained in terms of an underlying theory that account for systematic differences across cultures'. Consequently, respondents' views on factors they perceive as affecting performance management, including national culture can be seen as representing 'as is' and how they

wish things were in the form of recommendations on more acceptable performance appraisal practices that will suite both cultures. This in GLOBE terms refers to ‘what should be’. In addition, it is instructive to note as observed by GLOBE, a key aspect of critical success competences for leaders involved in multinational companies will be possession of “cultural intelligence”. This is a direct benefit of the GLOBE project to my research work.

Notwithstanding the above, notice should be made of the caution made by Tung and Verbeke (2010) citing Franke and Richey (2010) against generalizations drawn from studies relating to few number of countries of less than 7 in international business research. As my research is based on use of 2 countries, the application of conclusions may be somewhat hampered, albeit the point must be made that even though two countries have been used, respondents constituted nationals of more than seven countries who also had their respective country of origin cultural lenses as well as applied experiences drawn from their expatriation experiences in several other countries.

Based on the foregoing pointers regarding practical implications of the research, the following observations need to be recognized:

- i. The need to structure performance management systems of the organization in allowing for adaptability and consistency with prevailing cultural values and norms as this would serve to smoothen work relationships, communication and understanding as regards activities such as performance appraisal. This is against the backdrop that

adapting performance management systems to a universal template could be detrimental to the functioning of relationships within the workplace such that culture should be strengthened and applied uniquely as obtainable within each national context while controlling for negative outcomes as a result of bias and victimization.

- ii. The need to effectively communicate and orient staff on performance appraisal goals within the organization such that it is not seen to serve purposes of victimization. This can be achieved when supervisors and panel members are trained and exposed to methods and ways of handling such issues as difficult conversations especially with regards to ethnicity, religious affiliations and informal groups within the organization.

- iii. The expectation for performance appraisal panel members to be trained and adequately informed of appraisal expectations and intent which should be clearly stated in line with other prerogatives premised on performance indices and actual outcomes of organizational activities just as the raters themselves should be assessed on the degree to which they have “performed” their performance appraisals roles and responsibilities. To enhance participation and ownership, the value in extending the training to employees themselves was also stressed.

- iv. Encouragement of relevant features of each national culture in such a way that organizational goals are easily aligned with the cultural tendencies of each nationality (collectivism or individualism) and thus enhance staff performance and productivity.
- v. Need to extend the establishment of the link between national culture and performance management to similar organizational processes such as in managing employee discipline, job evaluation, reward and recognition etc. This is particularly as the link with other cultural dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long vs short term, masculinity vs feminism have also been established in this research effort.

5.4 Suggestions for further studies and research

This research does not make any claims at being exhaustive as regards the area of study which is the impact of national cultures on performance management. As a result of the nature and limitations of human endeavors especially as concerns scientific research, this study is only an aspect of a much larger and relevant topic bothering on national culture and its effect on the performance management activities as observed in Nigeria and Holland. It is herein suggested that further research in the areas pertaining to the variables of the study be taken into consideration such as the influence of national culture on employee performance itself, including such aspects as what Professor Patrick Utomi of

Lagos Business School, has referred to as the battle between competitive communalism and individualism. In addition, from a review of a number of literatures including the GLOBE project, it is clear that similar dilemma that was observed in the course of my study such as impact of factors as redundancies in influencing employee behavior on organizational processes need further study. This will benefit from further investigation of such factors as will also that of implicit evaluation of institutional vs cultural factors that affect work processes such as performance management.

In the course of the study, it was clear that all the respondents either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ to the fact that national cultures affect performance management. The degree of such impact is difficult to determine, particularly in a qualitative exercise such as this. Consequently, further study will benefit from establishing the strength of such relationship.

Similar to the above and while there is no doubt that national cultures affect organizational processes such as performance management, it will appear that the argument need to go further to address in greater details how and when such impacts occur (Leung et al 2001). In the same manner, there is the challenge of determining if the impacts on national culture happen the same way in all situations. For instance, in situations such as during redundancies and related organizational crisis when the clouds of uncertainty surrounds employees in such organizations, might sensitivity to national culture vary or remain the same?

