

# THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN DEBARK UNIVERSITY: TESTING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT USING STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING (SEM)

By

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## Abstract

HEIs are relevant for effective growth and development of the economy through the development of intellectual abilities and knowledge. To realize this, institutions should build a conducive culture for their staffs to do their best. The purpose of this study was to examine how organizational culture affects employee engagement and employee performance at Debark University. The study employed an explanatory Research Design. Data analysis was done using the partial least square-structural equation model version 4. The finding of this study showed that organizational culture has direct effect on employee engagement and employee performance. In addition, the result of the study established that employee engagement has direct effect on employee performance. As it was expected, the results of PLS-SEM confirmed that employee engagement partially mediates the connection between organizational culture and employee performance. This indicated that a strong and successful institutional culture will increase employee engagement in order to achieve employee performance and the goals of the institutions along a shared path.

**Key words:** Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, Debark University, PLS-SEM

## 1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the education sector plays a vital role toward the success of a nation's economic strategy. To realize this, the government of Ethiopia has invested much amount of resources to expand public universities in terms of number and student capacity with the objective of producing component graduates, conducting problem solving researches and rendering community services which will help in addressing the socio-economic problems of the country (HE proclamation, 2009). In this respect, designing and implementing an appropriate organizational culture (hereafter: OC) is key. The implication is that an appropriate culture will help organizations to enhance performance of employees.

Organizational culture can lead to determine the success of organizations (Fidyah *et al.*, 2020). In the empirical literature, Several Scholars (see: Betelhem, 2017, Sintayehu and Muhamed *et al.*, 2019; Fidyah *et al.*, 2020; Asrijal *et al.*, 2021) pointed out that employee performance is significantly impacted by organizational culture. The findings of the previous studies implies that the culture of an organization has become one of the most crucial aspects organization (Ojo, 2009). Other studies (see: Anitha, 2014; Ersin *et al.*, 2016; Stangrecka and Iddagoda, 2020) also established that organizational culture is a predictor of employee engagement. And also it was found that employee engagement has a positive link between engagement and employee performance (Azeem and Yasmine, 2015; Tampubolon, 2017; Nisha *et al.*, 2022).

Despite the positive link between organizational culture and employee performance, the studies are not conclusive (see: Addai, 2021). In this respect, a mediator is suggested to link organizational culture with employee performance. For this particular article, employee engagement is chosen to play the mediating role. This is because employee engagement is rapidly gaining popularity and importance in the workplace (Welch, 2011; Noori & Sabokro, 2016). Secondly, some scholars (see: Syauta *et al.*, 2012) pointed out that employee engagement is considered as a strong predictive to strengthen the link. Finally, scholars recommended that employee engagement can be applied to link the culture-performance debate (Ersin *et al.*, 2016; Ganyang, 2019; Addai, 2021; Abdulahi *et al.*, 2021). Empirically, studies (Shahzad *et al.*, 2013) found that organizational culture affects how managers and their employees to be engaged to attain organizational performance. Similarly, Ganyang (2019) believed that organizational culture has the power to affect employee performance through Employee engagement. Scholars (see: Shuck *et al.*, 2011) identified organizational culture as a driver of employee engagement and employee performance as the outcome of employee engagement (Anitha, 2014; Stangrecka and Iddagoda, 2020). So, this study introduced that employee engagement is a relevant mediator to link the study variables.

The study context is university setting. Education is important for the effective growth and development of the economy through the development of intellectual abilities and knowledge. The educational system must prepare students to be innovative, scholars, researchers, and teachers (Sreenivasulu, 2013). In this case, institutions should build a conducive culture so that academic staffs will contribute their best to achieve the mission of the university (Dawit, 2020). In the literature, studies haven't drawn much attention in the context of Ethiopia's educational system, indicating that previous studies were focused only on business organizations and other countries (Motyka, 2018). In addition, some scholars (Ganga, 2019; Addai, 2021) suggested that exploring the effect of culture on performance through employee engagement needs more analysis due to uneven and varied results. Therefore, this article aimed at addressing the gap by examining the effect of organizational culture on employee performance through the mediation role of employee engagement at Debark University.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Organizational Culture**

In management literature, culture is considered to be one of the most valuable characteristics of organizations (Ojio, 2009) and critical issue that must be understood by leaders (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Organizational Culture is defined as a system of shared assumptions, attitudes, and ideas that define what normal and inappropriate behavior within an organization is referred to as organizational culture. Although organizational culture has since been the focus of a large number of study, still it is a young but fast-growing area within management. Researchers on organizational cultures have proposed different types of cultures.

