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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AS A DETERMINANT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines organization culture as a determinant of customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya. This was done in an effort to examine ways in which these institutions can be made accountable and efficient in service delivery to citizens within their jurisdiction as envisioned in Kenya Vision 2030. It was based on the conceptualization that organization culture influences employee commitment which in turn determines service delivery in local authorities in Kenya. Using a descriptive survey design, the study collected data from 322 employees of local authorities and 216 small scale entrepreneurs in their jurisdiction who had been randomly and purposively selected. Data was analyzed descriptively and quantitatively to establish the linkage between organizational culture, employee commitment and customer service delivery. The findings of the study indicated that organizational culture had a positive and significant effect on employee commitment and customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya. The study therefore concluded that organizational culture determines customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya. The paper recommends that managers of current local authorities and those of the county governments that will be established in the country in 2013 should strive to build a strong organization culture that facilitates attainment of their strategic goals.

KEYWORDS

customer service delivery, organizational culture, employee commitment.

INTRODUCTION

The corporate world is populated by companies engaged in cut throat competition in an effort to win customers (Compton, 2004; Gachunga, 2008). Research shows that various internal factors in these entities drive their performance as well as shape their competitive advantage. Amongst the internal organizational factors that influence organizational performance is the corporate culture prevalent in a given organization (Zain, Ishak and Ghani, 2009; Martins and Martins, 2004). Many organizations have strived to build a strong corporate culture that ensures superior performance is attained where customers and other stakeholders receive value.

Scholars hold the view that organizational performance is a product of committed employees. According to Zain *et al* (2009) Sabir, Razzaq and Yameen (2010) and Manetje and Martins (2009), organizational culture builds organizational commitment in employees. This results in superior performance from them leading to enhanced organizational performance. For a long time, public institutions' performance in Africa has not been attracting attention as is the case with private enterprises. This is because unlike the public sector, shareholders of private firms have been vigilant and expect a good return on their investment. The management teams of such enterprises have therefore had to strive to ensure continuous enhancement of shareholders' value. In the public sector, citizens have started demanding for better services and accountability from public service bodies. This has led many governments and their agencies to adopt performance contracting as a means to enhancing accountability and service delivery.

Performance contracting has been embraced by governments and their agencies in Ghana, Swaziland, Botswana, Nigeria and Kenya among others (Kobia and Mohammed, 2006). The practice has aimed at recognizing citizens as customers of public entities who are meant to be offered superior services. In Kenya, the government embraced Results Based Management and Performance Contracting as part of the reforms in the public sector that sought to improve performance in government in 2001 (Kobia and Mohammed 2006). All government ministries and agencies such as Local Authorities are expected to develop strategic plans that focus on helping the country to attain Vision 2030 as well as deliver customer satisfaction to citizens. Local authorities have been involving citizens in identifying specific activities and projects to be undertaken in their various wards which are then incorporated in their Local Authority service Delivery Action Plans and Strategic Plans (CLARION, 2007; Odhiambo *et al*, 2005). Local Authorities have also developed service delivery charters that outline the timelines within which these institutions promise to deliver their obligations and services to citizens as well as provide recourse if one is dissatisfied with their services. This has resulted in marked improvement in the service delivery of local authorities and other government institutions. This made the country to receive the 2007 United Nations Public Service Award, (Mutunga, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arriving at a single definition of organizational culture has eluded scholars. According to Zain *et al* (2009), organizational culture is a management philosophy and a way of managing an organization that seeks to improve the firm's effectiveness and efficiency. Others such as Martins and Martins (2004) see it as a system of shared meaning held by organizational members that distinguishes it from other organizations. It is the organization's personality that sets it apart from others. This may be in the form of distinctive norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that combine to give each organization its distinctive character (Arnold, 2005). This paper defines organizational culture as a system of stable norms, beliefs, practices, actions and assumptions that are held by members of a given organization that define it and determine how it conducts its business.

