

The Relational Orientation of the African and Performance Management Practices in Selected Institutions in Ghana

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Abstract

It is unsatisfactory to find that in the literature on employee performance appraisal management, enough attention has not been paid to the important factors in the socio-cultural context of the society in which organizations concerned are sited. Employing both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the study explored the influence of certain socio-cultural values on performance appraisal practices in selected institutions in Ghana. Thus, the paper assesses some of the often neglected sociocultural factors and how they serve to moderate employee performance appraisal management in work organisations. It specifically discusses the relational orientation of the African and how it influences performance appraisal practices in organisations. Our hope is to enhance the understanding of researchers and human resource management practitioners of the realities of performance appraisal management within specific sociocultural contexts. The results reveal that in spite of the existence of established formal systems of performance appraisal in the universities studied, most of the officials in charge of appraisal face the challenge of objectivity and fairness due to their relational orientation. Virtually all the factors that pose this challenge to the officials are socio-cultural in nature. The express desire to maintain a good relation with subordinates and colleagues makes officials compromise on fairness and objectivity in appraising their subordinates. According to the study results, some managers believe that it is prudent to overrate one's cordial relation with colleagues and subordinates over a strict adherence to institutional provisions provided one does not break any serious rule.

Keywords: Relational Orientation, Performance Management Practices, Sociocultural Values

1. Background and Literature

The science of management has often had to deal with the administration of human and material resources. As such, a good manager is one who is able to effectively plan, organise, co-ordinate, and direct these sets of resources to achieve organizations' goals. It has been widely recognised in the management literature that organisations' most valuable asset is its human resource. An organisation's ability to attain its goals is therefore highly dependent on how best it is able to manage this resource. This means that all organizations, especially, service organisations rely largely on employee conduct and performance for its success. As such, effectively managing employee job performance has become a core value of management in organisations.

The importance of performance management in organisations cannot be overemphasised. Gruman and Saks (2011) for instance see performance management as a very critical aspect of the efficiency of every organization. The direct relationship between employee job performance and organisational growth has widely been recognised through extensive research (Voslobana, 2012; Gungör, 2011). In a study of 407 customer facing employees of a number of service organizations, Ellinger, Musgrove, Ellinger, Bachrach, Baş & Wang (2013) suggest that investing in social capital by organisations positively influences employees' commitment, their job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviour. This gives credence to the calls to lay emphasis on the social environments of organisations all around the world.

Li and Karakowsky (2001) and Ferris and Treadway (2008) are among the many authors who believe that cultural differences among other things, have significant effect on Human Resource Management practices (and performance evaluation in particular). These culture differentials are noted to cause all kinds of difficulties and in some cases,

inefficiencies in performance management systems implementation in organisations across the globe.

While reward systems have been well written about in the performance management literature over the years, the sociocultural moderators of performance management practices have been under-examined. In line with this concern, the present paper among other things, seeks to address some performance management challenges uncovered in a specific cultural context. This is done with quantitative and qualitative research data gathered on the subject in two institutions of higher learning in Ghana between March and June, 2013. With this, we hope to enhance the understanding of researchers and human resource management practitioners of the realities of performance management within specific sociocultural settings.

Major among the objectives of the study was to examine the implications of socio-cultural values for performance management practices in the study institutions. Following from this, one of the fundamental questions that the research sought to address was: 'what sociocultural values and norms facilitate or hinder performance management practices in organisations'? The present paper discusses the performance management practices as observed in the two institutions and assesses some selected sociocultural values and their implications for performance management in these institutions. It focuses attention on the relational orientation which is one set of sociocultural values common among many African societies.

2. Theoretical Perspective

2.1 The Relational Orientation of African Societies

Relational orientation refers to the modality of man's relationship to other men (Darley & Blankson, 2008). In their work on value orientations, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) identified three divisions of relational orientations: the individualistic, the collateral and the lineal. When the individualistic principle is dominant, individual goals have primacy over the goals of the group. When the collateral principle is dominant, a primacy of the goals and welfare of the laterally extended group prevails. When the lineal principle is dominant, group goals have primacy and continuity of the group through time and ordered positional succession within the group are both crucial (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p. 19). The African social structure is said to be collateral because the greatest concern is for one's group, extended family and/or clan (Dia, 1991). The relation orientation of the African is demonstrated in the respect for elders and the sense of community shared among many Africans (Sofola, 1973; Onwubiko, 1991).

