

Work-Related Alcohol Consumption: An Analysis of Motivators and Responses across Cultures

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While research into alcohol abuse is abundant, the science of how differing cultures view and respond to mild work-related alcohol consumption has been scientifically neglected. This article displays results from surveys conducted over a 7-year period and pivots around the cultural dimensions 'Power distance', 'Individualism', 'Indulgence' and 'Interpersonal trust' which are correlated with motivators, responses and acceptance levels of mild work-related alcohol consumption. The strongest motivator for participating in mild work-related drinking was 'To celebrate with colleagues', which achieved significance with all cultural dimensions except power distance, which in contrast, achieved significance with the motivator 'To bring out the real character' of the counterpart. Power distance also correlated strongly with negative emotions regarding the refusal of a drink when offered by a senior. Altogether, 52 correlation tests were conducted of which 18 achieved significance. We believe that a better understanding of this topic will increase the likelihood of obtaining a harmonious workplace that lessens employee misunderstandings and conflict.

Keywords: culture, alcohol, workplace, power distance, individualism, trust, indulgence

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Introduction

The consumption of alcohol is a widespread and socially accepted behaviour in most societies around the world. Its consumption is linked to a plethora of individual, social and cultural reasons that typically pivot

around an attempt to enhance enjoyment and promote a more relaxed and casual atmosphere. While the negative health and social repercussions of alcohol consumption have been thoroughly researched and modelled, global studies examining the impact of cultural variances on the motivation and acceptance of mild work-related alcohol consumption are lacking.

The negative health and psychological consequences of alcohol abuse are clear and are widely documented in countless medical journals. Research pertaining to alcohol consumption is thus strongly biased towards exploring the damaging physical and psychological effects of alcohol consumption. This is warranted: it is estimated that alcohol consumption kills more than three million people annually and is associated with general health loss and increased propensity for psychological deterioration (World Health Organization 2018). In contrast to alcohol abuse, the relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and health deterioration is complex (Panza et al. 2012), with varying results spanning from mild health deterioration to some studies suggesting small levels of alcohol consumption can have some social and mental benefits (Fairbairn et al. 2015; Moore et al. 2005) and some health benefits, e.g. lowering the risk of cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes (for a systematic review of studies pertaining to alcohol consumption in relation to health, see: Luitgaarden et al. (2022) and Dadras et al. (2022)). While these avenues exploring health-related implications of alcohol consumption remain dominant in literature and medical research today, much less is known about the social constitution implicit within the context of alcohol consumption patterns, especially in an environment of multiple cultures. For employees active in international organizations, being able to know how to navigate correct corporate behaviour in situations where alcohol is served may not be straightforward. For instance, when is it okay to say yes to an alcoholic beverage and when is it okay to refuse an alcoholic beverage when offered within the work domain?

These questions become increasingly relevant in an ever-globalizing world where company activity across borders and interaction between culturally diverse people rise in frequency. The challenges that accompany a transition from a mono-cultural organization to a multi-cultural global entity are plentiful. When it comes to the human capital within the organization and the norms and rituals they adhere to, the variances between culturally diverse employees manifest themselves in a plethora of ways (Gulev 2009b). Managing such global transitions resides in the ability to know which cultural origins lend themselves to certain behavioural tendencies and preferences.

The current article assists the global multi-faceted company, and its stakeholders, in better understanding how one of these societal norms may be interpreted very differently by varying cultural origins, namely, how mild work-related alcohol consumption is perceived differently across cultures. This research avenue, exploring the characteristics of drinking occasions that lead to feelings of subjective wellbeing and social cohesiveness in the workplace, remains largely unexplored compared to the literature on drinking occasions that lead to alcohol abuse (Peele and Grant 1999). The topic of alcohol abuse and its facilitators has formed much of our understanding of the problems associated with alcohol mis-handling and lays the foundation for alcohol policy issues in various cultures around the world (Alfred, Limmer, and Cartwright 2021; Roche et al. 2019). This literature is relevant and helps us understand how to deal with the negative repercussions of alcohol addiction and find suitable remedies in cases of abuse. However, it does not apply to the vast majority of situations where humans are consuming alcohol in a responsible and communal manner in the interest of facilitating social cohesion, nor does it apply to work-related drinking occasions.

