Organizational Culture and Employee Work Performance in the County Governments of Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: With the dynamism in the service industry, organizations are increasingly looking for ways of providing quality services for sustained competitive advantage. However, little attention is paid to what enhances good service delivery in terms of good organizational culture and how it affects employee work performance. The County Governments of Kenya are constitutionally mandated to provide proximate services to the people at the grass root level. However, a large population of citizens still rates most services delivered by the county governments as average or poor. The main purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between organizational culture and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya guided by institutional theory.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study adopted the mixed research designs - descriptive and exploratory - and the data were collected using questionnaires with both structured and unstructured questions.

Findings: The structural equation model revealed that the coefficient of primal assumptions has positive and significant relationship with employee work performance in the county governments of Kenya (β =.277, .000<0.05), coefficient of values and employee work performance (β=.205, .000<0.05), coefficient of artifacts and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya (β=.195, .003<0.05). The study concluded that organizational culture significantly influences employee work performance in the county governments among the three predictor variables.

Practical Implications: The study recommends for the need to cultivate virtue of timeliness, work ethics, diligence, creativity in task accomplishment among workers in county governments.

Originality/Value: Teamwork among employees, discipline, professionalism, competence, integrity, ethical conduct guided by accountability, transparency, and good rapport with the public are recommended for creating a strong organizational culture in the county governments of Kenya.

Keywords: Artifacts, County Governments of Kenya, Employee Work Performance, Primal assumptions, Values.
Research Type: Research Article.

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1. Introduction

Organizational culture is equally an essential ingredient of employee work performance and a source of sustainable competitive advantage. It encompasses shared basic assumptions, values and beliefs of the members of the organization that enable them understand what is expected of them and why something happens the way it does in the organization (Fitria, 2018). Strong organizational culture creates greater co-ordination and co-operation in the organization by aligning its current and future direction while a weak one affects employee productivity as employees have a problem in defining the values and determining the right process of conducting business in the organization (Tedla, 2016; Matko and Takacs, 2017).

A culture that supports the strategy implementation is a source of competitive advantage that helps even the county governments to deliver services to its citizens effectively (Kolil, Ondiek and Manyasi, 2019). Wong (2020) adds that a positive organizational culture exemplifies traits that lead to improved work performance since if it is well aligned, the employees are more likely to feel more valued, appreciated, comfortable and supported.

Without a culture, an organization is not sustainable in the 21st century since it is the fundamental driver of performance and it acts as the framework on which decision making is based. Organizational Culture makes employees experience their jobs and the overall effectiveness of the organization (Barrow, 2019). Organizational Culture is deemed strong when the beliefs and values of employees are closely aligned with the mission and vision of the organization, which is exhibited almost everywhere in the organization via aspects like the language used in internal communication and the artifacts that porttray customer service (Kamiri, 2018).

Organizational Culture requires collective identity, acceptable behaviours, teamwork spirit and good working environment which in turn affect how a culture contributes to the accomplishment of the set organizational goals and objectives. Zakari, Poku and Owusu (2013) echoes that organizations with cultures that lay strong emphasis on the key managerial components – employees, customers, stockholders and managers at all levels – outperform those that do not have such cultural aspects. Organizational Culture has become a focal determiner of failure or success of organizations where positively it leads to employee satisfaction and stability of an organization in implementing the operative h functions hence effective organizational performance.

Work performance in the public institutions in Kenya has been a challenge since independence due to the highly centralized bureaucracies, resulting in high poverty levels, inequality in resources distribution, lack of confidence in the government and slow economic growth (Rono *et al.,* 2015). In the last half of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium, African countries have been pressurized by the demands from their citizens, the increasing life complexities and change in the

global environments to adopt decentralization of the HR functions (Mutsoli and Kiruthu, 2019).

The County Governments Annual Progress Reports also present some setbacks witnessed in the process of implementing various developments projects, these include delays in funds disbursement, lack of county functions policy guidelines, irregular staff capacity building; inadequate staff in all cadres, poor co-ordination among departments, delayed staff salary scales harmonization and rationalization; late remuneration, weak labour relations, weak monitoring and evaluation systems and low morale in the adoption of modern technology to improve work performance (Republic of Kenya, County Government of Siaya, 2018; County Governemt of Meru, 2018; The County Government of Mombasa, 2018; RoK, The County Government of Tana River, 2019). This causes low staff morale and definitely impacts negatively on employee performance.

