

The Link between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance: a case study of Public Organizations in Ethiopia

Worku Mekonnen Tadesse (PhD)*

ABSTRACT

Organizational culture is unwritten customs and behaviors that are manifested within an organization. This paper examined the effect of organizational culture traits on employees' perceived performance. Towards this end Denison' model of organizational culture dimensions was adopted to show its effect on employees perceive performance. The study is quantitative in its approach and explanatory in its design. The analysis of the descriptive statistics revealed that employees perceive themselves as average performers. It was also found that the existing organizational culture moderately support employee performance. The correlation analysis results have shown that the organizational cultural traits namely consistency, mission support, involvement and adaptability had strong relationships with employee perceived performance. The explanatory power of organizational cultural factors as portrayed by adjusted R square was ($R=..730$) indicating that 73.0% of the variation in employee's perceived performance is explained by organizational cultural traits identified in the present study. From the analysis of the study it can be concluded that organizational culture traits strongly explains employee performance. Hence, organizations need to pay attention to organizational cultural traits and alter in manner that enhances employee performance. Given the limited number of studies on this topic in the context African public organizations like Ethiopia, this study may call for a much rigorous study to show the effect of organizational culture on performance.

Key words: Employee performance, Ethiopia, Organizational culture

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Organizational culture is a widely researched area in the field of human resource management though very limited literature available in the context of African organizations like Ethiopia. A number of scholars have questioned the applicability of western management practices in developing countries since culture been recognized as a main source of differences in employee performance. In other respect many researchers affirmed that organizational culture is "a set of norms and values that are widely shared and strongly held throughout the organization" (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1996; Guiso et al., 2015); Owens 1987; Schein, 1990; Berg & Wilderom, 2004; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). According to Dave and Urich (2011) culture dictates the way we do business which is part of organizational survival tactics and personal success. With strong organizational culture employees believe it is the right thing to do and feel they will be rewarded for their actions.

The findings of prior studies have come with empirical evidences that organizational culture affects employee performance. Schein (1991) emphasizes that organizational cultures provide group members with a way of giving meaning to their daily lives, setting guidelines and rules for how to behave, and, most importantly, reducing and containing the anxiety of dealing with an unpredictable and uncertain environment. According to Kandula (2006) the key to good performance is a strong culture. He further maintains that due to differences in organizational

* Associate Professor School of Commerce, Addis Ababa University, E-mail : Worku.mekonnen@gmail.com

culture, same strategies do not yield the same results for two organizations in the same industry and in the same location. A positive and strong culture can make an average individual perform and achieve brilliantly whereas a negative and weak culture may de-motivate an outstanding employee to underperform and end up with no achievement.

Ethiopia, like many other African countries, is a multi-ethnic state. Ethiopia has a diverse mix of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. It is a country with more than 80 different ethnic groups each with its own language, culture, custom and tradition. The differences may be observed in the number of languages spoken about 83, falling into four main language groups: Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan. Ethiopian society is very traditional. Certain customs and ceremonies are highly regarded deeply rooted in the social interactions of the country.

Several researchers have described organizational culture and employee performance from other wider dimensions in other countries such as USA, .UK and India. There is however a lot that has not been done to establish the specific culture related factors that affect employee performance. Organizational Culture research has not been effectively done in developing countries particularly in Ethiopian hence a major gap in relevant literature seen developing countries at large. The research intends to bridge this available gap by identifying the actual effect of culture in an organization to the employees' performance in the context of Ethiopian public organizations.

1. Problem Statement

Despite the vast literature on organizational culture much less is known in the context of African public organizations like Ethiopia. Most authors in the area of organizational culture affirmed that the stronger is the organizational culture, the more effective is the organization. A number of scholars have questioned the applicability of western management practices in developing countries. Many researchers like Yilmaz, (2008) have called to investigate the phenomenon of organizational culture in different cultural context particularly in non-western nations. The culture of an organization is brought about as a result of different factors some of which include the influence of national culture, previous events in the organization the different personality and socialization of individual members socialized as a result of past educational and work settings (Mahler, 1997).

Ethiopia is made of several ethnic groups with differing work cultures. Such differences had

serious implication for managing work forces of the organizations. Some of the preliminary investigations and discussions made with key informants suggest that the work culture of Ethiopian employees is hindering factor for organizational performance. Many discussant indicated that the workers had wrong orientations towards working time. Such preliminary investigations call for through research to reveal the existing organizational culture of Ethiopian organizations. Therefore, the purpose of this study to show the prevailing organizational culture of the Ethiopian public organizations and its effect on employees' perceived performance. Therefore, the study targeted to answer the following basic research questions.

