

Extent of Awareness of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance at Ubungu Municipal Council, Tanzania

Hadiness Mghamba¹, Dr Elizabeth Landa²

¹Department of Human Resources Management, Mzumbe University,
Dar es Salaam Campus College, Tanzania

²Mzumbe University, Dar es Salaam Campus College, Tanzania

ABSTRACT

Organizational culture is widely recognized as a critical determinant of employee performance in public sector institutions. However, employee awareness of organizational culture and its relationship to performance outcomes remains understudied in Tanzanian local government settings. This study assessed the extent to which employees at Ubungu Municipal Council are aware of their organizational culture and examined how this awareness influences employee performance outcomes. A cross-sectional mixed-methods design was adopted. Structured questionnaires were administered to 165 employees selected through stratified random sampling, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 purposively selected management staff. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that individual cultural awareness among employees was generally high (80.0% reported awareness of core values and norms), yet the formal organizational systems for communicating and institutionalizing cultural values remained significantly underdeveloped. Only 41.8% agreed that the council communicated its values clearly, and only 40.0% confirmed that new employees received adequate cultural orientation. Cultural awareness was found to develop predominantly through informal peer socialization rather than deliberate organizational programs. The dominant hierarchical culture was perceived as supporting role clarity but constraining motivation, initiative, and collaborative performance. While employee cultural awareness is adequate at the individual level, the absence of formal cultural communication and onboarding mechanisms creates behavioral inconsistencies that undermine performance across departments. Targeted investments in structured cultural onboarding, participatory leadership, and reformed reward systems are recommended to align cultural awareness with sustained performance improvement.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Employee Performance, Cultural Awareness, Hierarchical Culture, Competing Values Framework, Ubungu Municipal Council, Tanzania, Public Sector

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture defined as the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide employee behaviour within an institution has emerged as a significant predictor of employee performance across both private and public sector contexts (Ahmad et al., 2021; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In an era of increased pressure on public institutions to improve service quality, accountability, and responsiveness,

the cultural environment within which employees operate is no longer a peripheral concern but a strategic priority.

Tanzania's local government authorities (LGAs) have been at the centre of ongoing public sector reforms aimed at improving efficiency and service delivery. Despite these efforts, many LGAs continue to experience persistent performance challenges attributed not merely to resource constraints or technical deficiencies, but to cultural and human factors including the degree to which employees understand and internalize the organizational culture in which they work (Linje, 2025; Mrope & Malima, 2024). Cultural awareness the extent to which employees understand their organization's values, norms, and behavioral expectations is a largely underexplored variable in this reform discourse.

Ubungu Municipal Council, located in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's commercial capital, presents a compelling case for examining this phenomenon. As a predominantly hierarchical public institution managing diverse municipal services for a rapidly urbanizing population, the council's operational effectiveness depends significantly on whether its employees not only comply with formal rules but genuinely internalize the cultural values that underpin those rules. Recurring service delivery challenges, inconsistencies in staff motivation, and limited employee initiative at the council point to a possible gap between the organizational culture that the institution espouses and the degree to which employees are aware of and aligned with that culture.

Against this background, this study assessed the extent of employee awareness of organizational culture at Ubungu Municipal Council and examined the relationship between such awareness and key employee performance outcomes. The study was grounded in the Competing Values Framework (CVF) developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011) and Schein's (2010) three-level model of organizational culture, which together provide complementary analytical lenses for understanding how culture is experienced and internalized at the individual level. The findings contribute to the growing body of empirical literature on organizational culture in Tanzanian public administration and offer practical guidance for HR and management practitioners in local government settings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organizational Culture and Employee Awareness

Organizational culture encompasses the visible and invisible layers of shared assumptions, values, and artefacts that shape how employees perceive their work environment and behave within it (Schein, 2010). Schein's three-level model distinguishes between observable artefacts such as physical environments, dress codes, and written policies espoused values, which are explicitly stated organizational goals and norms, and basic underlying assumptions, which are the deepest, unconscious beliefs guiding organizational life. Employee awareness of culture operates primarily at the first two levels: employees observe artefacts and, through socialization, come to understand the espoused values that guide expected behaviour.

Awareness of organizational culture is significant because it mediates between the culture that an organization intends to create and the behaviour that employees actually exhibit. Mbuba (2022) found that employees in Tanzanian public sector organizations who develop strong cultural awareness tend to demonstrate greater alignment between personal behaviour and organizational goals. Conversely, where cultural awareness is low or inconsistently developed, employees may internalize divergent norms, resulting in behavioral inconsistencies that reduce service quality and operational efficiency. Bajaras (2024) similarly emphasized that organizations that proactively communicate and reinforce their cultural

values through formal mechanisms are better positioned to sustain alignment between employee conduct and institutional objectives.

