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Ubuntu as an emic belief system: A quantitative analysis of humane orientated practices

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Abstract: Ubuntu is often described as African humanness, uniquely rooted in Southern African cultures and distinct from practices like performance orientation, which is typically associated with Anglo-Saxon cultures. Aim: This research aims to determine whether humane orientation, as measured in the GLOBE study, is more prevalent in indigenous African societies compared to other regions globally. Method: Data from the GLOBE study was analysed to assess the extent to which humane orientation is emic to Africa, Southern Africa, and specifically, the indigenous people of South Africa. Mean scores for humane orientation were used for comparative analyses across regions, countries and within South Africa. Results: More African countries scored higher than the world mean on humane orientation. Among the 10 regional clusters identified in the GLOBE study, Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the second-highest humane orientation score. However, significant differences in humane orientation were found across Africa, indicating it is not uniformly endorsed. Within South Africa, black South Africans, more than white South Africans, perceived their society's practices as humane oriented. Discussion: The findings confirm a strong link between humane orientation and Africa, particularly when compared to the Anglo-Saxon cluster. Nonetheless, humane orientation is not exclusive to Africa and is observed in other parts of the world. Additionally, Africa itself is marked by diverse worldviews, with variations in the endorsement of humane orientation. Contribution: This research contributes empirical and quantitative evidence to support the argument that humane orientation, per proxy an essential part of Ubuntu, forms an integral part of being African. The study also provides empirical evidence of the presence of humane orientation outside Africa. Lastly, the research emphasises Africa's cultural diversity.

Keywords: African humanness, Emic framework, GLOBE study, Humane orientation, Ubuntu

1. Introduction

Ubuntu is often described as a form of African humanness, deeply rooted in Southern African traditions (Allais, 2022; Udom, 2024). While interpretations of Ubuntu vary, there is broad scholarly consensus that it embodies a uniquely African philosophy (Mbigi & Maree, 2005; Metz, 2020), especially when contrasted with the individualistic values commonly associated with Western thought systems (Gaim & Clegg, 2021; Nkomo, 2011). However, despite widespread claims that Ubuntu represents a distinctly African worldview, these claims are most often presented by philosophers (Molefe, 2024; Ntibagirirwa, 2024), politicians (Omodan, 2022; Risimati, 2023), and supported by qualitative research (Abubakre et al., 2021; Mickson Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2012), while empirical evidence supporting a higher prevalence of Ubuntu among African populations remains limited (Grobler & Koen, 2024; Muller et al., 2019). The predominantly qualitative origins of these claims raise important questions about the uniqueness or universality of Ubuntu across regions and invite closer examination of the African underpinning of Ubuntu.

This research aims to examine whether humane orientation, as a proxy to Ubuntu, and as conceptualised and measured in the GLOBE study, is more prevalent among indigenous African populations than among those from other regions. The use of humane orientation as a proxy is tolerable, as it is closely associated with Ubuntu. Some even refer to Ubuntu as African humanness (Gathogo, 2008; Metz, 2021; Murove, 2012) or African humanism (Mutsonziwa, 2020; Sibanda, 2014; Tschaepe, 2013). Exploring the unique bond between Ubuntu and Africa could offer valuable insights into African cultural identity and enrich our understanding of African societies.

2. Literature review

This section addresses the two central concepts of this research: Ubuntu and humanness. The literature review aims to highlight the overlap and differences between these concepts and ultimately demonstrates the appropriateness of humanness as a proxy to Ubuntu.

2.1. Ubuntu

The concept of Ubuntu has been defined in numerous ways. Mboti (2015: 126-127), for instance, notes that after analysing 23 separate definitions of Ubuntu, "the settled definition of choice seems to always return, again and again, to the saying 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (in Nguni languages), 'motho ke motho ka batho' (in Sotho languages), 'a person is a person through other persons' (in English), and so on. Other variations such as 'I am because we are' are also advanced." Along this line, Mbiti (1990 [1969]) states about Ubuntu that "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'" (Mbiti, 1990: 106).

These descriptions are on a higher philosophical level and tell the reader little about Ubuntu on a practical level. However, some scholars explain Ubuntu in more descriptive terms. Kamwangamalu (1999) suggests that Ubuntu embodies qualities such as respect for all people, human dignity, sharing, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, and communalism. Eliastam (2015: 4) includes terms like hospitality, compassion, humanness, sharing, and respect as central to discussions of Ubuntu. Letseka (2013: 339) emphasizes that "Ubuntu implies the capacity in African cultures to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity." Similarly, Khomba and Kangaude-Ulaya (2013: 673) define Ubuntu as "the capacity in an African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity, and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring."

