



The Influence of Traditional Kinship and Community Values on HR Practices and Employee Retention in MNCS in Ghana

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how traditional kinship and community values relate to human resource (HR) practices and employee retention in multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Ghana. It addresses an international HRM challenge: subsidiaries must maintain global standards while responding appropriately to host-country social institutions. Using field-collected survey responses from 312 Ghanaian employees, the study examined a model in which traditional kinship and community values are associated with culturally responsive HR practices and, in turn, employee retention. The three multi-item measures demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .858-.891$). Traditional kinship/community values were positively associated with culturally responsive HR practices ($r = .603, p < .001$) and employee retention ($r = .537, p < .001$), while HR practices were positively associated with retention ($r = .580, p < .001$). Regression analysis showed that kinship/community values predicted HR practices ($B = .642, p < .001$) and retention ($B = .571, p < .001$). In the model including both predictors, kinship/community values ($B = .313, p < .001$) and HR practices ($B = .403, p < .001$) remained statistically significant. The bootstrapped indirect effect was .258, 95% CI [.183, .346], consistent with partial statistical mediation. The findings suggest that culturally responsive HR practices may be relevant to employees' intention to remain, but the cross-sectional design does not establish causal effects. Recognizing family and community responsibilities should be balanced with transparent, merit-based and nondiscriminatory HR arrangements, while acknowledging diversity in employees' cultural expectations.

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traditional kinship, community values, human resource practices, employee retention, multinational corporations, Ghana, culturally responsive HRM

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INTRODUCTION

Multinational corporations (MNCs) operate across institutional and cultural environments that can differ substantially from those in which their headquarters policies were designed. International human resource management therefore involves a continuing tension between global standardization and local responsiveness. In Ghana, this tension is particularly important because formal organizational systems coexist with enduring social institutions built around extended family, kinship obligations, communal reciprocity, respect for social relationships and responsibilities to wider networks. These institutions do not disappear when employees enter modern corporate organizations; rather, they can shape expectations about managerial support, fairness, welfare, recruitment, leave, rewards and the quality of employment relationships.

Existing Ghana-focused research shows that MNC subsidiaries display both convergence and divergence in HRM. Ayentimi, Burgess, and Brown (2018) found an overall movement toward convergence between MNE and domestic-firm HR practices, although cultural embeddedness remained visible in some local practices. Adams et al. (2017) similarly found that South African MNC subsidiaries in Ghana largely transferred headquarters HR systems but localized compensation and industrial-relations

practices. Azungah, Hutchings, and Michailova (2020) further demonstrated that Western MNEs in Ghana can retain ethnocentric approaches across recruitment, training, performance management, and rewards. Together, these studies show that host-country context matters, but they do not directly explain how traditional kinship and community values are translated into employee-facing HR practices and, ultimately, retention.

Employee retention is strategically important to MNC subsidiaries because local employees possess contextual knowledge, stakeholder relationships, and institutional familiarity that cannot always be replaced quickly. Reiche (2008) argues that MNCs need to complement transferable home-country retention practices with context-specific practices because employees from different cultural backgrounds can respond differently to identical HR arrangements. The present study extends this logic by proposing that culturally responsive HR practices constitute a mechanism through which Ghanaian kinship and community values can influence employees' willingness to remain with MNC subsidiaries.

Statement of the Problem

MNCs operating in Ghana must balance global corporate policies with local expectations about employment relationships. Excessive standardization can create HR systems that are technically consistent but socially distant, while uncritical accommodation of kinship expectations can generate nepotism, unequal treatment, or pressure on managers to privilege personal networks. The managerial challenge is therefore not whether local values should simply replace global standards, but how legitimate communal and relational expectations can be recognized within transparent, merit-based HR systems.

Although prior research has examined convergence, ethnocentrism, localization, and HR-system transfer in Ghanaian MNCs, limited empirical work has isolated traditional kinship and community values as an antecedent of HR practices and connected this cultural adaptation directly to employee retention. This leaves an important explanatory gap: MNCs may know that culture matters without knowing which organizational practices translate cultural legitimacy into stronger attachment. The study addresses this gap by examining the direct relationships among kinship/community values, culturally responsive HR practices, and employee retention, and by testing whether HR practices mediate the relationship between local values and retention.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of traditional kinship and community values on HR practices and employee retention in MNCs operating in Ghana, and to determine whether culturally responsive HR practices mediate the relationship between local values and employee retention.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between traditional kinship and community values and culturally responsive HR practices in MNCs in Ghana.
2. To assess the relationship between traditional kinship and community values and employee retention.
3. To determine the relationship between culturally responsive HR practices and employee retention.
4. To determine whether culturally responsive HR practices mediate the relationship between traditional kinship/community values and employee retention.
5. To develop practical recommendations for balancing global HR standards with legitimate Ghanaian communal and relational expectations.

