



Research Article

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A Study on the Elasticity of Time in a Perceived Polychronic Culture

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Abstract

This study sought to measure polychronicity in the Ghanaian public sector. A qualitative approach was applied to the data collection. An improved polychronic attitude scale was used as the overall measure of monochronic/polychronic tendencies. This scale had been developed, tested and modified for the management setting to be utilized in measuring departmental or organizational polychronicity. A convenience selection of 30 participants from the Takoradi Technical University was done, and those selected were interviewed, using a semi-structured interview guide. Creswell and Poth's (2018) Analysis Spiral Plan used was to handle the data, and the findings showed a disposition towards monochronic behavior. There was evidence of generally positive results when the impact of the polychronicity of the participants was evaluated, although participants exhibiting monochronic tendencies benefited the most. All the participants, irrespective of their polychronicity inclination, demonstrated that their time use preference helped them get work done. Again, their communication context aided them to achieve their communication objective. Also, the managements of public sector organizations, knowing the monochronic tendencies of their administrators should strategize and implement policies such as polychronic superiors being tolerant with their subordinates who are likely to be monochronic in their approach to work. In addition, the institution should device and adopt a means of communication which is low context in nature to correspond with the monochronic tendencies of the workers.

Keywords: Monochronic; Polychronic; Takoradi Technial University; Time; Workers

1. Introduction

Time is an inelastic resource such that we cannot obtain an increase in its supply regardless of how high we demand it (Drucker, 1985). This presents a side-by-side relationship between using time

effectively and an individual's work, life and study. The Chinese, in reforming and opening up their country to become a powerful economy in the world, have widely accepted that time is money while effectiveness is life (Yu & Zhu, 2000). Dobbins and Pettman (1997) believe that time equates to life and that how one manages time is how one manages his or her life. According to Dobbins and Pettman (1997), time cannot be managed; rather it is the activities in a person's life that can be managed. An individual's orientation in life largely influences that individual's activities. That is, the individual's traditional background, cultural values, level of education, social setting, and job or career all impact the activities of the individual.

In the field of administration and organization, time is usually perceived as a commodity to be regulated. It is perceived as an immutable constant such that it cannot be stretched or manipulated. This view of time results in utilitarian approaches to time (Cunha & Cunha, 2004). This approach to time is characterized by concepts such as entry time (Miller & Folta, 2002), just-in-time (Harrison, 1992), time compression (Vermeulen & Barkema, 2002), temporary organizing (Engwall *et al.* 2003) and high-velocity environments (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1998).

Berry (2011) avers that Africans, especially within Sub-Saharan Africa, are generally perceived to be one of such polychronic cultures. That is, they do not strictly observe time schedules amongst other indicators of polychronic culture. Ghanaians are included in the polychronic culture by the country's geographical location concerning this classification. In addition, there have been some comments based on experiences and observations of scholars such as Berry (2011), Bayor (2012) and Manu (2006) who have described Ghanaians as also exhibiting this polychronic attitude towards time. Berry (2011) stated that Ghanaians have a calm attitude towards time because events are pointlessly delayed; this lateness is known as 'African Punctuality'. Bayor (2012) also observed that lateness is very much exhibited in Ghanaian society to the extent that it has pervaded the national psyche; Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is corrupted as 'Ghana Man Time' – which means hours or a significant number of minutes are normal allowed to pass scheduled times for activities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is a known perception that Africans in the Sub-Saharan region, including Ghanaians, have a polychronic view and attitude towards time (Hall, 1959). This behavior is exhibited in the formal workplace, especially in public sector institutions such as academic institutions (Bayor, 2015) and ministries (Awulesu, 2015). Manu (2006) avers that workers in all sectors in Ghana need to adopt a better attitude towards time since it is necessary for wealth creation because Ghanaians have become accustomed to the "African Time" slogan – not being punctual at meetings or programs without concrete reasons. Manu further adds that when meetings are not held timeously, there is a domino effect of critical decisions being taken at inopportune times. Manu subsequently deduced that such inept time management or cultural attitude towards time contributes to Africa's bane in economic development.

1.2 Research Questions

This enquiry was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent do the participants give attention to time?
2. How do the participants observe timelines (emphasis on promptness)?