Respect for elders is an important guiding principle for behaviour in Africa (Gyekye, 2003; Nukunya, 2003; Darley & Blankson, 2008). The elderly are seen as the true repositories of wisdom and knowledge, examples for the youth to emulate (Moemeka, 1996), forbearers or gate-keepers of society and treated with deference, respect and dignity. Africans also gravitate toward people because they live in the company of others (Mphahlele, 1962). This view "gives expression to the whole idea of communal responsibility and interdependence; a concept which is the basis of the whole structure of the African's cultural life" (Mphahlele, 1962, p. 112).

Time within the African culture is also socialized. Socialized time is "the use of time that does not sacrifice social duties and human relations on 'the altar' of clock-time punctuality (Hope, 2004; Darley & Blankson, 2008). Time in the African context is "programmed into socio-cultural norms of human behavior and inter-personal relationships" (Onwubiko, 1991, p. 25-27). Time use in Africa reinforces the relational orientation of African cultures. Socialized time here emphasizes interdependence and a shared heritage. Thus, time is most important when one can share it on family and social relations. Using time in social contexts takes precedence over the use of time in other contexts.

2.2 The Relational Context and Performance Management

The relational orientation (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961) of the African and for that matter Ghanaian society presents some challenge for performance management practices in organisations. The African social structure is essentially collateral following Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's theory of value orientation (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p. 19). This is because the greatest concern in the Ghanaian context is for one's group, extended family and/or clan (Dia, 1991). The relational orientation of the African is demonstrated in the respect for elders and the sense of community shared among many Africans (Sofola, 1973; Onwubiko, 1991) and among employees of some Ghanaian universities (Amoah & Afranie, 2014).

Respect for age and for that matter, elders is an important guiding principle of the behaviour of people both at home and at work. The elderly are seen as the true repositories of wisdom and knowledge. They are examples in society for the young to emulate (Moemeka, 1996); they are treated with deference, respect and dignity. This position and

perception about the elderly in the society is generally shared among both managerial and non-managerial personnel in Ghana (Amoah & Afranie, 2014); this orientation presents a challenge for human resource management practitioners, particularly, the young.

To the African, a man is what he is because he lives in the company of others (Anyanwa, 1983; Mphahlele, 1962). As such, they are said to gravitate toward people. This view "gives expression to the whole idea of communal responsibility and interdependence: a concept which is the basis of the whole structure of the African's cultural life" (Mphahlele, 1962, p. 112). This collectivistic view has been extended and presented in detail by Otite (1978) in the context of reciprocal relationships. Otite describes a myriad reciprocal relationship and posits that "the interplay between the moral element and the principle of reciprocal relationships is critical in distinguishing what is African" (cited in Darley & Blankson, 2008, p. 377).

In line with Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck's (1961) theoretical position, there are clearly some observed cultural dimensions common to the Africans (Grzeda & Assogbavi, 1999). The commonalities as observed by Darley and Blankson, (2008) include:

a hierarchical social structure, the importance of kinship, the primacy of the group, time orientation (Safavi & Tweddell, 1990), the driving norms of human interdependence, virtue of symbiosis and reciprocity (Mangaliso, 2001), the belief in ancestry and existence of a supreme being (Mwamwenda, 1999), and the value attached to the extended family (Darley & Blankson, 2008, p. 381).

As advanced earlier in Amoah and Afranie (2014), an argument for cultural relatedness across the African sub – region has been strongly made by Mbiti (1990) and Ahiauzu (1986). To Ahiauzu (1986), African culture differs from other cultures in the way Africans construct meanings, negotiate social contexts and make sense of their environment (Darley & Blankson, 2008, p. 380). It is on this basis that a reference is made to an African cultural orientation in this paper.

