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## PERCEIVED ROLE OF CORPORATE CULTURE IN PERFORMANCE OF COMMERCIAL STATE CORPORATIONS IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of corporate culture in organisational performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive and explanatory research designs with a statistical sample of 103 employees responsible for key result areas in 36 commercial state corporations in Kenya. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire as well as various reports. Corporate culture was measured using culture traits of Denison's model while organizational performance was measured through Fisher's measures with some modifications. The moderating variable was measured using scale of personal values in the Social Value Survey developed by Schwartz. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 for descriptive statistics, factor analysis, hypotheses testing and regression analysis. Secondary data was analyzed through the use of R-program. Results of the study show a positive significant role of corporate culture in performance of state corporations ( $R^2 = 0.951$ ). The study recommends that state corporations embrace positive corporate culture that promotes entrepreneurship and productivity for them to become competitive and remain successful.*

### KEYWORDS

corporate culture, denison model, ceo values, organizational performance, commercial state corporations.

### INTRODUCTION

rganisations in many industries, such as service, energy, banking, electronics and agriculture have faced increasingly complex and changing environments brought about by deregulation, technological revolution, foreign competition and unpredictable markets. This has not spared state corporations (Liu, Kiley & Ballard, 2009). Besides, the fierce competition of the market economy and globalization trends are forcing businesses to constantly explore new things and boost creativity and adaptability to changes in order to survive and develop (Nguyen, 2015). This requires businesses to build and maintain culture-specific routines to promote the capacity and promote the contribution of everyone to achieve the overall objectives of the organization - which is Corporate Culture (CC). Development of a particular culture for the organisation is key to the success of these organisations (Philip & McKeown, 2004). This consists of fostering attitudes of flexibility, dynamism and responsiveness; seeking structures and cultures that are positive and organic; and developing the human resource to its maximum capacity (Pettinger, 2000).

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite several efforts by the government to restructure the State Corporations to enhance performance, the corporations have over the years performed dismally due to a number of challenges notably bad governance, political interference and lack of corporate culture (Mwaura, 2007). Although empirical studies have been carried out globally on corporate culture and performance of organizations, there has been little evidence relating the effect of corporate culture to organizational performance (McKinnon et al., 2003). This shows that the importance of corporate culture, as a factor in defining performance, has received considerably little attention (Tepeci & Bartlett, 2002).

Denison & Mishra (1995) found that organizations with higher levels of involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission sense were more effective in achieving their goals. This study investigated involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission as sub-constructs under corporate culture given that no study has linked them to performance of organisations in Kenya. This holds especially true for parastatals (which form the largest sector in the economy) in Kenya. It is surprising because human resource involvement is considered an inherent and integral characteristic of the state corporations (Bavik, 2014). The distinct characteristics of the SCs make corporate culture an important area of concern for this sector, particularly as corporate culture has the potential to affect employees' behaviours to a noticeable degree. It plays an important role in internal control, employees' behaviours, and the prevention of undesirable behaviours (Hosseini, 2004).



In a study of Hong Kong and Australian managers, Lok and Crawford (2004) found a positive effect of corporate culture on employee performance. In another study Zain *et al.* (2009) examined the effect of four dimensions of corporate culture namely teamwork, communication, reward and recognition, and training and development on organizational performance and found that all the four dimensions of corporate culture were important determinants of organizational performance. While Mahmudah (2012) report a significant relationship between corporate culture and organizational performance, research by Lahiry (1994) showed only a weak association between corporate culture and organizational performance.