What should be noted from the latter descriptions is the emphasis that these qualities relate to an African way of being. Tellingly, Mbiti (1990 [1969]) describes Ubuntu as "the African view of man". Similarly, Thaddeus Metz (20i7; 2021) and Mogobe Ramose (2002; 2015), who are regarded as key thinkers on the subject (Taylor, 2023) elaborate on the Africanness of Ubuntu. In the Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research, Metz (2021) explains that Ubuntu denotes humanness: "To have ubuntu is to be a person who is living a genuinely human way of life, whereas to lack ubuntu is to be missing human excellence or to live like an animal. It is common for black people indigenous to the African continent to believe that one's basic aim in life should be to exhibit ubuntu, … " (no page). Ramose (2015) adds that botho/hunhu/ubuntu (concepts expressed in African languages) reflect humanness, where "it means that to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them" (Ramose, 2015: 70).

The essence of these statements and definitions provided above is that Ubuntu is seen as distinctly African and that humanity and humaneness form an integral part of defining Ubuntu.

2.2. Humanness

The concept of "humanness" has been explored by various philosophers throughout history, often touching on what it means to be human, the qualities that define humanity, and the moral obligations we have as human beings. Some of the earliest contributions come from ancient philosophers like Aristotle, who emphasised the rational nature of humans as central to their humanness. For Aristotle, being human was about fulfilling one's potential through reason and virtuous action, a concept rooted in his notion of eudaimonia (flourishing or well-being) (Aristotle, 350 BCE in Kraut, 2023). Immanuel Kant's philosophy focused on human dignity and autonomy, arguing that humans are ends in themselves and should not be treated merely as means to an end. For Kant (1785), humanness involves the capacity for moral reasoning, where individuals act in accordance with moral laws derived from reason, a perspective that significantly influences contemporary understandings of human rights (Johnson & Cureton, 2024). Existentialists such as Sartre (1943) offered a different view, suggesting that humanness is not defined by inherent qualities but is instead created through individual choice and action. Sartre's concept of existence preceding essence emphasises that humans are not born with a predetermined nature, but rather create their own essence through their choices, actions, and responsibility (Reynolds & Renaudie, 2024). In more contemporary terms, philosophers like Nussbaum (1993) focus on capabilities as an integral aspect of humanness. The researcher suggests that human flourishing involves developing and exercising fundamental capabilities that allow individuals to function fully within society. It seems that philosophers focus on the individual's virtues when explaining humanness, and on virtues of individuals when interacting in their societies, but with little reference to the reciprocal elements embedded in Ubuntu.

2.3. The GLOBE study

In the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) study, humane orientation is one of the key cultural dimensions that affect individuals' behaviour (House et al., 2004), with the other elements being power distance, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, and performance orientation (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2004). In the GLOBE study, the definition of humanness is broader than the philosophical understanding of humanness, as described above. According to the GLOBE study, "humane orientation" refers to the degree to which a culture encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others (House et al., 2004). GLOBE highlights societal values related to compassion, tolerance, and concern for the well-

being of others as elements of humanness. The GLOBE study's definition goes beyond the individualist focus and embraces moral responsibilities toward one another as being part of a group, and the GLOBE definition is well aligned with Ubuntu, Eliastam (2015), Kamwangamalu (1999), Khomba and Kangaude-Ulaya (2013), and Letseka (2013), mentioned above.

2.4. Ubuntu, humanness and GLOBE study

The concepts of Ubuntu and the GLOBE study's humane orientation are well aligned, with both emphasising compassion, generosity, and the intrinsic value of communal relationships. Ubuntu stresses that one's humanity is realised through others, which resonates strongly with the GLOBE study's humane orientation, where fairness, kindness, and concern for the well-being of others are culturally valued traits (House et al., 2004). In contrast, traditional philosophers like Aristotle, Kant, and Sartre discuss humanness from different angles. For Aristotle, humanness is defined through rationality and virtuous action; for Kant, it revolves around autonomy and moral reasoning; and for Sartre, humanness is created through individual choice and responsibility (Kraut, 2023; Johnson & Cureton, 2024; Reynolds & Renaudie, 2024). These philosophical perspectives centre on the individual as a self-contained being whose humanness is shaped through personal virtues, autonomy, or existential choices, differing from Ubuntu and GLOBE's emphasis on interdependence and shared humanity. It should thus be noted that Ubuntu and humanness, as defined by the GLOBE study, are proxies, valuing communal care and kindness, and are contrasted with traditional philosophical views on humanness, which focus more on individual moral development or self-definition.