The overarching aim of this article is to explore the varying reasons behind why some employees may be motivated to consume alcohol at work and under which conditions they are accepted by some but rejected by others. Further, what may be the social responses of employees that deem a colleague to be participating in inappropriate work-time drinking and under which conditions is it acceptable to refuse an alcoholic beverage when offered by a superior? These questions can be explored through various channels of observation, e.g. departmental variances, seasonal celebrations, corporate norms, age differentiations, etc. that may all influence the acceptance and frequency with which alcohol consumption occurs within the workplace. For instance, it is plausible that a sales department may engage in more regular alcohol consumption with potential clients than would an IT department. Similarly, medical practitioners may adhere to very different corporate norms regarding alcohol consumption compared to corporate consultants. These channels of observation are relevant and can help further contextualize work-related drinking behaviour. However, for the current study, the acceptance levels of work-related alcohol consumption are limited to the prism of cultural variances that categorize our respondents into organized groups of shared traits, thus discounting peripheral influences such as gender biases, departmental inclinations and age variations. The goal of the research is to better un-

derstand why some cultures consider alcohol consumption at the workplace acceptable and desired while others consider it undesirable and potentially damaging. Further, it is intended to gain insight into the social responses that may be triggered when alcohol is consumed during a work event and when the refusal of a drinking occasion can be perceived negatively by management and peers. Such insights will help individuals in a multicultural workspace better understand how to behave and react during a work-related event that is loaded with pre-set judgements and perceptions on right and wrong work-related behaviour.

In accordance with this thought-line, the remainder of this article is structured as follows. The second section presents a short literature review of the status-quo regarding alcohol consumption and its consequences on health and social wellbeing as well as an overview of findings relating alcohol consumption to cultural studies. The third section explains the methodological framework that lays the foundation for the analysis of the accumulated data while the fourth section reveals the results in the form of correlation coefficients. The fifth section discusses the meaning of the significant correlations and attempts to contextualize why some correlations that were expected to achieve significance failed. Finally, the conclusion sums up the main findings and highlights the limitations that this study suffers from.

Literature Review

Research pertaining to alcohol usage is overwhelmingly focused on risk factors, spanning from societal levels to personal levels (Sudhinaraset, Wiggelsworth, and Takeuchi 2016). These risk factors pivot around the destructive association between alcohol consumption and a variety of health deteriorating indicators such as accelerated cellular ageing (e.g. Carvalho et al. 2019; Boule and Kovacs 2017) and the link between alcohol consumption and Alzheimer's disease (Matloff et al. 2020). A plethora of similar studies examining longitudinal patterns and effects of alcohol consumption point in the same direction and document alcohol's addictive nature, damaging health and mental consequences and associated negative stigma (e.g. Ulrich et al. 2022; Judkins et al. 2022; Higgins-Biddle and Babor 2018).

These risk factors and negative effects are serious and research agendas along these tracks are valuable as they help us understand how alcohol can become destructive and the social costs associated with regular abusive drinking. However, along some peripheral research tracks, the use of alcohol is not associated with negative social and health consequences

but rather associated with an exploration of how alcohol consumption can enhance a socially conducive environment; an environment that promotes subjective wellbeing and communal cohesiveness among diverse people and creates social bonds that may otherwise not have been formed (Moore et al. 2005). Research into this less negatively laden avenue of alcohol consumption is less common but also very valuable to further understand and contextualize.

Rudnev and Vaclair (2018) explore the frequency with which alcohol is consumed in various recreational situations following three main motives for consuming alcohol: 1. Enjoyment and sensation seeking, 2. Social motives, and 3. Coping motives. They find that personal motives are strong predictors of the specific kind of drinking behaviour individuals will participate in. Hebden et al. (2015) explore university students' alcohol consumption patterns in tune with online drinking activities and find that while heavy drinking is a real risk concern, 'pleasurable consumption' of alcohol also leads to increased socialization and networking among university students.

Similarly, a symbiotic link is explored between moderate drinking behaviour and evoking positive emotions where it is proposed that while positive emotions may lessen drinking behaviour, the reverse is also true. As such, in the long run, a positive cycle of low alcohol consumption can be combined with sustained positive emotions (Previte, Russel-Bennet, and Parkinson 2015). Complementing this thought-line, Cooper et al. (2015) argue that people consume alcohol to manage internal feelings and to obtain valued social outcomes, thereby obtaining some social benefit through communal alcohol consumption.

In the workplace, the majority of studies on alcohol in relation to employee conduct tend to pivot around alcohol abuse often leading to efficiency losses mostly measured through poorer performance and extended sick leave. Blum, Roman, and Martin (1993) find that heavy drinkers score lower on work-performance skills such as self-direction and conflict avoidance abilities. These findings are complemented by numerous studies that arrive at similar conclusions. Mangione et al. (1999) show that heavy drinkers typically display more work performance problems than their lesser drinking counterparts, Thorrisen et al. (2019) demonstrate a link between higher levels of alcohol consumption and impaired work performance, and Sullivan, Edgar, and McAndrew (2019) calculate the average cost of lost productivity per employee that engages in heavy drinking by calculating absenteeism costs and inefficiency costs when present.

For a systematic review of alcohol-induced performance losses and absenteeism rates at the workplace see Hashemi et al. (2022), and for interventions that can be employed see Elling et al. (2020) and Lee et al. (2014).

This research, pertaining to how a minority of people consume alcohol at excessive levels, continues to receive the majority of academic and scientific scrutiny. Conversely, research into how the majority of people consume alcohol, in a mild and non-abusive fashion, has received comparatively little academic scrutiny, especially within the work realm.