Research Questions

1. What type of organizational culture is prevailing in the public organizations considered for present study?
2. To what extent organizational culture relates to employee's perceived performance in the organizations?
3. What is the effect of organizational culture on employee' perceived performance in the context of the organizations?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of organizational culture

Organizational culture comprises the unwritten customs, behaviors and beliefs that determine the "rules of the game" for decision-making, structure and power. It's based on the shared history and traditions of the organization combined with current leadership values. In effect, culture dictates the way we do business here and the organizational survival tactics that facilitate assimilation and personal success (Dave and Urich, 2011). With a strong organizational culture, employees do things because they believe it's the right thing to do and feel they'll be rewarded for their actions. Organizational culture can be treated as a series of distinctive characteristics of a specific organization. Some modern definitions of organizational culture are dynamic, directed at creativity, innovations and entrepreneurship. Organizational culture includes; a system of ideas and concepts, customs, traditions, procedures and habits for functioning in a specific macro culture» (Moran, 1981: 103-104). Organizational culture is a series of values, standards and beliefs (Handy 1986). Organizational culture is implicit, invisible, intrinsic and informal awareness of the organization which directs behavior of individuals and which results

from their behavior (Scholz Z 1987: 80).

Dimension of Organizational culture

In understanding organizational culture it is very important to know all its elements. Authors are not unanimous about what are the elements of the organizational culture. According to Armstrong (Žugaj, Cingula, 1992) there are four important elements of organizational culture. These are; organization value, organization climate, Leadership style, work processes and system. Schein's (1984) model is one of the best known in studies of organizational culture. It is based on three levels: artifacts, beliefs and values, and basic assumptions. This model analyzes culture according to the degree to which it is visible to the observer. Artifacts are the visible products of a group and include language, technology, style, myths, and stories; or, in the case of an organization, structure, processes, and so on – that is, all that is easy to see but difficult to decipher. In turn, beliefs and values, as processes and ways of thinking and acting that have proven successful, draw heavily from artifacts. They are adopted by existing members, transmitted to new ones, and established as the organization's philosophy, serving as a behavioral guide in certain situations (Schein, 2004).

Denison's model has been developed starting from the Schein (1985) approach to organizational culture. Therefore, the core of the model is represented by the underlying beliefs and assumptions. At the more surface-level, there are the values and the artifacts (symbols, heroes) and the behavior. In this model, the comparison between organizations is made according to the surface-level values and their manifest practices.

Schein's iceberg model shows that organizational culture has visible and hidden aspects. The visible aspects are things such as written documents – strategic plans, job descriptions and disciplinary procedures. Organizational culture consists of values, beliefs and norms, Schein argues that these exist in people's heads, which raises the challenge of how actually to identify and interpret them. The key to Schein's idea is that these three levels of analysis can create a better understanding of the different components of culture in organizations. Schein's model was one of the first scholarly studies – which are valuable – that provide the link between scientific activity and practicability. Furthermore, the model insures rationales for failures with the planned changes in culture. Schein's model demonstrated that culture is something of highly important to organizations as it is something that can either unite or alienate individuals.

Theoretical Frame Work of the Study

The present study considered the Denison's model of organizational culture. Davoodalmousavi (2013) stated that as compared to other models Denison's model is new, complete and widely used to assess organizational culture of different organizations. The organizational culture model of Denison is based on four cultural traits: involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission. All these traits have been shown to have an influence on organizational performance (Denison, 1990). Denison was one of the first authors to develop a model of organizational culture in different contexts, attempting to quantify organizational culture by relating it to performance. Adaptability refers the organizations ability to

