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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND SERVICE QUALITY IN UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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**MODERATING INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND SERVICE QUALITY IN UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the moderating effect of Employee Engagement on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in universities in Kenya. The study utilized descriptive and causal research designs. Using multi-stage sampling, a sample size of 225 teaching staff was obtained from the business program in four chartered universities. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. To measure the causal relationship, multiple regression and correlation analyses were used. Employee Engagement had no significant moderating effect on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in universities in Kenya. This study suggested that the university leadership needs to ensure that jobs are more inspiring and challenging as well to improve engagement levels for employees.*

**Keywords:** Organizational Culture, Service Quality, Universities

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years and in the area of Human Resource Management, a massive fascination with Employee Engagement has shifted focus from negative aspects of employee outcomes such as burnout (Krog, 2014). This is against the backdrop on the little agreement on specific factors that lead to highly engaged employees (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Besides, a large section of literature on Employee Engagement is not available in scholarly journals since the research is usually conducted by consulting firms hence the available information has not been subjected to rigor by scholars (Gikonyo, 2013). There are some scholars who have gone on record to state that Employee Engagement can foretell positive employee results, company growth and positive business outcomes (Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2012). This is echoed by Bailey, Madden, Alfes and Fletcher (2017) who posit that Employee Engagement has a favorable relationship with 'individual morale, individual task performance, organizational performance and extra-role performance'.

As an antecedent, Organizational culture is seen as a significant driver of Employee Engagement (Rofcanin, Las Heras, & Bakker (2017); Bashayreh, Assaf, & Qudah (2016). This is supported by Parent and Lovelace (2018) who are confident that a flexible organizational culture is essential in achieving employee engagement. Though engagement studies primarily focus on corporate employees, the employees in the Higher Education Industry are also affected by the concept of engagement. However, it is worrying that there are relatively few scholarly articles on employee engagement in the academic field (Selmer, Jonasson, & Lauring, 2014).

### Statement of the Problem

Scholars assert that raised levels of Employee Engagement are as a consequence of the culture within any organization (Zeinab & Ji-Young, 2017; Anuj, Rakesh, Sengupta, & Gautam, 2017). However, Yan, Zhang and Zhang (2018) point out that Employee Engagement leads to emotional

exhaustion, deviant behavior among employees and employee dismissals. Owing to the fact that universities are operating in a dynamic business environment while services offered by universities in Kenya are similar, there is a need to create an Organizational Culture that assists the university to remain competitive so that the students are satisfied with Service Quality delivered (Rono & Kiptum, 2017). The focus on providing quality service to students has become a critical point for universities (CUE, 2016) especially since these students are primary consumers as well as informed customers. This study therefore analyzed whether there exists a moderating effect of Employee Engagement on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organizational Culture

Organizational Culture, as reported anonymously by employees, is seen as such a crucial factor in the performance of organizations that it has been recognized in an annual report by Fortune's '100 Best Companies to Work For' (Levering, 2016). Organizational Culture is a vital ingredient of performance by organizations and a great origin of long-term competitive advantage (Kenny, 2012). Organizational Culture focuses on the soft management of human capital while also providing stability to an organization and representing a much higher level of analysis (Ko, 2014).

Organizational Culture is defined as the underlying values, beliefs, and principles that serve as a foundation for an organization's management system. It is also the set of management practices and behaviors that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles (Denison, Nieminen, & Kotrba, 2014). To measure Organizational Culture, this study used an adapted version of Denison's Organizational Culture Survey. The independent variables measured were Consistency, Involvement, Mission and Adaptability.

*Consistency dimension* supplies a core source of consensus where the focal point is on a shared

perspective and beliefs and a common assortment of management concepts. Consistency dimension has three features namely core values, agreement and coordination & integration. Organizations that encourage participation of their members will exhibit higher levels of the *Involvement* dimension. Involvement dimension has three features namely empowerment, team orientation, and capability development. *Mission dimension* emphasizes employees' understanding the organization's mission allowing leadership of an organization to mold present behavior by imagining a chosen anticipated position. Mission dimension has three features namely vision, strategic direction & intent and goals & objectives. *Adaptability dimension* is the organization's ability to make adjustments internally as a reaction to circumstances that happen outside the organization. Adaptability dimension has three features namely creating change, customer focus and organizational learning (Denison, Nieminen, & Kotrba, 2014).

