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Ethnic obligation and employee well-being: The moderating role of relative deprivation

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we propose that ethnic obligation is a norm that regulates the obligations of ethnic group members to each other and then examine its effects on well-being in a context where ethnicity is salient. Using a strain theory perspective, along with primary and secondary data sets, we found relative deprivation to be a moderator in the relationship between ethnic obligation and the well-being of individuals in both work and non-work contexts. The findings challenge previous findings on the structural perspective of ethnicity and help explain well-being in an under-researched cultural context.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century and continuing today, there has been an emergence of strong ethnic tendencies in both developed and developing countries (Castles, 2000; Kirgios et al., 2022; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015; Quillian & Lee, 2023), resulting in discourse on inequality and well-being among practitioners and scholars. Huppert et al. (2004b, p. 1331) defined well-being in broad terms as "a positive and sustainable state that allows individuals, groups or nations to thrive and flourish," which means that at the level of an individual, well-being refers to psychological, physical, and social states that are distinctively positive and that facilitate human flourishing, defined as the degree to which individuals have a sense of purpose and direction in life, good-quality relationships with others, and opportunities to realize their potential (Bartels et al., 2019; Ryff & Singer, 1998, 2000; Singer & Ryff, 2001). Studies of well-being have increased dramatically in the management and organization literature, particularly in developed contexts (Diener et al., 1999; Henderson & Knight, 2012; Kahneman et al., 1999; Keyes et al., 2002; Peterson et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman et al., 2004; Tay et al., 2023; Waterman, 1993). The studies that have been conducted in Western countries are characterized by individualism, and responsibility for the welfare of the individual is placed primarily on the individual.

However, a complication arises because, in non-Western contexts characterized by collectivism, such as Asia, South America, and Africa, the responsibility for well-being is not

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placed primarily on the individual but, rather, on the collective or ethnic group (Gyekye, 1997, 2002; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015; Sergio et al., 2021; Zoogah at al., 2015). As a result, ethnicity seems to be a factor that influences interactions and outcomes of individuals in organizations. Ethnicity, the attribute that defines a social group whose members share common and distinctive ethnic traits, backgrounds, allegiances, religions, languages, values, beliefs, and behavior norms (see Barth, 1969; Bilge et al., 2021; Griffin et al., 2016; Juby & Concepción, 2005), influences not only interactions but also economic activities (Akay et al., 2017; Bates & Yackovlev, 2002; Hall, 1997; Heine & Nurse, 2000). These factors have led economists (Easterly, 2009) to argue that ethnic fragmentation accounts for the underdevelopment of Africa's economies. In the management and organization literature, it has been suggested, for example, that the "extensive *ethnic* and linguistic diversity affects how individuals, groups, and organizations relate to one another, and has a bearing on how business is done as well as the costs of doing business in Africa for global companies" (George et al., 2016, p. 381, emphasis added). Consequently, studies show that ethnic structures influence behavior (Zoogah, 2022), corporate political activity (Liedong, 2022), corruption (de Sardan, 1999), and management and organization outcomes (Dia, 1996; Lister et al., 2021). Zoogah and Zoogah (2020), for example, examined ethnic obligations in Ghana and Botswana and found that the degree to which individuals internalize ethnic norms moderates the relationship between expectations of benevolence and negative deviant behavior. Liedong (2022) also examined the linkages between managers' tribal identities and political contestability among firms in Ghana. He found that contestable political systems are affected by tribal consonance (similarity) and tribal dissonance (difference) between corporate executives and policymakers. Yenkey (2015) found that in Kenya, ethnic segmentation influenced recruitment into the securities exchange.

While some view ethnicity as beneficent because of the provision of incentives that organize the flow of resources across generations and the acquisition of skills for industrial employment (Bates & Yackovlev, 2002; Hoppe et al., 2014; Rowley & Bhopal, 2005; Wright & Huang, 2012; Yenkey, 2015), others perceive that it induces conflict and violence that negatively affects well-being (Alesina et al., 2016). Thus, the studies show the effects of ethnicity as either negative or positive (Bates & Yackovlev, 2002). One reason is that previous research has focused on the structure of ethnicity (Bates & Yackovlev, 2002; Englebert, 2000; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015; Proudford & Nkomo, 2006; Yenkey, 2015) although extant evidence suggests that in ethnic groups, the degree of fractionalization per se may not be the major contributor for ethnic inequality (Alesina et al., 2016). Rather, it is ethnic group norms (defined as traditions, behavioral standards, and unwritten rules that govern how groups function) that have a profound influence on group members because they "typically override individual proclivities and encourage deference" to the group, which in turn overwhelmingly affects group performance (Duhigg, 2016).

One norm that is likely to explain ontological experiences in general and well-being, specifically, in societies with salient ethnicity is *ethnic obligation*. It is defined as an ethnic norm that obligates individuals of an ethnic group to be benevolent and agentic in their dealings with other members of the group (Zoogah, 2022; Zoogah & Zoogah, 2020). In Africa, for example, the tribe or ethnicity seems "to have successfully defied the laws of social and political change that tried to relegate it to an irrelevant anachronism and a residue from the pre-colonial past" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008, p. 177). In line

with that view, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015) found that ethnic-specific traits shape African development. It also fits the view that was advocated earlier by Comaroff (1997) that ethnicity exists as a set of human relations, a product of identifiable historical forces and processes rather than a primordial "given." So, we ask *how* does ethnic obligation influence employee well-being? As an ethnic norm, ethnic obligation regulates interactions of ethnic group members with outsiders. It is thus similar to noblesse oblige, "a social norm that obligates those of higher status to be generous in their dealings with those of lower status" (Fiddick et al., 2013, p. 318), which has been examined with regard to careers (Garth, 2004; Long & McGinnis, 1985), economic choice (Tost et al., 2015), scientific discovery (Over & Smallman, 1973), fairness (Fiddick & Cummins, 2007), corporate social responsibility (Crouch, 2010), inequality across cultures (Pratto et al., 2000), and job position in relation to early childhood leadership (Wang & Hong, 2023). Ethnic obligation is primarily insider-oriented (intended to benefit ethnic group members), unlike noblesse oblige, which is primarily outsider-oriented (intended to benefit those not of the nobility). It also differs from Chinese *quanxi* or Arabic *wasta*. The latter is more religious than ethnic, and the former is based on national identity instead of ethnic identity. According to Hutchings and Weir (2006), they are social networks that could be acquired by anybody. In contrast, ethnic obligation is acquired only through membership in the ethnic group.

By examining this question, we contribute to literature in three major ways. First, institutional scholars examining ethnicity have focused on the structural perspective – the relationships between individual identity and memberships in structures of ethnicity, kinship, gender, social classes, social movements, and organizations (Bates & Yackovlev, 2002; Frazer, 1999; Scott, 2014). We believe ethnic norms are more likely to explain well-being in societies with salient ethnicities (Ilorah, 2009; Samuel et al., ; Udogu, 2018). Ethnic norms yield positive outcomes for individuals and groups, while ethnic structures may not. Second, we focus on a neglected but important context in management research – Africa (George et al., 2016; Walsh, 2015). If companies are to create the shared value that is sorely needed in developing countries (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015; Walsh, 2015), then it is important for organizations to know the cultural norms that characterize the environments of their operations. Thomas and Ely (1996) indicated that "employees frequently make decisions and choices at work that draw upon their cultural background – choices made because of their identity-group affiliations." Third, we contribute to strain theory by showing that it can be applied in positively deviant contexts. Next, we discuss the theory and hypotheses before detailing the methods, results, and findings of the study.

