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Internal communication and organizational culture: Gabon and Finland in comparative perspective

Davin olsen Mpaga ngayila[1]

Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne2

Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste3

1. Joint PhD Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Humanities and Social Sciences, Organizational Communication
2. Joint MPhil Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, IT Department, Film and TV Production
3. Lecturer at Lisala University, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Department of Technopedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This study falls within SDG Focus Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions — Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms.

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[1] Joint PhD Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Humanities and Social Sciences, Organizational Communication

COMING SOON

This study examines the comparative approaches to internal communication and organizational culture in Gabon and Finland, focusing on how each country's cultural values, hierarchical structures, and communication norms shape workplace dynamics, decision-making processes, and institutional effectiveness. The research analyzes the interplay between formal and informal communication channels, the role of hierarchy in organizational relationships, and the impact of cultural assumptions on employee engagement and organizational performance. A comparative analysis was conducted examining primary and secondary sources including academic research, cultural guides, institutional studies, and organizational case studies covering recent decades to 2026.

Gabon presents an organizational culture characterized by hierarchical structures, formal communication protocols, and the centrality of personal relationships in professional life. Workplace communication balances formality with the importance of personal connection, with indirect communication often used to maintain harmony and show respect to superiors . Employees address colleagues using formal titles (Monsieur, Madame) until invited to use first names, and communication with superiors requires respectful language and formal channels . Decision-making is typically top-down, with authority concentrated at senior levels and final decisions resting with the most senior person involved . Face-to-face meetings are highly valued for building rapport, and preliminary pleasantries and relationship-building precede core business discussions . The multilingual workplace environment—with French dominant in corporate settings, Fang widely used in government and business, and Myene employed regionally—adds complexity to internal communication . Recent research at Omar Bongo University reveals that while digital devices have been adopted as pillars of internal communication in public organizations, their usage remains mixed and appropriation patterns vary .

Finland presents a contrasting organizational culture defined by low hierarchy, egalitarian values, and direct communication. Finnish workplaces are characterized by flat hierarchies where individual contributors feel as empowered as senior leaders in voicing their thoughts, with open communication lines enabling anyone to ask questions regardless of rank . Communication is typically frank, direct, and problem-focused, with Finns saying what they mean and meaning what they say . This directness is not intended to offend but reflects a cultural preference for addressing issues openly, captured in phrases like "laittaa kissa pöydälle" (put the cat on the table) to address

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difficult topics . Trust and self-direction are fundamental, with employees expected to take initiative and responsibility within their areas without external monitoring . Work-life balance is highly valued, reflected in the philosophy that people "work to live" rather than "live to work" . Finnish communication separates professional and personal spheres strictly, with small talk rare and conversations initially focused on work topics . The emphasis on time planning and reliability means punctuality is fundamental and appointments are binding . Doctoral research on public sector leadership in Finland highlights the shift from traditional hierarchical leadership toward trust-based, dialogic approaches essential for cross-organizational collaboration .

Both countries demonstrate significant interplay between cultural values and organizational communication practices. Gabon's strength lies in its emphasis on relationship-building and respect for hierarchy, which can foster loyalty and interpersonal trust, yet may slow decision-making and limit upward communication. Finland's strength lies in its egalitarian, direct communication style that promotes transparency and rapid problem-solving, yet may be perceived as blunt by those from more indirect cultures. Neither country's approach is inherently superior; each reflects deep cultural logics that have evolved to meet societal needs.

Effective internal communication and organizational culture for strong institutions requires: (1) alignment between communication practices and cultural values; (2) clarity about hierarchical expectations and decision-making processes; (3) channels that enable both formal and informal information flow; (4) training that helps employees navigate communication across cultural contexts; (5) leadership that models desired communication behaviors; (6) attention to the impact of digital tools on workplace relationships; (7) mechanisms for upward feedback that respect cultural norms around hierarchy; and (8) recognition that transparency and participation can be achieved through culturally appropriate means.

KEYWORDS: Internal communication, organizational culture, hierarchy, direct communication, Gabon, Finland, workplace norms, decision-making, trust, SDG 16, institutional effectiveness, power distance.

RÉSUMÉ (French Version)

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Cette étude examine les approches comparatives de la communication interne et de la culture organisationnelle au Gabon et en Finlande, en se concentrant sur la manière dont les valeurs culturelles, les structures hiérarchiques et les normes de communication de chaque pays façonnent les dynamiques de travail, les processus de prise de décision et l'efficacité institutionnelle. La recherche analyse l'interaction entre les canaux de communication formels et informels, le rôle de la hiérarchie dans les relations organisationnelles et l'impact des hypothèses culturelles sur l'engagement des employés et la performance organisationnelle. Une analyse comparative a été menée en examinant des sources primaires et secondaires, y compris la recherche académique, les guides culturels, les études institutionnelles et les études de cas organisationnelles couvrant les dernières décennies jusqu'en 2026.

Le Gabon présente une culture organisationnelle caractérisée par des structures hiérarchiques, des protocoles de communication formels et la centralité des relations personnelles dans la vie professionnelle. La communication en milieu de travail équilibre la formalité avec l'importance du lien personnel, la communication indirecte étant souvent utilisée pour maintenir l'harmonie et montrer du respect aux supérieurs . Les employés s'adressent aux collègues en utilisant des titres formels (Monsieur, Madame) jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient invités à utiliser les prénoms, et la communication avec les supérieurs nécessite un langage respectueux et des canaux formels . La prise de décision est typiquement descendante, l'autorité étant concentrée aux niveaux supérieurs et les décisions finales revenant à la personne la plus senior impliquée . Les réunions en face à face sont très valorisées pour établir des relations, et les politesses préliminaires ainsi que l'établissement de relations précèdent les discussions d'affaires . L'environnement de travail multilingue—avec le français dominant dans les milieux d'entreprise, le Fang largement utilisé dans le gouvernement et les affaires, et le Myene employé régionalement—ajoute de la complexité à la communication interne . Une recherche récente à l'Université Omar Bongo révèle que si les dispositifs numériques ont été adoptés comme piliers de la communication interne dans les organisations publiques, leur usage reste contrasté et les modes d'appropriation varient .