2.5. Humanness as a distinctly African concept

In the discussion of Ubuntu, it was emphasised that Ubuntu could be seen as humane orientation, and that societies, such as Africa, could be contrasted to societies with a lower humane orientation (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2004), were performance orientation, for example, may be more practised (Javidan et al., 2004). Such comparisons are widespread, and research fields such as cross-cultural psychology and global leadership are based on these comparisons (Bosson et al., 2021; Lansford, 2022; Wang et al., 2024). An African comparison with the Anglo-Saxon cluster is particularly relevant, given calls for decolonisation (Betts, 2012; Minga, 2021; Molefe, 2022) and critique that the scientific world is preoccupied with westernised, educated, industrialised, wealthy, and democratic societies (WEIRD) constructs, and that constructs and meaning should not be assumed to be universal (Dong & Dumas, 2020; Ludeke & Larsen, 2017; Spector et al., 2015), nor in Africa (Ndofirepi & Steyn, 2023; Steyn, 2023).

By specifying humanness, as used within the GLOBE study, as distinctly African, Mbigi and Maree (2005) and Metz (2020) profess that it may contribute to the understanding of Ubuntu from a typological perspective, where humanness is presented as a dominant way of life in Africa. It could be argued that since Ubuntu is presented as a prominent ideology in Africa, humane orientation should be a dominant practice among its citizens, more so than in any other geographical region. Given the aforementioned information, and considering the data available from the GLOBE study, two hypotheses were set:

1. Worldwide, humane orientation is equally displayed in practice. Alternative hypothesis: Humane orientation is practiced more in Africa.
2. All people from Africa have an equal inclination toward the practice of humane orientation. Alternative hypothesis: Humane orientation is practised differently among Africans.

These hypotheses will shed light on how African people practise a uniquely humane orientation, presented as a proxy for Ubuntu.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Design

Cross-sectional survey data, collected under the supervision of the Globe Coordinating Team, with R. J. House as principal investigator (House et al., 2004), was analysed. The data was presented by Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) in Chapter 18 (Humane orientation in societies, organisations, and leader attributes) of the GLOBE study.

3.2. Data collection

Data collection in the GLOBE study involved a multi-phase process of collecting quantitative survey data from 17 370 middle managers, across 951 organisations and 61 countries (House et al., 2004). At country level, carefully selected and well- trained country co-investigators collected data.

3.3. Measurement

GLOBE's Societal and Organisational Culture Questionnaire (SOCQ) was used to measure humane orientation. The SOCQ measures nine aspects of culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation. The focus of this study was humane orientation only, which reflects how societies enact kindness, generosity, and sensitivity toward others (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2004). SOCQ captures the "as is" (practices) and "should be" (values) aspects of humane orientation, and how these materialise in societies in general, as well as in organisations. Based on the limited data reported by Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) on some

of the aspects measured, this paper focused on societal practices of humane orientation only, the aspect most comprehensively reported on.

Sample items on humane orientated practices in societies, presented by Kabasakal and Bodur (2004: 571), are as follows: "In this society, people are generally [not at all concerned about others / very concerned about others]." "In this society, people are generally [not at all sensitive toward others / very sensitive toward others]." These practices are measured on a 7-point scale, where high scores are indicative of the presence of humane orientated practices in society.

3.4. Reliability and validity

Interrater correlations of .69 and a reliability estimate of .81 (based on the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula) for humane orientation (Gupta et al., 2004) reflect acceptable reliability. As far as validity is concerned, Gupta et al. (2004) report satisfactory construct validity for all the GLOBE surveys, with Hanges and Dickson (2004: 145) specifying that the scales developed were found to be aggregatable, unidimensional, and that "evidence for construct validity of the cultural scales was provided from several sources".