Theory

Recently, Zoogah (2022) elaborated on the theoretical basis of ethnic obligation. Departing from the structural orientation of ethnicity often used by economists, sociologists, and anthropologists, he proposed a behavioral perspective which he termed *ethnos oblige*. First, he contends that ethnic obligation focuses on how individuals adhere to socially prescribed obligations and how those obligations affect their behaviors inside and outside organizations, thereby determining organizational and societal outcomes. Cultural norms that have been widely studied in several fields, including logics, sociology, psychology,

and law, define not only the context (where) and content (what), but also the contours (how and why) of actions for members of that group (see, e.g., Gelfand & Jackson, 2016). Extrapolating from the logics underlying norms – deontic (with focus on appropriateness and expectations; Broersen et al., 2004; von Wright, 1951) and alethic (focusing on necessity and contingency; Huisjes, 1981; Knuuttila, 1981) – we argue that ethnic obligation is an expectation and a necessity. Drawing from Conte and Castelfranchi (1995), Zoogah (2022) points out that ethnic obligation is an expectation ethnic members have towards other ethnic members. If the expectations are not fulfilled, ethnic members incur social opprobrium (Conte & Castelfranchi, 1995). The latter suggests that an ethnic obligation may be a necessity that ensures generativity of the ethnic group; ethnic members' obligatory behaviors sustain the group. If an ethnic group member has no way of obtaining a job, for example, other than with the aid of another group member, then it is a necessity for the latter to help the former.

Cultural Origins

Second, he argued that ethnic obligation emerges from the group's acculturation processes (Lentz, 2005). This occurs through three mechanisms, the first of which is traditioning. As a primal mode of induction (Hofstede, 1997; Thomas & Bendixen, 2000), ethnic obligation involves teaching members to discern their obligations to the group and to frame justificatory mechanisms to educate both errant and molded in-group members in the future (Mbiti, 1977). In other words, ethnic group members internalize *agency*. Data from the Afrobarometer surveys (1999–2002) show that a greater proportion of respondents from 12 African countries who were surveyed about whether children should think of themselves as members of either their ethnic group or the nation agreed they should identify with the ethnic group. In Zimbabwe, for example, 61% agreed with the statement, while 84.3%, 88%, 89%, 90%, and 58% of respondents from South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Nigeria, and Lesotho, respectively, agreed or strongly agreed (see Figure 1a). A high proportion of respondents also said they are proud of the group identity (Figure 1b) or considered their ethnic group to be the best (Figure 1d).

The second mechanism, enactment, involves implementation of traditional practices and expectations. It is a manifestation of forethought and commitment to the ethnic group and involves demonstrating *benevolence*. As shown in Figure 1c, a high proportion of respondents from Botswana (62.7%) and Namibia (68.6%) indicated linkage with their ethnic groups in the Afrobarometer survey. Others included Nigeria (88.4%), South Africa (73.3%), and Lesotho (62.2%). Achievement, the third mechanism, refers to accomplishing the obligating process. The individual group member is put in a state of mind that aligns with the ethnic group so that the member becomes accustomed or inured to generosity toward other group members, for example (Fortes, 1949; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015). Although generosity is encouraged in all cultures (Batson, 1991), in some societies, such as those in Africa (Awedoba, 2010; Gyekye, 2005), it requires special effort because of the multiple, and sometimes counteracting, pressures to deny, disown, and oppose the ethnic group (Appiah, 2005; Shanklin, 2007). As shown in Figure 1d, achievement manifests when individuals see their own tribe as the best.

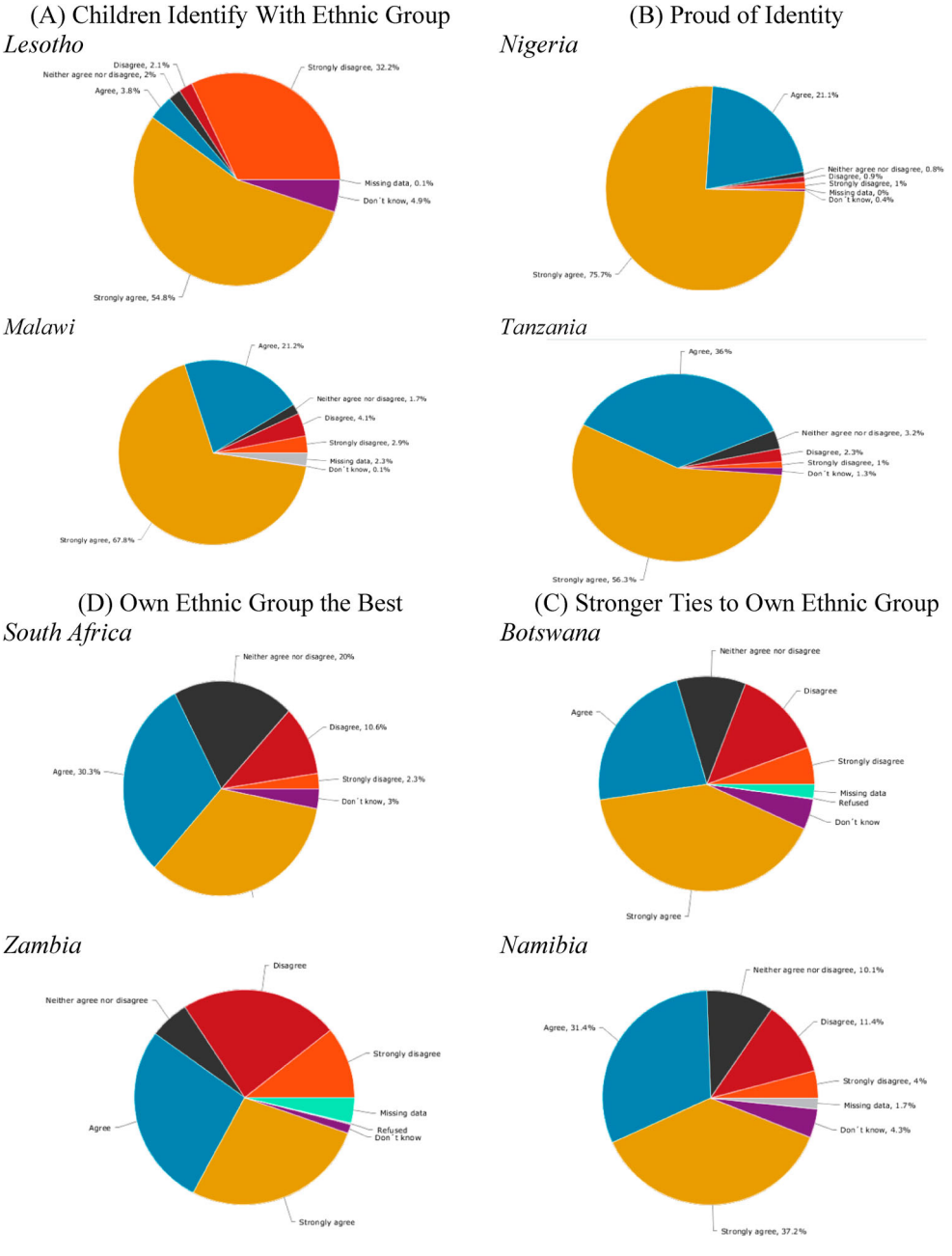


Figure 1. Cultural mechanisms of ethnic obligation.

Boundary Conditions

Third, he suggested boundary conditions of the theory. Ethnic obligation permeates numerous societies (Bates & Yackovlev, 2002; Collier et al., 2003; Mbiti, 1979). The "white ethnic" (Van den Berghe, 1987, p. 5), Jewish ethnic (Burstein, 2007), Hispanic ethnic (Melville, 1988), and Asian ethnic (Fong & Lee, 2006) are all common. Among

the Jews for example, more established members provide support – legal, financial, moral, advisory, or otherwise – to recent members embarking on new ventures (Bengtsson & Hsu, 2015; Burstein, 2007). In that regard, ethnic obligation is limited to the ethnic context (Van den Berghe, 1987). While membership in other group constructs is activated by entitlement, in ethnic obligation, the entitlement is restricted to ethnic lineage (Awedoba, 2010; Bates & Yackovlev, 2002; Ratcliffe, 2014). According to Bates & Yackovley, 2002), obligation to the ethnic group is activated through power, support, protections, legitimacy, and sentiments displayed by members. Zoogah and Zoogah (2020) also suggest that ethnic obligation which differs from other ethnicity-related constructs such as social identity, ethnic prejudice, ethnocentrism as well as social psychological constructs such as tribalism, homophily, social obligation, and felt obligation, is bounded by ethnic group membership. As a result, an individual who is not a Jew is not obligated to show generosity to Jews.[1] As an individual level construct, ethnic obligation has emergent properties (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Zoogah, 2022; Zoogah & Zoogah, 2020).

