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Bernard Bemo Mogesa, Dr. Michael Ngala & Dr. Ole Mapelu Zakayo

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Responsible Leadership and Performance of Constitutional Commissions in Kenya

[*1]Bernard Bemo Mogesa, [2]Dr. Michael Ngala & [3]Dr. Ole Mapelu Zakayo

[1]Doctoral Candidate, School of Management and Leadership, Management University of Africa

[2,3]Lecturer, School of Management and Leadership, Management University of Africa

***Email of Corresponding Author: mogesa53@gmail.com**

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Abstract

Constitutional commissions in Kenya have recorded progressive performance improvement, with aggregate evaluation scores rising from 40.6% in 2019/2020 to 57.4% in 2023/2024, yet performance remained moderate and uneven across important constitutional and organizational dimensions. This article examined the relationship between responsible leadership and performance of constitutional commissions in Kenya. The study was principally anchored on Stakeholder Engagement Theory and complemented by Transformational Leadership Theory to explain how stakeholder-oriented, ethical and strategically directed leadership may relate to institutional outcomes. Responsible leadership was operationalized through consistency, strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability, while performance was assessed through employee motivation, financial performance, adaptability, service delivery and mandate fulfilment. The study adopted a pragmatic philosophy and an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. A census of 117 strategically relevant senior office holders across 13 constitutional commissions was undertaken, yielding 103 usable questionnaires, equivalent to an 88.0% response rate. Eleven key informant interviews and secondary institutional records covering 2019/2020 to 2023/2024 complemented the survey evidence. Quantitative analysis was conducted in SPSS version 28 using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression, while qualitative evidence was used to explain the statistical patterns. Responsible leadership was strongly and positively associated with performance ($r = .685$, $p < .001$). The regression model was statistically significant ($R^2 = .361$, $F(4,98) = 13.818$, $p < .001$), indicating that the reported responsible leadership dimensions explained 36.1% of variation in performance. Transparency had the strongest standardized association with performance ($B = .130$, $\beta = .385$, $p < .001$), followed by accountability ($B = .111$, $\beta = .286$, $p = .001$), stakeholder engagement ($B = .114$, $\beta = .242$, $p = .004$), and strategic direction ($B = .117$, $\beta = .239$, $p = .006$). Qualitative evidence emphasized constitutional alignment, ethical firmness and openness in decision making, while secondary evidence showed continued performance improvement alongside persistent weaknesses in public participation and mandate fulfilment. The null hypothesis was rejected. The study concludes that responsible leadership is an important but insufficient correlate of constitutional commission performance and recommends stronger transparency, enforceable accountability, strategic clarity and meaningful stakeholder engagement within commission leadership practice.

Keywords: *Responsible Leadership, Constitutional Commissions, Organizational Performance, Transparency, Accountability, Kenya*

1.0 Background to the Study

Governance institutions translate constitutional principles, legislation and public policy into administrative and organizational action, making their effectiveness central to democratic accountability and public value creation (Regilme et al., 2023). In public institutions, performance cannot be understood solely through formal structures because leadership behaviour, organizational governance and the institutional environment influence how mandates are interpreted and implemented (Boyce & McDonald-Kerr, 2021). This makes leadership especially consequential in institutions that exercise public authority while remaining answerable to citizens and other constitutional actors. Responsible leadership has developed as a stakeholder-oriented approach that combines organizational effectiveness with ethical responsibility, accountability and responsiveness to parties affected by institutional decisions (Waldman et al., 2020). Voegtlin et al. (2020) conceptualized responsible leadership around relationships with multiple stakeholders and responsibility for the consequences of organizational decisions. Maak and Pless (2006) similarly emphasized the relational character of responsible leadership, arguing that leaders operate within networks of stakeholders rather than through hierarchical authority alone.

Recent empirical evidence indicates that responsible leadership is associated with a range of organizational outcomes, although the pathways are often indirect and context dependent. He et al. (2024) found that responsible leadership reduced deceptive knowledge hiding through moral reflectiveness, while Huo et al. (2024) linked responsible leadership with sustainable performance through motivational and contextual mechanisms. Lin et al. (2020) likewise showed that responsible leadership was associated with job performance through work engagement and helping initiatives. These studies indicate that responsible leadership should be examined empirically rather than treated as inherently performance enhancing. African evidence is comparatively less extensive but shows that responsible leadership must be interpreted within public institutional conditions. Jonck (2024) identified normative, relational and operational elements of responsible leadership in the South African public sector, emphasizing that accountability to internal and external stakeholders is central to public leadership. The relevance of constitutional and institutional context is also emphasized by Durant (2022), who argued that responsible leadership in constitutional environments must remain grounded in ethics, rights and public accountability rather than be reduced to generic managerial effectiveness.

In Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya 2010 substantially reorganized the governance architecture by establishing and strengthening constitutional commissions with specialized mandates and protected institutional independence. Article 249 provides that commissions are subject only to the Constitution and the law and are independent in the exercise of their functions, while Article 232 simultaneously requires professional ethics, efficient resource use, responsive service delivery, accountability, transparency and public participation (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Constitutional commissions therefore operate within a distinctive tension between institutional autonomy and extensive public accountability. Performance evidence shows improvement rather than continuous deterioration. Aggregate constitutional commission performance rose from 40.6% in 2019/2020 to 43.2% in 2020/2021, 45.1% in 2021/2022, 53.62% in 2022/2023 and 57.4% in 2023/2024 (Public Service Commission, 2023). Service delivery, governance and accountability, and professional ethics improved over the same period, but public participation reached only 18.3% in 2023/2024, indicating that progress remained uneven across constitutional obligations (Public Service Commission, 2023). The practical question is therefore not whether commissions improved, but why improvement remained moderate and why important dimensions continued to lag.

Responsible leadership provides one plausible explanation because commission leaders influence strategic direction, transparency, accountability, stakeholder relationships and organizational priorities. Kenyan studies have established significant leadership-performance relationships in universities and commercial banks, but these institutions differ from constitutional commissions in mandate, accountability and independence arrangements (Rubera et al., 2022; Mwangi et al., 2022). Evidence focused directly on independent constitutional commissions remains limited, although Githu and Minja (2025) show that governance arrangements are relevant to performance within this institutional category. The present article therefore isolates the responsible leadership-performance relationship while recognizing that governance and policy conditions form part of the broader institutional context.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Constitutional commissions were established to protect constitutionalism, democratic values, rights, accountability and institutional checks and balances, yet aggregate performance remained moderate despite progressive improvement. Overall performance increased by 16.8 percentage points between 2019/2020 and 2023/2024, but the 57.4% score in 2023/2024 indicates substantial room for improvement in the attainment of institutional expectations (Public Service Commission, 2023). Public participation remained particularly weak at 18.3%, demonstrating that formal constitutional obligations do not automatically translate into strong implementation (Public Service Commission, 2023). Existing leadership research provides useful evidence but leaves an important contextual gap. Voegtlin et al. (2020) linked responsible leadership with leadership effectiveness, stakeholder evaluations and employee engagement, while He et al. (2024) and Huo et al. (2024) demonstrated that responsible leadership can be associated with organizational outcomes through moral, motivational and contextual processes. Kenyan studies have concentrated on universities, banks and other organizational forms rather than constitutionally independent commissions (Rubera et al., 2022; Mwangi et al., 2022).

The remaining empirical question concerns whether responsible leadership is significantly associated with the multidimensional performance of constitutional commissions operating under constitutionally protected independence, multiple accountability relationships and politically sensitive mandates. This article addresses that gap by examining responsible leadership through consistency, strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability and relating these dimensions to employee motivation, financial performance, adaptability, service delivery and mandate fulfilment.

1.2 Research Objective

The specific objective of this article was to establish the relationship between responsible leadership and performance of constitutional commissions in Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between responsible leadership and performance of constitutional commissions in Kenya.

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2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The article is principally anchored on Stakeholder Engagement Theory, advanced by Freeman (1984), because responsible leadership is fundamentally concerned with how leaders recognize, balance and respond to legitimate stakeholder interests. The theory expands organizational analysis beyond narrow shareholder or hierarchical perspectives by recognizing that organizational decisions affect multiple constituencies whose support, cooperation and legitimacy matter for institutional effectiveness (Freeman, 1984; Clarkson, 1995). Stakeholder Engagement Theory is particularly applicable to constitutional commissions because citizens, Parliament, employees, courts, civil society organizations, oversight institutions and other state actors hold legitimate interests in commission decisions. Genuine stakeholder engagement can improve information quality, strengthen legitimacy, improve implementation and enhance responsiveness, although competing stakeholder demands may also create decision costs and institutional tension (Yang & Pandey, 2011). The theory therefore supports the expectation that stakeholder-oriented responsible leadership may be associated with institutional performance, but it does not imply that every stakeholder demand should be accommodated irrespective of constitutional mandate.