For example, Cameron and Quinn (2011) identified four culture types such as: Adhocracy culture, clan culture, hierarchy culture, market culture. Despite the difference models, this article employed the Competing Values Framework because it has been found to have both face and empirical validity. Secondly, due to the psychology and personality based, it is suitable to the academic environment than the business (Denison, 2011). Moreover, some scholars (see: Addai, 2021) recommended to measure culture in terms of clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market cultures.

### Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement is rapidly gaining popularity and importance in the workplace (Welch, 2011). Defining the term is a challenge because human resource generalists, educational consultants, and researchers have developed various definitions. According to Schaufeli and Salanova (2014), an engaged employee is energetic, mentally resilient, dedicated to working, and enjoys the challenges at work. Handa and Gulati (2014) defined employee engagement as an employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed towards desired organizational outcomes.. Employee engagement is a gauge of contentment, dedication, and independent effort (Ariani, 2013).

### Employee Performance

Employee Performance refers to an employee role in creating goods (product/service). Understanding each employee's performance allows managers to assign tasks and set objectives, encourage and support employees; efforts, and give feedback and assessments in a methodical manner. Additionally, managers should be aware that employee performance contributes to lowering organizational uncertainties in terms of productivity and overall effectiveness (Weerarathna and Geeganage, 2014). The importance of employee's performance must be understood by the management and sincere efforts must be put in that direction (Hana, 2011).

### Conceptual Framework

From the framework perspective (see: **fig 1**), it is presumed that Social Exchange Theory (SET) is one mechanism which illustrates how Organizational Culture (OC) can transform into Employee Performance (EP) through Employee Engagement (Blau, 1964).

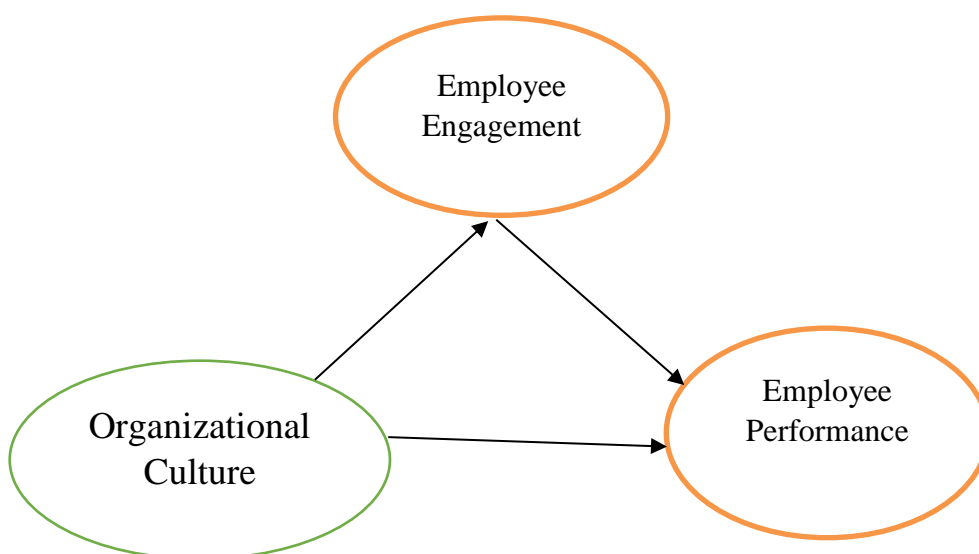


Figure 1 conceptual framework  
Source: adapted from Mensah (2015).