Locally, there is scarce literature on the role of corporate culture in performance of state corporations (SCs). Several studies have been conducted on performance of SCs in Kenya, such as one in which Shitakwa (2008) undertook a study of the relationship between performance contracting and performance of state owned corporations. Muriithi (2008) also did a research on corporate governance and the financial performance of state corporations. Wario's (2012) study was on the role of HRM in operationalization of tacit knowledge in Kenyan state corporations. Ong'onge's (2012) study was on the effect of autonomy on financial performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. Mwaura (2007) focussed on the failure of corporate governance in state owned enterprises in Kenya while Chumo's (2013) study was on effects of Chief Executive Officers' turnover and succession on the performance of state corporations in Kenya. Kibui (2014) conducted a study on role of talent management on employees of state corporations in Kenya. Empirical review among all these studies conducted shows no one has addressed role of corporate culture on performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. Therefore, there is need to address corporate culture and its role in performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya as the knowledge gap necessitating this research study.

The purpose of the study was to examine this relationship with particular reference to four corporate culture dimensions, namely involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission, in State Corporations in Kenya. CEO's values were adopted as the moderating variable because previous studies examining top leaders' personal values found that values can function as a cognitive hierarchy (Behr, 1998; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987) and the hierarchy of values has been used to explain the differences in organizational outcomes (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). It is important to analyse performance and conditions of parastatals under different aspects and changing environment and to use modern research methods in order to contribute to recommendations and improvement of performance of SCs. The research conducted by Denison is the most extensive quantitative study on organisational culture and organisational performance. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted on the Denison Organizational Culture Survey elsewhere, there have been no studies of this nature in Kenya. This study, thus, seeks to answer the question: what is the role of corporate culture in the performance of State Corporation in Kenya?

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of this study was to assess the role of corporate culture in organisational performance of State Corporations in Kenya.

**METHODOLOGY**

According to Cooper & Schindler (2006) a research design is the blue print for fulfilling research objectives and answering questions. It is the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them (Chumo, 2011). Selecting a design may be complicated by availability of a large variety of methods, techniques, procedures, protocols and sampling plans. This study was descriptive in nature, as the relationship between corporate culture and performance was described through the research. Christensen (1997) indicates that the primary characteristic of the descriptive research approach is that it represents an attempt to provide an accurate description or picture of a particular situation or phenomenon. It attempts to identify variables that exist in a given situation and describes the relationship that exists between those variables. This research meets these requirements as the characteristics and constructs of corporate culture and performance are clearly defined and will be analysed using quantitative techniques, and the aim of the research is to determine the nature of the relationship between the two variables.

Explanatory research goes further than merely indicating that relationships exist between variables (Mouton & Marais, 1994). It indicates the direction of the relationships in a causal relationship model. In this research, a particular organisational culture profile is hypothesised to have a role in the performance of the SCs. This research can thus also be described as being explanatory in nature.

Thus the study adopted a descriptive survey research with the SCs in Kenya as the unit of analysis because the design best serves to answer the questions and the purposes of the study. The survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. In other words, only a part of the population is studied, and findings from this are expected to be generalized to the entire population (Nworgu, 1991).

The hypotheses that were put forth by the researcher were tested through statistical outcomes, and the choice of statistical tests were based upon the level of measurement of the data; the validity of the instrument utilized for measuring the variables of interest; the power of the statistical test selected; and the methodological limitations of the research (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2010 cited in Sang, 2015).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**RESPONSE RATE**

Data was collected from 26 commercial state corporations while targeting 34 state corporations. A total of 70 out of 103 self administered questionnaires were filled and returned giving a response rate of 68 %. This was considered adequate as the recommended rate is 60% of respondents (Sekaran, 2009).

**ROLE OF INVOLVEMENT CULTURE IN PERFORMANCE**

In this study involvement culture was operationalized into empowerment, team orientation, and capability development. A five-point likert scale was used to measure each of the sub-variables and the results were presented in tables. Percentages were used to describe the results.

