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Organizational Culture and Internet 4.0 Adoption in African Enterprises: CEO Insights

Dr. Tosin Ekundayo

A Case Study of Global Leadership Competencies of Chinese Executives in Chinese Multinational Companies Investing in African Countries

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Regina Huber

Investigating Linguistic Demands in African Corporations: The Role of English and Wolof Proficiencies in Senegal

Khadi Diallo & Dr. Tosin Ekundayo

OD

Managing Editor's Note

We are pleased to be publishing Volume 6, Issue 1 of the Organization Leadership & Development Quarterly (OLDQ). The year 2023 has been an exciting year for the Centre for Organization Leadership and Development (COLD) and the Organization Leadership and Development Network (OLDN). Given the OD field's evidence-based practice, we published the Change & Transformation Handbook on March 31, 2023. In addition, we completed the project on the Change & Transformation Quotient for CEOs & Directors in Africa, a publication which was supported by Benedictine University (USA) and International Society for Organization Development & Change (ISODC).

I am humbled to be the Managing Editor of the OLDQ, the premier Organization Development (OD) journal in Africa. As an international journal, we receive articles from scholar-practitioners across the globe.

In this Issue, Dr. Tosin Ekundayo writes on Organizational Culture and Internet 4.0 Adoption in African Enterprises. This research article provides CEO insights that contribute to understanding the cultural factors that promote or impede technology adoption in African enterprises. The research informs OD strategies in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Another article by Xuanwei Cui explores global leadership competencies of Chinese executives in Chinese multinational companies investing in Africa. The article seeks to improve Chinese leaders' global leadership competencies.

I collaborated with Patrick A. Trottier to come up with an article on Ubuntu philosophy and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory as foundations of African OD. We postulate that Ubuntu and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory, through the practice of OD, facilitate the manifestation of the human spirit and humanistic principles and values. Yvonne Kanjanda's article looked at culture shift for emancipation and empowerment of women in Africa. The article references the unadulterated 'China chemadzimai' and 'Choto chemadzimai' philosophies as models for the culture shift. The integration of African cultural traditions and Ubuntu philosophy enriches the culture shift by extolling individual acts of giving power and rights to women and amplifying their individuation.

Regina Huber wrote on 'What could be the new business consciousness of the future look like for Africa?' She called for the creation of new, more humane models built on ancient Oneness wisdom, rather than copying models from elsewhere, can bring true transformation. An article by Khadi Diallo investigated linguistic demands in African corporations. This study focused on Senegalese companies with specific emphasis on English and Wolof languages.

We invite you to contribute to OLDQ's upcoming publications with a view to advance the science, theory, practice, and values of OD.

Dr. Justine Chinoperekweyi

OLDQ Managing Editor

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Organizational Culture and Internet 4.0 Adoption in African Enterprises: CEO Insights



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Abstract

As Internet 4.0 technologies like AI, IoT, big data, blockchain, and 5G reshape industries globally, African enterprises must adapt to this evolving landscape. Organizational culture is a key factor influencing the successful adoption of these technologies. However, there is limited empirical evidence and insights from top executives regarding the relationship between organizational culture and technology adoption in the African context. This study explores the nexus between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises through focus group discussions with CEOs from ten (10) diverse organizations across the continent. The focus group discussions were conducted to gather qualitative data from CEOs, delving into cultural attributes influencing technology adoption and the extent to which their organizations have implemented Internet 4.0 technologies. The focus groups engagements, examine aspects of organizational culture, such as open communication, willingness to embrace change, leadership support, and learning and development. Participants also discussed specific Internet 4.0 technologies adopted, challenges faced during implementation, and the perceived impact on organizational performance. The findings provide valuable insights into the role of organizational culture in facilitating the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies within the African context, as seen through the lens of these top executives. These insights contribute to understanding the cultural factors that promote or impede technology adoption in African enterprises and inform organizational development strategies in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Moreover, the study serves as a foundation for future research on the interplay between organizational culture and technology adoption in the Internet 4.0 era, with a specific focus on Africa.

Keywords: Organization Development, Organizational Culture, African Enterprise, Internet 4.0

Introduction

The emergence of Internet 4.0 technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, blockchain, and 5G, has brought significant changes to the global business landscape (Attaran, 2021; Jarašūnienė et al., 2023; Rao & Prasad, 2018; Sætra, 2021). These cutting-edge technologies have transformed the way organizations operate, compete, and innovate, creating both opportunities and challenges. In recent years, Africa has experienced remarkable growth in various

sectors, including telecommunications, finance, and agriculture(David & Grobler, 2020). However, the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises remains an area that needs further exploration to foster sustainable growth and competitiveness in the global market (Ekundayo, 2021).

Organizational culture, defined as the shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape an organization's behavior, has been widely recognized as a critical factor in the successful adoption of new technologies (Chouki et al., 2018; Tutar et al., 2014). A supportive and adaptive organizational culture is essential to encourage innovation, risk-taking, and the effective implementation of Internet 4.0 technologies. Moreover, leadership plays a vital role in promoting a culture conducive to technological adoption by setting the vision, providing resources, and motivating employees(Elkhdr, 2019). As the digital transformation accelerates, understanding the relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies becomes increasingly important for African enterprises to thrive in the rapidly changing environment.

Despite the growing interest in Internet 4.0 technologies and their potential to drive economic growth and innovation in Africa, empirical research on the role of organizational culture in the successful adoption of these technologies remains limited(Ekundayo, 2021). Most studies on technology adoption have focused on factors such as infrastructure, technological readiness, and regulatory frameworks, with little attention given to the cultural aspects that influence the adoption process(Kazim, 2021; Madichie et al., 2021; Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020). Furthermore, the unique challenges and opportunities faced by African enterprises in the context of digital transformation have been largely overlooked in the existing literature.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the nexus between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises. Specifically, the research focuses on the perspectives of CEOs from ten (10) diverse organizations across the continent, as they play a critical role in shaping organizational culture and driving the adoption of new technologies. By employing a focus group engagement to assess key organization cultural attributes and the extent of technology adoption, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How does organizational culture influence the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises?
- What role do supportive leadership and continuous learning play in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises?

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the role of organizational culture in facilitating the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies within the African context. These insights will contribute to understanding the cultural factors with African organizations that promote or impede technology adoption in African enterprises, allowing organizations to tailor their development strategies and foster an environment conducive to digital transformation. Additionally, the study will serve as

a foundation for future research on the interplay between organizational culture and technology adoption in the Internet 4.0 era, particularly in Africa.

By examining the relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the factors that drive digital transformation in the region. Ultimately, the research seeks to support African enterprises in their quest for sustainable growth and competitiveness in the rapidly evolving global market.

Background information

The rapid development and proliferation of Internet 4.0 technologies have led to a growing interest in understanding the factors that influence their successful adoption and integration into organizational processes. The literature on technology adoption has examined various factors, such as technological readiness, infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and organizational capabilities (Alaloul et al., 2020; Pradhan et al., 2016; Teisserenc & Sepasgozar, 2021). However, the role of organizational culture in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies, particularly in the African context, remains underexplored. A supportive and adaptive organizational culture fosters creativity, risk-taking, and the effective implementation of new technologies (Costanza et al., 2016; Madi Odeh et al., 2023; Rass et al., 2023). In contrast, a rigid and conservative culture may hinder innovation and impede the adoption of transformative technologies like AI, IoT, big data, and blockchain.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of organizational culture in the successful adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) Alaarj et al. (2017; Al-Gahtani et al., (2007). For example, Alaarj et al., 2015, 2016 found that a strong culture of innovation, learning, and open communication positively influenced ICT adoption in Malaysian SMEs. Similarly, (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007) reported that Saudi organizations with a culture that embraced change and innovation were more likely to adopt cloud computing technologies. However, these studies have largely focused on specific technologies or regions, with limited attention given to the broader context of Internet 4.0 technologies and the unique challenges faced by African enterprises.

Africa has experienced remarkable growth in various sectors, driven by factors such as a burgeoning youth population, rapid urbanization, and increased access to mobile technologies (World Bank, 2020). Internet penetration rates have risen significantly across the continent, with mobile broadband subscriptions reaching over 50% in several countries (Pradhan et al., 2016). However, the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies remains uneven, with some countries lagging behind in terms of infrastructure, digital literacy, and regulatory frameworks (Johnson, 2022; Pradhan et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2022).

Despite the potential of Internet 4.0 technologies to drive economic growth and innovation in Africa, there is a lack of empirical research on the role of organizational

culture in their adoption. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the nexus between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, focusing on the perspectives of CEOs from ten diverse organizations across the continent. As the digital landscape continues to evolve rapidly, it is crucial for organizations to adapt and embrace new technologies to remain competitive and drive innovation. Understanding the relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies is essential for organizations to develop strategies that foster a culture conducive to digital transformation. Moreover, the insights gained from this study will provide a valuable contribution to the existing literature on technology adoption, particularly in the African context, and inform future research on the interplay between organizational culture and technology adoption in the Internet 4.0 era

Statement of problem

This research seeks to explore the under investigated relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, given their significant potential to drive regional economic growth and sustainable development. Recognizing that shared values, beliefs, and practices within an organization can either foster innovation or impede technological uptake, this study aims to fill a knowledge gap in understanding how a supportive versus conservative culture impacts the integration of transformative technologies like AI, IoT, big data, blockchain, and 5G. It does so by capturing perspectives of CEOs from diverse African organizations, who hold critical roles in shaping the organizational culture and driving technology adoption.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore the nexus between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, with a focus on the perspectives of CEOs. To achieve this overarching objective, the study aims:

- To explore the influence of key cultural attributes like open communication, innovation, and supportive leadership on the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies within African businesses.
- To evaluate the extent of Internet 4.0 technology adoption and its impact on organizational performance in African enterprises, identifying unique challenges and opportunities in the process.
- To contribute to existing literature on technology adoption and organizational culture in the African context, providing insights for fostering a culture conducive to successful technology integration and informing future research on this subject.

Significance of the Study

This study's findings will offer valuable insights for both theory and practice, with important implications for organizational development, technology adoption, and sustainable growth in Africa.

Theoretical significance: The study contributes to the existing literature on technology adoption and organizational culture by examining the nexus between these two constructs within the context of Internet 4.0 technologies and the African business environment. By exploring the perspectives of CEOs, this research will provide a unique viewpoint on the cultural factors that facilitate or impede the adoption of transformative technologies in African enterprises, enriching the current understanding of the subject and informing future research.

Practical significance: The insights gained from this study will be beneficial for African enterprises seeking to adopt and integrate Internet 4.0 technologies into their operations. By identifying the key cultural attributes that promote successful technology adoption and the challenges faced during the implementation process, this research will inform the development of organizational strategies that foster a supportive and adaptive culture. These strategies will, in turn, help organizations capitalize on the opportunities presented by Internet 4.0 technologies, enhancing their competitiveness and driving innovation.

Policy implications: The study's findings may also be relevant for policymakers and stakeholders involved in promoting digital transformation in Africa. By shedding light on the role of organizational culture in technology adoption, this research could inform the development of policies and initiatives that support capacity building, digital literacy, and the creation of enabling environments for African enterprises to thrive in the Internet 4.0 era.

Socio-economic impact: Finally, the successful adoption and integration of Internet 4.0 technologies have the potential to drive economic growth, create job opportunities, and foster sustainable development in Africa. By exploring the factors that influence technology adoption in African enterprises, this study will contribute to enhancing the region's capacity for innovation, promoting socio-economic progress, and improving the quality of life for its people.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions:

- The study assumes that the CEOs participating in the research are knowledgeable about their organization's culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies.
- The research assumes that the selected organizations are representative of the broader African business landscape, providing generalizable insights into the relationship between organizational culture and technology adoption.
- It is assumed that the CEOs will provide honest and accurate responses during the data collection process, allowing for a valid analysis of the research questions.

Limitations:

- The study focuses on the perspectives of CEOs, which may limit the diversity of viewpoints and potentially overlook the experiences of other organizational members involved in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies.
- The research relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias and recall bias, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings.
- Due to the complex nature of organizational culture and the myriad factors that influence technology adoption, it may be challenging to establish a direct causal relationship between these two constructs.
- The study is limited to the African context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural, economic, and technological environments.

Delimitations:

- The research focuses on the relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies, excluding other factors that may influence technology adoption, such as infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and technological readiness.
- The study concentrates on African enterprises, with the aim of addressing the specific challenges and opportunities faced by organizations in this region during the digital transformation process.
- The research employs a survey instrument for data collection, focusing on quantitative data rather than qualitative insights that could provide a deeper understanding of the cultural dynamics at play.
- The study targets CEOs as the primary respondents, given their critical role in shaping organizational culture and driving the adoption of new technologies. This delimitation is intended to provide a focused analysis of the research questions from a leadership perspective.

Ethical Considerations for the Study

- *Informed Consent:* Prior to conducting focus group, informed consent will be obtained from all participants. They will be provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures. Participants will also be informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.
- *Confidentiality and Anonymity:* To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, all personal information and identifiers will be removed from the data during the analysis and reporting process. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and their organizations will not be explicitly named in the research findings.
- *Data Storage and Security:* All data collected during the study, including audio recordings, transcripts, and notes, will be securely stored in password-protected files and encrypted folders. Access to the data will be limited to the research team members who are directly involved in the analysis and reporting process.

- *Non-maleficence*: The study will be designed and conducted in a manner that minimizes the risk of harm to participants. This includes ensuring that questions asked during focus groups and interviews are respectful, non-invasive, and do not cause undue distress or discomfort.
- *Intellectual Property*: All sources of information used in the study, including previous research and publications, will be appropriately cited and acknowledged to give credit to the original authors and to avoid plagiarism.
- *Transparency and Openness*: The research design, methodology, and findings will be transparently reported and openly shared with the academic community and relevant stakeholders. This includes publishing the results in peer-reviewed journals and presenting the findings at conferences.

By carefully considering and addressing these ethical considerations, the study aims to ensure that the research process is conducted with integrity, respect for participants, and adherence to established ethical guidelines, thereby contributing to the generation of valuable and trustworthy knowledge in the field of organizational culture and Internet 4.0 technology adoption.

Literature Review

Alqahtani et al., (2014) examines the role of organizational support in the adoption of Enterprise Web 2.0 technologies. The study investigates the employees' adoption of enterprise web 2.0 in a study themed "Organizational support and Enterprise Web 2.0 adoption: a qualitative study". This study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to explore the role of organizational support in the adoption of Enterprise Web 2.0 technologies. The findings show that management support, technological infrastructure, and a clear vision and strategy for technology adoption were critical factors for successful implementation. By implication, the study emphasizes the importance of organizational support in overcoming barriers to technology adoption and fostering a culture of innovation, providing insights into the factors that facilitate the adoption of Web 2.0 technologies in enterprises. The study also found out that management support, technological infrastructure, and a clear vision and strategy for technology adoption were critical factors for successful implementation. As such, the authors emphasize the importance of organizational support in overcoming barriers to technology adoption and fostering a culture of innovation.

Penard et al., (2015) investigates the probability of using the internet and internet usage patterns in a study titled "Internet adoption and usage patterns in Africa: Evidence from Cameroon". The researcher explores the factors that influence internet adoption and usage patterns in Cameroon, providing valuable insights into the African context, using a quantitative approach based on survey data to analyse the factors that influence internet adoption and usage patterns in Cameroon. The study found that factors such as age, education, income, and trust were significant determinants of internet adoption. The internet was primarily used for communication, information, and entertainment purposes, with limited use for e-commerce and online

services. The findings highlight the need for further investigation into the barriers and enablers of technology adoption in Africa and provides valuable insights into the determinants of internet adoption in the region. The study also revealed that the internet was primarily used for communication, information, and entertainment purposes, with limited use for e-commerce and online services. This research highlights the need for further investigation into the barriers and enablers of technology adoption in Africa.

Another study by (Gono et al., 2016) themed “The Adoption and Impact of ICT in South African SMEs” Investigates the adoption of information and communications technology as well as impact of information and communications technology on small and medium sized enterprises In South Africa. As the study examines the adoption and impact of ICT in South African SMEs. The authors found that the level of ICT adoption varied across industries and that a lack of resources and organizational support were significant barriers to ICT adoption. The author used a mixed-methods approach, combining a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews to explore the adoption and impact of ICT in South African SMEs. The findings revealed that the level of ICT adoption varied across industries and that a lack of resources and organizational support were significant barriers to ICT adoption. Additionally, successful adoption of ICT positively influenced SME performance. This study emphasizes the need for organizations to create a supportive environment for technology adoption and highlights the potential benefits of ICT for SMEs in emerging economies like South Africa. The study also revealed that the successful adoption of ICT positively influenced SME performance, emphasizing the need for organizations to create a supportive environment for technology adoption.

(Chouki et al., 2018) in a study themed “Organizational culture as a barrier to information technology adoption: The case of Moroccan Small and Medium Enterprises”, measures organizational informalization, resistance to change of technologies’ Stakeholders’ Centralized Decision Making In SMES. The study investigates the role of organizational culture as a barrier to information technology (IT) adoption in Moroccan small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by employing a quantitative approach using a survey questionnaire distributed to Moroccan SMEs to assess the relationship between organizational culture and IT adoption. Findings shows that organizational culture significantly influenced IT adoption, with a conservative and hierarchical culture posing a major barrier. This research highlights the importance of fostering an organizational culture that supports innovation and change to facilitate the successful adoption of IT in SMEs, particularly in the context of developing countries.

Review conclusion

Alqahtani et al., (2014), Penard et al., (2015), Gono et al., (2016) and Chouki et al., (2018) contribute to this study by providing insights into the role of organizational culture and support in technology adoption. They highlight the importance of

fostering a culture that embraces change, innovation, and open communication, as well as the need for organizational support in terms of resources, infrastructure, and strategic direction. Additionally, these studies demonstrate the positive impact of successful technology adoption on organizational performance, particularly in the context of SMEs. By examining the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises and the role of organizational culture, this study builds upon the existing literature and addresses the unique challenges faced by organizations in the region.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study will be based on the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework and the Competing Values Framework (CVF). These two theories will be combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, with a specific focus on the role of organizational culture.

Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework:

The TOE framework, proposed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990), is a widely used model for understanding the factors that influence the adoption and implementation of technological innovations in organizations (Na et al., 2022). The TOE framework posits that technology adoption is determined by three contextual factors:

- Technological context: This includes the characteristics of the technology itself, such as its complexity, compatibility with existing systems, and relative advantage over alternative solutions.
- Organizational context: This encompasses the internal characteristics of the organization, such as size, structure, resources, and managerial support for innovation.
- Environmental context: This refers to the external factors that influence technology adoption, such as competitive pressures, industry characteristics, and government policies.

In this study, the TOE framework will be used to examine the technological, organizational, and environmental factors that influence the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises.

Competing Values Framework (CVF):

The CVF, developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), is a widely used model for understanding and assessing organizational culture (Gong et al., 2022). The CVF posits that organizations have four competing cultural types, each representing a different set of values and assumptions:

- Clan culture: This type of culture emphasizes collaboration, teamwork, and employee involvement, and prioritizes internal maintenance and stability.
- Adhocracy culture: This type of culture fosters innovation, creativity, and flexibility, and is oriented towards external growth and adaptation.

- Hierarchy culture: This type of culture is characterized by formalization, control, and clear lines of authority, and prioritizes internal efficiency and stability.
- Market culture: This type of culture focuses on results, competition, and customer satisfaction, and is oriented towards external positioning and adaptation.

In this study, the CVF will be used to examine the relationship between organizational culture and the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies, with a specific focus on how different cultural types may facilitate or hinder technology adoption. By combining the TOE framework and the CVF, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, and to shed light on the role of organizational culture in this process. This theoretical framework will guide the research design, data collection, and analysis, ultimately helping to address the research questions and objectives.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study will integrate the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework and the Competing Values Framework (CVF) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises. This framework will consider the interplay/impact of the underlisted factors on Internet 4.0 adoption in African enterprise.