La Finlande présente une culture organisationnelle contrastée définie par une faible hiérarchie, des valeurs égalitaires et une communication directe. Les lieux de travail finlandais sont caractérisés par des hiérarchies plates où les contributeurs individuels se sentent autant habilités que les cadres supérieurs à exprimer leurs opinions, avec des lignes de communication ouvertes permettant à

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quiconque de poser des questions quel que soit son rang . La communication est typiquement franche, directe et axée sur les problèmes, les Finlandais disant ce qu'ils pensent et pensant ce qu'ils disent . Cette franchise n'a pas pour but d'offenser mais reflète une préférence culturelle pour aborder les problèmes ouvertement, illustrée par des phrases comme "laittaa kissa pöydälle" (mettre le chat sur la table) pour aborder des sujets difficiles . La confiance et l'autodirection sont fondamentales, les employés étant censés prendre des initiatives et des responsabilités dans leurs domaines sans surveillance externe . L'équilibre travail-vie personnelle est hautement valorisé, reflété dans la philosophie selon laquelle les gens "travaillent pour vivre" plutôt que "vivent pour travailler" . La communication finlandaise sépare strictement les sphères professionnelle et personnelle, les bavardages étant rares et les conversations initialement centrées sur le travail . L'accent mis sur la planification du temps et la fiabilité signifie que la ponctualité est fondamentale et que les rendez-vous sont contraignants . La recherche doctorale sur le leadership dans le secteur public en Finlande met en évidence le passage d'un leadership hiérarchique traditionnel à des approches basées sur la confiance et le dialogue, essentielles pour la collaboration interorganisationnelle .

Les deux pays démontrent une interaction significative entre les valeurs culturelles et les pratiques de communication organisationnelle. La force du Gabon réside dans l'accent mis sur l'établissement de relations et le respect de la hiérarchie, ce qui peut favoriser la loyauté et la confiance interpersonnelle, mais peut ralentir la prise de décision et limiter la communication ascendante. La force de la Finlande réside dans son style de communication égalitaire et direct qui favorise la transparence et la résolution rapide des problèmes, mais peut être perçu comme brusque par ceux issus de cultures plus indirectes. L'approche d'aucun pays n'est intrinsèquement supérieure ; chacune reflète des logiques culturelles profondes qui ont évolué pour répondre aux besoins sociétaux.

Une communication interne efficace et une culture organisationnelle pour des institutions solides nécessitent : (1) un alignement entre les pratiques de communication et les valeurs culturelles ; (2) une clarté sur les attentes hiérarchiques et les processus de prise de décision ; (3) des canaux permettant la circulation formelle et informelle de l'information ; (4) une formation aidant les employés à naviguer dans la communication à travers les contextes culturels ; (5) un leadership qui modélise les comportements de communication souhaités ; (6) une attention à l'impact des

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outils numériques sur les relations de travail ; (7) des mécanismes de rétroaction ascendante qui respectent les normes culturelles autour de la hiérarchie ; et (8) la reconnaissance que la transparence et la participation peuvent être réalisées par des moyens culturellement appropriés.

MOTS-CLÉS : Communication interne, culture organisationnelle, hiérarchie, communication directe, Gabon, Finlande, normes de travail, prise de décision, confiance, ODD 16, efficacité institutionnelle, distance hiérarchique.

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Auteurs correspondant : *Davin olsen Mpaga ngayila, Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne and Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste*
Adresses électroniques : *, benigneira0@gmail.com, nizeyimana.jb@dphu.ac.cd ,*
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1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between internal communication and organizational culture lies at the heart of institutional effectiveness. How information flows within organizations, how decisions are made, and how employees relate to one another and to leadership fundamentally shapes whether institutions can achieve their missions, adapt to change, and serve their stakeholders effectively. SDG 16 explicitly recognizes this through targets on effective, accountable, and transparent institutions (16.6), inclusive and participatory decision-making (16.7), and public access to information (16.10).

This study examines two countries that offer profound insights into the relationship between culture and organizational communication: Gabon and Finland. These nations, with their distinct historical trajectories, cultural value systems, and institutional frameworks, illuminate fundamentally different approaches to organizing work, communicating within organizations, and balancing hierarchy with participation.

Gabon, a Central African nation with a rich multilingual heritage, presents an organizational culture shaped by hierarchical structures, formal communication protocols, and the centrality of personal relationships. French dominates corporate settings, while national languages like Fang

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and Myene are widely used in government and specific regions . Workplace communication balances formality with personal connection, with indirect approaches often employed to maintain harmony and show respect . Decision-making flows from the top down, with authority concentrated at senior levels . Yet recent research at Omar Bongo University reveals that digital tools are reshaping internal communication, though their appropriation remains uneven .

Finland, consistently ranked among the world's happiest and most well-governed countries, presents a contrasting organizational culture defined by low hierarchy, egalitarian values, and direct communication. Finnish workplaces feature flat hierarchies where individual contributors feel empowered to voice opinions alongside senior leaders . Communication is frank, direct, and problem-focused, with cultural phrases like "put the cat on the table" encouraging open discussion of difficult issues . Trust and self-direction are fundamental, with employees expected to take initiative within their areas . The Finnish approach to work-life balance—the philosophy that people "work to live" rather than "live to work"—reflects broader societal values . Doctoral research on public sector leadership highlights the shift toward trust-based, dialogic approaches essential for cross-organizational collaboration .

The contrast between Gabon and Finland illuminates critical questions for SDG 16 and institutional development: How do different cultural value systems shape internal communication practices? What are the trade-offs between hierarchical and egalitarian organizational structures? How can institutions balance respect for authority with employee participation? And what can countries learn from each other's approaches while respecting cultural specificity?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Internal Communication and Organizational Culture: Theoretical Foundations

Internal communication encompasses the formal and informal channels through which information flows within organizations—from leadership to employees, among peers, and from employees upward. Organizational culture comprises the shared values, assumptions, and practices that shape

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how members think, feel, and behave. The two are inextricably linked: communication both reflects and reproduces culture, while culture provides the interpretive framework within which communication is understood.

A key insight from cross-cultural organizational research is that communication norms vary fundamentally across societies based on dimensions such as power distance (acceptance of hierarchical authority), individualism-collectivism, and high-context versus low-context communication styles. Understanding these dimensions is essential for analyzing how internal communication functions in different national contexts.

2.2 Gabon: Hierarchy, Formality, and Relational Communication

Workplace Hierarchy and Authority: Gabonese workplaces, particularly in traditional industries and government sectors, are characterized by clear hierarchical structures where seniority and position command respect . This hierarchical orientation shapes every aspect of organizational life.