**EMPOWERMENT**

From the results in Table 1 below, 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that decisions are usually made at the level where the best information is available, 12.9% were neutral and 7.1% disagreed. It is deduced that decisions in the organizations are made where the best information is available. This facilitates quality of apt decisions at managerial level. On whether information is widely shared so that everyone can get the information he or she needs when it is needed, 68.6% agreed, 20% were neutral and 11.4% disagreed. This implies that information is widely shared in the organizations as and when required. It is a positive sign which facilitates employees to know all the details needed by them. Asked whether everyone believes that he or she can have a positive impact, 65.7% agreed, 21.4% were neutral and 12.9% disagreed. It is deduced that employees in their individual capacity consider their impact on performance of an organization. This can be attributed to their sense of positive contribution in the growth of the organization.

**TABLE 1: RESPONSE ON EMPOWERMENT**

Empowerment	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Summary		
						Mean	Median	Mode
Decisions are usually made at the level where the best information is available.	1.4%	5.7%	12.9%	54.3%	25.7%	4	4	4
Information is widely shared so that everyone can get the information he or she needs when it is needed.	0.0%	11.4%	20.0%	48.6%	20.0%	4	4	4
Everyone believes that he or she can have a positive impact.	2.9%	10.0%	21.4%	40.0%	25.7%	4	4	4

**TEAM ORIENTATION**

A modified five-point Likert scale was used to measure team orientation and the results were as tabulated in Table 2. Percentages were used to describe the results. It was found that 75.7% agreed with the opinion that working in the respective organization is like being part of a team, 14.3% were neutral and 10%

disagreed. It is deduced that employees believe working in the team instead of taking instructions in the hierarchy. This is an appropriate method of working in the organizations.

TABLE 2: RESPONSE ON TEAM ORIENTATION

Team orientation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Summary		
						Mean	Median	Mode
Working in this organization is like being part of a team.	2.9%	7.1%	14.3%	47.1%	28.6%	4	4	4
This organization relies on horizontal control and coordination to get work done rather than hierarchy.	2.9%	28.6%	20.0%	35.7%	12.9%	3	3	4
Teams are the primary building blocks of this organization.	4.3%	5.7%	27.1%	45.7%	17.2%	4	4	4

On whether the organization relies on horizontal control and coordination to get work done rather than hierarchy, 48.6% agreed, 20% were neutral and 31.5% disagreed. Lastly, for the opinion that teams are the primary building blocks of the organization, 62.9% agreed, 27.1% were neutral and 10% disagreed. This reveals that to a large extent organization teams are their building blocks.

**CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT**

A modified five-point Likert scale was used to measure capability development and the results were as tabulated in Table 3. Percentages were used to describe the results. From the findings, 60% agreed with the opinion that the organization is constantly improving its 'bench strength' in many dimensions, 34.3% were neutral and 5.7% disagreed. It is deduced that there is continuous investment in order to improve the skills of employees. On whether the organization continuously invests in the skill of employees, 68.6% agreed, 17.1% were neutral and 5.7% disagreed. This shows that to a great extent concerted efforts are made to develop and utilize the skill of employees. Lastly, 74.3% agreed with the opinion that the capability of people in the respective organization is viewed as an important source of competitive advantage, 14.3% were neutral and 11.4% disagreed. This shows that capability of employees is viewed as an important source of competitive advantage.

TABLE 3: RESPONSE ON CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Capability Development	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Summary		
						Mean	Median	Mode
The organization is constantly improving its 'bench strength' in many dimensions.	1.4%	4.3%	34.3%	42.9%	17.1%	4	4	4
This organisation continuously invests in the skill of employees.	2.9%	11.4%	17.1%	32.9%	35.7%	4	4	5
The capability of people in this organisation is viewed as an important source of competitive advantage.	1.4%	10.0%	14.3%	47.1%	27.1%	4	4	4

**RELIABILITY**

Internal consistency refers to the degree to which responses are consistent across the items (variables) within a single measurement scale (Kline, 2005 cited in Nguyen, 2010). According to Cortina (1993), Cronbach's Alpha remains the most widely used measure of scale reliability. A low Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indicates that variables may be too heterogeneous, thus perform poorly in representing the measure (the construct). Accordingly, Cronbach's Alpha above 0.70 is considered an acceptable indicator of internal consistency, and the values of 0.60 to 0.70 are at the lower limit of acceptability as suggested in the literature (Hair, et al., 2006).

