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## **Cultivating greater self-confidence in African management research**

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**ABSTRACT**

Although strategic management has taken root in many African organisations, much of the existing body of African management research offers little insight into the current state of knowledge and direction in terms of Africa finding its voice within the mainstream research. We draw on a review of the literature to develop a conceptual framework for classifying the contributions in African management research. The conceptual model captures the indigenous (intra-Africa) and inter-Africa dimension of macro-strategy and organisational behaviour/human resource research. The accumulated body of research indicates a sign of growing self-confidence in African management research which must be maintained and revitalised. The paper contributes to the literature by developing a unified conceptual model which captures both the indigenous and comparative dimensions of management research. A number of fruitful avenues for future research have been advanced.

**Keywords:** Africa; emerging economies; African management research; sub-Saharan Africa

## **1 Introduction**

Since the signing of the Berlin Act (1885) which culminated in the “scramble for Africa”, competition for resources, influence, capabilities and territory has continued unabated across the continent (Carmody, 2011; Uzoigwe, 1984). Interestingly enough, accompanying this has been growing competition for resources not only between nations, but also between local and foreign companies (Carmody, 2011; Pakenham, 1991). By the turn of the 21st century, there was another kind of competition for resources and influence between the traditional forces of the West and emerging forces from the East with China and India spearheading the quest for natural resources and raw materials (Brautigam, 2009). Indeed, China has emerged as a global industrial powerhouse and an engine for many emerging economies including those in Africa (Broadman, 2007; Carmody and Owusu, 2007; Ramamurti & Singh, 2009; Hanusch, 2012; Yin & Vaschetto, 2011). Trade between China and African nations grew from \$1bn in 1980 to \$3bn in 1995 to \$9.4 billion in 2000 and then to around \$114 billion by 2010 (Bremmer, 2012; Morgan, 2008; Wonacott, 2011). By 2015, the total trade had surged to \$172bn (Pilling and Klasa, 2017). This evolution of “strategy” is important because the changing environment has also been matched by burgeoning streams of African management research across the social science disciplines.

In the midst of these recent developments has been a growing scholarly interest in not only strategic management in Africa but also general management (see George, Corbishley, Khayesi, Haas & Tihanyi, 2016a; Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013). Although the existing body of research continues to expand, there remains a lack of a comprehensive framework to account for the various dynamics of the existing literature and past accomplishments. The scattered nature of the existing body of African management research has obscured the past progresses and future research direction remains uncertain (Amankwah-Amoah, 2016). The chief purpose of this paper is to draw on a review of the

literature to develop a multidimensional framework of African management research. We develop a conceptual model towards enhancing the voice of African management research within the mainstream management literature.

The paper extends prior scholarly works in the following respects. First, in spite of growing body of research on the business environment in Africa (e.g. Ofori-Dankwa & Julian, 2013; Julian and Ofori-Dankwa, 2013), there remains a dearth of integrated conceptual frameworks to account for the dynamics and pattern of the current body of research. In this direction, we chart the evolution of management and develop an integrated framework. Second, building on prior scholarly works that have emphasised a need to chart a new direction and improve the relevance and rigour of African management research (George, 2015; Zoogah & Zoogah, 2014), we utilise a review of the literature to develop a conceptual framework which sheds light on the indigenous (intra-Africa) and inter-Africa dimension of macro-strategy and organisational behaviour (OB)/human resource (HR) research. In this direction, we outline the linkages in the current streams of research and how they can be harnessed to enhance our understanding of African management research. Third, this article adds voice to the growing body of indigenous management research that has demonstrated that national differences, culture and traditions matter in explaining attributes of business and firm performance (Holtbrügge, 2013; Jackson, 2013; Leung, 2012). Indeed, advancing indigenous management research may help account for some of the conflicting results of studies in strategic management research (Harrison et al., 2015).

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Following a brief overview of the evolution of business management in Africa, we then develop a conceptual framework which is then utilised to outline the current body of research. In subsequent sections, we explore how we can enhance the confidence in

and relevance of strategy research in Africa. The implications of the analysis for theory and directions for future research are then examined.

## **2 The evolution of management and strategy in Africa**

Although there are different schools of thought in the field of strategic management (Chandler, 1962; Mintzberg, 1979; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998; for a detailed review of the literature, see Baraldi et al., 2007), the section seeks to provide a general overview of the evolution in the African setting. One of the key characteristics that distinguish Africa and its nations from other continents and nations is the institutions (Zoogah, Peng & Woldu, 2015; Ofori-Dankwa & Julian, 2013; Julian & Ofori-Dankwa, 2013). Institutions are commonly referred to as “rules of the game in a society” (North, 1990, p. 3). By institutions, we are referring to formal elements such as political systems (e.g. democracy, socialism and totalitarianism), legal systems and economic systems (Peng, 2002; 2014a). A force more potent which permeates society and influences human behaviour is the informal institutions, which includes culture, norms and ethics (Acquaah, 2007, 2012; Jackson, 2004; Zoogah et al., 2015). Although strategic management as a young social science discipline has gathered momentum and widened in scope since the formal inception in the late 1970s (Boyd, Finkelstein & Gove, 2005; Ketchen, Boyd & Bergh, 2008), principles in terms of long-term focus and mobilising resources and expertise to outwit rivals or enemies have always been the root of African history, traditions and cultures (see also Handley, 2008). Indeed, successes in tribal wars were often partly predicated on being able to assemble mobile and highly skilled individuals.

To an extent, strategy is not new in the African context. Since Kiggundu (1996) observed that strategic management was hardly dawning in the Third World not only has an increasing number of private firms embraced and embedded strategic management in their principles but also more public

organisations across the continent have done the same. In the mid-1990s, Kiggundu (1996) also observed that much of the effort to address performance problems tended to be piecemeal and often failed to yield the desired improved performance. No longer can management in the developing world be characterised by “reactive crisis and firefighting behaviour” (Kiggundu, 1996). More strategic thinking and long-term vision must be articulated by firms, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations (see Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013; Zoogah & Zoogah, 2014). However, there is no doubt that there are still pockets of the old “reactive crisis and firefighting behaviour” (Kiggundu, 1989).