## Hypothesis Development

Based on the conceptual framework supported by theoretical and empirical evidences, four hypothesis were postulated as it is indicated below:

In literature, Effective Organizational culture have positive influence on Employee Performance (Wambugu 2014; Mohamed and Abukar, 2013; Shahzad, 2014; Mohamed & Abukar, 2013; Saad & Abbas, 2018). The institutions must have a strong culture of trust in which the staff members communicate with one another without engaging in any form of prejudice (Thornton & Audrey, 2008). Several studies in various countries have confirmed a link between organizational culture and employee engagement (Pepra, Mensah and Addai, 2018; Brenyah and Obuobisa, 2017; Mohammed *et al.*, 2017). Improved engagement happens when there are positive working relationships, employee input in decision-making, and supporting growth and development with learning opportunities which are all features of organizational culture (Jane and Kathi, 2018). Similarly, scholars (Ersin *et al.*, 2016; Stangrecka and Iddagoda, 2020) affirmed that organizational culture is a predictor of employee engagement.

Studies of employee engagement shows that there is a positive link between engagement and employee performance (Azeem and Yasmine, 2015; Tampubolon, 2017; Nisha *et al.*, 2022). This implies that the level of employee performance is highly determined by the level of dedication an employee has toward organization efficiency. Gichohi (2014) says that there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and employee performance. As it is discussed above, the link between organizational culture and employee performance are inconclusive. Thus, a mediator variable was introduced. In this respect, this article considers employee engagement serves as a relevant mediator variable, which is supported by empirical and theoretical evidence. Empirically, Some studies (see: Shuck *et al.*, 2011; Ganyang, 2019; Stangrecka and Iddagoda, 2020) believed that organizational culture has the power to affect employee performance through Employee engagement. Theoretically, the nexus between the culture, engagement and performance is grounded with social exchange theory (SET). From the SET viewpoint, an organization that acts towards employees in a beneficial or positive ways generates reciprocity such that employees react in a beneficial manner too that can favor the organization (Blau, 1964). The processes involved in how talented employees view and respond to the Organizational Culture can be better understood with the use of SET. Therefore, the following hypotheses were established on the basis of empirical evidence and theoretical support:

- H1: organizational culture has a significant and a positive effect on employee performance***
- H2: organizational culture has a significant and a positive effect on employee engagement***
- H3: employee engagement has a significant and a positive effect on employee performance.***
- H4: Employee Engagement mediates the link between Organizational Culture and Employee Performance.***

## 3. Methodology

The study was conducted in Debarik University. The research adopted quantitative approach and explanatory research design. The target population were the academic staff of the University. This is because academic staffs are responsible to teach, conduct research and provide community service, which is the core activity of universities. The article employed census as the number of the academic staffs were small (N= 311). In terms of measurement of instrument, organizational culture was measured with 48 items adapted from Heritage (2014); employee engagement was measured with 12 items adapted from Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), whereas employee performance was measured with 12 items adapted from Pradhan and Jena

(2017). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this study, descriptive, correlation and regression analysis were done. Descriptive analysis was done to evaluate the level of culture, engagement and performance using mean and standard deviation; correlation analysis was also made to explore the association between the study variables whereas the PLS-SEM method was employed to examine the direct and indirect effects.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this study, about 311 questionnaires were distributed and in return, 275 were return and used to produce the results, indicates response rate of 88%. With respect to demographic information of respondents, the majority of the respondents were male, young, with experience between one to three years; master holders, single and with academic rank of lecturer. The implication is that the institution is male dominated, full of youth who are not married and limited assistant professors.

The level of academic staff's perceptions of organizational culture, employee engagement, and employee performance were assessed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). In this respect, the result of the descriptive analysis shows that academic staffs have moderate level of agreement on OC (Mean =3.74; SD =0.64), which implies that academic staffs were not fully satisfied with the existing culture. Similarly, this study suggests that academic staffs in DKU had a moderate level of engagement (Mean =3.64; SD =0.54), which may be related to their lack of passion, commitment, and vigor. The descriptive analysis result also shows that academic staffs have moderate level of agreement on EP (Mean =3.67) and (SD u=0.73). This result implies academic staffs have a moderate level of EP.

In order to test the strength and direction of linear relationship among organizational culture (OC), employee performance (EP) and employee engagement (EE), Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis was carried out.