The 47 County Governments in Kenya were formed in 2013 in line with the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 where the devolved government is mandated to facilitate the decentralization of state organs, their functions and services, promote democratic and accountable exercise of power; recognize the rights of communities to manage their own affairs and to promote social and economic development. They should also protect and promote the interests and rights of minorities and marginalized communities, provide proximate services to the people and ensure equitable sharing of national and local resources throughout the country (The Council of Governors, 2017; National Council for Law Reporting, 2012). This calls for a well-motivated workforce that is ready to execute its duties diligently in order to realize this core mandate of the county governments in Kenya. This paper seeks to assess the influence of organizational culture on employee work performance in the county governments of Kenya.

2. Literature Review

This paper was guided by the Institutional Theory. The roots of this theory can be traced in 1990s and it emphasizes that an organization's response to competitive pressure is vital for its survival and success since employees are able to work effectively and efficiently for a common goal. It entails institutional isomorphism or homogeneity where organizations have common fields with similar resources, consumers, suppliers, products/services, and regulatory agencies (Gooderham, Mayrhofer and Brewster, 2019). Isomorphism takes three forms: coercive, normative and mimetic; which strongly influence the formal processes and structures in which organizations operate and are institutionalized over time, inducing organizational conformity or culture that impact on employees' behaviour and work performance (Najeeb, 2014) .

This theory provides a useful framework of how organizations interact with the environment and determines what is institutionalized over time in terms of policies,

strategies, structures and procedures in an organization, which in turn impacts on how it performs in today's dynamic and competitive environment. Without a culture, an organization is not sustainable in the 21ˢᵗ century. Organizational culture is a social bond that binds the employees together and creates feelings as part of organizational experience, making them work efficiently. It also makes it easier for them to understand what is expected of them and interact freely with each other (Fitria, 2018).

There are various levels of organization culture that contribute to developing and maintaining an effective culture in the organization (Matko and Takacs, 2017). These include: values, artifacts and primal assumptions. Personal and local values play a vital role in shaping the OC in that people's way of thinking influences the workplace culture. Artifacts are observable characteristics of the organization that can be felt by the employees and they enhance work environment. Examples include work processes,workplace settting, organizational structures, dress code; resources, language,employees behaviour, the mission and vision of the organization among others. Primal assumptions are the supposed values of the employees that are unobserved but do make a difference to the culture of the organization.

Strong organization culture creates greater co-ordination and co-operation in the organization by closely aligning the organization's mission and vision with its current and future direction while a weak one affects employees' productivity as they have a problem in defining the values and determining the right process of conducting business in the organization (Tedla, 2016). This in turn creates gaps in work performance hence negatively impacting on the achievement of the set organizational goals and objectives (Barrow, 2019).

There are five elements that are pivotal in building and sustaining a great organization culture – purpose, ownership, community, effective communication and good leadership (Cabistan, 2016). Purpose is the 'why' of what employees do, which is exhibited by having a strong mission statement that enables an organiation share the reason for existence with their team. Giving employees the opportunity to be accountable for their work performance without necessarily being micro-managed makes them have the autonomy over their time to accomplish their goals. The CEO just sets expectations and gives people the chance to build their own schedules to meet them – ownership.

Community creates a sense of belonging amog the people who share similar principles, goals and values.this is enhanced via building ateamwork spirit and is unique in every organization. Effective communication implies building consistency in work processes and investing time learning the personalities and communication dynamicsof team members. Lastly, good leadership is the backbone of the cultural dynamics of any organization (clan culture) and it calls for consistency in pushing the mission, vision, standards and work processes. Without this the other elements cannot excel.

Zakari *et al.* (2013) studied organizational culture and organizational performance in the Banking Industry in Ghana and established that organization culture is focal in determining the success or failure of organizationsin that banks with cultures that emphasized on good leadership from managers at all levels, customers, stockholders and employees outperformed those that did not have those cultural traits. Kamiri (2018) assessed the factors influencing effective implementation of strategic plans in Kiambu County Government and concluded that a positive organization culture enhances efficiency in strategies implementation and an organization's working environment affects how a culture relates to the accomplishment of the set goals and objectives.