Since no factor was removed, reliability test results before and after factor analyses were the same as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: RELIABILITY MEASUREMENT RESULTS FOR INVOLVEMENT CULTURE

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Involvement culture	9	0.834

Cronbach's alpha result of 0.834 obtained in this variable shows good internal consistency. Davidson, et al (2007) obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 while Muhammad (2007) obtained alpha of 0.889 in a similar study.

**FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Principal Factor Analysis was conducted to determine if all factors/questionnaire items had significant factor loadings. All the factor loading was either greater than, or close to the threshold of 0.50 suggested by Hair et al (2006), supporting the reliability of the variables. All items were therefore retained since they had factor loadings greater than 0.5.

**Normality Test**

The basic assumption in regression analysis is normality of the residuals in the dependent variable in order to generalize findings of the study beyond the sample collected (Field, cited in Kimutai, 2014). Kolmogorov-Siminov test was used to test for normality of organisational performance. The results indicate that the dependent variable (organisational performance) is normally distributed as shown in Table 5 with a mean of 17.34 and standard deviation of 5.04.

TABLE 5: KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV TEST

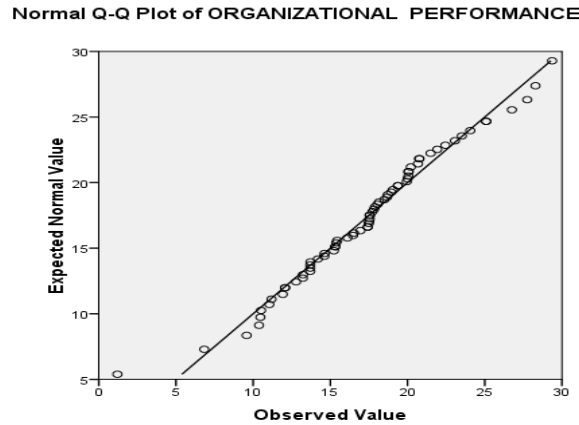
**One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

Organizational Performance

	N	70
Normal Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Mean	17.337347
	Std. Deviation	5.0411655
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.078
	Positive	0.077
	Negative	-0.078
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.649
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.794

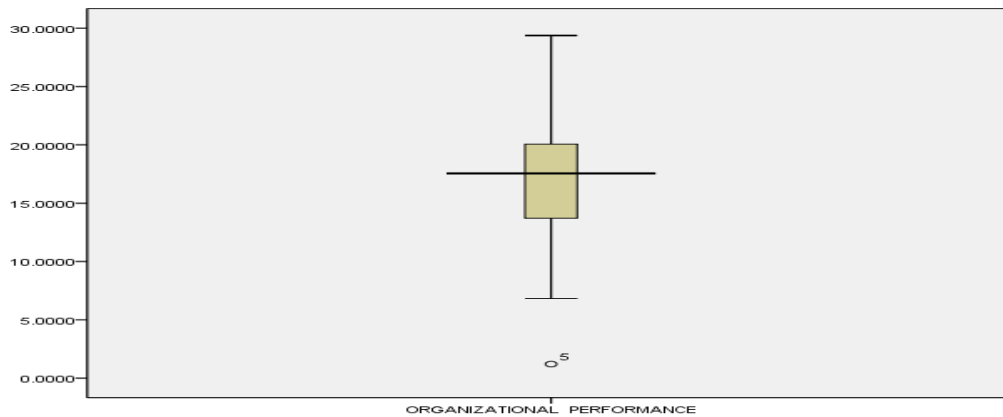
Graphical analysis (quantile-quantile plot) was used to assess the actual degree of departure from normality. The graphical analysis results in Figure 4.7 below shows that the line representing the actual data distribution closely follows the diagonal in the normal Q-Q plot, thus suggesting a normal distribution (Hair et al., cited in Kimutai, 2014).

