

Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Clarity and Performance of County Government of TransNzoia, Kenya

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of strategic stakeholder engagement clarity on performance of the county government of Trans Nzoia, Kenya. The study was guided by contingency theory. The study utilized cross sectional research design and the target population for the study comprised of all middle level management in County. The study employed census since the target population was small. The study utilized primary data sources which was collected by use of structure questionnaires. The questionnaires for the research were structured based on the research objectives. Data analysis techniques used by the study was descriptive statistics and inferential statistics which was computed through multiple regression and correlation analysis. The data collection tool used by the researcher was Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Analyzed data was presented in frequency distribution tables so as to make it easy for research results description and explanation. Based on the findings, the study concluded that strategic stakeholder engagement clarity had significant effect on performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. The study came up with the following recommendations; the county government should have procedural charts for all major stakeholder engagement and orient them on new processes before rolling out.

Keywords: strategic stakeholder engagement clarity, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), major stakeholder engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Managing organizational performance is directly related to organizational sustainability (Park & Choi, 2020). Managing performance in public organizations, however, has been quite challenging due to the complex nature of organizational goals. The goals of public organizations are inclined to be more ambiguous, dynamic, and sometimes multifaceted than those in private organizations (Younis, et al.,2023). Organizational performances are a set of overall preferred results that it wants to accomplish and measure for different levels of hierarchy and can be assessed for individuals, groups, and the entire organization as a whole (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). Chenhall and Langfield-Smith (2018), argued that an organization cannot sufficiently obtain a competitive advantage unless it connects all strategies to functional processes and information systems. This is because strategic clarity requires individuals at various levels to support the organization's purposes and goals with the same level of commitment (Kathuria et al., 2017). In the energy sector, the Ukrain-Russia conflict and uncertainty in Middle East unleashed a "storm" of unprecedented challenges and uncertainties in the sector worldwide (Gollakota and Shu, 2023, Amamou and Bargaoui, 2022, Lu and Khan, 2023).

Change dynamism in modern business environment complicated the management system and challenging effectiveness in performance (Morrison, Ghose, Dam, Hinge, & Hoesch-Klohe, 2017). Clarity in strategic statement provides valuable guidance to workers through specific identification of the performance dimensions that organization seeks to optimize (Smith & Thomas, 2020). The primary claim is that a clear strategy statement provides valuable guidance to workers by defining, simply and specifically, the ways in which an organization will pursue its objectives. Clarity can therefore help resolve conflicts and establish organizational priorities (Latham, 2018).

2. STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT CLARITY AND PERFORMANCE

Strategic Stakeholder Clarity refers to the clear identification, understanding, and communication of an organization's key stakeholders, their interests, influence, and expectations in relation to strategic goals (Kimani, B 2024).. It involves having a well-defined approach to recognizing who the stakeholders are, what they need or expect, and how their roles impact the organization's objectives. This clarity ensures effective stakeholder engagement, alignment of interests, and informed decision-making, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and strategic outcomes. Stakeholder management is crucial for the Ministry of Interior and National Administration to identify and respond to the needs and demands of different groups that are impacted by the ministry's policies and services. Such engagements can be in the form of public consultations, focus group discussions, and community outreach programs. Stakeholder engagement enables the ministry to increase the effectiveness of its services, foster trust, and make more informed decisions (Coleman, Manyindo, Parker & Schultz 2019). A study by Uddin, Ong & Matous (2023) showed that ministries with stakeholder engagements included in their strategic communication clarity plans were 40% more likely to meet their service delivery goals. It also emphasized the need to develop different engagement approaches for different stakeholders and the use of technology to increase the number of stakeholders involved.

Effect of stakeholder engagements on the quality of service delivery to the public Ferreira (2020) In his article 'Stakeholders' engagement on nature-based solutions,' discusses the effects that stakeholders have had on service delivery to the citizens of Canada. Several stakeholders in Canada including CSIS, frequently collaborate with non-government financial and social businesses, involving those in the private industry, legal community, educational institutions, and manufacturing organizations, to successfully tackle contemporary national security threats as well as other public service delivery impacting Canadians in a way that meets openness and responsibility standards and instills confidence in our efforts. According to the author, the stakeholder engagement strategy strives to ensure that Canadians accept CSIS as a knowledgeable and trustworthy collaborator in safeguarding Canada's social structure and financial stability. He concludes that to establish and maintain lasting connections with major stakeholders, this program publicly collaborates with Canadians in various areas of our civil society and finances to gain insight from other people's perspectives and contribute to developing a common awareness of Canada's national security interests and priorities in public service delivery.