In relation to how alcohol consumption varies across national cultures, research tends to focus on the amount of alcohol consumed in terms of frequency and extent of consumption. Moyo (1999) explores 'dry' versus 'wet' cultures, examining cultures where comparatively little alcohol is consumed overall but when drinking, it is extensive, leading to drunkenness, and contrasts it to cultures that are 'wet', where drinking occurs more regularly but in milder formats. She clusters Canada, the United States and the Scandinavian countries in the former group and Mediterranean and Latin cultures in the latter. Other studies that have followed claim the clarity with which 'wet' and 'dry' cultures can be made distinct is being blurred as overall alcohol consumption has increased in the North while decreasing in the South (Leifman 2001; Allamani et al. 2000). In more recent studies, the distinction at a national level has faded further, with no major distinctions between large clusters of countries but rather large distinctions within sub-cultures of those countries (Clements, Lan, and Liu 2020). Similarly, in a systematic review of over 80 articles on the topic of cultural difference in alcohol consumption, Aresi and Bloomfield (2021) conclude that it is problematic to define drinking habits at the national level as the broader cultural context is missing. This warrants the focus shifting from a national, country-specific analysis to a value-based cultural analysis that may measure cultural norms of individuals relinquished of national identity.

A few research initiatives seek to explore how differing values and norms, as measured by, for example, the World Values Survey (for viewing the latest World Values Survey data, please see wvs (World Values Survey 2022)), influence alcohol consumption. Assuming cultural variances can be measured on bipolar scales, a popular method adopted by many contemporary researchers, perhaps most notably Geert Hofstede and his six bipolar cultural dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010), we can start forming questions about which values may influence specific alcoholic drinking tendencies at the workplace.

TABLE 1 Summarization of Key Cultural Terms

Cultural dimension	Short definition	Typical country manifestations*
Power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010)	Measures inequality and unequal distribution of power	Low: The Netherlands, the Nordic countries High: China, France, Malaysia
Individualism (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010)	Measures the extent to which people primarily look after themselves	Low: Malaysia, Portugal High: USA, Australia
Indulgence (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010)	Measures the degree of freedom that societal norms give to citizens in fulfilling their desires	Low: South Korea, Russia, Japan High: Argentina, Chile, Canada
Interpersonal trust (Evans 2016)	Expectancy that others can be relied upon and being willing to quickly trust strangers	Low: Serbia, Bulgaria High: Denmark, Finland

NOTE *The correlation tests pertaining to this study purposely omit national portrayals as the survey data includes individual cultural profiles that are more specific than broad country portrayals. However, to help contextualize the cultural dimensions and better link which countries likely embody the people that express the upcoming views on work-related alcohol consumption, a brief country manifestation list is included.

In a recent study, Simha et al. (2022) examine stigmas regarding alcohol use in various cultures using several of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. They find a significant positive correlation between stigmas regarding alcohol use and institutional collectivism as well as assertiveness, but a negative association with future orientation. Albeit not related directly to the workplace, for the former, this suggests that cultures exhibiting high institutional collectivism and assertiveness levels are prone to negatively judge alcohol consumption whereas cultures high on future orientation appear to be more acceptant of this.

Further studies explore other cultural dimensions and their relative-ness to alcohol consumption. Wells et al. (2014) assert that masculinity, as expressed through higher acceptance of risk and aggression as well as a ‘playboy’ mentality for males, is significantly linked to heavy episode drinking. Mackinnon et al. (2017) find that individuals that rank high on individualism, in contrast to collectivism, more strongly endorsed social and enhancement motives that lead to increased alcohol consumption. Equally interesting, in a study conducted over a 15-year period, the manner in which authority is asserted, as measured through power distance, was found to be positively linked to wine consumption in 90% of wine consuming countries in the world (Agnoli and Outreville 2020).

These findings are valuable as we begin to understand how the values of an individual, as measured through the use of bipolar cultural spectrums, influence alcohol consumption. However, when relating this plot to the employment sector, little attention has been given to how the workplace setting interacts with the motivation and responses of individuals with respect to their work-related alcohol consumption patterns (Pidd 2005). It is this void in literature concerning the acceptance and rejection of mild consumption of alcohol in the workplace, measured through cultural variations, that the current study seeks to remedy. To accomplish this, Table 1 summarizes short definitions of the cultural dimensions that are probed and ultimately correlated with the motivators, responses and opinions pertaining to work-related alcohol consumption.

Methodology

Data collection started in 2015 and lasted until the beginning of 2022. Within this timeframe, eight independent studies focusing on cultural influences on work-related alcohol consumption were conducted by separate research teams at two different universities of applied sciences in Germany that collaborated on this project.

The results from the studies were compiled and recalculated into one large overarching data pool that could be used for composite analysis. This involved identifying a comparable metric, in our case, rank orders for the data in each study that could be processed through a correlation analysis using Spearman rank correlation tests.