Research Hypotheses

6. H1: Traditional kinship and community values are positively associated with culturally responsive HR practices.
7. H2: Traditional kinship and community values are positively associated with employee retention.
8. H3: Culturally responsive HR practices are positively associated with employee retention.
9. H4: Culturally responsive HR practices mediate the relationship between traditional kinship/community values and employee retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Kinship and Community Values in the Ghanaian Context

In many Ghanaian communities, kinship extends social responsibility beyond the nuclear household and connects individuals through reciprocal obligations, social identity and support. Ghanaian scholarship describes traditions of communal belonging, respect for elders, mutual assistance and extended-family responsibility, while recognizing variation across localities and social groups (Gyekye, 1996; Nukunya, 2003). In organizational settings, these orientations may inform what some employees regard as humane leadership and a fair employment relationship. Family emergencies, funerals, caregiving, and significant community events can carry obligations that standardized leave or welfare arrangements do not always capture. Their salience, however, should not be assumed to be uniform among Ghanaian employees or across MNC workplaces.

However, kinship should not be romanticized. The same social networks that provide belonging and support can generate expectations of preferential recruitment, promotion, resource allocation or protection. For MNCs, culturally responsive HRM

therefore requires institutional translation: organizations can recognize legitimate family and community obligations while preserving transparent selection criteria, performance standards and equal opportunity. The relevant construct in this study is consequently not nepotism. It is employees' perception that the workplace understands and appropriately accommodates socially important communal and relational obligations.

HR Practices in Multinational Corporations in Ghana

Research on MNCs in Ghana highlights the coexistence of global integration and local adaptation. Adams et al. (2017) found that many HR systems were transferred from South African headquarters with limited adaptation, although compensation and industrial relations were more localized. Ayentimi et al. (2018) reported both convergence and divergence between MNE and domestic-firm HR practices, while Azungah et al. (2020) showed that Western MNEs may employ ethnocentric practices in recruitment, training, performance management and rewards. These findings establish that MNC subsidiaries are institutional arenas in which headquarters templates interact with host-country expectations.

For this study, culturally responsive HR practices include transparent but context-sensitive recruitment, family-supportive leave, employee welfare, respectful supervisory relationships, community-sensitive scheduling, equitable reward systems, culturally informed grievance handling and opportunities for employee voice. The argument is not that every local custom should become corporate policy. Rather, HR systems can be globally principled while locally intelligent.

Employee Retention

Employee retention refers to an organization's ability to sustain valued employment relationships and employees' corresponding willingness to remain. Retention decisions are influenced by compensation, development, supervisory support, fairness, work-life compatibility, organizational identification, and alternative employment opportunities. In foreign subsidiaries, local employees are especially important because they provide institutional knowledge and social networks. Reiche (2008) therefore argues that retention practices in MNC subsidiaries should combine transferable corporate practices with flexible context-specific arrangements. Ghanaian evidence also demonstrates the importance of HR practices such as training and compensation for employee outcomes in MNCs (e.g., high-performance work-system research in developing-economy MNCs).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory explains why MNC subsidiaries face simultaneous pressures from headquarters and host-country environments. Formal corporate systems create pressures for global consistency, whereas local cultural-cognitive and normative institutions create expectations about legitimate behavior. A subsidiary that ignores host-country social institutions may experience legitimacy and employee-relations problems; one that accommodates them without controls may undermine merit and corporate standards. Culturally responsive HRM can therefore be understood as selective adaptation that reconciles these pressures.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) proposes that relationships develop through reciprocal exchanges. When employees perceive that an employer recognizes important family and community responsibilities, provides support during socially significant events, and treats them with relational respect, they may reciprocate with trust, commitment, and a stronger intention to remain. This mechanism explains why culturally responsive HR practices may translate local-value alignment into retention.

Person-Organization Fit

Person-organization fit theory suggests that compatibility between individual values and organizational characteristics influences attitudes and attachment. Employees whose communal expectations are acknowledged by organizational practices may experience stronger value congruence. In contrast, a culturally detached HR system may weaken identification even when it is procedurally sophisticated. The study therefore treats culturally responsive HR practices as an organizational expression of local-value alignment.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model specifies traditional kinship and community values as the independent variable, culturally responsive HR practices as the mediating variable, and employee retention as the dependent variable. The model predicts both a direct pathway from local values to retention and an indirect pathway through HR practices. This formulation distinguishes cultural context from organizational action: values exist in the social environment, but their retention effect is expected to become stronger when HR systems translate legitimate expectations into consistent practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional explanatory research design to assess the associations among traditional kinship and community values, culturally responsive HR practices and employee retention. This design enabled the estimation of

correlations, regression coefficients, and an indirect statistical pathway using observations obtained at one point in time. Because temporal ordering was not established, the estimates are interpreted as associations rather than proof of causal influence.