1.3 Context of the Study

The Takoradi Technical University (TTU) is a public sector tertiary educational institution located in Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana. It was first established in April 1954 as a Government Technical Institute and later became Takoradi Polytechnic. The Polytechnic amongst seven other polytechnics have been converted into Technical Universities by an Act of Parliament –Technical

University Act 2016 (Act 922). Thus, the institution is now named “Takoradi Technical University”. The University staff is generally categorized into Teaching and Non-Teaching staff. The Teaching Staff is made of Senior Members and Senior Staff, while the Non-Teaching staff has three main cadres: Senior Members, Senior Staff, and Junior Staff.

The participants of this study comprised administrative staff both Senior Members and Senior Staff. The administrators were chosen for this study due to the nature of the work and the direct impact of polychronicity. This study sought to research the measure of polychronic attitude or behavior in managing time at the workplace focusing on the the administrators (Non-Teaching Senior Members and Senior Staff) in Takoradi Technical University, considering they have regular work hours from 8:00 a. m. to 5:00 p.m. The administrators make up a quarter of the University staff.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Time as a Cultural Grammar*

According to Cunha and Cunha (2004), works in anthropology have revealed that time is not an immutable constant as Isaac Newton assumed much earlier. Rather, as Hall (1981) stipulates, time can be viewed as a cultural grammar. The relevance of the ‘cultural-grammatical’ nature of time becomes very evident and conspicuous when different grammars in this respect interact closely. Amongst them, a group may or may not realize how different their perception and behavior to time is, and also how it affects them. This is because almost everyone within that society, in one way or another other, is exhibiting that general behavior towards time, hence it is perceived as the norm. The effects of this behavior may not be readily perceptible to the group or necessarily be attributed to it until it is contrasted against another culture that exhibits behavior towards the time that is different from theirs.

Intercultural relations reveal cultural traits or behaviors which were previously not perceived by other cultures. It is through these intercultural relations that differences in perception and attitude towards time become exposed to other cultures. There has been some research conducted amongst cultures to find out how organizations engage in their business activities across cultural boundaries which highlight how the variances in viewing time as well as time-related communications across cultures influence workers’ interactions at work (Gannon, 1994; Hall, 1959; Palmer & Schoorman, 1999).

2.2 *Perspectives of Organisational Time*

According to Palmer and Schoorman (1999), researchers within the area of consumer behavior and marketing assume an economic view of time. That is, they perceive time as a tangible commodity and a scarce resource. This orientation is characterized by the notion of viewing time as money. In marketing, timing is of much essence, considering that sellers may just miss their target market to competitors if the sellers do not act on time. It is, therefore, not surprising that these researchers view organizational time from the perspective of a commodity that can be traded. Time to market affects profits realized by service providers. Time spent is very crucial when it comes to meeting deadlines for supplying customers’ orders. It is an essential requirement in addition to a measure of quality and efficiency to survive in the market (Gitanjali, 2012). According to Gross (1987), a person’s time sense usually affects that person’s total approach to using time, the duration and the sequence of time expended on tasks, and the perception of time pressure. Gross adds that a person’s monochronic or polychronic orientation influences how the individual goes about undertaking work assignments. This may be reflected in the individual’s efficiency on the job.

2.3 *Polychronicity*

Originally introduced from years of study by Hall (1959), the polychronicity concept is used to differentiate among several patterns of behavior in dissimilar cultural contexts. In the course of his

later works, Hall and Hall (1987) showed that international businesses were being influenced by differences in polychronic and monochronic time perceptions. Hall (1959) indicates that people in monochronic cultures tend to concentrate on one thing at a time, emphasizing the commitment to time schedules and promptness and do not like interruptions in their work. Individuals in polychronic cultures often change plans easily, do many things at a time, are not prompt, and do not mind interruptions (Lindquist & Kaufman-Scarborough, 2004). Recent organizational studies on polychronicity are generally marked by polychronicity being used as an individual difference variable; however, the concept originated from the study of human cultures. Hall (1959) first defined polychronicity to illustrate the extent to which a culture prefers carrying out many tasks at a time. Through a qualitative study, Hall came out with detailed descriptions of polychronic and monochronic cultures and a multifaceted definition of the term polychronicity.