Model

Fourth, he proposed a model that specifies the antecedents, mechanisms, contingencies, and outcomes of ethnos oblige. The multidimensional model shows ethnic obligation as expectations of *benevolence* (generosity and dependability) and *agency* (honor and representation) toward other group members. Benevolence is the belief that an ethnic member will act in the best interests of other ethnic members. Generosity which refers to the willingness to give, and nobility of thought or action (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015) entails assisting group members who are in need. Even though generosity is encouraged in most societies and religions (Batson, 1991), in Africa, it borders on moral compulsion (Awedoba, 2010; Gyekye, 2005; Mbiti, 1977). Dependability refers to the degree to which group members can rely on each other. It enables acquisition of relational resources for fulfilling goals (Lentz, 2005).

Agency refers to the capacity of a self-motivated ethnic member who functions as a representative actor to deploy transformative mechanisms that achieve specific outcomes. It may be intentional (i.e., goal directed or unintentional (i.e., involuntary behavior). It involves honor, defined as a value held by oneself and other group members (Miller, 1993; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Stewart, 1994), and representation, the degree to which the individual acts or speaks for the group, especially in external contexts. Both benevolence and agency are not only important mechanisms for the generativity of the ethnic group but also necessary expectations that, when centralized, enable development of strategies (Zoogah & Akoto, 2018) which then lead to some outcomes (Zoogah & Zoogah, 2020).

Centralization refers to the degree to which an ethnic member internalizes the expectations of benevolence and agency. An ethnic member centralizes the norms when they show forethought and commitment (Zoogah & Zoogah, 2020). Forethought is defined as cognitions that prioritize the ethnic group, while commitment refers to exertion of psychological resources such as loyalty and determination to uphold, protect, or promote the group (Lentz, 1995). Centralization of the norm is likely to lead to positive social and personal benefits (e.g., ethnic capital), while failure to centralize it may lead to negative consequences (e.g., social opprobrium (de Sardan, 1999, Lentz, 1995).

As Zoogah and Zoogah (2020) indicate Zoogah and Akoto (2018) extended ethnos oblige theory by proposing strategies as a second mechanism that links benevolence and agency norms to subjective and objective outcomes. Development of strategies is necessary because the integration of tribes into nations (Mazrui and Tidy 1984) induced national leaders to overtly disapprove ethnic obligations (Ekeh 1975; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016). As a result, ethnic members respond to ethnic demands using cognitive, affective, or behavioral strategies to minimize disapproval or opprobrium in some situations (de Sardan 1999). Cognitive strategies center on reflections on how to (dis)connect with the outcome (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013), while affective strategies focus on expression of positive or negative emotions towards the ethnic situation (Mudimbe, 1988). Behavioral strategies center on optimizing or perfecting the outcomes and include approaching or avoiding ethnic members (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The strategies minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of the expectations and centralization.

The last element of the model is outcomes. Ethnos oblige theory proposes that the benevolence and agency obligations lead to subjective and objective outcomes (well-being, performance, progression, etc.) of the ethnic group (or tribe). In sum, ethnos oblige theory propose that benevolence and agency influence outcomes of individual ethnic members and groups mediated by centralization and strategies.

In their study of benevolence and negative deviant behavior in Ghana and Botswana, Zoogah and Zoogah (2020) found centralization as a moderator rather than a mediator. They found support for three-way interactions "where the relationship between benevolence and negative deviant behavior is moderated by centralization and culture" (p. 783). However, in their robustness checks, they found "double mediation (Fig. 8 in Appendix) and moderated moderation (3-way interactions) were significant (Fig. 9 in Appendix)" (p.802) suggesting that there is validity for the conceptual model with centralization as a mediator. The empirical model is presented in Figure 3.

Hypotheses

Ethnic Obligation and Employee Well-Being

The concept of well-being has been of interest to social and physical science scholars since the 1960s, partly because of the challenge of defining wellness outside the domain of health (Huppert et al., 2004b). In the management and organization literature, the scientific study of well-being has resulted in eudaimonic and hedonic aspects (Barkema et al., 2023; Kahneman et al., 1999; Keyes et al., 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). Eudaimonic well-being refers to an individual achieving an integrated sense of self and realizing their human potential in terms of optimal psychological growth and development through employment, health, and wealth (Ryan & Deci, 2001). It is feelings of vitality and authenticity resulting from the expression of one's daimon, or true self (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). Ryff (1989) identified six dimensions of eudaimonic well-being, one of which is positive relationships and close, valued connections with significant others. These occur within and outside of work.

Hedonic well-being refers to short-term pleasures, such as those elicited by the senses, or to more complex states, such as sexual enjoyment or the excitement of watching a football game (Huppert et al., 2004a; Ryff, 1989). One indicator cited in the literature is

satisfaction with work, fellow workers, and the employer (Harter et al., 2003; Scanlan et al., 2013). In society, however, both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being tend to focus on health, wealth, or employment because a life rich in these three dimensions is associated with the highest degree of well-being (Henderson & Knight, 2012). For example, Peterson et al. (2005) found that all three elements were predictive of life satisfaction. Seligman et al. (2004) observed a similar finding when examining the pleasant life and the meaningful life, which correspond to hedonia and eudaimonia, respectively.

In this study, we considered ethnic obligation to be a strain on the well-being of employees. Well-being in the workplace has been extensively examined (Alimo-Metcalfe et al., 2008; Jeffrey et al., 2014; Stam et al., 2016; Stamp & Stamp, 1993; Tay et al., 2023). In their review of well-being at work, Jeffrey et al. (2014) identified several supervisory, interpersonal, and organizational factors that influence well-being, including norms. Consistent with the view that organizational norms determine employee well-being, we expected ethnic obligations to impact well-being at work. Ethnic obligation may lead to resentment, perceived injustices, and distrust, resulting in a toxic climate that damages employee well-being. Studies of ethnic conflict (Collier & Gunning, 1999), injustice (Zoogah, 2010), and dehumanization (Kelman, 1976) showed that perceived disadvantages led to psychological withdrawal or turnover. Engagement in negative deviant behaviors, such as theft (Greenberg, 1980) and interethnic sabotage, may also occur as forms of redress (Collier, 2007). In other words, social relations in the workplace are likely to deteriorate, which could affect employee satisfaction with work and their employer.

If ethnic obligation is a strain, how does it influence well-being? We drew on reactance (Brehm, 1966) and relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966) theories to argue that the goal of positive outcomes for the ethnic group will override the pressure of perceived obligation to other group members. In a study of employee development, Zoogah (2010) found that individuals who were deprived relative to their peers responded by engaging in development behaviors like participation in training workshops. He reasoned that the development behaviors were in response to pressure and a desire to redress extant and future disadvantages. Dowd (2002) suggested that "because reactant individuals have a need to maintain or restore their perceived or actual personal freedoms, it makes sense that reactance might be implicated in health promotion and health behavior, especially in the area of compliance to medical direction and maintenance of healthy behaviors" (p. 117). As a form of controlled motivation, individuals who centralize the ethnic obligation norm are likely to respond affirmatively with attempts to generate positive outcomes despite the strain of the obligation. The embeddedness of ethnicity in the social fabric (de Sardan, 1999; Lentz, 2005) suggests that agency and benevolence (i.e., demonstration of generosity and dependability) toward other employees could positively influence eudaimonic well-being. Honorable and representative actions are also likely to influence others' social well-being when opportunities or facilitation mechanisms arise (de Sardan, 1999). To improve emotional, social, and psychological well-being, employees are likely to devise strategies that enable others (e.g., juniors or neophytes) to fit well in the organization and obtain supervisory support, experience identity fusion with the organization, demonstrate extraordinary effort on work activities, increase engagement, and minimize negative interpersonal deviance. Leaders (e.g., supervisors and managers), for example, may engage with group members by providing them

access to resources, opportunities, and information. They may also expose them to high-level group members, which increases their ethnic capital and facilitates access to future health, job, and income opportunities. The following is therefore likely:

Hypothesis 1: Ethnic obligation relates positively to employee well-being.