The organizational culture found in local authorities has partly been seen as a contributor to poor service delivery by those entities (CLARION, 2007; Odhiambo *et al*, 2005). Previous studies have looked at organizational cultural dimensions such as the practices of an organization's members and its values towards

training, rewards, teamwork, goal attainment and communication and how they influence organizational commitment. In most of them, these dimensions were found to influence organizational commitment (Zain *et al*, 2009; Manetje and Martins, 2009). Another study by Shah, Memon and Phulpoto (2012) on the influence of organizational culture on organizational commitment of faculty members of private sector universities in Pakistan used team orientation, outcome orientation, people orientation, attention to detail, innovation and risk taking orientation as dimensions of organizational culture. The study found out that organizational culture influenced organizational commitment which in turn affected the performance of those organizations.

Organizational commitment has been defined by Meyer *et al* (2002) as employees' experience of a sense of oneness with the organization where they are psychologically attached to it. One identifies with the organization that he/she works for. It is made up of three components namely the affective, continuance and normative aspects. Affective commitment refers to an employees' positive emotional attachment to the organization. An employee strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and strives to attain them since he/she remains in the organization by choice.

Normative commitment on its part refers to employees' commitment to the organization due to a feeling of obligation. According to Nelson and Quick (2009), the employee stays with the organization because they feel they should. For example, it may be based on how they are socialized or due to the organization having facilitated their further training among others. Continuance commitment involves employees remaining within the organization due to the perceived high cost of losing organizational membership. Such employees fear losing the job, pensions and other accrued benefits hence will remain in the organization, at least until they get an alternative (Zain *et al*, 2009; Nelson and Quick, 2009).

Affective and normative commitments have been associated with superior organizational performance (Rashid and Raja, 2011). Continuance commitment on its part contributes to absenteeism, low staff morale and decreased productivity (Nelson and Quick, 2009). Employees remain in the organization in such a case because they have no alternative place to go. For example, their qualifications and experience may not give them a similar position elsewhere. In general, managers should strive to build organizational commitment since it is a major determinant of service delivery in organizations. Service delivery in Local authorities can be looked at in terms of the provision of required statutory services to the citizens in their jurisdiction. This can be in terms of timely provision of services, their quality and reduction of customer complaints.

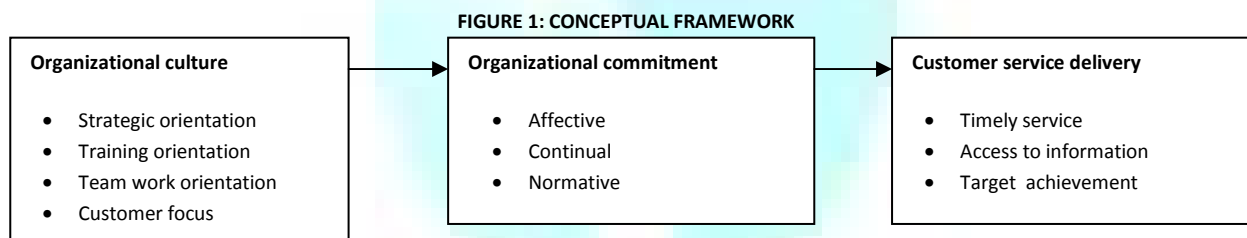
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The strategic plans of Local Authorities as well as the performance contracts signed by the managers of these entities are expected to elicit superior service delivery from them. This is because the projects and other activities that those local authorities commit themselves to implement in these plans and contracts usually target improving the general livelihoods of citizens socially, economically and even politically.

The scenario in Kenya is however contrary to these expectations. Garbage collection is irregular in major towns, traders lack markets, there is poor street lighting, corruption is rampant in local authorities and many are in financial distress (KACC, 2007, Kabathi, 2009, Kirimi and Munyinyi, 2007). Whereas this poor customer service delivery has been blamed on inadequate finances, corruption and political interference, other commentators blame poor service delivery on the prevalent organization culture in local authorities and other public agencies that does not recognize the citizens as customers who deserve better services (Kobia and Mohammed, 2006; Obong'o, 2009, Odhiambo *et al*, 2005). Despite the government's efforts to reverse this trend, these complaints still abound. This paper therefore sought to establish the influence of organizational culture on customer service delivery in Local authorities in Kenya.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This study examined the influence of organizational culture in determining customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya. Customer service delivery was seen as the ultimate performance of employees who were high on affective and normative commitment. Organizational culture was assessed in terms of employees' perception of organizational values and practices with reference to strategic orientation, training of employees, team work orientation and customer focus as seen in Figure 1.