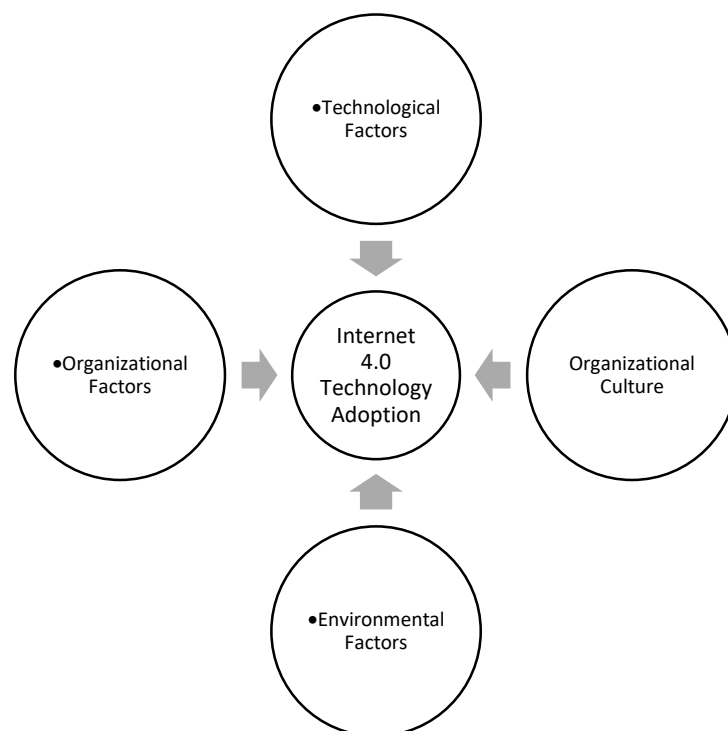


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author

Methodology

Research Design

In examining the connection between organizational culture and Internet 4.0 adoption in African enterprises, this study adopts an interpretivist philosophy, valuing the subjective meanings individuals assign to experiences. It employs an inductive approach to collect and analyse data to discern patterns and develop theories (Saunders et al., 2007). A qualitative route serves as the research strategy, providing an in-depth look at the interaction between culture and technology adoption across diverse African businesses. Data will be collected through focus groups with enterprise leaders, combining collective insight and individual perspectives (Saunders et al., 2007). Purposive sampling used to select 10 participants based on their knowledge and relevance to the topic (Center, 2019). Thematic analysis will then distil meaningful insights from the collected data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The validity and reliability of the findings will be enhanced by using triangulation and member checking (Gani et al., 2020). Overall, the study's design aims to deepen understanding of how organizational culture and Internet 4.0 adoption intersect in African businesses, contributing to strategies for digital transformation in the region.

Settings

The setting for this qualitative study will be comprised of a diverse range of enterprises within the African context, focusing on various industries that are either currently adopting or considering the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies. The primary purpose of selecting a diverse range of enterprises is to capture the richness and complexity of organizational culture and its influence on technology adoption across different contexts.

Geographical Scope: The study will be conducted across multiple African countries, representing different regions, such as North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa. This geographical diversity will enable the research to account for various cultural, economic, and regulatory factors that may influence technology adoption within the African continent.

Types of Enterprises: The study will include small, medium, and large enterprises from various industries, such as manufacturing, services, technology, agriculture, and finance. This diverse representation of enterprises will help in identifying the unique challenges and opportunities related to Internet 4.0 technology adoption in different sectors.

Data Collection Setting: Data will be collected through focus group discussions with CEOs from the selected enterprises. These focus groups will be conducted through virtual platforms (zoom), depending on the availability and preferences of the participants. This approach will ensure a comfortable and conducive environment for participants to openly share their experiences and insights regarding technology adoption and organizational culture.

The diverse and multi-faceted setting of this qualitative study will provide a rich and comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Internet 4.0 technology adoption in African enterprises. By capturing the experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders across different industries and geographical locations, the study aims to identify patterns and trends in technology adoption and the role of organizational culture in this process.

Participants

Ten (10) CEOs from the selected enterprises will be primary participants in this study. These individuals are responsible for making strategic decisions regarding technology adoption and can provide valuable insights into the factors influencing their decisions, including the role of organizational culture. Their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities related to Internet 4.0 technology adoption will be critical in addressing the research questions and objectives. The participants are recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, ensuring a diverse and representative sample of stakeholders involved in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises.

Results and implications

The findings of focus group engagement are summarised in two phases

Phase I: Determining the organization culture of African Enterprise.

1. Organization encouragement of open communication and collaboration in Africa

The focus group discussed the extent of organization encouraging open communication and collaboration among employees. The responses show that most of the CEOs (70%) believe their organizations offer little encouragement for open communication and collaboration among employees. This is a significant finding as it indicates a potentially low level of organizational culture support for open communication, which could negatively impact the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies. 20% of the CEOs report that there is a moderate level of encouragement for open communication and collaboration in their organizations, while only 10% believe there is a very strong encouragement. None of the CEOs feel that their organizations offer no encouragement or strong encouragement for open communication and collaboration.

These results suggest that many African enterprises may need to work on fostering a more supportive organizational culture that encourages open communication and collaboration. This could be key to facilitating the effective adoption and integration of Internet 4.0 technologies. Furthermore, the data indicates that there is room for improvement in terms of promoting open communication and collaboration, which are critical aspects of a learning culture and an innovative environment that can support the adoption of advanced technologies.

2. Organization promotion of a culture of innovation and experimentation in Africa

The focus group discussed how strongly organization promote a culture of innovation and experimentation. Responses suggest that a large majority of the CEOs (80%) believe their organizations provide either no or little promotion for a culture of innovation and experimentation. This finding is significant because it implies a potentially low level of organizational support for innovation and experimentation, which are key elements for the successful adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies. Only 10% of the CEOs report that their organizations have a moderate promotion of innovation and experimentation, while another 10% perceive a very strong promotion. None of the CEOs believe their organizations have a strong promotion of innovation and experimentation.

These results suggest that the promotion of a culture of innovation and experimentation may be lacking in many African enterprises. Given that the successful adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies often requires a willingness to innovate and experiment with new ways of working, these findings suggest that efforts may be needed to foster a more innovative and experimental organizational culture. The data indicates a clear opportunity for improvement in promoting innovation and experimentation, which could help facilitate the integration of advanced technologies into daily operations.

3. Organization's willingness to embrace change and adapt to new technologies in Africa

The focus group discussed organization's willingness to embrace change and adapt to new technologies. The response suggest that a majority of the CEOs (90%) believe their organizations are either very unwilling or unwilling to embrace change and adapt to new technologies. This finding is quite significant as it implies a potentially low level of readiness and willingness to change and adapt, which are key factors for the successful adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies. Only 10% of the CEOs believe their organizations are very willing to embrace change and adapt to new technologies. None of the CEOs rate their organizations as being neutral or willing to embrace change and adapt to new technologies.

These results suggest that many African enterprises may need to work on fostering a greater willingness to embrace change and adapt to new technologies. This could be a key factor in facilitating the effective adoption and integration of Internet 4.0 technologies. The data indicates a significant need for improvement in terms of promoting change readiness and adaptability, which are critical aspects of a resilient and innovative environment that can support the adoption of advanced technologies. The high proportion of CEOs indicating unwillingness to change and adapt suggests a significant barrier to technology adoption that should be addressed in future organizational development initiatives.

4. Organization's leadership in promoting the adoption of advanced technologies in Africa

The focus group discussed organization's leadership in promoting the adoption of advanced technologies. The response suggests a lack of strong support from

leadership in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies among the surveyed African enterprises. Most of the CEOs (70%) perceive their organization's leadership as either not supportive at all or only slightly supportive in promoting the adoption of advanced technologies. This is a key finding, as leadership support is a critical factor in successful technology adoption. It suggests that there may be a lack of strategic direction and commitment from the top towards technology adoption. Only 10% of the CEOs perceive their organization's leadership as very supportive, and 20% see them as moderately supportive. Notably, none of the CEOs perceive their organization's leadership as being simply 'supportive', indicating a lack of strong leadership support for technology adoption.

These results indicate a significant need for stronger leadership support in promoting the adoption of advanced technologies in African enterprises. The leadership's role in driving technology adoption is critical. This includes setting a clear vision, aligning technology initiatives with strategic objectives, and fostering an environment conducive to change and innovation. The lack of strong leadership support could be a significant barrier to Internet 4.0 adoption, highlighting the need for organizational development interventions focused on enhancing leadership commitment to technology adoption.

5. Organization ability to manage risk-taking and learning from failure during technology implementation in Africa

The focus group discussed organization risk-taking and learning from failure during technology implementation. The findings suggest a significant aversion to risk-taking and learning from failure among the surveyed African enterprises. 90% of the CEOs perceive their organizations as either strongly discouraging or discouraging risk-taking and learning from failure. This is a pivotal finding, as a culture that encourages risk-taking and learning from failure is critical for successful technology adoption. It suggests that there may be a fear of failure and a risk-averse culture prevailing within these organizations. Only 10% of the CEOs perceive their organization as encouraging risk-taking and learning from failure. None of the CEOs perceive their organization as strongly encouraging risk-taking and learning from failure, indicating a lack of a supportive environment for experimentation and learning.

These results indicate a significant need for a cultural shift within these African enterprises to foster an environment that encourages risk-taking and learning from failure. This is particularly important in the context of Internet 4.0 adoption, which involves significant uncertainty and requires a degree of experimentation and learning. The prevalent risk-averse culture could be a significant barrier to Internet 4.0 adoption, highlighting the need for organizational development interventions aimed at promoting a culture of innovation, experimentation, and learning.

6. Organization's continuous learning and upskilling for employees in Africa

The focus group discussed continuous learning and upskilling for employees in your organization. The findings suggest a moderate to low emphasis on continuous learning and upskilling in the surveyed African enterprises. 50% of the CEOs perceive continuous learning and upskilling as only slightly important in their organizations. This perception, combined with 30% who view it as moderately important, indicates that the majority of organizations do not place a high importance on employee learning and upskilling. Only 20% of the CEOs perceive continuous learning and upskilling as important or very important, which is quite low considering the rapidly evolving nature of Internet 4.0 technologies.

These results suggest a potential gap in the learning and development efforts of these African enterprises, which could impact their ability to effectively adopt and leverage Internet 4.0 technologies. Continuous learning and upskilling are crucial for keeping up with the fast-paced technological advancements and for fostering an innovative and adaptive organizational culture. The findings highlight the need for these organizations to place greater emphasis on learning and development initiatives, to enhance their readiness for Internet 4.0 adoption.

Phase II: Determining the organization adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in Africa

1. Organization adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in Africa

The focus group discussed the extent of organization adopted Internet 4.0 technologies. The response indicates a low to moderate level of Internet 4.0 adoption across the surveyed African enterprises. Half of the CEOs reported that their organizations have only slightly adopted Internet 4.0 technologies, while 40% reported a moderate level of adoption. This indicates that the majority of organizations (90%) have not fully embraced these advanced technologies. Only 10% of the CEOs stated that their organizations have fully adopted Internet 4.0 technologies.

These results suggest a potential lag in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies among these African enterprises. Given the potential benefits of these advanced technologies, including increased efficiency, innovation, and competitiveness, there appears to be a significant opportunity for these organizations to further leverage Internet 4.0 technologies. The findings highlight the need for these organizations to address the potential barriers to technology adoption, such as insufficient organizational readiness, lack of supportive leadership, and gaps in skills and learning, which were identified in the previous questions.

2. Integration of Internet 4.0 technologies in your organization's daily operations in Africa

The focus group discussed how well-integrated are Internet 4.0 technologies in your organization's daily operations. The response indicates that the integration of Internet 4.0 technologies into daily operations of the surveyed African enterprises is moderate. Specifically, 40% of the CEOs reported that Internet 4.0 technologies are slightly integrated into their organization's daily operations, while half of the

participants stated they are moderately integrated. This indicates that a majority of organizations (90%) have not fully integrated these advanced technologies into their everyday work. Only 10% of the CEOs reported that their organizations have fully integrated Internet 4.0 technologies.

These results highlight a need for greater integration of Internet 4.0 technologies in the daily operations of these African enterprises. Considering the benefits of these technologies, such as improving operational efficiency and fostering innovation, the findings indicate a substantial opportunity for these organizations to strengthen their technology integration. Addressing potential barriers to integration, such as lack of technical skills, insufficient organizational readiness, and lack of supportive leadership, as identified in previous questions, can facilitate this process.

3. Internet 4.0 technologies contribution to organization's overall performance in Africa

The focus group discussed the extent do Internet 4.0 technologies contribute to your organization's overall performance. The response indicates a moderate contribution of Internet 4.0 technologies to the overall performance of the surveyed African enterprises. Here, 30% of the CEOs reported that Internet 4.0 technologies make a minimal contribution to their organizations' performance, while 40% stated they make a moderate contribution. This implies that a majority of organizations (70%) have not yet fully leveraged the potential of these advanced technologies for performance enhancement. On the other hand, 20% of CEOs reported a significant contribution and 10% reported a very significant contribution of Internet 4.0 technologies to their organizations' performance.

These results highlight a potential gap in the effective use of Internet 4.0 technologies for performance improvement in these African enterprises. Given the transformative potential of these technologies, the findings suggest a significant opportunity for these organizations to enhance their performance by more effectively leveraging Internet 4.0 technologies. This might involve efforts to improve technology integration, upskill employees, and create an organizational culture that encourages innovation and adaptation to technological changes, as identified in previous questions.

4. Ease of implementation and adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in Africa

The focus group discussed the rate of ease of implementation and adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in organization. This discussion seeks to understand the perceived difficulty levels experienced by African enterprises when implementing and adopting Internet 4.0 technologies. The results show that a significant majority (80%) of the CEOs find it difficult to implement and adopt Internet 4.0 technologies in their organizations. Only 10% of the CEOs found it neither easy nor difficult, and an equal percentage found it very easy. Notably, none of the CEOs indicated that it was easy to implement and adopt these technologies.

This result is crucial as it highlights one of the key barriers to Internet 4.0 adoption in these organizations. The perceived difficulty could stem from various factors such as lack of technical expertise, infrastructure limitations, high implementation costs, or resistance from employees. The organizations might need to address these challenges through targeted strategies such as investing in technical training, infrastructure upgrades, change management programs, and perhaps seeking external assistance for the implementation process. This will be critical in enhancing their ability to leverage Internet 4.0 technologies for improved performance.

5. Organization invest in the development and implementation of Internet 4.0 technologies in Africa

The focus group discussed the organization investment in the development and implementation of Internet 4.0 technologies. The aim here is to understand the level of financial commitment organizations have towards the development and implementation of Internet 4.0 technologies. The results show that a considerable majority (70%) of the CEOs indicated that their organizations make minimal investment in the development and implementation of Internet 4.0 technologies. Another 20% reported moderate investment, while only 10% indicated very significant investment. Notably, none of the CEOs indicated that their organizations make no investment or significant investment.

These results underscore a crucial barrier to the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in these organizations - lack of sufficient investment. This could be due to various reasons such as limited financial resources, other competing investment priorities, or a lack of awareness about the potential benefits of Internet 4.0 technologies. It implies that for these organizations to fully harness the benefits of Internet 4.0 technologies, they need to allocate more resources towards their development and implementation. This could involve setting aside a dedicated budget, seeking external funding or partnerships, or reallocating resources from less critical areas.

6. Rate of overall success of your organization's efforts to adopt Internet 4.0 technologies in Africa

The question "ETA6. How would you rate the overall success of your organization's efforts to adopt Internet 4.0 technologies?" aims to assess the perceived effectiveness of the organizations' strategies in implementing Internet 4.0 technologies. The results indicate that 20% of CEOs consider their organization's efforts to be slightly successful, 50% see them as moderately successful, 20% as successful, and 10% as highly successful. Notably, none of the CEOs view their efforts as unsuccessful.

These findings suggest that while there are some positive outcomes from the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies, there is also room for improvement. A majority of the organizations are experiencing moderate success, indicating that while the adoption is occurring, it may not be fully realized or delivering the expected benefits.

This could be due to various factors, such as insufficient investment (as indicated in ETA5), lack of skilled personnel, or resistance to change among employees. Thus, to enhance their success in adopting Internet 4.0 technologies, these organizations might need to increase their investment, provide more training for their staff, and possibly conduct change management initiatives to cultivate a more receptive attitude towards these technologies.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this focus group discussion provide important insights into the state of Internet 4.0 technology adoption within African enterprises and how this is influenced by organizational culture attributes. A significant finding is the apparent lack of strong encouragement for open communication and collaboration among employees. This is concerning as open communication and collaboration are critical factors for successful technology adoption. The same applies to the promotion of a culture of innovation and experimentation, which also seems to be quite limited within the participating organizations.

These results align with the finding that the majority of organizations are slightly to moderately successful in adopting Internet 4.0 technologies, suggesting that there may be cultural barriers hampering the adoption process. The low emphasis on risk-taking and learning from failure could be another indication of this, as a fear of failure might stifle innovation and experimentation. Furthermore, while there is some level of willingness to adapt to new technologies, the reluctance is quite high, indicating potential resistance to change among employees. This could be due to various reasons such as lack of understanding of the benefits of Internet 4.0 technologies, fear of job loss due to automation, or lack of the necessary skills to use these technologies effectively.

The results also show that despite the above challenges, there is a moderate level of adoption and integration of Internet 4.0 technologies in the organizations' operations, and these technologies are perceived to contribute to the organizations' overall performance. However, the perceived difficulty of implementation and adoption, along with the minimal investment in the development and implementation of these technologies, suggests that there are significant resource and capability constraints.

Conclusion

This study reveals that while there is progress in the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies in African enterprises, there are significant cultural and resource challenges that need to be addressed to accelerate this process. The results suggest that to enhance the success of Internet 4.0 technology adoption, organizations need to foster a culture that encourages open communication, collaboration, innovation, and a willingness to take risks and learn from failures. Additionally, they need to invest more in the development and implementation of these technologies and provide continuous learning and upskilling opportunities for their employees.

Moreover, organizational leaders need to play a more active role in promoting the adoption of advanced technologies and mitigating resistance to change. They should communicate the benefits of these technologies more effectively and provide reassurance and support to their employees during the transition process. While this study provides valuable insights, it only involved a small number of organizations, and therefore, further research involving a larger sample size is needed to validate these findings. Future research should also explore in more depth the specific cultural and resource barriers to Internet 4.0 technology adoption and the strategies that can be used to overcome them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies within African enterprises:

- *Promote Open Communication and Collaboration:* Organizations should foster a culture that encourages open communication and collaboration among employees. This can be achieved by implementing policies that facilitate information sharing and teamwork and by using collaboration tools that make it easier for employees to work together on projects.
- *Encourage Innovation and Experimentation:* Organizations should promote a culture of innovation and experimentation. This can involve setting up a dedicated innovation team, providing time and resources for employees to work on innovative projects, and celebrating and rewarding innovative ideas and behaviors.
- *Foster a Positive Attitude Towards Change:* Organizations should work on reducing resistance to change among employees. This can involve providing clear communication about the benefits of Internet 4.0 technologies, involving employees in the change process, and providing support and reassurance during the transition.
- *Invest in Employee Upskilling:* Organizations should provide continuous learning and upskilling opportunities for their employees. This can involve providing training programs on Internet 4.0 technologies, providing opportunities for employees to learn on the job, and encouraging employees to take up external learning opportunities.
- *Increase Investment in Internet 4.0 Technologies:* Organizations should increase their investment in the development and implementation of Internet 4.0 technologies. This can involve setting up a dedicated technology development fund, seeking external funding or partnerships, or reallocating resources from other areas.
- *Leadership Support:* Organizational leaders should play a more active role in promoting the adoption of Internet 4.0 technologies. This can involve setting a clear vision and strategy for technology adoption, leading by example in the use of these technologies, and providing regular updates and feedback to employees on the organization's technology adoption progress.