Researches, based on Hall's definition of polychronicity, are centered on relating the concept of polychronicity to micro levels such as organizations, groups, and individuals. Bluedorn *et al.* (1999) defined polychronicity from the cultural perspective as how people in a culture desire to undertake two or more tasks or events concurrently, coupled with the belief that their preference is the best way to do things. This definition is very much similar to Hall's concept of polychronicity, in that it couples preference with correctness. Onken (1999), also placing polychronicity against the backdrop of a basic and profoundly entrenched cultural dimension, defines polychronicity as a dimension of human time that entails the range of organizing two or more events at a time. Benabou (1999) uses the terms P-time and M-time to refer to polychronic and monochronic behaviors respectively.

2.4 Dimensions of Polychronicity

Hall and Hall (1990) postulate that three distinct dimensions are typically linked to what is referred to as polychronicity: time use preference, context, and time reality. Hall (1983) found that monochronic individuals or cultures could be characterized by the way they view time to be a linear, physical form, and feasible to be apportioned into segments. This interpretation is much consistent with the view of time as being economic, as postulated by the researchers in the consumer behavior and marketing area. On the other hand, polychronic cultures are marked by their inclination to do more than one thing within a period; they find nothing wrong with often shifting among the many things they are engaged in at that period. This behaviour, however, seems to be getting the nod from studies in recent times which acquiesce to this concept of the individual being able to undertake more than one activity in a given period (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Lane, Kaufman & Lindquist, 1989).

2.5 Time Use Preference

Time use preference in terms of polychronicity denotes the degree to which individuals in a culture prefer to undertake simultaneously tasks. Hall (1983) defines two opposing ends of time use preference amongst cultures. Hall postulates that individuals or cultures which are monochronic have a preference for engaging in one task at a time. On the other hand, polychronic individuals or cultures are predisposed to engaging in multiple activities simultaneously. The monochronic time use stresses planning and formation of agenda, with conscious effort exercised in strictly maintaining the planned schedule. The polychronic time use, in contrast, is portrayed in two or more activities being attended to within the same time frame, intermittently switching attention to the activities engaged in.

Kaufman-Scarborough and Lindquist (1999) advances that studies (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Feldman & Hornik, 1981; Lane *et al.*, 1989) perceive polychronic time use preference as more desirable, considering the benefits, as opposed to monochronic time use. To these researchers, the polychronic time use presented a strategy which, when well harnessed, result in outputs that exceed that of the 24 hours of single monochronic activities. This is opposed to the earlier views held about

polychronic time use as being a less-desired time use strategy. The Polychronic Attitude Index was created and tested as a consequence of research by Kaufman *et al.* (1991). Bluedorn *et al.* (1992) updated this scale for the management context so that it could be used to assess organizational or departmental polychronicity. On their part, Palmer and Schoorman (1999) also indicate that although time use favorite remains the most common unit for describing polychronicity, Hall's conceptualization clearly showed polychronicity as involving many facets within culture, and also as a form of communication. According to Hall (1959), time depicts a cultural artifact, a "silent language", communicating import and common cultural dimensions. How a culture reacts to or treats time reveals much about the behavior of the members of that culture. In relating with other cultures, this trait may not be expressed vocally, but other cultures can perceive that behavior as a common trait of that culture.

2.6 High context/low context

According to a study done by Hall and Hall (1990), the cultures of the world can be compared on a scale from high to low context. Information in high context cultures is usually transmitted in an indirect and nonverbal manner. Gestures are very much utilized when an individual is expressing an opinion. The receivers of the information in this setting are required to be very attentive in order to grasp important facts which are inconspicuously expressed. The listener has to read in between the lines. Also information is disseminated in wide networks and impulsively. According to Hall and Hall, this way of communicating has the effect of working fast in disseminating information on many subjects to people. Conversely, the low context cultures communicate information in a direct manner. This brings about that high level of uncertainty avoidance where there is little or no room for toleration for uncertainty or ambiguity in communicating. Here, verbal communication strictly follows a predetermined plan. The result is a slow flow of information. Also people are usually not informed of information on subjects which are not of interest to them.