Transformational Leadership Theory complements the stakeholder perspective by explaining strategic direction, motivational influence and organizational adaptation. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) argued that transformational leaders articulate purpose, model desired values and stimulate commitment beyond routine compliance. This is relevant to constitutional commissions because broad constitutional mandates require translation into operational goals, staff commitment and adaptive organizational responses. However, transformational leadership alone is insufficient because constitutionally independent institutions cannot legitimately depend on individual charisma or vision at the expense of accountability and procedural safeguards. The two perspectives are therefore complementary. Stakeholder Engagement Theory explains to whom leaders are responsible and why transparency, engagement and accountability matter, while Transformational Leadership Theory explains how strategic direction and value-based influence can mobilize organizational effort. The article uses these theories to interpret the relationship between responsible leadership and performance without assuming that positive outcomes are automatic or causal.

2.2 Responsible Leadership

Responsible leadership refers to the ethical, transparent and stakeholder-oriented exercise of leadership authority while remaining answerable for organizational decisions and consequences (Waldman et al., 2020). Voegtlin et al. (2020) emphasize multiple stakeholder claims and leadership responsibility, while Maak and Pless (2006) emphasize relational accountability and responsible decision making. In the present study, the construct was operationalized through consistency, strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability. Consistency captures whether leaders accept responsibility for their decisions and whether organizational values are applied reliably rather than selectively. Stable value-based leadership can create predictable behavioural expectations and strengthen organizational trust, although consistency should not be confused with rigidity where institutional adaptation is required (Denison, 1990). Strategic direction captures the ability to articulate a clear institutional future and set ambitious but realistic objectives. In constitutional commissions, strategic direction is important because broad constitutional responsibilities must be translated into operational priorities that guide resource allocation and performance assessment.

Stakeholder engagement concerns meaningful inclusion of relevant actors in organizational planning and decision processes. Maak (2007) argued that stakeholder engagement can generate relational capital and legitimacy, while Yang and Pandey (2011) showed that citizen involvement can improve public outcomes under appropriate institutional conditions. Within constitutional commissions, stakeholder engagement is particularly relevant because the institutions exercise public authority and are expected to remain responsive without compromising their constitutional independence. Transparency concerns openness in information sharing and visibility of decision processes. Bal Taştan and Mousavi Davoudi (2019) linked relational transparency with the ethical climate surrounding socially responsible leadership, indicating that openness can influence how leadership is evaluated and trusted. Accountability concerns answerability for decisions and the existence of mechanisms through which leaders can be held responsible for conduct and performance (Waldman et al., 2020). These dimensions are conceptually related but distinct: transparency makes actions visible, while accountability concerns the consequences and answerability attached to those actions.

2.3 Performance of Constitutional Commissions

Performance of constitutional commissions is multidimensional because these institutions do not exist primarily to generate profit. Public institutional performance must incorporate organizational capability, stewardship of public resources, responsiveness to stakeholders and achievement of statutory or constitutional responsibilities (Boyce & McDonald-Kerr, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2023). The study therefore measured performance through employee motivation, financial performance, adaptability, service delivery and mandate fulfilment. Employee motivation represents the internal human capacity through which commission mandates are implemented. Financial performance reflects budget utilization and responsible stewardship of public funds, while adaptability reflects the capacity to modify work methods in response to legal, technological, fiscal or social change. Service delivery assesses accessibility and timeliness of public-facing outputs, whereas mandate fulfilment captures the achievement of strategic objectives and substantive constitutional responsibilities (Public Service Commission, 2023). The multidimensional approach avoids equating institutional effectiveness with one outcome. A commission may absorb its budget effectively but still perform poorly if citizens cannot access services or if the constitutional mandate is not fulfilled. Conversely, strong employee motivation cannot compensate for weak accountability or inadequate mandate delivery. The five dimensions therefore provide a broader assessment of public institutional performance than a single financial or output indicator.