The reciprocal relationship described in Otite (1978, p. 10) is what is exemplified between personnel in administrative and academic positions in some Ghanaian universities as expressed in Amoah and Afranie (2014). The collegium and the collegial atmosphere in these universities are reinforced by the principle of reciprocity. This also finds explanation in the fact that in Africa and in Ghana, man is what he is because he lives in the company of others (Anyanwa, 1983; Mphahlele, 1962). As is the case with Ubuntu among some southern Africans, Ghanaians whether at work or in other social settings gravitate toward people. Man is expected in these contexts to harness and develop in kindness, compassion and goodness in his general approach to life.

3. Methods of Research

The study employed quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method adopted is questionnaire survey while the qualitative approach adopted is in– depth interviews of selected managerial personnel and non-managerial staff of the institutions.

A multi-stage sampling design was adopted. This combined both non-probability and probability techniques to select the sample. In the first instance, the two institutions were selected from a list of accredited universities in Ghana with exclusion criteria. Thus, only universities which were accredited before 2010 by the Ghana Accreditation Board were included in the categories to be sampled. These universities were placed in two categories (private and public) and through the simple random technique, two universities (University of Ghana and the Valley View University) were selected eventually to represent both public and private institutions respectively. In the second instance, the units selected consisted also of the actual units of analysis for the study (Kumekpor, 2002, p. 150) who are the managerial and non-managerial personnel of the institutions. This was because the sampling frame was considered very elaborate and involved essentially scattered units. As such, this approach was envisaged to reduce the distance between the samples and further minimise cost.

The total sample for the questionnaire survey was one hundred and forty-four (144) personnel. In the survey, two different but similar instruments were developed for the managerial and non-managerial groups of the institutions. In all, 134 questionnaires were retrieved which however did not have any significant effect on the study and its outcomes. The 134 returned questionnaires netted a response rate of 93.05%.

For its qualitative nature, the key informant interviews employed a multiple of non-probability sampling techniques. They included quota, purposive, and snowballing techniques. In all, twenty-five (25) personnel were interviewed. Of this number, 15 were managerial and 10 non-managerial personnel from the two institutions. The interviews covered a broad range of issues and probing was used as a technique to stimulate discussion and also to obtain more information on the subject.

The study dealt with norms, attitudes and socio-cultural values and practices, and in such studies a mix research

approach is argued to always yield better results (Agyeman, Brown & Awusabo-Asare, 1990). Agyeman et al. (1990) recognise that the adoption of a single research instrument in studies of this nature has shortcomings. In the present study, while the questionnaire survey was employed to enable us cover a wide range of subjects and also generalise the findings to the population, the in-depth interviews were considered flexible enough to help follow leads on emergent issues. This research design was chosen to essentially reduce the deficiencies that are bound to be caused by the use of a single research approach.

4. Results and Discussion

The managerial personnel in this study included heads of departments (and residential halls), directors, deans, registrars/faculty officers and finance officers among others. The non –managerial personnel also included lecturers, administrative assistants, teaching assistants, secretaries, librarians, lab technicians and messengers. The managerial personnel in the study comprised 42 females and 25 males, while the non-managerial respondents included 40 females and 27 males. Seventy-eight (78) percent of the managerial personnel were aged between 35 and 54 years, and 15% between 55 to 64 years.

4.1 Performance Management in the study Institutions

Both the public and the private universities studied (University of Ghana & Valley View University) have established units which assess performance of staff under the charge of their human resource departments. It is worth mentioning that at the time of the survey, the University of Ghana had in place a well-established system of appraising the performance of all the staff (senior members, senior and junior staff). The private institution however had no such approach or system for its senior and junior staff. At the time of the study, a proposal towards establishing a well –structured appraisal system for all workers of the university was then being considered. The only existing system assessed senior members; leaving the senior and junior staff appraisal totally to the subjective control and evaluation of supervisors and departmental heads.

Despite the existence of the formal appraisal methods, managerial personnel in both institutions indicated that they sometimes face enormous challenges in giving a fair appraisal of their subordinates. The outcome of the survey shows that while 20.9% of the managerial personnel indicated that they never faced challenges in appraising the performance of subordinates, 79% find employee performance appraisal challenging. Of these, 21% indicated that they very often faced challenges in giving fair and truthful appraisals of personnel in their departments. Many of the factors accounting for this were found to be sociocultural in nature which is in line with earlier findings by Aluko (2003) in Nigeria. Aluko in his study found performance in textile firms in Lagos, Asaba and Kano to be highly influenced by sociocultural values.