Similarly, an observed methodological limitation exists. This is because, one of my questions asking respondents to comment on degree of their belief that national culture affects performance appraisal would appear to be too leading. The concern was however addressed when response to more indirect questions still highlighted impact of national culture as affecting performance appraisal.

Finally and as alluded to by a number of respondents, there is an emerging practice of some companies now doing away with performance appraisal as is currently practiced and supported by literature and there is the recommendation that it presents a panacea for addressing all the challenges associated with current practice of performance management and the impacts such as national culture. Although, now being practiced by a number of organizations in the sense of evaluating employees in their roles rather than on relative ranking, it remains an area with significant further research opportunity.

Appendix 1.

Interview Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

As a follow up to the data protection and informed consent documentations completed with you, please find below relevant questions that will guide our discussion.

The attached reference analysis of performance history records for Netherlands and Nigeria for the past five years is to form the basis of the interview, the first part of which will be completed by yourself and the second part will be a one to one interview that I will hold with you. The essence of the interview is to investigate the impact that national cultures play in performance appraisal exercise, referencing your experience in Nigeria and Netherlands.

Part A. Please tick as appropriate.

1. National culture* is believed to affect performance appraisal exercise including observed differences in outcome of appraisal exercise in Nigeria and Netherlands respectively as depicted in table and graph below. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with this view.

Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)

Part B. This part will be discussed but will equally suffice if you can write the responses.

- a. In your experience, what are the factors that influence the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises?
- b. If national cultures influence performance appraisal outcome, what are your recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective.

- c. What recommendations (if any) do you have on how the appraisal process can be applied in all national cultures?

Thank you for your help.

Steve Ojeh.

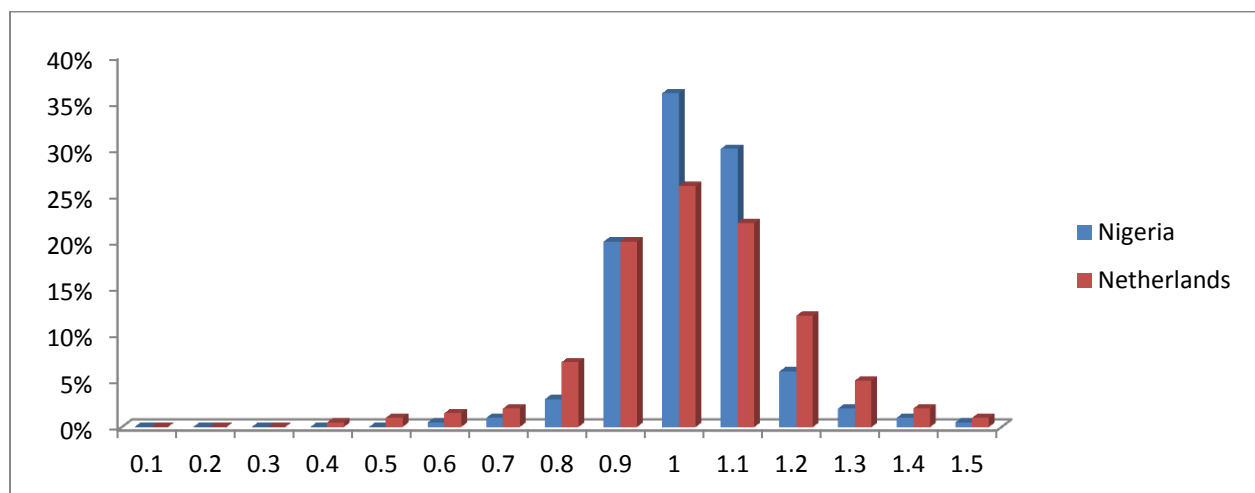
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*National culture is defined as a way of life of a people. Aspects of national culture in this research focus on the dimensions of Individualism vs Communalism. Individualistic cultures (e.g. Netherlands) refer to those societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself. In collectivist cultures (e.g. Nigeria), people strive in integrated, strong, cohesive/harmonious in-groups/relationships.

Summary of Average Individual Performance Factor from 2008 to 2012.

IPF	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5
Nigeria	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.5%	1%	3%	20%	36%	30%	6%	2%	1%	0.5%
Netherlands	0%	0%	0%	0.5%	1%	1.5%	2%	7%	20%	26%	22%	12%	5%	2%	1%

Graphical Representation of Average Individual Performance Factor from 2008 to 2012



Discussion Notes.