- *Further Research:* Given that this study involved a small number of organizations, further research involving a larger sample size is recommended to validate these findings. Future research should also explore in more depth the specific cultural and resource barriers to Internet 4.0 technology adoption and the strategies that can be used to overcome them.

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A Case Study of Global Leadership Competencies of Chinese Executives in Chinese Multinational Companies Investing in African Countries

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Abstract

Given the substantial potential for cooperation between African countries and China, it is evident that China's direct investment in Africa has experienced significant growth. The objective of the current study is to assess the global leadership competencies of Chinese executives within Chinese multinational corporations operating in African countries. A qualitative case-study methodology was employed. Specifically, a purposive sampling strategy was utilized, restricting the sample to two Chinese executives employed in Chinese multinational companies investing in African countries. The results revealed that Chinese executives exhibited moderate to high levels of global leadership competencies. This finding can help Chinese executives examine their global leadership competencies, thus improving their global leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Global leadership competencies, Chinese executives, Multinational companies, African countries

Introduction

Considering Africa's status as the continent with the highest concentration of developing nations and China as the largest developing country globally, there are substantial prospects for economic collaboration between them (Devincy & Sylvaire, 2020; Koomson-Abekah & Nwaba, 2018). China's FDI inflows into African countries have experienced significant growth, from US\$7.8 billion in 2008 to US\$46.1 billion in 2018 (Cudjoe et al., 2021). As far as the Chinese executives in Chinese Multinational Companies (MNCs) investing in African countries are concerned, their characteristics, cultural exposure, global education, and project/job novelty are the antecedents that can predict their global leadership competencies (Mendenhall et al., 2017). Moreover, for Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs investing in African countries to possess global leadership competencies, they also have to go through a transformational process that "consists of experiences, interpersonal encounters, decisions, and challenges that relate to global leadership challenges" (Mendenhall et al., 2017, p. 185).

The purpose of the current study is to examine the global leadership competencies of Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs in African countries. The research question that guides the current study is, "To what extent do Chinese executives in Chinese Multinational Companies investing in African countries possess global leadership competencies?" The structure of the current study was

organized as follows: a brief explanation of the methodology, the results of the current study, and a discussion followed by a conclusion.

Research Method

The researcher used a qualitative method to address the research question. The case study qualitative approach is most appropriate for the current study because it best addresses the “why” and “how” questions to provide a detailed description and analysis of a particular case (Creswell, 2018). The Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs investing in African countries are the study population. The researcher limited the sample to two Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs investing in African countries. Because the sampling procedure employed in the current study is the purposive strategy, participants were chosen based on the criteria that the executives are Chinese, and they work in Chinese MNCs operating in African countries. The researcher limited the sample to two Chinese companies investing in African countries to accommodate the scale of the research resources available. The researcher intentionally selected two Chinese executives working in a large-scale Chinese MNC and a small-scale Chinese MNC investing in African countries as the participants, two typical and representative examples of Chinese executives working in African countries.

Results

Participant One: David’s Professional and Personal Life

David worked with a large-scale Chinese MNC with a branch in Nigeria, specializing in industrial products. David was a man of 56 years old and the head of production at the Nigerian branch and had been working in Africa for 15 years. He was regarded as a respected senior manager in the company owing to his professionalism in developing customized products for the African market. In the interview, he asserted that he was a leader of sound business acumen, relationship management, and personal effectiveness. Thoroughly examining his depiction of his personal life, including his self-assessment of character and personality, work experience, and critical incidents highlighting each competence, demonstrates his exceptional resilience and strength as a highly seasoned manager with professional tenure in large-scale companies across China and Nigeria.

From the perspective of leadership, he shared that he was seriously ill, and therefore was treated in a hospital in Nigeria. Although he did not fully recover, he still returned to his office. From a cross-cultural perspective, a Nigerian may find it difficult to understand why he worked so hard in his work. This is because, in the corporate culture of China, the power distance is high so leaders need to be role models for employees (Livermore, 2015), even in suffering. Though working in Nigeria, his approach and attitude toward his work are still highly valued by many Nigerian employees. When asked how he developed global leadership capabilities, he replied that the company had given them professional training, and every year

new employees must participate in each session, but he emphasized that practice was more important.

Both life experiences and the complexity and intensity of the industrial practice in the corporate realm enabled him to be a leader with vision. He has impressive and considerable insight into his job and industry and can make important suggestions for where his company should be heading. Nonetheless, it may be because he has been engaged in the management of R&D and production, and his ability in interpersonal communication, especially how to motivate employees, is somewhat inadequate. For example, he said if he met a frustrated young employee at work, he was not good at comforting him or encouraging him. He believed that this may have something to do with his personal experience, as he grew up with his grandfather, and his relationship with his parents was alienated, which created his cold personality. Thanks to the cross-culture training, he was better informed on how to communicate with his African colleagues more effectively. However, he still felt that the cross-cultural training was not enough for him to understand how the local culture affects the attitudes and behaviors of his team members in African countries. He held the view that if the company could give him a test on cross-cultural management, he may not be a good candidate for this role. In terms of inquisitiveness, he expressed that he had different levels of curiosity at different ages. When he was young, he especially liked to accept the opportunity to work overseas to meet new people and cultures and explore this fresh world. However, nowadays he desires to return to work in China and spend more time with his old friends.

Participant Two: Rebecca's Personal and Professional Life

Rebecca worked with a small and medium-sized Chinese company specializing in the motorcycle industry in South Africa. Her company was aimed at gaining access to South Africa and the entire African market. Rebecca, a career woman of 43 years old, was the international sales director for the African division and has been working in Africa for six years. She was highly spoken of by his colleague in the headquarters in China for outstanding achievement in exploring the African market. Rebecca asserted in the interview that she was also a leader of sound business acumen, relationship management, and personal effectiveness. Carefully reviewing the description of her personal life including her self-evaluation of her personality and character, work experience, and the critical incident of each competence, the researcher found that she was extremely resilient and strong in character as a highly experienced manager with over 18 years of professional experience in a medium-scale company in China and African countries.

In terms of personal leadership aspects, she shared that to obtain good communication with foreign customers to obtain international orders, she would work overtime in the company for a long time even after supper. She believed that leaders needed to be good role models to be able to appeal to and gain the

recognition and respect of their employees. When asked about her global leadership development, she said that the company had given them professional training, and every new employee would participate every year. However, she pointed out that the most important thing was to put the theory into practice and only practice would make things perfect. She added that theoretical knowledge about cross-cultural management was not enough. After many years of working in African countries, she began to understand how to lead her local employees more effectively. She acknowledged that her company did not conduct any assessments to evaluate her global leadership abilities before her assignment in South Africa. However, she believed that doing so would be beneficial as it would help her comprehend her strengths and weaknesses in international business management.

She had a clear call to enter the field of international trade. Because she studied English at the university and has a cheerful personality, she believed that these were helpful for her to become a good international business professional. Whether it was to negotiate projects with foreign clients or to guide department employees to explore the international market, she was confident that she could demonstrate her excellent communication skills. However, because she did not receive a business education, she lacked knowledge in business, especially in economics and finance. But still, she was confident and optimistic that she could learn that important knowledge while at work.

As for her personal life, she grew up in a warm family, and her parents gave her complete love, which made her abundant love for people around her. She was concerned about the employees in the office, especially the young colleagues who had just come to work in Africa from China, and felt obliged to encourage them when they were depressed. Although she loved her work and was used to life in South Africa, she also expressed her reluctance to stay in South Africa for a long time. She believed that with her age, family reunion was more important than earning more money. She planned to return to China to work at the headquarters. In the past two decades, the complexity, intensity, and challenges in her work equipped her to be an experienced international business professional, and she hoped to share her experience with younger colleagues after returning to China.

Summary of the Global Leadership Competencies of David and Rebecca

Although there is a proliferation of identified global leader competencies, Mendenhall et al., (2017) argued that three groupings of global leadership competencies were particularly important: business acumen, relationship management, and personal effectiveness. As shown in Table 1, the global leadership competencies of both David and Rebecca were evaluated and analyzed from the three groupings of global leadership competencies.

Table 1

Global Leadership Competencies of David and Rebecca

| Global Leadership Competencies | David | Rebecca |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Business and Organizational Acumen | | |
| Visionary strategic thinking | High | High |
| Leading change | Low | Medium |
| Business savvy | Medium | High |
| Organizational savvy | Medium | Medium |
| Managing communities | Medium | High |
| Managing People and Relationships | | |
| Value people | Medium | Extremely High |
| Cross-cultural communication | High | High |
| Interpersonal skills | Medium | High |
| Team leadership | Medium | High |
| Empowering others | Medium | High |
| Managing Self | | |
| Inquisitiveness | Medium | High |
| Global mindset | High | High |
| Flexibility | Medium | High |
| Character | Extremely High | Extremely High |
| Resilience | Extremely High | Extremely High |

Note. Each competence was labeled as Extremely High, High, Medium, Low, Extremely Low, or Unknown according to the subjective evaluation of the researcher.

Discussion

By comparing David's and Rebecca's global leadership competencies, the results revealed that David mainly manifested a medium level of global leadership competencies and Rebecca mainly showed a high level of global leadership competencies. Because David represented a more experienced male leader working with a large-scale company in an international business environment and Rebecca represented a younger female leader in a small and medium-sized company in the same international setting, the analysis and comparison of the leadership competencies of David and Rebecca provided useful information regarding the global leadership competencies of Chinese executives in the African market. Neither of the two interviewees replied that they received any kind of pre-test of their global leadership competencies. But both strongly suggested that the companies should make relevant assessments toward the future global leaders, as it would enable those potential candidates to know the strengths and weaknesses and therefore make full preparations.

Mendenhall et al., (2017) suggested that individual characteristic was an important antecedent for growing into an international leader in the business setting. Although David had more work experience than Rebecca, Rebecca performed better than David in terms of managing people and relationships. It seemed that the personal life, especially the experience in an individual's childhood, indeed would make a difference in their adulthood. Still, David was confident that he could handle

cross-cultural communication well in his work, which implied that training and practice could make up for some losses brought up by the negative experiences individuals experienced in their childhood and was effective in cultivating a capable leader in the international setting.

When it comes to cultural intelligence, both David and Rebecca suggested that training seminars were useful but not enough to improve cultural intelligence. To be more specific, David was reported to be low in leading change in African countries, and Rebecca was not skilled at leading change either. This is due, in large part, to the fact that the training only provided a general introduction to the culture and social customs of African countries. However, this training did not provide a more in-depth analysis of the influence of African culture on the thinking and behavior of local employees, and the management style that managers should adopt to recruit, train, and evaluate local employees. Therefore, Chinese MNCs are suggested to improve their cultural intelligence from four aspects: Cultural Quotient motivation, Cultural Quotient knowledge, Cultural Quotient strategy, and Cultural Quotient action (Livermore & Soon, 2015). Additionally, it is important to note that education for a global leader is never done with a college credential, but it is a lifelong process as the contemporary global society is in a state of constant change. Just like Rebecca who wished to continue studying economics and finance, leaders embarking on the journey to become capable global leaders need to keep learning and improving themselves with a humble attitude.

Although education on cultural differences is important, as evidenced by the testimonies of David and Rebecca, what matters to them most is practice. There is no doubt that years of practice in the real business world promote them to be confident leaders in the international business realm. In other words, cultural exposure, particularly to varying degrees of complexities, emotional affect, and intensity, would be a useful approach for assisting leaders in going through the important transformational process of becoming confident global leaders. Chinese companies should also develop a mentoring system in their human resource policy, which calls for the senior global leader to instruct and mentor the inexperienced leader. Because the on-the-spot teaching and practice can convey the tacit knowledge to the inexperienced leader and help them to enhance their global leadership more effectively (Mendenhall, et al., 2017).

The results indicate that inquisitiveness is a relative, but not absolute standard to assess the capabilities of global leaders. It is noted that this competence of inquisitiveness may change as time goes by. When individuals are young, they may be eager to study and know more about exotic information, this feeling of being inquisitive of exotic information may gradually quieten down as they turn old. This may be explained by the fact that to lead with cultural intelligence, not only do leaders need to understand the local culture, but also need the motivation and willingness to embrace an exotic environment.

Conclusion

The current study concludes that Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs investing in African countries mainly have medium to high levels of global leadership competencies. For Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs to enhance their global leadership competencies, it is of great importance for them to receive relevant, intensive, and complex hands-on training. The significance of the current study is that the findings could effectively help Chinese executives in Chinese MNCs investing in Africa to examine their global leadership competencies, thereby improving their efficacy of global leadership.

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Africa's 'Ubuntu Philosophy' and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory - Foundations of African OD



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Abstract

At the heart of every society and organization is a predominant philosophical value system or a philosophical network that binds people together and influences perceptions, cultures, relationships, and what people create. Ubuntu philosophy is a cornerstone concept for African organization development (OD) theory and practice. For OD practitioners, Kurt Lewin's Field Theory is fundamental. Embracing traditional African culture and philosophies can manifest OD's value and outcomes globally. We postulate that Ubuntu and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory, through the practice of OD, facilitate the manifestation of the human spirit and humanistic principles and values. Thus, we conclude that Ubuntu and Lewin's Field Theory and Life Space are the same - indivisible in concept and in 'being'. The advancement of African OD should be premised on these cornerstone concepts and theories.

Keywords: Ubuntu, Field Theory, Organization Development

Introduction

Within this article, we strive to explore the relationship between 'Ubuntu philosophy' and a critical foundation and cornerstone of Organization Development (OD), that being Kurt Lewin's Field Theory. This is significant for African OD to colligate these two constituents, which may create a foundation and a founding cornerstone regarding the validity of Ubuntu as a fundamental of 'African OD'. Such may also emerge the value of traditional African culture and philosophy, which can bring immense thought, value, and novel practices to traditional (western) OD and the rest of the world in these precarious times of local, regional, and global change.

The following propositions are based on, but not limited to, three core principles (EODC®, 2015):

- Existence precedes a pseudo-essence, which means that the most crucial consideration for individuals is that they are independently acting and responsible, conscious beings rather than what labels, roles, submissions,

stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individual may be fitted into by some artificial, pseudo-state either by themselves or by others.

- A person creates 'meaning' and becomes who she/he is through one's interpretation of their experiences within the 'self', their relationships with others, and their interactions and experiences with their environments.
- 'Humanizing' is described as the manifestation of:
 - ✓ people's inalienable human rights, their innate human nature, and the manifestation of the natural abilities of humans as a whole person.
 - ✓ Human-centered, psychological and physically safe, fair, humane, just, respectful, healthy, performance-based, and livable environments that manifest the above point. People naturally desire to contribute and experience 'purpose' and achievement as an influencer (self-agency) and being a part of a community to aggregate further a healthy sense of self, social relationships, and well-being.

Understanding Ubuntu Philosophy

At the heart of every society and organization is a predominant philosophical value system or a philosophical network that binds people together and influences perceptions, cultures, relationships, and what people create. For Africa, it is Ubuntu; for Southeast Asia it is Confucianism, and for the global OD community it is Kurt Lewin's Field Theory. Ubuntu, or African humanism, originates in the African conception of 'being'. The individual is absorbed into the collective yet retains an identity as an intrinsic and sentient being (endowed with emotional and cognitive unstructured consciousness). Hence, Ubuntu's 'I am because you are, you are because we are' exemplifies these values. There are many idioms and proverbs across Africa that express the Ubuntu philosophy. For example, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – 'a person is a person because of others'. Concerning leadership, *Inkosi inkosi ngabantu* means a leader is a leader simply because of the people that support and give credence to that leadership. Such promotes the idea that any leader cannot succeed without the other.

Mugumbate & Chereni (2020) defines Ubuntu as:

"A collection of values and practices that people of Africa or African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing – an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental, and spiritual world."

According to Eze (2008), the core of Ubuntu can best be summarized as follows:

"A person is a person through other people strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an "other" in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the "other" becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests that

humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, I am. The "I am" is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance."

Through such various descriptors and definitions, Ubuntu has emerged as a common philosophy that encompasses the interdependence of humans on one another and the acknowledgment of one's responsibility to their fellow humans and the world around them. Therefore, Ubuntu is a philosophy that equilibrates collectivism and individualism. Ubuntu asserts that society gives human beings their humanity.

Ubuntu has a strong emphasis on compassion and communality. At the core of the Ubuntu belief system is the view that the collective supersedes the individual; hence, interdependence has a superior value to independence. '*The self cannot be self without other selves*'. Ubuntu, therefore, is a uniquely African moral philosophy that constitutes the spiritual cradle of African spirit, religion, and culture. It is a comprehensive mode through which reality is constructed and shared (social constructionism). In line with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belongingness (DEIB) concepts, Ubuntu values place a premium on the person's dignity, irrespective of race, gender, or creed. Such is essential to the growth of a healthy society. Such is also the genesis of 'diversity' from which emerges innovation and sustainability.

The OD field's humanistic values emphasize the importance of individuals and group culture. The particular context of Ubuntu also implies that this core belief system guides a person's thoughts, actions, and ethical conduct. It is worth noting that Ubuntu accepts individualism, but it values individualism within the context of collectivism and communal responsibility (Botha, 2005). Ubuntu's philosophical way of life facilitates harmony among cultures. According to Khoza (2013), "African humanism assumes that our commonality is the basis of our very being and is, therefore, the wellspring of all individual thoughts, feelings, and actions."

The Ubuntu philosophy has permeated the macro, organizational, and individual contexts (Khoza, 2013). At the macro-level, Ubuntu influences the national (political, cultural, economic, social), regional, and global relationships. At organizational levels, it influences strategy, structure, leadership, and processes; at an individual level, it influences thought, action, and ethical conduct.

As an OD practitioner, one may view Africa as an organization of diverse parts. A business organization has diverse parts such as marketing, operations, finance, research, etc. Such diverse parts are integrated, systemic, and symbiotic

through shared values, assumptions, and beliefs - a culture. As in any organization, such values, principles, and beliefs are expressed differently; however, the underlying values, principles, and beliefs guide all parts of a whole system in policies, decisions, relationships, and practices. We see Ubuntu as a critical cultural facet needed to emerge and be embedded into the fabric of Africa and African OD.

Kurt Lewin's Field Theory and Life Space

Kurt Lewin was a behavioral scientist and a Gestalt psychologist in the 1940s, who maintained that to understand an individual, it is vital to understand the environment (field) in which they are operating. Individuals do not exist in a vacuum – their surroundings always influence their actions. Kurt Lewin's Field Theory is a crucial foundation of OD. Lewin viewed the social environment as a dynamic field that interacted with human consciousness in an interactive way.

Field Theory is a theorem that examines patterns of interaction between the individual and their environment(s). The concept first appeared in psychology with roots in the holistic perspective of Gestalt theories. It indicates that whatever environment a person finds himself in, the person assimilates and accommodates feelings, thoughts, and experiences that emerge and influences their perceptions, thinking, feeling, and behavior. Lewin also proposed the idea of 'life space' in that an individual's behavior, at any time, is manifested only within the co-existing factors of the current "*life space*" or "*psychological field*."

Lewin's Field Theory can be expressed by his formula: Behavior equals a function of the person and environment; $B = f(p,e)$. OD expands such thinking, focused solely on the person, the group, the organization, and society. Therefore, Lewin's 'Life Space' contends that we are influenced by what we hold within us and by our many external environments when we are open to their influence. So, a life space is the 'space' within us that holds the combination of all the factors that influences a person's behavior at any time in one's life. Such may enhance a sense of 'self-agency' so important in one's life journey or inhibit one's influence on one's environments and, most importantly, novel forms of emergent thoughts and expressions within us and within our worlds.