Source: Research study, 2011

STUDY HYPOTHESES

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses with regard to customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya:

- HO₁ There is no relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment in local authorities in Kenya.
- HO₂ There is no relationship between organizational commitment and customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya.
- HO₃ There is no relationship between organizational culture and customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design. A sample of 322 employees was selected from 13 local authorities in the Western region of Kenya through stratified and simple random selection methods. The study also selected 216 small scale entrepreneurs from the jurisdictions of these councils to participate in the study for the purposes of triangulating the study. Data was collected through questionnaires which were tested for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient tests. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the questionnaires of employees and small scale entrepreneurs were 0.898 and 0.808 respectively, indicating high levels of reliability. The questionnaire for employees of local authorities had questions that sought for data on demographics, strategic orientation, training orientation, team work orientation and customer focus which were measured on a 5 point likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It also had items that sought for data on organizational commitment and customer service delivery. The questionnaire for small scale entrepreneurs had items that captured information on level of satisfaction with services offered by local authorities. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who were given adequate time to fill them before they were collected a week later.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study data was analyzed using descriptive and qualitative tests where the study hypotheses were also tested. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the data qualitatively and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient tests were used for the quantitative analysis. The results were then presented in the sections that follow.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The results of the data collection revealed that most of the Local authorities had employees whose highest level of education was diploma and below. Most of them had worked for less than five years for these entities as seen on Table 2.

TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics	Dimensions	Frequency(%)
Gender	Male	176 (54.7)
	Female	146 (45.3)
Age	Below 25 years	16 (0.5)
	25 - 34 years	97 (30.1)
	35 – 44 years	138 (42.9)
	45 – 54 years	67 (20.8)
	55 years and above	4 (1.2)
Highest level of education	Primary	15 (4.7)
	Secondary	84 (26.1)
	Certificate	72 (22.4)
	Diploma /CPA	121 (37.6)
	Bachelors degree	28 (8.7)
	Masters	2(0.6)
Duration of employment	Below 5 years	112 (24.8)
	6 – 10 years	66 (20.5)
	11 – 14 years	55 (17.1)
	15 years and above	89 (27.6)

Source : Research study 2012

The study further revealed that local authority employees acknowledged that various dimensions of organizational culture were practiced in the organization although their opinions differed on the extent to which they were practiced as seen on Table 3.

TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATION CULTURE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY

Statement	SA f(%)	A f(%)	FA f(%)	D f(%)	SD f(%)
Strategic orientation					
• Activities are carried out in my council in line with our vision and mission	80 (24.8)	182(56.5)	13(4)	34(10.6)	13(4)
• Employees views are incorporated in our strategic and action plans	35(10.9)	207(64.3)	8(2.5)	46(14.3)	28(8.1)
Training orientation					
• Appraisals are done to identify staff to undergo further training	25(7.8)	139(43.2)	15(4.7)	79(24.5)	64(19.9)
• Training in my firm is prioritized and I have undertaken further training in the last one year	71(22)	203 (63)	10(3.1)	33(10.2)	5(1.6)
• My council pays training fees for employees undertaking further training.	82(25.5)	148(46)	20(6.2)	50(15.5)	22(6.8)
• Those who successfully finish training are promoted	51(15.8)	126(39.1)	22(6.8)	82(26.5)	41(12.7)
Team work orientation					
• There is cooperation within departments	40(12.4)	139(43.2)	9(2.8)	105(32.6)	29(9)
• I am comfortable to work in a team than an individual	72(22.4)	109(33.9)	10(3.1)	68(21.1)	63(19.6)
• There is good interpersonal communication in my council.	58(18)	190(59)	30(9.3)	34(10.6)	10(3.1)
Customer service delivery					
• My council has effectively delivered services to citizens as outlined in the service charter.	10(3.1)	72(22.4)	23(7.1)	183(56.8)	34(10.6)
• My council meets the required needs of residents on time.	16(0.5)	65(20.2)	16(5)	157(48.8)	68(21.1)
• The council allows residents access to information on its performance	25(7.8)	121(37.6)	36(11.2)	108(33.5)	32(9.9)
• The council addresses customer complaints	32(9.9)	181(56.2)	35(10.9)	53(16.5)	21(6.5)
Organizational commitment					
• If I got an opportunity elsewhere , I will leave this organization	33(10.2)	49(15.2)	21(6.5)	183(56.8)	36(11.2)
• I am ready to put in extra effort on behalf of the organization	64(19.9)	78(24.2)	44(13.7)	118(36.6)	18(5.6)
• I believe and share in the goals and values of the organization	33(10.2)	62(19.3)	47(14.6)	152(47.2)	28(8.7)
• I work here because I am obligated to do so	47(14.6)	125(38.8)	52(16.1)	82(25.5)	28(8.7)
• I am happy that I am involved in decision making.	41(12.7)	91(28.3)	45(14)	118(36.6)	27(8.4)
Customer focus					
• My council seeks views of our customer on our services quality	22(6.8)	77(23.9)	56(17.4)	117(36.3)	50(15.5)
• My council improves its services based on customer feedback	26(8.1)	77(23.9)	33(10.2)	126(39.1)	60(18.6)
• My council treasures our customers	27(8.4)	85(26.4)	50(15.5)	114(35.4)	46(14.3)

