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**Organizational Culture as a Determinant of Performance:
Empirical Evidence from Water Sector institutions in Western
Kenya**

Elizabeth Kiasyo Kyulu, Jane Munga and Dorothy Kirimi



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Elizabeth Kiasyo Kyulu

Researcher, School of Business and Economics, Kenya Methodist University

Jane Munga

Lecturer, School of Business and Economics, Kenya Methodist University

Dorothy Kirimi

Lecturer, School of Business and Economics, Kenya Methodist University

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study examined the influence of organizational culture on organizational performance within water sector institutions in Western Kenya. Specifically, it focused on how shared values, personnel behaviors, and organizational routines shape institutional effectiveness.

Methodology: Data were collected from 247 employees working in water service providers across Kakamega, Busia, Vihiga,

and Bungoma counties. A combination of purposive and stratified sampling techniques was used.

Findings: The results revealed that organizational culture has a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with organizational performance ($r = 0.165$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, organizational culture showed moderate positive correlations with resource management ($r = 0.505$, $p < 0.01$) and leadership style ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further indicated that organizational culture is a modest predictor of organizational performance ($\beta = 0.165$, $p < 0.05$). These findings imply that while culture contributes to performance, its impact is more substantial when reinforced by other strategic factors.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:

The study extends organizational culture theory by demonstrating its contextual relevance within public water institutions in Kenya. Practically, it shows the need for integrating cultural values into management systems. From a policy perspective, it shows the importance of aligning organizational culture with leadership practices and resource management strategies to improve service.

Keywords: *Organizational Culture, Organizational Performance, Strategic Implementation*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture has increasingly emerged as a critical factor influencing organizational performance, particularly in sectors that depend on efficient service delivery and effective resource management such as the water sector. In the context of global water scarcity - affecting nearly two billion people and posing significant threats to public health, economic development, and sustainability - the need for strong internal organizational systems has become more pronounced (Ingati et al., 2024). Beyond infrastructure and policy frameworks, global discourse emphasizes the importance of institutional effectiveness, governance, and strategic organizational practices in enhancing water service delivery and sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2023). Consequently, attention has shifted toward internal organizational factors such as culture, which shape how institutions respond to these challenges and achieve performance outcomes.

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide employee behavior and influence how work is performed within an organization. It determines how employees interact, make decisions, and align with organizational goals. A strong and positive organizational culture promotes employee commitment, coordination, and effective implementation of strategies, thereby enhancing overall performance (Ariawaty, 2020). Conversely, weak or misaligned cultures can result in inefficiencies, poor service delivery, and reduced organizational effectiveness. As such, organizational culture is increasingly viewed as a foundational element that shapes institutional success, particularly in sectors characterized by complex operational and service delivery demands.

Globally, water management systems face increasing pressure due to population growth, urbanization, industrial expansion, and climate change, all of which strain water resources and infrastructure. In developed regions such as North America and Europe, reforms in governance, adoption of advanced technologies, and strong institutional frameworks have improved water service delivery and operational efficiency. However, even in these regions, challenges persist in areas experiencing high water stress, highlighting the need for continuous organizational improvement. In contrast, developing regions - especially in Sub-Saharan Africa - experience more severe challenges due to limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and weak institutional capacity (Akuiche & Akindoyin, 2025). These challenges are not only structural but also organizational, emphasizing the need to understand internal dynamics such as culture in improving performance.