According to Sorrells (1998) to get an understanding of how context is reflected in cultures, there is need to have knowledge of how communication is processed:

There is information transferred in and out which I will call "A". Plus there is information that is stored in the system that we will call "B". It takes these two to make meaning. It takes both the information that is transferred in and out and the stored information, the information in the context, to make meaning" (Hall, 1976, p. 91).

2.7 Business representation styles

all (1983) also found out more evidence from his studies that how people engaged in associations was much influenced by their context orientation. For the people in high context cultures, relationships hinged on trust such that they are formed slowly and tended to be stable. Also, they differentiate between those who are within their circle and those without. Business relationships develop over time, tend to last long, and are the element around which decisions are made. Rules and procedures are somewhat flexible (as per previous point, relationships are the priority). Identity and status may be disclosed 'non-verbally' and require proper acknowledgement. Learning occurs by observing first and then replicating the process. Accuracy and thoroughness are valued. Hall adds that the low context cultures in this regard form relations comparatively fast, and they terminate their relations rapidly. They do not place emphasis on who is within or outside their circles. Business relationships are mainly practical, are forged fast, and do not last long. Decisions are made after evaluation of facts and data, and they revolve around needs and responsibilities. Rules and procedures are followed closely. Learning occurs by following clear instructions and explanations of others. Speed, efficiency, and goal-orientation are valued.

2.8 Task Instruction Style Preference

Kim *et al.* (1998) states that communication styles in high context cultures are influenced by the tight human relations, well-arranged social hierarchy, and information flows freely through simple messages with deep meanings. In contrast, low context cultures are highly individualised with messages communicated plainly and explicitly to send the exact meaning.

In high-context cultures, as indicated by Hall (1998), instructional messages are implicit, indirect, and require a certain degree of interpretation to be understood. Context is more valuable than words. The use of non-verbal communication (voice, gestures etc.) is very significant. The reliance on written communication is low, and knowledge of “unwritten” rules tends to be assumed. In low-context cultures, instructional messages are explicit, direct, easily understandable by both insiders and outsiders. There is limited use of non-verbal communication. Written communication is common and relied on, and contracts tend to be long and extremely detailed.

Hall (1990) further makes a distinction between “Low” context and “High” context individuals or cultures. The distinction here is in the meanings that individuals or cultures communicate – the low context culture communication has a lot of meaning or information expressed in the content of the message while the high context culture has a lot of the meaning or information embedded in the message. Hall relates polychronic time as a characteristic of high-context cultures and monochronic time as a characteristic of low-context cultures.

2.9 Manner of Response(s) to Business Matters

Hall (1983) states that high context individuals or cultures tend to personalize disagreements. They are sensitive to conflict emanating from another individual’s nonverbal communication. This conflict can impede work progress. It, therefore, has to be resolved in order for work to proceed. Alternatively, such conflicts can be avoided entirely because it can generate into personal danger. In the low context setting, disagreements are not personalized. They usually withdraw from conflict prone situations in order to concentrate on their task. They, however, can be explicit about the behaviour of other people that bother them. Their attention is very much tuned to rational solutions rather than personal ones.

Studies by Hall (1998) recognized the high context cultures manner of association and business matters in their relationships being dependent on trust, building up slowly, and remaining stable. They differentiate between people inside and people outside their business circle. Getting things done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process. Their business structure and authority are centralized; responsibility is at the top hierarchy. The person at the top works for the good of the group. The low context cultures manner of association and business matters are recognized by their relationships beginning and ending quickly. They usually get things done by following procedures and paying attention to the goal. An individual’s identity is rooted in the individual and his/her accomplishments. Their business structure is decentralized; responsibility goes further down – it is not concentrated at the top.

2.10 Perception of Ghanaians as Polychronic

Ghanaians have generally been perceived as having polychronic behavior. The information displayed on the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) website about the business actions that are influenced by culture states that punctuality in Ghanaian business culture is not perceived as a main priority. This statement gives a generalized impression of the attitude of Ghanaians concerning time – Ghanaians are not time-conscious, hence people from other cultures which are time-paced should, by way of this statement, not be too perturbed when they encounter such Ghanaian behavior. It adds that the concept of time in Ghana is looked at in a relaxed and flexible way. This is exhibited especially in the attendance of events (<http://www.gipcghana.com/life-leisure/our-culture.html>).