Several interconnected and interwoven factors were found to account for the above in the present study. In line with the primary focus of this paper however, factors related to the relational orientation as espoused earlier are those given attention. The first to be considered among the many factors is the express desire to maintain a good working environment and a good relation with subordinates and colleagues. The second factor is the subjective nature of (or flaw in) the performance appraisal tool itself. The third factor has to do with indiscipline which is reinforced by the subjective nature of the process. The fourth and final to be considered is what has been termed the general lack of courage which is also reinforced by the desire and need to maintain good relationships.

4.1.1 Desire to maintain good work relations

The first factor takes us back to the lateral relational orientation of the African and for that matter, the Ghanaian. Where for example, a head is so closely related to the subordinates, he ignores whatever wrong they are doing. Where a head is partisan in a conflict settling between two subordinates, he or she may favour the one closely related to him or her. Here, some managers (but of course not all) believe that it is prudent to overrate one's cordial relation with colleagues and subordinates over a strict adherence to institutional provisions provided one does not break any serious rule. The key informant interviews revealed that there is always the tendency among personnel to avoid trouble or confrontation with colleagues and subordinates.

Most workers in the two institutions do not think appraisals are fair especially when a superior writes a comment they do not like. Well over two –thirds of all the managers interviewed (73%) indicated that in appraising the performance of subordinates, their feedbacks are often misconstrued as attacks on the person rather than on the observed behaviour. To some of the managerial respondents the problem partly lies in the fact that workers (subordinates and colleagues) see the appraisals, read and comment /sign before they are sent to the HR directorate.

A hall executive in her response to a question on her general assessment of performance appraisal in her position said,

Well, from the little experience I have, it is very funny in this University; especially when it comes to junior and senior staff appraisals. You know, the workforce of the University itself, I don't know whether it is lack of education or what... basically people feel that at all cost they must be given a good appraisal. People feel that, I mean, irrespective of their performance they deserve a good grade, especially when you have very cordial relationship with them.

In line with the observation here, one assistant registrar at the private university stated that,

"if one happens to give somebody a bad appraisal and he/she is not from the same ethnic group or origin, the workers feel that one did this because of nepotism or some vilification".

It is worth stating that these accusations were sometimes found to be very parallel to the cases at hand. For this reason, a lot of superiors were found to normally want to write good things about their subordinates to avoid any form of confrontations and allegations of unequal treatment. Consequently, even in cases where queries have been gathered in the worker's file, he/she receives a good appraisal during the ultimate appraisal.

4.1.2 Subjective evaluation of performance

To many of the managerial personnel at the University of Ghana, the performance appraisal system currently in place is very subjective. They variously believe that the appraisal document leaves too much room to the subjective evaluation of the superior. Some human resource management personnel concur to this as could be observed in the following quote:

Sometimes when the performance appraisal policy is not very objective, it becomes a difficult task. It has to be designed in such a way that, when you set your goals, you know that if you do this, I will give you 5/5, if you do this I will give you 3/5, what do you think? We all have a clear understanding of how much you get when you do your work like this. It makes the job very easy, but currently the way the job is, it leaves you with a lot of room to think. It says you should rate the person from seventy to hundred, what did he do to get there? So you sit there thinking.

In line with these widely recognised flaws, the University of Ghana is currently revising its performance evaluation scale. The Valley View University is also developing new tools and modules for effective performance appraisal of their personnel due to emerging challenges, some of which have been recognised here.

4.1.3 General indiscipline within the system

Some managerial personnel were quick to express their frustration at the general indiscipline they have observed. One head stated during the interview on the subject of performance management that "others do things in other units and are not queried and so you find your subordinates and colleagues complain when you try to make things work." This undermines performance management practices in the organisations. It is important to mention here that this concern was observed only among personnel of the public institution. The reason for this relationship could however not be clearly established in the present data.

According to a section of these respondents, there is a general lack of conformity to regulations in certain sections of the university. As such, when workers see this, they do not understand why a particular head of department alone would want to strictly enforce the rules of the Organisation.