- a. In your experience, what are the factors that influence the outcomes of performance appraisal exercises?
 - What issues/challenges faces by panel members
 - What factors explain the outcome between Nigeria and Netherlands

- b. If national cultures influence performance appraisal outcome, what are your recommendations on how such impact can be managed to still achieve the performance appraisal productivity improvement objective.
 - Is any of the countries more productive than the other?
 - Does it hurt/help organisations?

- c. What recommendations (if any) do you have on how the appraisal process can be applied in all national cultures?
 - Any basis to develop a framework that aligns with all cultures?

Disclaimer: This is for research purposes only aimed at understanding the roles that national cultures play in performance management of employees. It is not intended to investigate superiority or otherwise of any national culture against the other.

Appendix 2.

Date

Name

Address

DATA PROTECTION/INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Colleague,

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research on “*investigating the impact of national culture on performance management: a two country review*”. I greatly appreciate your giving up your time in order to help me. I am undertaking this project as part of a Doctorate degree which I am studying with the University of Leicester. The project I am working on is intended to help deepen understanding of the role that national cultures play in performance management for which the practices in Shell as it applies to Netherlands and Nigeria will be used. You were selected to take part in this research because you have experienced performance management practices in both countries.

You can withdraw from the study at any time if you feel that is necessary. If you are happy to take part in the research, however, I will ask you to sign a consent form giving your agreement. You can still withdraw from the research after signing the form. The interview will last for not more than one hour. I will ask you a series of questions and will give you the opportunity to ask me any questions you may have. I would like to reassure you that the information which you provide in the course of the interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence. All data collected will be treated in accordance with ethical codes set out in the British Sociological Guidelines (*or other appropriate ethical guidelines such as the Data Protection Act or other legislation relevant to Nigeria*). In addition, your answers will be unattributed to either yourself or to any organisation which you work for or have worked for.

The data gathered during the interview will be used for my Doctorate thesis and other related situations as may be appropriate such as academic conferences, publications, blogs or expert interview with national and trade press. Your own data will be completely anonymous and you will not be identifiable either by name or reference to any

information that is specific to your person and the data will be aggregated, so that no individual data are presented.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation. If you have any questions at any stage of the project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Ojeh.

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL CULTURE ON PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: A TWO COUNTRY REVIEW

I agree to take part in an interview as part of the above named project. The research has been clearly explained to me and I have read and understood the participant informed consent letter. I understand that by signing the consent form I am agreeing to participate in this research and that I can withdraw from the research at any time. I understand that any information I provide during the interview is confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than the research project outlined above. The data will not be shared with any other organisations.

Name: (please print)

Signature:..... Date:

Appendix 3 – Data Analysis.

