

## INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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### Abstract

*University performance is critical both locally and internationally. This is due to the crucial functions of teaching, research, and community service that universities discharge. However, public universities in Kenya are faced with different challenges that have jeopardized their performance. The challenges include inadequate funding by the government and a lack of unifying organizational culture that leads to good performance. There is limited information on the influence of organizational culture on the performance of public universities with most of the available literature dealing with universities in developed countries. For this reason, this paper investigated the influence of organizational culture on the performance of public universities in Kenya. The research aimed to determine the relationship between organizational culture and the performance of public universities in Kenya. A descriptive cross-sectional design was used in the study. At the same time, Semi-structured questionnaires and one-on-one interview data collection techniques were used to obtain data from 174 heads of departments who were sampled. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used to obtain the samples required for the study and Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample size. Data was collected and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. It was found that organizational culture had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the performance of public universities in Kenya. The study recommended that public universities in Kenya should encourage a unifying organizational culture to improve their performance.*

**Key Words:** Organizational Culture, performance of public universities, Human Capital, Community Service.

### Introduction

Universities play very crucial roles in development of human capital which is very crucial for economic advancement of any country (Scholz, 2019). In Kenya, there are thirty-one public universities besides other forty private universities (KUCCPS, 2023). All these universities are expected to provide excellent teaching, research publication and community service (Oduor, 2018). Universities are also expected to go beyond their normal functions of teaching, research and community service to impart values such nationalism, patriotism, environmental awareness together with other 21<sup>st</sup>

Century skills which are required for survival (Sindabi, 2021).

Five decades ago, there was only one public university in Kenya while the second university was established in 1985 almost two decades latter. However, increase in number of public universities in Kenya has been great since 2012 creating high level of competitiveness (Mumba, 2019). This increased competition comes at a crucial time when the government of Kenya who is the chief financier of public universities has reduced her funding to the public universities. This has forced universities to look for alternative source of funds to sustain

their crucial mandates of research, community service and effective teaching (Matende, 2020).

According to Otieno (2020) performance of public universities in Kenya is a key determinant in realization of vision 2030- an economic blue print that intends to transform Kenya into industrialized middle-income nation. In addition, the three pillars of the vision 2030 are anchored in the performance of public universities in Kenya. These pillars are economic pillar, political pillar and social pillar (Sindabi, 2021).

According to Peter and Waterman (2015), one way of enhancing performance in universities is creating an organizational culture that encourages performance. He defined organizational culture as shared beliefs and values that exist in an organization for a long period of time usually five years and above. Denison et al (2020) noted that organizational culture creates stability and fosters togetherness in an organization. He adds that in a wide ethnographic view, organizational culture encompasses beliefs, ethics, artifacts and customs acquired in an organization that tend to govern behavior of employees and performance in organization.

Public Universities in Kenya have a challenge to cut their niche in competitive arena where there is crowding of universities resulting into competition for students' enrolment besides endearing themselves to the market (Oduor, 2018). According to Sindabi (2021), gone are the times when universities would sit and wait for their performance and growth in terms of students' population to be decided by fate. However, he notes that each university must come up with right organizational culture that supports performance, attract students and competitive academic staff. In the study, the performance issue in public universities in Kenya is addressed by determining the influence of organizational culture and performance of public universities in Kenya.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The demand for university education has continuously increased in Kenya since 1963 as evidenced by the gross enrolment of students in universities which has been over five hundred students for the past five academic years (Education, 2021). The numbers of universities have also increased from one university in 1970(s) to 31 public universities and 42 private ones as at February 2021. This increase in number is as a result of demand for human capital as well as prestige associated with University Education (Mumba, 2019). Public universities are therefore under both legal and moral requirement to display good performance by providing excellent teaching, research and community service (Sindabi, 2021).