<b>Table: 1 Correlation analysis result</b>			
<b>Study Variables</b>	<b>OC</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>EP</b>
Organizational culture	1		
Employee engagement	.804**	1	
Employee performance	.809**	.749**	1
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The correlation result from table 1 displays that organizational culture has positive and strong association with employee performance ( $r=0.809$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and with employee engagement ( $r=0.804$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Similarly, employee engagement has a positive and strong association with employee performance ( $r=0.749$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

The PLS model analysis is used to test the direct and indirect effect. To examine the effect, assessment of the measurement and structural model is vital. To ensure validity and reliability of constructs, factor loading are relevant (Hair, *et al*, 2006). Thus, items that have factor loading below 0.60 should be deleted. Therefore, this research avoided any factor loading  $< 0.60$ . In this case, six items (OC1, EE1, EE8, EE11, EP1 and EP4) were deleted (see: in fig 2).

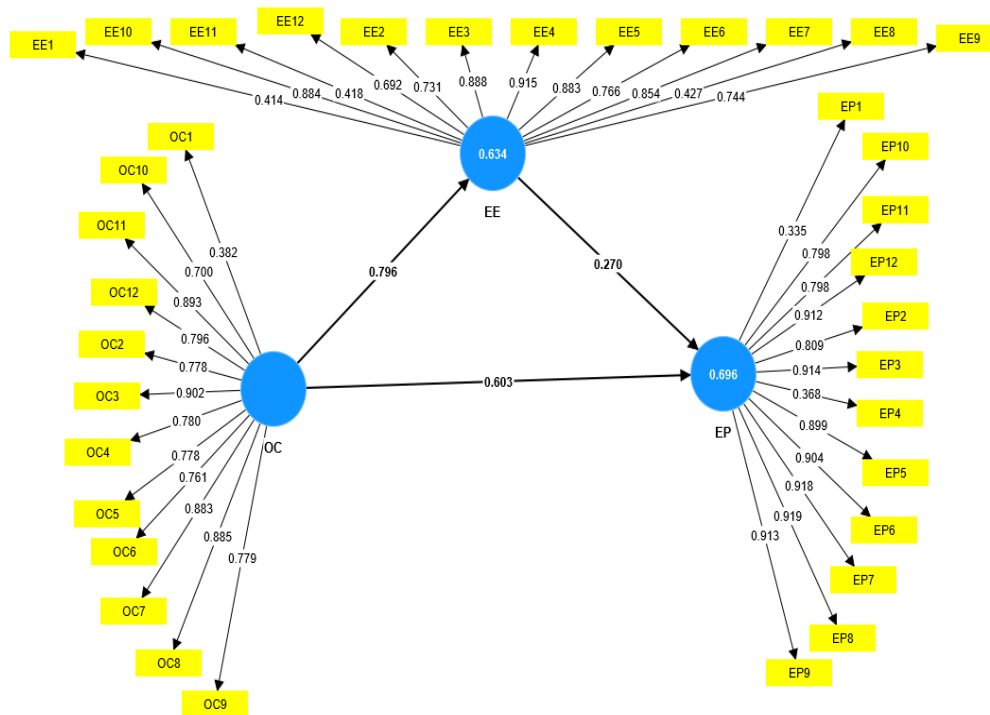


Figure 2 factor loading of each item

Table 2 Chronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability, rho\_A and AVE

Constructs	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR	AVE	rho_A
OC	0.949	0.951	0.666	0.956
EE	0.941	0.942	0.685	0.951
EP	0.968	0.968	0.779	0.972

Source: Own Survey: 2022

**Note:** EP =Employee performance; EE = Employee engagement; OC =Organization culture.

The other relevant issue to discuss is about construct validity (Rossiter, 2002). Validity is classified into two types: convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity specifies that items that are indicators of a construct should share a high proportion of variance (Hair *et al.*, 2006) whereas convergent validity of the scale items was assessed using three criteria. First, the factor loadings should be greater than 0.60 and secondly, composite reliability exceeding 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Lastly, AVE for each construct should be above the recommended cut-off 0.50 (Fornell and Larker, 1981).