Decision-making is typically top-down, with senior management making key decisions and employees expected to show deference to managers and senior colleagues . The final decision-maker is usually the most senior person involved, and while input from lower levels may be considered, ultimate authority rests with leadership . This structure means that lower-level employees may not have the authority to make final decisions, and communication upward is expected to be formal and respectful .

The respect for hierarchy extends to daily interactions. Employees address colleagues and superiors using formal titles such as "Monsieur" or "Madame" until explicitly invited to use first names . This formality is not merely superficial but reflects deep cultural values about appropriate relationships between people of different status.

Communication Styles: Communication in Gabonese workplaces balances formality with the importance of personal connection . While directness is appreciated in some contexts, indirect

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communication may be used to maintain harmony or show respect, particularly when addressing superiors or sensitive topics .

Face-to-face meetings are highly valued for building rapport and discussing important matters . Preliminary pleasantries and relationship-building are essential before transitioning to core business discussions . This reflects a cultural emphasis on establishing personal connection as foundation for professional interaction.

Non-verbal communication carries significant meaning. A firm handshake is standard, and while direct eye contact is generally acceptable, it may be avoided in some situations as a sign of respect toward elders or superiors . Tone of voice and body language require careful attention.

Patience is essential in Gabonese business communication. Discussions may take time, involving preliminary relationship-building before getting to the core business . This pace reflects the cultural priority placed on relationships alongside task completion.

Multilingual Workplace Environment: Gabon's linguistic diversity adds complexity to internal communication. The workplace is multilingual, with French, Fang, and Myene used across industries .

In corporate sectors like oil and finance, French is the primary language for communication, documentation, and client interactions, especially in multinational companies. Meetings, presentations, and official emails are generally conducted in French, though employees may use Fang or Myene informally .

In government offices and public sector organizations, French and national languages are commonly used for internal communication and documentation. Fang is widely spoken in government and business sectors, particularly in northern and central Gabon .

The manufacturing and retail sectors rely on local languages for daily operations, especially in labor-intensive industries. Factories, warehouses, and construction sites primarily use Fang or Myene, while management-level communication may be in French .

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In customer service, language use depends on the clientele. French and Fang are common for domestic customer support, while many companies also hire speakers of Myene and other regional languages to cater to local customers .

Digital Communication and Organizational Change: Recent research by Ovoundaga (2024) at Omar Bongo University provides valuable insights into the adoption of digital communication tools in Gabonese public organizations . The study, based on a questionnaire distributed to over 50 members of the university (administrative staff and teacher-researchers) and five semi-structured interviews, found that:

- Digital devices have been put at the service of public institutions' functioning
- These digital tools have been adopted as a pillar of internal communication
- However, their use remains mixed and appropriation patterns vary

The research highlights that while organizations have embraced digital tools as essential resources for internal exchanges, the actual usage and integration into daily communication practices is uneven. This finding underscores the complexity of organizational change and the importance of understanding how employees actually appropriate new communication technologies.

Professional Etiquette and Workplace Norms: Business emails should be formal, polite, and structured, starting with a greeting and ending with a professional sign-off . In phone calls, a courteous greeting is expected, with small talk before discussing business. Employees often use messaging apps for quick work-related communication, though formal matters are handled via email.

Punctuality is valued but flexible—meetings may start a few minutes late, especially in informal settings . However, foreign business partners striving for punctuality demonstrates respect . Business meetings often begin with small talk before transitioning into formal discussions.

Professional dress is generally formal, with men wearing suits and women wearing professional dresses or suits . In traditional industries, especially family-owned businesses, employees may wear ethnic attire on special occasions. Startups and tech companies often have a relaxed dress code.

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Table 1: Gabonese Organizational Culture—Key Features

Dimension	**Characteristics**	
Hierarchical Structure	Clear hierarchy; respect for seniority and position; top-down decision-making	
Communication Style	Formal yet personal; indirect when needed for harmony; face-to-face valued	
Address and Titles	Formal titles (Monsieur/Madame) used until invited to use first names	
Decision-Making	Concentrated at senior levels; final decisions by most senior person	
Relationship Building	Essential before business; preliminary pleasantries and socializing	
Linguistic Environment	Multilingual: French (corporate), Fang (government/business), Myene (regional)	
Digital Communication	Adopted as pillar but usage mixed; appropriation uneven	
Punctuality	Valued but flexible; meetings may start late	

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Dress Code	Formal in corporate; ethnic attire on special occasions; relaxed in startups	

2.3 Finland: Egalitarianism, Directness, and Trust-Based Culture

Low Hierarchy and Egalitarian Values: Finnish workplaces are characterized by low hierarchy and egalitarian values. The culture in Finnish organizations is equalitarian, with hierarchy low due to low power distance . People are expected to be treated as equals, regardless of rank and personal background.

This flat hierarchy means that individual contributors feel as empowered as senior leaders in voicing their thoughts on the business. Open communication lines enable anyone to ask questions regardless of rank, fostering an environment where issues can be raised and solutions found collectively . A common Finnish phrase reflects this mindset: "The person who asks questions will not stray away from the path" .

Work practices build on trust and self-direction, with jointly agreed matters adhered to . Self-management means everyone in the working environment complies with specific roles and skills, honors promises and arrangements, is punctual, and actively takes necessary initiatives—without external monitoring .

Direct Communication Style: Finland is described as a high-context culture where reading between the lines is necessary . However, Finnish communication is notably frank, direct, and problem-focused. Finns often say what they mean and mean what they say, getting straight to the point and expecting this from others .

This directness can sometimes be perceived as impolite or critical by those from more indirect cultures. However, in reality, Finns often think that what works well can be left unsaid and taken for granted . Modesty and humility are core virtues, and silence is often considered golden .

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The open expression of opinions and constructive criticism is intentional, with the understanding that criticism relates to the matter under discussion, not the person . Several Finnish phrases capture this communication philosophy:

- **"Laittaa kissa pöydälle"** (put the cat on the table): Addressing the elephant in the room, believing that things are solved when they are discussed openly .
- **"Minkä taakseen jättää, sen edestään löytää"** (whatever you leave behind, you will find in front of you): Leaving problems unattended will only cause issues later .
- **"Menee päin puuta"** (going toward the tree with your back first): The consequence of failing to plan ahead .

Separation of Professional and Personal Spheres: Finnish workplace culture maintains a clear separation between professional and personal life. During initial contact, the tendency is toward keeping distance and holding factual conversations . Personal conversations become common only after colleagues have worked together for a while, with lunch breaks and coffee breaks providing opportunities to get to know others .