However, Public Universities in Kenya are currently facing various challenges associated with the increasing higher education demands. These challenges include poorly maintained and inadequate learning, teaching and research facilities (Mengich, 2023). The public universities in Kenya are also competing for the scarce resources since the government has limited funds to cater for the budgets of the public Universities. In the last one decade, there has been an increase in the number of students in the Public Universities in Kenya resulting from the introduction of module II programs and free primary and Secondary education (Muiruri, 2023). In addition, there has been an increasing rate of competition resulting from globalization, technological innovations and increased quality demands. All these challenges and demand for public university performance has forced each university to look for different ways of creating a performance culture that will make them stand tall among equals. Thus, a call for the study; influence of organizational culture on performance of public universities in Kenya.

### ***Objective of the Study***

The specific objective of this study was to examine the influence of organizational culture on performance of public universities in Kenya.

**Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between organizational culture and performance of public universities in Kenya.

**Theoretical Foundation of Organizational culture and performance**

The study was anchored on universalistic theory which states that there are certain practices or values that will definitely lead to high organizational performance. The proponents of this theory were Darler and Dorthy (1981). The duo argue that when right values and practices are imparted in an organization for a long period of time, they constitute the culture of the organization at they definitely lead to better performance. The study therefore investigated how adoption of best practices, policies, procedures and continuous performance improvement affect the performance of public universities in Kenya.

**Methodology**

The study adopted mixed research design consisting of quantitative, cross sectional and descriptive survey design. The study adopted mixed methods because it wanted to leverage on the strength of each method involved. The target population was 489 heads of departments in 31

public universities in Kenya. However, 23 public universities with a total of 308 heads of departments were purposively sampled because they had taken more than five years since their time of establishment to the time when the research was conducted for the study. Slovin’s formula was used to determine the sample size from 308 heads of departments in the sampled 23 universities. A total of 103 heads of departments were randomly sampled taking note that each school must have at least one head of department in the sample.

The study employed both questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data. The data was the analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics was given in terms of mean and standard deviation. The hypothesis of the study “H<sub>1</sub>: there is no relationship between organizational culture and performance of public universities in Kenya” was tested using inferential statistics at 5% level of confidence.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X + \varepsilon$$

The quantitative data obtained by the questionnaire was supplemented with qualitative data obtained by interviewing at least one key informant in each university. The qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis method.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics on organizational culture*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Well set procedures guides employee behavior	103	1.000	5.000	3.97087	1.097737
Existence of best performance practices	103	1.000	5.000	4.03883	1.056468
Varsity management encourages best performance	103	2.000	5.000	4.10680	.969259
University encourages continuous improvement in performance	103	1.000	5.000	4.01942	.989955
New employees given guidance on policies	103	1.000	5.000	4.25243	.967293
Valid N (listwise)	103				

Source: Survey Data (2021)

According to Table 1 above, new employees are given guidance on policies leads all aspects of organizational culture with mean of 4.25243, followed by varsity management encourages best performance with a mean of 4.10680 which is closely followed by university encourages continuous improvement in performance with a mean of 4.01942. The least in terms of prevalence is well set procedures guides employee behavior at 3.97087. The implication is that universities are more focused on giving new employees guidance on policies; varsity management encourages best performance and continuous improvement in performance. The highest standard deviation is 1.093 while the lowest 0.967. This shows that there is slight variation on respondent's opinion on

matters to do with organizational culture in public universities in Kenya. According to Kothari (2014), a standard deviation of less than one represents a normal deviation thus the respondents opinion on organizational culture are almost normally distributed.

***Inferential Statistics on Influence of Organizational Culture on Performance of Public Universities in Kenya***

The first hypothesis sought to assess the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between organizational culture and performance of public universities in Kenya. This hypothesis was tested using the regression models presented and discussed in Table 2, 3 and table 4.

**Table 2**

*Model Summary for Organizational Culture and University Performance*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.559 <sup>a</sup>	0.312	0.305	0.560083

a. Predictors: (Constant), organizational culture  
 Source: Survey Data (2021)

From the results in Table 2, the value of adjusted R square was 0.305 indicating that organizational culture accounts for up to 30.5 % of the variability in university performance, leaving out a further 69.5% to be accounted for by other variability not fitted into the model. It is therefore noted that, it is

possible to generate high levels of university performance by adoption of appropriate culture in the universities. R squared is the coefficient of determination (Higgins, 2021) and summarizes how much the variability in the outcome variable is related to predictor variables.