FIGURE 1: NORMALITY PLOT OF ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE (DEPENDENT VARIABLE)



It is important to validate the assumption that data of this sample was from a normal distribution, through visual inspection of data plots because this validates generalising of results from the sample to the entire population of state corporations in Kenya. When majority of the responses are closer to the normality line it shows that the data was effective and therefore it is suitable for all types of statistical analysis including parametric and regression analysis (Weru, 2014).

FIGURE 2: BOX PLOT OF ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE (DEPENDENT VARIABLE)



The results of a box-plot also depicted that organisational performance lies between 14 and 20 units. However, there is one outlier at the bottom whose performance is low, as shown in Figure 2.

**Correlations between Involvement Culture and Performance**

Variables of this study were measured on likert scale (nominal scale) and were converted into weighted data using R-programme to gain atleast approximate interval characteristic (Nguyen, 2013). The extent of linear approximation between two variables was indexed by a statistic known as the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) (Jaccard & Becker, 1997), which can assume any value from -1.00 to +1.00 inclusive. The size of the absolute value provides an indication of the strength of the relationship. A correlation coefficient of -1.00 or +1.00 and -0.50 or +0.50 indicates perfect and moderate correlation respectively (Pallant, 2007). However, in behavioural science research, where complex behaviours are studied, significant correlation of 0.20 to 0.30 (and -0.20 to -0.30), are often considered important (Jaccard & Becker, 1997). The variable that was identified to have significant association with several other variables was further analysed through a stepwise regression process to reveal whether it (as a criterion) could be predicted or explained by those variables (as predictors). In this study, 43 factors which included 9 factors of involvement culture (IC), 9 of consistency culture (CC), 9 of adaptability culture (AC), 9 of mission culture (MC), and 7 of CEO values (CV) were used to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions. The correlation analysis was performed to identify aspects of the relationship among these dimensions. Table 6 shows the Pearson’s Bivariate correlation between organisational performance and involvement culture.

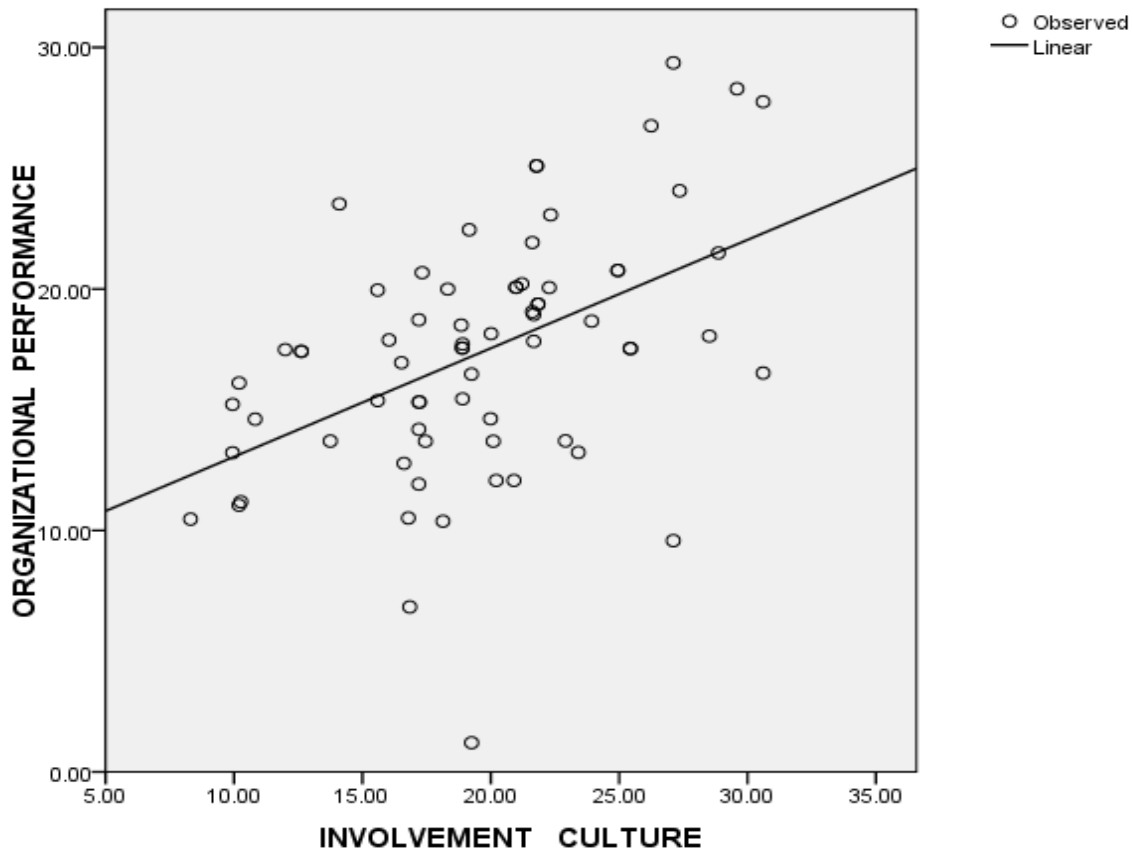
TABLE 6: CORRELATION BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND INVOLVEMENT CULTURE