Moderation of Relative Deprivation

Ethnic obligation is likely to be a strain on ethnic group members. Sociology shows diverse strain theories, with the major ones being general strain, social control, and differential association.[2] Strain theory, which began in the 1930s with Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1959, 1961), enjoyed a resurgence in the 1990s with Agnew's (1992) introduction of a revised general strain theory. He overcame the inconsistencies that plagued traditional strain theories while remaining true to the underlying argument that strain lies at the root of delinquent/criminal behavior. Strain theory has typically focused on relationships in which others prevent the individual from achieving positively valued goals. Agnew (1985), however, broadened the focus of strain theory to include relationships in which others present the individual with noxious or negative stimuli. Agnew (1992) revised the theory to include the loss of positively valued stimuli. Further, the revised theory argues that adolescents are pressured into delinquency by negative affective states – most notably anger and related emotions – that often result from negative relationships (Kemper, 1978; Morgan & Heise, 1988). The negative affect creates pressure for corrective action and leads adolescents to (1) using illegitimate channels to achieve their goals, (2) attacking or escaping from the source of their adversity, and/or (3) managing their negative affect through the use of illicit drugs. In short, the theory primarily explains negative deviant behavior. Broidy (2001) found support for the revised version.

We therefore propose that the relationship between ethnic obligation and well-being is likely to be moderated by the degree of perceived deprivation relative to other individuals. Since the 1940s, when Stouffer (1949) found that an individual's satisfaction with outcomes was measured relative to other individuals, research on relative deprivation has rapidly grown in social psychology and organizations (Crosby, 1984; see also Pettigrew, 2016; Pettigrew et al., 2008) to the point that it now encompasses not only interpersonal and group comparisons (Walker & Smith, 2002) but also has applications in other social science domains (e.g., economics [Deaton, 2000]; tourism [Peng, Chen, & Wang, 2016]; and communication [Helsper, 2017]). For example, Deaton (2000) found that individual health in a reference group was negatively affected by relative deprivation, defined as the ratio of the total "weight" of the income of group members better off than the individual to the group mean income. Walker (1999) also found that personal (and group) relative deprivation had different outcomes. Relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966) suggests that people will feel discontented if they recognize an unfavorable discrepancy between "value expectations" and "value capabilities" (Gurr, 1970). Resentment about the disadvantage, which manifests in feelings of anger, grievance, and moral outrage, may lead to specific behavioral responses (Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Mark & Folger, 1984).

Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981) also suggests that individuals in deprived situations (i.e., pressure-laden) sometimes respond positively. According to

reactance theory, "If individuals feel that any of their free behaviors, in which they can engage at any moment or in the future, is eliminated or threatened with elimination, the motivational state of psychological reactance will be aroused. This reactance state is directed toward the restoration of the threatened or eliminated behavior" (Miron & Brehm, 2006, p. 37).

Integrating the positive elements of reactance and relative deprivation theories – restorative value – along with the pressures of strain theory, we propose that ethnic obligation is likely to be a strain to which individuals may react positively or negatively (negative affect or resentment). The theories suggest that individuals feeling strain or pressure are particularly likely to engage in behaviors that yield positive outcomes when their goal achievement is very high. The response may involve development of strategic responses (Zoogah & Zoogah, 2020) as consequences in order to achieve valued outcomes. Consistent with these findings, we propose that individuals who perceive the obligation to improve the welfare of others, particularly those from their ethnic group, may engage in more positive behaviors that promote well-being when they believe that either they or other group members are disadvantaged relative to members of other ethnic groups or tribes. Tribesmen and tribeswomen who perceive greater dissatisfaction are likely to expect greater prioritization. For such tribesmen and tribeswomen, an increase in ethnic obligation is likely to be associated with improved well-being, while those who feel less dissatisfaction may have decreased well-being. We therefore hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Relative deprivation moderates the relationship between ethnic obligation and well-being such that as ethnic obligation increases, well-being increases for individuals with high relative deprivation but reduces for those with low relative deprivation.

Methodology

Context

In this two-stage study, we examined the effects of ethnic obligation on well-being among individuals in a context of salient ethnicity, and where well-being is challenging – Africa. Economic deprivation and inequalities are rife because Africa is marked by high unemployment, poverty, and health challenges. The International Labor Organization's partnership for Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[3] and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) show that Africa is characterized by extreme poverty, which is defined as living on $1.25 or less per day which will continue till 2030 as indicated by the 2023 Africa Sustainable Development Report.[4] In fact, 75% of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, including Zimbabwe, Liberia, and Ethiopia. The 2013 Gallup World Poll also showed that 10 countries with the highest proportion of residents living in extreme poverty were all in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2010 and 2015, average unemployment as a percentage of total labor force in sub-Saharan Africa was above 8.0% (International Labor Organization, 2015). The MDGs indicate that for every 100,000 people, there were about 2731 malaria deaths, and World Health Statistics show that Africa had the lowest life expectancy in 2013, which suggests that well-being is likely to be low. Finally, in 2015, respondents to the Afrobarometer survey from 35 countries listed unemployment, health, and poverty as among the top five priorities in their country (Bentley et al., 2015).

Stage 1

Sample and Procedure

In this stage, we focused on Ghana, which has been a context for several studies (see Julian& Ofori-Dankwa, 2015; Zoogah, 2010). We tested Hypothesis 1 by first determining the nature of ethnic obligation through two focus groups (faculty and workers), in which we asked participants about the nature of ethnic obligation as an institutional norm that regulates ethnic groups. The major tribes in Ghana – Twi, Bono, Fante, Ewe, Dagaaba, Frafra, Kasena, Ga, and Akwapem – were represented. All faculty members were Ghanaian, although some ($n = 6$) had traveled abroad, and others ($n = 3$) had lived in Europe for over a decade. The latter provided contrasts on the prevalence of ethnic obligation. The second group ($n = 13$) comprised workers from organizations ($n = 11$) in two major metropoles of Ghana. The sessions were tape-recorded and transcribed. The results revealed the nature, growth, effects, and dimensions of ethnic obligation.[5]

Ethnic Obligation Scale Development

To examine its diffusion in other African countries, we developed a scale by following conventional scaling procedures (DeVellis, 2003) for generating, constructing, and testing the scale's reliability and validity. We developed items ($n = 65$) based on six dimensions identified from the focus groups and piloted them with MBA students in the United States. Some of the participants in the pilot test were African ($n = 15$) and others were non-African ($n = 10$). Based on scale analysis of reliabilities and validities using demographics, we revised the scale to eliminate items with low reliability and inter-item correlations (DeVillis, 2003). We also clarified the content of some of the items to establish face validity and aid with construct clarity. This process resulted in a reduced scale of 42 items. We then administered a Qualtrics survey to participants ($n = 1400$) from 13 African countries. The demographics of the participants were as follows: male = 59%, female = 41%; employed = 87%, unemployed = 13%; undergraduate = 35%, graduate = 29%, doctoral = 19%; operatives = 38%, supervisors = 25%, managers = 31%; Ghana = 29%; Kenya = 15%; Nigeria = 10%; Uganda = 8%; Tanzania = 3%; Togo = 2%.