Key: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Fairly Agree (FA) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD)

Source : Research study, 2012

The findings reveal that employees perceived that activities in their local authorities were carried out according to the strategic plans and employees were taken for further training to improve their service delivery. Teamwork was also identified to exist amongst members of the local authorities. Although levels of organizational commitment were high, a high number of employees were not ready to put in extra effort on behalf of the organization as confirmed by 118(36.6%) and 18(5.6%) respondents respectively who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement on the issue. Most of them were also unhappy that they were not involved in decision making.

The study further revealed that small scale entrepreneurs who were identified as major customers of local authorities were fairly satisfied with the services of local authorities as shown on Table 4.

TABLE 4: PERCEPTION OF SMALL SCALE ENTREPRENEURS WITH SERVICES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Statement	SA f(%)	A f(%)	FA f(%)	D f(%)	SD f(%)
The council fees and levies are fair	12(5.6)	96(44.4)	12(5.6)	60(27.85)	36(16.7)
The council offers quick and efficient services to me	78(36.1)	24(11.1)	24(11.1)	54(25)	60(27.8)
Employees of the council are friendly, caring & courteous	18(8.3)	72(33.3)	0	102(47.2)	24(11.1)
The council fully provides citizens with relevant services as outlined in the service charter	18(8.3)	60(27.8)	12(5.6)	84(38.9)	42(19.4)
The council allows me easy access to required information from their offices	24(11.1)	96(44.4)	6(2.8)	54(25)	36(16.7)
In general, I am satisfied with services offered by my local authority	36(16.7)	78(36.1)	12(5.6)	60(27.8)	30(13.9)

Key: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Fairly Agree (FA) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD)

Source :Research study, 2011

However, most of them felt that the council employees were not caring and courteous as was perceived by 102(47.2%) and 24(11.1%) of the respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with a statement that stated the contrary. They also felt that the local authorities were not fully providing citizens with relevant services as provided for in their service charter.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The study sought to establish the relationship between organization culture and organizational commitment and how this affected customer service delivery. The means for the organizational culture dimensions, organizational commitment measures as well as those of customer service delivery items were obtained and summated. They were then correlated using Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient tests at 95% confidence level. The results of these tests are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

TABLE 5: PEARSON'S PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION TEST RESULTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

	Strategic orientation	Training orientation	Teamwork orientation	Customer focus	Organizational culture
Organizational commitment	0.466	0.433	0.346	0.299	0.414
Sig(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	322	322	322	322	322

Source: Research study 2011

The results on Table 5 indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between the four dimensions of organizational culture and organizational commitment. Strategic orientation had the highest correlation ($r = 0.466$; $p = 0.000$) followed by Training orientation and Teamwork orientation. Customer focus had the least correlation with organizational commitment ($r = 0.299$; $P = 0.000$). In general, there was a positive and significant relationship between organization culture and organizational commitment ($r = 0.414$; $p = 0.000$). From the findings in Table 5, the first null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment. Organizational culture therefore influences organizational commitment.