According to Heckert (2020) in his article 'Research Involvement and engagement', stakeholders in the United Kingdom function as key advisors to major companies and other institutions, which in turn improves the quality of services offered to the people. Companies engage their stakeholders in discussion to determine what social and environmental concerns are most important to them regarding company performance, to enhance decision-making and accountability. The Global Reporting Initiative, a globally recognized sustainable development reporting methodology, requires stakeholder engagement. According to the author, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) demands stakeholder input for newly developed guidelines. One fundamental principle of stakeholder engagement is that stakeholders can impact decision-making processes which will improve service delivery. He suggests that firms could increase their stakeholder involvement by actively listening, building respectful relationships, and responding to their issues in a manner that benefits everyone involved.

According to Mziba (2020) in his article 'The role of public participation in service delivery', stakeholders in South Africa play a significant role in project monitoring, financial input, and evaluation to improve service delivery to its citizens. Project monitoring and assessment entail measuring, recording, analyzing, and responding to variances in the project's achievement to accomplish targets. The author maintains that tracking and evaluating development initiatives allows government authorities, development supervisors, and community groups to gain insight from previous experiences, improve how they provide services, plan, and allocate resources, and demonstrate results as a means of transparency to key stakeholders. The author affirms that Statistics South Africa's Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP) focuses on offering an ongoing approach to improvement on essential goods that are in keeping with the Batho Pele principles, which help to guarantee timely and effective service delivery by putting "people first."

As per the article 'Journal of Business Research' by Romero (2020), Nigeria has been active in engaging stakeholders in decision-making that affects service delivery to its people. According to the author, similar initiatives in Nigeria have helped to establish trust among citizens and stakeholders. Engaging them demonstrates that you recognize and respect their thoughts and interests. Therefore, you gain their confidence and credibility. When stakeholders trust in you, they become more supportive and eager to engage, which may lead to new possibilities and beneficial relationships. The author also claims that when stakeholders from various backgrounds collaborate, the opportunity for creativity and innovative problem solutions grows dramatically. Stakeholder talks can generate ideas that would not have occurred within a closed circle of decision-makers. This collaborative approach promotes innovation and results in more effective public service delivery.

According to Waikenda (2020) in his article 'Influence of Stakeholders' Participation on Performance of County Governments in Kenya' Kenya has been actively involving stakeholders in many of its institutional decisions which has seen an improvement in service delivery within the public sector. According to the author, stakeholder analysis, which is employed in Kenya, is the process of identifying and analyzing the individuals or groups that might or will be affected by your service delivery initiative. It allows you to better grasp their requirements, passions, demands, and potential worries. He also believes that involving stakeholders is critical for effective strategy planning. It entails finding, comprehending, and incorporating those who have an interest in a project involving service delivery to the citizens. Effective stakeholder engagement management necessitates a complete strategy that involves continual interaction, attentiveness, and cooperation in the entire procedure.

Some of the key aspects of stakeholder engagement clarity are; stakeholder engagements should be well-documented, complete with step-by-step guides, flowcharts, and any relevant information that can support understanding, and having standardized processes creates consistency, making it easier for team members to follow established protocols and reduce variability in outcomes. It also involves an open channels of communication are essential for clarifying any ambiguities about engagements (Yang 2023). Regular discussions and updates can help reinforce understanding. Providing training sessions for employees can help them gain a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder engagements, which promotes clarity and adherence and encouraging feedback from team members can help identify areas of confusion or inefficiency in engagements, which can then be addressed to enhance clarity (Zaheer et al., 2024).

Employees who believe that the outcome is the product of their actions and have good relationships with their leaders are seen to have a considerably greater level of role clarity, which has a substantial influence on work performance and commitment than those who lack all of these aspects (Hegazy et al., 2023; Kauppila, 2014). When an organization hires people who are overqualified and have an empowering attitude, job clarity increases significantly, which has a considerable impact on work outcomes or work performance but when work autonomy exceeds networking abilities, it has a greater influence on in-role performance (Ma et al., 2020; Nesheim, Olsen, Sandvik, 2017). If employees are free to perform their tasks transparent with internal communication, collaboration, and flexible work arrangements then they feel at ease at work which enhances work performance, well-being, and motivation but developing networking skills and work autonomy corresponds with positive in-role and extra-role performance (Fincke et al., 2020; Nesheim, Olsen, Sandvik, 2017). Muthini (2017) researched on stakeholder engagement clarity and performance in the context of Kenya Revenue Authority. The research design was a case study. The target population consisted of top management. Data collection was based on both primary and secondary sources. An interview guide was used to collect data from the respondents. The study established that Kenya Revenue Authority has aligned its internal and external strategies and this has resulted in increased total revenue collection.