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Organizational Culture

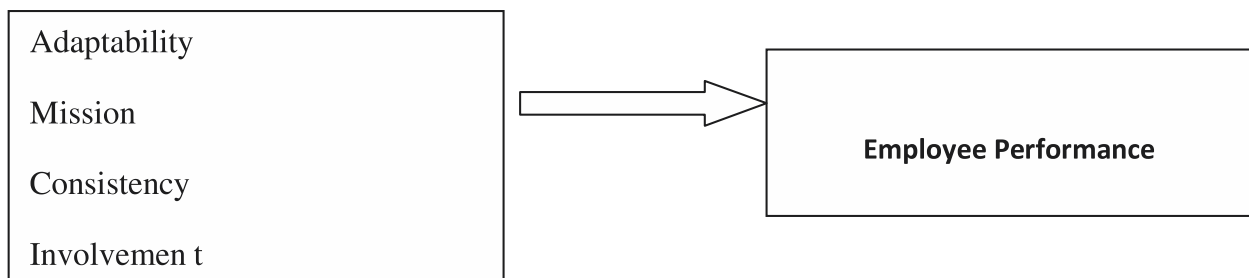


Figure 1. Conceptual Frame work of the study

understand and react to the competitive environment and its ability to meet customer expectations on a continuous manner. Denison stated that successful organizations have a clear mission that shown employees why they are engaged in their tasks and how they meet organizational expected performance. In other words Consistency represents the main source of integration, coordination and control. In addition, it helps organizations develop

a set of procedures that create an internal system of governance which is based on support that is consensual. Involvement refers the employees' level knowledge about decisions they are allowed to take and which ones are beyond their responsibility. It shows how far the employees are empowered to take decisions in an informed framework. Therefore the conceptual frame work of the study is shown in figure as follows:

Figure 1 shows that the organizational culture dimensions considered for present study had a significant effect on employee performance. The study targeted to test the following hypotheses:

- H1:** Organizational cultural trait of adaptability has a significant effect on employee performance.
- H2:** Organizational cultural trait of awareness of mission has a significant effect on employee performance.
- H3:** Organizational culture trait if consistency has a significant effect on employee performance.
- H4:** Organizational culture trait of involvement has a significant effect on employee's performance

RESEARCH APPROACH & DESIGN

There are currently twenty public ministerial offices in Ethiopia including the Attorney General with the Rank of a Minister. The present study selected headquarters of the ministries located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as sampled location of the study. The study is quantitative in its approach. Miles & Huberman (1994) stated that in quantitative research, the researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter. Kohtari (2004) explained that explanatory research design is useful for studying relations between causes and effects.

Sample Size & Sampling Technique

The target population of this study was professional employees of the public organizations who have experience of more than or equal to one year. These employees were selected as respondents because it is believed that they have adequate knowledge about organizational culture of their respective organizations. As per Morgan's sample size determination table if a population size is about 2000 it could be represented by 322. Since the population size for the current study was more than 2,000 a sample size of 330 was considered. Two hundred and ninety five of them properly filled the questionnaire which will make 89.4% of return rate. In order to provide equal chance for the heterogeneous groups of employees of the organizations, questionnaires were distributed

in the headquarters of public organizations using proportionate stratified sampling method

Data Collection and Analysis

The organizational cultural dimension was assessed using Denison (2000) organizational culture survey questionnaire. Employee perceived performance was measured based on performance measures scales identified by Cavalluzzo and Ittner (2004). The reliability of the questionnaires was tested using alpha Cronbach test. The overall findings of the pilot study were ($\alpha = .92$) that shows all the scales were reliable as their reliability values exceeded the prescribed threshold of 0.7 by Pallant (2005). The collected data were processed using SPSS version 20. Descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness were employed. Inferential statistics like Pearson Correlations and linear regression were employed to show the effects of organization culture on employee's perceived performance.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The respondents were drawn from the head quarters of public ministerial offices located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The sampled respondents were permanent employees of the organizations. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1 as follows:

As shown in Table 1, the number of male respondents outweighs the female respondents (65.4% and 34.4% respectively). Age wise the majority them are below 40 years old (75.3%). The level of education of respondents shows (63.1%) are at first degree and diploma level. Referring to their years of service in the sector majority of them working less than 10 years in the sector. The overall profile of the respondents shows that they had adequate exposure regarding the subject of the study which justifies the reliability of the information used for the purpose for this study.