Self-agency is the capacity of individuals and groups to act independently and collaboratively to make their own free choices *as salient beings* within an ever-expanding 'sphere of influence'. It *is* the realization and manifestation that one can change oneself, manifest new relationships, and influence to make things happen in the world (good or bad – healthy or unhealthy)." (Trottier, 1990).

What we 'do', what we perceive, what we believe, our opinions, our knowledge, our sense of safety, of belonging, and our desire to contribute come from and exist within us and are limited or enhanced by the internal and external 'worlds' we learn from and experience.

Questions for reflection:

- Does one's environment enhance the self and self-agency (ability to influence one's environment) or diminish such? Do I enhance or diminish such for myself and others?
- What happens when such environments inhibit self-agency from naturally emerging throughout all areas of a person's life, including work, parental practices, educational approaches, belief systems, relationships, knowledge formation, socialization processes, institutionalization, etc.?

For Kurt Lewin, behavior was determined by the totality of an individual's situation. Field Theory defines a 'field' as 'the totality of co-existing facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent' (Lewin 1951, p.240). Individuals were seen to behave differently according to how tensions between perceptions of the self and the environment were worked through. The whole psychological field, or 'life space', within which people acted had to be viewed to understand behavior. Within such, individuals and groups could be seen in topological terms (using map-like representations). Individuals participate in a series of life spaces (such as the family, work, school, and church), which were constructed under various force vectors (Lewin, 1952).

An example of a simple life-space concept is the idea that two (or more) people's experience of a situation emerge from being engrained from a defended, static position into an open dialogue where emotions and thoughts can be explored to create novel thoughts and feelings of understanding, appreciation, and connection. This does not happen if two or more people do not truly and authentically interact and connect within the self and with each other at certain levels. This combined space can be "built" up as the two (or more) people share feelings, experiences, thoughts, and ideas through open and generative dialogue to create a more complex, genuine 'experience' and, thus, a life-space together. This manifestation, sometimes called 'we made a connection', emerges within personal relationships, work groups, organizations, social/political entities, and any form of elements and constituents that have the potential to achieve 'common appreciation'.

Questions for reflection:

- Does Lewin's work reflect the core concepts of Ubuntu: 'I am because you are', and 'the self cannot be validated without other-selves'?
- Within 'a pseudo-life space' shaped with labels, roles, submissions, stereotypes, definitions, 'boxes', or other preconceived categories an individual may be fitted into, how much genuine communication and productive relationships manifest? How much novel thought, innovation, and creativity emerge?
- How much our socialization, parental practices, our education, our work experiences, our institutionalization in general block our 'naturalness' to create new thoughts, relationships, and solutions to complex business and

social issues as we learn to assimilate and accommodate status quo social norms, perceptions and beliefs through our lives? How much do we compete and use others to promote our agendas? How does such drive out our natural ability to connect and build mutually beneficial relations with others?

Within organizations, the traditional structures, roles, status levels, power dynamics, control, communication dynamics, systems, processes, hidden agendas, etc. may have 'normalized' and stymied us in how we have come to accept the 'status quo' and view the state of our organizations as 'acceptable'. The irony is that such organizational aspects inhibit our natural human abilities to explore, to create, to innovate and to collaborate - the things that organizations say they are looking for.

Questions for reflection:

- What type of 'culture and structures' do traditional/current organizations create?
- Can traditional hierarchies of 'control' facilitate relationships based on the values and principles of Ubuntu?
- How does the lack of Self-Agency impact performance, innovation, collaboration, exploration, acceptance of diversity, imagination, and creation - as well as to people's lives in general?

On Change

As postulated and shown in Lewin's Life Space and Ubuntu philosophy, one's total environment refers to the internal and external influences, drivers, and motivators within which the person exists, perceives, and acts. The life space environment is completely subjective within each context as it depends on the objective situation (context) and the characteristics, attributes, beliefs, and perceptions of the person and others within that life space. In other words, we often perceive our environment as arbitrary, an illusion of our own creation based on social constructivism. This is important to note since what is 'arbitrary' can be reframed not just in one's mindset, in relationships but also within the 'realities' of social and global current norms, beliefs, and actions.

Within an OD context, social constructionism (influencers and drivers), which shape our norms, beliefs, perspectives, attitudes, motivations, creativity, relationships, and sense of self, includes such things as organizational structures and cultures, financial systems, religions, belief systems, work relationships, power dynamics, roles, and status systems; as well as educational systems, socialization systems, utilization of resources, ownership of property, social relationships, and national boundaries. Thus, such 'illusions of our creations' are not marked in stone but can emerge and evolve beyond the current rationale that is seemingly forever set and see that nothing can be done to change oneself and one's world(s).

In OD, openness toward reframing one's mindset is critical. "How we see ourselves and our environment is what we create." Thus, what we have created is not locked into what cannot emerge. The unknown is constituted with 'what is

possible', and 'what is not possible'. We are the 'self-agents' of our worlds – nothing more and nothing less."

Conclusion

The core concepts of Ubuntu: 'I am because you are', and 'the self cannot be validated without other selves' seems to 'fit' Kurt Lewin's Field Theory and within a larger context of Lewin's Life Space. We postulate that Ubuntu and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory, through the practice of OD, facilitate the manifestation of the human spirit and humanistic principles and values. Thus, we conclude that Ubuntu and Lewin's Field Theory and Life Space are one and the same - indivisible in concept and in 'being'. This gives the philosophies and values of Ubuntu its validity as an OD fundamental, and most important, Ubuntu is the common thread throughout most of the African continent. We also conclude that 'Ubuntu' is the foundation and cornerstone of African OD.

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Culture Shift for Emancipation and Empowerment of Women in Africa

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Abstract

Organization Development (OD) addresses hard problems and grand societal challenges. The emancipation and empowerment of women is a worrisome global phenomenon that needs 'real OD' interventions. Women in Africa are exposed to masculinized leadership and cultural biases that limit and deplete their cognitive and emotional capacities. African OD, embedded in Africa's cultural practices towards women, can be used as a model to reframe women's cognitive and emotional frameworks to connect to their inner power and authentic brilliance. Such cultural shift is fundamental for inclusive change and transformation. The integration of African cultural traditions and Ubuntu philosophy enriches the culture shift by extolling individual acts of giving power and rights to women and amplifying their individuation. Policymakers and development cooperation providers can strengthen efforts to achieve gender equality through OD concepts and theories. In Zimbabwe, the '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' concepts embody OD premises and pillars that enrich women's capacities. Societies and organizations need this cultural shift to break stereotypes and facilitate sustainable positive social change. The article references the unadulterated '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' philosophies as models for the culture shift.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Women emancipation, Organization Development, Ubuntu

Introduction

The emancipation and empowerment of women has been a worldwide phenomenon of concern to many countries and organizations within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Subsequently, female emancipation links to any effort or movement which seeks to free women from social, political, or even economic bounds held together by patriarchal dictates UN Women (2023) This article acknowledges that Africa faces a significant gender gap. On average, women have fewer opportunities than men while they contribute significantly to the social-economic development of the continent. Organization Development (OD) contributes towards driving positive change to this belief and recognizes its responsibility to actively work towards reducing this gap, being a force for good in society. The ever-rising changes environmentally due to globalization, cultural changes, and diversity, the rise of women in different spheres has driven women to be emancipated and empowered. Globally various organizations are helping to empower and emancipate women. In Zimbabwe, the '*China Chemadzima*' (literally

meaning Women Thursday meeting' and '*Choto Chemadzima*' (women social gathering) are some of the social groupings that encapsulate OD principles.

Women empowerment encompasses increasing educational opportunities for women so that they can make meaningful decisions about themselves and their families (Pathak, 2003). The economic empowerment of women refers to the process of according to women the power to become "breadwinners" to be self-reliant to generate income from projects and fight poverty (Elliot, 2008). The political empowerment of women is the process of advancing women's political interests (Rajput, 2001; Tiwari, 2001).

Promoting gender equality, equitably, is not just a nice to have, but the right and smart strategy for sustainable development. In line with the essence of organization development (OD), when women are empowered, we unlock their potential and unleash their creativity, innovation, and resilience. This benefits not just families, but also societies. Therefore, OD imprimatur must be more visible (Worley, 2022) and should intervene in this worrisome worldwide phenomenon bedeviling women, globally.

According to the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal Number 5, Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. According to the UN (2020), there has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. The social and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation even bleaker. Progress in many areas, including time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, decision-making regarding sexual and reproductive health, and gender-responsive budgeting, is falling behind.

Women's health services, already poorly funded, have faced major disruptions. Violence against women remains endemic. And despite women's leadership in responding to COVID-19, they still trail men in securing the decision-making positions they deserve. Commitment and bold actions are needed to accelerate progress, including through the promotion of laws, policies, budgets, and institutions that advance gender equality. Greater investment in gender statistics is vital since less than half of the data required to monitor Goal 5 are currently available.

Gender inequality and gender-based violence are grand challenges that require an OD approach. According to UN Women (2023), following are some statistics to show the depth of this scourge in our society:

- Globally, 26 percent of ever-partnered women aged 15 and older (641 million) have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a husband or intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.

- In a 2021 survey in 13 countries, 45 percent of women reported that they or a woman they know has experienced some form of violence since Covid-19.
- In 2021, nearly one in five young women were married before the age of 18.
- 35 percent and 28 percent of young women were married in childhood, respectively in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.
- The global prevalence of child marriage has declined by about 10 percent in the past five years.
- Up to 10 million more girls are likely to become child brides by 2030 due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to the 100 million girls projected to be at risk before the pandemic.
- At least 200 million girls and women today have been subjected to female genital mutilation, mainly in 31 countries.
- As of 1 January 2022, the global share of women in lower and single houses of national parliaments reached 26.2 percent, up from 22.4 percent in 2015. At this pace, it would take another 40 years for women and men to be represented equally in national parliaments.
- Women's share is slightly over one-third in local governments.
- In 2019, before the pandemic, women accounted for 39.4 percent of total employment. In 2020, women represented nearly 45 percent of global employment losses.
- The share of women in managerial positions worldwide increased from 27.2 to 28.3 percent from 2015 to 2019, but remained unchanged from 2019 to 2020, the first year without an increase since 2013.
- Between 2007 and 2021, 57 percent of women aged 15 to 49 who are married or in a union made their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care.
- In the first year of the pandemic, an estimated 1.4 million additional unintended pregnancies occurred in lower- and middle-income countries.
- Only 15 out of 52 reporting countries included sufficient provisions in their legal frameworks to protect women's rights to land.
- Between 2018 and 2021, only 26 percent of countries have comprehensive systems in place to track public allocations for gender equality, 59 percent have some features of such a system, and 15 do not have the minimum elements of such a system.

It falls within the OD fundamental values that organizations should not operate in silos. The Covid 19 pandemic provided an opportunity for radical, positive action to redress long-standing inequalities in multiple areas of women's lives and build a more just and resilient world. The United Nations Women has developed a rapid and targeted response to mitigate the impact of the Covid 19 crisis on women and girls and ensure that long-term recovery benefits them, focused on five priorities: -

- Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is mitigated and reduced.

- Social protection and economic stimulus packages serve women and girls.
- People support and practice equal sharing of care work.
- Women and girls lead and participate in Covid-19 response planning and decision-making.
- Data and coordination mechanisms include gender perspectives.

The OD value of justice and inclusion of women encourages organizations to provide women with the necessary support to enable them to become financially independent. The integration of African cultural traditions and Ubuntu philosophy enriches the culture shift by commending individual acts of giving power and rights to women and strengthening their individuality. Policymakers and development cooperation providers can strengthen efforts to achieve gender equality through OD concepts and theories. In Zimbabwe, the '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' concepts embody OD premises and pillars that enrich women's cognitive and emotional frameworks. Societies and organizations need this cultural shift to break stereotypes and facilitate sustainable positive social change. The article references the unadulterated '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' philosophies as models for the culture shift.

Understanding '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' philosophies

In Zimbabwe, the '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' concepts embody OD premises and pillars that enrich women's cognitive and emotional frameworks. Societies and organizations need this cultural shift to break stereotypes and facilitate sustainable positive social change. During the '*China chemadzimai*' session, women are encouraged to self-develop themselves. OD also realizes that inclusion and justice are critical to women's empowerment, hence also crucial in fostering economic independence among women who depend on their husbands for their daily bread, subjecting themselves to the possibility of mistreatment. This is unfair to them, given that they can perform and add to the economic benefits of the society apart from exhibiting economic independence themselves.

According to the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the world has made substantial progress in achieving universal primary education, with girls and boys participating equally in primary education in most regions. While school closures related to Covid-19 are likely to set back progress on access to education, evidence shows that girls, once they have access to schooling, tend to do better than boys in terms of academic achievement. In tertiary education, women outnumber men, and enrolment is increasing faster for women than for men. However, women continue to be underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, representing only slightly more than 35% of the world's STEM graduates. Women are also a minority in scientific research and development, making less than a third of the world's researchers.

According to the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020, in terms of power and decision-making, women held

only 28% of managerial positions globally in 2019 – almost the same proportion as in 1995. And only 18% of enterprises surveyed had a female Chief Executive Officer in 2020. Among Fortune 500 corporations only 7.4%, or 37 Chief Executive Officers, were women. In political life, while women's representation in parliament has more than doubled globally, it has still not crossed the barrier of 25% of parliamentary seats in 2020. Women's representation among cabinet ministers has quadrupled over the last 25 years yet remains well below parity at 22%. This drives OD practitioners to approach organizations and embrace the OD values of justice and inclusion to build up better societies.

According to Lawless and Fox (2008), research shows that there are several reasons why women have preferred to shy away from active political participation. Of significance is that women are constantly being asked to prove themselves and their contribution to national development, contrary to their male counterparts. There have been significant challenges that women have faced when making inroads into political and economic platforms. Women are asked if they qualify to hold positions, yet no one asks men if they are qualified for a position. Women are also objectified and seen as sex objects, their contributions are not viewed in any other way than that, forcing many women to stay away.

Zimbabwe can be regarded as one of the many countries, especially in Africa, where the participation of women is largely found in the academic sector but fewer of them are involved in politics. Despite that, women constitute over 52 percent of the population; their involvement in politics is mired by political abuse, inappropriate attention, lack of access to resources, and trying to balance work, household, and political activities amongst other underlying circumstances.

Women's empowerment is all about fostering gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth. Therefore, now is the opportune time for Zimbabwean OD practitioners to remind women of financial opportunities they can access through, for example, Empowerment Bank. Resources from Empowerment Bank can help women finance projects for self-empowerment. Women may also be reminded that Government, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Small and Medium Enterprises, offers them access to information they may require for empowerment initiatives. In line with OD values, denigration and abuse of women should be condemned and dismissed with the utter contempt it deserves. For Zimbabwe to fully realize economic growth, the contributions of women cannot be side-lined. Such inclusivity will manifest the whole system thinking at the national level.

As part of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belongingness (DEIB), the fight for gender justice and equality has taken center stage across the globe, Zimbabwe included. While patriarchy and other gender stereotyping have for long-time condemned women to the periphery of decision-making, it is encouraging to note that efforts are being made to empower women and ensure their meaningful

participation in the community as well as nation-building. Churches, through the '*China Chemadzimai*' and other women's gatherings, encourage women to be bold enough and accept challenging roles in various organizations.

Amidst all this, unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) remains one of the most crippling hindrances to women's emancipation. Women's contributions through UCDW are oftentimes disregarded and they are considered inferior to their male counterparts who are engaged in formal employment. More importantly, the burden of UCDW cripples women's chances towards emancipation and self-actualization as required in a gender-just society.

According to UN Women (2022), the impacts of UCDW range from education and training, labor force participation, earning, political participation, and health which all border on gender stereotyping and norms that have for long gone unchallenged. This calls for socio-economic policies that foster equal emancipation of men and women. March is international women's month and development players, government, community leaders and politicians, churches as well as the general populace must spare a thought for women by way of recognizing the great work that they are doing through unpaid care and domestic work. This realization will be a befitting gateway to a sharing of the burden towards sustainable emancipation of women.

For a long time, unpaid care and domestic work have been considered a reserve for women but as research and enlightenment set in, it is becoming more evident that there must be recognition, reduction, redistribution, and representation of UCDW if women's emancipation is to be achieved. In Zimbabwe, the overarching problematic narrative is the belief that women are inferior. This leads to the undervaluing of women's work in both unpaid and paid spheres. This view is widespread from the individual to the government. Hence, the need for increased calls for OD practices and principles in addressing gender issues.

The problematic narratives that flow from the notion that women are inferior include the belief that unpaid care work is inherently a woman's job and therefore inferior, that a man is considered weak if he helps with UCDW, and the wife is ridiculed and that men are seen as breadwinners and are therefore "more deserving" of paid work.

OD has demonstrated the value of the whole system as the inclusion of women across the world in various institutions. After thousands of years of suppression and subordination under the male identity, women globally are breaking the stereotypes and resetting the social equations to seek equal rights and duties (Matume, 2017) The world is passing through an evolutionary transition phase of amazing transformation when women are emerging to lead from the front. This silent revolution, with empowerment and participation, is shifting the dynamics of socio-economic transformation. Whole system thinking enhances organizational

effectiveness by having a 360 view of the whole organization, system, or issue. This enables an integrated approach that incorporates the whole organizational ecosystem in trying to come up with interventions that would be inclusive of everyone, thereby empowering women by including them in strategic and influential roles.

Ecobank Case Study – Manifesting Whole System Interventions

The manifestation of whole system thinking around the women empowerment challenge is illustrated by large organizations such as Ecobank. Ecobank is a Pan-African bank headquartered in Nigeria. The bank supports and promotes gender equality. Ecobank is committed to driving positive change in Africa. During the 2023 International Women's Day celebrations, the Chief Executive Officer, Jeremy Awori highlighted his passion for Diversity and Inclusion agenda and, therefore, committed to creating a workplace where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and succeed. The Ecobank Chief further highlighted that promoting gender equality equitably was not just a nice to have but the right and smart strategy. The bank recognizes that when women are empowered, this would benefit not only the organization but also the society.

Ecobank has made great strides toward promoting gender equality. In 2016, the Ecobank Women Agenda was launched as part of Ecobank's Talent Management Framework. It aims to achieve 50/50 gender equality across the group and at all levels by 2030. As of Q1 2023, 46% of the workforce are women, while 30% of Ecobank's management and executives are female. The bank continues with various women empowerment initiatives, from its internal Women Development programs to the award-winning Elevate by Ecobank. It is OD's value to embrace advancement in communication and networking technologies.

Reforming Women's Mindsets – A Collective Responsibility

Women across the world are reframing years of conditioning as the weaker gender. In line with OD's essence of elevating humanity, this awakening and reframing of mindsets is essential in amplifying women's enduring capabilities. While the UN Women 2022 published that women remain oppressed, there are various organizations worldwide that assist in empowering women. Women for Women International is a non-profit organization that seeks to support women displaced or marginalized by conflict and oppression in eight foreign territories including Iraq and Rwanda. Many of their efforts are education-based, facilitating classes, and finding opportunities for graduates. Currently, the group is offering psychosocial and educational resources to Syrian women in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, to reach over 3000 women in the next three years.

Wholesome leaders need to be good at creating a powerful vision, inspiring people to follow that vision, and thinking strategically through various business options, which promote empowerment and emancipation of women, to promote justice. There are numerous reports on the participation of women in activities that no one had imagined. Several factors made it possible to start the transformation, but it

is the development of the democratic world order in the last 60 years that shaped and reshaped the mind to seek equality of rights in every sphere of life. The emergence of OD in the 1930s contributed to the transformation we see today.

Previously, the only role women had was to raise the children and look after the family and be subordinate to the superior male. Equality was nowhere in the scene as women were physically, mentally, socially, and financially dependent on their male counterparts. This mindset was the root cause of unconscious oppression. The democratic process ignited the spark of equality and today women are playing the role of a game-changer in family, society, workplace, politics, and global stages.

Women's participation in the workforce

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, women's participation in the workforce increased from 39.9% in 1950 to 57% in 2016. It is likely to head towards 85% in the next decade or so. It is not as positive globally, but tech push is likely to speed up the process.