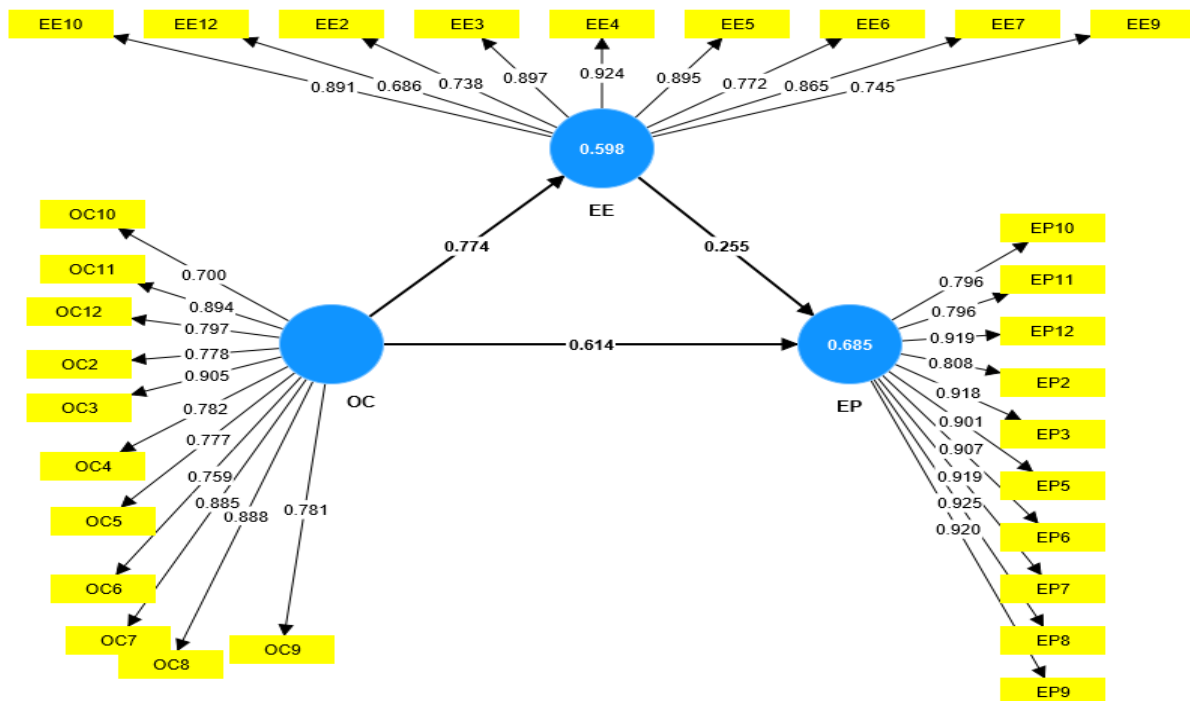
In this study, composite reliability support convergent validity criteria for all constructs (see: **Table 2**). To ensure discriminant validity (Hair et al, 2012), this study employed Fornell and Laker (1981) method. The diagonal values in bold (see table 3) reflect the square root of the AVE whereas the off-diagonals reflect the correlations. The Fornell-Larcker criterion results revealed that the square root of the AVE’s of the constructs are above the correlations of all other constructs, which ensures discriminant validity.

**Table 3 Results of Discriminat Validity (Fornell-Larcker Method) & VIF**

	EE	EP	OC	VIF
EE	<b>0.828</b>			2.49
EP	0.73	<b>0.883</b>		
OC	0.774	0.812	<b>0.816</b>	2.49

Using bootstrapping, SmartPLS can provide T-statistics for significance testing of both the inner and outer model. In this method, a sizable subsample (e.g., 5000) of the original sample is obtained with replacement to produce bootstrap standard errors, which in turn produces approximate T-values for the structural paths significance test. Using SmartPLS 4, the structural model's validation was accomplished. To determine if each path coefficient was statistically significant, the bootstrap re-sampling approach was used. According to Rossiter's (2002) criteria, all routes should produce a t-statistic value more than 2, a latent variable R Squares (R<sup>2</sup>) greater than 50%, and a p-value less than 0.05 for the structural model. In this model, every requirement was met.