4.1.4 Lack of courage among managerial personnel

As has been stated earlier, there is always the tendency to avoid trouble or any form of confrontation with colleagues and subordinates at the workplace. When it comes to having the courage to write negative things about colleagues that heads of departments see as ineffective, there is the general tendency to avoid doing so. Why is it so? People at home and at the work place generally strive to avoid confrontations and for that matter try to maintain the already existing good relationship or foster new ones. For this reason, sometimes the manager feels that well, "let me give this person sometime to reform". Of course, sometimes they do not expect any good out of it because they know the persons. Yet this persistently goes on because of the narrowness of space within which the subordinates and the superiors have to negotiate for their self-expression. These are people who see and interact with each other every day. As one goes out

he/she sees the other, as he/she comes in he/she meets the other and so forth. To some of the managerial personnel interviewed, "one must take account of all these and the need to co-operate with the persons in other things". In sum, they say, 'we are a community of people'.

Considering all of these and many other things, some managers in the two universities were found to let a lot of unwholesome conduct pass, although these are not things they would want to accept in strict managerial terms. As one head of department stated in the key informant interview, "you can't blame us; we need to be accommodating because of where we find ourselves." He further emphasised that "in managing performance, an important problem with a lot of us around here is the lack of courage".

4.2 Plea for Clemency and Performance Management

As could be noticed throughout our discussions, culture permeates every level and fibre of society including formal organizations. Within the organization, it is a common practice to find subordinates in trouble bringing not another subordinate but a middle management or top management personnel (or senior members in the case of the University) that they happen to know or someone has introduced them to. They bring him or her to beg on their behalf. This as has been noted by Akuoko (2008) is a practice among Ghanaian traditional societies; and has been transferred into bureaucratic establishments (Amoah & Afranie, 2014). This, according to the respondents in the key informant interviews, happens all the time.

Similar to the general practice in some Ghanaian societies, the practice of *dwanetoea* takes place to the extent that, in cases where even crimes have been committed, sometimes very heinous crimes, suddenly one sees the offender bringing an entourage of elderly and senior people in the system to come and plead on his/her behalf (Amoah & Afranie, 2014). That is how far the concept goes. The following quotation puts the discussion of the practice in perspective.

In my case, I have so many examples to share with you in this position. Sometimes when you appraise subordinates and they are not pleased with it, they go about complaining to other senior members. There are even instances where they photocopy the appraisal documents / forms and go and give it to some senior lecturers and professors to come and do something about it. Your 'dwanetoea thing' always plays out here. These other senior members come pleading with you to rescind your comments about the worker in question. I find it very difficult to understand and I am happy you want to investigate and write about things like these (Principal Administrative Assistant, UG).

During the interviews, a lot of personnel shared their experiences with the practice of *dwanetoea*. As has been mentioned earlier, some of these personnel find the practice frustrating and unfavourable to effective performance management practices in the universities. Similar to the above quote, one head of department at VVU did not mince words in making known her frustrations with the practice:

They come begging you and saying that 'if you fail to change your comments, he /she would not get promotion...' You are not working well, not punctual and all that whilst somebody else is punctual. If I am going to give all of you 'excellent or very good' then what is there to work for? Why should the other person work hard?

Frustration among personnel such as the one expressed in this interview response was the case with many of the personnel in both universities.

While some managers would not give in to pleadings for misconducts and non –performance, others would succumb to have their peace. In line with this, a head of department at the public university expressed the following sentiment:

In some of the departments and units here, we have assigned senior members to supervise and appraise performance there. What usually happens is that these heads bring queries which I keep here but when it comes to the real appraisals in the end they give them better grades and write wonderful comments about them.

During the key informant interviews, the sentiments expressed in the preceding quote were further explored. The general response was that they (the heads of the sub units) do not want to be insulted by the subordinates; thus their good appraisals for everyone to live in peace.

Another head of department at the private university when interviewed on the concept of *dwanetoea* indicated her understanding and experience with the practice in the university. *Dwanetoea*, according to this and many other respondents, is a common practice among employees of VVU. This respondent particularly describes the practice as sometimes very frustrating. To quote this head of department,

Workers sometimes use the pastors but that doesn't really matter. Depending on the case involved and the sort of person, they just get someone in or out of the system that you the superior respect so much and try to convince you to soften your stands. It is common, they do this and sometimes it is destructive. You know what you should do given the circumstance but you do otherwise. That is how difficult things are sometimes here but it looks as if everything is alright because no one is talking about it.