In Kenya, the water sector plays a vital role in socio-economic development and is guided by policy frameworks such as the Water Act and supported by regulatory institutions like the Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB), which aim to enhance efficiency and ensure sustainable water resource management (Mutschinski & Coles, 2021). Despite these efforts, water sector institutions continue to face performance challenges, including inefficiencies in service delivery, governance constraints, and inadequate infrastructure (Water Services Regulatory Board, 2025). These issues are particularly pronounced in Western Kenya, where rapid population growth, urbanization, and climate variability intensify pressure on water systems (Mulwa et al., 2021). Additionally, limited emphasis on internal organizational factors such as culture has constrained institutional effectiveness. Although organizational culture has been widely studied in sectors such as education, banking, and manufacturing, limited empirical attention has been given to its role in the water sector in Kenya. This study therefore addresses this gap by examining organizational culture as a determinant of performance among water sector institutions in Western Kenya, providing insights for improving service delivery and enhancing institutional effectiveness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was grounded on Edgar Schein's Organizational Culture Theory (1985), which examines the deeply held values, beliefs, and assumptions that influence individual behavior within organizations. Schein identifies three levels of culture: artifacts (visible structures and processes), espoused values (stated principles and goals), and basic underlying assumptions (unconscious beliefs and perceptions). According to Schein, the culture of an organization significantly influences its internal operations, decision-making processes, and overall performance (Akpa et al., 2021). In the context of water sector institutions in Western

Kenya, organizational culture plays a critical role in determining how effectively these institutions can implement Strategic Implementation practices. A culture that promotes shared values, collaboration, and a focus on service delivery can foster a conducive environment for improving performance.

Key aspects of organizational culture, such as shared values, personnel behaviors, and organizational routines, can directly influence the success of Strategic Implementation initiatives. Shared values refer to the core beliefs and guiding principles within the organization, which set the foundation for decision-making and behavior. When an institution's values align with its mission and goals, they promote a collective commitment to achieving its objectives. Personnel behaviors are the actions and attitudes of individuals within the institution, shaped by the organizational culture. A culture that encourages proactive and collaborative behavior can enhance organizational performance by improving communication, problem-solving, and adaptability (Radu, 2023). Organizational routines encompass the established practices and procedures that define how work is done within the institution. These routines, when aligned with organizational values, can ensure consistency, efficiency, and quality in service delivery.

According to Maika (2020), organizational culture affects an institution's ability to respond to external pressures and internal challenges, such as resource constraints and changing regulatory environments, which are prevalent in the water sector. A positive and adaptive culture facilitates smooth implementation of strategies, whereas a rigid or negative culture may hinder progress and innovation. However, the theory has been critiqued for being difficult to measure and for oversimplifying the complexities of culture. Some researchers argue that organizational culture can be too abstract to apply effectively in certain contexts, particularly when dealing with diverse and evolving sectors like water services (Maika, 2020). Despite these criticisms, Organizational Culture Theory remains a powerful framework for understanding how the shared values and practices within an institution impact its strategic direction and performance.

In this study, Organizational Culture Theory is used to assess how the culture within water sector institutions in Western Kenya influences their performance in delivering water services. The study examines the extent to which a supportive organizational culture, characterized by strong shared values, positive personnel behaviors, and effective organizational routines, promotes efficiency, accountability, and effective resource management. Schein's framework provides insight into how leadership, communication, and shared values impact organizational behavior and, ultimately, the performance outcomes of these institutions. By applying this theory, the study aims to understand how organizational culture can either enable or constrain the successful implementation of Strategic Implementation practices, thereby influencing the performance of water sector institutions in the region.

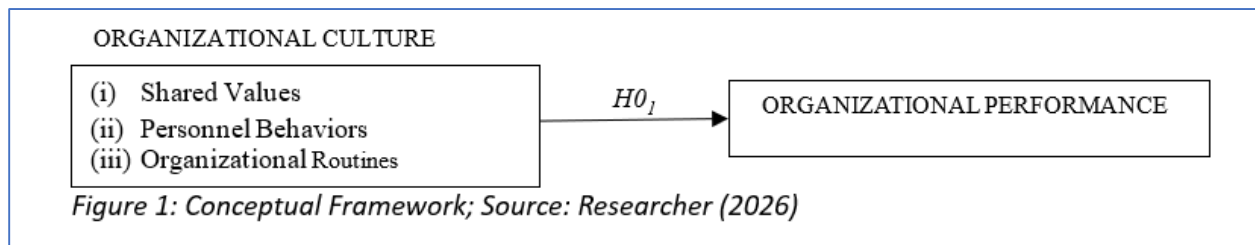
The study by Mbijiwe (2021) explored the role of organizational culture in the performance of county government health projects in Meru County, Kenya. The author employed a mixed-methods approach, using a sample population of 100 project managers and employees. The findings revealed that a strong organizational culture positively affected project outcomes, particularly in team collaboration and project sustainability. However, the study focused on the health sector and did not explore the water sector, where operational dynamics may differ. Other studies, such as those focusing on private sectors, have shown similar results, but they do not account for public sector challenges in the water sector. This study differs from the current research, which investigates organizational culture in the context of water sector institutions, particularly looking at shared values, personnel behaviors, and organizational routines in Western Kenya.

