

# A Qualitative Research on Zambian Work Values: A Theoretical overview from an Intrinsic and Extrinsic Point of View across Generations

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## Abstract

This paper aims to explore and elaborate on Zambian work values, of which a mixture in traditional and western values has been the focal point of the daily life of Zambians. This paper will use qualitative research methods and empirical observations from participants to shade more light on Zambian work values. This paper also aims to highlight on the intrinsic and extrinsic values that encompass work values. Twenty Zambian employees at different companies in different sectors were interviewed to build findings on this construct. Questions on intrinsic work values and extrinsic work values were asked to them in interview style for them to shade more light to which category they thought they inclined to and their justification of such a way of being. After which they were administered a work value questionnaire, for more brief and confined answers. Both the questionnaires and the data from the interview responses were used to draw conclusions.



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## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there have been discussions on perceived work values in different societies. Understanding employees' work values has become a key issue for organizations aiming to achieve higher performances. These discussions have yielded many research efforts and advances in determining the work values of each culture, society and individual. Prior independence, Zambia was an agrarian society that worked on small scale production to cater for the needs of its own people. Over the years with the coming of the colonialists, Zambia changed its society and adopted industrialization which the colonialists used for decades for gains in the availability of mineral wealth. After gaining independence, Zambia has still experienced rollercoaster's in political systems, types of governments and governing values of its people. That has come with extreme economic shake ups accompanied by administrative hardships that have resulted in a different type of administration all together, that is – strength of administration being determined by who is in charge and rather than actual strength of the system in the institute itself, perhaps due to an existing mixture of inherited western values and naturally embedded tradition values. Despite all of this, the people have forged forward to do everything they can to better their understanding and way of work.

Work values differ significantly from society to society, culture to culture, as well as organization to organization. Despite the importance of work values in the process of career adjustment (Dawis, 2002), little empirical research has focused on articulating the domains represented within the construct of work values and the examination of evidence of validity for the construct has been limited. Furthermore, no empirical research has focused on work values of different African countries because researchers tend to conduct empirical research on Africa as a whole due to the wrong perception that African is the same in its entirety. The west has had independent research done on different countries; therefore work values in the west tend to be further divided by country and better yet, by organization because multinational organizations tend to nurture their own employee's of different cultural backgrounds to follow organization work values diligently. Work values in Africa tend to be divided into culture but with the wrong perception that African cultures are the same. Despite having migrated from the same roots, time and different settlements have changed and shaped each settlement, which have now become societies, differently, therefore it is important to note that Africa is too large and too diverse to have its view represented by a single perspective.

This research attempts to present findings based on empirical observation of our participants and give a general overview of what the Zambian work values seem to be like, we will also elaborate on what constructs constitute as measureable elements for work values because different researchers tend to focus on different dimensions in the quest to evaluate work values. Due to mixed inherent values and traditions, we still expect Zambian work values to be at the peripheral of every Zambian in today's globalised world. With industrialization being the center of economic development, little is left for cultural heritage to detect people's work attitude in performance oriented organizations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Zambia is a country which has diverse work environments. Zambian nationals work in different fields for different organizations or companies. Some of the organizations representing the Zambian work force are foreign organization, but arguable, the biggest

workforce in Zambia comes from the public sector. This means that within the government or public sector, values are equally the same because Zambian work values are dominated by cultural beliefs. In order to understand the connection, we need to understand what culture is. Culture entails the totality of traits and characteristics that are extremely peculiar to a people that it sets them apart from other people and societies. These peculiar characteristics and traits include language, dance, daily routines, work, arts, and religion, food and so on. These traits also include taboos, norms and beliefs. Values are what people believe to be right or wrong and what is important in life. In this context, we can say that culture is the way of being. The way people are, and their overall perspective on how things should be conducted, including how their lives should be organized for survival, while a value can be seen as a point of view or conviction which we can live with, live by, even die for. As reality differs in the eyes of people, choice, methods and general daily conduct may differ from society to society, which is to say, what is important for one, may just not be relevant to the other; it doesn't necessarily make one thing more right than the other. Work values are equally important to study, as they influence employees' attitudes, behaviour (Robbins et al., 2009: 100). This sub section of values is one of the most important aspects of any organization. And in order to get the best out of employees, their work values need to be studied.