3.5. Analyses

The analyses conducted to assess the Africanness of humane orientation practices focused on reported mean scores, and in some cases the standard deviation (SD), when it was reported. The mean and SD for the total sample (N=61) are available (see Table 18.4a in Kabasakal and Bodur (2004)). Country-level data is also available (See Table 18.4b in Kabasakal and Bodur (2004)), but only mean scores and no SDs are presented. Some interpretable data is presented in Table 18.4b, where data is presented in the form of different bands, typical of a post facto test following an ANOVA test, where the mean in band A differs significantly from band B, B from C, and so forth. Lastly, data per cultural cluster on the prevalence of humane orientation practises was also available (see Table 18.4c in Kabasakal and Bodur (2004)). Here, mean scores and SDs are available.

Some data, presented in the abovementioned tables, can be interpreted directly to address the research questions. For example, should all African countries be in band A (as per table 18.4b), it should provide convincing evidence that humane orientation is dominant in Africa. In this case, the Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) table would be reproduced and aspects bolded / highlighted to ease interpretation.

The primary analysis done for the study involved calculating Cohen's d-values (d = Mean1-Mean2 / ((SD1 + SD2)/2) (Cohen, 1988) to determine if the means groups differed on a practical level. In cases where SDs were unavailable, the SDs from the relevant larger groups were used. Cohen's d-values around $d \approx 0.2$ suggest subtle but real differences. A medium effect is approximately $d \approx 0.5$, indicating a moderate, noticeable difference. A large effect is $d \approx 0.8$ or higher, reflecting a substantial and often practically significant difference (Cohen, 1988).

With regard to hypothesis 1 (worldwide, humane orientation is equally displayed in practice. Alternative hypothesis: Humane orientation is practised more in Africa), the following analysis was performed:

1. Country-level mean scores, as per Table 18.4b, were inspected to find out if African countries consistently had higher mean scores than most of the other countries. If all African countries are in the high band, band A, it should constitute convincing evidence that humane orientation is dominant in Africa.
2. To elevate the analysis beyond the mere inspection of a table, Cohen's d-test was performed to quantify the extent to which individual African countries differed from the mean of the rest of the world. As country-level SDs are not presented by Kabasakal and Bodur (2004), country-level SDs were replaced with the total group SD. As such, d was calculated with the following equation: d = MeanTotal-MeanCountry / SDTotal. Should African countries score significantly higher than the total mean, it would be indicative of humanness being a dominant philosophy in Africa.
3. In Table 18.4c, Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) provide means and SDs on the prevalence of humane orientation practises data per cultural cluster. Here, data on the Sub-Saharan Africa (S-SA) cluster, representing four of the six African counties, is reflected. Should inspection reveal that the S-SA cluster has the highest score, it could be claimed that humane orientated practices are typical of Africa.
4. To elevate the cultural cluster inspection to a quantitative level, three different Cohen's d-tests were performed. In the first case, the S-SA cluster was contrasted with the world's mean, the total sample. All the necessary data was available to calculate Cohen's-d-values. Also, a comparison between S-SA and the Anglo-Saxon cluster was made, as Africa is often contrasted with the Anglo-Saxon part of the West. Here, all data was available to conduct the analysis. Thirdly, the means of indigenous people of South Africa (Blacks of South Africa, which forms part of S-SA, as labelled by Kabasakal and Bodur (2004)) were compared with those of Whites in South Africa (labelled by Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) as belonging to the Anglo-Saxon cultural cluster). As no SD on country level is provided, the SD of S-SA was used for the Black sample, and the Anglo-Saxon SD for the White sample. Should the difference be practically

significant, it would be analysed as indicative of the Africanness of humane orientation, compared to the Anglo-Saxon group.

With regard to hypothesis 2 (All people from Africa have an equal inclination toward the practice of humane orientation. Alternative hypothesis: Humane orientation is practised differently among Africans) ,the following analyses were performed:

1. Inspection of the country-level mean scores, as per Table 18.4b, could point out the uniformity of the endorsement of humane orientation. Should the African countries be clustered together, with mean scores not far apart, it would provide evidence that humane orientation is practised similarly across Africa.
2. To elevate the analysis beyond the mere inspection of a table, Cohen's d-test was performed by comparing individual African countries with the mean of the rest of the world. Should the d-values of the African countries be similar, it would indicate that humanness is practised uniformly across Africa.
3. As Ubuntu is often presented as an S-SA construct, it could be expected that S-SA countries have scores similar to those of the S-SA cluster on humane orientation. Here, calculating Cohen's d-values could be productive. Small differences in d-values would be an indication of uniformity.