In order to test the hypothesized relationships between variables, structural equation modelling was employed using *SmartPLS 4*. The results of the PLS analysis (see fig 3) including path coefficients (β), factor loading, and variance explain (R<sup>2</sup> values) of the structural model. First, the analysis conducted collinearity evaluation among the predictor variables, and the result in Table 3 showed that collinearity is not a problem since all VIF values are significantly far below 5 as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2013).

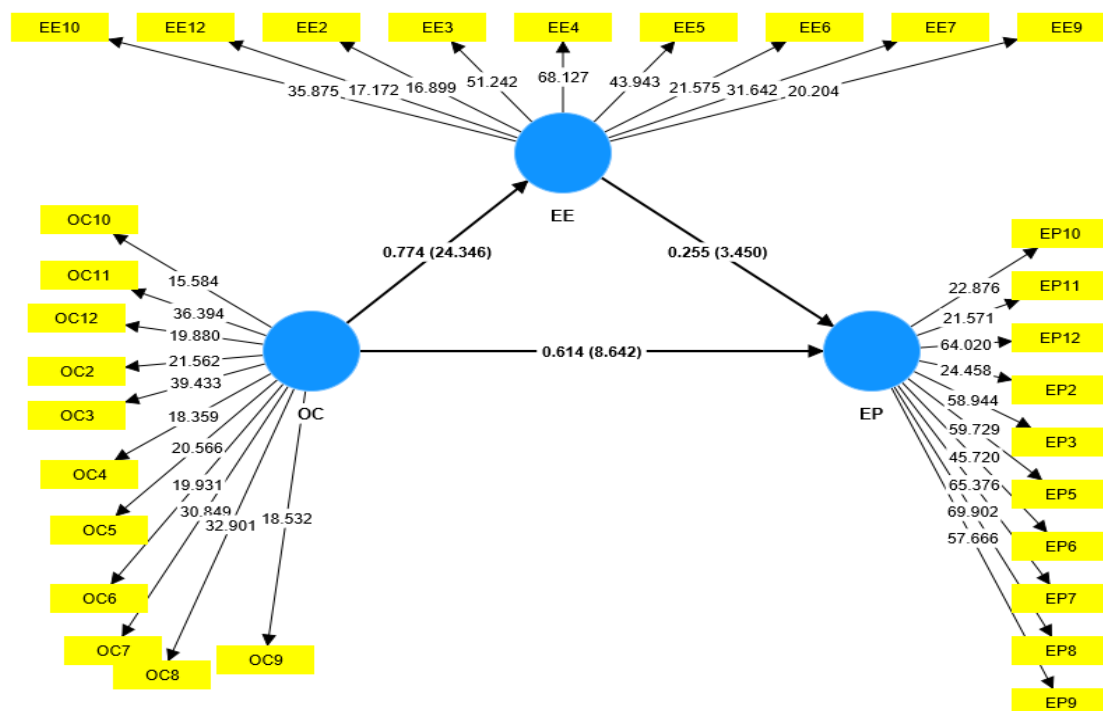


**Figure 3: structural model**

Using two-tailed t-tests, all statistical tests were evaluated at a 5 percent level of significance.  $R^2$  was assessed to ascertain the structural models coefficient of determination. The  $R^2$  showed how much variance the independent variable exhibits (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The value of predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) should be greater than zero (Henseler, 2015). The  $Q^2$  value EE was (0.59) and EP (0.654) all were higher than 0, which demonstrate that the structural model has adequate predictive significance. After determining the study VIF,  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  the hypotheses were tested next. For the hypothesized relationships the path estimates and t-statistics were determined using a bootstrapping approach with a re-sampling of 5000.