### **Service Quality**

Whereas the interests of all the beneficiaries of Higher Education should be safeguarded, it is vital to note that provision of Service Quality is ultimately the responsibility of the universities (Dado, Rajic, T, Riznic, & Rajic, 2011). In universities, lectures are a fundamental service while auxiliary services, such as administrative and support, are helpful to create a wholesome learning encounter (Buultjens & Robinson, 2011). Since universities are operating in highly challenging and dynamic environments, attaining excellence and enhancing Service Quality provides a substantial competitive advantage thus helping universities to set themselves apart from their competitors (Chong & Ahmed, 2015). With the rise of student fees payable to the universities, education being categorized as a sought-after service, an increase in demanding students and the availability of university choices for students, the expectation for Service Quality has heightened (Kwek, Lau, & Tan, 2010).

Service Quality is defined as the contrast between what one expects to receive (expectations) and

what one actually thinks they get (perceptions) (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). To measure Service Quality, this study used an adapted version of SERVQUAL. The dependent variables measured were Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Reliability. Responsiveness refers to being eager to serve, being helpful and fulfilling service quickly and in time to students in universities. Assurance refers to being knowledgeable, kind and able to give assurance to students in universities. Tangibles refers to the physical appearance of equipment, personnel and library materials in universities. Empathy refers to showing interest and being sensitive to students in universities. Reliability refers to the ability to realize pledged service perfectly and reliably to students in universities.

### **Employee Engagement**

The striking uniqueness of employee engagement is that it is a bilateral reciprocal process between the employee and the organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). This supports Social Exchange theory which provides a powerful theoretical rationale for understanding Employee Engagement since responsibilities result from association between employers and employees who are in a state of required dependence on each other (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Due to this, it is becoming an accepted term among both human resource management professionals and scholars while being increasingly attractive to organizations because of the lucrative business outcomes it promises.

However, questions persist regarding whether engagement is just a short-lived concept (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). This is further supported by (Gallup Inc, 2013) who notes that employee performance levels are high for engaged employees and this drives organizations ahead. Besides, West and Dawson (2012) mention that consequences of low Employee Engagement include high burnout, increased absenteeism, high employee turnover, stressful situations, impaired physical health and detachment. To illustrate a link between employee productivity and performance in organizations,

Young (2012) adds that employee engagement is a critical player. In this study, Employee Engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, 2011).

### **Relationship between Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture and Service Quality**

Babu and Mohan (2020) in a study in the hospitality industry in South India interrogated the impact of Organizational Culture on Employee Engagement and found that there is a need to prioritize the customer plus obtain customer reactions to get employees better engaged. This study fulfilled this need by emphasizing on Service Quality received by customers. (Pepra-Mensah and Kyeremhe (2018) in a study in Ghana's public sector found a statistically positive relationship between Organizational Culture and three dimensions of Engagement namely Cognitive, Affective and Physical. Al Shehri, McLaughlin, Al-Ashaab and Hamad (2017) carried out a study to investigate the relationship between Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement on banks in Saudi Arabia and indicated a positive relationship between the two variables. Hazriansyah, Maarif and Kuswanto (2017) conducted a study in Indonesia and found that Organizational Culture (using DOCS) and Employee Engagement (using UWES) had a significant, positive influence on performance of employees.

In an investigation on the influence of Organizational Culture on teachers' work engagement in India, Khan (2016) uses DOCS and four dimensions of work engagement respectively and the findings indicate that there is a relationship between Organizational Culture and work engagement. Reis, Trullen and Story (2016) in a study in Brazil, found that perceived Organizational Culture, measured using CVF, was related to Engagement (measured using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) with authenticity as a mediator. Mehrzi and Singh (2016) investigated factors affecting Employee Engagement with employee motivation as a mediator in the public sector in United Arab Emirates (UAE). Organizational Culture

was one of the independent variables. The study suggested that further studies focus on possible antecedents, consequences and also determine a clear definition of Employee Engagement. Njuguna (2016) studied the influence of Organizational Culture on Employee Engagement in a bank in Kenya using CVF model. The author found that market culture was most dominant followed by hierarchical culture and finally adhocracy and clan culture which both had the smallest effect.

In Ghana, Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement showed a very strong positive relationship in a study in telecommunication organizations (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). Parent and Lovelace (2015) conducted a survey on the impact of Employee Engagement and a positive Organizational Culture. They concluded that organizations with a positive Organizational Culture bring about both job engagement and organizational engagement and that employees who have a greater level of engagement are less adaptable to change. The authors were able to differentiate employee engagement, job engagement and organizational engagement while this study centered on Employee Engagement. In a study done by private banks in India, Sarangi and Srivastava (2012) the authors found relationships between Organizational Culture, communication on Employee Engagement (Vigor, Dedication and Absorption).