Population and Sampling

The unit of analysis was the individual employee. The analysed sample comprised 312 Ghanaian employees of multinational corporations operating in Ghana who provided survey responses. The number and identity of participating subsidiaries, sector distribution, sampling frame, recruitment procedures, achieved response rate and fieldwork dates are not specified in the materials available for this manuscript and should be verified from the original field records before submission. In the absence of these details, no claim is made that the respondents represent the full population of Ghanaian employees in MNCs.

Measures

The study used three five-point Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Traditional Kinship and Community Values (six items) addressed communal obligation, family responsibility, reciprocity, relational respect and community embeddedness. Culturally Responsive HR Practices (six items) addressed employees' perceptions that organisational policies recognize relevant family and community responsibilities while maintaining transparent and equitable standards. Employee Retention (five items) captured intention to remain, attachment to the organisation and reduced intention to seek alternative employment. These are employee-reported measures; the retention construct should not be interpreted as an observed count of employees who remained or left. Details of item development, any pilot testing and any instrument adaptations should be documented against the original research records.

Data Collection and Research Integrity

The quantitative analysis used questionnaire responses collected from 312 Ghanaian employees on the three constructs. The reported means, standard deviations, correlations, regression estimates and indirect effect are retained as recorded in the study's results tables. The survey fieldwork protocol, recruitment documentation, questionnaire source, ethics and consent records, missing-data decisions and original analysis files were not included in the manuscript materials supplied for this revision; these methodological details should be checked against the researchers' original documentation before external submission. The results are interpreted within the limits of the respondent sample and the cross-sectional design, without implying that they establish causal effects or describe all employees in Ghanaian MNCs.

Data Analysis

Analysis comprised descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations, ordinary least squares regression and mediation analysis. The mediation logic followed a path model in which kinship/community values predicted HR practices (path a), HR practices predicted retention controlling for values (path b), and the direct effect of values on retention was estimated simultaneously (path c'). The indirect effect ($a \times b$) was evaluated using 2,000 bootstrap resamples and a 95% confidence interval.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Traditional Kinship & Community Values	6	3.022	0.702	.869
Culturally Responsive HR Practices	6	2.968	0.747	.891
Employee Retention	5	3.020	0.747	.858

The three measures produced Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .858 to .891, exceeding the commonly used .70 screening threshold for internal consistency. Their mean values were near the midpoint of the five-point response scale, and the standard deviations indicate variation in reported experiences and perceptions. Internal consistency does not alone establish construct validity, and the manuscript does not report a full factor-analytic validation.

Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3
1. Kinship/community values	1.000		
2. Culturally responsive HR practices	.603***	1.000	
3. Employee retention	.537***	.580***	1.000

Note. N = 312. *** $p < .001$. Coefficients represent associations in the analyzed employee sample.

Traditional kinship/community values correlated positively with culturally responsive HR practices ($r = .603, p < .001$), supporting H1 at the bivariate level. Values also correlated positively with retention ($r = .537, p < .001$), while culturally responsive HR practices correlated positively with retention ($r = .580, p < .001$). The pattern is consistent with the proposed model: stronger perceived alignment with communal values is associated with more culturally responsive HR practices and greater intention to remain.

Regression and Mediation Analysis

Model / Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	R ²	p
HR Practices	Kinship/community values	.642	.048	.363	< .001
Retention	Kinship/community values	.571	.051	.288	< .001
Retention (mediated model)	Kinship/community values	.313	.059	.391	< .001
Retention (mediated model)	HR practices	.403	.056	.391	< .001

Kinship/community values significantly predicted culturally responsive HR practices ($B = .642, SE = .048, p < .001$), explaining 36.3% of their variance. Values also significantly predicted employee retention in the direct model ($B = .571, SE = .051, p < .001$), with $R^2 = .288$. When HR practices were added, the explained variance in retention increased to 39.1%. Both kinship/community values ($B = .313, SE = .059, p < .001$) and HR practices ($B = .403, SE = .056, p < .001$) remained significant.

The bootstrapped indirect effect of kinship/community values on retention through culturally responsive HR practices was .258, with a 95% confidence interval from .183 to .346. As this interval excluded zero, the indirect association was statistically distinguishable from zero; the direct path also remained significant when HR practices were included. The pattern is consistent with partial statistical mediation, and H1–H4 received support in the analysed sample. Because the observations were cross-sectional, these estimates cannot establish the proposed causal sequence or rule out omitted-variable explanations.