Item scale analysis showed that factors of ethnic obligation had high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.59$). Item–test correlations also ranged from 0.50 to 0.72 and item–rest correlations ranged from 0.16 to 0.54. Based on the results of Mplus (v. 8) exploratory factor analysis (EFA) structural equation modeling (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2009), we adopted a four-factor model (see Figure 2). The fit indexes suggested that the model fit the data well (−2 log-likelihood [−2LL] = −70,316.110; $\chi^2 = 2408.69$, df = 465; Akaike information criterion [AIC] = 140,960.22, Bayesian information criterion [BIC] = 141,795.54, sample size adjusted BIC [SSABIC] = 141,274.61; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.06; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.98, Tucker–Lewis index [TLI] = 0.96; standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = 0.048). Ethnic obligation factors – benevolence, agency, centralization, and strategies – related significantly and moderately to each other (Cohen et al., 2003, pp. 342–343). Further, *generosity* (F1: B = 0.28, SE = 0.04, $z = 6.25$, $p < 0.0001$), *dependability* (F2: B = −0.10, SE = 0.03, $z = -4.82$, $p < 0.0001$), *honor* (F3: B = 0.30, SE = 0.04, $z = 7.40$, $p < 0.0001$), and *representation* (F4; B = 0.47, SE = 0.04,

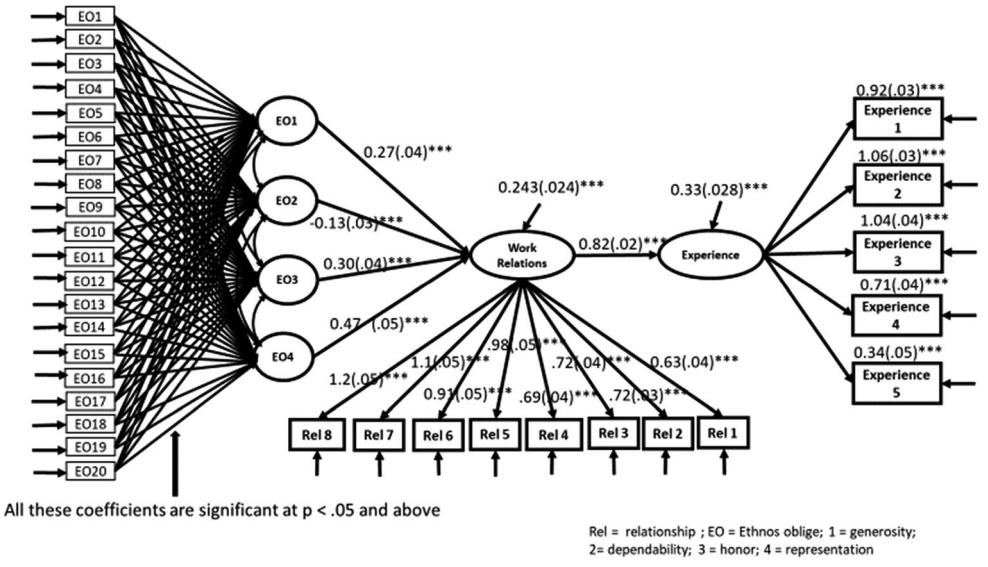


Figure 2. Exploratory factor analysis structural equation modeling results. $\chi^2 = 426.01$; df = 132; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.04; Akaike information criterion (AIC) = 90,817.19, Bayesian information criterion (BIC) = 91,428.99; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93

$z = 12.37$, $p < 0.0001$) related significantly to relationships (work and non-work), which in turn related to experience with ethnic obligation (B = 0.791, SE = 0.024, $z = 32.86$, $p < 0.0001$).

Discriminant and Convergent Validity

Further, we examined the discriminant and convergent validity of ethnic obligation by surveying 467 employees from various industries in Ghana to validate the factor structure. Appendix 1 shows the measures, sources, number of items, and reliabilities. Correlations between ethnic obligation (average of *generosity*, *dependability*, *honor*, and *agency*) and social dominance ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$), homophily ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$), cosmopolitanism ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), social obligation ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$), and personal relative deprivation (PRD; $r = -0.05$, *n.s.*) were low to moderate. Structural equation modeling results also showed that ethnic obligation related positively to social relations (B = 0.69, SE = 0.26, $p < 0.001$) and ethnic commitment (B = 0.55, SE = 0.23, $p < 0.001$).[6] Social relations related positively to ethnic commitment (B = 0.78, SE = 0.52, $p < 0.001$). The social relations factors – cosmopolitanism (B = 0.54, SE = 0.14, $p < 0.001$), felt obligation (B = 0.32, SE = 0.13, $p < 0.001$), and ethnic identity (B = 0.57, SE = 0.16, $p < 0.001$) – were significant. Further, multiple group ($n = 6$) structural equation modeling results confirmed the factor structure of ethnic obligation. The model showed good fit with the data (−2LL = −66,397.99; AIC = 135,495.98; BIC = 142,605.25; SSABIC = 138,316.76; $\chi^2 = 3330.66$; df = 1620, $p < 0.0001$; RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.03), and the χ^2 contribution from each group was low (group 1 = 546.38, group 2 = 497.37, group 3 = 479.71, group 4 = 658.27, group 5 = 656.42, group 6 = 492.51). The final scale comprised 26

items.[7] We then administered the survey to three groups of employees (Group 1: $n = 109$, Group 2: $n = 145$; Group 3: $n = 249$)[8] in organizations from the industrial sector of Ghana to test Hypothesis 1 on the relationship between ethnic obligation and individual well-being in the workplace.

Measures

The measures for well-being (psychological, emotional, social), ethnic obligation (generosity, dependability, honor, representativeness, forethought, commitment), experience with ethnic obligation, validation factors (ethnic identity, social dominance, homophily, cosmopolitanism, felt obligation, social obligation), and demographics along with sources, and reliabilities are shown in Appendix 1. Generally, the psychometrics are adequate.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations from the third group of employees.[9] The structural component of the SEM results (see Figure 3) shows that benevolence ($\beta = 0.42$; $p < 0.01$) and agency ($\beta = 0.56$; $p < 0.01$) correlated positively to centralization, which in turn correlated positively to strategies ($\beta = 0.26$; $p < 0.001$) and well-being ($\beta = 0.11$; $p < 0.05$). Strategic responses also correlated positively to well-being ($\beta = 0.16$; $p < 0.05$).

The measurement components of benevolence (generous – $\beta = 0.66$; $p < 0.001$; dependable – $\beta = 0.65$; $p < 0.001$), agency (honor – $\beta = 0.78$; $p < 0.001$; representation – $\beta = 0.38$; $p < 0.01$), centralization (forethought – $\beta = 0.81$; $p < 0.001$; commitment – $\beta = 0.75$; $p < 0.001$), and strategies (identity fusion – $\beta = 0.72$; $p < 0.001$; voice – $\beta = 0.43$; $p < 0.001$) were all positive.

Sensitivity Analysis

We conducted sensitivity analysis using SEM. The fit indexes show a good fit to the data ($-2LL = -2170.75$; AIC = 4391.50, BIC = 4471.46, SSABIC = 4392.28; $\chi^2 = 61.99$, df = 19; RMSEA = 0.09; SRMR = 0.06; CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.95). First, the structural model shows that benevolence ($\beta = 0.27$; $p < 0.01$) and agency ($\beta = 0.59$; $p < 0.01$) correlated positively to centralization, which in turn correlated negatively ($\beta = -0.32$; $p < 0.01$) to well-being, but not strategies ($\beta = 0.02$; ns). Strategies also correlated negatively to hedonic well-being ($\beta = -0.11$; $p < 0.10$). The measurement components show positive coefficients, except engagement strategies.

Second, ethnic obligation related positively to perceived human resources orientation (B = 0.20, SE = 0.09; $z = 2.03$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that as ethnic obligation increases, human resources practices tend to become ethnically oriented.[10] More specifically, ethnic obligation correlated positively to hiring (B = 0.95, SE = 0.11, $p < 0.001$), compensation (B = 0.61, SE = 0.08, $p < 0.001$), and performance management (B = 0.76, SE = 0.08, $p < 0.001$) but negatively to training and development (B = −0.43, SE = 0.09, $p < 0.001$). These effects suggest that employees perceive human resources orientation to favor ethnic group members in the organization. In other words, the well-being of ethnic

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations (Group 3).