### **A brief history of work**

Zambia and a few other African countries have a common past. Therefore it would not be surprising to notice that it's easy to compare different African cultures and find similarities. In order to understand Zambian work values, we need to first remember that Zambia is an ancestral home which was first occupied by the Bantu people who migrated from the south; it was later home of the British colonialists who brought industrial revolution. Then later after independence, Zambians took charge of their own land again. Ancestral Zambia was a land with an oral rather than a literature culture, many of its traditions, culture and values were passed on orally, meaning a lot has been lost in the transition from generation to generation. We also need to note that while some tradition and values have been lost, some were picked up along the way, making the values a mix of the past and the present. What we can observe now, from the common languages that were divided up by settlements during early African migrations, is that Africans, part of migrants, who later became Zambians, had a particular view regarding work. Work in the past was more of a ritual and a parcel of life passed around the agricultural cycle. Pre-colonial, many Zambians were almost entirely dependent on agriculture and animal farming thus work was more for subsistence living rather than building of wealth. Day to day work was based on life evolving around rituals and early African religions. The livelihood of people was working together and sharing everything among households, no man amassed massive wealth for himself. Zambian cultures like other African cultures were largely agrarian therefore all work evolved around changing agricultural seasons of rainmaking, sowing, harvesting and thanksgiving and so on. Even outside these "rituals", other work was done in passing waiting for the work that surrounded agriculture. The purpose of work was to cater for subsistence livelihoods. Work was generally completed together in groups with households contributing to production units; this is evident - for examples in farmers, using cattle for fields. Leaders of the land would more than often depend on spiritual guidance on how to lead, and knowledge and guidance on how to cope with or avoid natural disasters was acquired from long deceased ancestors, as opposed to making individual decisions. A counsel of the elderly would convene to give wisdom and guidance on matters that was beyond their understanding, as opposed to individuals using investigative methods to determine the source and solution of the problem. Therefore work

was viewed as a necessity for day to day duties. This can also be proven by a very popular phenomenon called 'ubuntu', ubuntu simply means humaneness or humanity, It is an Nguni (i.e. an ethnic group within Southern Africa) word that conveys that all people are connected with each other, and are reliant on each other (Poovan, 2005). Most of our work culture is also based on this phenomenon because it's synonymous with meanings such as "I exist because you exist" (Sayers, 2009: 8), or "A person is a person because of other people", or "I am because we are" (Mbigi, 1997: 2, cited in (Poovan, 2005). This shows us that work in the early days of today's Zambia was all about people working together to achieve a common goal as opposed to doing work that is totally independent or irrelevant to another household.

The invasion of the Europeans brought a whole new perspective of work. During this invasion, Europeans introduced industries, heavy profit plantations and other forms of work which were solely focused on business. Africans were forced to work in industries without any form of remuneration; no one had been paid for their work before. Colonization brought a new type of slavery and forced labor. This was a major factor in reshaping the meaning of work. While Europeans took back the loot, colonized Zambians were left with nothing to show off of their hard labor despite doing all the physical work. Colonization also brought about new ideas of property and land ownership. Working for someone whom one did not previously know and accumulating wealth for oneself was an ideology totally new to the colonized Zambians. Within this transition from the old concept of work to the new concept, there were many concepts that needed to be learnt. The concept of wages only came about gradually, which was introduced only to help colonized Zambians sustain themselves on a day to day basis to make sure they come back because wages were needed in the next cycle. Together with these new concepts, colonized Zambians faced extensive supervision, some were fired for being away from work for too long even if they went away to perform sacred ceremonies such as burials of their immediate family members. This brought about resentment for work, which the Europeans interpreted as laziness. But the fact is that work was seen from the perception of forced labor, and not individual will.

### DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

**Work values** – an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence (Rokeach, 1973: 5)

**Intrinsic work Value** – Post-Kammer (1987) have defined intrinsic work values as people's strivings for autonomy and competence in the work place.

**Extrinsic Work Values** – defined as the desire for extrinsic rewards such as good pay, a good workplace, and promotion. Extrinsic work values concern 'the traditional pursuit of success by advancing up the organizational hierarchy to achieve prestige, status, and high income' (Watts, 1992, p.51).

