

Research Article

## Cultural convergence among educated elites in Sub-Saharan Africa: a reassessment of Hofstede's cultural dimensions

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural orientations of highly educated individuals in four Sub-Saharan African countries—Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda—using Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework. While Hofstede's national cultural profiles have long served as reference points in cross-cultural research, empirical data for many African countries remain limited and outdated. This study addresses this gap by applying the Values Survey Module 2013 (VSM 2013) to a sample of 226 university-educated respondents, grouped by nationality (55 Ghanaians, 60 Nigerians, 42 Tanzanians, and 69 Ugandans). Cultural dimension indices were calculated and compared both across countries, against Hofstede's reference database, and in relation to developed economies and Türkiye as an emerging country benchmark. Descriptive results revealed relatively similar cultural patterns among respondents in the four countries. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) further indicated that nationality had no statistically significant effect on the cultural dimensions. These findings suggest that highly educated populations in the sampled countries exhibit broadly similar cultural orientations despite belonging to different national contexts. The results underscore the importance of considering socio-structural factors, such as education and globalization, when interpreting cultural values. The study contributes updated empirical evidence to debates on cultural change and raises questions about the extent to which national cultural models capture emerging cultural patterns among educated populations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### KEYWORDS

culture, higher education, cultural dimensions, Sub-Saharan Africa, modernization

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## Introduction

Over the past several decades, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced profound social, economic, and cultural transformations. Processes such as rapid urbanization, the expansion of higher education, technological advancement, and increasing global interconnectedness have contributed to changes in social life across the continent (Gyimah-Brempong & Ondiege, 2011; Akpan & Udoinwang, 2023). The growth of digital communication technologies and mass media has further intensified exposure to global ideas, lifestyles, and cultural norms (Alsaleh, 2024). Digital transformation extends beyond technological change within organizations, as digital technologies increasingly reshape organizational practices, value creation, and interactions with the broader social environment (Vial, 2019). As a result, the cultural landscape of many African societies is evolving in ways that may challenge long-standing assumptions about traditional value systems. Understanding how these transformations influence cultural orientations has therefore become an increasingly important area of inquiry for scholars interested in social change, development, and cross-cultural interaction.

Culture plays a central role in shaping social behavior, institutional practices, and patterns of interaction within societies. In comparative research, one of the most influential frameworks for analyzing cultural differences is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). Originally developed through large-scale surveys of employees across multiple countries, Hofstede's model conceptualizes national cultures along several dimensions, including power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2011). Over the past four decades, this framework has been widely used in studies of international business, organizational behavior, education, and cross-cultural communication (Taras et al., 2010). Hofstede's cultural indices have also served as reference points for understanding how societies differ in their approaches to authority, social relationships, risk, and long-term planning. Although Hofstede's framework was originally designed for national-level analysis, cross-cultural researchers increasingly apply it to sub-national groups, such as professional or educational cohorts, to examine cultural dynamics within societies (Taras et al., 2010).

Despite its influence, the application of Hofstede's model to African contexts raises several important challenges. The empirical data underlying many of the original country scores were collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and African countries were only sparsely represented in the initial surveys (Hofstede, 1980; Taras et al., 2010). In several cases, country scores for Sub-Saharan Africa were derived from small samples or aggregated regional estimates rather than extensive country-specific data (Oppong, 2013). Moreover, the social, economic, and educational conditions of many African societies have changed dramatically since those early measurements were conducted. As modernization processes expand educational opportunities, technological access, and urban lifestyles, cultural orientations may evolve accordingly (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Consequently, the cultural profiles reported in Hofstede's database may not fully

capture contemporary cultural orientations in rapidly transforming African societies. These limitations highlight the need for updated empirical studies that examine how cultural values may have evolved in the region over time.

One particularly important group for examining potential cultural change is the highly educated population. The expansion of higher education across Africa has produced a growing cohort of university graduates who increasingly occupy influential positions in government, academia, business, and civil society (Gyimah-Brempong & Ondiege, 2011). These individuals often have greater exposure to global knowledge systems, international networks, and diverse cultural environments through education, travel, and digital connectivity. As a result, they may develop perspectives that differ from those traditionally associated with their national cultures. Educated populations may therefore represent a distinct social group whose cultural orientations reflect both local traditions and global influences. At the same time, research on African cultural values suggests that many African societies maintain strong communal values, including social solidarity, hierarchical family relations, and collective identities even amid modernization processes (Oppong, 2013). However, empirical research focusing specifically on the cultural values of educated populations in Sub-Saharan Africa remains limited, leaving an important gap in the literature.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the cultural orientations of highly educated individuals from four Sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. Using the Values Survey Module 2013 (VSM 2013) developed by Hofstede and Minkov (2013), the study measures cultural dimensions among university-educated respondents, grouping them by nationality to align with Hofstede's conceptual focus on national cultural orientation. The resulting cultural profiles are compared across the national groups to examine patterns of similarity and variation among educated elites. In addition, these findings are examined in relation to the original national reference scores reported in the Hofstede database (Hofstede, n.d.), as well as a wider set of international reference countries including developed economies (Germany, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, and India) and Türkiye as a developing country benchmark. By focusing on a highly educated demographic group within rapidly transforming societies, this study aims to provide new empirical evidence to debates on cultural change, modernization, and the applicability of Hofstede's framework at the sub-national level in contemporary African contexts.

## **Literature Review**

### **Culture, Modernization, and Social Change**

Culture is commonly understood as a system of shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape the ways individuals interpret the world and interact within social groups. Anthropological and sociological perspectives emphasize that culture is both socially constructed and historically transmitted, evolving through continuous interaction between tradition and social change (Hofstede et al., 2010). Cultural systems influence a wide range of societal domains, including political

institutions, economic practices, organizational behavior, and everyday social relations.

Modernization theory provides an important framework for understanding how cultural values may shift over time in response to structural transformations in society. Modernization processes typically involve industrialization, urbanization, technological development, and the expansion of formal education systems. These changes alter patterns of social organization and exposure to information, potentially influencing individuals' values and orientations (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). According to Inglehart and Baker (2000), socio-economic development tends to generate gradual shifts from traditional authority structures and survival-oriented values toward more secular-rational and self-expression values.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, modernization has taken distinctive forms shaped by colonial legacies, postcolonial development trajectories, and increasing global integration. Rapid urbanization and the expansion of digital technologies have accelerated exposure to global cultural influences, particularly among younger and more educated populations (Alsaleh, 2024). The growth of higher education has further contributed to social mobility and the emergence of new professional classes whose perspectives may differ from those traditionally associated with rural or less educated populations (Gyimah-Brempong & Ondiege, 2011). In Nigeria, for example, the growing use of digital technologies among young people has been associated with the emergence of a digital culture and changes in patterns of peer interaction, family relationships, values, and social order (Akintunde, 2021). More recent research similarly shows that digital media have become important spaces for urban Nigerian youth to engage with popular culture, negotiate identities, and participate in social life (Imoka, 2023). At a broader level, digital platforms have also created new spaces for African communities to preserve, negotiate, and redefine cultural identities across national boundaries (Babalola & Sedisa, 2025). Evidence from Kenya further indicates that internet-enabled mobile devices mediate access to information and engagement with the social world, enabling young people to develop understandings of themselves, others, and their local and global contexts (Tallam, 2021). In Ghana, social media have likewise created new spaces for youthful participation in public discourse, where local cultural identities and traditions intersect with global digital influences (Agana-Nsiire & Prempeh, 2022).