Variable		Organizational Performance	Involvement Culture
Organizational Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	0.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Involvement Culture	Pearson Correlation	0.474**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

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

The result shows that involvement culture is positively and significantly associated (r = 0.474, p-value=0.000) to organisational performance. This is further supported by the scatter plot diagram in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: SCATTER PLOT ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT CULTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE



A scatter diagram is a type of mathematical diagram using Cartesian Coordinates to display values for two variables for a set of data. The data are displayed as a collection of points on the horizontal and vertical axes (Kimutai, 2014). The results show that as magnitude of involvement culture increases organisational performance increases in the same positive direction and therefore the two variables are correlated positively. Since the two variables are associated with each other, a hypothesis that postulates a significant relationship between the two variables can be tested by examining the correlation between the two (Sekaran & Bourgie, 2010).

**Regression Analysis of Organisational Performance on Involvement Culture**

Table 7 shows that  $R^2$  is 0.225, that is, 22.5% of the variation in organizational performance is explained by the model:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation 1}$$

Where Y is Organisational Performance,  $b_0$  is the Y intercept,  $b_1$  is the gradient of the regression line,  $X_1$  is Involvement Culture and  $\epsilon$  is the error term. This result shows that involvement culture can only explain 22.5% of change in organizational performance and other factors explain 77.5% of variation in organizational performance (Sekaran & Borgie, 2010).

**TABLE 7: VARIATION OF THE REGRESSION MODEL FOR INVOLVEMENT CULTURE**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.474	0.225	0.213	4.4715642

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) determines whether the regression model results in significantly better prediction using the 'F' values. The value determines how much variability the model can explain relative to how much it cannot explain. It is the ratio of how good the model is compared with how bad it is (Field, 2009 cited in Kimutai, 2014). The results of ANOVA in Table 8 give a p-value of the above fitted model as 0.000 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05.

**TABLE 8: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REGRESSION MODEL IN PREDICTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	393.869	1	393.869	19.698	0.000
	Residual	1359.652	68	19.995		
	Total	1753.521	69			

This implies a highly significant overall model at 0.000. It can, therefore be concluded that the regression model results in significantly better prediction of organizational performance than if we used the mean value of organizational performance.

In equation 1,  $b_0$  is the Y intercept and this corresponds with value of B in the Table 9 for the constant. From the table the value of  $b_0$  is 8.560 units and this can be interpreted to mean that when involvement culture is not present or embraced by the organizations ( $X_1 = 0$ ), the model predicts that organizational performance will be 8.560 units.