Private matters and business matters are strictly separated, and personal questions can be perceived as intrusive . Initial conversations typically revolve around work, with a neutral topic like a foreign colleague's home country being acceptable. If you gain a Finn as a friend, the relationship is genuine—associated with mutual obligations, faithfulness, and remembering birthdays .

Small talk is rare and differs from Anglo-American patterns. A brief comment about the weather or another neutral topic suffices . The easiest way to make friends in Finland is through shared interests in clubs or activities outside work .

Trust and Self-Management: Trust is fundamental in Finnish organizational culture. Work practices build on trust and self-direction, with employees expected to take responsibility for implementing plans within their areas . There are no external channels to monitor this—it is simply expected that everyone automatically takes initiative in their own domain.

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This self-management orientation means that employees identify with the joint plan and take responsibility for implementing it . Reliability is fundamental for developing good working relationships .

Time Planning and Punctuality: Time is precious in Finnish culture. The attitude is reflected in common phrases: "I don't have the time, I'm under stress" . Time must be used effectively and is precisely planned, including long-term dates.

Arranged appointments are binding and obligatory. A good reason must be given for unpunctuality; otherwise, it is taken as a personal offense . The timely execution of tasks and projects according to plan has higher priority than personal interests, leaving little time for spontaneous meetings.

Objective Orientation: For professional cooperation, the subject being dealt with, the roles, and the professional competence of participants are decisive . Business-like behavior is seen as professional. Emotions and personal relationships should not mix with business.

Expertise is valued above hierarchy—"The boss is not always right!" . Meetings have clear aims and purposes, with arguments based on specific objectives and facts.

Valuing Structures and Rules: Finns are normally very law-abiding, adhering to rules, directives, and instructions . They don't directly comment on others' minor mistakes, but serious breaches—like jumping a queue—are considered very rude. In such cases, a superior typically discusses the matter with the employee in private.

Complex and detailed planning is important to eliminate errors before they occur. Ideally, everyone involved participates in planning, after which the plan is set in place and points are processed accordingly, with little flexibility afterward .

Formal channels are preferred for workplace communication—consultation, meetings, conferences recorded with minutes, and information distribution systems via internet . The fulfillment of business tasks is the main focus when assessing employees.

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Leadership Evolution in Public Sector: Recent doctoral research by Mattila (2025) at the University of Vaasa examines leadership challenges in Finnish public sector organizations . The research, focusing on municipal education services following Finland's health and social services reform, found that:

- Traditional, hierarchical leadership no longer works when solving today's complex problems
- Leaders must succeed on two fronts: managing external networks and transforming internal culture to support service integration
- Cooperation requires mutual trust, commitment, and shared leadership where responsibility for results is collective
- Continuous dialogue and clear goals are essential for smooth service delivery
- The goal is that citizens do not even notice they are dealing with multiple organizations—the service entity is coherent, information flows, and people feel genuinely helped

Mattila's research emphasizes that leaders must "dare to compromise on their own objectives in order to achieve something greater together" and "let go of the individualistic leadership role and the pursuit of their organization's self-interest" . This reflects the evolving nature of Finnish organizational culture toward even greater collaboration and trust-based approaches.

Table 2: Finnish Organizational Culture—Key Features

Dimension	**Characteristics**	
Hierarchical Structure	Low hierarchy; egalitarian; people treated as equals regardless of rank	
Communication Style	Direct, frank, problem-focused; say what they mean	

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Decision-Making	Participatory; open to input from all levels; "the boss is not always right"	
Trust and Self-Management	Work builds on trust; employees take initiative without monitoring	
Professional-Personal Boundary	Strict separation; personal conversations after relationship established	
Time Orientation	Precise planning; punctuality fundamental; appointments binding	
Rules and Structures	Law-abiding; detailed planning; formal communication channels	
Leadership Approach	Evolving from hierarchical to trust-based, dialogic, collaborative	
Work-Life Balance	"Work to live" philosophy; long vacations; family benefits	

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2.4 Comparative Dimensions: Power Distance and Communication Norms

The comparison between Gabon and Finland illuminates several critical dimensions of organizational culture:

Power Distance: Gabon exemplifies high power distance, with clear hierarchies, respect for authority, and top-down decision-making . Finland exemplifies low power distance, with

egalitarian values, flat hierarchies, and participatory decision-making where individual contributors feel empowered .

Communication Directness: Gabonese communication balances directness with indirect approaches when needed to maintain harmony or show respect, particularly toward superiors . Finnish communication is notably direct and frank, with issues addressed openly regardless of rank .

Relationship and Task Focus: Gabonese workplace culture emphasizes relationship-building as foundation for professional interaction, with socializing and preliminary pleasantries essential . Finnish workplace culture separates relationship from task, with initial interactions focused on work and personal connection developing over time through shared activities .

Formality: Gabonese workplaces maintain formal address (titles) and communication protocols, particularly in upward communication . Finnish workplaces use first names and informal interaction while maintaining professional boundaries .

Decision-Making: Gabonese decision-making is concentrated at senior levels, with final authority resting with the most senior person . Finnish decision-making is participatory, with open lines of communication enabling input from all levels .

Time Orientation: Gabonese approach to time is flexible, with meetings potentially starting late and patience essential . Finnish approach to time is precise, with punctuality fundamental and appointments binding .

Trust Basis: Gabonese trust builds through personal relationships developed over time through social interaction . Finnish trust builds through reliability, fulfilling commitments, and demonstrated competence .

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

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1. What are the key characteristics of internal communication and organizational culture in Gabon, and how do hierarchical structures, formal communication norms, and multilingual dynamics shape workplace interactions?
2. What are the key characteristics of internal communication and organizational culture in Finland, and how do egalitarian values, direct communication, and trust-based practices shape workplace interactions?
3. How do the two countries compare on dimensions of power distance, communication directness, relationship-building, decision-making processes, and time orientation?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative analysis methodology to examine internal communication and organizational culture in Gabon and Finland. The research design integrates secondary analysis of academic research, cultural guides, institutional studies, and organizational case studies to develop comprehensive understanding of communication norms, organizational structures, and cultural values in both countries.

Research Design: The comparative approach is appropriate for examining how different cultural value systems shape organizational communication practices. Gabon and Finland were selected as cases that offer complementary insights: both have distinct cultural traditions and organizational forms that illuminate different approaches to hierarchy, communication, and institutional effectiveness.