These transformations highlight that globalization does not necessarily produce a uniform cultural outcome. Rather, contemporary cultural change may involve both processes of homogenization, through the diffusion of dominant global norms, and hybridization, through the selective adaptation and reinterpretation of external cultural influences within local contexts (Haddad, 2026). Thus, increasing global connectivity and educational expansion may not simply replace existing cultural orientations but may contribute to the emergence of new cultural configurations shaped by both local traditions and shared global experiences. Taken together, these developments raise important questions about how cultural orientations evolve among different social groups within contemporary African societies, particularly among highly educated populations with greater exposure to global knowledge systems and transnational networks.

At the same time, scholars caution against assuming that modernization necessarily leads to the disappearance of traditional cultural values. Empirical research suggests that cultural change often involves processes of adaptation and hybridization rather than simple replacement (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Many African societies continue to emphasize communal relationships, collective identity, and strong family ties even as they experience economic and institutional modernization (Oppong, 2013). Consequently, the relationship between modernization and cultural change remains complex and context-dependent.

### **Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Framework**

One of the most widely used frameworks for analyzing cultural differences across societies is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. Hofstede (1980) originally developed this framework through a large-scale analysis of employee surveys conducted within a multinational corporation. The study identified systematic differences in cultural values across countries and conceptualized these differences through several dimensions representing fundamental societal orientations.

The initial framework consisted of four dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance refers to the degree to which members of a society accept unequal distributions of power. Individualism versus collectivism describes whether individuals primarily define themselves in terms of personal autonomy or group membership. Masculinity versus femininity captures the extent to which societies emphasize competitiveness, achievement, and material success as opposed to cooperation and quality of life. Uncertainty avoidance reflects the degree to which individuals feel uncomfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty in social and institutional contexts.

Subsequent research expanded the framework to include additional cultural dimensions. Long-term orientation was introduced to capture differences in temporal perspectives, particularly the extent to which societies emphasize future-oriented values such as perseverance and thrift (Hofstede et al., 2010). A sixth dimension, indulgence versus restraint, was later added based on analyses of international value surveys, reflecting the degree to which societies permit or regulate the gratification of human desires (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Hofstede's model has had a profound influence on comparative cultural research and has been widely applied in fields such as international management, organizational behavior, marketing, and education. The framework's conceptual clarity and comparative approach have made it a widely used tool for analyzing cross-national differences in cultural values (Taras et al., 2010).

At the same time, scholars have questioned whether national-level cultural dimensions adequately capture the complexity of cultural variation, particularly when cultures are examined within specific social contexts or educational settings (Signorini et al., 2009). Recent discussions have also emphasized the need to reassess the validity and contemporary relevance of Hofstede's cultural scores, as cultural orientations may evolve alongside broader social transformations (Özcan, 2025). These discussions highlight the importance of considering intra-national

variation and the possibility that different social groups within the same country may exhibit distinct cultural orientations.

While Hofstede's cultural dimensions have provided an influential foundation for cross-cultural research, alternative models have expanded the understanding of cultural variation by emphasizing different theoretical perspectives. For example, the GLOBE framework extends cross-cultural research by distinguishing between cultural practices and cultural values and by examining how cultural dimensions relate to leadership expectations and societal norms across different national contexts (House et al., 2004). Recent replications of the GLOBE approach also suggest that cultural dimensions and leadership preferences may shift over time as societies undergo social transformation (Pagda et al., 2021). More recent research has also revisited and refined Hofstede's cultural dimensions using broader international datasets. Minkov and Kaasa (2022), for instance, expanded revised individualism–collectivism and flexibility–monumentalism dimensions using World Values Survey data across 102 countries, providing further empirical support for these dimensions in cross-national research. These developments indicate that cultural frameworks continue to evolve as researchers seek to capture both enduring cultural patterns and changing social realities across societies.

### **Applications and Critiques of Hofstede's Model in African Contexts**

The application of Hofstede's cultural framework to African societies has produced both valuable insights and important debates. Early interpretations of African cultural values often characterized many societies in the region as relatively collectivist and hierarchical, reflecting strong communal relationships and respect for traditional authority structures (Oppong, 2013). These interpretations are broadly consistent with ethnographic observations highlighting the importance of extended family networks, social solidarity, and communal responsibility in many African communities.

However, empirical studies applying Hofstede's framework in Africa have faced several methodological limitations. One key challenge concerns the limited representation of African countries in the original datasets used to generate national cultural scores. In some cases, cultural indices for multiple countries were derived from aggregated regional data rather than from extensive country-specific measurements (Taras et al., 2010). This has raised concerns about the accuracy and generalizability of the cultural profiles often used in cross-cultural comparisons.

Another limitation relates to the diversity of cultural traditions within African societies themselves. Sub-Saharan Africa contains a wide range of ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities whose cultural practices may differ significantly both within and across national boundaries. Consequently, representing national cultures as uniform entities may obscure important internal variations (Oppong, 2013). Scholars have therefore emphasized the need for updated empirical research that captures contemporary cultural dynamics and accounts for the diversity of social contexts across the region.

In addition, critics argue that Hofstede's framework was developed primarily using data from corporate employees in industrialized societies, raising questions about its

applicability in contexts characterized by different historical and socio-economic conditions. Although the framework remains widely used, scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of complementing Hofstede's model with empirical studies that reflect changing social realities. Furthermore, a key methodological debate surrounds the level of analysis; since the Values Survey Module (VSM) is theoretically designed for ecological (national) comparisons, applying it to individual-level or sub-national cohorts requires caution as the factor structures may not directly mirror those at the national level.

### **Education, Globalization, and Cultural Transformation**

Higher education has long been identified as a significant factor influencing cultural values and social attitudes. Educational institutions play a central role in transmitting knowledge, shaping worldviews, and fostering exposure to diverse ideas and perspectives. Individuals who participate in higher education often develop greater familiarity with global intellectual traditions, scientific reasoning, and cross-cultural communication, which may influence their social values and cultural orientations (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the expansion of tertiary education has been particularly notable in recent decades. Governments across the region have invested heavily in expanding university access in order to support economic development and human capital formation (Gyimah-Brempong & Ondiege, 2011). This expansion has produced a growing cohort of educated professionals who increasingly participate in national and international institutions. These individuals often possess greater mobility, digital connectivity, and exposure to international networks compared with earlier generations.