The surveys were conducted entirely in English and targeted employed individuals in companies based in Europe, North America and East Asia. Survey respondents that did not match this profile were excluded from the analysis. Within this narrowed demographic scope, randomized sampling was performed where the surveyed respondents were randomly included for analysis from the population pool limited by the aforementioned geographic location, employment status and linguistic aptitude. However, as the surveys were performed on a voluntary basis, only those that were inclined to devote their time to the surveys participated. As such, some level of convenience sampling is apparent as complete population randomness, within the narrowed demographic scope, could not be assured. While direct generalizations to the larger population may thus be mildly compromised, we are confident that the results are not sample specific or biased as the respondents participating on a voluntary basis are not expected to differ along the probed cultural dimensions or alco-

hol predilections compared to those that had time constraints and did not participate in the study. We feel the results from our survey respondents can thus responsibly be termed reflective of the larger population.

As individual cultural profiles were conducted for each survey respondent throughout the eight studies, the national location of the people being probed and its cultural connection were omitted from the analysis. Despite the researchers agreeing that national and corporate cultures are often isomorphic (Gulev 2009a), this omission was important in order to increase the accuracy of the data obtained directly from the survey respondents who could more precisely depict their cultural biases, values and traits compared to the broad depictions given by generic national-based cultural portrayals.

From the eight studies a total of 980 returned survey questionnaires were accepted for analysis. The data was collected using online questionnaires disseminated through social media tools with 5- and 7-point Likert scales measuring variances in motivation for drinking and variances in cultural bias towards the cultural dimensions. The data collection process was not conducted in a uniform manner and was led by differing research groups that shared the same research goal but pursued mildly different data accumulation methods as is evidenced by the non-conformity of the Likert scales as well as variances in the sample sizes of each study. The collected data from the surveys that went into the eight studies was thus initially not compatible and could not be directly compiled into a common data pool. In order to achieve uniformity with the data, the different composite datasets from the studies were recalculated using percentages for each subsection of the surveys from which the data came and subsequently recategorized into different subcategories that each independent research endeavour could be matched with. As such, the data from the pooled surveys from the different research teams pertaining to motivators for drinking were resorted and ranked into 14 levels, ranging from high to low, and matched to its specific motivator, for example, 'drinking in order to break the ice'. Similarly, the data pertaining to the cultural values of the respondents were reorganized and ranked from the 5- and 7-point Likert scale into 14 levels matching each analysed cultural dimension, for example 'Interpersonal trust levels'. In doing so, the data from each data collection endeavour were primed for analysis as the different data sets became compatible. This important step ensured that the research data was usable for analytic purposes; however, it came at the cost of some accuracy. As the individual data sets

were resorted into rank orders they lost their absolute values, which deprives this analysis of some precision. However, by utilizing 14 rank orders for each subsection of analysis, some precision was recovered; the smaller the gap in between the rank orders, the lower the variance in the recalculated percentage values between each data point. With this intermediate step accomplished, the data sets, reorganized into rank orders, could be collectively analysed using Spearman rank correlation tests.

Throughout the questionnaire, the method of triangulation was used for each topic of analysis, repeating the notion of the topic in subsequent sections, thereby testing for consistency in the responses. The first section of the survey questionnaires dealt with the cultural traits of the respondents that initially probed the dimensions 'Power Distance', 'Indulgence', 'Individualism', 'High Context', 'Secular Oriented' and 'Interpersonal Trust'. These six cultural dimensions were chosen for their suspected affiliation and influence on potential variances pertaining to alcohol consumption that may occur at the workplace and were loosely based on Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions questionnaire as well as questions inspired by the World Value Survey (Inglehart et al. 2014) probing interpersonal trust levels and secularism. This suspected affiliation was based on results that were obtained from an academic workshop where multiple mainstream cultural dimensions were discussed and predictions were expressed as to which cultural dimensions may possess the most potential for a fruitful analysis of work-related alcohol consumption across cultures. Only four of the cultural dimensions, namely 'Power Distance', 'Indulgence', 'Individualism' and 'Interpersonal Trust' were used for the composite analysis as they revealed the most interesting results worthy of further analysis. It is these four cultural dimensions that are included and referenced in this article. The subsequent section probed motivators behind work-related alcohol consumption and social response of employees that deem a colleague to be participating in inappropriate work-related alcohol consumption. These motivators and responses were gathered from the same workshop where predictions were made as to why alcohol may be consumed at the workplace. A final section dealing with opinions related to alcohol at the workplace was included as it was deemed interesting to probe three peripheral tangents that did not fit directly into the motivators or responses categories, yet were predicted to yield interesting results that vary according to the selected cultural dimensions.