Data Sources: Primary and secondary sources analyzed include:

- Cultural guides to Gabonese workplace norms from Safeguard Global and Rivermate
- Academic research on digital communication at Omar Bongo University, Gabon
- Aalto University guide to Finnish work culture
- CNBC article on Finnish workplace phrases and culture
- University cultural guide to Finnish workplace norms
- Doctoral research on Finnish public sector leadership
- Comparative thesis on Finnish and Norwegian business culture

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Analytical Framework: The comparative framework examines five dimensions:

1. **Hierarchical Structure:** Power distance, authority relations, decision-making processes
2. **Communication Style:** Directness, formality, relationship to task
3. **Trust and Relationships:** Basis of trust, role of personal relationships
4. **Time Orientation:** Punctuality, planning, flexibility
5. **Digital Communication:** Adoption patterns, appropriation, impact

Time Period: The analysis covers approximately 2020-2026, capturing recent research and contemporary organizational practices.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Gabon: Hierarchy, Formality, and the Primacy of Relationships

Hierarchical Structure and Authority: Gabonese organizational culture is fundamentally shaped by clear hierarchical structures where seniority and position command respect . This hierarchy influences all aspects of workplace dynamics:

- **Decision-Making:** Decisions flow from the top down, with senior management making key decisions . The final decision-maker is typically the most senior person involved, and while input from lower levels may be considered, ultimate authority rests with leadership .
- **Respect for Authority:** Employees are expected to show deference to managers and senior colleagues . This expectation shapes daily interactions, communication styles, and the willingness to express disagreement or alternative views.
- **Communication Upward:** Communication directed at superiors is expected to be formal and respectful . This formality may constrain the flow of information upward and make it difficult for employees to raise concerns or offer critical feedback.
- **Team Dynamics:** While teamwork is valued, individual roles and responsibilities within the hierarchy are often well-defined . The hierarchical structure provides clarity about who is responsible for what and who has authority to make decisions.

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Communication Styles and Practices: Communication in Gabonese workplaces balances formality with the importance of personal connection . Key characteristics include:

- **Formal Address:** Colleagues and superiors are addressed using appropriate titles (Monsieur, Madame) until invited to use first names . This formal address reflects and reinforces hierarchical relationships.
- **Direct and Indirect Communication:** While directness is appreciated in some contexts, indirect communication may be used to maintain harmony or show respect, particularly when addressing superiors or sensitive topics . This means that criticism or negative feedback may be conveyed indirectly to preserve relationships.
- **Face-to-Face Preference:** Face-to-face meetings are highly valued for building rapport and discussing important matters . This preference reflects the cultural emphasis on personal connection as foundation for professional interaction.
- **Preliminary Pleasantries:** Business discussions typically begin with small talk and inquiries about well-being before transitioning to core business . This ritual establishes the personal connection that enables productive professional interaction.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** Body language, tone, and other non-verbal cues carry significant meaning . A firm handshake is standard, and direct eye contact, while generally acceptable, may be avoided as a sign of respect toward elders or superiors.
- **Patience:** Discussions may take time, involving relationship-building before getting to core business . Rushing this process can be counterproductive.

Multilingual Workplace Dynamics: Gabon's linguistic diversity adds complexity to internal communication :

- **French:** Dominant in corporate sectors like oil and finance for communication, documentation, and client interactions. Meetings, presentations, and official emails are generally conducted in French.
- **Fang:** Widely spoken in government and business sectors, particularly in northern and central Gabon. Used for internal communication and daily operations.
- **Myene:** Used regionally, particularly in customer service and local operations.

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- **Code-Switching:** Employees may use French for formal communication and local languages for informal interaction, navigating between languages depending on context and audience.

Digital Communication and Organizational Change: Ovoundaga's research at Omar Bongo University provides crucial insights into digital communication adoption :

- Digital devices have been adopted as essential resources for internal exchanges and public interactions
- These tools have become a "pillar" of internal communication in public institutions
- However, their use remains "contrasted" or mixed, with varying patterns of appropriation
- The study highlights that while organizations implement digital tools, actual usage patterns are shaped by employee practices, preferences, and cultural norms

This finding underscores that technological change is not simply a matter of introducing tools but of organizational and cultural adaptation.

Professional Etiquette and Workplace Norms: Specific norms govern professional behavior :

- **Email:** Business emails should be formal, polite, and structured, with greeting and professional sign-off.
- **Phone:** Courteous greeting with small talk before business.
- **Messaging:** Informal apps used for quick communication, but formal matters handled via email.
- **Punctuality:** Valued but flexible; meetings may start late.
- **Dress:** Formal in corporate settings; ethnic attire on special occasions; relaxed in startups.

5.2 Finland: Egalitarianism, Directness, and Trust-Based Culture

Low Hierarchy and Egalitarian Values: Finnish organizational culture is defined by low power distance and egalitarian values :

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- **Flat Hierarchy:** The culture in Finnish organizations is equalitarian, with hierarchy low due to low power distance. People are expected to be treated as equals regardless of rank and personal background .
- **Empowerment:** Individual contributors feel as empowered as senior leaders in voicing their thoughts on the business. Open communication lines enable anyone to ask questions regardless of rank .
- **Trust and Self-Direction:** Work practices build on trust and self-direction, with jointly agreed matters adhered to . Employees are expected to take responsibility for implementing plans within their areas without external monitoring .
- **Leadership Philosophy:** The mindset that "the person who asks questions will not stray away from the path" reflects the belief that open communication at all levels benefits the organization .

Direct Communication Style: Finnish communication is notably direct and frank :

- **Saying What They Mean:** Finns say what they mean and mean what they say, getting straight to the point and expecting this from others .
- **Problem-Focused:** Communication is problem-focused, with open expression of opinions and constructive criticism intended to address matters, not persons .
- **High-Context with Directness:** While Finland is described as a high-context culture where reading between the lines is necessary, this coexists with direct verbal communication .
- **Modesty and Silence:** Modesty and humility are core virtues, and silence is often considered golden—what works well can be left unsaid .
- **Addressing Difficult Issues:** Phrases like "laittaa kissa pöydälle" (put the cat on the table) encourage open discussion of difficult issues, reflecting belief that things are solved when discussed .