Globalization and digitalization further contribute to these dynamics by facilitating the rapid circulation of cultural ideas across national boundaries. Advances in communication technologies enable individuals to interact with global media, educational resources, and social networks, potentially influencing their values and identities (Alsaleh, 2024). These processes may contribute to the emergence of shared cultural orientations among educated populations across different societies.

Nevertheless, modernization processes do not necessarily produce uniform cultural convergence. Cultural traditions, social norms, and institutional structures continue to shape how individuals interpret and adapt to global influences. As a result, cultural change often reflects a combination of continuity and transformation rather than complete replacement of existing values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Understanding how these processes operate within specific social groups therefore remains an important empirical question.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Present Study**

This study is grounded in Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, which conceptualizes culture as a system of shared values that influence how individuals perceive authority, social relationships, uncertainty, and long-term goals within a society (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede describes culture metaphorically as the "software of the mind," emphasizing that cultural values shape

collective patterns of thinking and behavior within social groups (Hofstede et al., 2010). In comparative research, these cultural patterns are typically analyzed through several dimensions that represent fundamental orientations toward power relations, individual autonomy, gender roles, uncertainty, and temporal perspectives.

In the present study, six cultural dimensions are examined: power distance (PDI), individualism versus collectivism (IDV), masculinity versus femininity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), long-term orientation (LTO), and indulgence versus restraint (IVR). These dimensions provide a structured framework for comparing value orientations across societies and for identifying similarities and differences among cultural groups (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). While the original model conceptualized these dimensions at the national level, subsequent research has also applied them to specific social groups in order to examine how cultural orientations may vary within societies (Taras et al., 2010).

The theoretical logic of this study is informed by the broader modernization perspective, which suggests that socio-economic development and educational expansion can influence value orientations by increasing exposure to new knowledge systems, institutional norms, and global cultural interactions (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Higher education, in particular, may contribute to the formation of shared perspectives among individuals who participate in similar educational environments and professional networks. As a result, educated populations may exhibit cultural orientations that differ from traditional national patterns or that display similarities across national boundaries.

Within this framework, the present study treats university-educated individuals as a socially distinctive group whose cultural orientations may reflect both national traditions and shared experiences of education, modernization, and global exposure. By measuring Hofstede's cultural dimensions among university-educated respondents grouped by nationality across four Sub-Saharan African contexts, the study examines whether cultural orientations vary significantly across national contexts or whether they show similar patterns among educated populations. In this way, the theoretical framework allows the study to assess the extent to which cultural differences remain primarily national in character or whether broader socio-structural factors such as education and modernization may contribute to emerging similarities across countries, while acknowledging the methodological considerations of using national-level constructs at the sub-national level.

### **Research Gap**

Despite the extensive literature on cultural values and modernization, empirical research focusing specifically on the cultural orientations of highly educated populations in Sub-Saharan Africa remains limited. Much of the existing literature relies on national cultural indices derived from historical datasets or on broad surveys that do not specifically examine the experiences of educated populations. As a result, relatively little is known about whether contemporary educated elites in African societies exhibit cultural orientations that differ from traditional national profiles.

This gap is particularly significant given the increasing importance of educated populations in shaping institutional development, governance, and economic transformation across the region. Understanding their cultural orientations may provide valuable insights into emerging patterns of leadership, organizational behavior, and social change.

The present study addresses this gap by examining cultural values among university-educated individuals of Ghanaian, Nigerian, Tanzanian, and Ugandan nationalities using Hofstede's Values Survey Module 2013. By generating updated empirical data on cultural dimensions within this population, the study contributes to ongoing debates about cultural change, modernization, and the continued relevance of Hofstede's framework in contemporary African contexts. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

*RQ1. What are the VSM 2013-based cultural dimension scores of university-educated respondents in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda?*

*RQ2. How do the cultural dimension scores observed among university-educated respondents compare descriptively with previously reported Hofstede country scores?*

*RQ3. Are there statistically significant differences in the overall cultural dimension profile among university-educated respondent groups from Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda?*

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study was designed as a quantitative comparative investigation aimed at examining and comparing the cultural profiles of four Sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. The study adopts a cross-national comparative approach grounded in the cultural dimensions framework developed by Geert Hofstede and colleagues and presented in *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The primary objective of the study was twofold. First, it sought to examine how the cultural dimension scores obtained from the present sample relate to the reference country scores reported in the Hofstede cultural database (Hofstede, n.d.). These database scores were treated as indicative national tendencies rather than as benchmarks for direct statistical comparison. Second, the study investigated whether statistically significant differences exist among Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda across the six cultural dimensions.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

Participants were university graduates from Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. In this study, the term "*educated elites*" is operationally used to refer to individuals with a university degree or higher level of educational attainment. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure comparability across national groups. Within this framework, snowball sampling was used to reach eligible participants.

The process began by contacting known individuals in each country who met the study criteria. These initial participants completed the survey and subsequently referred other potential participants within their professional or social networks, thereby facilitating the snowball sampling process (Neuman, 2014). As a selection criterion, participants were required to hold at least a bachelor's degree. Restricting the sample in this way helps reduce heterogeneity associated with educational background and enhances comparability across countries in cross-national analyses. For the purpose of comparative analysis, participants were grouped according to their nationality rather than country of residence to align with Hofstede's conceptual focus on national culture. This resulted in the final analysis sample comprising 55 Ghanaians, 60 Nigerians, 42 Tanzanians, and 69 Ugandans (Total N = 226), which accounts for one participant residing in Ghana who possessed Nigerian nationality.

The data were collected during the first half of 2025, ensuring that the analyses reflect recent cultural orientations among the sampled populations. Participants completed the survey voluntarily, either online or in paper format. Responses were collected anonymously, and ethical research standards regarding voluntary participation, confidentiality, and responsible data use were maintained throughout the data collection process. Descriptive information about the sample, including country distribution and gender composition, is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Sample Characteristics*

| <b>Nationality</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> |
|--------------------|----------|---------------|-------------|
| Ghana              | 55       | 19            | 36          |
| Nigeria            | 60       | 41            | 19          |
| Tanzania           | 42       | 16            | 26          |
| Uganda             | 69       | 25            | 44          |
| Total              | 226      | 101           | 125         |

### **Measurement of Cultural Dimensions**

Cultural values were measured using the Values Survey Module 2013 (VSM 2013) developed by Geert Hofstede and Michael Minkov. The instrument operationalizes six cultural dimensions: power distance (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), long-term orientation (LTO), and indulgence versus restraint (IVR). Dimension scores were calculated following the procedures described in the VSM 2013 manual. For each country, mean item scores were first computed and subsequently used to derive dimension index values according to the scoring formulas specified in the manual (Hofstede & Minkov, 2013). During this process, item priorities were taken into account and reverse-coded items were recoded prior to the calculation of the dimension scores.