A critical distinction in the literature concerns the pathways through which cultural awareness develops. Formal mechanisms including structured onboarding programmes, values-based induction training, and regular cultural communication produce more consistent awareness than informal socialization (Mbuba, 2022; Schein, 2010). In the Tanzanian public sector, however, empirical studies suggest that formal cultural communication is often absent or inconsistently applied, leaving employees to acquire cultural understanding primarily through peer interaction and observation (Mrope & Malima, 2024; Linje, 2025). This informal pathway creates differential cultural understanding across departments and seniority levels, contributing to variable performance outcomes.

2.2 The Competing Values Framework and Performance

The Competing Values Framework (CVF), developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) and elaborated by Cameron and Quinn (2011), provides a theoretically robust classification of organizational culture types based on two axes: internal versus external focus, and flexibility versus stability. The resulting four quadrants clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchical each represent a distinct cultural orientation with corresponding performance implications.

Hierarchical culture, which emphasizes formal structures, established procedures, and clear lines of authority, is particularly prevalent in public sector organizations (Cui et al., 2018). While associated with operational consistency and accountability, excessive hierarchical orientation has been shown to suppress innovation, reduce employee initiative, and limit the adaptive capacity necessary for responsive public service delivery (Akpa et al., 2022; Luhambati & Mutarubukwa, 2024). Clan culture, characterized by collaborative, family-like environments and participatory leadership, has been empirically linked to stronger employee commitment and satisfaction, particularly in Tanzanian LGA contexts (Mrope & Malima, 2024). Adhocracy culture, which prioritizes creativity and risk-taking, tends to be largely absent in public bureaucracies, as confirmed by multiple African studies (Mbuba, 2022; Gasela, 2022).

Empirical research applying CVF in Tanzanian and African public sector contexts confirms that cultural type significantly influences performance outcomes. Mrope and Malima (2024), in a study of Morogoro Municipal Council, found that all four CVF culture types had significant positive relationships with employee job satisfaction, with clan and hierarchical cultures exerting the strongest influence. Luhambati and Mutarubukwa (2024) similarly found that clan culture contributed most positively to performance at Tanzania Revenue Authority. These findings suggest that the configuration of cultural types not merely the presence of any single type is the key determinant of performance.

2.3 Research Gap

Despite a growing body of research on organizational culture and performance in Tanzania, the specific dimension of employee awareness of culture as an independent mechanism through which culture affects performance has received insufficient empirical attention. Most existing studies treat culture as an institutional variable and measure its type and strength without examining the degree to which employees consciously understand and internalize that culture. This study addresses this gap by placing cultural awareness at the centre of analysis, treating it as a mediating variable between organizational culture characteristics and employee performance outcomes at Ubungu Municipal Council.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The cross-sectional design was appropriate for capturing a contemporaneous snapshot of employee cultural awareness and its perceived relationship to performance (Kesmodel, 2018). The mixed-methods approach, guided by the pragmatism paradigm, enabled triangulation of quantitative patterns with qualitative depth of understanding (Creswell, 2018; Morgan, 2007).

3.2 Study Area and Population

The study was conducted at Ubungu Municipal Council in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The total study population comprised all employees of the council, including management and non-management staff. Employees were required to have a minimum of six months of service and to participate voluntarily. The total population was estimated at 300 employees.

3.3 Sampling

The sample size was calculated using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, yielding a sample of 171 employees for the quantitative component. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across departments and staff levels. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 15 management staff members with relevant experience, knowledge of organizational culture practices, and involvement in decision-making, consistent with data saturation principles (Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2015). Total sample: 186 participants.

3.4 Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using structured, pre-tested Likert-scale questionnaires (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) administered to employee respondents. The questionnaire assessed awareness of organizational culture norms and values, formal and informal channels of cultural communication, and the perceived impact of cultural awareness on performance. Qualitative data were gathered through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with management staff, audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, with themes derived inductively from interview transcripts and cross-checked against the quantitative findings for triangulation (Bryman & Bell, 2018; Creswell, 2020). Cronbach's Alpha was used to test internal consistency of the questionnaire, with a threshold of 0.7 (Kothari, 2013).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from Ubungu Municipal Council management. All participants provided written informed consent. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymous coding of responses, and participation was entirely voluntary with the right to withdraw at any stage.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Response Rate and Sample Characteristics

Of 171 questionnaires distributed, 165 were returned fully completed, yielding a response rate of 96.5% rated excellent by survey research standards (Babbie, 2021). The sample comprised 57.6% male and 42.4% female respondents, reflecting the gender composition of the council's workforce. The majority of

respondents (33.3%) were aged 31–40 years, followed by 41–50 years (26.7%) and 18–30 years (23.0%). Most respondents had served at the council for 4–6 years (37.6%), with 24.2% having more than six years of service, indicating a workforce with substantial institutional experience relevant to cultural assessment.