Considering the analyses presented above, multiple results could be considered when dealing with the hypotheses, contributing to the rigour of this study.

3.6. Ethical considerations

The GLOBE study's results are open to all interested parties, and the authors of this paper cite and reference this document extensively (see House et al., 2004). No data was collected specific to this research, and existing data from the GLOBE study was analysed. At university level, the use of this secondary data was approved by the local ethics committee: 2022_SBL_AC_001_SD.

4. Results

The results are presented below, first focusing on sampling and the psychometric matters, descriptive statistics, and then on the results related to the set hypotheses.

4.1. Sample

In total 17 370 middle managers (1 943 from phase 1 and 15 427 from phase 2), across 951 organisations, and 62 countries (Hanges, 2004).

4.2. Reliability and validity

Reliability data validity information is reported under the heading measurement, and this was satisfactory.

4.3. Descriptive statistics

The mean scores for humane orientated practices are presented in Table 1, staring with the country with the highest mean score (top left) and ending with the country with the lowest mean score (bottom right). The countries are grouped into bands, where each band forms a distinct group.

Table 1: Humane orientation practices mean scores – per country

Band A		Band B		Band C		Band C	
Country	Mean	Country	Mean	Country	Mean	Country	Mean
Zambia	5.23	Indonesia	4.69	U.S.A.	4.17	Italy	3.63
Philippines	5.12	Ecuador	4.65	Taiwan	4.11	Poland	3.61
Ireland	4.96	Albania	4.64	Sweden	4.10	Switzerland	3.60
Malysia	4.87	India	4.57	**Nigeria**	4.10	**South Africa**[2]	3.49
Thailand	4.81	Kuwait	4.52	Israel	4.10	Singapore	3.49
Egypt	4.73	Canada	4.49	Bolivia	4.05	Germany[3]	3.40
		Zimbabwe	4.45	Kazakhstan	3.99	France	3.40
		Denmark	4.44	Argentina	3.99	Hungary	3.35
		Qatar	4.42	Mexico	3.98	Greece	3.34
		Costa Rica	4.39	Finland	3.96	Spain	3.32
		China	4.36	**Namibia**	3.96	Germany[4]	3.18
		South Africa[1]	4.34	Turkey	3.94		
		New Zealand	4.32	Russia	3.94		
		Japan	4.30	Switzerland	3.93		
		Australia	4.28	Portugal	3.91		
		Venezuela	4.25	Hong Kong	3.90		
		Iran	4.23	Guatemala	3.89		
		Morocco	4.19	Netherlands	3.86		
		Georgia	4.18	South Koria	3.81		
				Slovenia	3.79		
				Austria	3.72		
				Colombia	3.72		

	England	3.72
	El Salvador	3.71
	Brazil	3.66

Source: Adapted from Kabasakal and Bodur (2004). Note: Humane orientated practices were measured on a 7-point scale. [1] South Africa (Black sample), [2] South Africa (White sample), [3] Germany (East), [4] Germany (West). African countries are **bolded**, and Sub-Saharan African countries **bolded and underlined**.

Table 1 provides information on hypothesis 1. It can be observed from the table that more African countries are in the top two bands than in the lower two bands. However, not all African countries are in the top band. The wide spread of countries does not provide convincing evidence of the uniqueness of human orientation in Africa.

The argument could be quantified if the mean scores of the individual African countries are compared to the rest of the world. Details on the humane orientation practices in societies for the total sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary statistics for humane orientation practice

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Div.	Min.	Max.
Society practices	61	4.09	.74	3.18	5.23

Source: Adapted from Kabasakal and Bodur (2004).

4.4. Analyses of mean differences

The individual African countries' means can now be compared to that of the global mean, and the results do the d-tests are resented in Table 3. In this case, the total sample SD was used as the SD for the individual countries, as Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) do not report SDs per country. These results are presented in Table 3, with d = $Mean^{Total}$-$Mean^{Country}$ / (SD^{Total}+$Std.Div^{Total}$)/2.