**Culture** – entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other peoples or societies

### INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC WORK VALUES

The two types of work values that are broadly discussed by scholars are intrinsic and extrinsic work values. (Hirschi, 2010) developed five intrinsic work value items (variety at work, helping other people, independence at work, leadership and responsibility, and interesting work) and another five extrinsic work value items (high income, job security, fast and easy entry to job, leisure time besides work, and prestigious work). (Hegney, 2006)

classified sixteen items into these two work value dimensions. From these value items, we can easily determine what constitutes as extrinsic values, and intrinsic values. Post-Kammer, (1987) defined intrinsic work values as people's strivings for autonomy and competence in the work place while (Watts, 1992) p.51) stated that Extrinsic work values concern 'the traditional pursuit of success by advancing up the organizational hierarchy to achieve prestige, status, and high income. Over generations, important to these values have changed. This change has been a result of social economical changes and individual values as well. This is also because over time, the concept of "organizational outcomes" has been viewed as an important element related to internal organization performance.

In Zambia today, different generations have varying opinions and attitudes towards intrinsic and extrinsic values, but this is a significant signal of change in the way work is perceived. From the research observation point of view, most people anchored their answers in relation to the present day economical demands. This is highlighted in the fact that different age groups gave a seemingly different view on both aspects. Generation Z, Millennial's, General X and an almost baby body answered varying question and from observation it was quite apparent that general X and the baby boomer's values were only partially influenced by today's economical demands, the major influencer was inherent cultural believes.

### **WORK IN PRESENT DAY**

Work today is seen as one of the most vital aspects of one's survival in society. But different generations such as baby boomers, generation Y and generation X see the concept of work very differently. This is due to different timelines in their lives. Kupperschmidt (2000: 66) defines a generation as an "identifiable group that shares [the same] birth year, age, and significant life events at critical developmental stages". Also, the term generation typically refers to a group of individuals who share common life experiences such as world events, natural disasters, politics, economic conditions, and pop culture (Smith, 1997) & Clurman, 1998). Generational cohort theory, also known as subculture theory, posits that life events, such as significant macro-level societal, political and economic events during pre-adolescence, result in a generational identity. This generational identity seems to remain relatively stable throughout the lifespan of the generation (Fisher & Crabtree, 2009: 656). Therefore different generations have a totally different view on what work is supposed to be and how it's supposed to be. The life events as experienced by various generations have a definite impact on the formation of attitudes and beliefs (Meriac, 2010). Hence work values differ from generation to generation, as from society to society.

Post colonial Zambia has seen an adaption of the western work values, though the work value measurements and constructs are the same, the results significantly differ. This is mainly to do with a different cultural background highlighted in the previous chapter. World economies are merging, with organizations operating from different countries; employee's moving around the group, the world faces a dynamic change. This has resulted in many countries adopting work values from everywhere in order to fit in the bill. In Zambia today, there is a mixture of different cultures working together, while the fundamental aspects of the working culture has been preserved, there is a definite shift in beliefs about what work should be as opposed to initial assumptions in the pre-colonial era.

## CONSTRUCTS AND EMPIRICAL OBSERVATION OF ZAMBIAN WORK VALUES

A handful of major career development theories include a discussion of work values (Dawis, 2002) Super et al., 1957). Within the Theory of Work Adjustment, work values are conceptualized as aspects of a job that are necessary to promote job satisfaction (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Donald Super (1980, p. 130) defined work values as “an objective, either a psychological state, a relationship, or material condition, that one seeks to attain.” Regardless of varying definitions, Zytowski (1994) noted that in the vocational psychology literature, work values most often are characterized as positive reinforcers of job satisfaction. Empirical research shows that work values are associated and can predict an individual’s job satisfaction, their career choice, as well fundamentals that drive people into passionate fields.

Research has specifically addressed work values in different areas. Work values have been addressed amount generations, but this paper addresses work values in different cultures, in this paper, specifically, the Zambian culture and its perspective on work. As is the case with the concept value or psychological value, various definitions of the concept “work values” are presented by different authors. However, it is evident that the idea of an “attitude towards or orientation with regard to work” constitutes a central element of most interpretations, thus people interpreting work slightly differently. One of the most significant aspects that come to the fore from the theories of work and work motivation is that workers differ with regard to the reasons they have for working and the needs they want to satisfy through work. Biesheuvel (1984) supports this fact and argues that it is not everyone who looks for the satisfaction of higher level personality needs through the work they do and that it is in fact “... an intellectualist fallacy that everyone seeks opportunities for responsibility, independence and creativity in his job”. Zagoria (1974) too does not regard all workers as being alike, “... they come in assorted shapes, sizes, education and experience, attitudes and ambitions. Some work for a living, for others working is a living. He continues by mentioning that some regard work as the central goal in life, whereas others think about work as a way of providing for the daily necessities and then regard time away from work as the real joy in life. Different individuals are driven by different motives and it’s also very dependent on individual past experiences in life. Just to have an overview of the Zambian work values, a simple Q and A was sent out to random staff members at a bank in Zambia, with more than 8 years working in the industry, they helped us use our measurement scales (to be elaborated in the next paragraph) give an overview of the general situation based on observation.