Nevertheless, there is an accumulating body of research which has demonstrated that many organisations have adopted a strategic management approach in areas such as acquisitions, mergers, alliances, human resources and diversification. A number of factors accounted for the slow adoption of strategic management principles in modern organisations. First, the protection offered by the state in many industries such as aviation, water, gas and electricity prior the 1980s’ Economic Recovery Programme popularly known as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) created conditions where there was little or no incentive for firms to seek to improve their human capital and strategic management skills (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2014a). Markets were carved out for state-owned enterprises. Backed by the protection, they were able to raise prices to counteract any financial strain. Indeed, in many of these sectors competitive advantage was anchored in government support, provision of subsidies and debt relief. There were few market-driven incentives for firms to seek to improve their competitiveness. Consequently, managers operating in such sectors or regions were under pressure to focus on the “here-and-now” (Kiggundu, 1989, 1996).

By focusing more on operational issues, strategic management issues took a back seat and further took on a diminished role with organisations. In many state-owned organisations, managers and

executives often acquire their position through political affiliation in the same way their tenures are predicated on this and external political considerations (Kiggundu, 1989, 1996). As such, these individuals are often unlikely “to concentrate on long-term strategic needs of the organisation and more likely to concentrate on appeasing current political interests” (Kiggundu, 1996, p. 1421). In countries such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Uganda (Kiggundu, 1991) such an approach decouples performance from rewards and incentives, which are essential pillars of strategy and strategic formulations. There is little room to reward excellent performance and discourage poor performers (Kiggundu, 1996). Although many have questioned the merit of the SAP in the 1980s, it helped to shepherd in a more liberal environment in much of sub-Saharan Africa. When the business and competitive environment is assumed to be stable and unchanging, the quest for new solutions becomes less relevant. In the vacuum of strategising and business analysis, guesswork becomes more prominent in organisational decision making.

For many indigenous firms, the influx of many eastern multinationals in the late 20th century and early 21st century backed by financial muscle has gradually eroded their traditional sources of sustained competitive advantage and therefore triggered new strategic responses (Akorsu & Cooke, 2011; Cooke, 2014). Accompanying these new sources of competition has been a change in the competitive dynamics, with some firms being forced to reduce their reliance on the state for protection from competition to seek new resources and capabilities to compete for and defend their competitive advantage (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2014a, 2016).

Facing the new waves of multinationals on the continent is the challenge for firms in building their competitive advantage or leveraging their advantage in other markets to strengthen their market position (Cooke, 2014). As the forces of free market and competition for resources continues to advance in many African nations and territories, it will become increasingly necessary for firms to

explore new ways to gain competitive advantage and for governments and non-governmental organisations to seek to improve service provision and delivery. The competition for scarce resources in the 21st century has driven home the need for firms to remain competitive to ensure their long-term survival. Indeed, the increasing investment by emerging markets and developed countries' multinationals has further engendered scholarly interest of firms and business strategy in Africa (see George, 2015; George et al., 2016a).

A new era has emerged in which quality human capital has emerged as competitive weapons not only for companies but also nations. These have prompted governments to explore new ways of powering the forces of innovation and economic development through human capital development (Debrah & Ofori, 2005, 2006). Although African countries are developing and business activities are flourishing, the perception that somehow the continent was closed for business or is still closed for business is not eroding fast enough to ignite and attract more research (Jackson, 2004). These changing dynamics of the competitive environment in many industries have often been overlooked not only by African scholars but also scholars in mainstream strategy literature.

### **3 Towards a typology of African management research**

To develop a conceptual model, we start with the premise that conceptualisation is an essential element in distinguishing between intra- and inter-African research. Scholars have recognised that contextualisation matters in business and management research (Whetten, 2002). Contextualisation also means recognising the value of both indigenous and comparative research. In order to advance knowledge on African management, both indigenous research and comparative research are essential. By indigenous research, we are referring to “any study on a unique local phenomenon or a unique



element of any local phenomenon from a local (native as emic) perspective to explore its local implications, and, if possible, its global implications as well” (Li, 2012, pp. 849–972).

Indigenous research can be construed as encompassing an indigenous phenomenon or issue (Whetten, 2009), or context-specific factors (Tsui, 2006). Indigenous research has often been applied to challenge or help assess the generalisability of widely utilised theoretical lenses in management research (Holtbrügge, 2013; Li, 2012). By comparative research, we are referring to studies that attempt to compare context-specific knowledge with findings from outside that territory of scope (Meyer, 2006). It should be noted that comparative research entails cross-national comparisons of business and management practices. In other words, such studies attempt to provide a better understanding of specific context by exploring the applicability of existing theoretical models (Meyer, 2006).

In order to illustrate the dynamics and African management research, we develop a conceptual framework which captures both the inter-Africa and intra-Africa dimensions of research (see Figure 1). Intra-African studies are studies that focus on the 54 nations in Africa. There are aspects of comparative studies between countries. Inter-African studies are studies that are comparative in nature. This entails samples from an African country or countries compared with nations from other continents. To develop a conceptual model of African management research, we identified the inter-Africa and intra-Africa dimensions of research as key pillars.

Building on past studies on emerging market contexts such as Meyer (2006), and Bruton and Lau (2008), we also employed micro-OB/HR research (e.g. group and team studies, individual differences, etc.) and macro-strategy research (joint ventures and alliances; network and business groups; market entry strategies, etc.). Crossing these dimensions led to the 2 x 2 matrix of Afro-

management research. Building on this, we developed a four-quadrant framework which highlights different bodies of research and how they have evolved, as demonstrated in Figure 1. By organisational behaviour (OB), we are referring to the “study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behaviour within organizations, for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization’s effectiveness” (Robbins and Judge, 2013, p. 10). Micro OB/HR research encompasses issues such as talent management, staffing, leadership, trust, attitudes and personality (Bruton and Lau, 2008).