The coefficients included in the original VSM formulas were introduced as calibration constants intended to align results with the large-scale national datasets used in Hofstede's cultural research. However, the sample in the present study does not represent national populations but rather a specific subgroup consisting of individuals with at least a bachelor's degree. Applying these constants would

therefore imply methodological equivalence with nationally representative samples, which cannot be assumed in the present context. For this reason, raw index values were calculated for each cultural dimension, and cross-country comparisons were conducted using these uncalibrated scores. In the Hofstede country comparison tool, some country scores are derived from validated empirical studies, whereas others are presented as estimations and are not intended for use in research (Hofstede, n.d.). Accordingly, Hofstede's country scores were used in this study only as reference points indicating expected national tendencies, and comparisons with the present findings were conducted at a descriptive and graphical level. Based on these considerations, the raw indices obtained in this study were not subjected to direct statistical comparison with the national scores reported in the Hofstede country database. This approach allows the results to be interpreted in relation to established cultural benchmarks while acknowledging differences in sampling structure. Additionally, although Hofstede's Values Survey Module is traditionally designed for aggregate ecological comparisons at the country level, individual-level VSM dimension scores were calculated for each respondent to serve as the metric for within-sample statistical analyses. This approach enabled the application of multivariate analyses while acknowledging that the original purpose of the VSM was to derive country-level cultural indices.

### **Data Analysis**

To examine whether cultural dimension scores differed across the four national groups, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. MANOVA was selected because it enables the simultaneous examination of multiple related dependent variables and is appropriate for assessing group differences across several cultural dimensions.

Prior to conducting the MANOVA, the relevant statistical assumptions were evaluated. First, the assumption of univariate normality was assessed by examining skewness and kurtosis values for each dependent variable within each national group. All values fell within the acceptable range of  $\pm 1$ , indicating that the assumption of normality was satisfied. Second, multivariate normality and potential multivariate outliers were assessed using Mahalanobis distance. The calculated distances were compared with the critical chi-square value at  $p < .001$ , and the results indicated that no multivariate outliers were present in the dataset. Third, the homogeneity of covariance matrices was evaluated using Box's M test. The test yielded a statistically significant result (Box's  $M = 96.21$ ,  $F = 1.45$ ,  $p = .011$ ). However, this test is known to be highly sensitive to sample size, and violations are generally considered problematic primarily when  $p < .001$ , particularly when group sizes are unequal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Given that group sizes were relatively similar and the obtained significance level exceeded this threshold, the assumption was considered sufficiently satisfied for proceeding with the analysis. Following recommendations in multivariate statistical procedures, Pillai's Trace was used as the primary statistic for evaluating multivariate significance because of its robustness when the assumption of covariance homogeneity may be partially violated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

## Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study according to the three research questions. Descriptive statistics are first presented to illustrate the cultural dimension scores for each country. These results are then compared with the reference values reported in Hofstede's cultural database. Finally, multivariate statistical analysis is used to examine whether significant differences exist among the national groups.

### 5.1 Cultural Dimension Scores of Highly Educated Respondents

The first research question examined the cultural dimension scores of highly educated individuals in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda according to Hofstede's framework.

Cultural values were measured using the Values Survey Module 2013 (VSM 2013), and dimension index values were calculated following the procedures described in the VSM manual (Hofstede & Minkov, 2013). Because the calibration constants proposed in the manual were not applied, the resulting indices include both positive and negative values. Therefore, interpretation focuses on the relative positioning of countries across dimensions rather than absolute values.

Table 2 presents the calculated cultural dimension indices for each country.

**Table 2.**  
*Cultural Dimension Indices for the Four Countries*

| Country  | PDI   | IDV    | MAS    | UAI    | LTO    | IVR   |
|----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Ghana    | -1.09 | 9.54   | 0.00   | -36.63 | -61.54 | 24.54 |
| Nigeria  | 7.58  | -3.50  | -4.66  | -34.16 | -60.33 | 35.91 |
| Tanzania | -4.64 | -13.33 | -16.66 | -41.07 | -47.38 | 39.52 |
| Uganda   | -6.88 | -16.73 | -5.07  | -38.33 | -42.39 | 40.65 |

Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate relatively limited variation across the four countries. Nigeria recorded the highest score on power distance, while Uganda showed the lowest. Ghana had the highest individualism score, whereas Uganda displayed the lowest value on this dimension. Masculinity scores were relatively low across all countries, with Tanzania recording the lowest value. Uncertainty avoidance scores were relatively similar across the sample. Long-term orientation scores were negative for all four countries, indicating relatively similar patterns across the sample. Finally, indulgence scores were positive across all countries, with Tanzania and Uganda showing slightly higher values than Ghana and Nigeria.

### Comparison with Hofstede's Country Scores

The second research question examined how the cultural dimension scores obtained in the present study compare with the national cultural scores reported in Hofstede's country database (Hofstede, n.d.).

Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumptions of MANOVA were evaluated. Skewness and kurtosis values indicated that the assumption of normality was

satisfied. Multivariate outliers were examined using Mahalanobis distance, and no significant outliers were detected. The homogeneity of covariance matrices was tested using Box's M test, which produced a statistically significant result (Box's M = 96.21,  $F = 1.45$ ,  $p = .011$ ). However, because the significance level did not exceed the more conservative threshold of  $p < .001$  and group sizes were relatively similar, the assumption was considered acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

Pillai's Trace was used as the primary multivariate test statistic because of its robustness under potential violations of covariance homogeneity.

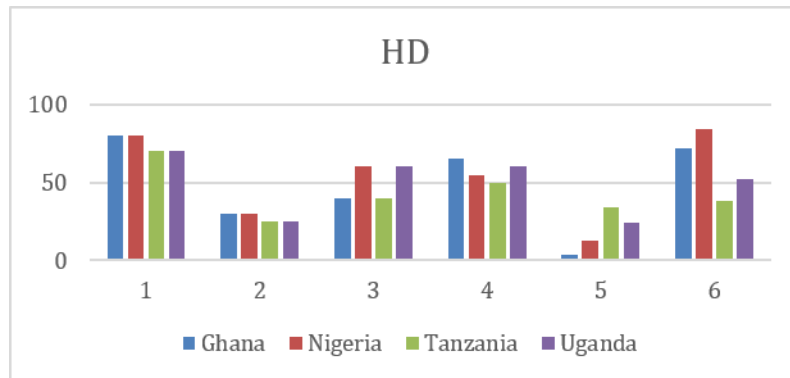
**Table 3.**  
*Multivariate Test Results for the Effect of Nationality on Cultural Dimensions*

| Effect      | Test statistic | Value | F (df1, df2)         | p    | Partial $\eta^2$ |
|-------------|----------------|-------|----------------------|------|------------------|
| Nationality | Pillai's Trace | .071  | $F(18, 657) = 0.888$ | .594 | .024             |