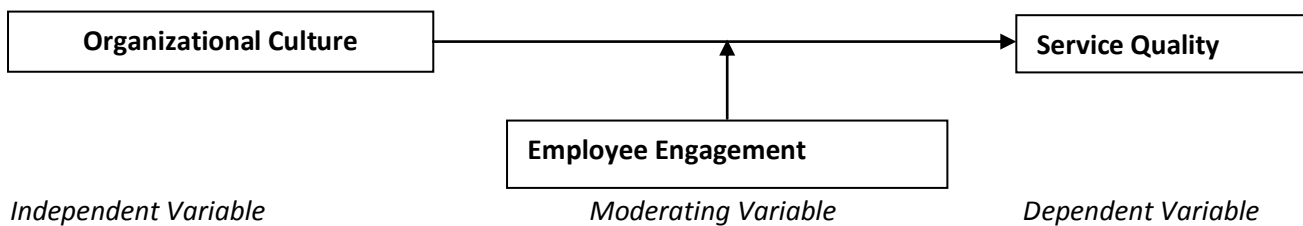
In a study done in ninety organizations to establish the relationship between Organizational Culture (measured using DOCS) and Employee Engagement (measured using the Engagement module), the result was that organizations with low levels on Culture also had lower Engagement levels and organizations with strong Culture levels had higher Engagement levels. That research revealed that the four dimensions of Organizational Culture positively correlated to Employee Engagement with Adaptability dimension having the weakest impact on Employee Engagement (Denison, Nieminen, & Kotrba, 2014). Greenidge (2010) in a doctoral dissertation assessed the connection between

leadership communication, Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement. The study reported a statistically significant relationship between the Culture of the Organization and Employees' level of Engagement, in both the private and the public sector. Employees had higher levels of engagement in organizations categorized as having an increasingly positive culture.

This study sought to understand the moderating effect of Employee Engagement on the relationship

between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in universities in Kenya. Organizational Culture was measured using Denison's Organizational Culture Survey (DOCS) while Service Quality was measured using SERVQUAL and Employee Engagement was measured using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).

The constructs and their relationships were illustrated in the following hypothetical model shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**Hypothesis**

*H<sub>0</sub>: Employee Engagement has no significant moderating influence on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in Universities in Kenya*

**METHODOLOGY**

This study used descriptive and causal research designs (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011). The study was based on positivist approach. The target population was the teaching staff in the business Cluster in all the 40 chartered universities in Kenya where there were 23 public universities and 17 private universities. The sampling frame was obtained from the target population of 2,475 which comprised of teaching staff in the business cluster in all the 40 chartered Public and Private Universities in Kenya (Commission for University Education, 2016). To calculate the sample size, multi-stage sampling was used. Since this study's target population was 2,475 which was less than ten thousand, the formula given by Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) was adapted in this study.

The study obtained quantitative data using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires used

a 5-point Likert scale with 1-Strongly disagree, 3-Neutral and 5-Strongly agree. To measure the Independent Variable (Organizational Culture), 60-item DOCS was adapted. To measure the Dependent Variable (Service Quality), 20-item SERVQUAL was adapted. To measure the moderating variable (Employee Engagement), modified 17-item UWES scale was adapted. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

**RESULTS**

The study's response rate was 84% which was calculated from the returned 189 questionnaires out of the sample of 225 respondents. This agreed with the assertion by Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2010) that a response rate above 70.0% is adequate for generalization of outcome of the findings.

Demographically, there were 55 females and 79 males. 57 were in public chartered universities and 77 were in private chartered universities; 68 had taught for 1 to 5 years, 43 taught for 6 to 10 years, 11 taught for 11 to 20 years and 12 taught for over 20 years.

The study obtained reliability analysis statistics for the three variables as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Reliability analysis**

Variable	No of items	Cronbach alpha
Organizational Culture	60	0.944
Service Quality	20	0.877
Employee Engagement	17	0.843

The Cronbach alpha for Organizational Culture (60 items) was 0.944; Service Quality (20 items) was 0.877; Employee Engagement (17 items) was 0.843. All the values for Cronbach alpha were above the acceptable 0.7 value.