Strategy is broadly defined as “the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals” (Chandler, 1962, p. 13). Broadly speaking, strategy revolves around the approaches inherent in gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Rothaermel, 2014; Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2013). There are broadly three levels of strategy, i.e. corporate, business and functional levels (see Rothaermel, 2014). Corporate level encompasses decision making by the management including the CEO and senior executives. Decisions include market-entry strategies such as diversification, strategic alliances and acquisitions. The business level includes the strategic choice of generic strategy (cost leadership, differentiation, focus) and the benefits and costs of first-mover advantages. Often an enterprise participating in multiple businesses will have different business strategies. Functional level activities typically are directed at improving the effectiveness of functional operations within a company such as manufacturing, materials management, human resources, marketing and operations management (see Hitt et al., 2013). It also entails competitive advantage, competitive parity and competitive disadvantage (see also Rothaermel, 2014; Hitt et al., 2013). To an extent this helps to explain how and why some firms gain or lose their competitive edge.

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**Insert Figure 1 about here**  
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### **3.1 Quadrant I: Indigenous (intra-Africa) research in OB/HR**

Quadrant I includes studies that focus specifically on the local context or a local phenomenon in the intra-Africa setting. The past two decades or so have witnessed a growing body of research on the array of HR/OB issues in Africa including high-performance work systems (Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu & Otaye, 2012, 2016), talent management and skills formation (Debrah and Ofori, 2005, 2006), underperforming workers in countries such as Nigeria and Ghana (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2016), managing in different ethnic groups, industrial skills development policies, diversity management, job-related issues and employment relations, policies and legislation, and people-management techniques (see Appendix 1 for further details).

On intra-Africa organisational psychology, studies have explored areas such as high-performance work systems (e.g. Aryee et al., 2012, 2016), effectiveness of training for customer service (Lee, 2012) and work motivation in South Africa (Orpen and Nkohande, 1977). Recently, the introduction of indigenous concepts has gained much currency in the literature, for instance scholars have introduced indigenous concepts such as Indaba (Newenham-Kahindi, 2009) and Ubuntu (Mangaliso, 2001; Sarpong et al., 2016) into the vocabulary of scholars. Indeed, these studies have suggested that firms could improve their performance, leadership and ability to outwit rivals by creating work environments which reflect these indigenous principles and “ways of doing things” (Mangaliso, 2001).

A number of studies have explored the dynamics and manifestation of these in managers’ behaviour (see also Selmier, Newenham-Kahindi & Oh, 2014). These are signs of a growing recognition among

scholars that a better understanding of Africa may require exploring the effects of local institutions such as norms and culture rather than blind replication of western developed concepts.

### **3.2 Quadrant II: Indigenous (intra-Africa) research in macro-strategy**

In tandem with the growing body of research on strategy in Africa is the broadening scope of studies. Prior to the 2000s, studies concentrated mainly on issues such as environmental scanning (e.g. Sawyerr, 1993) and divestment (e.g. Meznar et al., 1994; Wright & Ferris, 1997; McWilliams & Siegel, 1997; Meznar et al., 1998). On the intra-Africa segment under a wider umbrella of business environment/policy, studies have focused on areas and settings such as environmental scanning activities in Nigeria (Sawyerr, 1993), effects of liberalisation on SMEs in Ghana (Tagoe et al., 2005), effectiveness of government policies (Lemaire, 1979), and the effects and dynamics of Nigeria's proposed exit from OPEC (Fubara, 1986b).

Intra-African research has concentrated on strategic policy formulation issues such as strategic decision effectiveness in Egypt (e.g. Elbanna & Child, 2007a, 2007b), strategy making in South Africa (Maritz et al., 2011), strategic implementation of social responsibility policies (Kapelus, 2002), strategic planning of manufacturing firms in Ghana (Yusuf & Saffu, 2005), corporate social policy processes in sub-Saharan Africa (Pratt, 1991), marketing strategies of fashion retailers in South Africa (Radder, 1996), and strategic adaptation of business concepts in South Africa (Morris and Zahra, 2000). Related to this is a stream of research on corporate divestment focusing specifically on the effect of corporate divestment from South Africa (Meznar et al., 1994; Wright & Ferris, 1997; McWilliams & Siegel, 1997; Meznar et al., 1998; Lansing & Kurvillla, 1988; Bond, 1988; Malone & Goodin, 1997), ethical aspects of divestment (di Norcia, 1989), and the role of divestment activist groups in South Africa and Sudan (Westermann-Behaylo, 2010). Under a wider

umbrella of corporate social responsibility studies have focused on an array of issues as summarised in Appendix 1.

Studies on market entry mode decisions have focused on areas and settings such as mergers and acquisitions and their outcomes (Gomes et al., 2012), international joint ventures in Ghana (Boateng & Glaister, 2003), institutional drivers and inhibitors of partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa (Bitzer & Glasbergen, 2010), cross-sector partnerships in South Africa and Zambia (Rein & Stott, 2009), and strategy for technological acquisition in Nigeria (Fubara, 1986a). One recent study using a sample of 1,490 African firms demonstrated that improvements in factors such as location advantages, national governance quality and stock market development had positive effects on the volume of M&A activity (Tunyi & Ntim, 2016).

### **3.3 Entrepreneurship and innovation**

Over the last two decades or so, research on African development and barriers to economic development and entrepreneurial development have typically emphasised the effects of government bureaucracy, and the lack of effective institutions such as governance and political systems to support the functioning of markets (Acquaah, 2007, 2012). Overarching much of the scholarly works in the entrepreneurship domain is the increasing recognition that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial development can help foster not only economic development but also poverty alleviation and sources of gainful employment (see Kiggundu, 2002; George, Kotha, Parikh, Alnuaimi & Bahaj, 2016).