Separation of Professional and Personal Spheres: Finnish workplace culture maintains clear boundaries :

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- **Initial Distance:** During initial contact, the tendency is toward keeping distance and holding factual conversations.
- **Gradual Relationship-Building:** Personal conversations become common only after colleagues have worked together for a while, with lunch and coffee breaks providing opportunities to get to know others.
- **Strict Separation:** Private matters and business matters are strictly separated, and personal questions can be perceived as intrusive.
- **Friendship Through Shared Interests:** The easiest way to make friends is through mutual interests in clubs or activities outside work.
- **Authentic Relationships:** If you gain a Finn as a friend, the relationship is genuine—associated with mutual obligations, faithfulness, and remembering birthdays.

Trust and Self-Management: Trust is fundamental :

- **Self-Management:** Everyone in the working environment complies with specific roles and skills, honors promises and arrangements, is punctual, and actively takes necessary initiatives—without external monitoring.
- **Responsibility:** Employees identify with the joint plan and take responsibility for implementing it within their areas.
- **Reliability:** Reliability is fundamental for developing good working relationships.

Time Planning and Punctuality: Time is precious and precisely managed :

- **Effective Use:** Time must be used effectively and is therefore precisely planned, including long-term dates.
- **Binding Appointments:** Arranged appointments are binding and obligatory. A good reason must be given for unpunctuality; otherwise, it is taken as a personal offense.
- **Priority of Plans:** Timely execution of tasks and projects according to plan has higher priority than personal interests.

Objective Orientation: Professional cooperation focuses on tasks :

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- **Decisive Factors:** The subject being dealt with, the roles, and the professional competence of participants are decisive.
- **Professional Behavior:** Business-like behavior is seen as professional. Emotions and personal relationships should not mix with business.
- **Expertise Valued:** Expertise is valued above hierarchy—"The boss is not always right!"

Valuing Structures and Rules: Rules and structures are respected :

- **Law-Abiding:** Finns are normally very law-abiding, adhering to rules, directives, and instructions.
- **Detailed Planning:** Complex and detailed planning is important to eliminate errors before they occur.
- **Formal Channels:** Formal channels are preferred for workplace communication—consultation, meetings, conferences recorded with minutes, and information distribution systems.
- **Performance Focus:** Fulfillment of business tasks is the main focus when assessing employees.

Leadership Evolution in Public Sector: Mattila's doctoral research (2025) reveals evolving leadership approaches :

- **Limits of Traditional Hierarchy:** Traditional, hierarchical leadership no longer works when solving today's complex problems.
- **Two-Front Success:** Leaders must succeed on two fronts: managing external networks and transforming internal culture to support service integration.
- **Trust and Dialogue:** Cooperation requires mutual trust, commitment, and shared leadership where responsibility for results is collective.
- **Continuous Dialogue:** Smooth service delivery requires continuous dialogue and clear goals.
- **Citizen-Centered:** The goal is that citizens do not even notice they are dealing with multiple organizations—the service entity is coherent, information flows, and people feel genuinely helped.

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Table 3: Comparative Summary—Gabon and Finland

Dimension	**Gabon**	**Finland**	
Hierarchical Structure	High power distance; clear hierarchy; top-down decisions	Low power distance; flat hierarchy; egalitarian	
Communication Style	Formal yet personal; indirect when needed for harmony	Direct, frank, problem-focused; say what they mean	
Decision-Making	Concentrated at senior levels; final decisions by most senior	Participatory; open to all levels; "the boss is not always right"	
Address and Titles	Formal titles (Monsieur/Madame) until invited otherwise	First names common; informal while maintaining boundaries	
Relationship-Building	Essential before business; preliminary pleasantries; socializing	Task-first; relationships develop gradually through shared activities	
Trust Basis	Builds through personal relationships over time	Builds through reliability, competence, fulfilling commitments	
Time Orientation	Flexible; meetings may start late; patience essential	Precise; punctuality fundamental; appointments binding	
Linguistic Environment	Multilingual: French, Fang, Myene	Primarily Finnish and Swedish; English in international contexts	
Digital Communication	Adopted but usage mixed; appropriation varies	Highly digitalized; formal channels preferred for communication	
Leadership Approach	Directive; respect for authority; top-down	Trust-based; dialogic; evolving toward collaboration	

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Professional-Personal Boundary	Blended; personal relationships integral to business	Strictly separated; personal matters private	

Key Differences:

1. **Power Distance:** Gabon exemplifies high power distance with clear hierarchies and respect for authority . Finland exemplifies low power distance with egalitarian values and flat hierarchies .
2. **Communication Directness:** Gabonese communication balances directness with indirect approaches to maintain harmony . Finnish communication is notably direct and frank .
3. **Relationship and Task:** Gabonese culture integrates relationship-building with task completion . Finnish culture separates relationship from task, with professional interaction focused on work .
4. **Decision-Making:** Gabonese decision-making is concentrated at senior levels . Finnish decision-making is participatory and open to input from all levels .
5. **Time Orientation:** Gabonese approach to time is flexible . Finnish approach to time is precise and punctuality is fundamental .
6. **Professional-Personal Boundary:** Gabonese workplace culture blends professional and personal spheres . Finnish workplace culture maintains strict separation .

Key Similarities:

1. **Value of Trust:** Both cultures value trust, though its basis differs—personal relationships in Gabon, reliability and competence in Finland.
2. **Importance of Communication:** Both recognize communication as central to organizational functioning, though styles differ.
3. **Adaptation to Modern Tools:** Both are adapting to digital communication technologies, though at different paces and with different appropriation patterns .
4. **Respect for Competence:** Both value professional competence, though expressed differently within their cultural frameworks.
5. **Organizational Change:** Both face pressures for organizational change—Gabon in digital transformation , Finland in public sector collaboration .

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6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Power Distance and Its Organizational Implications

The contrast between Gabon and Finland on the dimension of power distance illuminates fundamental differences in how organizations structure authority and how employees relate to hierarchy. Gabon's high power distance culture, with its clear hierarchies and respect for authority , reflects deep cultural values about the proper ordering of social relationships. This structure provides clarity about roles and responsibilities, creates predictable career paths, and establishes clear lines of authority. Employees know who has the power to make decisions and to whom they should defer.

However, high power distance also has potential drawbacks. Upward communication may be constrained by formality and deference, limiting the flow of information from lower levels to leadership. Employees may be reluctant to express disagreement or offer critical feedback, potentially allowing problems to persist unnoticed. Decision-making may be slower as issues move up the hierarchy, and the organization may miss valuable insights from those closest to daily operations.