In order to conduct the Q and A and to establish the general overview, we first need to establish the constructs to be used. Little work has been completed to summarize and organize different conceptualizations of work values. Making comparisons between the MIQ (Minnesota Importance Questionnaire) (Rounds et al., 1981), Ronen’s classification of (Hofstede, 1980) work values (Ronen, 1994), and Super’s work orientations from the Work Importance Study (Super & Sverko, 1995), Rounds and Armstrong (2005; see Table 13.4) illustrate that there were likely five work values being captured across these three classifications. These values include the importance of achievement/self-actualization, autonomy, power or status, social relationships, and the work environment (e.g. job security, benefits, physical workspace).

We were however to highlight important aspects that Zambian’s consider in career development, and use those components to as a measurements for work values. We categorized them as follows-;

**Table: Work Value Constructs**

CONSTRUCT TABLE FOR ITEMS RELATED TO WORK VALUES	
CONSTRUCT	ITEMS
INTRINSIC	Pride at work: this entails the satisfaction and enjoyment one feels from doing their work
	Job involvement: this was the degree to which one takes interest in co-workers and company functions and desire to contribute to job related decisions
	Activity preference: preference by the work to keep oneself active and busy at work
	Responsibility at work: the recognition that one is obligated to work and that he must depend on himself rather than others
EXTRINSIC	Attitude towards earning: the value and individual places towards making money on the job
	Upward striving: desire to continually seek a higher level job and a better standard of living
	Social status on the job: the effect the job alone has on personal standings among peers

(Yet-Mee, 2008) definition of work values is more all-encompassing; it states that work values “comprise one’s preferences for the type of work or work environment, beliefs about the importance of the prerequisites in a work situation and the guiding principles of job related decisions, action and behaviours”. From the above category, we can see that it is all-compassing, it covers every aspect of the definition but the categorization mainly focuses on “preference” and “belief”, this is the ultimate guideline to measuring what people do truly believe when it comes to work.

### SAMPLE DATA

The qualitative data collection was conducted in interview style. 20 respondents were interviewed separately in two parts. First part of the interview was discussion style interview in which their stories gave an overview of perception of Zambian work value – speaking for themselves. The second part was a work values questionnaire which had two types of questions, intrinsic and extrinsic type of questions. Upon completion of the discussion, they had to individually feel in the data which was used for further analysis to use in this journal. Total number of respondents was ( $n=20$ ), 60% were male, and 40% were female. Of all the respondents, only 1 was self employed, the rest belong to different institutes, with industries ranging from banking to café service workers. Most of them ( $n=8$ ) were secondary school certificates holders and the bachelor degree holders were ( $n=6$ ), followed by master degree holders ( $n=4$ )

### Level of Education of Participants

Level of education of participant	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Junior secondary	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
Senior Secondary	8	40.0	40.0	45.0
College Degree/Certificate	1	5.0	5.0	50.0
Bachelor Degree	6	30.0	30.0	80.0
Masters Degree	4	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Source: Interviewee’s Data Sample: SPSS output

From the total interviewed participants, ( $n=11$ ) were millennials, representing 55% of our respondents, generation Z only had ( $n=2$ ), representing only 10% of our interviewee's, this was a sign that general Z number are diminishing, with generation X and millennials starting to dominate organizations.

Generation Gap					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Generation Z	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Millennials	11	55.0	55.0	65.0
	Generation X	7	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Source: Interviewee's Data Sample: SPSS output

## RESULTS

Results were presented from empirical results that were obtained from the interviews conducted. Only 20 candidates were spoken to but not only did they give feedback from their own stand point, but went further to giving testimonies based on the observation they had on the colleagues, friends and family members who openly spoke to them about it, but their general overview is not a representation of the entire perspective on work values in Zambia, their observations and overview was just used as a point of view to offer a general outlook. Further an extensive research is to be held to get conclusive empirical results. The observations were rated 1 to 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strong agree, anywhere in between either meant the perspective was divided or people being observed had totally different situations or were just not too sure.