3.   Research Methodology

This study adopted pragmatism approach since it strives to reconcile both objectivism and subjectivism, values and facts, accurate knowledge and experiences (Bajpai, 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This is done by considering theories, concepts, research findings and hypotheses in terms of the roles they play as instruments of thought and action. It also holds that research starts with a problem and aims to give practical solutions that inform future decisions. This study used mixed research designs, that is, descriptive and exploratory.

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey focuses on a large population, answers questions concerning the current state of the phenomenon under study and also enables the researcher to gather, analyze, organize and present data in an effective and meaningful way in order to provide insights into the why and how of the research (Kumar, 2019). Exploratory research design uses the researcher's ideas on a subject to further explore it in order to answer the what, how and why of the subject; thus developing the hypotheses.

3.2 Study Population and Instrument

The target population of this study was 206,950 operational staff in the various ministries of the 47 County Governments in Kenya. A sample size of 225 employees was determined using Nassiuma (2000) formula. Questionnaires were used to obtain primary data, where the questions included were both structured and unstructured.

3.3 Data Analysis

The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data for hypotheses testing. Qualitative comparative analysis was used to identify and analyze common responses in many cases that give particular outcomes. The structural equation model (SEM) was employed to determine the effect of values, artifacts and primal

assumptions on employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya. The structural equation model is shown below:

Equation 1: $Y = f_y(\eta, \delta)$

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$

Y is employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya
X$_1$ is Values
X$_2$ is Artifacts
X$_3$ is Primal Assumptions

4. Results

The sample size of the study was 225 operational employees in the various ministries of the 47 County Governments in Kenya. Out of the 225 questionnaires distributed to operational employees in counties for filing, 201 were properly filled and returned representing 89.3 percent response rate. The data collection procedures used could have attributed to this high response rate. These included, pre-notification of respondents and voluntary participation by respondents; drop and pick of questionnaires to allow for ample time to fill; assurance of confidentiality and anonymity and follow up calls to clarify queries from the respondents. Dillman *et al.* (2014) state that introduction letter issued by an established authority authenticates the study, thus enhancing the response rate. Based on the results, the response rate results were satisfactory.

4.1 Factor Analysis

To measure the validity test for organizational culture, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were employed. Table 1 shows the KMO and Bartlett's Test results.

Table 1. *KMO Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Sphericity Tests for organizational culture*

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure	.624
Bartlett's Chi- Square	411.715
Bartlett's df	36
Bartlett's Sig.	.000

Source: Own study.

The results indicated a KMO statistic was .624 which was significantly high and greater than the critical level of significance of the test which was set at 0.5 (Field, 2013). Supporting the KMO test, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (Chi-square = 411.715 with 36 degree of freedom, at p=.000< 0.05). After

conducting the KMO Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Sphericity Tests, factor analysis was undertaken using Principal Components Method. For a data set to be regarded as adequate and appropriate for statistical analysis, the value of factor loading should be greater than 0.5 (DiStefanoand Hess, 2005). The factor loading results for measures of organizational culture are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Organizational Culture Factor Loadings

Measure of organizational culture	Factor loadings
Values	
There exists a culture that employees identify with easily	0.548
The organizational culture at my work place hinders creativity in work performance	0.559
The values in my workplace enhances work performance	0.585
Artifacts	
Work processes and the organizational culture in my county government are compatible	0.501
A lot of resistance is expressed when change is introduced at my workplace	0.737
The work processes in my department enhance service delivery	0.559
Primal Assumptions	
My supervisor provides fair and constructive feedback and regular guidance to improve my work performance	0.611
Employee recognition is given for good work performance	0.817
Quality service delivered in my department has increased customer satisfaction	0.66

Source: *Own study.*

The factor loading for the statement that there exists a culture that employees identify with easily was 0.548>0.5 and thus retained for further analysis. Further, the statement that the organizational culture at the work place hinders creativity in work performance attracted a factor loading of 0.559 while the statement that the values in the workplace enhances work performance had a factor loading of 0.585. Based on the factor loadings results, the statements for values as one of measure of organizational culture were all retained.