4.2 Types of Organizational Culture at Ubungo Municipal Council

Prior to examining cultural awareness, the study established the dominant culture types as contextual grounding. Findings confirmed that hierarchical culture is overwhelmingly dominant: 76.9% of respondents agreed that the council operates under strict rules, formal procedures, and a clear chain of command; 75.7% affirmed top-down leadership with limited employee involvement; and 73.9% indicated that rewards are tied to rule adherence rather than creativity. Clan culture received moderate endorsement (47.2% agreement), while adhocracy culture was largely absent, with only 27.3% of respondents indicating that creativity and innovation are encouraged. Table 1 summarizes these findings.

Table 1: Types of Organizational Culture at Ubungo Municipal Council (N = 165)

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Strict rules, formal procedures, clear chain of command (Hierarchical)	3.0	7.3	12.7	44.8	32.1
Collaborative, team-oriented environment (Clan)	9.1	19.4	24.2	33.3	13.9
Creativity, risk-taking, innovation encouraged (Adhocracy)	17.0	26.7	29.1	18.8	8.5
Top-down leadership, limited employee involvement	3.6	5.5	15.2	43.0	32.7
Rewards based on compliance, not creativity	2.4	6.7	17.0	41.8	32.1

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree. Source: Field Data, 2026.

4.3 Extent of Awareness of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance

This section presents the central findings of the study. Respondents were assessed on five dimensions of cultural awareness: personal knowledge of core values and norms; understanding of how culture influences daily work; clarity about decision-making processes; ability to identify specific cultural effects on performance; and the adequacy of formal cultural communication and onboarding. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Extent of Awareness of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance (N = 165)

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Aware of core values and norms guiding behavior	1.8	4.8	13.3	46.1	33.9

Understand how culture influences day-to-day work tasks	2.4	6.7	18.2	44.2	28.5
Council communicates cultural values clearly to all employees	8.5	23.0	26.7	28.5	13.3
Can identify specific ways culture affects my performance	3.6	8.5	21.2	43.0	23.6
New employees receive adequate cultural orientation	10.9	25.5	23.6	27.3	12.7

Source: Field Data, 2026.

The findings reveal a significant bifurcation between individual cultural awareness and organizational cultural communication. At the individual level, cultural awareness is notably strong: 80.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are aware of the core values and norms guiding behaviour at the council, while 72.7% reported understanding how organizational culture influences their daily work tasks. A further 66.6% indicated that they could identify specific ways in which the organizational culture affects their personal performance. These figures suggest that, through lived experience and peer interaction, the majority of employees have developed a functional understanding of the cultural environment in which they operate.

However, this individual awareness contrasts sharply with the organizational systems designed to communicate and reinforce cultural values. Only 41.8% of respondents agreed that the council communicates its cultural values clearly to all employees, while 31.5% actively disagreed and 26.7% were neutral. Most critically, only 40.0% of respondents agreed that new employees receive adequate orientation on the council's culture and behavioral expectations, with 36.4% disagreeing. These findings indicate that the primary vehicle for cultural transmission at Ubungo Municipal Council is informal socialization a pattern that, while effective for experienced employees, creates significant onboarding risks for new staff and produces differential cultural understanding across departments.

4.4 Qualitative Evidence on Cultural Awareness

Qualitative responses from management interviews enriched and validated the quantitative findings. The pattern of informal cultural acquisition was explicitly acknowledged:

"I know what is expected of me here. The rules are clear, and over time you learn what the organization values most: punctuality, compliance, and meeting targets. But honestly, I learned most of that from colleagues, not from any formal training or induction program. Nobody sat down with me and explained the culture when I joined." (Participant 4, 2026)

The inadequacy of formal cultural communication was highlighted by a second respondent:

"The organization has values written on the wall, but many employees, especially new ones, do not really understand what those values mean in practice. There is no structured program to help employees connect those values to their actual work. As a result, people interpret expectations differently, which can create inconsistency in performance. Better communication channels would help enormously." (Participant 5, 2026)

A senior management officer acknowledged the structural gap:

"We do have cultural expectations, but I think the challenge is that we assume people will pick them up naturally. In a large organization like this one, that assumption is risky. Some departments have strong cultural alignment while others operate quite differently. A standardized onboarding process focused on our organizational values would be a significant improvement." (Participant 6, 2026)

4.5 Impact of Cultural Awareness on Employee Performance

The study further examined how cultural awareness and the gaps in its institutional communication translates into specific performance outcomes. Table 3 presents findings on the relationship between prevailing cultural dimensions and performance indicators.