**Table 3**

*ANOVA Results for Organizational Culture and Performance of public Universities in Kenya*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.386	1	14.386	45.859	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	31.683	101	.314		
	Total	46.069	102			

b. independent variable (organizational culture)

Source: Survey Data (2021)

From table 3 above, p value = 0.000 thus p is less than 0.05 a demonstration that organization culture is statistically significant on performance of public universities in Kenya.

The F- Statistics is used to test the significance status associated with the regression models

(Kothari, 2014). Analysis of variance test results in the Table 3 above indicated the overall significance for the regression model. The linear regression F-test result was significant at 5% level of significance ( $F(1, 101) = 45.859, p < 0.05$ ). It is therefore noted that the model is statistically significant.

**Table 4**

*Regression Coefficients for Organizational Culture and University Performance*

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	1.414	.378		3.712	.000
	Organizational culture	.622	.092	.559	6.772	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Public university performance

Arising from the data displayed in Table 4, a simple regression equation that may be used to estimate university performance given its existing organizational culture is expressed as follows:

$$UP = 1.414 + 0.559OC + \varepsilon$$

Where;

UP = University Performance.

OC = Organizational Culture.

The equation above shows that organizational culture has a coefficient ( $\beta_1$ ) of 0.559. This therefore indicates that a unit change in organizational culture would result into 55.9% positive improvement in university performance. The t-statistic and corresponding p-value are t-value = 6.772 and p value = 0.000 respectively. On this basis, therefore, at 5 percent level of significance, the null hypothesis is consequently rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that encouraging of appropriate culture has a positive and statistically significant relationship with university performance

The findings are in line with those of Saad and Abbas (2020) who studied the direct and indirect

influences of organizational culture on job performance and the impact of each sub-element of organizational culture on the very performance. In the study, it was found that employees' performance derives from a long-term perspective related to changes that organizations manage and implement during their process of growth. Secondly, the study found that organizational culture can be fused through organizational values, routines and distinctive aspects of culture so as to allow organizations achieve competitive advantages.

The current study also agrees with that of Calciolari, Prenestini and Lega (2021) which found that organizational culture affects result of public healthcare organizations and is manifested through strong professional control. The study sought to determine whether certain culture dominate others in fostering performances. Organizational culture was manifested in Competing Values Framework. The study results indicated that dominant rational and hierarchical culture types are related, leading to higher competitiveness and enhanced financial performance.

The study also concurs with that of Meng and Berger (2021) who investigated the impact of critical organizational factors on public relations professionals' overall job satisfaction by focusing on testing the joint mediating effects work engagement and trust could generate. In particular, the study found that organizational culture and leader performance is associated with public relations professionals' work engagement, trust, and job satisfaction. The study also found significant joint mediating effects of engagement and trust on professionals' job satisfaction, when the requisite organizational culture and improved leader performance are achieved.

However the findings were contradicting that of Eaton and Kilby (2020) which noted that organizational culture is inconsequential to organizational performance. It is only organizational structure and leadership that affects the performance. These findings also contradicted Flamhotz and Randle (2021) who noted that organizational culture may lower the performance

of an institution since people insist on particular way of doing thing which may kill the spirit of innovation in an institution what can encourage inventions and innovations.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions above, the study concluded that, organizational culture is statistically significant in influencing performance of public universities in Kenya. Following this conclusion, it is imperative that universities adopt best practices in their day-to-day undertakings. The policies and procedures in the universities also need to be friendly to both staff and clients of the universities. There is also need for continuous performance improvement as a way of ensuring public universities has unique organizational culture that would positively influence its performance. It was further recommended that universities should adopt an organizational culture that will align it to high level of competitiveness and performance.

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