Organizational Culture of Public Organizations in Ethiopia

To assess the prevailing organizational culture and employee perceived performance of the organizations, respondents were asked to rate 60 items categorized in terms of organizational culture traits namely consistently, conformity to mission, involvement and adaptability as identified by Denison (2000). Employee's perceived performance was also assessed based survey questions identified by Cavalluzzo and Ittner (2004). The items were interpreted in line

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

No.	Factor	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	F	101	34.4
		M	193	65.4
		Missing	1	.3
		Total	294	100.0
2	Age	Below 30	95	32.2
		31-40	127	43.1
		41-50	58	19.9
		Over 50	12	4.0
		Missing	3	1.0
		Total	295	100
3	Level of Education	First Degree	186	63.1
		Masters	82	27.8
		Above masters	20	2.
		Others	4	6.8
		Total	295	100
4	Length of service years in the sector	1 to 5 years	63	21.4
		6 to 10 years	138	46.8
		11 to 15 years	71	24.1
		Over 15 years	13	4.4
		Total	295	100

Source: Survey 2019

with Baba (1999) references points which are shown as follows: 1.00 - 1.80 Strongly Disagree, 1.81 - 2.60 Moderately Disagree, 2.61 - 3.40 Average, 3.41-4.20 Moderate Agreement, 4.21 - 5.00 Strong/ High Agreement. The group means reports of each of the categories were shown in Table 2 as follows:

As shown in Table 2 the standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis reports show the normality

of the distribution of the descriptive statistics. The first item of the table shows the overall consistency of the organizational culture trait. This trait shows how far different behaviors within organization are coordinated and integrated. The mean average of consistency of organizational behavior was found to be 2.8571 with St. dev. of .97883. This implied that average consistent coordination and

integration behavior are prevailing among groups employees in the organizations. Respondents were asked to rate questions as related to employees' effort in order to realize organizational mission. In order to assess this trait questions related to clarity, directedness and attainability of organizational

goals and strategic objectives were posed. The result pertaining to this issue revealed the moderately lower level of mission related culture is prevailing in organizations that are considered for present study. In order to assess the involvement trait of organizational culture, respondents were asked to

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics report on Organizational culture dimension and Employee Performance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
consistency	287	2.8571	.97883	.642	.144	-.219	.287
Mission	291	2.0447	.67478	.913	.143	1.212	.285
Involvement	285	2.1363	.72867	.701	.144	-.096	.288
Adaptability	293	2.3191	.80407	.646	.142	-.119	.284
performance	291	2.7131	.94031	.817	.143	.138	.285
Valid N (listwise)	273						

reflect their views on items like degree of employee empowerment, team cohesiveness, and the degree of employees' commitment to their respective organizations. The descriptive report related to this item as shown in Table 2 is 2.1363 with Std. of .72867 implying that moderately lower level of employee feeling involvement in organizational decision making process of their respective organizations. The third item shows the extent of adaptability of the organizational culture to the environment. The respondents were asked to reflect their views on such items like reaction to customers' needs, extent of taking risks and organizations capacity in creating change. As shown in Table 2 the mean average of the items was found to be 2.3191 with standard deviation of .80407 implying their expression of moderate lower level satisfaction on adaptability of organizational culture to the changes in environment. The last item targeted to assess the employees feeling about their performance. The mean average of the items as shown in Table 2 was found to be 2.7131 with standard deviation of .94031 implying the respondents feeling of average perform. The overall

findings of the descriptive statistics reports revealed weak organizational culture is prevailing in public organizations in Ethiopia.

Relationship between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance

In order to show the extent to which employees safety behavior related to organizational safety climate, analyses were done based on Cohen (1988, pp,79-81) correlation coefficients formula as shown here below:

$r = 0.10$ to 0.29 or $r = -0.10$ to -0.29 represents small correlation,

$r = 0.30$ to 0.49 or $r = -0.30$ to -0.49 represents medium correlation and

$r = 0.50$ to 1.0 or $r = -0.50$ to -1.0 represents high correlation.

The results of the coefficients of variables obtained were summarized in matrix form as shown in Table 3. The traits of organizational culture that are considered for the study are strongly related to employee performance. A correlation result of (Consistency ($r=.772$), adaptability ($r=.760$), involvement($r=.758$))

and mission related behavior ($r=.698$) were obtained. The overall finding of this section revealed that a key for employees' performance is the organizational culture that is prevailing in the organization.