A report by Awlesu (2015) reveals that the then Minister of Employment and Labour Relations in Ghana was not pleased with the increasing rate of lateness in state institutions. According to the report, the workers in state institutions do not regard work time in a strict sense – they report to work late but leave before the stipulated closing time. Also, because of Hall's original analysis of polychronic cultures, Ghana is classified to have a polychronic culture. Polychronic time systems exist in African, Latin American, the Middle East, Asian, and South American cultures (Adams & Eerde, 2010; Hall, 1990).

However, is it justifiable to classify Ghanaians, and, for that matter, the participants in public institutions as polychronic because of a fairly generalized categorization. Palmer and Schoorman (1999) indicate that Hall's works and observations which resulted in the categorization of polychronic cultures focused on traditional societies or industrialized, mass production-based societies which existed decades back in history, where people were employed in the service of machines. Those cultures probably portrayed the different characteristics of polychronicity. Presently, the scenario could be different from the former. As expressed by Bluedorn (1998), Hall in an interview in which he was asked whether the USA is monochronic or polychronic, admitted that it is more difficult to answer now than when he first did his works on polychronicity. The scenario in Ghana may have changed, hence the need for a study to evaluate how Ghanaians, and for this study, participants of the TTU perceive and manage their time.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study was qualitative. This approach aims to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people assign to them. To enable the researcher to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings articulated concerning the phenomena of perceived polychronic behavior of Ghanaians, particularly public sector workers, the qualitative approach was chosen. The study was descriptive, considering that the study was about human behavior.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population for this study was all staff of the TTU. The target population comprised all Non-teaching staff (Senior Staff and Senior Members) who work full-time at the TTU. These participants numbered one hundred and fifty (150), out of which thirty (30) participants were selected to form the sample size for this study. The target participants were put into two quotas – participants in teaching departments (e.g., Department of Computer Science) and participants in non-teaching departments/offices (e.g., Directorate of Finance). Fifteen participants each from the groups were conveniently selected to give a fair representation to each group.

3.3 Instrumentation

An interview guide was developed by the researchers to elicit the data. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a list of themes and some key questions required to answer the research questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012), that is, the extent to which the participants give attention to time and how the participants observe timelines (emphasis on promptness).

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks. Serene environments were chosen to allow for a free flow of ideas. Before the conduct of each session, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants in observance of their rights to informed consent. Their

anonymity was also assured to afford them the opportunity to give responses that were reflective of their truest perceptions. Each session lasted approximately thirty (30) minutes. Audio recordings and field notes were also taken.

3.5 Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth's (2018) Analysis Spiral Plan, as cited in Asafo-Adjei, Klu and Bukari (2022), was applied to the responses. For Spiral Loop 'A', as depicted in Figure 1, the data were collated and divided into smaller components. Meaningful ideas were derived from the data for Loop "B", and initial interpretations were generated. In terms of Loop "C", the information was organised into categories, themes, and sub-themes based on insights gained from the codes. The results were combined, summarised, and synthesised with the current empirical literature with regard to Loop D.