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	Age	–														
2	Gender	0.10	–													
3	Job tenure‡	.58***	−0.11	–												
4	Firm tenure‡	.62***	−0.02	0.67***	–											
5	Generosity	−.21**	0.01	−0.18*	−0.11	**0.86**										
6	Dependence	−0.05	0.10	0.01	−0.03	0.57***	**0.73**									
7	Honor	−0.11	0.03	0.02	−0.03	0.59***	0.51***	**0.63**								
8	Representativeness	0.06	0.10	0.06	0.15*	0.49***	0.48***	0.57***	**0.87**							
9	Forethought	−0.09	−0.07	0.05	0.02	0.57***	0.47***	0.80***	0.51***	**0.75**						
10	Commitment	−0.13	0.02	0.02	−0.05	0.53***	0.41***	0.79***	0.58***	0.65***	**0.87**					
11	Supervisor support	−0.13	0.03	−0.08	−0.08	0.20**	0.17**	0.18**	0.15*	0.17*	0.17*	**0.73**				
12	Organizational fit	0.09	0.17**	0.046	0.10	0.09	0.19**	0.20**	0.34***	0.18**	0.19**	0.13*	**0.76**			
13	EWB	0.14*	0.06	0.16*	0.15*	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.23**	0.10	0.10	0.21**	0.07	**0.73**		
14	SWB	0.11	0.09	0.19*	0.11	0.13*	0.18**	0.23***	0.28***	0.18**	0.19**	0.25***	0.16*	0.54***	**0.76**	
15	PWB	0.14*	0.11	0.10	0.09	0.11	0.14*	0.16*	0.30***	0.15*	0.18**	0.18**	0.17*	0.53***	0.57***	**0.84**
	M	33.2	0.5	69.3	75.3	3.7	4.2	3.6	3.2	3.5	4.1	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.0	3.9
	SD	8.9	0.5	65.1	66.2	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.3	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.1	0.8
	Min	18.0	0.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.7
	Max	61.0	1.0	348.0	276.	6.3	6.8	7.0	5.0	7.0	7.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

‡ = months; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; EWB = Emotional well-being; SWB = social well-being; PWB = psychological well-being; $N = 225$; diagonals – reliabilities.

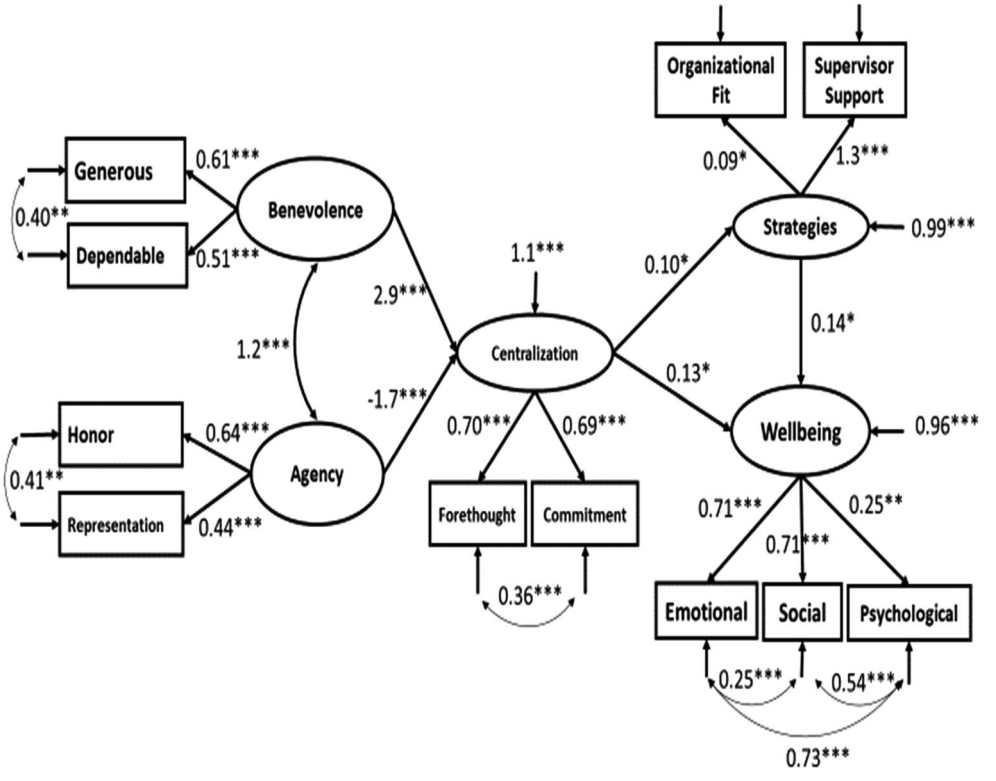


Figure 3. SEM results of ethnic obligation's effects on well-being.

group members was enhanced by HR practices. In sum, there seems to be evidence of support for Hypothesis 1.

Stage 2

Data and Procedure

To achieve the purpose of this stage – test of hypothesis 2 – we used secondary data – the Afrobarometer survey (round 4) – which was gathered in 2008–2009 and represents 20 countries and 22,202 respondents (www.afrobarometer.org). The surveys are national probability samples designed to generate representative cross-sections of all citizens of voting age in a given country based on random selection methods, with probability proportionate to population size (for details, see the methodology of the Afrobarometer). The data have been used in several publications (see Afrobarometer.org) including management (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015). Countries from the southern, northern, eastern, and western regions of Africa are included. In total, individuals from 588 ethnic groups or tribes are represented in the data.

Measures

Ethnic obligation is measured on the Afrobarometer with one item, which asks respondents to indicate the degree to which they agree that leaders are obligated to help

their ethnic groups (1 = agree strongly with statement 1; 2 = agree with statement 1; 3 = agree with statement 2, 4 = agree strongly with statement 2, 5 = agree with neither). For the item, "Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Statement 1: Since leaders represent everyone, they should not favor their own ethnic group. Statement 2: Once in office, leaders are obliged to help their ethnic group," we created a continuous variable – EOCONT – scaled as 1 = agree strongly with statement 1; 2 = agree with statement 1; 3 = agree with neither statement 1 nor statement 2; 4 = agree with statement 2, 5 = agree strongly with statement 2.

Personal Relative Deprivation (PRD) was measured on the Afrobarometer with two items using an economic perspective ($\alpha = 0.695$): "In general, how do you rate your living conditions compared to those of other [Ghanaians/Kenyans/etc.]?" and "Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to 12 months ago: Your living conditions?" on a scale of 1 = much worse, 2 = worse, 3 = same, 4 = better, 5 = much better.

"*Dependent variables:* UNEMPLOYMENT was measured by asking participants about their work status (coded as 1 = unemployed and 0 = employed), excluding the responses of missing ($n = 6$) and not looking ($n = 68$). LIVED POVERTY, an experiential measure of how frequently people go without basic necessities during the course of a year, gauges a portion of the central core of the concept of poverty not captured by existing objective or subjective measures (Mattes, Dulani, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016). It is an average of four items regarding how often a participant went without food, income, clean water, and fuel (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). HEALTH was measured by asking participants how often they had been without medicine.

Analytic Technique

We used multilevel techniques to analyze the data by first normalizing the data using log transformation and testing for missingness using Little's (1988) missing completely at random (MCAR) test. The multilevel analysis had four major forms: the null model, which was used to examine variations in well-being between individuals without predictors; the random coefficient model, which focused on individual-level predictors of employee well-being; the means as outcomes model, which focused on country-level predictors of individual well-being; and the intercepts and slopes as outcomes model, which focused on both individual- and country-level predictors of employee well-being. The latter is sometimes termed a cross-level model because it gauges the extent to which country-level factors and individual-level factors interact to influence employee well-being. We used the bootstrap (repetitions of 1,000) technique to compute the coefficients. Before using the XTMIXED command of Stata to examine the interactions on employee well-being, we centered the variables using grand–mean (i.e., country) centering. We then used R to plot the significant interactions (http://www.quantpsy.org/interact/hlm2.htm).