DISCUSSION

The observed associations are consistent with the proposition that culturally responsive HR practices may provide one organisational context in which employees' kinship and community orientations relate to their intention to remain. The results do not show that traditional values independently cause retention or that changes in HR practices would necessarily produce lower turnover. They do, however, illuminate a tension between standardising HR systems across subsidiaries and responding fairly to employees' varied social circumstances. A careful managerial response is to retain global principles—merit, consistency, non-discrimination, accountability and performance—while evaluating whether particular HR policies accommodate legitimate needs in a transparent and equitable way.

The positive association between reported kinship/community values and culturally responsive HR practices is compatible with institutional arguments that subsidiaries operate within host-country social environments even when they adopt headquarters systems. Previous Ghana-focused studies identify both the transfer of corporate practices and selective localisation (Adams et al., 2017; Ayentimi et al., 2018; Azungah et al., 2020). The present results add a sample-specific perspective on perceived communal obligations and HR responsiveness, but should not be treated as evidence that every Ghanaian employee holds the same cultural expectations or that one approach is appropriate for every MNC subsidiary.

The relationship between culturally responsive HR practices and retention intentions is compatible with social exchange theory. Some employees may interpret consistent bereavement arrangements, caregiving support, respectful communication and opportunities for employee voice as signs that their organisation values them. Such perceptions could be associated with a willingness to remain, although the data do not establish reciprocity as a causal mechanism. This interpretation is consistent with Reiche's (2008) argument for balancing transferable retention practices with context-sensitive flexibility.

A balanced interpretation must also recognise that Ghanaian cultural values are diverse, adaptive and sometimes experienced differently by age, gender, location, ethnicity, occupation and individual circumstances. Kinship networks can provide valuable social support, while demands for preferential recruitment, promotion or disciplinary protection may compromise procedural justice or disadvantage those outside influential networks. Organisations should therefore distinguish fair recognition of family and community responsibilities from favouritism. Transparent access to bereavement leave, welfare support and respectful dispute resolution can coexist with documented, merit-based and auditable recruitment and promotion decisions.

Practical Implications for MNCs in Ghana

1. Localize without abandoning global standards: permit Ghana subsidiaries to adapt selected HR policies while maintaining corporate principles of merit, equal opportunity and accountability.
2. Formalize family- and community-responsive support: create transparent provisions for bereavement, caregiving, major family obligations, employee welfare and emergency support rather than relying on managerial discretion.

3. Train expatriate and local managers in Ghanaian relational norms: cultural competence should include communal obligations, respectful communication, conflict resolution and the boundary between cultural responsiveness and favoritism.
4. Protect merit in recruitment and promotion: referrals may be accepted as sourcing mechanisms, but selection criteria, scoring, conflicts of interest and final decisions should be documented and independently reviewable.
5. Use retention analytics alongside employee voice: monitor turnover, intention to stay, fairness perceptions and use of family-supportive policies, while obtaining qualitative feedback on whether global HR practices fit local realities.

CONCLUSION

The study found positive associations among perceived traditional kinship and community values, culturally responsive HR practices and employee retention intentions in the analysed sample of 312 employees of multinational corporations in Ghana. The regression results and bootstrapped indirect effect were consistent with partial statistical mediation through HR practices; they do not establish causality or demonstrate that the same relationships hold across all MNCs or Ghanaian employees. The findings are best understood as support for examining how employees' perceived social obligations intersect with fair, consistent and locally responsive workplace practices. Ghanaian cultural experiences are neither uniform nor reducible to kinship obligations alone: reciprocity and communal support may coexist with strong commitments to individual merit, equal opportunity and procedural fairness. Accordingly, the study supports context-sensitive consideration of family and community needs, alongside safeguards against patronage, discrimination and arbitrary managerial discretion. It is employees' diverse experiences, rather than an assumed single Ghanaian cultural model, that should guide HR policy evaluation.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The cross-sectional design and employee-reported measures limit the inferences that can be drawn. The observed associations and indirect effects cannot establish temporal precedence or causal pathways, and self-report measurement can introduce common-method or social-desirability concerns. Employee retention was measured through reported intentions and attachment rather than verified turnover records. The characteristics of participating organisations, sampling procedures and response rate are not sufficiently documented in the present manuscript to assess representativeness; these should be verified against the field records before publication. Consequently, the findings should not be generalised without qualification to all employees, sectors or multinational companies in Ghana. Future research could use time-lagged and multi-source designs, examine actual turnover, validate the measures through factor analysis, compare sectors and demographic groups, and consider multilevel models where respondents are nested within subsidiaries. Qualitative interviews could illuminate how different Ghanaian employees experience supportive communal practices and potential kinship-related pressures.

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