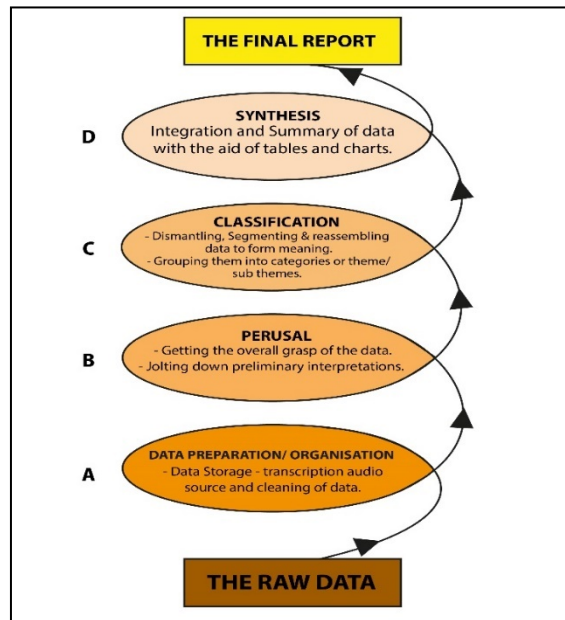


Figure 1: Analysis Spiral Plan
Source: Creswell and Poth, 2018

4. Results and Discussion

The Extent to which the Participants Pay Attention to Time

Time is an essential requirement in addition to a measure of quality and efficiency for organizations to survive in the market (Gitanjali, 2012). Followingly, this domain was explored under two sections (approach to timed projects and the resulting impact of monochronicity/polychronicity on work) in order to ascertain how the participants' pay attention to time.

4.1 Approach to Timed Projects

Universally, how individuals approach timed projects is critical to the success or otherwise of such projects. This domain was, therefore, explored to understand how the participants approach timed

projects at the TTU. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: How participants approach timed projects

Reasons	Explanations
Schedule a plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apportion time (timetable) and proceed in stages 2. Program or condition oneself 3. Schedule time and follow
Simply strive to complete on time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work extra hours to complete 2. Work within the time given 3. Try and meet the deadline 4. Prioritize the project due

The majority of the participants indicated polychronic tendencies by stating that they will simply strive to complete assigned projects in time. Polychronic cultures have an intangible view of time where time is open and flexible. Scheduling and being in time are less important in polychronic cultures, which often lead to a delayed start and end of meetings, tasks, or projects (Brislin & Kim, 2003). Pertaining to scheduling a plan, some of the respondents answered that they schedule plans for assigned projects due at specific times, they apportion time and proceed with tasks in stages, and they condition themselves according to the times they have scheduled and follow them through. These responses are suggestive of monochronic behavior. Monochronic cultures perceive time as tangible, and, hence, engage in careful planning and scheduling to get things done (Kaufman & Lindquist, 1999). It is evident from these responses that even though polychronicity tendencies were mostly expressed by the participants, traces of monochronicity also existed.

4.2 Results of Polychronicity on Work

Closely related to how individuals perceive timed projects is how polychronicity can impact their work. This domain was, therefore, explored, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Being in time as against other concerns

Reasons	Explanations
Important to be in time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Other concerns will not benefit of the organization. 2. Time is time; it is essential. 3. It is good, making one effective and efficient.
Depends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the urgency of the other concerns 2. Importance of other activities on a scale of preference

Most of the participants indicated that it is important to be in time, and it should be a priority (Table 2). It was found that the polychronic behavior of these participants has a positive impact on their work. They explained that it is good, and makes them effective and efficient at work. They also believed that time is essential; it should not be taken by other concerns which will not benefit the organization. Quite a few of the participants expressed that it is dependent on the situation in which they find themselves. To these participants, other urgent concerns can be attended to, and a scale of preference or importance of the activities at stake can be used to decide which activity to attend. These findings are in congruence with the assertions Bluedorn and Denhardt (1988) and Lane *et al.* (1989) who assert that polychronic individuals or cultures are predisposed to engaging in multiple activities simultaneously. That is, polychronic cultures are marked by their inclination to do more than one thing within a period; they find nothing wrong with often shifting among the many things they are engaged in at that period.

4.3 How participants observe timelines

Palmer and Schoorman (1999) aver that time is a tangible commodity, a scarce resource, and money. For these reasons, how the participants observe time at work was explored. The results are presented under three subthemes – reasons for respondents’ context, manner of response(s) to business matters and task instruction style preference.