A growing body of research has shown that market-based organisations can play a pivotal role in fostering indigenous innovations as well as addressing societal concernment or challenges. Here some recent studies have explored the role of private firms in poverty alleviation efforts, scaling-up solar technologies and in combating environmental pollution across the continent. A line of inquiry

has focused mainly on business failures in the African context highlighting issues such as why companies fail, how business failure occurs and what entrepreneurs and companies can learn from other business failures (Amankwah-Amoah, 2014; Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2010, 2014a). In these areas, studies have employed large organisation such as Air Afrique, Ghana Airways and Nigeria Airways to shed light on business failures (Amankwah-Amoah, 2015). In a broader sense, however, business failures in this context have been attributed to external factors such as competition and liberalisation, and internal factors such as inferior resources, lack of skilled personnel and lack of business strategy, which operate in combination to precipitate large business failure (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2010, 2014a). On small businesses, studies have employed the experience of serial entrepreneurs to demonstrate how failure can shape the dynamics of successive entrepreneurial engagement (e.g. Amankwah-Amoah, Boso & Antwi-Agyei, 2016). One of the take-away messages from these streams of research is the suggestion that the history of entrepreneurs in failed ventures has effects in subsequent venture.

### **3.4 Quadrant III: Inter-Africa comparative research in OB/HR**

In recent years, a number of articles in this category have explored the effects of emerging-market multinationals' activities in Africa. Studies in this inter-Africa HR issues category have mainly focused on areas and settings such as employment reform in Ghana, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda and the UK (e.g. McCourt, 2001), workplace discrimination in Canada and South Africa (e.g. Jain et al., 2012), employee ownership in the Afro-Asian context (e.g. Wright et al., 2000), effects of Chinese and Indian investments on employment conditions in Ghana (e.g. Akorsu & Cooke, 2011), and managerial skills and national cultural evidence from Senegal, Central African Republic and Hungary (e.g. Lubatkin et al., 1997).

On organisational psychology, studies have explored issues such as high-performance work practices in the Afro-Asian context (Horwitz et al., 2002), transformational leadership in China, India and Kenya (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003), authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008), and leadership in 27 countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Paris et al., 2009). Although scholars have long recognised that the chief business of government is to ensure provision of an array of services (Fitch, 1975: 397), many governments in recent years have sought to streamline their operations and consolidate services to help ensure sustainability of existing services and meet growing demand for new services (Kiggundu, 1989).

Nonetheless, much of the research on strategic management in public service has focused on how governments can measure and verify performance as a means of eliminating waste, overlapping activities, and improving cost efficiency and equity in public services delivery (see Kiggundu, 1994, 1996). Some studies have used the balanced scorecard in administrative sectors such as for local government, police and education as a means of helping to improve public service outcomes. By measuring and verifying performances, governments hope to be able to eliminate much of the misallocation of national resources. Academics appear to have been relatively less successful in helping to erode the stereotypes that strategic management and performance measures are yet to gather steam. Indeed, there is a long-established strategic management principle not only in the private sector but also across state-owned organisations. There are areas where the pace of technology adoption in Africa has been at a much faster pace than developed and even other emerging economies. Generally, technology leapfrogging is occurring unrestricted and warrants further scholarly attention to highlight these outperforming sectors and areas of the national economies. A developing line of research has focused on comparing the experiences of African nations with other non-African nations in areas such as bribery and deviations from ethical behaviour

in Colombia, Ecuador, South Africa and the United States (Bernardi et al., 2009), and ethical beliefs of managers operating in South Africa and Australia (Abratt et al., 1992).

### **3.5 Quadrant IV: Inter-Africa comparative in macro-strategy**

Quadrant IV represents studies that are comparative in nature in the sense that it attempts to compare African examples with other geographical contexts. For many firms, success in the twenty-first century is often predicated ability to utilise limited resources and capabilities to achieve successful internationalisation. Accordingly, research on business strategies in Africa has surged. A survey of the existing literature points to two lines of research on the comparative research in macro-strategy. On market entry modes, inter-Africa comparative studies have focused on areas and settings such as greenfield, acquisition and joint ventures in India, Vietnam, South Africa and Egypt (Meyer et al., 2009), and capital strategies of Australian and South African firms (Naidu, 1986). Although much of the international business and strategy literature has historically sought to explain why some African firms underperform (see Adams, Debrah, Williams & Mmieh, 2015; Adams, Debrah, Williams & Mmieh, 2014), outperformance has remained a silent issue.

Using insights from emerging economies including Poland, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, Temouri, Driffield and Bhaumik (2016) examined cross-listing by emerging-market businesses and found that cross-listing was advantageous for firms domicile in countries characterised by institutional voids such as lower levels of investor protection, and perceived to be informationally opaque. Prior research has shed light on how foreign direct investment (FDI) has helped to facilitate knowledge and technology transfer in Africa (e.g. Brautigam, 1993; Osabutey, Williams and Debrah, 2014) and MNCs' knowledge appropriation (Kamoche & Newenham-Kahindi, 2012). It has been established that quality institutional factors such as effective government, enforcement of rule of law



and government accountability help to attract higher levels of FDI through M&A (Tunyi & Ntim, 2016).

Much of the work originally focused on what these firms can learn from the West but an increasing number of studies have begun to explore how Africa can learn from the Asian Tigers and firms to enhance their own competitiveness. In 2009, China surpassed the United States to become Africa's single largest trading partner with China's FDI in Africa surging from \$100 million in 2003 to over \$12 billion in 2011 (Moyo, 2012). The changing dynamics of sources of investment and trade provide opportunities for scholars to explore the effects of the increasing influence of trade and investment from the East on governance, government effectiveness, and technology and knowledge transfer. One of the largely underexplored questions is how to create an effective mechanism for African nations to shift from knowledge transfer to local knowledge-building capability. Macro-strategic activities are more likely to lend themselves to inter-African comparison. Some of the work on macro-strategy has revealed a need to account for institution effects in influencing firm performance and firms' ability to forge and tap into global strategic alliances (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2016).