Khodair (2024) investigated the effect of organizational culture on the performance of travel agencies in Egypt. The author employed a quantitative methodology, using a sample population of 200 employees and managers. The findings indicated that organizational culture had a significant influence on service quality and employee productivity in the travel industry. However, this study focused on private sector service delivery, which may not be directly applicable to the public water sector, where service provision faces different constraints, including infrastructure and resource management. The research gap exists in the lack of similar studies in the water sector. Other studies have found a connection between organizational culture

and performance in private enterprises but did not consider the particular characteristics of public sector water management. This study differs from the current research, which focuses on public water sector institutions in Western Kenya, especially examining shared values and organizational routines in this context.

Baariu (2021) explored the influence of organizational culture on employee productivity in local government segment in Ghana. The research study used a survey-based approach, using a sample size of 150 employees. The findings revealed that organizational culture, particularly fostering respect and clear communication, positively influenced employee productivity and job satisfaction. This study aligns with previous research on the importance of organizational culture in local governance but does not explore how specific elements like shared values, personnel behaviors, and routines affect performance in water sector institutions. This study differs from the current one, as it was conducted within local government institutions, while the current study investigates the water sector in Western Kenya. Additionally, this study focuses more on employee satisfaction rather than the interplay of shared values and organizational routines, which are central to the current research.

Hantiro and Maina (2020) conducted a study on the effect of Strategic Implementation practices on organizational performance of state corporations in Kenya, with a case study of Kenya Power. The study utilized a descriptive research design and simple random sampling, selecting a sample size of 250 employees from the organization. Results indicated that strategic human resource management, leadership, technological innovation, and outsourcing significantly impacted Kenya Power's organizational performance. Specifically, strategic human resource management was found to have the greatest impact, as it determines the professionalism of employees and their capacity to perform assigned tasks. The study highlighted that strategic leadership also influenced organizational performance, as supervisor support motivated employees, while mistreatment demoralized them. Additionally, the study concluded that strategic technology and innovation contributed to performance due to the increasing need for creativity and new skills in the job market. The research identified a gap in the need for organizations to carefully evaluate outsourcing decisions, ensuring they align with the organization's goals and policies. This study concurs with a similar study by Sweya et al. (2019), who found that organizational structure and management practices impact performance in water management agencies in Tanzania. Unlike previous studies, the current research examines the specific impact of strategic implementation on Kenya Power's organizational performance. Figure 1 illustrates the study conceptual framework.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of organizational culture on organizational performance among water sector institutions in Western Kenya. This design is appropriate for collecting quantitative data to describe existing conditions and relationships among variables (Siedlecki, 2020). It enabled the study to capture employees' perceptions of organizational culture and its effect on performance outcomes.

3.2 Target Population

The target population comprised employees from selected water sector institutions in Western Kenya, including Kakamega, Busia, Vihiga, and Bungoma water service providers. These institutions are responsible for water supply and sanitation services across both urban and rural areas. Respondents were drawn from various organizational levels, including senior management, middle-level managers, technical staff, and operational personnel. This ensured a comprehensive assessment of organizational culture across different functional areas within the institutions.

3.3 Sampling Design

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, yielding a sample of 247 respondents from a total population of 643 personnel. This ensured adequate representation and reliability of the study findings. A combination of purposive and stratified sampling techniques was employed. Purposive sampling was used to identify relevant departments involved in service delivery and organizational management, while stratified sampling ensured proportional representation of different staff categories. This approach minimized bias and enhanced the representativeness of the sample (Haruna, 2023).