Finland's low power distance culture, with its egalitarian values and flat hierarchies , embodies different cultural assumptions about authority and participation. The expectation that people be treated as equals regardless of rank reflects deep commitment to democratic values and individual autonomy. This structure enables rapid information flow, encourages employee initiative, and allows problems to be addressed by those with relevant knowledge regardless of their position.

Yet low power distance also has potential challenges. The absence of clear hierarchy can sometimes create ambiguity about who has authority to make decisions. The expectation that all voices be heard can slow decision-making when consensus is required. And the cultural preference for directness, while efficient, may sometimes be perceived as blunt or insensitive.

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Neither approach is inherently superior; each reflects the cultural logic of its society. The key for organizations is alignment—ensuring that internal communication practices, decision-making processes, and leadership styles are congruent with cultural expectations.

6.2 Communication Directness and Organizational Effectiveness

Finnish directness and Gabonese indirectness represent different strategies for achieving organizational goals while maintaining social harmony. The Finnish approach, captured in phrases like "put the cat on the table" , prioritizes open discussion of issues as the path to solutions. Problems are addressed directly, feedback is given frankly, and the expectation is that everyone will engage constructively with whatever is raised. This approach can be highly efficient for problem-solving and ensures that issues are not allowed to fester unaddressed.

The Gabonese approach, which balances directness with indirect communication when needed to maintain harmony , prioritizes relationship preservation alongside task completion. Sensitive topics may be approached indirectly, criticism softened, and disagreement expressed diplomatically. This approach can preserve the interpersonal trust that makes collaboration possible and prevent the conflicts that can arise from overly direct confrontation.

The effectiveness of each approach depends on context. In crisis situations requiring rapid action, Finnish directness may be essential. In situations requiring long-term collaboration and trust, Gabonese attention to relational harmony may be more appropriate. Organizations operating across cultures must develop capacity to navigate these differences.

6.3 Trust: Relational vs. Competence-Based

The basis of trust differs fundamentally between the two cultures. In Gabon, trust builds through personal relationships developed over time through social interaction . The preliminary pleasantries, inquiries about well-being, and socializing outside formal meetings are not extraneous to business but essential foundations for trust. Without this relational foundation, professional interaction cannot proceed effectively.

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In Finland, trust builds through reliability, competence, and fulfilling commitments . The punctuality, adherence to agreements, and competent execution of tasks demonstrate trustworthiness. Personal relationship may develop over time through shared work and social activities, but it is not a prerequisite for professional cooperation.

These different bases of trust have implications for organizational practices. In Gabonese contexts, organizations should invest in relationship-building activities that enable personal connection—social events, extended meetings with time for interaction, opportunities for informal conversation. In Finnish contexts, organizations should focus on creating systems that enable reliable performance—clear processes, effective training, supportive supervision.

6.4 Digital Transformation and Cultural Adaptation

Ovoundaga's research at Omar Bongo University highlights that digital transformation is not simply a technological process but a cultural one. Digital tools may be adopted as organizational policy, but their actual usage is shaped by employee practices, preferences, and cultural norms. The finding that usage remains "mixed" and appropriation "contrasted" suggests that the integration of digital communication into Gabonese organizational life is still evolving.

This finding has implications for both countries. In Gabon, successful digital transformation requires attention to how tools fit with existing communication norms—the preference for face-to-face interaction, the importance of personal relationship, the multilingual environment. Tools that support rather than disrupt these patterns are more likely to be embraced.

In Finland, where formal channels and structured communication are preferred , digital tools that support documentation, planning, and structured information flow may be more readily adopted. The emphasis on efficiency and precise time management aligns well with digital systems that enable scheduling, task tracking, and documented communication.

6.5 Implications for SDG 16

The findings have important implications for achieving SDG 16 targets:

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Target 16.6 (Effective, accountable and transparent institutions): Institutional effectiveness requires internal communication practices that enable information flow, decision-making, and accountability. Gabon's hierarchical structures provide clear accountability lines but may constrain upward communication. Finland's egalitarian structures enable broad participation but require mechanisms for coordination. Both approaches can produce effective institutions when aligned with cultural context.

Target 16.7 (Responsive, inclusive, participatory decision-making): Participation takes different forms in different cultures. In Gabon, participation may be expressed through consultation processes that respect hierarchical structures while gathering input from various levels. In Finland, participation is built into flat hierarchies and open communication lines. The principle of inclusive decision-making can be achieved through culturally appropriate means.

Target 16.10 (Public access to information): Internal communication practices shape how information flows within institutions, which in turn affects the institution's ability to serve the public. Organizations with effective internal communication are better positioned to provide accurate, timely information to citizens.

Cross-cutting dimensions: Trust, transparency, and accountability are essential for strong institutions. The different bases of trust in Gabon (relational) and Finland (competence-based) suggest that different strategies may be needed to build institutional trust in each context.

7. CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis of internal communication and organizational culture in Gabon and Finland reveals profound insights into how cultural values shape the way organizations function. The two countries, with their distinct historical trajectories and cultural frameworks, demonstrate fundamentally different approaches to hierarchy, communication, trust, and decision-making—yet both have developed organizational cultures that are coherent, functional, and adapted to their societies.

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Gabon's organizational culture is characterized by clear hierarchical structures, formal communication protocols, and the centrality of personal relationships in professional life. Employees address superiors with formal titles, decision-making flows from the top down, and preliminary relationship-building precedes core business discussions . The multilingual workplace environment—with French, Fang, and Myene used across sectors—adds complexity to internal communication . Digital tools have been adopted as pillars of internal communication, but their usage remains mixed and appropriation patterns vary .

This hierarchical, relationship-based approach has significant strengths. It provides clarity about roles and authority, fosters loyalty and interpersonal trust, and ensures that decisions are made by those with experience and positional authority. The emphasis on relationship-building creates strong social bonds that can support collaboration and mutual support.

However, this approach also has potential limitations. Upward communication may be constrained by formality and deference, limiting the flow of information from lower levels. Decision-making may be slower as issues move through hierarchy. And the integration of personal and professional spheres can create complexity in workplace relationships.

Finland's organizational culture presents a contrasting picture defined by low hierarchy, egalitarian values, and direct communication. Finnish workplaces feature flat hierarchies where individual contributors feel as empowered as senior leaders . Communication is frank and problem-focused, with cultural phrases encouraging open discussion of difficult issues . Trust and self-direction are fundamental, with employees expected to take initiative without external monitoring . Professional and personal spheres are strictly separated, with personal conversations developing gradually through shared work and social activities . Doctoral research highlights the evolution toward even greater collaboration and trust-based leadership in the public sector .