#### **4 Implications and challenges in advancing indigenous concepts**

The essence of our argument here is that self-confidence in African management research is more likely to require a combination of introduction of indigenous concepts, novel research and assessing the applicability of Western and Eastern theories and concepts, as demonstrated in Figure 2. The figure demonstrates fostering greater confidence may require the integration of these distinctive but complementary lines of inquiry. To enhance the self-confidence of African management research, one needs to be able to overcome the methodological challenge. As observed, Holtbrügge's (2013)

lack of well-developed research methods is a primary challenge facing researchers seeking to bring to the fore indigenous management concepts. The challenges and constraints of cultural traditions often limit researchers' ability to comply fully with well-defined construct in undertaking research such as unwillingness of some individuals/organisations to open up to researchers, ability to record individuals, and limited access or no access to other employees.

For African management to advance and bring more indigenous concepts beyond Indaba (Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Selmier et al., 2014) and Ubuntu (Mangaliso, 2001), there is a need to address these challenges. In seeking to advance indigenous research, there is a danger that studies become disconnected from mainstream research. There is a danger that highly indigenous research may represent a disengagement from the mainstream literature (Meyer, 2006; White, 2002). This echoes Stephan, Patterson, Kelly and Mair's (2016, p. 1250) assertion that the tendency among scholars to "introduce and hang on to distinct labels to demark the uniqueness of research areas hinders building cumulative knowledge on market-based activity". As such, the comparative inter-Africa research is essential in mitigating some of the risks.

Another point well noted in the current discourse around advancement of indigenous management is that many leading journals are reluctant to embrace or consider studies seen to be "only" relevant in a limited context (Holtbrügge, 2013; Leung, 2012). Furthermore, advancing indigenous research and concepts should not be about throwing away principles of rigour and relevance at the heart of social science research, but rather adding to the existing body of knowledge and helping to account for or explain conflicting results of studies in management research (see also Harrison et al., 2015). Given that many indigenous contexts are only relevant in a few areas, there is a need to employ different mechanisms or approaches such as special issues to bring indigenous concepts to the mainstream.

The informal economy in Africa may represent a promising avenue for future research. Although such sectors are often not seen in the positive light (Venkatesh 2006), they represent a promising avenue to explore indigenous ideas and concepts (Debrah, 2007; Jackson, 2013; see also Jackson, Amaeshi and Yavuz, 2008). Exploring such sectors can provide an opportunity to conduct comparative research given the informal economy prevalent in many other developing nations. Perhaps what matters most is the wider contribution to the growing body of knowledge. Notwithstanding the growing streams of African management research, the lack of confidence in bringing more indigenous concepts to the academic vocabulary and discourse may have been mistaken as a struggle for legitimacy (Amankwah-Amoah, 2016).

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## **5 Conclusion and directions for future research**

Although African management research has come of age, there is a need to foster greater confidence in advancing and bring indigenous ideas and concepts to the fore. The often over-generalisation of western concepts and theories without attention to context have often led to what we refer to as the “two kingdoms, one culture”. The disjointed streams of research need classifying to help lay a more concrete foundation towards a better understanding of the current state of knowledge. In this direction, the present study drew on a review of the literature to develop a multi-dimensional model of African management research, in general. The 2 x 2 framework includes indigenous (intra-Africa) research in OB/HR, indigenous (intra-Africa) research in macro-strategy, inter-Africa in macro-strategy and inter-Africa research in OB/HR. These dimensions help in classifying the current state of knowledge and outline directions for future research. Although its culture, traditions, norms and customers remain underexplored, there is little dispute that they offer promising avenues for scholars

to explore the relationships between informal institutional factors and firm performance. As observed by Barkema et al. (2015), the field of management has to date not done enough to tap into indigenous/context-specific concepts and theories or bring them to the fore.

From a theoretical standpoint, our study developed a conceptualisation model which integrated different streams of research. It might be worthwhile exploring the informal sector – a feature of many African economies and a source of indigenous management concepts (Jackson, 2013). It has been argued that much of the existing mainstream research offers little insight into the intrinsic dynamics of doing business in Africa and the influence of culture and history. Future studies could explore this issue by examining formal and informal business practices and traditions. Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that future research could explore how the cultural and social differences within countries can influence firm strategising.

Last but not the least, there is little doubt that African management now occupies a unique place in mainstream management research. As world becomes increasingly interconnected and more firms expand the scope of their operations, the inter-African setting is more likely to represent a promising avenue assessing the generalizability of existing theories and concepts. It is worth noting that Africa is not a homogenous entity and the analysis presented here fails to capture many of the diverse and intricate influences of culture, national laws and norms. Accordingly, a greater level of sensitivity is needed in interpreting this study. There is a flourishing stream of research which should serve as a catalyst for engendering greater confidence in African management research.