2.4 Responsible Leadership and Performance of Constitutional Commissions

Empirical evidence generally supports a positive relationship between responsible leadership and organizational outcomes, but the literature also shows that the relationship is context dependent. Voegtlin et al. (2020) reported favourable relationships between responsible leadership, employee engagement, stakeholder evaluation and leader effectiveness. Lin et al. (2020) found that work engagement and helping initiatives transmitted responsible leadership effects to job performance, indicating that leadership-performance relationships may operate through intermediate processes rather than direct influence alone. More recent studies reinforce this complexity. He et al. (2024) found that responsible leadership reduced deceptive knowledge hiding through moral reflectiveness, while Huo et al. (2024) associated responsible leadership with sustainable performance through epistemic motivation under varying climate conditions. Khanam et al. (2025) similarly found that ethical climate partly mediated the relationship between responsible leadership and employee sustainable performance. These findings converge on the importance of responsible leadership but differ in the organizational mechanisms and outcomes examined.

African public-sector evidence remains comparatively limited. Jonck (2024) found that responsible leadership in the South African public sector possesses distinct normative, relational and operational characteristics, indicating that public institutional responsibility cannot be reduced to corporate leadership constructs. Durant (2022) likewise emphasized constitutional ethics, rights and accountability as important foundations of responsible leadership in public constitutional settings. These perspectives strengthen the case for contextual testing within constitutional commissions rather than transferring private-sector findings uncritically. Kenyan empirical work has established that leadership is associated with organizational performance across several sectors. Rubera et al. (2022) reported a significant relationship between leadership practices and performance among chartered universities, while Mwangi et al. (2022) found significant leadership effects within commercial banks. However, universities and banks operate under accountability and performance arrangements that differ from constitutional commissions. Githu and Minja (2025) provide more direct institutional proximity by examining governance and performance within independent constitutional commissions, but responsible leadership as a multidimensional construct remains insufficiently isolated within that literature. The unresolved empirical gap therefore concerns the magnitude and composition of the responsible leadership-performance relationship within Kenya's constitutional commissions. The literature supports the relevance of leadership but does not establish whether consistency, strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability have equivalent importance under constitutional independence and public accountability conditions. The present study addresses this gap by testing the relationship within the complete institutional category targeted by the thesis.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy and an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Quantitative data provided the principal test of the responsible leadership-performance relationship, while qualitative interviews and secondary institutional records provided explanatory and contextual evidence. The unit of analysis was the constitutional commission, while senior office holders constituted the unit of observation because they possessed strategic knowledge of leadership, governance, policy implementation and organizational performance. The study targeted 117 strategically relevant office holders across 13 constitutional commissions. The census frame comprised nine designated positions per commission: the chairperson, vice-chairperson, chief executive officer and six directors responsible for strategically relevant functional areas. All 117 eligible office holders were approached through a census rather than a probability sample, and 103 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding an 88.0% response rate. Eleven key informant interviews were conducted separately with purposively selected senior leaders who had sufficient institutional tenure to provide contextual explanation.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Responsible leadership comprised ten items distributed across consistency, strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability, with two items for each dimension. Performance also comprised ten items distributed across employee motivation, financial performance, adaptability, service delivery and mandate fulfilment. The pilot reliability coefficients were .842 for responsible leadership and .804

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for performance, both exceeding the .70 threshold applied in the study. Face and content validity were assessed through supervisor and practitioner review, and pilot feedback was used to improve clarity and contextual relevance. The final thesis also reports exploratory factor analysis as part of construct assessment, although the small pilot size limits the strength of factor-analytic inference. Accordingly, the present article treats the factor evidence cautiously and relies primarily on the theoretically specified dimensions, reliability evidence, and consistency of the observed relationships with qualitative and secondary data.