The researcher conducted partial correlation analysis and the results were shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Partial Correlation between Organizational Culture, Service Quality, Employee Engagement**

a) Control variable			X	Y	M
None	X	Pearson correlation	1	.727	.746
		<i>Sig (2 tailed)</i>		.000	.000
		<i>df</i>	0	187	187
	Y	Pearson correlation	.727	1	.629
		<i>Sig (2 tailed)</i>	.000		.000
		<i>df</i>	187	0	187
M	Pearson correlation	.746	.629	1	
	<i>Sig (2 tailed)</i>	.000	.000		
	<i>df</i>	187	0	187	
b) Control variable			X	Y	
M	X	Pearson correlation	1	.498	
		<i>Sig (2 tailed)</i>		.000	
		<i>df</i>	0	186	
	Y	Pearson correlation	.498	1	
		<i>Sig (2 tailed)</i>	.000		
		<i>df</i>	186	0	

The first correlation analysis involved Organizational Culture, Service Quality and Employee Engagement. The results showed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.727 which was significant at the 5% level of significance. The second correlation analysis involved Organizational Culture, Service Quality and was controlled by Employee Engagement. The results showed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.498 which was not significant at the 5% level of significance. It is important to note that Employee Engagement has

some influence on Service Quality because of the reduction in correlation coefficient from 0.727 to 0.498. However, the moderating effect of Employee Engagement was not significant because there was no change in significant levels.

Moderation regression analysis was performed to determine the moderating effect of Employee Engagement on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in universities in Kenya. The results of the regression analysis were shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Moderation regression analysis**

Model Summary				
	R	R squared	Std. error of estimate	
	.741	.549	.458	
ANOVA				
	df	F	Sig.	
Regression	3	75.202	.000	
Residual	185			
TOTAL	188			
Coefficients				
Unstandardized coefficients				
	B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.379	.582	.651	.516
ZX	.561	.761	7.369	.000
ZM	.223	.776	2.870	.005
Int_1	-.051	.042	-1.218	.225

Where:

**Int\_1:** ZX\*ZM; **ZX**= standardized independent; **ZM**= standardized moderator  
 Dependent Variable: Service Quality; Independent Variable: Organizational Culture

The coefficient of determination (R square) of this model was 0.549. This showed that Employee Engagement can only explain 54.9% of change in Service Quality and other factors explain 45.1% of variation in Service Quality. In the ANOVA table, the p-value of the F-statistic (75.202) was 0.000 which was less than the level of significance of 0.05. This suggested a statistically significant overall model.

The coefficients table showed the value for the constant ( $\beta_0$ ) was 0.379. The values for the standardized Independent variable (Organizational Culture) were  $\beta=0.561$ ,  $p=0.000<0.05$  while the values for the standardized Moderator variable (Employee Engagement) were  $\beta_5=0.223$ ,  $p=0.005<0.05$ . For the interaction model (Int\_1), the value of the coefficient was -0.051 while the p-value (0.225) was greater than 0.05 (5% level of significance).

Since the p-value of the interaction model was more than 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_{06}$ ) was accepted. Therefore, this study declared that Employee Engagement had no significant moderating effect on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality.

*H<sub>0</sub>: Employee Engagement has no significant moderating influence on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in Universities in Kenya*

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Partial correlation analysis confirmed no significant moderating relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality after controlling for Employee Engagement. Through moderation regression analysis, the study confirmed no significant moderating effect of Employee Engagement on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality in universities in Kenya.

This study's findings that Employee Engagement has no moderating effect on the relationship between Organizational Culture and Service Quality was consistent with findings by Amir and Khan (2020). This is consistent with Parent and Lovelace (2018) who warn that employees who have a greater level of engagement are less adaptable to change. This was despite mixed findings that found Employee Engagement has a moderating effect on different variables (Mishra & Kodwani, 2019). Babu



and Mohan (2020) add that it is crucial to place the needs of customers first and to get customer reactions to increase levels of engagement among employees.

This study recommended that university leadership needs to address the issue of teaching staff getting easily distracted and not feeling happy when working intensely. This is against the sentiments by Crabb (2011) who mentions that for employees to have high levels of employee engagement, they must entirely focus on the tasks ahead of them and avoid getting distracted by negative thoughts. This study suggests that the university leadership needs to ensure that jobs are more inspiring and challenging as well to improve engagement levels for employees. The university leadership needs to look into improving the working environment to

ensure that the employees are able to work for long periods at a time and that the employees to look forward to.

This study suggested future research might include qualitative research and larger sample size to further grasp how these variables interact. In addition, to improve the generalizability of the findings, future research needs to replicate this conceptual model in other colleges/schools in universities and focus on all the universities in Kenya. This study may also be conducted in universities in other developing countries and compare public and private universities. Finally, this study recommends research on the relationship between Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement and Service Quality in other service industries in Kenya and worldwide.

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