Sadiq (2020) investigated resource allocation strategy on water services board performance in Kenya. The study adopted both descriptive and correlational designs. The target population of this study was employees of water services board in Kenya. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique to select a sample size of 150 employees from the population of the employees of water services boards. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered by the help of research assistants in each and every department. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The study findings indicated that the pressure to provide water to the rapidly growing population in Kenya has made it mandatory for the water services boards to come up with clear cut strategies to meet these demands.

Hu and Liden (2015) posit that stakeholder engagement clarity in goals and processes at the employee and team level is positively related to employee and team performance as well as organizational efficiency as a whole. Clear procedures

toward goals are also very important for employee and team performance, because stakeholder engagement clarity provides clearer and more active plans and visible strategies to achieve the goal. Therefore, employees must achieve stakeholder engagement clarity in terms of strategic and operational integration to internalize strategic alignment in their jobs and tasks. Organizational performance is a set of overall preferred results that it wants to accomplish and measure for different levels of hierarchy and can be assessed for individuals, groups, and the entire organization as a whole (Knies et al., 2016). It is a set of overall preferred results that it wants to accomplish and measure for different levels of hierarchy and can be assessed for individuals, groups, and the entire organization as a whole (Knies et al., 2016). Thus, performance is success that doesn't exist by itself, but it is a function of individual efforts and the result of action (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021).

Non-financial factors that contribute to success include service delivery, quality, dependability, customer satisfaction, and product or service quality (Karanja, 2017). An organization's performance can be clearly shown using a combination of monetary and nonmonetary metrics. The effectiveness of a company's performance in achieving its objectives can be determined (Cascio, 2006). Firm performance will be measured by operational efficiency, cost reduction and market share.

3. METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population for the study was comprised of 72 middle level management in County government of TransNzoia. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents. Both primary and secondary data was collected. Piloting was done to test validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. Once data was collected, it was crosschecked and verified for errors, completeness and consistency. It was coded, entered and analysed descriptively using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 27). Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between variables in the study hypotheses. ANOVA multiple linear regression analysis was also used to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variable and the dependent.

4. DISSCUSSION

4.1 Effect of Stakeholder Engagement Clarity on Firm Performance of County Government of TransNzoia in Kenya

The third specific objective of the study was to examine the effect of stakeholder engagement clarity on firm performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to the effect of stakeholder engagement clarity on firm performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. A 5 point Likert scale was used where 1 symbolized strongly disagree, 2 symbolized disagree, 3 symbolized neutral, 4 symbolized agree and 5 symbolized strongly agree. The results were as presented in Table 4.1.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the corporation documents tasks procedures through user manuals. This is supported by a mean of 3.615 (std. dv = 0.797). In addition, as shown by a mean of 4.696 (std. dv = 0.709), the respondents agreed that the employees are supported to understand the expectations and outcomes of their roles. Further, the respondents agreed that the organization has procedure charts for all major stakeholder engagement. This is shown by a mean of 3.592 (std. dv = 0.691). The respondents also agreed that the stakeholder are oriented on new processes before rolling out. This is shown by a mean of 4.526 (std. dv = 0.695). With a mean of 4.405 (std. dv = 0.773), the respondents agreed that the decisions made by the organisation should be communicated to all stakeholders. Lastly, the respondents agreed that strategic stakeholder's engagement enhances organisational performance. This is shown by a mean of 4.241 (std. dv = 0.644).

Table 4.1: Stakeholder Engagement Clarity on Firm Performance of County Government of TransNzoia in Kenya

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The corporation documents tasks procedures through user manuals	3.615	0.797
The employees are supported to understand the expectations and outcomes of their roles	4.696	0.709
The organization has procedure charts for all major stakeholder engagement	3.592	0.691
The stakeholder are oriented on new processes before rolling out	4.526	0.695
The decisions made by the organisation should be communicated to all stakeholders	4.405	0.773
Strategic stakeholder's engagement enhances organisational performance	4.241	0.644
Aggregate	4.179	0.718