Effect of Organizational Culture on Employees Performance

In order to show the effect of organizational culture on employee performance multivariate linear regression model was employed. Before considering

the model, test of model fit was made based on the key assumptions of multivariate regressions proposed by Kothari (2004) and Hayes (2013). Based on the analysis made in test of the model fit, all the key assumptions of multivariate linear regression were met. Accordingly, the model summary of the effect of organizations culture on employee performance is shown in Table 4 as follows:

Table 3: Relationship between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance

Variables	consistency	Mission	Involvement	Adaptability	performance	
consistency	Pearson Correlation	1	.714	.749	.715	.772
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	287	284	278	286	284
Mission	Pearson Correlation	.714	1	.729	.612	.698
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	284	291	282	290	290
Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.749	.729	1	.693	.758
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	278	282	285	284	282
Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.715	.612	.693	1	.760
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	286	290	284	293	290
performance	Pearson Correlation	.772	.698	.758	.760	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	284	290	282	290	291

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The model summary in Table 4 shows the cumulative effect of organizational culture on employee perceived performance. As depicted in the model summary, the adjusted R square result is .730. This indicates that 73.0% of the variations on employees' performance are explained by the organizational culture traits that prevail in the public organizations.

Contribution of the independent variables.

In order to show the contribution of each independent variable as depicted in the conceptual model a test was made using coefficients and significance of

Independent Variables.

Table 5 shows the coefficients Beta value of the independent variables on organizational culture of public organizations considered for the present study. The contributions of organizational culture in terms of their weight magnitude is : .390 for adaptability trait; .265 for trait of involvement, .250 for consistency and .240 for mission trait. As show in the significance level all the factors considered for the present study have significantly explain employee performance.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.857 ^a	.734	.730	.48571

Source: Survey 2019

Therefore, the hypotheses stated in terms of the effect of organizational culture traits on employee's performance are summarized as follows:

DISCUSSION

The present study considered trait of organizational culture as identified by Dension's (2000) dimensions of organizational culture namely consistency, mission

support, involvement and adaptability to show their effect on employees' perceived performance. The first analysis made was to show the level of employee performance. The descriptive report shows that employee's feeling as an average performer (mean=2.7131 with standard deviation of .94031). The employee's perception about their performance was considered as a dependent variable. Accordingly,

Table 5: Coefficients of Independent Variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.030	.102		.296	.768
consistency	.250	.052	.258	4.773	.000
Mission	.240	.069	.174	3.472	.001
Involvement	.265	.071	.203	3.740	.000
Adaptability	.390	.056	.335	6.962	.000

a. Dependent Variable: performance

the effect cultural trait factors on employee perceived performance were discussed as follows. The descriptive and inferential statistical report as the related to the first organizational trait namely consistency the culture shows (mean=2.8571 with SD of .97883 $r=.772$ $B=.250$). This shows moderate level organizations effort on creating consistent culture across the units of the organizations. It also revealed consistency in culture is highly related to employee performance and had significant effect on their performance. The findings as related to this section similar to the findings of the study conducted by Das and Tripathy (2018). The findings as related to the magnitude employees' level of mission commitment shows mean value of 2.0447 and $r=.714$ and $B=-.240$ sig. .069. These findings suggest the employees' lower level of concern about mission of the organization. In other respect the factor significantly related to employee performance and weakly explains employee performance. This finding is also consistent with study conducted by Das and Tripathy (2018).

The findings as related to practice of involving and the extent of adaptable culture exercised in the organizations shows mean value of 2.1363 and 2.3191 respectively. This shows the existing culture of the organizations hinder employees to involve in major issues as well less do not allow employees to proactively take action depending on environmental changes. The correlation results show that the factors are strongly related to employee performance and significantly explain employee performance based on Beta value of the factors. The cumulative effect of the safety climate on employee's safety behavior as shown by adjusted R square is .730 which shows 73.0% the variations in employee perceived performance is explained by the cumulative effect of organizational trait factors identified for the present study. The study conducted by Glasister and Buckley (1998) Langat & Lagat (2017) Olu Ojo (2008) identified that organizational culture as one of the factors responsible for organizational effectiveness and employee performance.

Concluding Remarks

The findings of the study indicated employees perceive themselves as an average performer. The organizational trait factors considered for present study contributes for their level of performance as the study portrays 73.0% of variations in the employees perceived performance would be explained by organizational culture related traits.

Limitations

As the study is quantitative in its approach it lacks the qualitative dimension to have comprehensive picture on making inferences about the effect of organizational culture on employee's perceived performance.

Recommendations for future study

The study calls for an in depth study in other establishments in the country so that policy makers and researchers can have a wide spectrum of the role of organizational culture on employee performance in the Ethiopian organizations.

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