Table 3: Comparison of mean scores

Country	Mean score	Cohen d	Effect
Zambia	5.23	1.54	Large effect
Egypt	4.73	0.86	Large effect
Zimbabwe	4.45	0.48	Moderate effect
South Africa [1]	4.34	0.33	Subtle effect
Morocco	4.19	0.13	Negatable effect
Nigeria	4.10	0.01	Negatable effect
Namibia	3.96	-0.17	Negatable effect
South Africa [2]	3.49	-0.81	Large effect

Note: $Mean^{Total}$=4.09; SD^{Total}=.74. [1] South Africa (Black sample), [2] South Africa (White sample).

Again, referring to hypothesis 1, while some of the listed African countries score high on humane orientation, it is not convincing from the results to suggest that African countries score highest on humane orientation. It is also important to note that Ubuntu is frequently presented as a phenomenon endemic to Southern Africa, and Egypt is geographically far from that region. In fact, Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) place Egypt and Morocco in the Middle Eastern cultural cluster.

Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) also provide data on humane orientated practices per cultural clusters, and these are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Humane orientate practices per cultural clusters

Cultural cluster	Mean	Std. Div	Rank
Anglo: United States, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa (white sample), New Zealand (N=7)	4.20	.49	4
Latin Europe: France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland (French- and Italian-speaking regions).	3.71	.32	9
Nordic Europe: Denmark, Finland, Sweden (N=3)	4.17	.25	5
Germanic Europe: Austria, Germany (former East and West), Netherlands, Switzerland (German-speaking regions) (N=5)	3.55	.27	10
Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Bolivia (N=10)	4.03	.32	6
Eastern Europe: Greece, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Slovenia (N=8)	3.85	.44	8
S-SA: Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Nigeria, South Africa (Black sample) (N=5)	4.42	.49	2
Middle East: Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Kuwait, Qatar (N=5)	4.36	.30	3
Confucian Asia: China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan (N=6)	3.99	.33	7
Southern Asia: India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand (N=6)	4.71	.30	1

Source: Adapted from Kabasakal and Bodur (2004). Note: N=61; Though counterintuitive, Iran forms part of the Southern Asian cluster (Gupta & Hanges, 2004).

Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) report statistically significant differences in practice scores across cultural clusters. In terms of this study, the S-SA scores were important, with a mean score of 4.42 and an SD of .49. This is the second-highest score, following Southern Asia. Looking at Table 4, it becomes clear that S-SA has the second-highest mean. Humane orientation is thus a feature in S-SA societies, but not the highest among all cultural clusters. This provides support for not rejection of the null hypothesis.

Using the data in Table 4, and the overall mean score reported in Table 2, the Cohen's d-value (d = $Mean^{Total}$-$Mean^{S\text{-}SA}$ / ((SD^{Total}+$SD^{S\text{-}SA}$)/2) = (4.09-4.42 / (.74+.49)/2) = .53, which indicates a moderate effect (Cohen, 1988).

S-SA scored moderately higher than the world mean. The result provides little support for the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Next, the S-SA and Anglo-Saxon cluster were compared. The S-SA cluster mean was 4.42 while that of the Anglo cluster was 4.20. Thus, d = 4.42-4.20 / (.49+.49)/2) = .48, which indicates a moderate effect (Cohen, 1988). Thus, compared to the Anglo-Saxon cluster, S-SA is moderately more humane orientated.

The last calculation pertaining to hypothesis 1 was to calculate Cohen's d-values comparing Blacks in South Africa to Whites in South Africa. Here, d = $Mean^{BlackSoutAfricans}$-$Mean^{WhiteSouthAfricans}$ / ((SD^{S-SA} +SD^{Anglo})/2), which translates to 4.34-3.49 / (.49+.49)/2) = 1.7, which is considered a large effect. Compared to White South Africans, Blacks are, therefore, significantly more humane orientated.

Next to be addressed is hypothesis 2, suggesting that "All people from Africa have an equal inclination toward the practice of humane orientation". Tables 1 and 3 (above) and 5 (below) are relevant to address this hypothesis.

From Table 1, it can be observed that African countries are captured in Bands A, B, C, and D, thus across all bands. This provides sufficient evidence that humane orientation is not practised uniformly across Africa. The results presented in Table 3 affirm the widespread mean scores on humane orientation. The large differences from the total mean scores provide little evidence that the humane orientation is practised uniformly across Africa.