To test the strength of the correlations between our cultural traits and opinions about work-related alcohol consumption, Spearman rank cor-

relation tests fitted with confidence intervals for 14 datasets were conducted. This involved 52 tests (the results of which are shown in the following section) that were conducted by calculating the Spearman rank correlation coefficient (ρ) as:

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \times \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)},$$

where d = the difference in the rank values (i) for n (14) observations.

Results

The Spearman rank correlation tests calculated coefficient results between the cultural profiles our respondents expressed and their attitudes on several topics pertaining to work-related alcohol consumption. The results are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Spearman Rank Correlation Results

	Power Distance	Individualism	Indulgence	Interpersonal Trust
Motivation for consuming alcohol at work				
To celebrate/bond with colleagues	-0.426	0.622*	0.554*	0.589*
To allow for a time out	0.257	0.263	0.42	0.183
To bring out the real character	0.548*	0.452	0.059	-0.832**
To break the ice	0.165	0.824**	0.254	0.343
For the taste	-0.296	0.296	0.692**	0.443
Because it is normal	0.045	0.304	0.499	0.29
Social response of employees that deem a colleague to be participating in inappropriate work-time drinking				
Confront/talk to him/her	-0.541*	0.433	-0.421	0.737**
Do nothing/ignore	0.126	0.396	-0.621*	0.722**
Join him/her	0.327	-0.284	-0.167	0.025
Inform superior	0.677*	-0.305	-0.742**	-0.621*
Opinion about work-related alcohol consumption				
A complete ban on work-related drinking would be good	-0.232	0.580*	-0.358	-0.609*
Refusing a drink from boss is viewed negatively	0.729**	0.423	-0.029	0.622*
Working from home increases work-related drinking	-0.198	0.308	-0.426	-0.261

NOTES $N = 14$. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Several significant correlations emerged between our cultural dimensions and motivations for consuming alcohol at work and social responses of employees that judge a drinking occasion to be inappropriate as well as opinions related to the compatibility of alcohol in the work space.

Beginning with the motivations for consuming alcohol in the workplace, positive significant correlations were notable within three of the four analysed dimensions for wanting 'To celebrate/bond with colleagues'. Only 'Power distance' failed to achieve significance within this category and interestingly revealed a negative, albeit insignificant, correlation. The only significant negative correlation within the realm of motivations was linked to 'Interpersonal trust' levels with regards to wanting 'To bring out the real character' of the drinking counterpart.

The results pertaining to the social responses regarding inappropriate work-related alcohol consumption were more varied. 'Interpersonal trust' achieved three significant correlations; 'Informing a superior' achieved a significant negative correlation (-0.621) while 'confronting him/her' as well as 'ignoring it' both achieved significant positive correlations (0.737 and 0.722 , respectively). 'Indulgence' achieved only negative correlations, two of which were significant, and 'Individualism' achieved both positive and negative correlations, albeit all being insignificant. 'Power distance' achieved one significant positive correlation connected to 'Informing a superior' (0.677) and one significant negative correlation concerning direct confrontation (-0.541).

Finally, the results pertaining to opinions related to the compatibility of alcohol in the work space revealed many interesting thought-lines. Surprisingly, the notion 'A complete ban on work-related drinking would be good' scored significantly positive with 'Individualism' (0.580) while scoring significantly negative with 'Interpersonal trust' (-0.609). 'Refusing a drink from a superior is viewed negatively' achieved two significant positive correlations; the first with 'Power distance' (0.729) and the second with 'Interpersonal trust' (0.622). Lastly, although most correlations pointed in the negative directions, no significant correlations were found regarding 'Working from home increases work related drinking'. These results will be discussed in the following section.

Discussion

RESULTS PERTAINING TO POWER DISTANCE

Perhaps surprisingly, only one significant correlation emerged regarding extents of power distance and work drinking motivations. As power

distance levels increased so did the likelihood that the motivation for participating in a work-related drinking occasion pivoted around the desire to 'Bring out the real character' (0.548) of the opposing alcohol consuming person. It is theorized that high power distance employees may leave colleagues with uncertain and distant perceptions of each other. A common drink would be an opportunity for titles and status to be lessened in importance and provide more clarity and closeness in the bond that exists between co-workers, between and across ranks. As such, with small levels of intoxication, the high power distance employee is granted a candid view into a co-worker's otherwise closed off and formal behaviour.

In scenarios where a co-worker deems a fellow co-worker to be participating in inappropriate drinking behaviour at the workplace, power distance revealed several significant correlations. First, 'Informing a superior' was found to be significantly correlated with high power distance (0.677). These results comply with the high power distance notion to seek structural solutions to such a problem; to escalate the problem upwards to a higher entity that appropriately reprimands the employees and diffuses the situation. This behavioural tendency was not observed with low power distance employees that rather opted for direct confrontation and communicating with the individual, seeking a personalized, non-formal and non-structured solution, as is apparent from the significant negative correlation of -0.541 .