This has been evidenced by a few females listed below, according to Education News (2022): -

- **Ethiopia - Sahle-work Zewde:** The former Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union was born in February 1950, a former diplomat and first female president of Ethiopia who was voted in by a unanimous vote of the Federal Parliamentary Assembly to assume the highest executive position in the country on 25th of October 2018. She is the current Ethiopian President and so making Ethiopia one of the countries with a female president in Africa and the world.
- **Singapore - Halimah Yacob:** The former Lawyer and Singapore-based politician assumed office as the 8th Singapore President in 2017. Halimah Yacob was born on the 23rd of August 1954. She assumed the position as the first female President of Singapore after serving as Speaker in the Country's Parliament. Singapore is one of the few Countries with a female President in the world.
- **Barbados- Sandra Mason:** Dame Sandra Prunella Mason FB GCMG DA QC was elected as the first female president of Barbados from November 30th, 2021, when the country rescinded from being a constitutional monarchy to become a republic. She was born on the 17th of January 1949. She was the former governor-general of the country between 2018 and 2021 before becoming the president. She qualified Barbados as one of the few Countries with a female President in the world.

The whole system perspective is, therefore, critical as shown in OD values as the system ensures engaging all stakeholders regularly regardless of gender, looking at the problem holistically, and coming up with sound advice and decisions to meet the reach the organizational goals. From the beginning of the right to vote in 1920,

women in the U.S. slowly penetrated the male-dominated Congress. Currently, they are the most powerful voice in the American political arena. It is not just American but a global phenomenon. Currently, women are at the top of the political system in several democracies. Nonetheless, it is still far below the expected 50% participation. Women leaders are a better fit in the changing dynamics of democracies across the globe. Local and global issues require skills that are in favor of women leaders. In this era of hyper-networked two-way communication, women are a better fit to listen to voices and find solutions through humanistic approaches. Issues like climate change, inequality, the green economy, healthcare, family care, etc. require better gender-sensitive handling.

The changing work culture and practices demand a new set of skills that are very natural to women as compared to men. The amazing skill of integration and cooperation makes women more fit for the jobs required to be executed in the hyper-connected and interdependent world. The natural traits of stability, consistency, and responsibility make them better candidates for various roles. Their adaptive and resilient qualities make women suitable for challenging roles in administration and business. The multitasking, flexibility, listening, and household management make them fit candidates for global home operations.

Trottier (1995) states that when we refer to organizations as emergent, we are saying that every facet of organizations such as culture, meaning, technology, social relationships, and decision making processes as well as business systems and processes are continually changing, following no exact predefined, prescribed, predictable pattern. These 'organizational forms' are products of constant social negotiation with their internal and external environments, influencing patterns and determinates. By the term 'form', we are NOT limiting 'organizational form' to such an old term as 'structure'. We are talking about 'a whole system' which includes behaviors, perceptions, capabilities, norms, finances, policies, practices, technologies, relationships, environmental influences, systems, structures, compensation, rewards, decision-making processes, power dynamics, and some may call this gestalt an 'organizational culture'.

In an emergent change environment, every job requires certain core skills, and one needs to have training and experience of executing particular tasks. But gender cannot be the differentiator. Some roles suit males better as it requires physical strength, and the system isn't yet ready to prepare women for such roles. But, with evolving technology and mindset even those barriers will have to go away, sooner or later. The presence of women in combat roles is a perfect example. Administrative and legal rules are changing to equip women better in a better manner, but it might take some more time to make it perfectly equal. The rules should be more gender-flexible to accommodate women in better roles and positions. Zimbabwe uses '*China chemadzimai*' and '*Choto chemadzimai*' as platforms to reframe and reform women's mindsets.

Financial dependency makes all the difference when it comes to the empowerment of women. The behavior and mindset take time to change, but financial freedom makes it happen faster. In the post-World War II era, women's participation in the labor force changed drastically. It was not just the number, but the composition also changed drastically. This led to the economic boom and the resulting push for higher participation and engagement. No country could grow if half of the demography remains out of active economic activities. Despite the active participation of women in farm activities across all major cultures, society failed to appreciate the participation. In Agri-based economies like India, women's participation in the active labor force is above 50% of the total. In some African societies, women lead from the front on the farm. A recent trend suggests that almost farm-based economic activities have higher women participation, as this suits their role as a multitasker. Women of India made the country the number one producer of milk in just two decades.

In fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belongingness (DEIB), the goal of all our effort is happiness. The work-life imbalance is an unfortunate reality of modern society. It is not about the gender-specific physiological role of raising and upbringing children but finding the balance. Thanks to the progress made in communication technology, it is now possible to find a fine balance to lead a happy life. Maternity and paternity rules are now more flexible to share responsibilities and manage family values accordingly. Women are more like a CEO in the home front, the success of the families depend on women. Women are playing this role effectively since the beginning of human civilization and they will continue to do so more effectively with professional roles.

Conclusion

The empowerment of women should be facilitated in all spheres of life. Dynamism is the key to socio-cultural evolution. As the trend suggests, gender barriers will get eliminated, so one should be mentally prepared to face behavioral changes. Equality is a relative concept, and the women's empowerment movement will continue until the "male" benchmark remains. Play the game effectively and make room for others to play. As OD practitioners we are therefore called to encourage constructive conversations, diversity, inclusion, and equity. It is through these significant OD values that aid the Emancipation and Empowerment of women as exhibited by '*China Chemadzimai*' in Zimbabwe.

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What Could the New Business Consciousness of the Future Look Like for Africa?

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Abstract

Imagine a business world where leadership focuses on the well-being of all employees and anyone interacting with the business or its products and services. A business environment where love, compassion, and co-creation are sacred values implemented in all processes, projects, and policies; where people are recognized as being the heart of the organization. Achieving this requires a radical change in consciousness, a profound transformation. While adults can acquire such new consciousness through a mindset shift and by adding heart wisdom, foundational change starts with education. Today's education systems need to be more conducive to co-creation; they promote competition. They do not teach children to uncover and value their unique talents or to harness their creative power, which would allow them to develop their unique genius into professional applications joyfully. This is counterproductive to the consciousness that drives organization and societal transformation. Having experienced a slice of the rich African culture, with the spirit of Ubuntu at its heart, the secret is in reviving this nurturing force in business and education. Creating new, more humane models built on ancient Oneness wisdom, rather than copying models from elsewhere, can bring true transformation.

Keywords: Consciousness, Ubuntu, Co-creation, Well-being, Education

Who am I to write about Africa's transformation?

Who am I to write about a continent on which I have spent at most nine months in just seven of the 54 countries? While I have been involved in many Africa-centered activities in the last few years, both on the continent itself and elsewhere, online and in person, this doesn't make me an expert in African matters. Following my intuition, this article offers some ideas that, while relevant for all continents, may fall on more fertile ground on the African continent. Khoza (2013) asked, "How can Africa lead the world, considering that so many countries on the continent cannot get their houses in order?" p.231. In my work with African people, especially youth, I have found that African minds are generally less manipulated by politics and thus more open to fresh perspectives when it comes to 'new ways of doing'. The African culture connects the dignity of the human person with the viability and sustainability of businesses and societies (Khoza, 2013).

Dreaming of a new business consciousness while reflecting on the education system

Imagine a world of business where leadership focuses on the well-being of all employees and anyone who interacts with the business or its products and services. A business environment where love, compassion, and co-creation are sacred values implemented in all processes, projects, and policies, where people are recognized and treated as the heart of the organization. Based on Ubuntu philosophy, African leadership has the transformative power of building great institutions. As Khoza (2013) puts it, African leadership serves rather than dictates, builds trust, and inspires followers.

Picture a world where people watch out for each other, independently of their roles; everyone has access to the resources they need to comfortably live in their purpose and accomplish the goals embedded in their visions; where the human is at the center of leadership and education. These principles are enshrined in African humanism as implied in the isiZulu maxim: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person because of other people; I am because you are, you are because we are). Such a world aligns with the essence of organization development, elevating humanity and bringing presence to human systems.

Dreams become visions, which then become plans. Others before us turned their dreams into physical reality, even when they initially seemed too fantastic. Leaders must nurture imagination and dream together with their people to ignite conversations that manifest change and transformation. Khoza (2013) wrote, "to define African leadership and impress its virtues on the business community, dreams, and imaginings are as important as logical thought and dissection" (p.17). Implementing dreams of a more human-centered economy requires advanced consciousness. While adults can acquire this new consciousness through a radical mindset shift and by adding heart to their minds, foundational change starts with the school system. As practitioners, and change leaders, we could learn a lot from young children (most of who, if not all, are born with more evolved consciousness than most adults) if we just let them be more who they are; if we allowed them to express themselves, and we listened. Instead, education systems press them into a system that's not made for them, a system that molds them into what it wants them to be, its servants. Children (all humans) are not meant to fit into a box. Humans are meant to live their unique purposes; the reason they came to this Earth. This is hard when they cannot be themselves and uncover their unique genius. The beauty of Ubuntu, or African humanism, is in its ability to appreciate every human being and create safe spaces for people to be who they are. Therefore, learners must be exposed to logic-based and experiential learning (Grace and Seemiler, 2016).

Adults are quick to label children if they don't live up to their expectations: ADD, ADHD, and some are even medicated. Often, these symptoms indicate that a child's unique needs are not met. Needs such as movement (rather than sitting still on a school bench all morning), attention (rather than being ignored or dismissed), a sounding board (rather than being left to themselves), the list goes on, and it's

different for each child because children have unique personalities that deserve respect so they can grow into the best version of their adult self.

Do today's education systems produce leaders who foster positive change & transformation?

The change and transformation dilemma could be traced to a reliance on education systems that deplete people's enduring natural capabilities. Conformity-focused educational concepts and methods are not conducive to implementing the dream of new business consciousness. Such systems do not further co-creation but rather competition. Students are told to get better grades than their classmates and to stick to their papers during tests rather than cooperate. Concepts like being "better than" or "worse than" are quickly adopted. Conformity-focused systems do not teach children to uncover and value their unique talents, which would allow them to develop their unique genius into its practical application joyfully and, as a result, a purpose-filled life. Kids are told to compare and measure themselves against others rather than focusing on their unique potential.

Addai (2009) noted that some African learning and training programs need more relevancy. Curricula, analogies, and books for instruction are, for the most part, irrelevant to the African context. Most programs are based on Western models, hence failing to facilitate the needed change and transformation in Africa.

Birkenbihl (n.d), management trainer and creator of brain-friendly language learning techniques, says in her video on human potential: "Humans are born with potential. If you had evolved optimally, your potential would have unfolded fully, and you would have become a homo sapiens. However, in most cases, you didn't evolve optimally. Something happened that we call 'upbringing'... and this is how you were normalized. Because we put a lot of value on normality." Normality is a synonym for ordinariness, uniformity, and averageness, frequently resulting in the inability to fulfill our potential.

If people could be taught to be extraordinary, why do education systems teach people to be ordinary instead? Have you ever wondered about this?

In addition, children are taught not to make mistakes. This stifles their natural curiosity for experiments and their creative spirit. They are instructed to learn facts by heart and study other people's truths without questioning. Critical thinking is not desired and is often even actively discouraged. One-size-fits-all syllabi systematically subdue their passions and dreams, categorized into intelligence boxes that tell nothing about their distinct creativity and potential. Through exams, they falsely learn that there is only one possible answer when there are unlimited possibilities. They may even be ridiculed when they suggest there might be other options.

I clearly remember that I was what would be called a "hopeless dreamer" before moving through school. My dreaming was impaired over time as I became more "realistic." What does "being realistic" really mean? It means "facing reality," perceiving our physical reality with our five externally-oriented senses as if it were set in stone, no longer seeing other possibilities with our inner eyes. We learn that we have to "see it to believe it." When it should be the other way around: We have to believe it to see (or create) it. Our inner dreams are the cause, and our outer (physical) reality is our creation's effect or result. Dreams become visions, become plans to create the world we want to see.

Despite going through this experience, I'm still an idealist, and I am proud of it. I have refused to give up my faith in humanity's drive to strive for positive expansion, which has helped me resist being educated out of dreaming. Like many others, I was not encouraged to explore my creative potential. I was told to repeat and memorize a myriad of so-called facts (many of which, more recently, have turned out to be wrong, if not blatant lies). I decided to explore this innate potential more consciously again later in life and help my clients do the same. Seeing how many people struggle with this and so unnecessary is sad.

Parents are becoming more concerned about the content of education

Many parents are starting to realize this, primarily due to the overly "woke" syllabi and more-obvious-than-ever indoctrination practices, and this is why in the U.S., more and more parents are taking their kids out of school and home-school them instead. Of course, this is not an easy scenario for people working two jobs or whose schedules are otherwise overloaded with tasks that don't permit them to educate their offspring outside of what is now often called the "indoctrination school system." And in some European countries like Germany, the police show up if you don't send your kids to school.

Education systems produce the leaders of the future. They produce leaders of small businesses and large corporations, foundations, political entities, communities, and families—the leaders who facilitate and determine organization development and design interventions. Leaders in Africa need to recognize that building better educational institutions is not about copying whatever has a big name. It's about creating something new and different.

Rekindling the spirit of Ubuntu (or Oneness) must be at the core

It is easy to realize that content from the preceding sections is counterproductive to the consciousness many of us would love to see in business: one of love, compassion, and co-creation. Co-creation, as in Ubuntu.

Having experienced a slice of the rich African culture and learned about the spirit of Ubuntu, it is critical to revive this nurturing force both in business and education. Ubuntu mobilizes human capacity by conveying appreciation of human

worth and supporting productive economic relationships (Khoza, 2013). True progress cannot come about by emulating current models that have produced unhealthy dependencies while favoring the separation of humans through their categorization into different races, confusing young people about their gender identities, and belittling the importance of family. As postulated under Ubuntu philosophy, it does take a village. Integrating Ubuntu's relational and economic logic is essential in Africa's transformation.

Profound change can only be generated by creating new, better models; models built on this ancient Ubuntu or Oneness wisdom, which is also embraced by a growing number of people in other cultures, whether in living truth or on a more theoretical spiritual level. It was always there; it had just been forgotten (and actively suppressed).

However, Ubuntu still mostly shines through its absence in most educational institutions. This is one of the reasons why people will also look for it in vain in our corporations. In organizations, people might catch a glimpse of it here and there in some outstanding individuals embodying it, but they often have a hard time implementing their noble intentions in work environments that reject the "together" (co-creation) in favor of the "against each other" (competition).

What do students need to find their ideal spot as working adults?

The essence of education has yet to be reformed since the Industrial Revolution. The question is: Who does this benefit? To foster real change and transformation, it is essential to develop schools that cater to the children's and youth's diverse talents, rather than propagating Western-modeled colleges as the ultimate recipe for success, for example, by adding more polytechnics, apprenticeships, etc. In parallel, it is high time to upgrade syllabi and learning materials to foster the students' uniqueness and creativity. This allows for teaching them their role in the greater picture. Students will be able to become the unique piece they were meant to be in the jigsaw puzzle, the fullest expression of their potential. In contrast, Chinoperekweyi (2019) noted that "most education systems seemingly shape learners in a way gratifying to the academic enterprise's vanities and idiosyncrasies" p.1.

In line with Conscious Organization Development (OD) (Brendel, 2020), other beneficial (and currently widely missing) subjects are the exploration of the power of the mind and the heart, understanding one's energy, and mindfulness. Lessons people usually look for in vain would be about building a positive self-image; practicing self-care; staying healthy (in body, mind, soul, and spirit); respecting and appreciating one's own and other people's unique greatness; manifesting more consciously; developing emotional intelligence; probing deeper into the infinite human potential; and related topics.

Many students would appreciate more variety of art classes (I would have loved to study dance). Anyone would benefit from public speaking classes; from knowing the principals and tools of Conversational Intelligence (C-IQ)®; from comprehending the light and shadow sides of culture (traditional values and learning about our roots); from understanding money and investments; from building functional communities; from grasping the importance of self-awareness and an emphasis on attitudes we value in leaders, such as compassion, commitment, and courage; from yoga, meditation, and martial arts. Some of these belong to any school curriculum; others can be optional. And children need attention. This means the student/teacher ratio must be low enough to guarantee optimum attention, and teachers must be trained accordingly. We would be surprised by how much hitherto hidden potential this initiative could bring to the surface; how much enthusiasm it could awaken; how it could strengthen entrepreneurship and teams in corporate, professional services, or any other organization; and what its impact on an economy could be. Such would also lead to more prosperity and peace.

A shift in education leads to a shift in organizations

The following are some hypotheses of how this could affect organizations, their leadership, and teams:

- An education system that furthers creativity logically leads to more creative adults, who can bring about more incredible innovation, assuming they are encouraged to share their ideas in an environment built on trust. Education systems should not impose the educators' prejudices, hopes, and fears upon learners or mold learners to fit a pattern of the academic enterprise's desires (Chinoperekweyi, 2019).
- Curricula that teach values and inspire creative thinking, for example, by offering visualization training and allowing students to dream, and produce visionary, value-driven leaders. This requires learning strategies that engage learners, hence the need for research-based, relevant, rational, relaxed, and rapport (Price, 2011).
- Students attending lessons on money management, like budgeting, spending, and investing, become money-savvy project managers or entrepreneurs who make better-informed money decisions.
- Co-creatively spirited people value their colleagues' unique greatness and complementary skills within their teams. They know that trying to put out someone else's light doesn't make theirs shine any brighter, and they don't even feel a need for that, given that they have explored and are aware of their authentic brilliance. Less precious energy and time will be spent on useless competition and on resolving conflicts because the number of the latter will decrease. Smoother collaboration leads to higher productivity. Competition becomes irrelevant once you fully comprehend and embody the beauty of all humans being different while all being connected.
- Greater sharing and collaborative solution-finding at school give rise to true inclusiveness (not the pseudo-version of it that has brought more separation

and frequently calls for conformity rather than inclusion, unity, and diversity of perspectives). As observed in the US. and Europe, DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) has been politically abused to increase division rather than benefit inclusion, and critical voices are not tolerated. If you look at those societies, the current approach is firing in the wrong direction, asking humans to embrace greater conformity rather than diversity. True inclusiveness comes from within, and if people were not educated about it, we'd probably naturally practice it, thus effortlessly nurturing team cohesion. This is corroborated by Chinoperekweyi (2019), who stated that "teaching and learning should ensure collaborative knowledge creation and learning beyond conventional notions of time and space. The curriculum should be rigorous, real, require independence, rich in thinking, revealing, rewarding, and reflective. Educators must adopt interactive, activity-based learning and radically shift from 'theory-to-practice' towards 'practice-to-theory'" p.4.

- Conversational Intelligence (C-IQ)® training helps leaders and all employees build trust, communicate more effectively, and make their voices heard, while better understanding others. Words have power; tweaking our language can drive (true) inclusion, create more cohesive teams, and increase employee engagement, to name a few benefits. Conversational Intelligence (C-IQ)® also provides powerful tools to navigate more successfully through meetings, encourage the sharing of creative ideas, and shift individual team members with a passive or skeptical attitude towards a more co-creative one.

When people have a good self-image and self-belief, thanks to supportive upbringing and education, they are more prone to show up as the best version of themselves, to display their most precious talents and strengths, and to share their most promising ideas. This, in turn, leads to tremendous enthusiasm for their work, which raises their engagement, productivity, and creative output. Our self-image and self-belief are primarily influenced by subconscious beliefs formed from birth (and even before that, through our genes) and through a lifetime. What we observe and hear from our family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, managers, coworkers, and other influencing voices around us generates these beliefs and, through them, our self-image. If it is a positive one, it will be easier for us to achieve success, and we will also be less stressed. That's why self-image is such a critical topic regarding self-awareness and self-development, and many of us have had to work diligently to upgrade our self-belief and self-worth.