**Table 4 demonstrated the analysis of the structural model.**

	Path coefficients	Q square	F square
EE -> EP	0.255	EE =0.59	EE=0.083
OC -> EE	0.774	EP= 0.654	EP=1.490
OC -> EP	0.614		OC=0.481



**Figure: 4 T-statistics and path coefficient**

The inner model test is another name for the PLS hypothesis test. This test measures the strength of the direct and indirect effects. A direct and indirect effect test is required to determine the impact of organizational culture and staff engagement on academic staff's performance. Using the Smart PLS 4, the effect test was carried out using the t-statistic. The R Square value and the significance test value were calculated using the PLS-algorithm and are displayed in the table below:



**Table 5 R Square value**

	R-square	R-square adjusted
EE	0.598	0.597
EP	0.685	0.683

The outcome revealed that  $R^2$  values of EE and EP were concurrently 0.598 and 0.685 from the PLS-algorithm which indicates high explanatory strength (chin, 1998). The finding of the study revealed that Organizational Culture can explain 68.5 percent of the academic staffs Performance whereas the remaining is explained by other variables. According to the above table, 59.8% of the academic staff's engagement can be accounted for by organizational culture, with the remaining being explained by factors.

**Table 6 T Statistics and P-Values show the influence of research variables that have been mentioned.**

	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
OC -> EP	0.614	0.62	0.071	8.642	0.00
OC -> EE	0.774	0.777	0.032	24.346	0.00
EE -> EP	0.255	0.25	0.074	3.45	0.001

## 5. Hypothesis Testing

To realize the objective of this study, four hypotheses were postulated and tested using Smart PLS-SEM. The detail analysis was presented below:

***H1: organizational culture has a significant effect on employee performance.***

The hypothesis postulated that organizational culture has a positive effect on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.614$ ;  $P < 0.050$ ). This means organizational culture has a significant effect on academic staff's performance. So, H1 is accepted. This indicates that when organizational culture is increased by 1% employee performance will be increased by 64.1%.

***H2: organizational culture has a significant effect on employee engagement***

The finding of the study reveals that OC has a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.774$ ;  $P < 0.050$ ). Thus, the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that when organizational culture is increased by 1% employee engagement will be increased by 77.4%. Employee engagement will rise in response to a rise in the organizational culture variable, and it will fall in response to a fall in organizational culture.

***H3: employee engagement has a significant effect on employee performance.***

It was hypothesized that employee engagement has an effect on employee performance. The finding of the study shows that employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.255$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ) has a positive effect on employee performance. In this respect, the hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that when employee engagement is increased by 1% employee performance will be increased by 25.5%. Employee performance will rise in response to an increase in the variable determining employee engagement, and employee performance will fall in response to a decline in the same variable.

**H4: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.**

The fourth hypothesis is that employee engagement has a mediating role in the link between organizational culture and employee performance. To test this hypothesis, this study employed Baron and Kenny, 1986). According to the literature, the bootstrapping method was also employed to analyze the indirect effect, and the findings in Table 6 indicated that the indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.255$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) were substantial, indicating that there were mediating effect. As proposed by Hair *et al.* (2013), variance accounted for (VAF) has been evaluated. The VAF determines indirect impact magnitude compared to total or overall effect.

$$\text{VAF} = \frac{\text{indirect effect}}{\text{total effect}} \quad \text{i.e. } \frac{a \times b}{(a \times b) + \text{direct effect}(c)}$$

$$= \frac{0.255 \times 0.774}{(0.255 \times 0.774) + 0.614} = 0.243$$

Where a= the coefficient of OC to EE, b= the coefficient of OC to EP and c= the coefficient of EE to EP

The rule of thumb is, if the VAF is less than 20 percent, one should conclude that nearly zero mediation occurs. A situation in which the VAF is larger than 20 percent and less than 80 percent could be characterized as a typical partial mediation (Hair *et al.*, 2017); and a VAF above 80 percent indicates a full mediation. Therefore, VAF was assessed in this study, and the result was 24.3% which was rated as partial mediation (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, employee engagement partially mediates the relationship between Organizational culture and Employee performance in DKU.