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, which were designed to capture information on organizational culture and organizational performance. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items to measure respondents' perceptions of shared values, employee behaviors, and organizational routines, as well as performance indicators such as service delivery efficiency and operational effectiveness. Secondary data were obtained from institutional reports and publications to complement the primary data and provide contextual insights into performance trends within the water sector.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The validity of the research instrument was ensured through content and construct validation to confirm that the questionnaire adequately measured organizational culture and performance variables (Handage & Chander, 2021). A pilot study was conducted in a comparable water institution to test reliability. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the results indicated that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics were employed to examine relationships between variables. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance, while simple linear regression analysis was used to assess the effect of organizational culture on performance outcomes.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining approval from Kenya Methodist University and NACOSTI. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants were free to withdraw at any time. The research ensured transparency, integrity, and protection from any harm.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Pilot Study Results and Response Rate

The pilot study conducted on Eldoret Water and Sanitation Company Ltd (ELDOWAS) assessed the reliability and validity of the research instrument specifically for organizational culture. The Cronbach's Alpha value for organizational culture was 0.749, which falls within the acceptable range (0.7–0.8) according

to Sekaran and Bougie, as cited in Jepkosgei (2022). This indicates that the items measuring organizational culture (such as shared values, personnel behaviors, and organizational routines) are internally consistent and reliably capture the intended construct.

Construct validity was further confirmed through Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The organizational culture items exhibited a communality of 0.653, suggesting that over 65% of the variance in each item is explained by the extracted component. The component loadings were also strong (0.687 on Component 1), demonstrating that the items cluster together as expected and effectively measure the organizational culture construct.

A total of 247 questionnaires were administered, of which 221 were valid, representing a response rate of 89.47%, which is considered satisfactory for academic research (Siedlecki, 2020). The respondents comprised 53.9% males and 46.1% females, with the majority in the 31–40 years’ age group (41.2%), followed by 41–50 years (27.6%), and minimal representation above 60 years (0.9%). Participants were drawn from four Water Services Providers: Kakamega (34.4%), Bungoma (28.1%), Vihiga (21.3%), and Busia (16.3%), ensuring regional representation across Western Kenya. Most respondents held a diploma (43%) or a bachelor’s degree (29%), with 82.4% having at least a diploma, indicating a well-educated sample capable of providing informed responses.

The respondents represented a variety of departments, with the largest proportions from Technical (27.1%), Finance & Administration (15.8%), and Audit & Compliance (14.5%), while smaller numbers came from Customer Care, Human Resources, ICT, Transport, and Procurement. In terms of job level, Operational Staff made up the largest group (43%), followed by Middle Management (31.7%) and Senior Management (15.4%), with Top Management at 4.5%. Most respondents had between 3 and 10 years of experience in the water sector, with 41.6% having 3–5 years and 35.3% having 6–10 years. This distribution reflects a workforce with practical experience and exposure to strategic implementation, providing reliable insights into organizational performance.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The study sought to examine respondents’ perceptions of organizational culture within water sector institutions in Western Kenya. Using a five-point Likert scale, participants rated key dimensions of organizational culture, including Shared Values, Personnel Behaviors, and Organizational Routines. The results in Table 4.1 illustrate the distribution of responses across Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) categories, alongside the calculated means and standard deviations for each sub-variable. The results are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Responses on Organizational Culture

Category	Variable Description	Mean	SDV
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Shared Values	Organizational values are aligned across all departments.	2.9774	1.1734
	Employees share a common understanding of the organization's mission and vision.	3.4344	1.0231
Personnel Behaviors	Employees consistently adhere to organizational norms and codes of conduct.	3.5520	0.8220
	Expectations for employee behavior are clearly communicated and understood.	3.5385	0.8968
Organizational Routines	The organization has well-established processes and consistent work patterns.	3.2624	1.0330
	Daily operations are guided by structured routines that promote efficiency.	3.2941	1.0952

Source: Study Data (2026)

Personnel Behaviors received the highest mean score (3.55, SD = 0.86), reflecting strong consensus that employees adhere to organizational norms and that behavioral expectations are clearly communicated. Shared Values (3.21, SD = 1.10) suggested moderate agreement on value alignment and mission clarity, with notable variability in responses. Organizational Routines scored moderately (3.28, SD = 1.06), indicating average recognition of established processes but also revealing inconsistencies. The findings highlight a well-defined behavioral framework but point to gaps in value cohesion and routine consistency. Addressing these areas can strengthen organizational culture and enhance strategic execution, aligning with insights from Radu (2023) and Mutschinski and Coles (2021) on the role of culture in driving institutional performance in Kenya.