The new consciousness addresses brain drain

The much-lamented brain drain could be reduced as young people have better opportunities and enjoy greater well-being. When workers are appreciated, recognized, nurtured and properly remunerated, fewer will be urged to look for opportunities elsewhere. If their work preferences, natural talents, and strengths are honored, and they feel like they have a real choice, they will more easily find their spot in the business world. According to Khoza (2013), "Africa can only reverse its brain drain by offering its professional workers rewarding jobs in safe and pleasant

circumstances" p.217. Africa needs to stem disillusionment in its professionals to turn brain drain into brain gain.

For the positive effects of a better education system to take faster effect, a simultaneous move toward a more humanistic, new business consciousness of love, compassion, and co-creation must be implemented in organizations, augmenting the employees' well-being. Well-being is the currency of the future. This is a profoundly appealing idea to those who sincerely appreciate the quality of life, a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle, and a sense of peaceful fulfillment through achieving impact without stress. To foster such well-being and a sense of peaceful fulfillment, learners should be exposed to exciting learning approaches, relevant content, and opportunities for learning by doing (Chinoperekweyi, 2019).

What we want to see in the future needs to start now

I realize that this is a long-term project. Significant change will only happen over time, but it will never happen if this shift is not initiated. The sooner we start; the sooner we will see the results. Faster progress can also be attained by launching parallel improvements in several different areas: schools and corporations, small and large companies, across all industries, both in the private and public sectors. And we may get to a tipping point faster than we can envision. Substantial transformation often can only take place with disruption. The global mood is one of imminent breakdowns of systems (including belief systems) to bring significant breakthroughs in human consciousness. Sometimes, financial and political systems are bound to crumble and fall so we can create something new and better. Eventually (sooner or later, depending on the speed at which human consciousness elevates itself), the timeline of advanced consciousness – one of abundance and freedom, peace, and wealth for all will prevail over darker timelines. It depends on us because we are the ones who (co-)create our reality (even if we don't learn this vital truth in school). Whether we know it or not, we co-create our reality during each second of our lives. So, we better be aware. Creation is continuously happening on a large and a small scale; we create through thoughts, feelings, emotions, words, and actions. Imagine what we could create if we consciously did it and taught our children to do the same.

Such is the power of thoughts and words

If you don't believe your thoughts influence the world and the people around you, check out the Emoto (2017) water experiment in one of many videos. He proved that water is affected by our words and intentions. We can improve water quality by raising its vibration through loving words (similarly to blessing food, which you may already be doing) or addressing it with hate speech. That's also why food cooked with love tastes so much more delicious.

I have conducted a few water experiments of my own, where I froze tap water that I had placed under a Russian healing pyramid on the one hand and water directly from the tap on the other. I positioned both glass jars next to each other in

the freezer. Despite the same freezing time and temperature, similar amounts of water in each jar, and equal positioning in the freezer, the outcome was astoundingly different: The pyramid water jar was so full of expansive energy it burst the jar into shards (despite not using a lid on any of the jars), and its frozen shape and crystallization mimicked the shape of the pyramid. In contrast, the other tap water just froze into some random jumble. I invite you to experiment with water yourself! Our DNA responds to language, and our human bodies consist of water to a huge extent. Sounds and words can have a calming, healing effect or the opposite, depending on their quality and frequency. Everything is energetic frequency (including our thoughts), and there is a continuous exchange of energy between us and the world around us. We are energy, and we are consciousness. Even water is living consciousness. This is exactly why consciousness is the central word of this article.

As consciousness evolves, everything follows

The consciousness we develop for our families, schools, and organizations will always revert to us. It either rewards us or it hurts us. Why didn't we learn this in school? In any case, we all must do our part in this creation; every little thing adds to the big picture, and every puzzle piece counts, both in consciousness and practicality. As within, so without. As above, so below.

Let's break the cycle!

Are you ready to step into a future with New Consciousness? Are you ready to bust the cycle and design a new template? What are you waiting for? You can do your part, and you are important. Even a small wave can have a huge ripple effect when a passionate, committed, and resilient soul, a heart-centered and value-driven human being, initiates it.

Schools are not schools without pupils or students. Schools house communities. The same is true of any institution or organization. Let's give rise to new ways of being in a community with each other, and let's start with the schools because this has the potential to create a potent ripple effect that will spread into all the corners of society. Many African countries have a much better chance to create the schools of the future on a broad level than any other places because large parts of this continent seem less regulated than, say, Europe. That may be a problem. See, any structure has advantages and drawbacks, just like any shadow has a light on the other side. Having too much structure can be counter-productive to change. It's often easier to build something new than to fix the existing and outdated, especially when deeply engrained. If you're in a privileged place where you could invest in or influence the education system, could this become your calling? Could you make it your life's mission? Please share this article with others who would also find value in it so you can inspire them to join you in your endeavor to drive this New Consciousness for Africa. Isn't this a superb dream to be converted into a vision and a plan? You'd leave a legacy of contributing to a major evolutionary shift for humankind.

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Investigating Linguistic Demands in African Corporations: The Role of English and Wolof Proficiencies in Senegal



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Abstract

This study investigates the linguistic needs of Senegalese companies with a specific emphasis on English and Wolof languages. Recognizing the increasing globalization of business and the specific multilingual context of Senegal, the research aims to understand the role of these languages in corporate communication, operational efficiency, and overall business success. The research employs a survey of over 300 stakeholders in HR and Hr related field, in Senegal to gain comprehensive insights into the companies' linguistic demands and their impact on various business aspects. Preliminary findings indicate a growing importance of English for international business communication and the sustained relevance of Wolof for local operations and employee engagement. The study's findings contribute valuable insights for human resources development, business strategy, and language policy in Senegal, demonstrating the key role of linguistic proficiency in enhancing business competitiveness in an increasingly globalized market.

Keywords: Linguistic Needs; Senegalese Companies; English Language; Wolof Language; Business Communication

Introduction

Situated in West Africa, Senegal spans an area of 196,722 km², sharing borders with Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau to the south and southeast respectively. The nation also touches The Gambia and maintains a maritime border with Cape Verde. As a part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a 15-country collective representing around 360 million people, Senegal actively contributes to regional peace, stability, and economic integration. The country also belongs to the West African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU), a consortium of eight nations sharing a common customs and currency system, utilizing the CFA franc (XOF) (Eberhard, Simons, & Fernig, 2020) cited in (USAID, 2020).

As of 2021, Senegal's population stood at 17,215,433, with a slight female majority (8,649,066, or 50.24%) over males (8,566,367, or 49.76%). Half of this

population is under 18, indicating the youth-dominated demographic structure of the country (ANSD, 2021).

While French is the official language and serves as the primary medium of instruction, the nation also acknowledges several indigenous languages, with Wolof emerging as the most prominent. As of 2022, there are approximately 4,640,365 French speakers aged ten and above. In contrast, Wolof is spoken by 12.2 million people, with 5.9 million as first-language speakers and 6.3 million as second-language speakers [(Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020) cited in (USAID, 2020)]. Predominantly used in urban areas, Wolof spans 80% of the national territory and is understood by various ethnic groups [(Daff, 1998) cited in (Degache, 2022)]. Despite not having an official language policy, Senegal's government demonstrates support for using native languages in the formal education sector. Consequently, the Ministry of Education, non-governmental organizations, and donors have initiated bilingual and multilingual education programs to improve literacy. However, these initiatives have yet to be formally recognized or implemented on a national scale (RTI International, 2015) cited in (USAID, 2020).

In the realm of foreign languages, English stands as a mandatory subject from college onwards. The growing specialization in English teaching curricula reflects its widespread application in diverse fields. Recognizing English's communicative importance, teachers aim to foster fluency and familiarity with subject-specific English, leading to the growth of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a field distinct from General English (Gaye, 2015).

Background information

By 2050, it is projected that one-third of the global youth population will be situated in Africa, a significant rise from the one-fifth recorded in 2012. This expansion is expected to primarily affect West, Central, and East Africa [(Bloom, 2012) cited in (AfDB, 2015)]. Simultaneously, numerous West African countries, including Senegal, are grappling with a serious challenge of mass unemployment, which stood at 24.1% in the fourth quarter of 2021, showing an increase of 7.8 percentage points compared to the last quarter of 2022 (ANSD, 2022).

Particularly alarming in Senegal is that 41% of individuals aged 15-34 are neither employed nor engaged in the education system, with a disproportionate impact on women (51%) as compared to men (29%) within this age group (Mbaye & Gueye (2018) cited in (Kappel, 2022)). The issue of unemployment in Senegal has been extensively studied by both government institutions (ANSD, 2022) and independent researchers (Diallo & Diallo, 2021); (Sall & Tine, 2008). The prevailing explanation for the high unemployment rate among young graduates is an overall job shortage and a discrepancy between the training provided and the real-world needs of businesses for qualified young graduates (Government of Senegal, 2014).

Despite multiple attempts by governments to address the youth employment issue, a significant gap remains between job availability and demand. Demographic growth and the health implications of the coronavirus pandemic have further underscored the urgent need to bridge this employment gap.

In the realm of education, recent years have seen a global shift in language policies from focusing on official languages to promoting minority languages as media of instruction. The advantages of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), which underscores the use of the home language for instruction, came into international spotlight following UNESCO's 1953 publication: *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education*. Gradually, national lingua francas and international languages are introduced, eventually becoming the main medium of instruction [(UNESCO, 2018; Wisbey, 2016) cited in (Reilly, 2019)]. In Senegal, a growing trend of a mixed Wolof-French code can be observed, resulting from the close interplay and overlapping functions of these two languages [(Juillard, 1995) cited in (Saltevo, 2005)].

The era of globalization acknowledges the crucial role of English as a universal medium of communication, and its position as the first foreign language choice for most non-English speaking countries. In West Africa, English serves multiple roles as observed in a study by the British Council (2013); it is used for internal communication in multinational companies, regional economic cooperation organizations, international development agencies, and it plays a vital role in international peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, it is the preferred language for those planning to study abroad and is widely used by traders operating in the informal economy.

Language proficiency is a key determinant of learning, professional mobility, and employability, both domestically and internationally. However, a mismatch between the supply and demand for language-skilled professionals has emerged as a significant challenge for Senegal, a prominent supplier of human capital in West Africa. According to a study (Gaye, 2015), many Senegalese students recognize upon entering the job market that their English proficiency is below what is required in the labor market.

Statement of the Problem

Given the aforementioned context, it is clear that the rising population in Senegal, coupled with economic stagnation and an education system that fails to adequately equip students with requisite language skills, are key contributing factors to the unemployment crisis. In our increasingly globalized world, where English is the international lingua franca and national languages are gaining value, particularly through the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), it is imperative for Senegal to enhance its population's language proficiency. To address this, an optimal Language of Instruction (LOI) approach is needed to

facilitate effective knowledge transfer and thereby increase employability. By bridging the gap between the linguistic skills required by employers and those possessed by the available workforce, Senegal can boost its local economic development and meet its civic objectives.

In the broader context, if the language proficiency gap persists, it will pose a significant obstacle for Senegal in its efforts to align with international organizations, such as the UN, in achieving sustainable development goals. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the language skillset deficiency is promptly addressed to ensure future socioeconomic growth and sustainability.

Purpose of the Study

Language, as a vital tool for communication, is crucial in imparting necessary skills through education and training. Identifying the particular language proficiency that carries the most employment potential is, therefore, essential. This study is intended to delve into the comparative impact of English, Wolof, or a combination of the two, on enhancing the employability of the Senegalese population. The primary objective is to understand which language, or language blend, can expedite the improvement of national capacity to produce skilled labor, thereby increasing their suitability for employment in companies operating in this former French colony.

Research Question

This study seeks answer for below question:

"How does proficiency in English, Wolof, or both languages impact the employability of individuals in Senegal?"

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to offer significant insights for both the government and educators alike. It equips the government with vital knowledge to strategically allocate limited resources to bolster economic growth and reduce unemployment rates. This ultimately aids in addressing the prevalent skills shortage faced by companies within Senegal, thereby fostering an increase in national GDP. On the other hand, educators and trainers could utilize these findings to inform the development, planning, and execution of curricula that can effectively enhance the human capital in Senegal. Consequently, this would establish a sustainable pool of proficient individuals who meet the demands of the labor market in the Senegalese economy. In essence, this study elucidates the specific language skill needs of Senegalese employers and underscores the necessity of aligning these needs with the available human resources.

Literature review

In 2015, to address the issue of Senegalese students in content areas that noticed that their level of English was lower than the labor market's requirements when they became job seekers, the author Amina Gaye (Gaye, 2015) conducted a study titled "Assessing the English Language Needs of the Senegalese Professionals Working in Business and Tourism Sectors in Saint-Louis, Senegal". Using a qualitative approach to research design, the study was built on the works of Hutchinson & Waters (1987), and explored the role English plays in professional domains and assessed the learning needs for the professionals working in the fields of Business and Tourism. The purpose of the study was to help reduce the gap that exist between the English instructional programs and the job market's requirements in order to produce graduates that meet the labor market's expectations. The research was conducted in only one region of Senegal out of 14, namely Saint- Louis, through an on-site observation and a questionnaire(Gaye, 2015).

The research found that 92% of the professionals in the field of tourism who answered the questions need and use English in their jobs. Since they are in constant contact with tourists, the type of English they mostly need is spoken English, but this does not mean that they do not use written English. Some of them, depending on their job responsibilities, use both oral and written English. However, although some of them claimed to speak English fluently, more than half (60%) reported facing difficulties expressing themselves correctly or understanding certain native speaker interlocutors, and 98% want to improve their oral skills in English. In the field of business, 86% of the professionals working in banks, agencies, insurance companies, and post offices need and use English in their jobs. They receive English-speaking customers and need English for both written and oral communication. Only a few of them do not face difficulties in their use of the English language (12%), the majority having problems with expression (28%) or comprehension (30%). Therefore, 88% of those professionals want to improve their English, and 02% of those who answered that they did not use English in their jobs nevertheless want to improve their oral as well as written skills. However, all the professionals surveyed agree that after all the years they spent learning English in high school and college, they did not acquire the skills necessary to communicate effectively in job situations. As a matter of fact, they stated a need for additional training to improve their skills in English and better use that language in the workplace (Gaye, 2015).

To identify the language skills needs of French employers, the LEMP project of the Cereq Institute conducted several investigations during 2014 through the research themed "Analyse of the needs of French employers with regard to foreign language skills" (Cereq-Iredu Institute, 2015). A first quantitative survey, through 801 companies responding to an online questionnaire, shed light on topics such as methods of evaluating the skills of job candidates, the use of foreign languages in the professional context, or the role of languages with regard to hiring, international mobility, careers, training. This first quantitative study was enriched by a qualitative

study through 14 testimonials from company managers, excerpts from semi-structured interviews, which identify current issues, their personal and professional visions of foreign language skills. In addition, an analysis of a corpus of 1,529 job offers posted on two websites over two months, make it possible to identify the requirements in terms of language skills formulated by employers, in link to job conditions and profiles" (Cereq-Iredu Institute, 2015).

The research found that half of the companies demand competences in foreign languages when recruiting. All other things being equal, foreign language knowledge makes a difference. English prevails as most demanded language. It is followed by German, Spanish and Italian. Two advertisements in five required competences in two foreign languages. Two thirds of the companies used the interview in foreign language to test the candidate's language level. Half of the enterprises reported that they often take into account experiences of international mobility when recruiting. Half of the companies mentioned that foreign language competences have positive effects in employers' career contributing to promotion, mobility and remuneration. Foreign language skills increase the chances of getting a stable and better remunerated job. Foreign language skills are more often demanded in the case of management positions (57% and 59%) followed by technicians (48% and 41%) and other workers (8%). Foreign languages are mostly used in sales-market research (61%), services to clients (51%), and purchase (45%). The language level demanded increases with the qualification level of the job position, the education level required, and the years of work experience. The majority of companies demand both oral and written skills. Around 70% of the companies' respondents believe that having employer with language skills is an asset to the company. A third of the enterprises report difficulties to recruit candidates with the needed language competences. Close to a quarter of the firms organise training in foreign languages for their employers" (Cereq-Iredu Institute, 2015).

Campanella et al., (2021) in a study themed "The contribution of foreign language learning to employability" argue that education in foreign language plays an important role in preparing student for employment opportunity. This study highlights the role of education system in stirring the language capacity of students within a country as such advocate and necessitate. English as a language of instruction (LOI). While the study questions the main skill that boost students' employability, it also questions the weakness of the current graduands, how to prepare them relative to the expectation of employers of the modern economy. The author theorizes that English has become the most important language of instruction, if local and international opportunity for employment is to be optimized(Campanella et al., 2021).

To validate the argument, qualitative methodological approach to analyses the needs and requirements of companies from different sectors in the recruitment process. This approach to allows the researcher to obtain insights and interpretations

rather than hypothesis testing. Data were collected from a closed-ended questionnaire composing of 12 questions formatted and distributed using Google Forms in a Likert-type with scale ranging from 1 to 5 to identify key factors for employment success and to conclude that foreign language skills play an important role in the recruitment process. The study received 191 respondents from companies operating in 11 different municipalities and 14 sectors, mainly from the Services Sector (20.9%), Education (19.4%) and Accommodation, Catering and Similar (17.3%). Analysis of data shows that employers value social and interpersonal competencies, communication skills and foreign language proficiency (Campanella et al., 2021). These previous studies provide significant groundwork for the current research, highlighting the value of language skills in various professional settings and the potential disconnect between educational language programs and real-world job requirements.

Contribution to this study

Gaye's 2015 research demonstrated the specific language needs of Senegalese professionals in the tourism and business sectors. This research highlighted the need for spoken and written English, with professionals often facing difficulties in communication despite years of English instruction. This study not only underscores the demand for practical English skills in these sectors but also signals potential deficiencies in existing language instruction programs in Senegal. Similarly, the LEMP project by the Cereq-IREDU Institute presented a comprehensive analysis of language skill requirements in French companies. The results from this research suggest that language competencies often make the difference in recruitment decisions, with English being the most demanded language. The study also revealed that language skills could positively impact career progression and compensation, which aligns with the human capital theory. The work of Campanella et al., (2021) emphasized the pivotal role of foreign language education in enhancing students' employability, stressing the importance of English as the language of instruction. This aligns with the objectives of our research to examine the language needs of Senegalese companies, with a focus on English and Wolof proficiency.

Therefore, these pieces of literature contribute significantly to the current study by elucidating the importance of language skills in professional settings, the potential inadequacies in current language instruction, and the role of English proficiency in improving employability. These findings will guide the development of our research methodology and the interpretation of our results.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Human Capital Theory. The Human Capital Theory is most frequently associated with the work of economist Gary S. Becker, although its roots can be traced back to the work of other classical economists such as Adam Smith. Becker, an economist at the University of Chicago and a Nobel laureate, expanded and formalized the concept of human capital in his

book "Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education," published in 1964. Becker's work was revolutionary for its time, as he proposed that knowledge, skills, and health contributed directly to a person's economic potential in the same way physical assets or investments did.

This theory posits that an individual's skills and competences, such as language proficiency, are seen as valuable assets that enhance the individual's economic potential and productivity. In this context, the proficiency in English and Wolof can be considered forms of human capital that may enhance an employee's performance and value within the Senegalese business environment. Thus, we question How proficiency in English, Wolof, or both languages impact the employability of individuals in Senegal?"

Conceptual framework

The proposed conceptual framework based on the theoretical framework "Human Capital and Language Proficiency" would look something like this: Inputs: These include the basic human capital investments like formal education, professional training, and language instruction (specifically English and Wolof in the case of Senegalese businesses).

Processes: These involve the utilization of the acquired skills, competences, and language proficiencies in the work environment. Language proficiency, in particular, would be used in tasks such as communication with peers, supervisors, and customers, problem-solving, decision-making, and innovation. The proficiency in English and Wolof can facilitate cross-cultural understanding, enhance customer service, and improve overall business operations.