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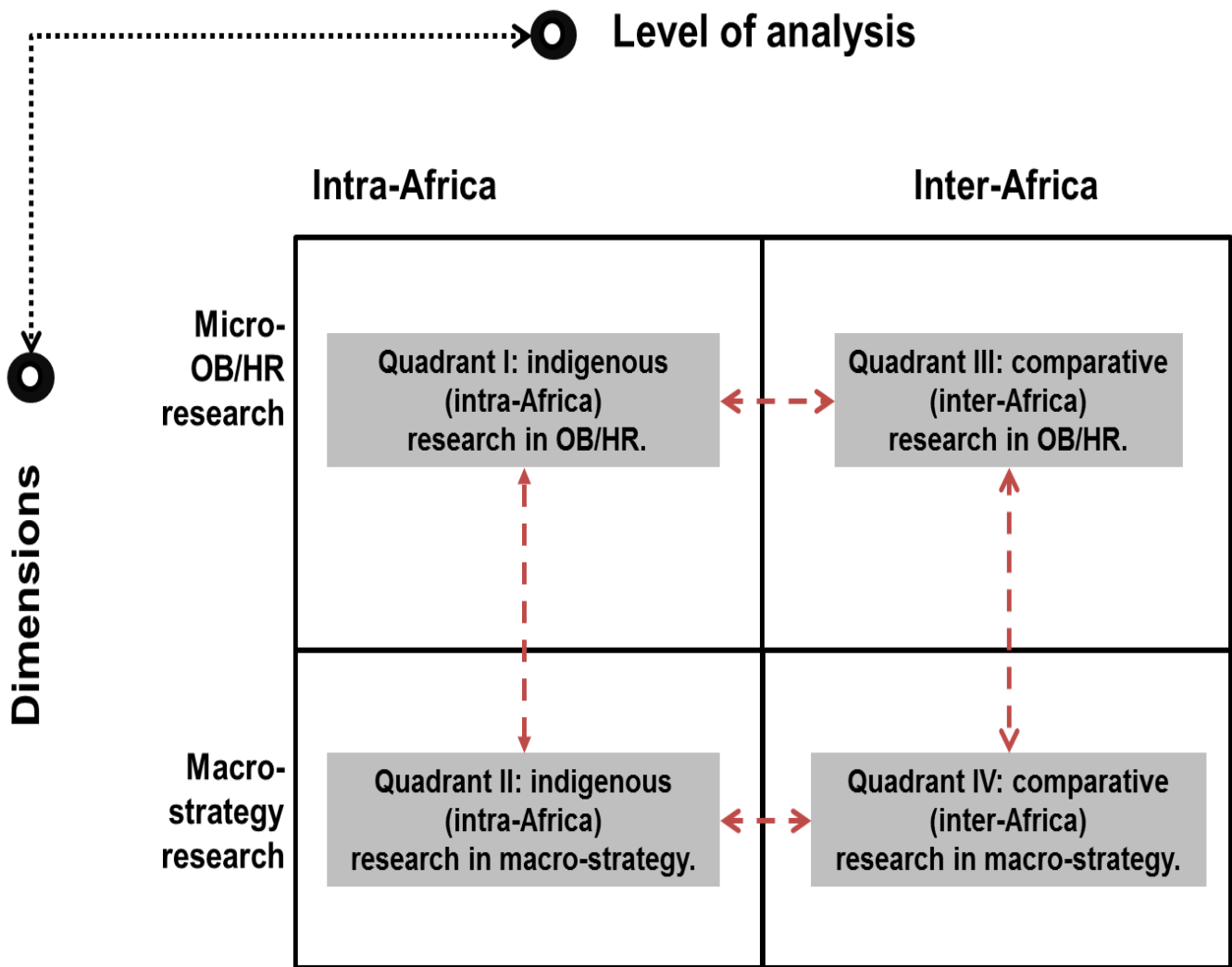
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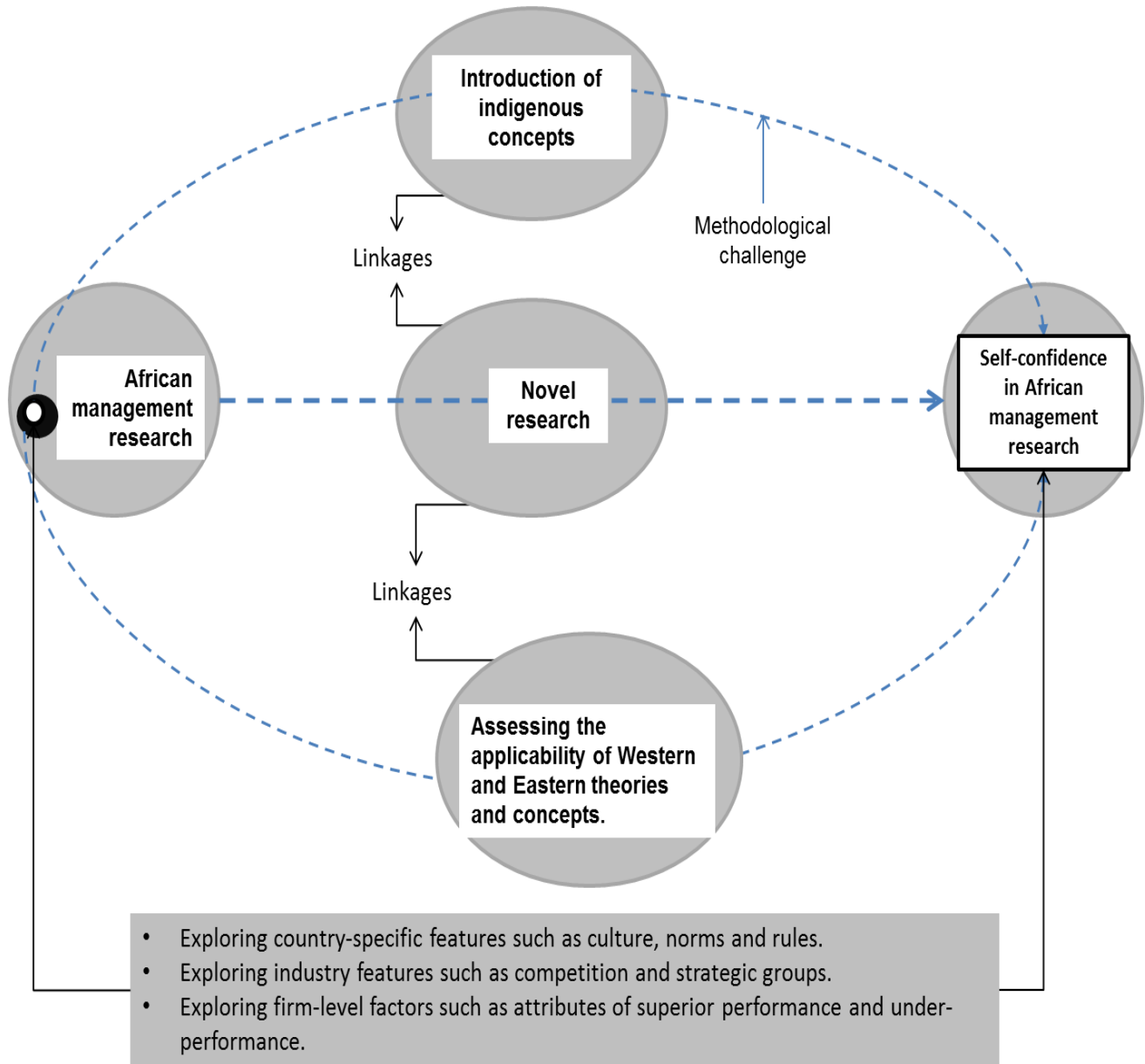
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**Figure 1: A four-cell typology of research themes**