What further sustains and heightens the practice of *dwanetoo* in the Universities is workers knowledge of the fact that performance appraisals are used in taking critical decisions in the institutions. The following expression by a worker puts the current argument in perspective:

Before I came to this department, I worked in one of the residential halls (I have told you earlier). I gave appraisal to someone who complained; ...I was there one day and someone came to me from the Registry where I sent the appraisal, asking me to reconsider the appraisal because the person concerned would not get promoted should my appraisal remain as it is. This is a serious matter I am telling you about.

To the extent that human resource management personnel of the organisation could be involved in this activity leaves much to be desired.

4.3 Religiosity and Performance Management

We posit based on the study results that Ghanaian religiosity is very open to be observed and very rampant in the work place. This observation provides evidence to re-affirm already existing evidence showing that the hitherto distinct line between religious beliefs and work (Gunther, 2001) appears to be blurring (Roundy, 2009).

It is very common to find idle secretaries and cleaners reading the Bible and listening to religious (especially, Christian) messages on a casual walkabout on the two University campuses. Notwithstanding the fact that this could be observed on the campuses and in the offices of the two institutions studied, the degree of this religious manifestations were observed to be high among employees of the private University. The act of religiousness is very open and rampant in the speech and courtesies of personnel at the Valley View University. The most probable but obviously not the only explanation is that the private university studied is a Christian academic institution. Personnel often prayed and worshipped together. On one of our visits to the VVU during the data collection, we had to spend close to 30 minutes waiting at the gate of one of the departments of the central administration because personnel of the department were having morning devotion during working hours.

It is important to point out here again that the level of religiosity and religious involvement may differ depending on the thinking and orientation of the personnel. What is crucial in the work is the possible influence of religion on appraisal management in the universities. In the mind of the average Ghanaian worker, a religious/Christian manager is supposed to be considerate, loving and not expected to make any decisions which can bring hardship to other human beings. That is unchristian, no matter the circumstances in which the manager is taking that decision. Despite the widespread involvement in religious activities and open display of religiousness, some personnel would not hide their dissenting opinion on the subject at the workplace. One of the managerial personnel registered his difficulty in understanding why religious activities and ceremonies should be instituted among work groups. He said in an interview,

Perhaps I shouldn't say this but the Deans office is not far from here; and because of his beliefs he has instituted this morning prayer and devotion session among the workers here. I haven't done that here not because I am not religious but because I think that religion is a personal affair, people find their own ways to relate with their God, it is not for me or anyone to institutionalize that. If you do this and they see you as their religious leader they behave anyhow and you can't discipline them or give them negative appraisal because you don't discipline members of your faith.

Religiosity and specially fellowshipping with the workgroup has been found to have several implications for work and organisational behaviour (Roundy, 2009).

Among other things, the interviews in this study revealed a certain belief among the religious practitioners (groups and bodies) that to be religious is to be good. To be good is also to be accommodating, to be forgiving, tolerant, patient and above all, consistent in how one deals with people. It would therefore appear to workers to be incongruous that one is devoted so closely to God and yet unforgiving when a mistake or offence has been committed at work. This was noted to pose a great challenge to office holders in their effort to effectively implement established performance management standards.

4.4 Time Responsiveness among Personnel

The survey and observation revealed that a majority of workers are not time responsive. Over a half of the managerial personnel (51%) described workers' attitude to time as poor which in turn affects job performance in the departments in question. Respondents in some of these departments indicated delays and failure in meeting set deadlines among others as some of the harmful effects they face due to workers poor attitude to time. Despite these known effects, managerial personnel and for that matter supervisors are unable to enforce clock-time punctuality among the employees. Some of these personnel claim the circumstances and for that matter contexts present a difficulty.