4.4 Reasons for participants’ context

Individuals from polychronic cultures are considered high context in regard to communication style. High context cultures prefer communicating informally, with a low reliance on written communication (Hall, 1998). A large amount of information is delivered in a non-verbal manner through gestures and facial expressions. This domain was, therefore, explored to identify if same pertains at the TTU; the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants’ explanation of communication style preference

Reasons	Explanations
Written Memos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is documented, and put on record 2. People forget informal (unwritten) messages 3. Used for future reference 4. Appropriate 5. Provides an idea or information on what needs to be done 6. Source of information is authenticated 7. Evidence of dissemination of information 8. No distortion of information
Depends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On what is being communicated 2. On what the required medium is 3. The coverage of the information and content 4. Communication mediums should be varied 5. In the area of communication
Informal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Because Ghanaians do not like reading

As shown in Table 3, most of the participants preferred the written communication. This was found to be suggestive of the low-context communication style of monochronic cultures. These participants stated that organizational communication should be documented. They added that informal communication is not documented, hence people tend to forget. Some of the participants explained that they preferred the written form of communication because it can be used as a reference in the future and are appropriate and authenticated sources of communication. Some of the participants preferred it because it provides evidence of the dissemination of information, and is devoid of distortion. This finding is in opposition to the typical behavior of individuals in polychronic cultures, as they are high context. That is, they prefer communicating informally, with a low reliance on written communication (Hall, 1998).

This preference by most of the participants to communicate through written form coupled with the belief that it is the right way to do so is in consonance with the monochronic low context behavior explained by Kim *et al.* (1998). The monochronic cultures, being highly individualized, prefer communicating plainly and explicitly to send exact meaning. Few of the participants did not have a clear-cut polychronicity inclination concerning the communication context. These participants indicated that they do not have a preferred form of communication, stating that the choice or preference for a communication form is dependent on some factors. The dependent factors encompass what is being communicated, what the required medium is, the coverage of the information and context, and the kind of receiver.

4.5 Business Representation Style

Closely related to the context of communion is individuals' business representation styles. This domain was also explored to comprehend how participants observe timelines. The results are found in Table 4.

Table 4: Participants' description of their business representation style

Reasons	Explanations
Flexibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do not stick to one thing2. Try to accommodate different work contexts and tasks
Adaptive	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To incidence of tasks2. To changes in the job environment3. To situations presented4. To different supervisors
Sequence	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Finish one at a time2. Tackle work tasks in stages
Orderly	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Wants work to flow2. Makes work completion easier3. The nature of the work requires such an approach

The results suggest that both monochronicity and polychronicity tendencies were prevalent. The participants expressed their business representation style to be flexible, explaining that it is not good to stick to one thing. Flexibility allows them to accommodate different work contexts and tasks. Some also described their approach to work as being adaptive to the incidence of tasks, changes in job environment, different kinds of bosses, and as the situation presents itself. Both the flexible and adaptive categories of participants' description of their approach to work are in line with the polychronic behavior (Kim *et al.*, 1998). On the reverse, other participants had an orderly business representation style, explaining that they want their work to flow. They indicated that this style of approach to work made it easier for them to complete their tasks, and, also, the nature of their work demanded such an approach. Their reasons for sequence and orderliness are characteristic of monochronic individuals (Kim *et al.*, 1998).

4.6 Manner of Response(s) to Business Matters

The aspect of the manner in which participants respond to business matters was also investigated. A presentation of the findings is done in Table 5.

The participants expressed polychronic tendencies because they believed that sufficient time should be given for discussion, consensus, and deliberation of business matters. They indicated that working without discussions is difficult, and that it is best practice to incorporate other people's views to bring the best of ideas into shape. They added that immediate decisions end up being bad decisions. Others suggested that business decision-making style depends on the situation – polychronic trait. Others indicated that situations that require re-strategizing need patience and further thought before taking decisions on them while urgent situations require quick actions. This is in consonance with studies by Hall (1998) which revealed that the high context cultures manner of association and business matters is such that their relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, and remain stable. Also, they differentiate between people inside and people outside their business circle, hence getting things done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process and requires patience.

Table 5: Participants’ explanation of the manner of response to business matters

Reasons	Explanations
Depends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the urgency of the situation 2. On the exigencies of the situation 3. On the time frame required to react 4. On the importance of the subject and status of those involved
Sufficient time for discussion, consensus, and deliberation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Difficult working with humans without having discussions 2. A best practice is to incorporate other people’s views 3. Taking immediate decisions ends up in bad decisions and feedback
Require immediate and decisive decision-making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To save time in management

4.7 Task Instruction Style Preference

The task instruction style preference of the participants is also another context indicator in this section, as expressed by Table 6.