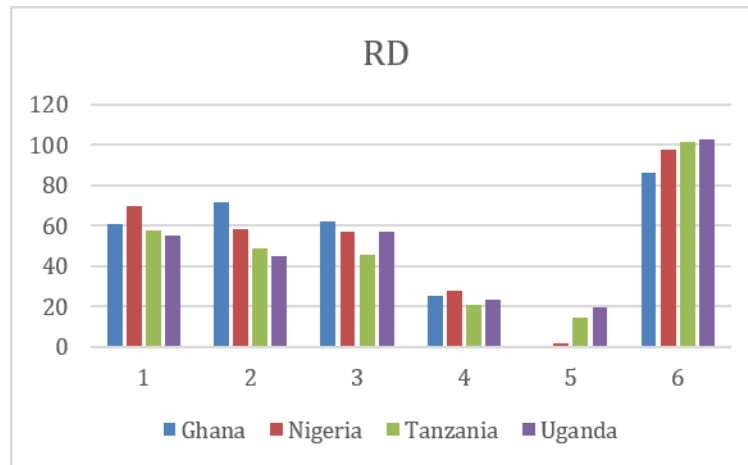
The multivariate test results indicated that nationality did not have a statistically significant effect on the set of cultural dimensions within the highly educated sample included in this study. As shown in Table 3, the effect of nationality was not significant according to Pillai's Trace,  $V = .071$ ,  $F(18, 657) = 0.888$ ,  $p = .594$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .024$ , indicating a small effect size. These results suggest that cultural dimension scores did not differ meaningfully across the national groups represented in the sample.

Figures 1 and 2 provide a visual comparison between the reference cultural dimension scores reported in the Hofstede database and the indices calculated from the research dataset.

Overall, several dimensions show patterns that are broadly comparable to those reported in the Hofstede reference framework, although some differences in magnitude and country ordering are observable.



**Figure 1**  
Reference Cultural Dimension Scores from the Hofstede Database (HD)



**Figure 2**  
Country Cultural Dimension Indices Calculated from the Research Dataset (RD)

For the *power distance dimension*, Nigeria recorded the highest score in the present dataset, while Uganda recorded the lowest. In the Hofstede reference scores, Ghana and Nigeria appear relatively similar, whereas the present findings indicate a clearer separation between these two countries.

For *individualism*, the results show a gradual decline from Ghana to Uganda, while the Hofstede reference values suggest a more clustered distribution across countries.

In the case of *masculinity*, the present dataset indicates a decreasing pattern from Ghana to Tanzania, with Uganda showing a value similar to Nigeria. By contrast, the Hofstede reference values indicate relatively similar scores for Nigeria and Uganda and somewhat lower scores for the remaining countries.

For *uncertainty avoidance*, the four countries display relatively similar scores in both datasets. Minor differences appear in the relative ordering of Ghana and Nigeria between the two datasets.

For *long-term orientation*, both the present dataset and the Hofstede reference scores indicate relatively low values across the four countries. However, the relative positions of Tanzania and Uganda differ between the two datasets.

Finally, the *indulgence dimension* shows relatively similar values across the four countries in the present dataset, whereas the Hofstede reference scores display greater variation, with Nigeria showing the highest value and Tanzania the lowest.

Taken together, the comparison suggests that while some general patterns resemble those reported in Hofstede's framework, the present dataset reveals modest differences in the magnitude and ordering of cultural dimensions across countries.

### 5.3 Cross-National Differences in Cultural Dimensions

The third research question examined whether the cultural dimension profiles of university-educated respondents differed significantly across Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda. To provide a broader contextual interpretation of these findings, Hofstede's cultural dimension scores for six additional countries—Germany, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, India, and Türkiye (as an emerging economy benchmark)—were included as reference points.

Table 4 presents the Hofstede cultural dimension scores for the four Sub-Saharan African countries alongside the selected comparison countries. These values are drawn from the Hofstede country comparison database (Hofstede, n.d.) and represent national-level reference scores rather than measurements derived from the present dataset.

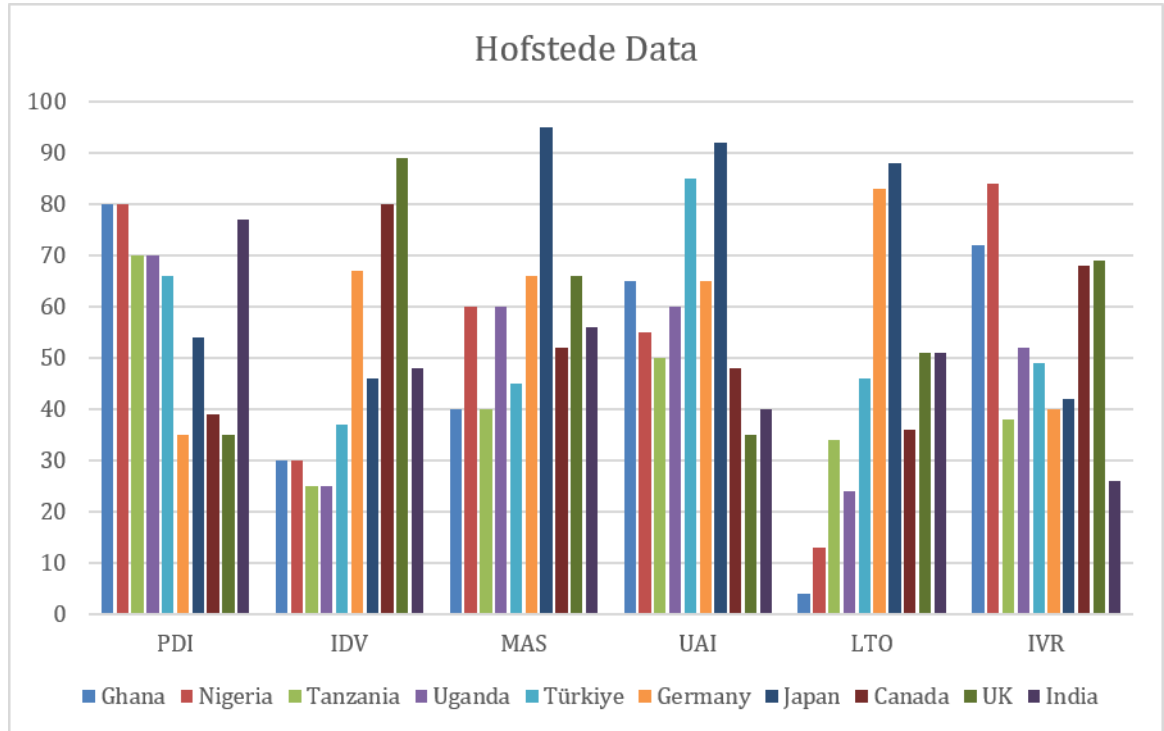
**Table 4.**  
*Hofstede Cultural Dimension Scores for Selected Countries (Reference Values)*

| Country  | PDI       | IDV       | MAS       | UAI       | LTO       | IVR       |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Ghana    | <b>80</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>65</b> | 4         | 72        |
| Nigeria  | <b>80</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>84</b> |
| Tanzania | <b>70</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>50</b> | 34        | 38        |
| Uganda   | <b>70</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> | 24        | 52        |
| Türkiye  | 66        | 37        | 45        | 85        | 46        | 49        |
| Germany  | 35        | 67        | 66        | 65        | 83        | 40        |
| Japan    | 54        | 46        | 95        | 92        | 88        | 42        |
| Canada   | 39        | 80        | 52        | 48        | 36        | 68        |
| UK       | 35        | 89        | 66        | 35        | 51        | 69        |
| India    | 77        | 48        | 56        | 40        | 51        | 26        |

**Note.** Values highlighted in the original dataset indicate estimated scores reported in the Hofstede database for the corresponding cultural dimensions.