Firstly it was observed that people did not attach importance to pride at work, for people who have worked in the industry for many years, it was observed that most people did work not related to their interest or initial qualifications, people also worked far from their initially targeted industry. This was common in the generation X pool, they expressed that due to economical hardships and that they already had families, the type of work they did not matter, and that it was their capability to provide for their families that mattered. For example, some people who did animal husbandry found themselves working as cashiers. This could be as a result of economic hardships that represented less job opportunities. In the second category, it was found that most people did not care much about contribution at work, decision making, this is because many people did jobs to make ends meet. In the third, people were found to keep themselves busy, this was because many people interpreted "being busy and active" as productivity, therefore many people at work would engage in minor activities to pre-occupy themselves so that they felt productive, actual productivity was not properly accounted for in many cases. In the fourth item of interest, it was observed that people highly value earning money during work because people worked to make ends meet. It was found that in most places, people were visibly happier on pay than when a big project without remuneration was completed; this was common in the millennial group. Interestingly, the millennial group was more conscious about what they did, it was important that they followed their passion, but earning money was equally important to them. In the fifth item, people valued social status a lot because it gave them an opportunity to feel as though they



are in-charge, in fact in many situations it was observed that people of high status frequently abused their authority to reassert their social status this trait was common in baby boomers. In the sixth item, it was found that the goal of most peers was to strive to get a promotion or climb up on the chain of command; this is the only way they would be assured of some of the values they held dearest, such as earning money, and increasing their social status and obtaining a higher job security. Stability at work scored one of the highest marks. It was observed that many employees would rather have a stable permanent job in the government than risk being in the private sector on contracts were they had to a chance to earn a bigger but unpredictable income. Many employees value a guaranteed salary other than fluctuating income this trait was common in generation X. In the seventh question, it was found that many employees preferred finishing work alone, as opposed to doing work in teams or groups. Many people preferred individual completion of assignments, rather than team work effort. An important observation was that employees were mainly motivated by salaries, or bonuses than the sense of responsibility at work, also that many preferred to work in places that had routine tasks, than area's that sudden daily change of tasks and responsibilities. This trait was observed generally in all our interviewee's. it was a common denominator and essentially meant that stable jobs are more preferred than free lancing.

## SUMMARY

Work values tend to differ at individual level. People also tend to adjust in their "preferences" and "beliefs" due to circumstances surrounding them. While Zambian work values have their own blueprint, it is quite evident that the west has had a visible effect. Therefore it's safe to say Zambian's are of a diversified nature, but our qualitative research reviews that the most valuable things to a Zambia in work are a good stable income and upward striving, to improve their social status. The pre-colonial era, as far back as it may seem to be has had a very big impact on Zambia's current work values. The results obtained from empirical observations made by our subjects are a reflection of what Zambian's viewed as work in the past. Growing up in agrarian societies, work was just a passing day to day activity; this can be seen today because most of the workers in Zambia are working to make ends meet. Mostly work is done in order to live and not to build or amass wealth, hence in our observations we find that most people value earning money and upwards striving the most because this results in earning money. Though due to external influence, culture exchange etc, we find that there is indications of change towards work values. Today, work values are strongly associated with career trajectory and success, it's now common to find that a few from the pack have work values that differ from the rest. However it is important to note that as times change, generations are also changing their general attitude. Today economy demands less traditional work styles and demands more of organizational culture related work style. As each organization tries to compete, the future generations will definitely have to change depending on the organization they render their services to.

## LIMITATION

As aforementioned, this journal was only a qualitative study to give a highlight of what constitute Zambia values; hence the results might be inconclusive. Therefore this results of this journal need to be taken for further analysis using much more comprehensive research - quantitative data research. Another issue is that the number of correspondents in this study was considerable low, in order to get a full picture in the next quantitative study; at least 180 participants have to answer questionnaires with at least 3 constructs in place to conduct

hierarchical regression for conclusive results. Others a new direction of study has been opened. The limitations of this study offer future opportunities.

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