Table 3: Relationship between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance (N = 165)

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Hierarchical culture helps understand responsibilities and perform effectively	3.0	6.1	14.5	47.3	29.1
Reward system motivates me to improve performance	13.3	27.9	23.0	24.2	11.5
Communication culture supports effective collaboration	9.7	23.6	25.5	27.9	13.3
Leadership style encourages initiative and quality work	12.1	26.7	21.8	26.1	13.3
Overall, organizational culture positively influences my performance	4.8	10.9	20.6	41.8	21.8

Source: Field Data, 2026.

Results indicate that the hierarchical culture, once internalized, provides a strong scaffold for role clarity and performance discipline: 76.4% of respondents agreed that it helps them understand their responsibilities and perform their duties. This confirms that cultural awareness of hierarchical norms translates positively into task-level performance precision. However, performance-enhancing outcomes were substantially weaker for three other cultural sub-dimensions.

The reward system received the most negative assessment: only 35.7% agreed that it motivates performance improvement, while 41.2% disagreed. This finding is particularly significant in the context of cultural awareness employees who are fully aware of the organization's culture but do not see that culture reflected in a fair and motivating reward system experience what Schein (2010) describes as a misalignment between espoused values and experienced reality, a condition that generates disengagement rather than commitment. The communication culture showed similarly limited motivational impact (41.2% positive), and leadership style was perceived as insufficiently encouraging of initiative and quality work (39.4% positive). Overall, 63.6% of respondents affirmed a positive overall relationship between culture and performance, masking these sub-dimensional weaknesses.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Bifurcation of Individual and Organisational Cultural Awareness

The study's central finding that individual cultural awareness is high while formal organisational mechanisms for cultural communication are underdeveloped constitutes a theoretically significant contribution to the literature on organisational culture in African public sector contexts. This bifurcation aligns with Schein's (2010) model, which predicts that where organisational communication of espoused values is weak, employees will revert to interpreting the visible artefacts of culture through the lens of their own socialized assumptions, leading to divergent cultural understandings across the workforce.

Mbuba (2022) observed a similar pattern in Tanzanian public sector organizations, noting that informal socialization is the dominant vehicle for cultural transmission in the absence of formal onboarding structures. The present study extends this finding by demonstrating that, at Ubungu Municipal Council specifically, the gap between individual awareness and institutional communication has concrete performance consequences: departments where informal socialization produces consistent cultural understanding tend to exhibit stronger performance alignment, while departments with higher staff turnover or weaker peer networks are more culturally fragmented. This finding resonates with Bajaras (2024), who argued that the absence of formal cultural reinforcement mechanisms allows behavioral norms to drift away from institutional intentions over time.

The qualitative evidence adds critical texture to this analysis. Participant accounts confirmed that employees develop their cultural understanding not through deliberate organizational investment but through observational learning a process that, while efficient for experienced staff, is unreliable as a foundation for consistent institutional performance. As one respondent noted, the council's cultural expectations are effectively invisible to new joiners: values posted on walls are not translated into lived behavioral guidance. This is precisely the kind of artefact-level visibility without espoused-value-level communication that Schein (2010) identifies as a risk factor for cultural confusion.

5.2 Hierarchical Culture, Awareness, and Performance

The strong endorsement of hierarchical culture's contribution to role clarity (76.4%) demonstrates that when the dominant culture type is clearly communicated and consistently enforced as the council's bureaucratic structures tend to ensure awareness of that culture translates into predictable and stable task performance. This is consistent with Cui et al. (2018), who found that hierarchical cultures in structured public organisations promote operational predictability and compliance, and with Akpa et al. (2022), who confirmed that culture type shapes the specific performance outcomes most likely to be realised.