**TABLE 9: REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS OF INVOLVEMENT CULTURE**

Model	Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	8.560	2.049	4.178	0.000
(1) INVOLVEMENT CULTURE	0.449	0.101	4.438	0.000

In equation 1,  $b_1$  represents the gradient of the regression line. This line represents change in the outcome associated with a unit change in the predictor. Therefore, the b-value tells about the relationship between organizational performance and involvement culture. If b-value is positive, then the relationship between organizational performance and involvement culture is positive; otherwise it is negative. For data in this study involvement culture had a positive b-value (0.449) indicating a positive relationship, and therefore, as involvement culture improves, organizational performance increases. In addition, the b-value tells to what degree

each predictor affects the outcome. Given  $b$ -value = 0.449, it implies that as involvement culture improves by one unit, organizational performance increases by 0.449 units. When the  $b$ -values are substituted in equation 1, the model can be defined as follows:  
 $Y = 8.56 + 0.449$  (Involvement Culture).

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The hypothesis of the study was as follows:

$H_0$ : Involvement culture has no influence on performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya.

To test this hypothesis, linear regression was performed to determine the level of significance of the relationship between mission culture and organizational performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. As shown in Table 4.15,  $b_1 = 0.449$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . Since  $p$ -value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore it can be declared that there is a highly significant relationship between mission culture and organizational performance in Kenya's commercial state corporations.

To test whether the regression relationship was not positive, the  $b$ -value was subjected to further analysis using  $t$ -test. Calculated  $t$ -value was compared with the critical  $t$ -value. For involvement culture  $t_{\text{calc}}(69) = 4.438$  while  $t_{0.95}(69) = 1.6672$  at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated  $t$ -value was found to be greater than the critical  $t$ -value and therefore the alternative hypothesis that there was a significant positive relationship between involvement culture and performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya was adopted.

In relation to hypothesis one, there is significant positive relationship between involvement culture and organisational performance. This implies that increase in employee involvement is associated with increase in organisational performance. This finding supports earlier reports by Denison (1984) and Denison and Mishra (1995) that involvement culture is significantly correlated with return on assets. There are several reasons why employee involvement is related to performance. Organizations that have participative corporate cultures and well-organized workplaces have better performance records than those that do not have (Denison 1984). Receiving input from organization members tend to increase the quality of decision and improve their implementation. Profitability goals set by organizations are easily achieved when employees are involved in decision-making. Involvement empowers, and empowerment increases motivation. Superior performance capabilities are created by employee empowerment. Organizations in which employees are involved in decision making will achieve their goals better than those that do not involve employees in decision-making (Amah, 2012). Parastatals that set unattainable targets without inputs from their employees have witnessed high employee turnover.

Other studies have shown that employee involvement is positively related to productivity (Rossler & Koelling, 1993). There are several possible explanations for this significant relationship. Employees reduce cost through recommendations to senior executives and this result in higher productivity. Involvement creates a sense of ownership and responsibility amongst employees and this motivates them to be more productive. Involvement increases commitment to the organization amongst employees. Committed employees are more productive than uncommitted employees. Empowerment enhances creativity in employees and this could lead to increased productivity. The finding suggests that organizations in which employees are involved will be more productive than those in which they are not involved. Parastatals in Kenya need to involve employees as much as possible to improve both the organizational processes and the individuals themselves. Denison (1990) stated that effective organizations require a high level of involvement. The finding that employee involvement is positively related to productivity is also supported by Kelleher (1995) in (McShane & Von Glinow 2006) who stated that the strength of Southwest comes not from products or services but from a unique culture and management philosophy that emphasizes employee involvement and empowerment. Based on the results one can say that involvement and organisational performance are positively related.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms the work of Denison (1990) and from the findings, it can be concluded that involvement culture had a positive and significant role in performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. This is consistent with empirical literature.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Boards of Directors of Commercial State Corporations in Kenya need to consider corporate culture as an important ingredient in the performance of the corporations. To turn around the corporations and achieve high performance they need to build and sustain a culture of involvement.

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