**Figure 2: An integrated approach to African management research**



**Appendix 1: Summary of some studies on corporate social responsibility**

<b>Intra-African studies: Specific issue investigated, Author, Year, Journal, Type of Paper</b>	<b>Inter-Africa comparative studies</b>
<p><b>Institutional:</b> Shareholder Activism in Nigeria (Adegbite et al., 2012), JBE/E/QL; Country influences of multinational corporations CSR (Amaeshi &amp; Amao, 2009), JBE/E/QA; Socio-political challenges facing MNEs in South Africa (Mangaliso, 1992), JBE/E/CS; Institutional analysis (Muthuri &amp; Gilbert, 2011), JBE/E/QS; Effects of CSR in the capital markets in South Africa (Arya &amp; Zhang, 2009), JOMS/E/QA; CSR in Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo (Kolk &amp; Lenfant, 2010), JBE/E/QA; Sullivan Principles and corporate monitoring in South Africa (Paul, 1989), JBE/E/QL &amp; QA</p>	<p>Attitudes of United States and South African Managers towards CSR (Orpen, 1987), JBE/E/QS; principal-agent problems (Dharwadkar et al., 2000), AMR/C; CSR and economic development in Singapore, Turkey and Ethiopia (Robertson, 2009), JBE/E/QL;</p>
<p><b>Country level:</b> Corruption in public procurement (Ntayi et al., 2012), JBE/E/QL &amp; QS; Corruption in Nigeria in particular (Nwabuzor, 2005), JBE/C; Between corruption and development in Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2012), JBE/C; stress level and ethical behaviour (van Zyl &amp; Lazenby, 2002), JBE/E/QL &amp; QS.</p>	
<p><b>Organisational:</b> stakeholder responsive firms (Wheeler et al., 2002), JBE/C; Corporate community involvement (Muthuri et al., 2009), JBE/E/QL; Applicability of Western driven CSR in Botswana and Malawi (Lindgreen et al., 2009), JBE/E/QS; Misconducts by foreign firms in Nigeria (Geo-Jaja &amp; Mangum, 2000), JBE/E/QL &amp; QA; conflict between corporate codes and professional codes (Higgs-Kleyn &amp; Kapelianis, 1999), JBE/E/QA; model of ethical behaviour in South African businesses (van Zyl &amp; Lazenby, 1999), JBE/C; Decision-making models in business ethics - affirmative action in South Africa (West, 2008), JBE/E/CS; Relationship between responsibility and legitimacy (Claasen &amp; Roloff, 2012), JBE/E/CS; Oil extraction and poverty reduction in Nigeria (Idemudia, 2009), JBE/E/QL; Evolution of corporate governance in Nigeria (Ahunwan, 2002), JBE/C; Effects of environmental turbulence on business ethics (Morris et al., 1996), JBE/E/QL &amp; QA; Moral dispute in South Africa (Rossouw, 1997b), JBE/C.</p>	<p>First mover advantages and political resources-cases SHELL-BP in Nigeria, Volkswagen in China and Lockheed Martin in Russia (Frynas et al., 2006) SMJ/E/QS &amp; QA;</p>
<p><b>Interaction of ethics and business:</b> Public discourse of ethical issues in labor conditions in West Africa's cocoa industry (Dahan &amp; Gittens, 2010), JBE/E/unspecified; ethics of ransom payment -Somali pirate (Lansing &amp; Petersen, 2011), JBE/C; MNEs as an agent of community development through investment (Nwankwo et al., 2007), JBE/C; human rights in South Africa (Hamann et al., 2009), JBE/QS; corporate governance in South Africa (West, 2006),</p>	<p>Bribery and deviations from ethical behaviour in Colombia, Ecuador, South Africa and the United States (Bernardi et al., 2009), JBE/E/QS; Perceptions of Ethical</p>

<p>JBE/C; (Rossouw et al., 2002), JBE/E/QA; Business moral culture in South Africa (Rossouw, 1998), JBE/C; community engagement (Newenham-Kahindi, 2011), JBE/E/QL; Individuals attitudes towards business ethics (Moore &amp; Radloff, 1996), JBE/E/QA; responsibilities arising from oil exploitation in Nigeria (Eweje, 2006), JBE/E/QL; Business ethics implications in Eastern and Southern Africa (Milanzi, 1997), JBE/C. Ethical concerns of managers in Zimbabwe (Gifford &amp; McBurney, 1988), JBE/E/QL; Antecedents of human rights issues of South African listed companies (Hamann et al., 2009), JBE/E/QA; Firms as development agents and fairtrade products in Kenya (Blowfield &amp; Dolan, 2010), JBE/E/QL; Corporate ethics at workplace of mining firms in South Africa (Eweje, 2005), JBE/E/QL; the role of smallholders in Fairtrade certification schemes in Tanzania, (Loconto &amp; Simbua, 2012), JBE/E/QL and Focus group.</p>	<p>Behavior in South Africa (Abratt &amp; Penman, 2002), JBE/E/QS; Ethical beliefs of managers operating in South Africa and Australia (Abratt et al., 1992), JBE/E/QS;</p>
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**Note: for the type of paper,** C = Conceptual; E = empirical; TB; Teaching briefs. Please refer to Table 5 for a list of the journals and their acronyms. Methods adopted: QS: Quantitative – survey; QA; Quantitative – archival; QL: Qualitative; LA; Lab/experiment; CS; case study: Note: A total is less than the total number of articles reviewed due to theory development articles which have no methodology.