Results

Multilevel results (Table 2) show that the null models were significant for unemployment (coef. = 0.67, SE = 0.03, $z = 21.22$, $p < 0.001$), poverty (coef. = 2.29, SE = 0.07, z = 32.58, $p < 0.001$), and health (coef. = 0.58, SE = 0.03, z = 17.9, $p < 0.0001$) and the intraclass

correlations (ICC) suggest that about 8.8% of the total variance in unemployment was accounted for by differences between countries, while 91.2% was due to differences across individuals; 11% of the total variance in poverty was accounted for by differences between countries, while 89% was due to differences across individuals; and 8.6% of the total variance in health was accounted for by differences in countries, while 91.4% was due to differences across individuals. Collectively, they provided a basis for us to conduct multilevel analysis (Hayes, 2006; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) or to test our hypothesis using such techniques (Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

Results of the random coefficient model (RCM) that examined ethnic obligation as an antecedent of health, poverty, and unemployment are summarized in Table 2. The fit indexes (i.e., deviance) show that the RCM of unemployment (Δdeviance = 144.8, Δdf = 3; ΔAIC = 138.65, ΔBIC = 114.63), poverty (Δdeviance = 1794.26, Δdf = 3; ΔAIC = 1788.17, ΔBIC = 1764.22), and health (Δdeviance = 853.2, Δdf = 3; ΔAIC = 847.28, ΔBIC = 823.25) improved upon the null models, as indicated by the reduced deviance. The results showed a significant positive effect of ethnic obligation for poverty (coef. = 0.03, SE = 0.004, $z = 8.57$, $p < 0.001$) and unemployment (coef. = 0.010, SE = 0.002, $z = 4.96$, $p < 0.001$), but negative for health (coef. = −0.008, SE = 0.002, $z = -3.81$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that as ethnic obligation increases, reported poverty and unemployment increase, but reported health (access to medicine) decreases. Ethnic obligation also interacts with PRD in correlating to poverty (coef. = 0.012, SE = 0.004, $z = 2.82$, $p < 0.01$), unemployment (coef. = 0.01, SE = 0.002, $z = 4.55$, $p < 0.001$), and health (coef. = −0.005, SE = 0.002, $z = 2.04$, $p < 0.05$). The interaction plots show that as ethnic obligation increases, reported poverty increases for those who report greater relative economic deprivation, but stays flat for those who report lower relative economic deprivation (see Figure 4a). Reported unemployment (coded 0) also seems to increase for individuals reporting greater relative economic deprivation than those reporting low relative economic deprivation (Figure 4b). Health (i.e., reported access to medicine) also reduces for individuals reporting greater relative economic deprivation, but is flat for those reporting low relative economic deprivation (Figure 4c). The simple slopes were significant at $p < 0.01$ for the high but not the low categories in the three figures. There is thus support for Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

In this study, we proposed and tested ethnic obligation from a strain theory perspective using both primary and secondary data. We found positive effects of ethnic obligation on the well-being (emotional, social, and psychological) of employees. To validate the theory, we used a large sample ($n = 22{,}204$) of secondary data from 20 countries to examine the contextual (country) effects of ethnic obligation (expectations of ethnic members to help the ethnic group first) on well-being (poverty, unemployment, and health). Multilevel results yielded negative and positive effects of ethnic obligation. Further, we found that ethnic obligation interacts with PRD to influence individual well-being. Given the symmetry of moderation, we transposed the roles of ethnic obligation and PRD, and found that as PRD increases, poverty and unemployment reduce for individuals who have low expectations of leaders' ethnic obligations but increases for individuals who have high expectations of leaders' ethnic obligations. These findings suggest that ethnic obligation does not appear to be a strain or that the respondents perceived

Table 2. Random coefficient modeling interaction results.

		Poverty			Unemployment			Health		
Variable		Coef.	RSE	z	Coef.	RSE	z	Coef.	RSE	z
Intercept		2.29	0.07	32.58***	0.67	0.03	21.22***	0.58	0.03	17.9***
Random-Effects Parameters		*Est.*	*RSE*		*Est.*	*RSE*		*Est.*	*RSE*	
COUNTRY: Identity	var(_cons)	0.10	0.03		0.020	0.006		0.021	0.007	
	var (Residual)	0.80	0.01		0.207	0.002		0.221	0.002	
$ICC_{(country)}$		0.110			0.088			0.086		
$ICC_{(individual)}$		0.890			0.912			0.914		
Deviance (−2LL)		58015.6			28090.6			29620		
df		3			3			3.000		
AIC		58021.5			28096.5			29625.99		
BIC		58045.6			28120.52			29650.01		
Intercept		2.29	0.07	33.77***	0.673	0.032	21.35***	0.583	0.032	18.03***
Ethnic obligation (EO)		0.03	0.00	8.57***	0.010	0.002	4.96***	−0.008	0.002	−3.81***
Personal relative deprivation (PRD)		−0.30	0.01	−42.18***	−0.037	0.004	−9.94***	0.111	0.004	29.14***
EO × PRD		0.01	0.00	2.82**	0.010	0.002	4.55***	−0.005	0.002	−2.04**
Random-Effects Parameters		*Est.*	*RSE*		*Est.*	*RSE*		*Est.*	*RSE*	
COUNTRY: Identity	sd (_cons)	0.30	0.05		0.14	0.022		0.144	0.023	
	sd(Residual)	0.86	0.00		0.45	0.002		0.462	0.002	
Deviance (−2LL)		56221.34			27945.8			28766.8		
df		6			6			6		
AIC		56233.33			27957.85			28778.71		
BIC		56281.38			28005.89			28826.76		
Δdeviance		1794.26			144.8			853.2		
ΔAIC		1788.170			138.650			847.280		
ΔBIC		1764.220			114.630			823.250		

$N = 22{,}202$; *$p < 05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. ICC = Intraclass correlation coefficient.

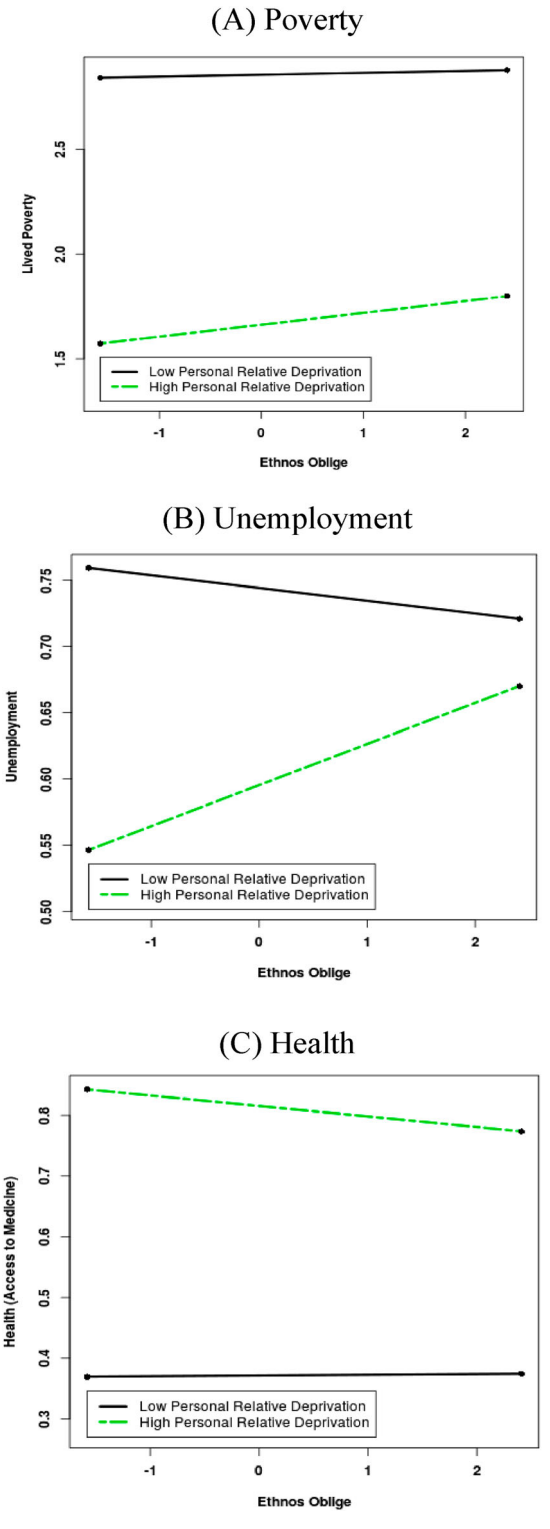


Figure 4. Interaction plots of ethnic obligation and personal relative deprivation on well-being.

leaders to overcome the strain because of the goal of improving the well-being of their group members. The moderation of PRD seems to validate that thinking.