The statement that work processes and the organizational culture in the county governments are compatible, attracted factor loading of 0.501>0.05. Regarding the statement that lot of resistance is expressed when change is introduced in the workplace, the factor loading was 0.737. Further, the factor loading for the statement that work processes in the county departments enhance service delivery was 0.559. All the statements had factor loadings greater than 0.5 and thus were retained for use in SEM equations.

The statement that supervisors provide fair and constructive feedback and regular guidance to improve work performance had factor loading of 0.611. The factor

loading for the statement that employee recognition is given for good work performance was 0.817. In addition, the statement that quality service delivered in the department increases customer satisfaction attracted factor loading of 0.66. All the measures of primal assumptions had factor loadings greater than 0.5 and thus were all retained for use in running SEM equation.

4.2 Relationship between Organization Culture and Employee Work Performance in the County Governments of Kenya

A structural equation modeling equation was estimated to model the relationship between organization culture and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya. The model results are shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Table 3. *Relationship between organization culture and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya*

Organization culture		Variable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
Values	--->	Employee work performance	.205	.036	5.736	.000***
Artifacts	--->	Employee work performance	.195	.066	2.960	.003***
Primal Assumptions	--->	Employee work performance	.277	.045	6.112	.000***

	Estimate
Squared correlation	.405

*Note: **Significant at 0.05*
Source: *Own study.*

Figure 1. *Relationship between organization culture and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya*
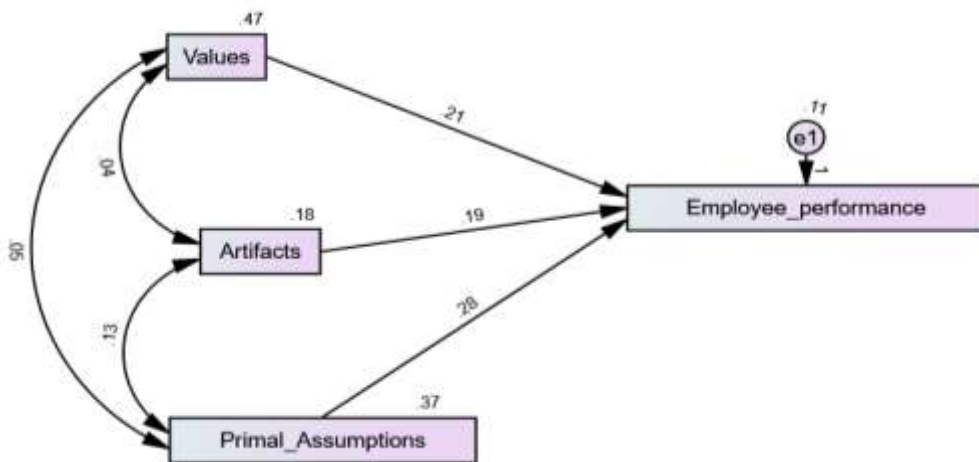
Source: *Own study.*

The SEM equation results above show that the relationship between organization culture and employee work performance in the county governments of Kenya was statistically significant. The coefficient of determination (Squared correlation) was .405. The results imply that organization culture (values, artifacts and primal assumptions) explain 40.5 percent of employee work performance in counties. The beta coefficient of primal assumptions was highest (.277), followed by values (.205) and lastly artifacts (.195).

The coefficient of primal assumptions has positive and significant relationship with employee work performance in the county governments of Kenya (β =.277, .000<0.05). The beta coefficient of .277 indicates that one unit change in primal assumptions leads to .277 units increase in employee work performance in the county governments of Kenya. The coefficient of values and employee work performance in the county governments of Kenya was positive and significant (β=.205, .000<0.05). The beta estimate of .205 indicates that one unit change in organizational values in county governments lead to .205 units increase in employee work performance.

Further, SEM results indicated that the coefficient of artifacts had a positive and significant relationship with employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya (β=.195, .003<0.05). The results imply that one unit change in organization artifacts result to.195 units increase in the employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya. The null hypothesis of the study that there is no significant relationship between organizational culture and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya was rejected leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is statistically significant positive relationship between organizational culture and employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya.

Organizational culture is deemed strong when the beliefs and values of employees are closely aligned with the mission and vision of the organization, which is exhibited almost everywhere in the organization via aspects like the language used in internal communication and the artifacts that portray customer service. Organizational culture requires collective identity, acceptable behaviours, teamwork spirit and good working environment which in turn affect how a culture contributes to the accomplishment of the set organizational goals and objectives.