Secondary data were obtained from Public Service Commission evaluation reports, commission annual reports, Office of the Auditor-General reports and budget documents covering 2019/2020 to 2023/2024. Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28. Descriptive statistics summarized the study variables, Pearson correlation assessed the bivariate association between responsible leadership and performance, and multiple regression assessed the reported dimension-level relationships with performance. Qualitative interview data were analysed thematically and integrated at the interpretation stage. Because the primary survey was cross-sectional, the results are interpreted as associations rather than definitive causal effects.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Response Profile

The study obtained 103 usable questionnaires from the 117 eligible respondents, representing an 88.0% response rate. Men constituted 66.0% of respondents and women 34.0%. Most respondents were aged 41-50 years (55.3%), while 29.1% were aged 51 years and above and 15.5% were aged 31-40 years. Directors constituted 69.9% of respondents, vice-chairpersons 11.7%, chairpersons 9.7% and chief executive officers 8.7%. Importantly, 85.4% of respondents had served in constitutional commissions for four years or more, providing a substantial base of institutional experience for assessing leadership and performance patterns.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Responsible Leadership

The final thesis reported a composite responsible leadership score of M = 3.52 (SD = 1.13), indicating moderate overall perceptions of responsible leadership. Item-level results nevertheless showed substantial variation across dimensions. Consistency was the strongest descriptive dimension, while transparency and accountability were comparatively weaker and more variable. Table 1 presents the item-level results used in the study.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Responsible Leadership

Statement	M	SD
Consistency: Leaders take responsibility for their decisions	4.14	0.54
Consistency: Leaders are held accountable when they violate organizational core values	3.75	0.81
Strategic direction: The commission has a clear vision for the future	3.70	0.86
Strategic direction: Leaders set goals that are ambitious but realistic	3.68	1.08
Stakeholder engagement: The commission has a stakeholder engagement plan	3.71	1.19
Stakeholder engagement: Business planning involves diverse stakeholders	3.63	1.34
Transparency: Leaders openly share information with stakeholders	3.49	1.46
Transparency: Decision-making processes are transparent	3.29	1.38
Accountability: Leaders are accountable for their actions	3.12	1.25
Accountability: There are clear mechanisms for holding leaders accountable	3.48	1.31

The strongest item was leaders taking responsibility for their decisions (M = 4.14, SD = .54), suggesting broad agreement that formal responsibility is generally accepted. However, actual accountability was less favourably assessed, with 'leaders are accountable for their actions' recording M = 3.12 (SD = 1.25). The distinction suggests that accepting formal responsibility and experiencing enforceable accountability are not equivalent. This aligns with the broader responsible leadership argument that answerability requires both individual conduct and functional institutional mechanisms (Waldman et al., 2020). Transparency was also relatively weak. Decision-making transparency recorded M = 3.29 (SD = 1.38), while open information sharing recorded M = 3.49 (SD = 1.46). The high dispersion indicates substantial differences across commissions and may reflect variation in mandate sensitivity, public scrutiny and organizational practice. Within constitutional bodies, transparency can be especially important because public legitimacy depends partly on whether stakeholders can understand how authority is exercised (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Performance of Constitutional Commissions

Performance recorded an overall composite mean of M = 3.44 (SD = 1.13), which is consistent with the secondary evidence showing moderate but improving institutional performance. Table 2 presents the item-level descriptive results across the five performance dimensions.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Performance of Constitutional Commissions

Statement	M	SD
Employee motivation: Work is completed accurately and within deadlines	3.44	1.23
Employee motivation: There is a compensation system for exceptional performance	3.32	1.12
Financial performance: Budget absorption rate is above 90%	3.50	0.97
Financial performance: The commission operates within allocated budget	3.41	1.19
Adaptability: The commission encourages flexible work methods	3.56	1.11
Adaptability: The commission adopts improved ways of working	3.45	1.15
Service delivery: Services are accessible to the public	3.37	1.09
Service delivery: Services are delivered within set timelines	3.56	0.99
Mandate fulfilment: The commission achieves its annual strategic objectives	3.59	1.13
Mandate fulfilment: Constitutional mandates are fulfilled effectively	3.19	1.26

The weakest performance item was effective fulfilment of constitutional mandates (M = 3.19, SD = 1.26), whereas achievement of annual strategic objectives was rated more favourably (M = 3.59, SD = 1.13). This gap suggests that internal target attainment may be easier to demonstrate than complete fulfilment of broad constitutional responsibilities. Service accessibility was also relatively modest (M = 3.37, SD = 1.09), indicating that improved institutional performance must be assessed not only through internal targets but also through citizen-facing outcomes.

4.4 Correlation between Responsible Leadership and Performance

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to establish the bivariate relationship between responsible leadership and performance. The results are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3: Correlation between Responsible Leadership and Performance

Variable	Performance	Responsible Leadership
Performance	1.000	.685**
Responsible Leadership	.685**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	103	103

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). Source: Field Data (2026).