The mean scores for organizational culture dimensions were then summated resulting in a composite measure of organizational culture. The same was done for the items on organizational commitment and customer service delivery. Further tests were then carried out to determine the relationship between organizational culture, organizational commitment and customer service delivery. This was done to test the second and third hypotheses of the study. The findings are presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6: PEARSON'S PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION TEST RESULTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY

	Organizational culture	Organizational commitment
Customer service delivery	0.421	0.437
Sign. (2tailed)	0.000	0.000
N	322	322

Source: Research study 2011

The results in Table 6 showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and customer service delivery ($r=0.437$; $p=0.000$). This led the study to reject the second null hypothesis and conclude that there was a positive and significant relationship between organizational commitment and customer service delivery. Organizational commitment therefore influenced customer service delivery.

Further test results on Table 6 showed that there existed a positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and customer service delivery ($r=0.421$; $p=0.000$). Contrary to the postulations of third hypothesis, the study concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and customer service delivery. This led to the conclusion that organization culture influenced organizational performance.

DISCUSSIONS

Organization culture was found to be correlated to organizational commitment. This concurs with the findings of earlier studies by Zain *et al* (2009), Shah *et al* (2012) and Manetje and Martins (2009). Specifically, the strategic orientation where employees shared in the vision, mission and values of the organization and training orientation had the highest influence on organizational commitment. This indicates that employees ought to be made aware of and contribute to the formulation of strategic and action delivery plans to enhance their effective commitment. The local authorities had facilitated employees' skills enhancement through their emphasis on training hence enhancing normative commitment. With a positive culture that encourages teamwork, training and strategic focus, organizational commitment will be enhanced.

Although there was a significant and positive relationship between team orientation and organizational commitment, this correlation was low ($r = 0.346$). This signified that there was moderate cohesiveness amongst employees in local authorities which may have contributed to this scenario. The study also found that there was a positive and significant relationship between customer focus and organizational commitment ($r = 0.299$). The low score shows that employees' appreciation of customers was low, yet the local authorities were primarily established to offer citizens a variety of social and economic services. This indicates that there was a proportion of continuance commitment where some employees were serving these institutions without dedication for lack of alternative forms of employment. This tallies with the perception of small scale entrepreneurs respondents that employees of local authorities were not friendly, courteous and caring. This area needs to be addressed where employees should be taken for customer care training to enhance their social skills.

The findings also showed that organizational commitment had a superior relationship with customer service delivery ($r=0.437$) when compared to organizational culture ($r=0.421$). This shows that managers in local authorities ought to focus on building and emphasizing organizational cultural aspects that enhance organizational commitment. With enhanced affective and normative commitment in the employees, customers will receive better service quality from the local authorities.

With the promulgation of the new constitution of Kenya, 2010 and the enactment of the Urban Areas and Cities Act of 2011, Counties, Cities, Municipalities and Towns are going to compete against each other in attracting investors. Managers ought to make their employees to appreciate their customers and deliver required services to them. With enhanced organizational commitment, there will be superior service delivery to customers. Organizational cultural dimensions that enhance affective and normative commitment should therefore be encouraged and nurtured.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concluded that organizational culture positively influenced customer service delivery in local authorities in Kenya. A focus on aspects of organizational culture that enhanced organizational commitment resulted in enhanced superior customer service delivery. Based on these findings the study recommends that:

- Managers of local authorities should focus their efforts on enhancing employees' appreciation of their customers.
- Local authorities should come up with mechanisms of encouraging the development of normative and affective commitment in employees to enhance customer service delivery.
- Local authorities should build strong cultures that encourage service delivery to enhance customer appreciation of their services. This will result in giving them a competitive edge over others.

- The County Governments that will be formed in 2013 in Kenya should prioritize the development of strong organizational cultures that fosters organizational commitment and superior performance.

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