However, should we assume that Ubuntu is unique to S-SA, there may be no significant difference in humane orientated practices across these countries. The odds of uniformity across S-SA compared to Africa at large (including Egypt and Morocco) are better. Again, Cohen's d-values were calculated using the mean scores from Table 1 for country-level scores, and the SD from the S-SA data presented in Table 4. Thus, d = $Mean^{S-SA}$-$Mean^{Country}$ / (SD^{S-SA}+ SD^{S-SA})/2.

However, Kabasakal and Bodur (2004) provide interesting information on humane orientated practices in different bands. The bands represent distinct groups, with Band A being high, Band B above average, C below average and D representing the group with the lowest scores. The results from Kabasakal and Bodur (2004), which include mean scores for the S-SA countries, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Sub-Saharan Africa scores on practices of humane orientation

Country	Mean score	Cohen d	Effect
Zambia	5.23	1.65	Large effect
Zimbabwe	4.45	0.06	Moderate effect
South Africa (Black sample)	4.34	-0.16	Negatable effect
Nigeria	4.10	-0.65	Moderate effect
Namibia	3.96	-0.93	Large effect

Note: $Mean^{S-SA}$=4.42; SD^{S-SA} =.49. The South African White sample was excluded from the analysis, as it is placed in the Anglo-Saxon cluster by Gupta and Hanges (Gupta & Hanges, 2004).

Table 5 shows that humane orientation practices are notably higher in Zambia, with a large effect size, whilst Zimbabwe's score shows a moderately large effect. The South African Black score was not significantly different from that of the S-SA mean. The Namibian score was practically significantly lower than the rest of S-SA, while that of the Nigerians was moderately lower. The results provided in Table 5 support the rejection of the null hypothesis.

5. Discussion

The study explored the prevalence of humane orientation on the African continent, assuming that humane orientation, as measured by the GLOBE study, serves as a proxy for Ubuntu. The literature review demonstrated that, when considering the definitions provided by Eliastam (2015), Kamwangamalu (1999), Khomba and Kangaude-Ulaya (2013), and Letseka (2013), the concepts are highly similar. However, humane orientation represents only one aspect of Ubuntu; Ubuntu encompasses much more than mere humane orientation.

The methodology relied on cross-sectional survey data from the GLOBE study, using SOCQ as the measurement tool for assessing humane orientation. Based on the sample items, humane orientation aligns well with Ubuntu, which is indicative of face validity. Gupta et al. (2004) and Hanges and Dickson (2004) reported satisfactory reliability and extensive evidence of (cross-cultural) validity. Thus, the measurement was considered both valid and reliable. The GLOBE study remains one of the most cited studies on cross-cultural matters. It is highly influential, with more than 15 760 citations (Google Scholar, 2024), reflecting researchers' trust in the instruments used.

Data was collected from 17 370 middle managers across 951 organisations in 61 countries (House et al., 2004). The large sample size enabled meaningful cross-country comparisons. Additionally, six African countries and an S-SA cultural cluster (comprising four countries) were included, allowing for comparisons between Africa and the rest of the world. However, the study excluded 48 African countries, limiting its representativeness for the entire continent.

The data analysis involved examining the reported means, ranking African countries, and analysing the results related to the S-SA cultural cluster. These findings were used to draw conclusions about the prominence of humane orientation in Africa relative to the rest of the world, particularly in comparison to the Anglo-Saxon cluster. Cohen's d-tests complemented this analysis to quantify the observed differences.

Regarding Hypothesis 1 (Worldwide, humane orientation is equally displayed in practice. Alternative hypothesis: Humane orientation is practised more in Africa), the null hypothesis should be rejected. However,

the alternative hypothesis is also not fully supported. While there is considerable variation in humane orientation globally, Africa is not the leading region in this regard. African countries appear scattered across Table 1, rather than ranking consistently at the top. Moreover, the Cohen's d-values in Table 3 indicate inconsistent differences between Africa and the rest of the world. Notably, Egypt – typically associated with the Middle East – ranked high in humane orientation.