However, the study also confirms that awareness of hierarchical culture alone is insufficient for comprehensive performance improvement. Employees who understand the compliance-oriented norms of the council but find the reward system demotivating, the communication culture unresponsive, and the leadership style restrictive of initiative, experience a cultural awareness that produces compliance without commitment the minimum performance floor rather than a motivated pursuit of excellence. This finding aligns with Luhambati and Mutarubukwa (2024), who found that while hierarchical culture maintains operational order, its restrictive features tend to limit proactive performance behaviour in Tanzanian public sector contexts.

5.3 The Role of Reward Systems and Leadership in Mediating Culture–Performance Awareness

The consistently weak performance of reward systems and leadership style as cultural sub-dimensions in this study points to a critical mediation problem: employees may be aware of the organizational culture but remain unconvinced that performing in alignment with that culture will yield personal benefit.

Farrukh et al. (2020) established that reward structures are among the most powerful determinants of employee motivation and that misaligned reward systems actively undermine performance even in organizations with otherwise strong cultural identities. At Ubungu Municipal Council, the perception that compliance and exceptional effort attract the same recognition creates what Dirani et al. (2020) describe as motivational neutralization — a condition in which cultural awareness fails to translate into performance because the incentive architecture does not reinforce the desired cultural behaviours.

Leadership style emerges as an equally important mediator. The predominantly directive, top-down leadership reported by respondents constrains the conversion of cultural awareness into proactive performance by signalling that employee initiative is unwelcome. Bajaras (2024) found that participatory leaders who actively cultivate cultural alignment between values and daily behaviour were significantly more effective at translating cultural awareness into sustained performance gains. Investing in leadership development focused on participatory and transformational approaches is therefore not merely a management improvement but a cultural intervention with direct performance implications.

5.4 Comparison with Existing Literature

The findings are broadly consistent with and extend existing empirical studies on organisational culture and performance in Tanzania and sub-Saharan Africa. Mrope and Malima (2024) found that all four CVF culture types positively influenced job satisfaction at Morogoro Municipal Council, suggesting that the key is not the elimination of hierarchical culture but its complementation with clan and adhocracy elements a recommendation consistent with the present study's findings. Linje (2025) similarly traced public sector performance deficiencies to misalignments between cultural directives and employee understanding, directly supporting the present study's argument that the communication of cultural values is as important as the values themselves.

The study diverges somewhat from Gasela (2022), who found in a South African public entity context that organizational culture did not significantly affect performance during strategy implementation. This divergence may reflect contextual differences in the degree of formal cultural communication and the strength of alternative performance drivers in South African public entities compared to Tanzanian LGAs. The present study's finer-grained focus on employee awareness rather than culture type per se may also account for the difference, as it reveals a mechanism (awareness gap) that aggregate culture-performance studies do not capture.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to assess the extent of employee awareness of organizational culture at Ubungu Municipal Council and to examine how this awareness relates to employee performance outcomes. The findings reveal that individual cultural awareness is generally high, with most employees able to articulate the core values and behavioral expectations of the council. However, this awareness has developed largely through informal peer socialization rather than through deliberate organizational communication and onboarding, creating significant inconsistencies in cultural understanding across departments and staff cohorts.

The dominant hierarchical culture, once internalized, supports role clarity and task-level performance consistency. However, weaknesses in the reward system, communication culture, and leadership style limit the translation of cultural awareness into motivated, initiative-driven, and collaborative performance. The near-complete absence of adhocracy culture further constrains the council's adaptive

capacity. These findings confirm that cultural awareness, while necessary, is not sufficient for sustained performance improvement it must be supported by institutional mechanisms that reinforce the alignment between stated values and experienced organisational reality.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are directed at Ubungo Municipal Council management and HR practitioners:

Structured Cultural Onboarding: The council should develop a formal cultural orientation programme for all new employees, explicitly communicating core values, behavioral expectations, and the connection between cultural norms and individual performance standards.

Reform of Reward and Recognition Systems: A comprehensive review of the reward structure is required to introduce performance-based incentives, merit-based promotions, and non-monetary recognition mechanisms that reflect and reinforce the council's espoused cultural values.

Participatory Leadership Development: Leadership training focused on active listening, employee empowerment, and constructive feedback would shift the communication culture toward greater inclusivity, improving the translation of cultural awareness into proactive performance behaviour.

Cultivation of Clan Culture Elements: Cross-departmental teams, mentorship programmes, and collective achievement recognition would introduce clan culture elements that complement the existing hierarchical orientation and strengthen collaborative performance.

Regular Culture Audits: Biannual organizational culture assessments using validated instruments such as the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) would enable the council to track cultural alignment, identify emerging gaps, and evaluate the effectiveness of cultural interventions.

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