Contributions

These findings suggest three major contributions. First, we show that ethnic norms, rather than ethnic structures, have positive effects on well-being. These findings challenge the negative effects observed by scholars of the structural perspective (see Alesina et al., 2003; Easterly & Levine, 1997). Second, we contribute to strain theory by showing that it can be applied in positively deviant contexts. In other words, strain serves as a motivational mechanism to the extent that individuals internalize or centralize the valued goals. In this paper, we showed that cultural norms also influence behaviors of employees inside and outside of organizations. Unlike Western contexts, where ethnicity seems to not be salient and, therefore, does not tend to intrude on work processes, it constitutes the moral fabric of most societies, particularly those in Africa (Lentz, 2005). It manifests in diverse institutional contexts – politics, industry, economics, and technology (de Sardan, 1999). Our third contribution focuses on the context. Extant research shows the importance of context in organization and management research. Context, a situational or environmental constraint and opportunity that has the functional capacity to affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior, manifests at different levels of analysis and operates as main and moderating effects (Johns, 2006, 2017). Consistent with Johns (2017), we built context into the research by specifically examining a contextual variable – ethnic obligation – which is specific to salient ethnic contexts.

Implications

What are the implications of the findings for the science of organizations, particularly in relatively deprived contexts where well-being tends to be challenging? Given the growing discontent with globalization and concern for well-being, research on contextual factors that determine well-being has significant implications for theory and practice. Theoretically, we extend strain theory by examining how ethnic norms affect behaviors of individuals in organizations and society. As interest in Africa grows (George et al., 2016; Walsh, 2015; Zoogah et al., 2015), understanding of the cultural norms that regulate individuals and tribes can inform our knowledge of management. Another theoretical implication centers on ethnicity and neo-institutionalism. Prior research has primarily focused on the structural perspective, showing that ethnicity generally has negative outcomes, particularly at the national level (Alesina et al., 2003; Collier & Gunning, 1999; Fearon, 2003). In this study, we found that ethnic norms have positive outcomes for individuals. A study from de Sardan (1999) pinpointed certain social norms that widely represent modern Africa and "communicate" with or influence the practices of corruption, for example. The researcher argued that certain "logics, … defined a priori in a negative light in terms of illegality, enter into the larger fabric of everyday practices, expressing positive logics from the perspective of habitual local social norms" (p. 36). Our study validates the interactive effects of strain theory and its effects on individuals (Agnew, 1992).

With regard to practice, the findings have three implications. First, organizations, particularly multinationals that are investing in developing countries, have some basis for the behavior of employees. In other words, we provide preliminary evidence about the "ethnic man" (Zoogah, 2022) that might differ from the "organization man" (Whyte, 1956). Foreign organizations are familiar with the latter but not the former. Second, we provide evidence of the potential effects of the external environment on employees. Ethnic obligation is likely to permeate organizations through members' (e.g., supervisors and leaders) decisions (de Sardan, 1999; Zoogah, 2016). The sensitivity tests showed that ethnic obligation influences perceived human resources practice orientations, suggesting that HR decisions might not be free of effects from the external environment. Third, we found that ethnic obligation relates to well-being. How organizations manage that cultural norm might affect the outcomes they achieve. Organizations' social responsibility initiatives, for example, might be affected by the ethnic obligations of the managers or executives implementing those initiatives. When ethnic obligations are heightened, decisions might be biased in favor of some ethnic groups, even when those groups do not "deserve" or should not be granted those programs. In contrast, organizations may use ethnic obligation to facilitate achievement of certain outcomes (e.g., land acquisition or access to resources). As de Sardan (1999) indicated, ethnic logics have a family resemblance, a certain relationship of affinity with employee's corruption-type practices that are not themselves corrupt. Their role is simply to provide a better understanding of the reasons why certain practices (e.g., corruption) find in contemporary Africa such favorable ground for its extension and generalization or banalization.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings and contributions of the studies reported in this paper are not without limitations. We did not compare ethnic obligation in the context of this study with other contexts. Although ethnicity is salient in almost all societies, "it is only in the context of Africa that respondents are asked to rank their ethnic identity vis-à-vis their national one" in surveys (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015, p. 39). We searched the data in the Latinobarometer surveys; the Life in Transition Surveys (LiTS), which cover Eastern Europe and Central Asia; and the Asian Barometer surveys but did not find questions on ethnic obligations or related ethnic identity questions. A second limitation is that we mostly adopted a cross-sectional approach. We encourage future studies to adopt a longitudinal approach. We also encourage studies that examine the interactive effects of ethnic obligation and ethnic identity on well-being and inequality. Finally, it would be interesting to examine the effects of cosmopolitanism on ethnic obligation. Future research may examine their joint effects on well-being, as well as other outcomes. Studies conducted in the future should untangle the mechanisms that transform the strain of ethnic obligation into positive outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we were motivated by the growing interest in emerging countries and calls for a focus of management scholars in Africa (George et al., 2016; Walsh, 2015; Zoogah

et al., 2015) to examine the extent to which ethnic obligation influences the well-being of individuals. We used primary and secondary data of individuals from several countries and found not only main effects but also interactive effects of ethnic obligation. The moderation of PRD suggests nuanced meaning on the strain perspective of ethnic obligation. We hope future research builds on our initial attempt to examine the cognitive, affective, and behavioral attributes of ethnic obligation on organizations.

Notes

1. Of course, it does not mean that that a person cannot demonstrate generosity to others who are not part of the tribe. To the extent that such acts are demonstrated, they are personality attributes rather than ethnic obligations.
2. For differences, see Agnew (1992).
3. The goal of Decent Work for All and the pledges in the Millennium Declaration go hand in hand. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda, in a context of fair globalization, is essential to the achievement of these shared aims. (https://www.ilo.org/pardev/development-cooperation/millennium-development-goals/lang--en/index.htm).
4. (https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/2023-africa-sustainable-development-report).
5. It can be argued that the construct may be different for people with less power because the focus group was a powerful group. As a result, we surveyed a less powerful group comprising tailors, high school dropouts, and first-degree holders using the same interview protocol. The responses were similar. For example, one respondent indicated, "I feel really indebted to ethnic group members because they have helped me achieve this height."
6. Figure of summarized results not shown due to space limitations.
7. Due to space constraints, we have not provided the scale and its items. Interested readers may request this information from the first author.
8. We present the results of only one group due to space limitations.
9. Tables for Groups 1 and 2 are not shown due to space limitations.
10. Items were adapted from Ulrich (1997).

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Appendix 1

Appendix 1
Variables and Sources

Variable	Measure	Source	Reliability (α)
Wellbeing			
Psychological	6-items	Lennecke (2017), Keyes (2002)	α = 0.84
Emotional	3-items	Lennecke (2017), Keyes (2002)	α = 0.73
Social	3-items	Lennecke (2017), Keyes (2002)	α = 0.76
Ethnos oblige		**Developed**	**Primary**
Generosity	7-items	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.86
Dependability	4-items	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.84
Honor	2-items	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.85
Representativeness	7-items	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.90
Forethought	3-itesm	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.75
Commitment	2-items	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.79
Validation of Ethnos Oblige			
Poverty, Unemployment, health	4 items = Poverty	Afrobarometer	Poverty: α = 0.69
Experience with ethnos oblige	5-items	Developed using dimensions from focus groups, and validated	α = 0.85
Ethnic identity	6-items	From Dambrun, Taylor, McDonald, Crush, & Méot, (2006)	α = 0.92
Social dominance	4-items	Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994	α = 0.92
Homophily	8-items	McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly (1975	α = 0.90
Cosmopolitanism	3-item	Grinstein & Wathieu, 2012	α = 0.82
Felt obligation	4-items	Mossholder, Settoon, and Henagan, (2005)	α = 0.86
Social obligation	4-items	Barrett et al., (2004)	α = 0.59
Organizational Fit	3-items	Cable & Judge (1996)	α = 0.76
Supervisory support	3 items	Jokisaari & Nurmi (2009); Greenhaus et al., (1990)	α = 0.73
Demographics	**Individual**		
Age, gender, tenure	In years	Converted to months	