Examining cultural clusters, S-SA ranked second-highest, following Southern Asia (Table 5). While Ubuntu would suggest a strong humane orientation in African countries, the aggregated S-SA scores did not position Africa as the dominant region in this regard. Again, the Cohen's d-test showed a moderate difference between S-SA and the rest of the world. Table 4 further confirms that S-SA has the second-highest mean score for humane orientation. While humane orientation is a defining feature of S-SA societies, it is not the highest among all cultural clusters. These findings support the rejection of the general null hypothesis but do not confirm the alternative hypothesis that Africa is dominant in this area. The Cohen's d-test reinforced this conclusion. However, not being the highest does not denounce the fact that humanness is important in Africa. It forms the second-highest cluster, but is not unique. These findings contradict existing literature that describes Ubuntu as an exclusively African framework for understanding behaviour (Mbigi & Maree, 2005; Metz, 2021; Nkomo, 2011).

When comparing Africa to the Anglo-Saxon cluster (a modified hypothesis 1), humane orientation was more prevalent in Africa. The S-SA cluster ranked higher, and the Cohen's d-value also indicated a significant difference between S-SA and the Anglo-Saxon cluster. Thus, in comparison with WEIRD societies, characteristic of Anglo-Saxon countries, Africa emerges as a stronghold of humane orientation – the proxy for Ubuntu.

Compared to the Anglo-Saxon cluster, Africa exhibits a stronger orientation toward humane values.
The second hypothesis addressed the universality of humane orientation across Africa (All people from Africa have an equal inclination toward the practice of humane orientation. Alternative hypothesis: Humane orientation is practiced differently among Africans). The results confirmed that humane orientation practices vary significantly across African countries and even within the S-SA region. Africans are not uniform in their practice of humane orientation, just as the stereotype of Africa's uniformity has long been debunked (Faloyin, 2022; Lansford, 2022; Odimegwu & Adewoyin, 2022). Therefore, while Africans – including this author – acknowledge these differences, academics, politicians, and philosophers should be careful in portraying Africans as sharing a singular exemplary attribute, such as the humane orientation or Ubuntu.

6. Conclusion

The study supports the argument that humane orientation, the proxy to Ubuntu, is prevalent in African cultures, more than in most other regions. While the results highlight humane orientation as central to African identity, they also reveal that these practices are not exclusive to Africa, as even higher scores are found in Southern Asia. Africa's indigenous populations exhibit higher humane orientation scores compared to Western populations, as reported in earlier studies (Gade, 2012; Kamwangamalu, 1999). This research affirms that the notion of humane orientation is geographically or culturally specific and suggests that it manifests differently across various countries and cultural clusters (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2004). However, despite the geographical link with humane orientation, large diversity was prevalent in Africa, and even in S-SA.

Humane orientation (Ubuntu) is not unique to Africa, nor is it uniformly practised across Africa.

The study has several limitations, including its reliance on secondary GLOBE data and the fact that some data – particularly standard deviations – had to be replaced with aggregated scores, which may have affected the accuracy of the calculations. The scope of the available data was also limited, as only six out of 54 African countries were included. Furthermore, the GLOBE team has acknowledged potential biases in their methodologies (House et al., 2004), which should be acknowledged.

Perhaps the most significant limitation is the use of humane orientation as a proxy for Ubuntu. This article focused on humanness as an indicator of Ubuntu. However, in the GLOBE study several possible proxies, such as institutional collectivism (which measures the degree to which collective distribution of resources and collective action are encouraged and rewarded (Gelfand et al., 2004)), could also be seen as a better / alternative proxy to Ubuntu. Along similar lines, Terblanché-Greeff and Nel (2023) call for a nuanced understanding of cultural values, noting that Ubuntu can be interpreted as a context-specific expression of collectivism in South Africa. In this light, a similarly nuanced interpretation of African humaneness may also be valuable.

The study may also be criticised for relying on data from 2004. However, given the uniqueness and also the richness of the dataset, and the absence of similar studies since, this data remains a valuable resource. Should cultural values and practices change slowly, which is sometimes true (Inglehart & Baker, 2000), the results could still be relevant today. However, if this assumption proves incorrect, the study may instead be regarded as a historical reflection, providing insights from a unique and comprehensive dataset.

The collection of new data using the GLOBE instruments to provide up-to-date findings is recommended. Present values and behaviours could then be studied, as well as comparisons made to what was prevalent in the past. However, this would be a very expensive endeavour, requiring substantial funding. This article focused on humanness as an indicator of Ubuntu. Further investigations could use multiple indicators of Ubuntu, including institutional collectivism as conceptualised in the GLOBE study, to offer a more complex and nuanced understanding of Ubuntu and its uniquely African nature.

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