**Table 7 Results of Structural Path Model of Direct, Indirect and Mediation Effects**

Hypothesized Paths	Path Coefficient	Std. Error	T-value	P-value	Decision
OC -> EP	0.614	0.029	28.172	0.000	Supported
OC -> EE	0.774	0.032	24.346	0.000	Supported
EE -> EP	0.255	0.074	3.45	0.001	Supported
OC -> EE -> EP	0.197	0.058	3.397	0.001	Supported

## 6. Discussions of Results

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of organizational culture on employee performance through the mediation role of employee engagement in university context, DebarK University. Based on Structure Equational Modeling Analysis, four hypotheses were tested and the finding shows that the result supports all the hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that organizational culture has a significant effect on employee performance. Accordingly, the study findings established that organizational culture has a significant effect on how well employees perform. This implies that organizational culture in DebarK University is one of the critical factor impacting academic staff performance. Thus, the university should build organizational culture that are more responsive to their workforce and organizational context and that also align well with their core values. This finding is supported by prior studies (Santoso and Moeins, 2019; Widodo, 2017; Muliaty *et al.*, 2017; Saprudin *et al.*, 2019; Wambugu, 2014; Shahzad, 2014; Bethelhem, 2017).

The second hypothesis postulated that organizational culture has a significant impact on employee engagement. As it was expected, culture predicts engagement. Organizations with a positive outlook appreciate their employees and create a setting where they may flourish and realize their full potential. As a result of the organizational culture, workers often grow a strong sense of commitment and purpose. The result of this study was in line with previous studies (Abeje, 2020; Nishan et al, 2022).

With reference to the third hypothesis, it was postulated that employee engagement has a significant and positive effect on performance. Employee engagement significantly affects employee performance. The results of this study is consistent with previous studies (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; Anitha, 2014; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

The fourth postulated hypothesis stated that the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance is mediated by employee engagement. This study found that organizational culture is a good predictor of worker performance and that employee engagement also contributes significantly to enhancing that performance. The study's results showed that in order to achieve sound performance it is prudent for DKU to create and promote a good and strong culture and to make sure that academic staff members are dedicated and engaged in their job. This is in line with the study of other scholars (Blegur and Amalia, 2019; Tannady *et al*, 2019).

## 7. Summary

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of organizational culture on employee performance through the mediation role of employee engagement in university context, Debark University. Based on 275 responses, this study was analyzed using descriptive, correlation and structural equation modeling tools. The respondent's gender distribution shows that majority of the respondents were male, young, with experience of one to three years, master holders, single and with rank of lecture. The descriptive statistics result revealed that the academic staffs' level of agreement on organizational culture, employee engagement, and employee performance were moderate level. The result of correlation analysis shows that organizational culture has a positive and strong association with employee performance and employee engagement. It was also indicated that employee engagement has a positive and strong association with employee performance. In the SEM Analysis, the finding of the study revealed that construct validity of the study variables were ensured, which fulfills the reliability and validity standards. In addition, the study test the different assumptions and found that there is no problem of normality, collinearity, linearity and others. Finally, the four hypotheses were supported.

## 8. Conclusions

The article deduced the following conclusions based on a summary of the study's findings. From the result of descriptive statistics, it was conclude that organizational culture, employee performance and employee engagement has moderate level of agreement. Based on the result of correlation analysis, it was concluded that organizational culture has significant relationship with employee engagement and employee performance. The results also indicate that employee engagement has a significant relationship with employee performances. From the result of PLS-SEM, the article concludes that organizational culture has a significant impact on employee performance; and also showed that the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance is partially mediated by employee engagement.

Based on the finding the researcher concludes that a strong and successful university culture will increase employee engagement in order to achieve employee performance and the goals of the institutions along a shared path. The results definitely demonstrated that employee engagement and organizational culture are the most crucial and important elements in achieving employee success.

## 9. Recommendations and future research directions

Based on the findings of the study, the article recommends the following issues: The management of the university should focus on organizational culture that promotes participation, cooperation and sense of belongingness by creating conducive working environment that can encourage employees to be more focused on completing work targets and fostering an entrepreneurial culture. To meet this, sound policies should be formulated and implemented that will enable to build an engaged workforce by providing good leadership qualities, maintaining good relations between employees, providing welfare for employees, and making policies that can influence the extent to which employees are involved. The shortcoming of this study was that it only focuses on organizational culture as the independent variable. In this perspective, future studies may include other predictors. In addition, future researches can consider other relevant mediator and moderator in the link between organizational culture and employee performance in different context.

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