4.3 Regression Assumptions

The regression assumptions for Organizational Culture were thoroughly tested to ensure valid and reliable results. Normality tests using Shapiro-Wilk ($W = 0.989$, $p = .088$) and Kolmogorov-Smirnov ($D = 0.053$, $p = .200$) confirmed that the distribution of Organizational Culture scores (Fig 2a) did not significantly deviate from normality. Skewness (0.333) and kurtosis (-0.101) further supported this, and the histogram showed a bell-shaped curve centered around the mean, indicating a symmetrical distribution. Linearity was confirmed through P-P plots (figure 2b), which showed that residuals for Organizational Culture closely aligned with the diagonal line, demonstrating a straight-line relationship with other variables in the model.

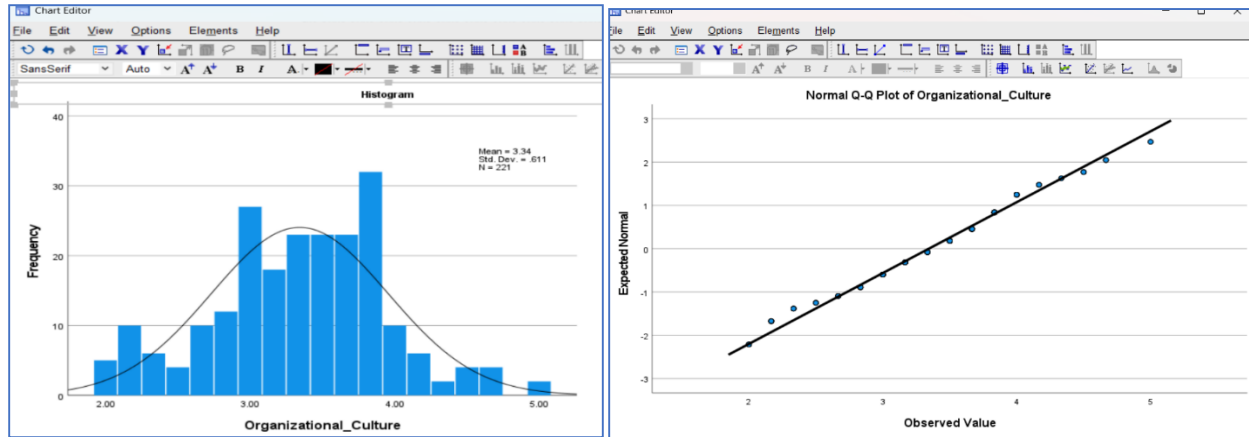


Figure 2: (a) Histogram of Normality

(b) PP=Plot for Linearity; Researcher (2026)

Homoscedasticity was verified using Levene’s Test, with p-values exceeding 0.05 across all methods (mean, median, adjusted median, trimmed mean), indicating constant variance for Organizational Culture scores across levels of independent variables. Multicollinearity analysis showed that Organizational Culture had a tolerance of 0.709 and a VIF of 1.411, reflecting minimal correlation with other predictors and no multicollinearity issues.

4.4 Correlational Analysis

The correlational analysis between Organizational Culture and Organizational Performance revealed a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.165, p < 0.05$). This suggests that water sector institutions with stronger, more supportive organizational cultures tend to experience slightly higher levels of performance. While culture alone may not be the primary driver of performance, it contributes positively to organizational outcomes. The findings also indicate that the impact of Organizational Culture on performance may be mediated by other factors such as leadership practices and resource management. A positive organizational culture can enhance teamwork, communication, and adherence to institutional values, which collectively support improved performance within water sector institutions.