Figure 3 illustrates the cultural dimension scores for the four Sub-Saharan African countries in relation to the broader set of comparison countries.

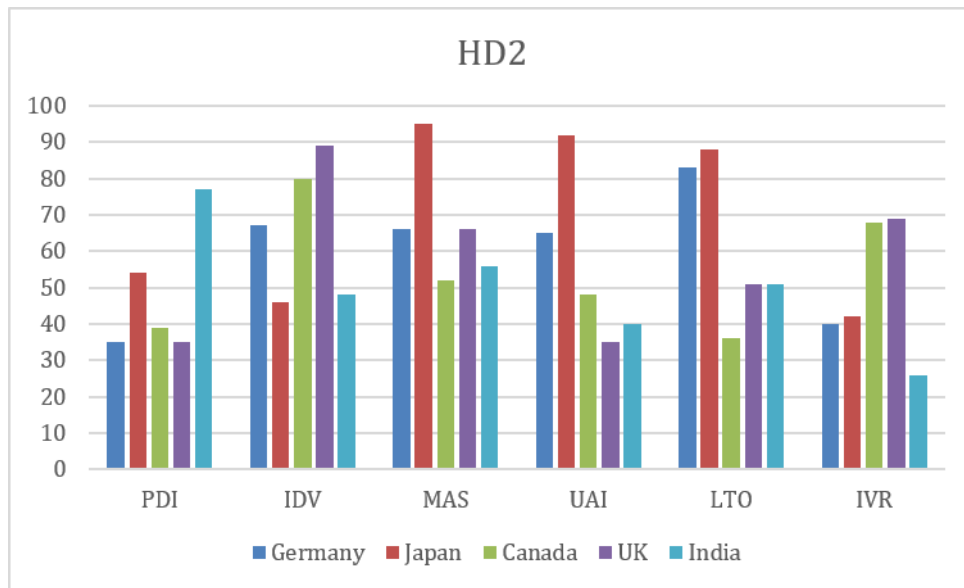
To facilitate clearer comparison with developed economies, Table 5 presents the Hofstede cultural dimension scores for five selected countries frequently used as benchmarks in cross-cultural studies: Germany, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, and India.



**Figure 3**  
Hofstede Cultural Dimension Scores for Selected Countries (Reference Values)

**Table 5.**  
Hofstede Cultural Dimension Scores for 5 Selected Countries (Reference Values)

| Country | PDI | IDV | MAS | UAI | LTO | IVR |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Germany | 35  | 67  | 66  | 65  | 83  | 40  |
| Japan   | 54  | 46  | 95  | 92  | 88  | 42  |
| Canada  | 39  | 80  | 52  | 48  | 36  | 68  |
| UK      | 35  | 89  | 66  | 35  | 51  | 69  |
| India   | 77  | 48  | 56  | 40  | 51  | 26  |



**Figure 4**  
*Hofstede Cultural Dimension Scores for 5 Selected Countries (Reference Values)*

Figure 4 provides a graphical representation of these cultural dimension scores, allowing visual comparison across the selected countries and cultural dimensions.

Overall, the reference scores presented in Tables 4 and 5 illustrate notable variation across countries in each of the six cultural dimensions. The Sub-Saharan African countries generally display higher power distance scores and lower individualism scores relative to several developed economies. In contrast, developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany tend to exhibit higher individualism scores and lower power distance scores. Differences are also observable across other dimensions, including masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence.

These comparative reference values provide a contextual background for interpreting the cultural patterns identified in the present study.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural orientations of highly educated individuals in four Sub-Saharan African countries—Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda—using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions framework and to compare these orientations both across countries and with the national cultural profiles reported in Hofstede’s database. The findings provide several insights into contemporary cultural dynamics among educated populations in the region.

### Cultural Similarities Among Educated Populations

The most notable finding of the study is the limited variation in cultural dimension scores across the four countries. Although minor differences were observed in the

descriptive statistics, the multivariate analysis indicated that nationality did not have a statistically significant effect on the set of cultural dimensions. In other words, the cultural orientations of highly educated respondents in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda appear to be broadly similar.

This pattern suggests that national boundaries may play a less pronounced role in shaping cultural values within highly educated populations than traditionally assumed in national cultural models. Hofstede's framework conceptualizes culture primarily at the national level, implying that individuals within a country tend to share common value orientations that distinguish them from those in other countries (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). However, the present findings indicate that individuals who share similar educational backgrounds may exhibit comparable cultural orientations even when they belong to different national contexts.

This finding is consistent with broader developments in cross-cultural research that have increasingly emphasized the complexity and dynamism of cultural variation. For example, the GLOBE framework distinguishes between cultural practices and cultural values, highlighting that cultural orientations may be understood through multiple aspects of social experience rather than through national profiles alone (House et al., 2004). Similarly, recent work has revisited and extended cultural dimensions using broader international datasets, reflecting the possibility that cultural orientations may evolve alongside changing social conditions (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022). From this perspective, the limited cross-national variation observed in the present study does not necessarily indicate that national cultural differences are absent. Rather, it suggests that national-level cultural profiles may not fully capture the orientations of particular social groups, especially those sharing similar educational and broader social experiences.

One possible explanation for this pattern lies in the role of higher education as a socializing environment. Universities often expose students to similar forms of knowledge, institutional norms, and professional expectations that transcend national boundaries. Participation in higher education may therefore contribute to the formation of shared cognitive frameworks and value orientations among individuals who undergo similar educational experiences. Previous research has suggested that education can promote more cosmopolitan outlooks and greater openness to diverse perspectives, potentially reducing cultural differences across national groups (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

### **Modernization, Globalization, and Cultural Convergence**

The observed similarities across countries may also reflect broader processes associated with modernization and globalization. As modernization theory suggests, socio-economic development and expanding access to education can gradually transform cultural values and social attitudes (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, rapid urbanization, digital connectivity, and increased access to global information networks have intensified exposure to international cultural influences. These processes may contribute to the diffusion of shared norms and expectations among educated populations across different countries.