In accordance with our initial thought-line, the act of refusing a drink offered by a superior was indeed observed to be inappropriate for a high power distance individual compared to a low-power distance person (0.729). In the workplace, the yearning to respect authoritative lines and not disappoint or contradict a superior-ranked employee is a strong emotion for high power distance individuals (Gulev 2017). This sentiment was very robust judging by the strength of the positive correlation. For low power distance employees, the refusal of a drink offered was, not surprisingly, viewed as common, without cause for concern for either the superior or the subordinate.

RESULTS PERTAINING TO INDIVIDUALISM

Individualism and power distance are often observed to relate negatively to each other (Hofstede 2001; 1986), that is, individuals that rank high on power distance tend to rank low on individualism. It follows, that low power distance individuals tend to exhibit typical individualistic

behaviours. For this reason, it was expected that we achieve opposing correlations relating to alcohol consumption at work as with those observed with power distance. This was, however, by and large not the case and was most noticeable with the results pertaining to how negatively it is perceived to refuse a drink from a superior. According to our results, a slight positive, albeit failing to achieve significance, correlation (0.423) emerged suggesting that individualistic employees did, at least to some extent, care about how the social manager-employee bond may be affected by such a refusal. It is often presumed that highly individualistic-ranking people are comparably more resistant to societal prescriptions as they follow their own code of conduct (Gulev 2017; Oyserman and Lee 2008). With regards to refusing a drink at work, this lack of societal conformity was, however, not observed within our sample of highly individualistic respondents.

No significant correlations emerged regarding social actions that an individualistic person may take when deeming a colleague to be participating in inappropriate work-time drinking. Mild positive, albeit insignificant, correlations emerged pertaining to 'Confronting him/her' (0.433) and 'Do nothing/ignore' (0.396). We had theorized that both these societal responses would achieve significant positive correlations as the former confrontational response would not be atypical for individualistic behaviour while the latter is representative of separate and disconnected spheres of interest also typically associated with individualistic behaviour (Hofstede 2001). It is possible that individualistic behaviour, when it comes to alcohol at the workplace, is lessened and the pressure of societal norms regarding when it is appropriate to drink and not drink weighs heavy on both ends of the individualism-collectivism spectrum.

Two strong positive significant correlations emerged regarding motivations behind the act of participating in work-related drinking. Strongest and most surprising was the positive correlation of drinking at work in order to 'Break the ice' with co-workers (0.824). It was hypothesized that exactly this motivation would be weak, if not void, in individualistic people as the ease with which new relationships are formed tend to occur more easily as loose bonds are easily created and quickly lost (Gulev 2017; Hofstede 2001), which suggests the need to rely on an ice-breaking facilitator, such as alcohol, would be low for individualistic people. However, exactly this connection yielded the strongest correlation. It appears that when it comes to the somewhat taboo topic of alcohol-related work

interaction, individualistic people do not behave as free-willingly as their individualistic reputation may suggest.

Also surprising was the strong significant and positive correlation pertaining to the desire 'To celebrate/bond with colleagues' (0.622). Seeking occasions for bonding with colleagues was presumed to be a trait strongly represented within collectivistic work cultures attempting to increase a sense of community in contrast to individualistic work cultures that are characteristically underpinned by lone behavioural traits (Akuffo 2020). Yet, in relation to alcohol consumption at the workplace, our individualistic samples expressed this notion more vividly than their collectivistic opposites. When relating to alcohol consumption at work it appears that typical reclusive individualistic behaviour is quickly shelved for more communal bonding opportunities. It may be that the typical perception of the normality of drinking alcohol among different demographics influenced this result. According to a research branch within the World Health Organization, consuming alcohol regularly is more frequently observed on average in individualistic countries compared to averages found for collectivistic countries (World Health Statistics 2022). This may help partially explain why the respondents of our surveys that leaned towards individualism were quicker to agree with this motivation as it provides an opportunity to participate in an activity that is comparatively more commonplace for them.

RESULTS PERTAINING TO INDULGENCE

When viewing the results pertaining to the influence an indulgent predilection may have on mild work-related alcohol consumption, the clusters of positive and negative correlations quickly become apparent. All correlations related to the motivation for consuming alcohol at work yielded positive, albeit not all significant, results. Most strikingly, 'To celebrate/bond with colleagues' achieved a significant positive correlation with 'Indulgence' (0.554) and drinking 'For the taste' achieved a very strong positive correlation (0.692). Both of these positive correlations go in tune with the indulgent mindset opting for the pursuit of gratification and enjoyment (Palazzo 2019). Surprisingly, the motivation 'To allow for a time out' failed to achieve significance (0.420). Perhaps this is because the act of participating in a mild work-related drinking occasion is, from the viewpoint of a highly indulgent person, supposed to make the event more fun, but not provide a mental escape from it. As such, there appears to be a rational and intellectual disconnect between

the celebratory event and work obligations; they are perceived as two different occasions, albeit both being within the work domain.