4.5 Simple Linear Regression and Hypothesis Test

To assess the influence of Organizational Culture on Organizational Performance among water sector institutions in Western Kenya, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted involving the independent variable (Organizational Culture) and the dependent variable (Organizational Performance) - (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Simple Linear Regression Model Summary for IV (Organizational Culture)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.165 ^a	.027	.023	.69295	.027	6.099	1	219	.014

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Culture

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance; Study Data (2026)

The model summary indicates that Organizational Culture explains approximately 2.7% of the variance in Organizational Performance. While the R Square value is modest, it suggests a weak but positive relationship. The adjusted R² (.023) confirms that the model is reliable, although Organizational Culture alone does not explain much of the variation. The standard error of the estimate (.693) reflects a relatively moderate prediction error, suggesting that other variables may play a stronger role on performance.

Table 4.3: ANOVA Results for Independent Variable (Organizational Culture)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.929	1	2.929	6.099	.014b
Residual	105.161	219	0.480		
Total	108.089	220			

a. *Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Culture; Source: Study Data (2026)*

The ANOVA results (table 4.3) indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 6.099$, $p = .014$). This means that Organizational Culture has a statistically significant impact on Organizational Performance at the 5% level. Although the proportion of explained variance is small, the model's F-statistic shows the variable contributes meaningfully to the prediction of performance.

Table 4.4: Regression Coefficients for Independent Variable (Organizational Culture)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.780	.260		10.700	.000
Organizational Culture	.189	.076	.165	2.470	.014

a. *Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance; Study Data (2026)*

From the coefficients (Table 4.4), the regression equation based on the model becomes: $Y = 2.780 + 0.189X_1$, ($Y = \text{Organizational Performance}$; $X_1 = \text{Organizational Culture}$).

This means that for every one-unit increase in Organizational Culture, there is a corresponding 0.189-unit increase in Organizational Performance, assuming all other factors are held constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.165) indicates a positive, though weak, influence. The relationship is statistically significant ($t = 2.470$, $p = .014$), confirming that Organizational Culture has a measurable, though limited, effect on performance.

The study objective sought to evaluate the influence of Organizational Culture on Organizational Performance among water sector institutions in Western Kenya. To realize this objective, the following hypothesis was formulated and tested: H_{01} : *There is no statistically significant influence of Organizational Culture on Organizational Performance among water sector institutions in Western Kenya.*

Based on the regression results, the p-value (.014) was less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The findings indicate that Organizational Culture modestly influences performance in water sector institutions, with elements like shared values, norms, and employee behaviors contributing positively to outcomes. This aligns with Mulwa et al. (2021), who emphasized cultural alignment in strategic implementation, and Maika (2020), who linked institutional culture to improved governance and accountability. Although the effect size is weak, its significance echoes Kudaibergenova et al. (2025) view of culture as an enabler in project performance.

The low beta value suggests that culture's impact may be mediated by other strategic factors such as leadership, resource management, or structural design, as noted by Ingati et al. (2024). Therefore, while

culture is important, its full influence is best understood in conjunction with broader organizational dynamics.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that organizational culture has a statistically significant but modest positive effect on organizational performance. This indicates that shared values, norms, and employee behaviors do contribute to institutional success, but culture alone is not a primary driver. Its influence is likely strengthened when combined with other strategic factors such as leadership and resource management, highlighting the need for an integrated approach to performance improvement. Water sector institutions should deliberately foster a positive and cohesive organizational culture that emphasizes shared values, ethical behavior, and collaboration. This can be achieved through regular staff engagement, cultural awareness programs, and incorporating cultural values into performance appraisal systems. Promoting accountability, innovation, and teamwork will enhance strategic alignment and support better organizational outcomes.

Future applications of organizational culture theory in water sector institutions should treat culture as a strategic asset. Institutions are encouraged to design frameworks that leverage cultural strengths to drive innovation, employee commitment, and alignment with strategic goals. Researchers and practitioners should also explore systematic approaches for implementing cultural change initiatives that reinforce values critical to organizational performance.

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