4.2. Effect of Performance of County Government of TransNzoia in Kenya.

The objective was to assess the effect of on performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. The reliability for performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to the effect of on performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. The reliability for performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. A 5 point Likert scale was used where 1 symbolized strongly disagree, 2 symbolized disagree, 3 symbolized neutral, 4 symbolized agree and 5 symbolized strongly agree. The results were as presented in table 4.2.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the success of any organisation is measured by its ability to achieve set goals and objectives. This is supported by a mean of 4.261 (std. dv = 0.957). In addition, as shown by a mean of 3.958 (std. dv = 0.802), the respondents agreed that performance of the county government is attained when an organization efficiently and effectively achieves its objectives, surpassing its competitors in the process. The respondents further agreed that customer satisfaction, should be exercised in the organisation. This is shown by a mean of 3.803 (std. dv = 0.752). The respondents also agreed that the organisation should minimize its costs for proper management. This is shown by a mean of 3.792 (std. dv = 0.843). With a mean of 3.743 (std. dv = 0.925), the respondents agreed that strategic management clarity enhances performance. The respondent also agreed that The organisation should have clear and precise goals, vision as well as stakeholders engagement and on communication. This is shown by a mean of 3.761 (std. dv = 0.901).

Table 4.2. Effect of Performance of County Government of TransNzoia in Kenya

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The success of any organisation is measured by its ability to achieve set goals and objectives	4.261	0.957
Performance of the county government is attained when an organization efficiently and effectively achieves its objectives, surpassing its competitors in the process	3.958	0.802
Customer satisfaction, should be exercised in the organisation	3.803	0.752
The organisation should minimize its costs for proper management	3.792	0.843
Strategic management clarity enhances performance.	3.543	0.925
The organisation should have clear and precise goals, vision as well as stakeholders engagement and on communication	3.761	0.901
Aggregate	3.853	0.863

4.3 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics in the current study focused on correlation and regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength of the relationship while regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between dependent variable (performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya) and the independent variable (stakeholder engagement clarity).

4.3.1 Correlation Analysis

The present study used Pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength of association between independent variables (stakeholder engagement clarity) and the dependent variable (performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya) dependent variable. Pearson correlation coefficient range between zero and one, where by the strength of association increase with increase in the value of the correlation coefficients. The current study employed Taylor (2018) correlation coefficient ratings where by 0.80 to 1.00 depicts a very strong relationship, 0.60 to 0.79 depicts strong, 0.40 to 0.59 depicts moderate, 0.20 to 0.39 depicts weak.

Table 4.3: Correlation Coefficients

		Performance of County government		Strategic stakeholder clarity	
Performance of County government	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	60			
Strategic stakeholder clarity	Pearson Correlation	.872**		1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	60		60	

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

Results from table 4.3 revealed that there is a very strong relationship between strategic stakeholder clarity and performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya ($r = 0.872$, p value = 0.000). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05 (significant level).

4.3.2 Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between independent variables (strategic stakeholder engagement clarity) and the dependent variable (performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya).

Table 4.4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.921	.766	.733	2.128

a. Predictors: (Constant), strategic stakeholder engagement clarity.

The model summary was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The r -squared for the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was 0.766. This implied that 76.6% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya) could be explained by independent variables (strategic stakeholder engagement clarity).

Table 4.5: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	111.326	1	37.311	54.927	.001 ^b
1 Residual	10.237	59	.070		
Total	121.553	60			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya

b. Predictors: (Constant), strategic stakeholder engagement clarity

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 54.927 while the F critical was 2.044. The p value was 0.000. Since the F -calculated was greater than the F -critical and the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05, the model was considered as a good fit for the data. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of strategic stakeholder engagement clarity on performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya.

Table 4.6: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	.675	.108		5.582	.000
	Strategic Stakeholder Clarity	.782	.227	3.275	3.381	.000

a Dependent Variable: Performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya

Table 4.6 showed that if strategic stakeholder engagement clarity are all held constant, performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya would be at 0.675.

Performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya = 0.675 + 0.782 (strategic stakeholder engagement clarity).

The regression model was as follows:

$$Y = 0.675 + 0.782X_3 + \varepsilon$$

According to the results, strategic stakeholder engagement clarity has significant effect on performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya ($\beta_1=0.782$, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.002 was less than the significant level of 0.05.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the findings, the study concluded that strategic stakeholder engagement clarity has significant effect on performance of County government of TransNzoia in Kenya. The study recommended that the county government should have procedural charts for all major stakeholder engagement and orient them on new processes before rolling out. The strategic decisions made by the organisation should be communicated to all stakeholders.

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