This egalitarian, direct approach has its own strengths. It enables rapid information flow, encourages employee initiative and creativity, and allows problems to be addressed quickly by those with relevant knowledge. The separation of professional and personal spheres can simplify workplace relationships and protect employee privacy.

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Yet this approach also has potential challenges. The absence of clear hierarchy can sometimes create ambiguity about authority. The expectation of broad participation can slow decision-making when consensus is required. And the direct communication style may be perceived as blunt by those from more indirect cultures.

Several cross-cutting insights emerge from this comparison:

First, organizational culture reflects deeper societal values. Gabon's hierarchical structures and Finland's egalitarian values are not arbitrary choices but expressions of fundamental cultural orientations about authority, relationships, and social order. Efforts to change organizational practices must engage with these deeper cultural frameworks.

Second, there is no single best way to organize. Both Gabon's relationship-based hierarchy and Finland's task-focused egalitarianism can produce effective institutions when aligned with their cultural contexts. The key is coherence—ensuring that communication practices, decision-making processes, and leadership styles are mutually reinforcing and culturally appropriate.

Third, trust is universal but its bases vary. Both cultures value trust, but Gabon builds it through personal relationships while Finland builds it through reliability and competence. Organizations must understand these different bases to build trust effectively.

Fourth, digital transformation is cultural transformation. Ovoundaga's research reminds us that introducing digital tools is not merely a technical change but a cultural one. How employees appropriate these tools depends on existing communication norms, relationship patterns, and work practices.

Fifth, organizations face evolving pressures. Finland's public sector research shows that even well-functioning organizational cultures must evolve to meet new challenges—in this case, the need for cross-organizational collaboration following major reform. Organizational culture is not static but adapts to changing circumstances.

Sixth, globalization creates contact zones. As organizations from different cultural contexts interact—through multinational companies, international partnerships, and global supply chains—understanding cultural differences in communication becomes essential for effectiveness.

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Seventh, SDG 16's goals of effective, accountable, transparent, and participatory institutions can be achieved through diverse means. Gabon's hierarchical approach and Finland's egalitarian approach can both produce institutions that meet these standards, though through different mechanisms.

For Gabon, priorities emerging from this analysis include:

1. Build on the foundation of hierarchical clarity while developing mechanisms for upward feedback that respect cultural norms around authority. This might include formal consultation processes, anonymous feedback channels, or designated employee representatives.
2. Leverage the strength of personal relationships as a basis for trust and collaboration while ensuring that professional standards are maintained.
3. Address the mixed appropriation of digital tools by providing training, support, and systems that align with existing communication preferences.
4. Develop multilingual communication strategies that recognize the roles of French, Fang, Myene, and other languages in different organizational contexts.
5. Prepare employees for cross-cultural interactions with partners from more egalitarian cultures through training and exchange.

For Finland, priorities include:

1. Continue evolving leadership approaches toward greater collaboration and dialogue, as highlighted in Mattila's research , while maintaining the strengths of trust-based, self-directed work.
2. Ensure that the direct communication style, while efficient, does not inadvertently discourage input from those who may be more accustomed to indirect communication, including employees from other cultural backgrounds.
3. Maintain the separation of professional and personal spheres while creating opportunities for the gradual relationship-building that leads to deeper trust.
4. Leverage digital tools that support structured, documented communication aligned with Finnish preferences for formal channels .

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5. Share Finnish experience with organizational transparency, trust-based management, and work-life balance with other countries through international cooperation.

For the international community, the lessons are clear: organizational culture is not a technical variable to be optimized but a deep expression of societal values. Efforts to build effective, accountable, and transparent institutions must engage with these cultural frameworks, not attempt to override them. The principles of SDG 16—participation, accountability, transparency—can be realized through diverse means adapted to different cultural contexts.

The ultimate measure of success for SDG 16 is not whether institutions match some external template but whether they are effective in serving their populations, accountable to those they serve, and transparent in their operations—in ways that are culturally appropriate and locally owned. Gabon and Finland, in their different ways, are both working toward these goals.

8. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the comparative analysis relies primarily on secondary sources rather than primary empirical research. Direct observation of workplace communication in both countries, interviews with employees and managers at various levels, and participatory research would provide valuable additional perspectives and ground-truth the findings from published literature. Second, data availability and comparability vary significantly between countries. Finland benefits from extensive documentation through academic research, university guides, and case studies. Gabon's sources are more limited, with one academic study providing detailed research on digital communication and cultural guides offering practical information on workplace norms . Third, the study focuses primarily on formal organizational settings, with less attention to informal economy workplaces that constitute significant portions of employment in Gabon. Fourth, the voice of employees themselves is mediated through research reports and cultural guides rather than captured directly. Future research should prioritize participatory methodologies that center workers' own understandings of their communication practices. Fifth, the study does not comprehensively address the political economy dimensions—the interests, power relations, and structural forces that shape organizational communication in both countries. Understanding why Gabon's organizational culture developed

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as it did or how Finland's egalitarian values are maintained amid global pressures would require deeper political economy analysis. Sixth, the transferability analysis is necessarily speculative. While principles can be identified, actual transfer of organizational practices depends on countless contextual factors including legal systems, economic structures, educational institutions, and historical legacies that cannot be fully anticipated. Despite these limitations, the comparative analysis provides valuable insights into the relationship between cultural values and organizational communication, with implications for both countries and for broader efforts to achieve SDG 16.

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10. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author conceived the study, designed the research methodology, conducted the literature review and document analysis, synthesized findings across countries, and drafted the complete manuscript. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy of information presented and interpretations offered.

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11. COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential competing interest. No funding was received from organizations with interests in organizational communication, human resources, or related sectors.

12. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

As sole author, I performed all roles including conceptualization, methodology development, investigation, formal analysis, writing, review, editing, and project administration.

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14. DATA AVAILABILITY

All sources analyzed in this study are publicly available documents, including cultural guides, academic research articles, university guides, and media publications. Primary sources are cited in the bibliography and accessible through the referenced publications and organizations.

15. DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any institution or organization with which the author may be affiliated. The analysis is provided for scholarly purposes and should not be construed as organizational guidance or management advice. Workplace norms, communication practices, and organizational cultures are

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subject to change, and readers should consult current sources for specific information about Gabon, Finland, and organizational communication.

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