Organizational culture reflects the organization's vision, values, business ethics, beliefs, personalities and even the traits of the organizations founders, the management, shareholders and its employees and these influences the way business is conducted. Organizational culture is a social bond that binds the employees together and creates feelings as part of organizational experience, making them work efficiently. It also makes it easier for the employees to understand what is expected of them and interact freely with each other. Key sub constructs of organizational culture that contribute to developing and maintaining an effective culture in the

organization include values, artifacts and primal assumptions. Values represent individual motivations at the work place which influence the diligent delivery of assigned tasks at the work place. Personal and local values play a vital role in shaping the organizational culture in that people's way of thinking influences the workplace culture. Employee values have significant influence on productivity.

They play a crucial role in shaping behavior in organizations, and focuses on those forces that include structures, processes and incentives. It determines the way employees interact and relate to one another, healthily compete, accomplish their tasks, unite and work as a team, implement organization policies, and carry out their role and responsibilities at workplace. Without an effective organization culture, an organization cannot achieve its goals, hence it plays a crucial role in the development of the organization and impacts on the level of employees' satisfaction towards organization culture measures. Values may range from hard work, honesty, unity to accountability and diligence. Thus, understanding employees' work values is key for county governments aiming to achieve higher service delivery and delivering the mandate bestowed to them by the Constitution of Kenya.

Artifacts are observable characteristics of the organization that can be felt by the employees and they enhance work environment. Artifacts assist employees to be more effective in work delivery. Artifacts of organizational culture have an effect on the adoption of compassionate organizational practices in terms of management support, employee support and human resources compassionate practices. Management support, employee support and human resources compassionate practices define the level of employee productivity.

Primal assumptions are the supposed values of the employees that are unobserved but do make a difference to the culture of the organization. Strong organizational culture creates greater co-ordination and co-operation in the organization by closely aligning the organization's mission and vision with its current and future direction while a weak one affects employees' productivity as they have a problem in defining the values and determining the right process of conducting business in the organization. This in turn creates gaps in work performance hence negatively impacting on the achievement of the set organizational goals and objectives.

The results concur with Zakari *et al.* (2013) who studied organizational culture and organizational performance in the Banking Industry in Ghana and established that organization culture is focal in determining the success or failure of organizationsin that banks with cultures that emphasized on good leadership from managers at all levels, customers, stockholders and employees outperformed those that did not have those cultural traits. Likewise, (Otwori and Juma, 2017) in a study on the effect of organizational values on employee performance in Urban Roads Authority found a significant positive effect of organizational values on employee performance and how it influenced employee performance.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that organizational culture had the greatest impact on employee work performance in the county governments among the three predictor variables. Organizational culture is a social bond that binds the employees together and creates feelings as part of organizational experience, making them work efficiently. It also makes it easier for them to understand what is expected of them and interact freely with each other. Key sub constructs of organizational culture that contribute to developing and maintaining an effective culture in the organization include values, artifacts and primal assumptions. Values represent individual motivation at the work place which influences the diligent performance of assigned tasks at the work place.

Employee values have significant influence on productivity. Artifacts are observable characteristics of the organization that can be felt by the employees and they enhance work environment. Artifacts assist employees to be more effective in work performance. Primal assumptions are the supposed values of the employees that are unobserved but do make a difference to the culture of the organization. Strong organizational culture creates greater co-ordination and co-operation in the organization by closely aligning the organization's mission and vision with its current and future direction while a weak one affects employees' productivity as they have a problem in defining the values and determining the right process of conducting business in the organization.

It was also established that organizational culture has a positive and statistically significant relationship with employee work performance in the County Governments of Kenya. Organizational culture reflects the organizations vision, values, business ethics, beliefs, personalities and even the traits of the organizations founders, the management, shareholders and its employees and these influences the way business is conducted. Organizational culture is a social bond that binds the employees together and creates feelings as part of organizational experience, making them work efficiently. The study recommends for the need to cultivate virtues of timeliness, work ethics, diligence, creativity in task accomplishment among workers in county governments. Teamwork among employees, discipline, professionalism, competence, integrity, ethical conduct guided by accountability, transparency, and good rapport with the public are recommended for creating a strong organizational culture in the County Governments of Kenya.

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