Responsible leadership demonstrated a strong positive association with performance ($r = .685$, $p < .001$). The result indicates that commissions reporting stronger responsible leadership also tended to report stronger institutional performance. The association is substantively important but should not be interpreted as proof that leadership changes necessarily caused performance changes because the survey captured the variables during one main data collection period.

4.5 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to assess the dimension-level responsible leadership model and test H_{01}. The final tabulated thesis output reports strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability as predictors in the fitted model. Consistency remained part of the responsible leadership measurement and descriptive analysis, but it is not displayed as a separate row in the final tabulated regression output; the present article therefore reproduces the tabulated model rather than reconstructing an unsupported coefficient table.

Table 4: Regression Model Summary for Responsible Leadership and Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.601	.361	.335	.25111

Predictors: Strategic Direction, Stakeholder Engagement, Transparency and Accountability. Source: Field Data (2026).

Table 5: ANOVA for Responsible Leadership and Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.485	4	.871	13.818	.000
Residual	6.179	98	.063		
Total	9.665	102			

Dependent Variable: Performance. Source: Field Data (2026).

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Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.797	.243		7.384	.000
Strategic Direction	.117	.042	.239	2.794	.006
Stakeholder Engagement	.114	.039	.242	2.940	.004
Transparency	.130	.029	.385	4.482	.000
Accountability	.111	.032	.286	3.421	.001

Dependent Variable: Performance. Source: Field Data (2026).

The model was statistically significant, $F(4, 98) = 13.818$, $p < .001$, with $R^2 = .361$. The model therefore explained 36.1% of the observed variance in performance. This represents meaningful explanatory power while simultaneously indicating that a substantial proportion of performance variation is associated with factors outside the article's direct model, including governance practices, policy environment, resource conditions and other institutional characteristics. Transparency had the strongest standardized coefficient ($B = .130$, $\beta = .385$, $p < .001$). This finding is particularly important because transparency was one of the weaker descriptive dimensions. The combination of comparatively weak mean scores and a strong performance association suggests that openness in information sharing and decision processes represents a strategically important area for commission leadership. The result is consistent with the stakeholder perspective because transparent information allows citizens and other stakeholders to understand, evaluate and respond to institutional decisions (Freeman, 1984).

Accountability was also significant ($B = .111$, $\beta = .286$, $p = .001$). The result indicates that commissions in which leadership answerability is stronger also report better performance. The finding is especially salient because the descriptive evidence distinguished the existence of accountability mechanisms from actual accountability in practice. Formal accountability structures therefore appear insufficient unless leadership behaviour and enforcement mechanisms make answerability consequential. Stakeholder engagement was positively associated with performance ($B = .114$, $\beta = .242$, $p = .004$). This supports the core proposition of Stakeholder Engagement Theory that organizational effectiveness benefits from productive relationships with affected constituencies (Freeman, 1984). The effect should nevertheless be interpreted within constitutional boundaries because commissions may face competing stakeholder demands and cannot define performance simply as stakeholder satisfaction. Meaningful engagement must therefore improve information, legitimacy and implementation without displacing the constitutional mandate.

Strategic direction was similarly significant ($B = .117$, $\beta = .239$, $p = .006$). The finding is consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory because clear vision and realistic organizational goals help convert broad institutional purposes into coordinated action (Bass, 1985). In constitutional commissions, strategic direction is particularly relevant where complex mandates must be translated into annual priorities, performance targets and resource decisions. Based on the statistically significant model and predictor coefficients, H_{01} was rejected. The evidence supports a statistically significant positive relationship between responsible leadership and performance of constitutional commissions in Kenya. The conclusion remains associational rather than causal because the primary quantitative design was cross-sectional.

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4.6 Integrated Interpretation of Quantitative, Qualitative and Secondary Evidence

The qualitative evidence deepens the interpretation of the statistical relationship. Senior respondents described responsible leadership in constitutional commissions as being constitutionally grounded, ethically firm, transparent and evidence based. One respondent characterized responsible leadership as being 'careful, transparent, and making decisions that align with the Constitution,' while another emphasized the need to resist political interference while remaining accountable to the public. These observations suggest that responsible leadership in constitutional commissions is evaluated against constitutional legitimacy as well as managerial competence. The prominence of transparency in the regression results can therefore be understood contextually. Constitutional commissions operate under intense public, parliamentary, judicial, civil society and media scrutiny. Transparency reduces information asymmetry and enables stakeholders to evaluate whether commissions are exercising protected independence in the public interest. This may explain why transparency was more strongly associated with performance than stakeholder engagement, even though stakeholder engagement occupies a central position in responsible leadership literature (Voegtlin et al., 2020).