In particular, digital technologies and global communication platforms facilitate the circulation of ideas and knowledge across national borders, potentially fostering common cultural orientations among individuals who participate in global information networks (Alsaleh, 2024). Highly educated individuals are especially likely to engage with such networks through academic collaboration, professional mobility, and access to international media. As a result, their cultural perspectives may reflect both local traditions and global influences.

At the same time, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of complete cultural convergence. Instead, the findings indicate similarities within the present sample that may reflect shared educational and socio-cultural experiences. However, cultural traditions, social institutions, and historical experiences continue to shape value systems within societies. Research on African cultural values, for example, emphasizes the persistence of communal orientations, extended family obligations, and collective social identities (Oppong, 2013). Thus, rather than replacing traditional values entirely, modernization processes may produce hybrid cultural configurations in which elements of both traditional and modern value systems coexist.

### **Reconsidering Hofstede's National Cultural Profiles**

The results of this study also have implications for the interpretation and application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework. Hofstede's national cultural scores have long served as reference points in cross-cultural research, particularly in fields such as international business and organizational management (Taras et al., 2010). However, the original datasets used to generate many of these scores were collected several decades ago and included relatively limited representation of African countries.

The comparison between the present findings and the reference values reported in Hofstede's database revealed both similarities and differences in the patterns of cultural dimensions. While some general tendencies appear broadly consistent with Hofstede's framework, the magnitude and relative ordering of scores across countries differ in several cases. These differences may partly reflect changes in social and educational conditions that have occurred since the original measurements were conducted.

More importantly, the results suggest that national cultural indices may not fully capture the diversity of value orientations within contemporary societies. Cultural values may vary not only between countries but also across social groups within the same country. Highly educated populations, in particular, may exhibit cultural orientations that reflect shared experiences of education, professionalization, and global exposure. This observation supports the argument that cultural analysis should consider both national and socio-structural factors when examining value systems.

### **Cross-Regional Comparison with Developed Economies**

A third important observation emerges from the broader comparison between the Sub-Saharan African countries examined in this study and the selected developed

and developing comparison countries. The reference values presented in Tables 4 and 5 (and corresponding Figures 3 and 4) illustrate noticeable contrasts between the cultural profiles traditionally associated with the four African countries and those reported for developed economies such as Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In particular, the Hofstede database generally reports higher power distance and lower individualism scores for many Sub-Saharan African societies, whereas several developed countries tend to display lower power distance and higher individualism scores. These contrasts reflect long-standing interpretations in cross-cultural research that associate Western industrialized societies with stronger individualistic orientations and comparatively flatter authority structures (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). At the same time, the comparative visualization highlights that cultural dimensions are not distributed along a simple dichotomy between "African" and "Western" cultural patterns. For instance, the inclusion of Türkiye as a developing country benchmark highlights how emerging economies can show distinctive dimension profiles that do not fit neatly into a developed Western or Sub-Saharan African template. Considerable variation exists among both groups of countries, as illustrated by differences between Germany, Japan, Canada, and India in dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation. These patterns suggest that while broad regional tendencies may be observable, cultural value systems remain complex and multidimensional. In the context of the present study, the comparison further underscores the importance of interpreting cultural values not only through national averages but also through the characteristics of specific social groups, such as highly educated populations, whose cultural orientations may differ from historically established national profiles.

### **Implications for Cross-Cultural Research**

The findings of this study contribute to ongoing debates about the relationship between culture, modernization, and social change. While national cultural frameworks remain valuable tools for understanding broad societal patterns, the results indicate that cultural orientations may also be shaped by transnational experiences such as higher education and global communication networks.

For researchers and practitioners working in international contexts, this insight highlights the importance of recognizing intra-national diversity in cultural values. Professionals operating within higher education, international organizations, and multinational institutions often interact with individuals whose cultural orientations may reflect shared professional or educational backgrounds rather than strictly national cultural characteristics.

More broadly, the findings suggest that cultural analysis in rapidly changing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa should incorporate dynamic perspectives that account for ongoing social transformations. Rather than treating culture as a static national attribute, future research may benefit from examining how education, urbanization, and globalization contribute to evolving cultural patterns within societies.

## Conclusion

This study examined the cultural orientations of highly educated individuals in four Sub-Saharan African countries—Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda—using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions framework. By applying the Values Survey Module 2013 to a sample of university-educated respondents, the research sought to assess whether cultural orientations among this population differ significantly across national contexts and how these orientations relate to the national cultural profiles reported in Hofstede’s database.

The results indicate that the cultural dimension scores of highly educated respondents across the four countries display relatively limited variation. Although minor differences appeared in descriptive statistics, the multivariate analysis revealed no statistically significant differences among the national groups. These findings suggest that highly educated individuals in the sampled countries share broadly similar cultural orientations, despite belonging to different national contexts.

Finally, comparison with Hofstede’s published indices should be interpreted cautiously. Because the present study used uncalibrated VSM scores derived from a highly educated subgroup rather than nationally representative samples, the resulting values are not directly equivalent to Hofstede’s national indices. Accordingly, differences in absolute score magnitude should not be interpreted as evidence of cultural change or deviation from national profiles. The comparison is limited to broad descriptive patterns, relative country positioning, and directional similarities or differences.

## Findings-Based Interpretive Model of Cultural Orientations Among Highly Educated Populations

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to ongoing discussions about the applicability of national cultural models in rapidly transforming societies. Hofstede’s framework has long been used to conceptualize cultural differences at the national level (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). However, the results of this study indicate that cultural orientations may also be shaped by socio-structural factors such as education and exposure to global knowledge systems. In this sense, the findings are consistent with modernization perspectives suggesting that socio-economic development and expanding educational opportunities can influence cultural values and social attitudes (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). The relative similarity observed among the respondents may therefore reflect shared experiences associated with higher education, professionalization, and global connectivity. This interpretation is consistent with broader discussions on globalization and cultural transformation, which emphasize that contemporary cultural change does not necessarily imply the replacement of local cultural orientations by a single global culture. Rather, globalization often operates through processes of adaptation, negotiation, and hybridization, in which individuals incorporate global influences while maintaining connections with existing cultural frameworks (Haddad, 2026). The present findings may therefore reflect such hybrid cultural processes among highly educated populations, whose educational experiences and professional

networks expose them to similar global knowledge systems and interaction patterns across national contexts.