**Appendix 2: Summary of some relevant research in OB/HR studies**

Level of analysis	Intra-African studies: Specific issue investigated, Author, Year, Journal, Type of Paper	Inter-Africa comparative studies
HR related issues	<p><b>HR practices:</b> HR practices in civil servants in Eritrea (Tessema &amp; Soeters, 2006), IJHRM/E/QS; HRM in West Africa (Arthur et al., 1995), IJHRM/E/QS; people management (Kamoche, 2002), IJHRM/C; New directions in HRM (Kamoche et al., 2012), IJHRM/C; informal sector as source of employment (Jackson, 2012), IJHRM/C; (Debrah, 2007), IJHRM/E/QL; Informal sector as source of employment in South Africa (Morris &amp; Pitt, 1995), JSBM/E/QL &amp; QS; Understanding organisational justice (Beugre, 2002), IJHRM/C; HRM in sub-Saharan Africa (Khan &amp; Ackers, 2004), IJHRM/C; HRM in South Africa (Wood &amp; Els, 2000), IJHRM/E/QL; employee turnover (Lee &amp; Rwigema, 2005), IJHRM/E/QS;</p>	<p>Employment reform in Ghana, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda and the UK (McCourt, 2001), IJHRM/E/QL;</p>
	<p><b>Diversity management:</b> Discrimination in South Africa (Horwitz et al., 2002), IJHRM/C; cultural diversity (Sartorius et al., 2011), IJHRM/E/QL &amp; QS; domestic multiculturalism in Nigeria (Adigun, 1995), IJHRM/E/QS; diversity in the multi-ethnic societies (Nyambegera, 2002), IJHRM/C; Cross-cultural issue-ethnicity (Thomas &amp; Bendixen, 2000), JIBS/E/QS; diversity management and skills formation in South Africa (Horwitz et al., 1995), IJHRM/E/QA; Diverse life roles among black South African (Bosch et al., 2012), IJHRM/E/QS.</p>	<p>Workplace discrimination in Canada and South Africa (Jain et al., 2012), IJHRM/E/unspecified; Ethnocentrism (Blunt, 1986), AMR/C.</p>
	<p><b>Workplace issues:</b> HRM in Southern African multinational firms (Horwitz, 2012), IJHRM/C; workplace participation (Horwitz &amp; Townshend, 1993), IJHRM/E/CS; managing workers in immune diseases such as Tanzania (Baruch &amp; Clancy, 2000), IJHRM/E/QL; workplace policies in Malawi (Bakuwa &amp; Mamman, 2012), IJHRM/E/QS; effect of employment legislation and psychological contracts (Wocke &amp; Sutherland, 2008), IJHRM/E/QS; Effects of managers' nationality on commitment to industrial employment (Oloko, 1972), JOMS/E/QL;</p>	<p>Employee ownership in the Afro-Asia context (Wright et al., 2000), IJHRM/C; effects of Chinese and Indian investments on employment conditions in Ghana (Akorsu &amp; Cooke, 2011), IJHRM/E/QL; managerial skills and national cultural evidence from Senegal, Central African Republic and Hungary (Lubatkin et al., 1997), JIBS/E/QS;</p>
	<p><b>Employment relation, policies and legislations:</b> Employment relations in Ghana (Debrah &amp; Mmieh, 2009), IJHRM/E/QL; Flexible employment practices in South Africa (Horwitz &amp; Smith,</p>	

	1998), IJHRM/E/QS; frontline employees' perceptions of HRM practices (Browning, 2006), IJHRM/E/QL & QS;	
	<b>Talent acquisition:</b> Global human capital acquisition and workers migration (Healy & Oikelome, 2007), IJHRM/E/QL; Reverse knowledge transfer and skill manpower in Ghana (Sarpong & Rawls, 1976), JOMS/E/QS; Personnel poaching (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011), IJHRM/E/QL.	Human capital development (Harvey et al., 2002), IJHRM/C.
	<b>Job related issues:</b> Job characteristics, work-home interference and burnout (Mostert, 2011), IJHRM/E/QS; Job satisfaction in Liberia (Howell et al., 1975), JOMS/E/QS; Managerial attitudes, beliefs and values of Malawian managers (Jones, 1988), JOMS/E/QL & QS; Job satisfaction in South Africa (Blunt, 1973), JOMS/E/QS;	
Leadership	The culture-fit model for managing and leading in Africa (Beugre & Offodile, 2001), IJHRM/C; American and Egyptian management styles in Egypt (Parnell & Hatem, 1999), JOMS/E/QS; Responsible leadership in South Africa (Coldwell et al., 2012), JBE/E/QL & observations.	Transformational leadership (e.g. Walumbwa et al., 2010), JAP/E/QS; in China, India and Kenya (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003), IJHRM/E/QS; Authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008), JOM/E/QS; leadership in 27 countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Paris et al., 2009), JIBS/E/QS.
Organisational Psychology	High-performance work systems (e.g. Aryee et al., 2012), JAP/E/QS; effectiveness of training for customer service (Lee, 2012), IJHRM/E/QS; a disadvantage perspective in Ghana (Zoogah, 2010), JAP/E/QS; work motivation in South Africa (Orpen & Nkohande, 1977), JOMS/E/QS	High performance work practices in the Afro-Asian context (Horwitz et al., 2002), IJHRM/C;

**Note: for the type of paper,** C = Conceptual; E = empirical; TB; Teaching briefs. Please refer to Table 5 for a list of the journals and their acronyms. Methods adopted: QS: Quantitative – survey; QA; Quantitative – archival; QL: Qualitative; LA; Lab/experiment; CS; case study. Note: A total is less than the total number of articles reviewed due to theory development articles which have no methodology.