Purely negative correlations were observed pertaining to the social responses to mild alcohol consumption deemed to be inappropriate that one can expect from highly indulgent individuals. These are best understood when viewing the results from the opposite end of the indulgence spectrum, namely, individuals that rank high on restraint. 'Informing a superior' revealed a strong and significant negative correlation (-0.742) with 'Indulgence'; when indulgence levels were low, or, put differently, restraint levels high, this response was popular. This result complies nicely with a tendency to suppress gratification and seek to regulate routines with strict social norms typical of restrained behaviour (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). However, the significant negative correlation pertaining to the social response 'Do nothing/ignore' with 'Indulgence' (-0.621) seems to contradict this. Why are the same restrained individuals that have been argued to seek conformity through rules and regulations in the previous correlation now seeking a passive response to the same action? It is possible that when it comes to mild, perceived to be inappropriate, alcohol consumption at the workplace, the restrained person processes this by seeking a response of avoidance by ignoring it just as frequently as seeking an active response such as informing a superior.

RESULTS PERTAINING TO INTERPERSONAL TRUST

Finally, results pertaining to variances in 'Interpersonal trust' levels revealed some of the strongest and most telling correlations. Starting with exploring the motivations of consuming alcohol at work, we noticed a strong significant correlation with the desire 'To celebrate/bond with colleagues' (0.589). It is likely that a work-related drink can be viewed as a vehicle to facilitate trust building among colleagues and that high trust individuals successfully use that vehicle to further increase trust levels with their colleagues. While this is thought to be true, it is interesting to note that the motivation 'To bring out the real character' scored a very significant negative correlation (-0.832) with trust, which does seem to contradict the former correlation. In other words, would 'Celebrating/Bonding with colleagues' not also 'Bring out the real character' of the counterpart? Our results suggest that these two motivations indeed differ along two important chords.

First, we theorize that our respondents viewed the motivation 'To bond with colleagues' as a positive action that proactively boosts work

cohesiveness and enjoyment whereas the motivation 'To bring out the real character' has a negative stigma to it which would deteriorate current obtained trust levels. We believe that these positively and negatively charged undertones to each motivation led high trust individuals to agree with the notion of desirable bonding and reject the negatively charged motivation of wanting to decloak their counterpart and bring out their real character.

Second, high trust individuals are known for quickly extending trust to strangers, in contrast to low trust individuals that need a long time to build up trust (Gulev 2017; 2016; Gulev and Lierse 2012). This speedy trust-building inclination means that, although colleagues trust each other, they are aware that they may not know all about their counterpart and their multifaceted lives. They only know each other a short period of time in comparison to a low trust individual that has built up trust with a colleague over many years and consequently has more in-depth knowledge of their trusted counterpart. Accordingly, we believe it is likely that a high trust individual is happy to bond with the current version of the drinking counterpart without needing to delve deeper into other sides of the individual and the veiled 'real characters' that he or she may harbour below the surface.

Regarding the social responses to colleagues participating in perceived inappropriate work-related drinking behaviour, we notice two strong correlations that are noteworthy. The response 'To report the incident to a superior' scored significantly negative (-0.621) while the response 'To confront' and talk directly to the individual scored significantly positive (0.737). These correlations are in tune with the behaviour we would expect of a high-trust individual; escalating the issue outside the circle of trust is not wanted but a direct dialogue seeking quick internal resolution to the issue is wanted.

However, it is interesting to observe the significant positive correlation pertaining to the response 'Do nothing/ignore' with the perceived inappropriate work-related drinking behaviour (0.722). It appears ignoring the inappropriate behaviour seems just as fitting a response as directly confronting the individual. Although seemingly contradictory, both of these may simultaneously be typical responses of the high trust individual. Such an individual may choose to look away a few times if inappropriate drinking behaviour is observed; after all, trust is high and thus it is believed that the counterpart probably has it under control. Equally likely, the high trust individual may also eventually seek direct confron-

tation as an additional response. Accordingly, the two responses can be seen to complement each other when viewed in the entirety of several work-related drinking incidents.

The significant and negative correlation pertaining to 'A complete ban on work-related drinking would be good' (-0.609) matches the behavioural typecast of high trust individuals. Banning a work-related alcohol-laden event is viewed as too extremist when more personalized responses can remedy the situation in which counterparts can successfully address any potential negative repercussions of work-time drinking events.

However, the significant and positive correlation observed for 'Refusing a drink from a superior is viewed negatively' (0.622) is very surprising. Despite high trust levels, typically presumed to allow employees to express emotions freely (Gulev 2017), our respondents viewed the rejection of a drink offered from a superior as negative. We had theorized that high trust levels would trump any animosity or uncomfortableness that may arise as a result of such a refusal. The current results do not support this theory. It appears high trust individuals were very much exposed to feelings of negativity if they were to refuse an alcoholic beverage from a superior. Perhaps the high levels of assurance and confidence in colleagues typically expressed by the high trust individual do not transcend hierarchical borders so well. A superior making an invitation for a bonding moment over an alcoholic beverage is, it seems, a welcomed initiative from the perspective of the subordinate. We hypothesize that it may even foster increased trust levels across hierarchical levels, a connection that we had envisioned only for low trust individuals. High trust individuals seem to experience uncomfortableness with such a refusal similar to how low trust individuals would experience it.