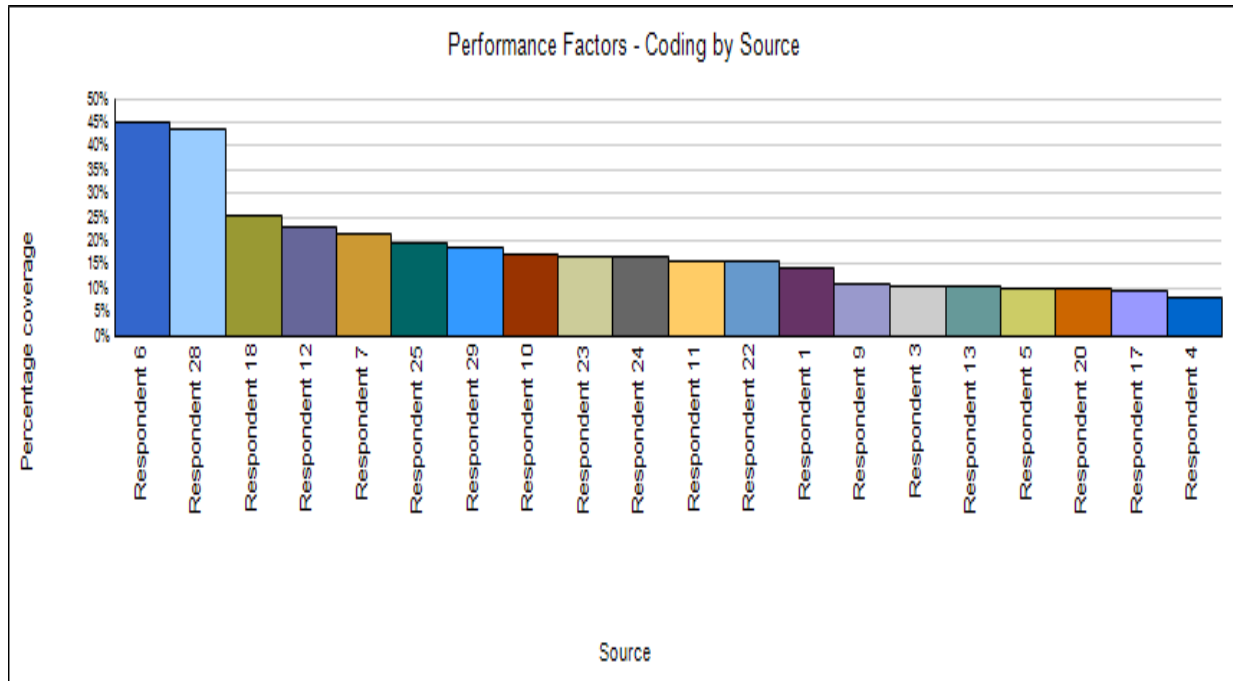


Fig. 1 illustrating the process of coding at source for the parent node – performance factors

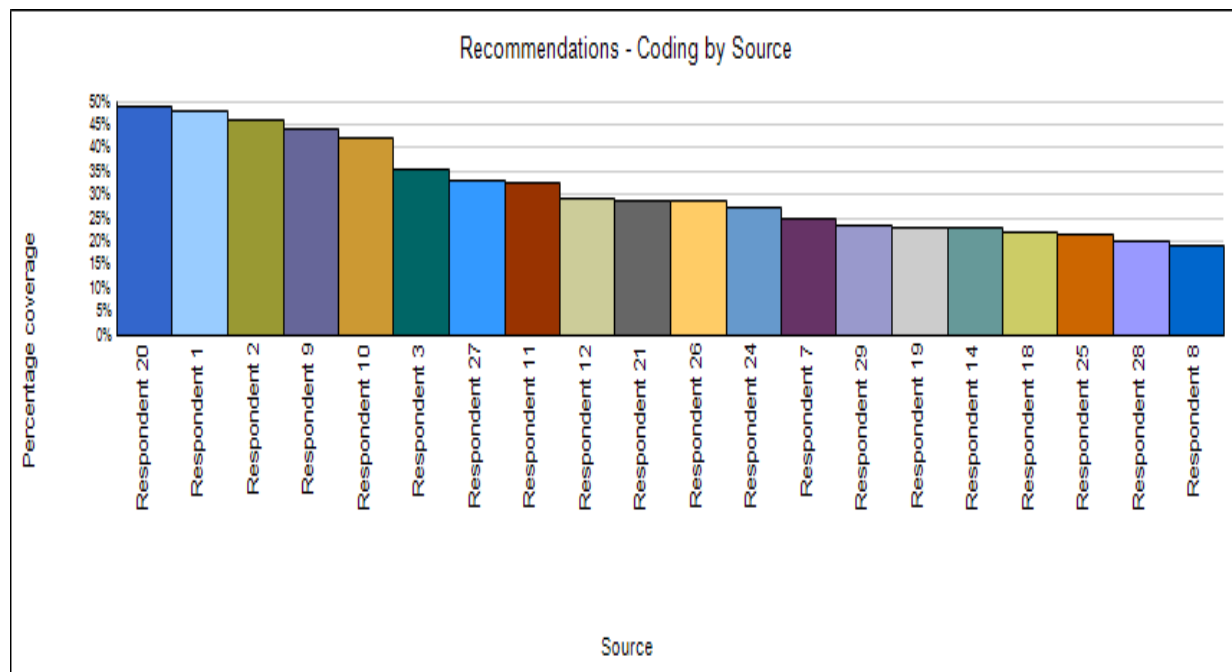


Fig. 2 illustrating the process of coding at source for the parent node – recommendations

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