Outputs: These are the tangible and intangible outcomes resulting from the application of human capital in the work environment. Tangible outcomes could include improved productivity, increased sales, and enhanced profitability. Intangible outcomes might encompass improved employee morale, stronger team cohesion, and enhanced corporate reputation.

Outcomes/Impact: This is the ultimate goal or effect of the application of human capital. In the case of this study, it would be improved business performance, increased competitiveness of Senegalese businesses, and potentially, greater economic development in Senegal.

This framework posits that the skills and competences individuals acquire through education and training, particularly language proficiency in English and Wolof, can have a direct impact on their productivity and value within the workplace. This, in turn, can lead to improved business outcomes and, on a broader scale, contribute to the economic development of Senegal.

This conceptual framework is as illustrated below

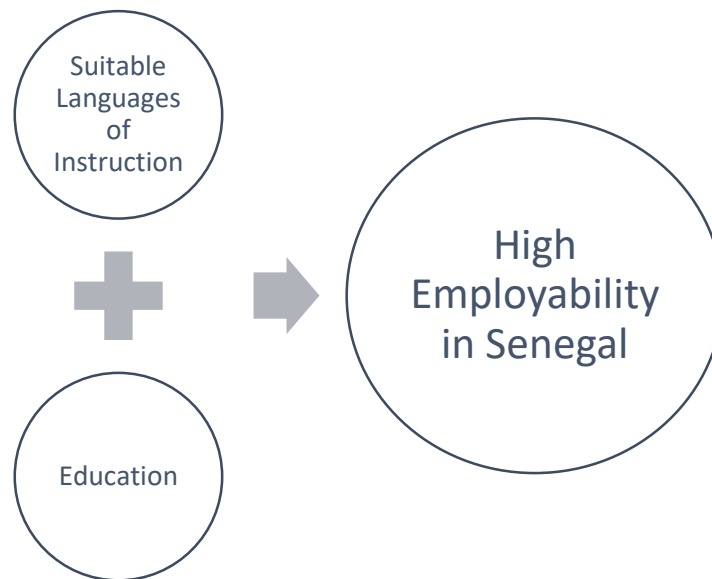


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research design

Philosophical Stance (Positivism): The study will assume a positivist perspective, relying on observable social realities and the generation of quantifiable findings. The purpose is to identify whether language proficiency (English, Wolof, or both) influences employability in Senegal.

Research Approach (Deductive): The research will use a deductive approach, as it begins with a theory (the importance of language proficiency in employability) and then tests a hypothesis about that theory.

Research Strategy (Survey): The research strategy will involve conducting a survey of human resource professionals across various cities in Senegal. Sample size is 350 using Simple random sampling. Simple random sampling is a sampling method where, sample size has equal probability of being selected. This approach is ideal for gathering data directly from individuals who make hiring decisions and evaluate the importance of language proficiency in the job market.

Choice of Method (Mono-method): The study will use a mono-method technique, with qualitative data gathered through a structured questionnaire to assess the impact of language proficiency on employability.

Time Horizon (Cross-sectional): As the survey will be conducted at a specific point in time, this research will be a cross-sectional study. For this study, the survey is conducted between February-May, 2023.

Techniques and Procedures (Sampling and Data Collection): The sample size will comprise 350 HR professionals, drawn randomly from cities in Senegal to ensure

representation of diverse perspectives. Data collection will involve a survey instrument comprised of closed-ended questions to qualitatively evaluate the perceived importance of English and Wolof proficiency in employability. The survey will be distributed either online or in-person, depending on the prevailing conditions and the most convenient method for participants.

After data collection, thematic analysis analyses will be conducted to analysis of data, allowing us to determine the role of language proficiency in employability in Senegal. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method that involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting ethical research is of paramount importance. Here are some ethical considerations for this study:

- **Informed Consent:** It is crucial that all participants in the study understand the purpose of the research and their involvement. They should be informed about the research's objectives, what participation entails, the time commitment, and their right to withdraw at any time without any repercussions.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Participants' responses must be kept confidential. Participants' identities should not be disclosed in any published results, ensuring anonymity. If it's necessary to use names during the research process, pseudonyms should be used. Data must be stored securely and accessible only by the research team.
- **Privacy:** Privacy of the participants must be respected. Any personal information collected should be minimally invasive and relevant to the research question.
- **Respect for Participants:** It is vital to respect the dignity and autonomy of participants. Their voluntary participation must be acknowledged, and they should never feel coerced into participating.
- **Transparency:** Researchers should be clear and open about their methods and aims. Any potential conflicts of interest should be declared at the outset.
- **Beneficence and Non-Maleficence:** The research should aim to benefit society or contribute to knowledge without causing harm to participants. Any risks or potential harms should be identified, minimized, and communicated to participants.
- **Debriefing:** Once the research is concluded, participants should be debriefed about the study's results and their contribution. This helps to respect the participant's involvement and promotes a better understanding of the study.

Result and Implication

Sample Description

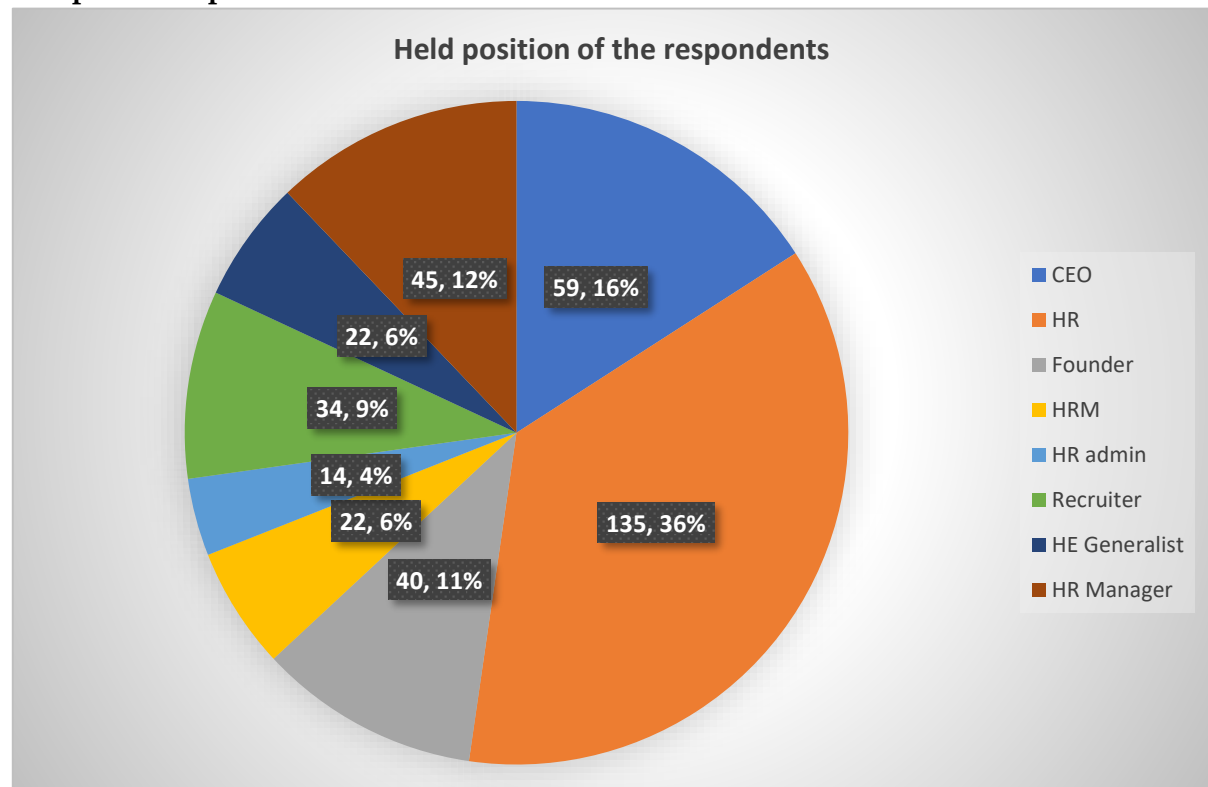


Figure 3: Held position of the respondents

The sample population for the survey consists of a variety of professionals predominantly involved in human resource management and organizational leadership within companies in Senegal. Figure x shows the breakdown of the roles held by respondents.

The highest percentage of respondents were HR professionals (36.39%), followed by CEOs (15.90%) and HR Managers (12.13%). The remaining respondents held other key positions involved in hiring and human resources within their organizations. This distribution of respondents is indicative of a comprehensive representation of perspectives from key stakeholders in the employment and hiring process. Having input from a diverse range of positions, from CEOs to HR administrators, enriches the data by encompassing various levels and facets of the decision-making process related to employability.

The implication for this study is that the collected data provides a broad perspective on the importance of language proficiency (English and/or Wolof) in employability within Senegal. Given that HR professionals and CEOs often have significant input into hiring decisions, their perspectives on the importance of language proficiency provide valuable insights. Furthermore, the inclusion of founders and recruiters in the respondent pool adds depth to the understanding of how language skills are perceived in entrepreneurial settings and the recruitment industry.

However, it's crucial to recognize potential biases that might exist. For example, HR professionals might place more emphasis on formal qualifications, including language proficiency, while CEOs and founders may value practical skills and experiences more. These differences in perspective should be considered when analysing the results.

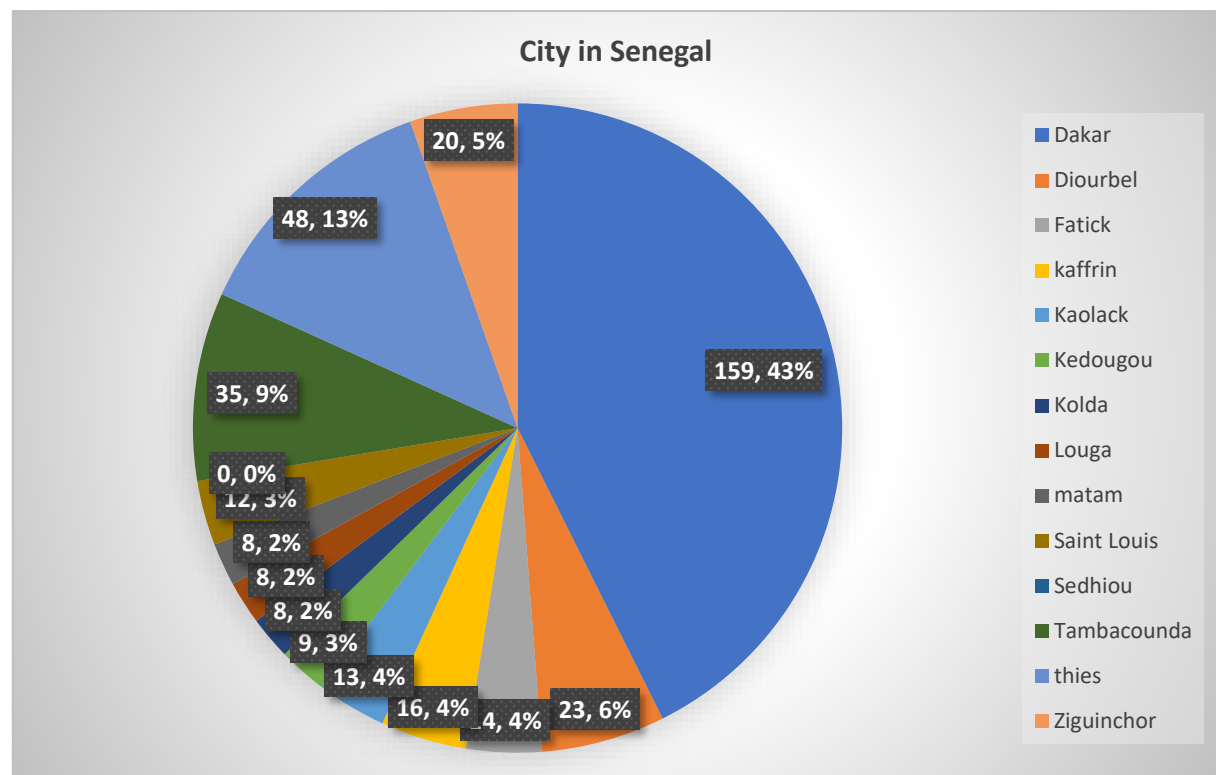


Figure 4: Surveyed City in Senegal

The sample population for the survey includes respondents from various cities in Senegal, with the following distribution:

The largest proportion of respondent's hail from Dakar, which makes sense given that Dakar is the capital and largest city in Senegal, and likely to have a larger concentration of HR professionals and organizational leaders. Thies and Tambacounda also have substantial representation, which could be reflective of a considerable corporate presence in these cities.

There are no respondents from Sedhiou, which might suggest a lack of corporate or industrial presence in that city, or it could simply be an area where the survey failed to reach.

The implication for this study is that the data provides a reasonable geographic representation across Senegal, with a particular emphasis on regions with larger corporate presence like Dakar, Thies, and Tambacounda. Therefore, the findings of this study should be largely applicable to these areas. However, given the lack of data from Sedhiou and the smaller number of responses from some other cities, care should be taken when generalizing the results across all regions of Senegal.

Key Findings

Expectations regarding the English and Wolof languages proficiency

To uncover the importance employers place on language skills, specifically English and Wolof, during the recruitment process, the survey queries how “What are your expectations regarding the English and Wolof languages proficiency of the candidates during the recruitment process?”. This will help gauge the weightage of language skills in comparison to other qualifications and skill sets. Additionally, it will help understand the level of proficiency expected in these languages.

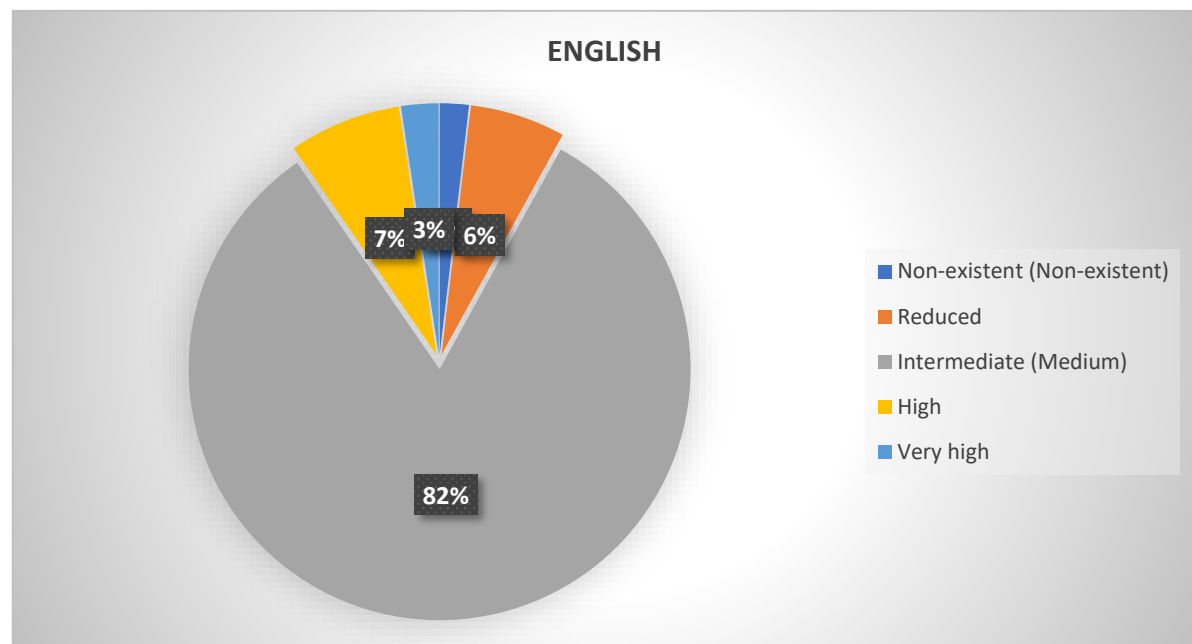


Figure 5: Expectations regarding the English proficiency

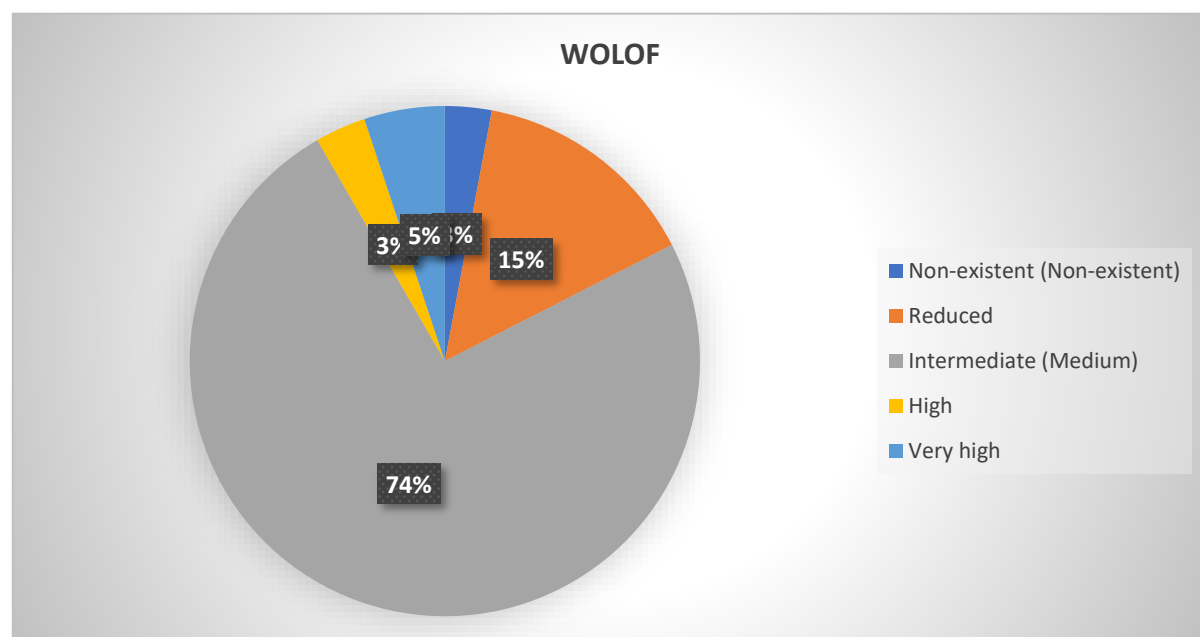


Figure 6: Expectations regarding the English and Wolof languages proficiency

The survey results indicate the expectations of the respondents regarding the proficiency in English and Wolof languages of candidates during the recruitment process.

This data suggests that, during the recruitment process, the majority of respondents expect candidates to have at least an intermediate proficiency in both languages. Over 82% expect intermediate proficiency in English, and around 74% expect the same for Wolof. This implies a general consensus on the importance of language proficiency, particularly in English and Wolof, for potential employees in Senegal. However, it's also noteworthy that a higher proficiency is not as sought-after; a smaller percentage of respondents require high or very high proficiency in either language. Less than 10% of respondents expect high or very high English proficiency, while slightly over 8% expect the same for Wolof.

This indicates that while language proficiency is valued, other factors could potentially take precedence in the hiring process. Alternatively, it could suggest that companies are prepared to invest in language training for employees who demonstrate other desired skills and attributes.

Overall, the study should take into consideration that the importance of language proficiency might vary depending on other skills required for specific jobs and that most companies are looking for at least an intermediate level of proficiency in English and Wolof.

Language proficiency and performance of company/organisation

To measure the perceived impact of language proficiency on job performance. The survey queries "The proficiency in English and/or Wolof influences in a positive way the performance of the professional in your company/organisation". The response will help determine whether companies see a correlation between proficiency in English and/or Wolof and employee productivity, efficiency, and overall contribution to the organization's goals.