A further enquiry into the causes and reasons for workers inability to keep to 'clocked times' in the universities revealed interesting responses with insightful interpretations. Similar to earlier research outcomes in St. Lucia (Hope, 2004) a few of the workers in the present study blame this on the poor transport situation (traffic) in the city, while to a majority, they cannot sacrifice their social duties and family concerns for the need to be punctual. This concern is much in line with an earlier description of the African conception of time as expressed by Darley and Blankson (2008). Darley and Blankson posit that time in the African context is much socialised. By citing Onwubiko, (1991), they describe socialised time as "the use of time that does not sacrifice social duties and human relations on 'the altar' of clock-time punctuality" (Onwubiko, 1991, p. 25-27 cited in Darley & Blankson, 2008, p. 376). Here time is said to be programmed into the sociocultural norm and interpersonal relationships. The use of time in the social context as argued by Darley and Blankson "takes precedence over the use of time in other contexts" (2008, p. 376).

The social description of time and its use cannot be discussed in isolation from the human relational orientation of the human race as identified by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) identified three types of relational orientations which include the individualistic, the collateral and the lineal relational orientation. As explained by Darley and Blankson (2008), whenever the individualistic principle of relation is dominant, "individual goals have primacy over the goals of the group" and when the collateral principle of relation as outlined by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) is dominant, "a primacy of the goals and welfare of the laterally extended group prevails" over that of the individual (Darley & Blankson, 2008, p. 374 -376). However, when the lineal principle is dominant, group goals have primacy and continuity of the group through time and ordered positional succession within the group are both crucial (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p. 19).

Managers from the same socio-cultural environment with a similar understanding of time find it difficult in strictly tying subordinates to 'clock-time' because they are, or at least, are expected to be aware and conscious of the context.

5. Conclusion

What we essentially sought to do in this paper is to bring to the fore and examine some of the often neglected sociocultural factors that serve to moderate employee performance and its management in organisations. We paid particular attention to the relational orientation of the African (and for that matter, the Ghanaian) and how it influences performance management practices in organisations. Our hope in this is to enhance the understanding and awareness levels of researchers and human resource management practitioners about the realities of performance management within specific socio-cultural settings. The results of the study show, that in spite of the fact that the two universities studied have established formal systems of performance appraisal, most of the officials in charge of the appraisal face the challenge of objectivity and fairness due to their relational orientation. The factors that pose such a challenge to these officials are largely socio-cultural in nature, which is in line with earlier findings by Aluko (2003) in Nigeria. Most officials in charge of appraisal are very careful in giving negative scores to deserving subordinates, because that can affect their most cherished good relationships with the subordinates. In other words, their express desire to maintain a good relation with subordinates and colleagues make them compromise on fairness and objectivity in appraising their subordinates. Some managers believe that it is prudent to overrate one's cordial relation with colleagues and subordinates over a strict adherence to institutional provisions provided one does not break any serious rule.

There is also the issue of loopholes in the existing performance appraisal tool itself, which also make it easy for the influence of the relational factors to thrive. There is also lack of uniformity in the enforcement of discipline across units of the universities. Those who strictly enforce discipline in the appraisal management are tagged wicked because managers of other units are not doing same. The strict adherence officer even faces more challenges and criticisms when he is known to be a Christian. The subordinates expect the Christian leader to be considerate and compassionate and not to take decisions that can affect another person negatively. The use of colleagues of managers and highly respected persons in society to plead on behalf of subordinates who have been appraised negatively to rescind his/her decision is another social factor affecting appraisal management in the institutions. They bring him or her to beg on their behalf. This

as has been noted by Akuoko (2008) is a practice among Ghanaian traditional societies; and has been transferred into bureaucratic establishments (Amoah & Afranie, 2014).

Thus, the study has confirmed the relational orientation, particularly the lateral orientation as one important factor affecting performance management in the universities. As recognized elsewhere by Sofola (1973) and Onwubiko (1991), the relational orientation here is demonstrated largely in the sense of community shared among members of the organisations. This is an important guiding principle of behaviour and presents a daunting challenge for HR practitioners in these environments. The results and discussions reveal that when it comes to having the courage to write negative things about colleagues who managerial personnel see as ineffective, there is the general tendency among all the heads to avoid doing so. This is explained by the fact that in the society and at work, people generally strive to avoid confrontations with others, or actions that can mar their relationship with others. As such, they try to maintain already existing good relationships or try to forge new ones. In line with these considerations and as a result of other socio-cultural factors, managerial personnel sometimes let some unacceptable conduct pass, even though they would not want to accept these under strict managerial terms.

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