Secondary evidence provides a further point of triangulation. Aggregate performance improved from 40.6% in 2019/2020 to 57.4% in 2023/2024, while service delivery, governance and accountability, and professional ethics also improved (Public Service Commission, 2023). However, public participation remained substantially weaker and reached only 18.3% in 2023/2024. The pattern suggests that leadership improvements may coexist with institutional constraints and implementation weaknesses, reinforcing the conclusion that responsible leadership is important but cannot independently explain all performance variation. The findings also reveal a distinction between formal arrangements and behavioural implementation. Respondents were relatively positive about leaders taking responsibility for decisions, yet actual leader accountability was rated less favourably. Likewise, strategic objectives were rated more favourably than full constitutional mandate fulfilment. This pattern indicates that constitutional commission performance depends not only on formal rules, plans and structures but also on whether leadership behaviours consistently activate them in practice. The article therefore contributes a context-specific insight: within Kenyan constitutional commissions, transparency appears to be a particularly important responsible leadership attribute.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that responsible leadership is strongly and positively associated with the performance of constitutional commissions in Kenya. The null hypothesis was rejected. The reported regression model explained 36.1% of performance variation, showing that leadership constitutes a meaningful part of the performance explanation while leaving substantial variation attributable to other organizational and institutional factors. Transparency emerged as the strongest standardized predictor among the tabulated responsible leadership dimensions. This result is practically significant because transparency was also comparatively weak descriptively, indicating a substantial improvement opportunity. Accountability, stakeholder engagement and strategic direction were also significantly associated with performance, demonstrating that responsible leadership in constitutional commissions combines openness, answerability, relational engagement and strategic clarity.

The broader meaning of the findings is that constitutional independence alone does not guarantee institutional effectiveness. Leadership determines how protected authority is exercised, how openly decisions are communicated, how stakeholders are engaged and how accountability is experienced. However, the cross-sectional design means that the findings should be understood as statistical relationships rather than definitive evidence of temporal causation. The article therefore concludes that responsible leadership is a foundational but insufficient condition for stronger constitutional commission performance. Sustainable performance improvement requires responsible leadership to be embedded within effective governance processes, adequate institutional capacity and enabling policy conditions, even though those additional relationships fall outside the direct hypothesis examined in this article.

6.0 Recommendations

Constitutional commissions should prioritize transparent decision making because transparency displayed the strongest standardized relationship with performance. Commission leadership should establish clear disclosure protocols for major institutional decisions, publish understandable decision rationales where legally permissible, improve access to performance information and ensure that stakeholder communication is timely and accurate. Accountability should move from formal mechanisms to demonstrable enforcement. Chairpersons, chief executive officers and senior managers should link leadership performance evaluation to mandate achievement, resource stewardship, ethical conduct and implementation of corrective actions. Internal audit, compliance, performance management and disciplinary mechanisms should be treated as functional accountability systems rather than procedural requirements.

Strategic direction should be strengthened by translating constitutional mandates into specific, measurable and realistic institutional priorities. Senior leadership should communicate strategic priorities across organizational levels and ensure that annual performance targets remain traceable to the constitutional and statutory mandate rather than being treated as isolated administrative outputs. Stakeholder engagement should become more meaningful and evidence based. Constitutional commissions should maintain stakeholder maps and engagement plans, use accessible participation channels and provide feedback showing how stakeholder submissions were considered. This is especially important given the weak public participation trend identified in the secondary evidence. Leadership development should cover the five responsible leadership dimensions used in the study: consistency, strategic direction, stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability. Such development should be tailored to the constitutional commission context and should emphasize the balance between institutional independence and public accountability rather than importing private-sector leadership models without adaptation.

Future research should also investigate organizational culture, political interference, resource adequacy, employee commitment and institutional autonomy as additional mechanisms or boundary conditions. Such studies would help explain the substantial proportion of performance variance not accounted for by the responsible leadership model in this article.

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