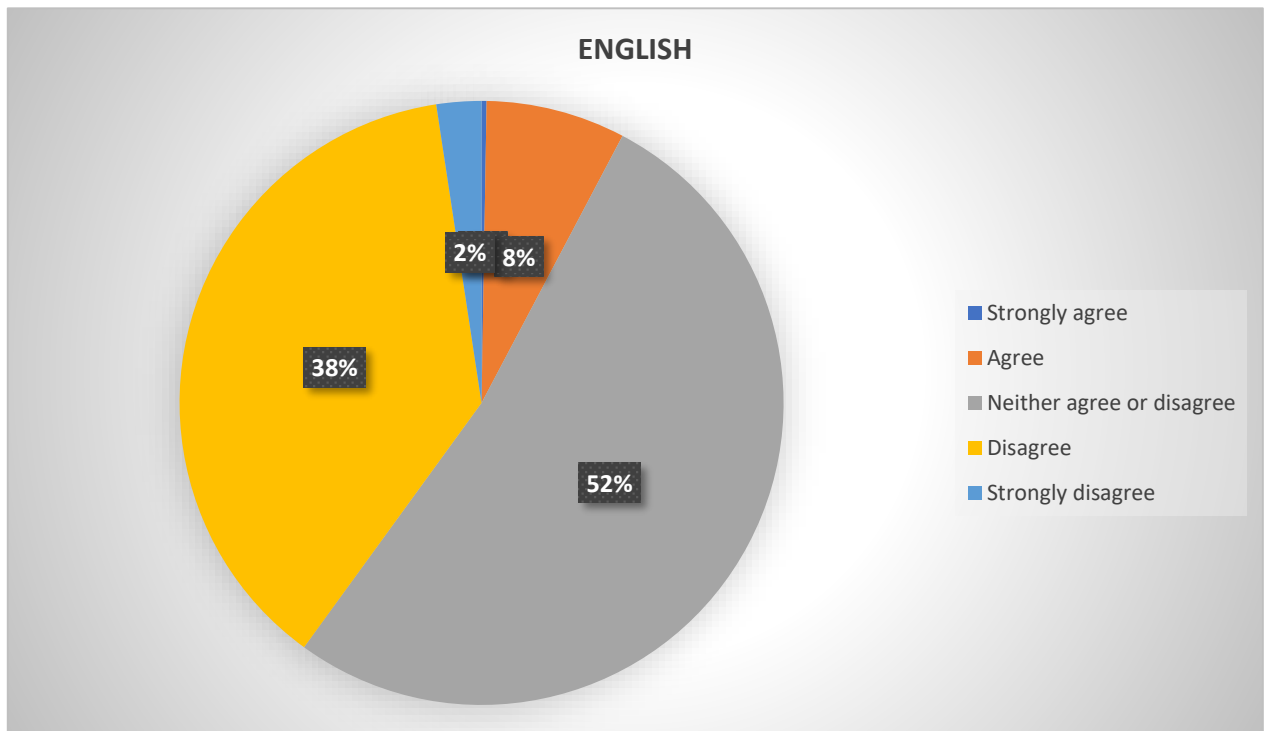


Figure 7: English Language proficiency and performance of company/organisation organization

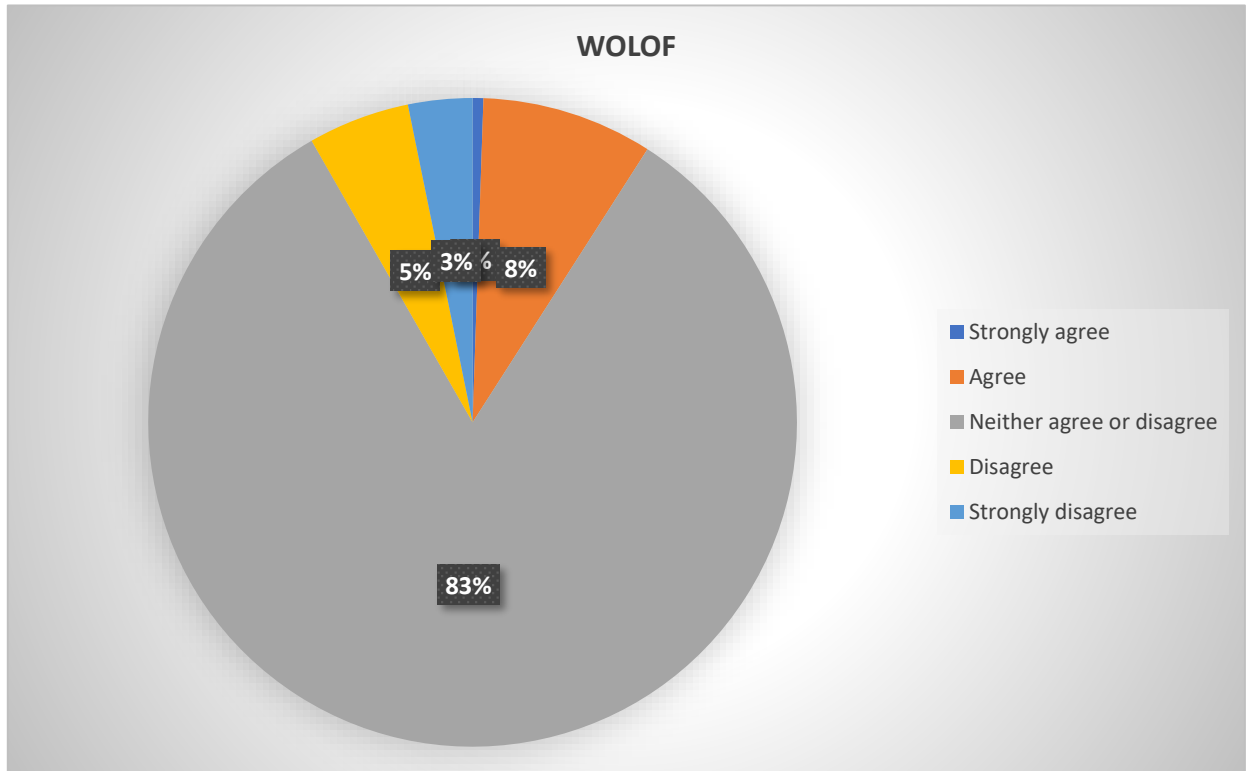


Figure 8: Wolof Language proficiency and performance of company/organisation organization

The survey results shed light on the respondents' opinions about whether proficiency in English and/or Wolof positively influences professional performance in their company or organization. In relation to English language proficiency, the majority (52.27%) are neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that it positively influences professional performance. However, a significant percentage (37.60%) disagree with the statement, and only a small percentage (7.74%) agree or strongly agree. When it comes to Wolof language proficiency, the vast majority (82.67%) neither agree nor disagree that it has a positive influence on professional performance. A smaller portion (8.53%) agree, and an even smaller group (5.07%) disagree.

The results imply that there is uncertainty among the respondents about the extent to which language proficiency, in either English or Wolof, impacts professional performance. The high percentage of neutral responses may indicate that language proficiency is seen as just one among many factors that can influence professional performance. It may also indicate that the respondents recognize the influence of language proficiency, but believe it depends on the specific job role or industry. Additionally, the relatively high rate of disagreement regarding English's positive impact could be due to other factors. It might be that English is less frequently used in their specific contexts, or other skills are considered more crucial for professional performance. This suggests that the study should consider the specific context and role in which language proficiency might impact professional performance. It also indicates the need to explore other factors that could be influencing professional performance, beyond language proficiency.

Language proficiency and probability of recruitment

To assess whether proficiency in these languages can provide a competitive edge to candidates during the recruitment process, the survey queries how “The proficiency in English and/or Wolof increases the candidate's probability of recruitment in your company/organisation”. The answer will provide insight into the role of language skills in hiring decisions and whether companies prefer candidates with specific language proficiencies. This information will be valuable to job seekers and educational institutions to prepare individuals for the job market. Thematic analysis is as indicated in the below figure.

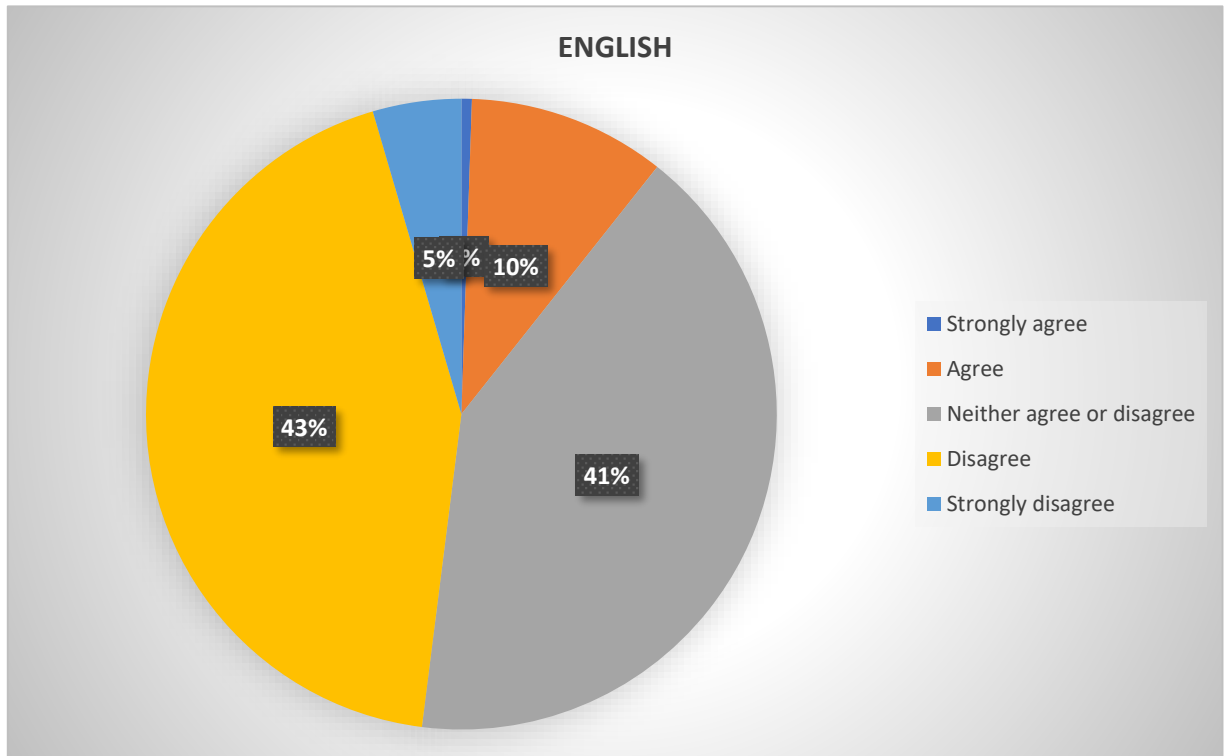


Figure 9; English proficiency and probability of recruitment

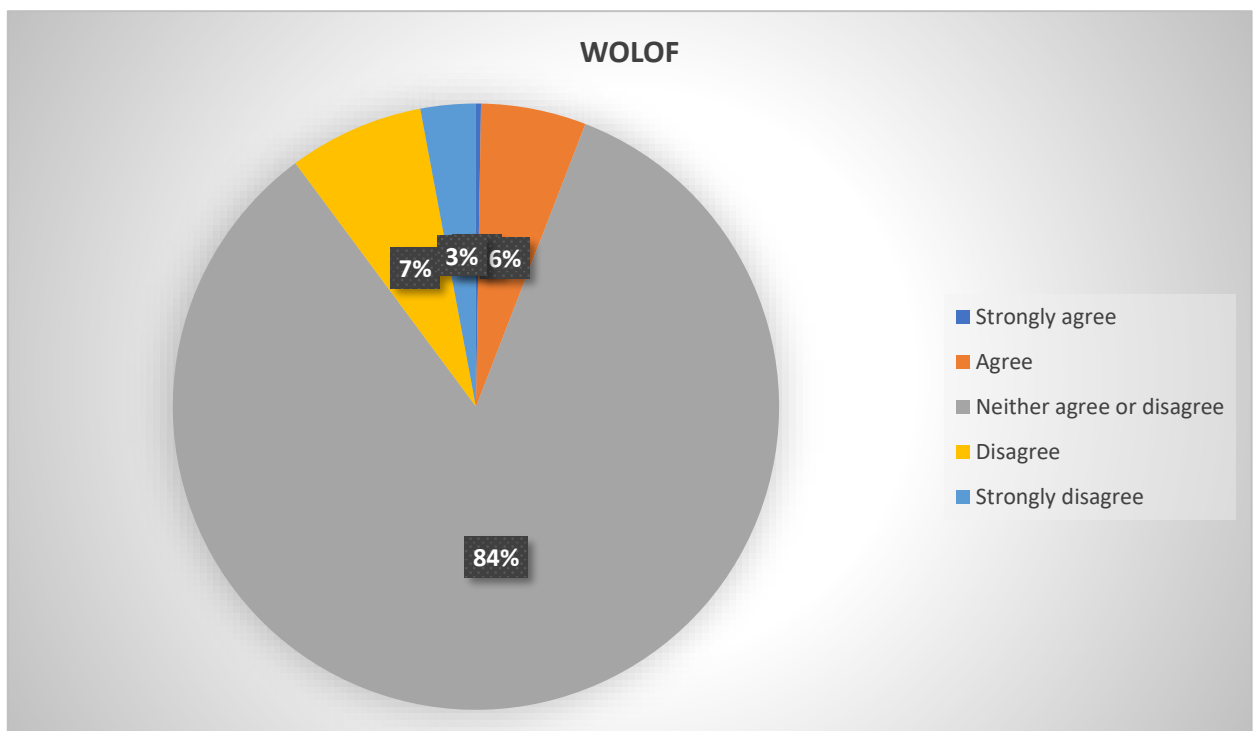


Figure 10; Wolof proficiency and probability of recruitment

The survey results present the respondents' perceptions regarding whether proficiency in English and/or Wolof increases a candidate's likelihood of recruitment in their respective companies or organizations.

In relation to English proficiency, a plurality of respondents (43.47%) disagree that it increases a candidate's probability of recruitment, with a similar proportion (41.33%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Only a small percentage (10.66%) agree or strongly agree with the statement.

As for Wolof proficiency, the majority of respondents (83.96%) neither agree nor disagree that it enhances a candidate's chances of recruitment. A smaller group (5.88%) agree or strongly agree, while another small percentage (10.16%) disagree or strongly disagree.

These results imply a level of ambiguity regarding the impact of English or Wolof proficiency on recruitment probability. This uncertainty may indicate that language proficiency is viewed as one of several factors that can affect a candidate's chances of recruitment, or that the importance of language proficiency depends on the specific job role or industry.

The relatively high disagreement concerning the impact of English proficiency on recruitment chances might indicate other skills are perceived as more essential in the recruitment process, or English is less commonly used in their specific business contexts.

However, it is important to take into account, that these varying perceptions and consider exploring the specific contexts, roles, or industries in which language proficiency might influence recruitment probabilities. It might also be beneficial to investigate what other factors are seen as vital in the recruitment process.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This research set out to investigate whether proficiency in English and/or Wolof languages enhances employability in Senegal. Given the global significance of English and the local prominence of Wolof, understanding their influence on employability was identified as a key concern, especially in light of rising unemployment rates.

Our findings provide an intriguing, albeit somewhat ambiguous, answer to our research question: "Does proficiency in languages (English or Wolof or both) boost employability in Senegal?" The results suggest that while recruiters have certain expectations for proficiency in these languages (with most requiring at least intermediate proficiency), the perceived impact of language proficiency on professional performance and the recruitment probability seems to be less clear-cut. Concerning our hypothesis, the research data does not provide strong support for either H1: Proficiency in English and/or Wolof languages increases employability in Senegal, or H2: Proficiency in English and/or Wolof languages decreases employability in Senegal. A large proportion of respondents neither agreed nor

disagreed with the idea that language proficiency positively influences professional performance or the probability of recruitment. This indicates the importance of context, with language proficiency likely being more or less important depending on the specific job role or industry.

Conclusion

The study illuminates the nuanced role that language proficiency plays in employability in Senegal. While it does not conclusively establish that proficiency in English or Wolof significantly enhances or reduces employability, it underscores the value of having at least intermediate proficiency in these languages, as seen in recruiters' expectations. However, the results also highlight that language proficiency is just one of many factors influencing employability, and its impact may not be as decisive as hypothesized. Therefore, government and educational stakeholders might want to focus on a more holistic approach to enhancing employability, addressing various skill sets and qualifications beyond language proficiency. Moreover, these findings should encourage further research into how the importance of language proficiency might vary across different industries or job roles, and what other skills or qualifications might be pivotal for enhancing employability in Senegal's changing economy.

In the face of increasing globalization and a dynamic employment landscape, understanding the nuanced influences on employability is key for addressing unemployment challenges and fostering a resilient and adaptable workforce. While language proficiency is an important component, it is clear from our study that it is not the sole determinant of employability, highlighting the need for comprehensive, multifaceted strategies to enhance employability in Senegal.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Holistic Skill Development: While English and Wolof language proficiency is important, it's not the only factor that influences employability. The government and educational institutions should aim to provide a comprehensive skill set for students and workers, including technical, digital, and soft skills. This will ensure that candidates are well-rounded and adaptable to various roles in the job market.

Tailored Language Instruction: Given that language proficiency expectations can vary significantly depending on the specific role or industry, it would be advantageous for language instruction to be tailored accordingly. For instance, roles that require international communication might necessitate a higher level of English proficiency, while roles focused on local community engagement might place more emphasis on Wolof.

Sector-Specific Studies: This study has unveiled the complexity of employability factors. Therefore, future research could focus on investigating language proficiency

requirements and their impact on employability in specific sectors. Such sector-specific studies can provide more actionable insights for job seekers, educators, and policymakers.

Career Guidance: Career guidance services can play an essential role in informing job seekers about the specific language requirements and expectations in their chosen field or sector. These services should be strengthened and made widely accessible to help job seekers make informed decisions about their language learning and professional development.

Employer Engagement: Employers can provide valuable input into the design of language courses and other educational programs. By engaging employers in curriculum development, educational institutions can ensure their programs are aligned with the real-world demands and expectations of the job market.

In conclusion, while this study has highlighted the importance of English and Wolof language proficiency in employability, it is clear that a multi-dimensional approach to skill development is needed to effectively address employability challenges in Senegal. These recommendations aim to promote such an approach, fostering a job market that is responsive, adaptable, and inclusive.

Limitation of study and Recommendation for further research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of language proficiency on employability in Senegal, it is important to acknowledge the following limitations:

- **Sample Size and Composition:** The study engaged 350 human resource professionals in Senegal, which, while substantial, may not fully represent the entirety of Senegal's diverse labor market. Different sectors or regions may have distinct language preferences that our sample may not fully capture.
- **Language Proficiency Evaluation:** The study relies on self-reported perceptions of language proficiency importance, which may not accurately reflect the actual skill level of employees. Direct testing or assessment of language skills may provide a more accurate gauge of language proficiency.
- **Focus on English and Wolof:** The study focused on English and Wolof language proficiencies. However, other languages such as French or local languages may also play important roles in employability that were not explored in this study.
- **Causal Relationships:** The study's design makes it challenging to establish clear causal relationships between language proficiency and employability. Other factors such as educational background, professional experience, and personal skills may also influence employability.

Future research could address these limitations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language proficiency and employability in Senegal.

In light of the findings from this study, the following recommendations are proposed for future research:

- **Sector-Specific Research:** Future studies could delve into the role of language proficiency in specific industries or sectors. This would provide more nuanced insights and could highlight particular areas where language proficiency plays a pivotal role in employability.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** A longitudinal study monitoring the same participants over time could offer valuable insights into the relationship between language proficiency and career progression, exploring how this relationship evolves as individuals navigate their professional journeys.
- **Impact of Language Training Programs:** Research could investigate the effectiveness of specific language training programs in enhancing employability. This would help identify the most beneficial methodologies and strategies in language learning for employment.
- **Comparative Research:** Studies could compare the situation in Senegal with other countries, particularly those with similar linguistic environments or labor market structures. This could yield valuable insights and best practices that might be applicable in the Senegalese context.

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