Table 6: Participants’ explanation for task instruction style preference

Reasons	Explanations
Explicitly defined tasks and procedures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To know where one is headed towards 2. It eliminates ambiguity 3. To be able to assess work done for the effective execution of tasks
The general idea of what has to be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gives a broad knowledge 2. There is room to come out with ideas that bring about creativity 3. Allows for different methods to be employed
Depends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the weight of the task 2. On how critical the task is 3. On the technical level of the task

From Table 6, the participants were found to exhibit monochronic tendencies based on their preference for being given tasks and procedures being defined explicitly. They revealed that these give them information on where they are headed and eliminate ambiguity, as they can know what their supervisor(s) requires of them. They also explained that it enables them to effectively execute tasks and assess work done. Other participants preferred to be given a general idea of what to do – polychronic tendencies. These participants explained that their preference brings out their creativity and gives them broad knowledge as compared to the explicit definition of tasks or procedures. They added that it does not restrict them; rather, it allows them to employ different methods to work on tasks. These responses reflect the works of Kim *et al.* (1998), in that communication styles in high context (monochronic cultures) are influenced by the tight human relations, well-arranged social hierarchy, and free flow of information through simple messages with deep meanings. In contrast, low context (polychronic cultures) are highly individualized with task instructions and messages communicated plainly and explicitly to send the exact meaning.

5. Conclusion

Contrary to the expected polychronic behaviour, considering that Ghana has been classified to

possess an intangible sense of time, this study concludes that the study participants rather exhibit a tangible view of time. The participants have a monochronic attitude toward time schedules. This is opposed to the findings by Berry (2011) and Baylor (2012) that Ghanaians have a relaxed attitude towards time, and that lateness is very much the norm of the Ghanaian culture.

The findings point to the conclusion that the workers are more of low context behavior. That is, the participants are inclined to a monochronic culture in terms of communication than they are to the polychronic classification presented by Hall (1990) and Adams and Eerde (2010). Kim *et al.* (1998) state that communication styles in high-context cultures are informal and information flows freely through simple messages with deep meanings. However, the workers are mostly monochronic showing a preference for the written form of communication. Therefore, the contextual factors which influence the participants' time perception in terms of observing timelines at work are monochronic oriented. On-time use preference, it was deduced that the monochronic trait is dominant, as opposed to the classified behavior that they are polychronic. The workers prefer to engage in one activity at a time, as well as complete one project before moving on to the other.

Irrespective of the polychronicity inclinations of the public sector participants, there is no significant direct impact on their work output. Thus, the developmental woes of Ghana cannot be directly linked to the supposed polychronic behavior of the citizenry. The implication, therefore, for the institution is that, considering that the workers are predisposed to engage in one activity at a time, it remains that polychronic superiors' influence on the workers may cause them to approach work in that manner which will affect output and quality of work.

6. Recommendations for Practice

Considering the polychronic superiors influence on the workers would likely affect the manner in which their subordinates approach their work, institutions should structure their work systems in such ways that would efficiently utilize the monochronic tendencies of their workers. This way, the workers naturally flow with the polychronicity inclination of their institutions work system. That is, the job situation for most of workers should correlate with the time style preference of the workers to create a natural synergy in work flow. Organizations should create work environments that promote formal means of communication in a fast and accessible means. This would ensure that the workers whose communication style is low-context would thrive and entice even the minority high-context workers to also adopt formal communication. This would benefit the institutions as the immense benefits of written and concise formal communication means would be achieved.

Institutions should organise time management programs which would enable the monochronic workers better express their views and perceptions on the general time management principles. These time management trainings should be tailored to benefit both the workers and the institution through specific recommendations to the timestyles and preferences of the participants, as well as the timestyles of the specific workplace. Finally, institutions can build a validated measurement of polychronicity tendency which would prove as a useful tool to test how workers balance their time; it would be an aid to ascertain whether a worker's own tendencies toward monochronicity or polychronicity actually matches that of the institutional time culture. Supposing a highly polychronic person is employed by an institution which is not flexible to schedules and sequences of activities, that person, most probably, would experience considerable job stress and related productivity issues due to the mismatch.

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