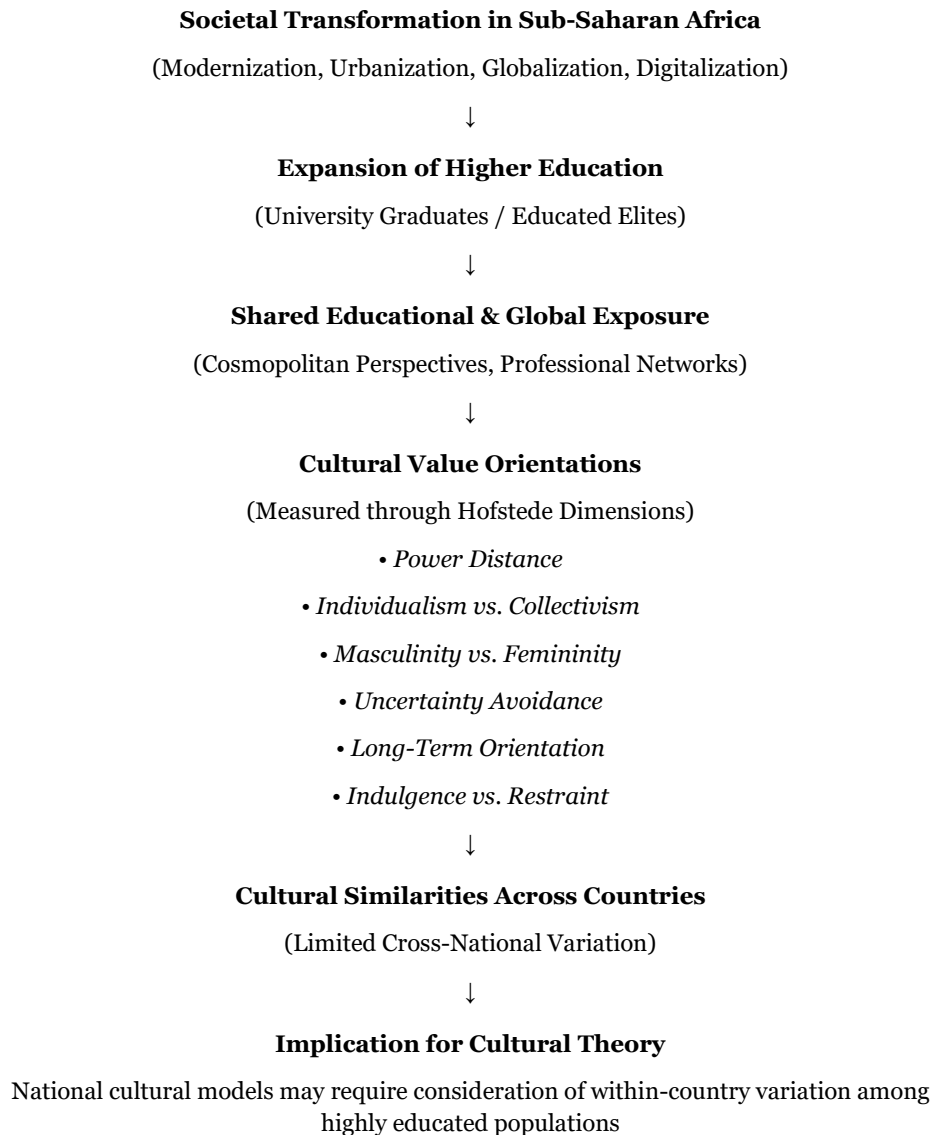
In the African context, these processes are particularly relevant because modernization has occurred alongside the persistence of historically embedded communal values, family structures, and social identities. Rather than indicating the erosion of local cultural orientations, the limited cross-national variation observed among highly educated respondents may reflect the coexistence of local cultural continuities and shared global experiences. Previous research suggests that digitalization, higher education expansion, and increased global connectivity have created new spaces where individuals negotiate between local cultural traditions and emerging global influences (Akintunde, 2021; Imoka, 2023; Babalola & Sedisa, 2025). Therefore, the limited cross-national variation observed among highly educated respondents should not be interpreted as solely evidence that national cultural differences have disappeared. Instead, it may indicate that education and global exposure constitute important social contexts through which cultural orientations are reshaped.

The study also has implications for cross-cultural research and practice. Scholars and practitioners frequently rely on national cultural indices when analyzing cultural differences in international business, organizational management, and educational collaboration (Taras et al., 2010). While national cultural frameworks remain useful for capturing broad societal tendencies, the present findings suggest that cultural orientations may vary across social groups within countries. Highly educated populations may exhibit cultural profiles that differ from those traditionally associated with national cultural averages. Recognizing such intra-national diversity may help improve the accuracy of cultural analysis in international contexts.

Drawing on the empirical findings and theoretical discussions, an interpretive model is proposed to illustrate how societal transformation, higher education, and global exposure may relate to cultural orientations among highly educated populations. The proposed model is presented in Figure 5.

An additional insight emerging from this study concerns the broader cross-regional comparison between the Sub-Saharan African countries included in the analysis and the selected developed and developing reference countries. The comparative overview of Hofstede's cultural dimension scores indicates that traditional national profiles continue to show noticeable differences between many Sub-Saharan African societies and several comparison countries (developed economies and Türkiye as a developing country benchmark), particularly with respect to dimensions such as power distance and individualism. However, when focusing specifically on highly educated populations, the results of the present study suggest that cultural orientations may become less strongly differentiated along national lines. This observation is consistent with the findings-based interpretive model proposed in Figure 5, which highlights how societal transformation, expanding higher education, and increasing global exposure may contribute to the emergence of shared cultural perspectives among educated groups across different national contexts. In this sense, the findings point toward the possibility that education and transnational

interaction function as important mediating factors between traditional national cultures and evolving cultural value systems in contemporary societies.



**Figure 5.**

Findings-based interpretive model of cultural orientations among highly educated populations

**Note:** The figure presents an interpretive model derived from the findings of the study. It illustrates how societal transformation, expansion of higher education, and global exposure may be associated with cultural value orientations among highly educated populations. Shared educational experiences and global interactions may contribute to similarities in cultural dimensions across national contexts.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample consists exclusively of individuals

with at least a bachelor's degree and therefore does not represent the broader populations of the countries studied. Cultural orientations among other social groups may differ from those observed in this research. Second, the sample size within each country, while adequate for exploratory comparative analysis, remains relatively modest. Third, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to assess long-term cultural change over time.

Future research could extend this work by examining cultural orientations among larger and more diverse samples across additional African countries. Comparative studies that include different educational levels, occupational groups, and age cohorts may help clarify the extent to which education and socio-economic factors influence cultural values. Longitudinal research may also provide deeper insights into how cultural orientations evolve as modernization processes continue to reshape social and institutional contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In conclusion, this study provides updated empirical evidence on cultural values among highly educated populations in four Sub-Saharan African countries. The findings suggest that cultural orientations among these groups may exhibit greater similarity across national boundaries than traditional national cultural models would predict. As African societies continue to experience rapid educational expansion and global integration, further research will be essential for understanding how these transformations shape the evolving cultural landscape of the region.

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### Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical standards, including respect for participants' rights and confidentiality. The study was ethically approved by the XXX Social and Humanities Ethics Board.

### AI Use Disclaimer

The author discloses the use of AI in the research process, manuscript preparation, and data analysis. Specifically, ChatGPT 4.5 was used as a tool to assist with proof reading of the research. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and ethical considerations of any AI-generated content included in the manuscript.

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