Of the correlations that failed along all cultural dimensions, most interesting are the results pertaining to whether 'Working from home increases work-related alcohol consumption.' Although the results are insignificant at all levels, the fact that consistent insignificance was achieved is interesting. In the continuously evolving deliberations of the perils and promises of remote working and home office allowances, variances in work-related alcohol consumption and the occasions where they are warranted have to date not been explored. This study provides an initial cautious jab into this research terrain where much of the data was, by coincidence, collected during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of high global home office frequency. The emerging, insignificant, correlations suggest that working from home did not increase work-re-

lated alcohol consumption; in fact, the negative direction of most of the correlations suggest that a tendency towards less work-related alcohol consumption when working from home seems to have occurred in our sample group. Of course, this remains contentious as the correlations are insignificant and it is important to declare that this does not connect to overall changes in alcohol consumption patterns of people in general during the corona pandemic.

Conclusion

While the mostly negative-laden repercussions of alcohol consumption, and especially alcohol abuse, have been thoroughly researched and modelled in medical journals, global studies examining the impact of cultural variances on the acceptance of mild, work-related alcohol consumption are lacking. The current paper is among the first to examine the extent to which the specific cultural dimensions of ‘Power distance’, ‘Individualism’, ‘Indulgence’ and ‘Interpersonal trust’ impact the motivation, social responses and acceptance of mild, work-related alcohol consumption. The underlying aim of the paper is to enhance an understanding and contextualization of how these non-abusive drinking occasions are received differently by varying demographics.

Along this vein, the current research revealed many noteworthy findings that have value for anyone operating in a polycultural work environment that may desire some guidance with regards to behavioural norms concerning alcohol in the workplace. Equally, the current results contribute and have value for researchers that seek to continue research within this mostly unnavigated field and wish to gather some initial insights into how cultural variances may act as a tacit influence prompting certain implicit behaviours otherwise not easily deciphered in the workplace.

While none of the analysed cultural dimensions revealed unanimous indications of a particular predilection regarding mild, work-related alcohol consumption, it is interesting to note that the most common motivation for consuming alcohol at work, ‘To celebrate with colleagues’, achieved significance with all cultural dimensions except ‘Power distance’, which interestingly appears to be mildly negatively correlated with this motivation. Instead, ‘Power distance’ scored ‘To bring out the real character’ as the most significant motivator for participating in mild, work-related alcohol consumption, a trend not observed with the other cultural dimensions, and was directly opposite to the results pertaining to ‘Interpersonal trust’, which ranked this motivator as least influential.

Equally significant are the findings relating to the social responses of individuals deemed to be participating in inappropriate work-related drinking behaviour. In tune with our predictions, individuals high on 'Power distance' sought circumventive remedies, escalating the issue to a superior to deal with, rather than pursuing personalized confrontation through direct dialogue. This relationship was flipped with high 'Interpersonal trust', where direct confrontation was preferred to externalizing the issue to a superior.

Within the final category of analysis, exploring the acceptance of work-related alcohol consumption, it was highly interesting to see that no significant correlations were achieved along the view that remote working increased levels of alcohol consumption. This indicates a disconnect between the frequency of work-related alcohol consumption and on-site versus remote working; the frequency, among our sample groups, seemed to neither dramatically increase or decrease. A strong connection was, however, found for 'Refusing a drink from a superior' to be viewed negatively by both high 'Power distance' and, surprisingly, high 'Interpersonal trust' individuals. For the former, this was expected, but for the latter this negative interpretation of the refusal recontextualizes the open and free communication thought to be closely intertwined with high 'Interpersonal trust' levels.

Although these insights help individuals operating in a multicultural work environment better navigate the choppy waters of when one can say yes or no to participation in mild work-related drinking occasions, the results are limited along two important aspects. First, the connection between mild or non-abusive work-related alcohol consumption and the long-term drinking behaviour that may be facilitated as a result of work-related alcoholic engagements is not explored. As such, we are mindful of the claim that non-abusive work-related alcohol consumption may eventually lead to abusive behavioural patterns. Accordingly, the term 'non-abusive' can only be applied in the short term. Second, the studies included in this analysis probe opinions, not actions, regarding work-related alcohol consumption. The surveys triangulated questions to test for consistency in the responses which increased the buoyancy of the emerging results, yet it must be noted, especially with a sensitive topic such as alcohol consumption, that actions and opinions may be diverging. Consequently, the results of this study are not to be viewed as the absolute truth in all cases, but rather as indicative of behaviour that we can expect in some international settings.

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