LEVERAGING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FOR ENHANCED PERFORMANCE: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions constitute a crucial pillar in Kenya's economic advancement by cultivating industry-oriented skills and competencies that promote innovation and employment creation. However, many institutions still experience persistent challenges such as limited apprenticeship opportunities, inadequate practical training infrastructure, and weak collaboration with industry partners. In addition, outdated curricula, skill mismatches, and congestion in workshops and classrooms continue to undermine the effectiveness of training delivery. The present study sought to determine how strategic leadership influences institutional performance among TVET institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya, with particular focus on the role of strategic direction. The investigation was guided by the Upper Echelon Theory, Resource-Based View, and Dynamic Capabilities Framework. An explanatory research design was employed, targeting 2,082 staff members drawn from senior, middle, and junior management across 25 TVET institutions within the county. A stratified proportional sampling approach yielded a representative sample of 336 respondents. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire whose validity and reliability were verified through expert review and pilot testing. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, and results were presented in tabular and graphical formats to enhance clarity. The findings revealed that strategic direction had a statistically significant effect on institutional performance. The study recommends that management should formulate policies that strengthen leadership competencies, promote continuous environmental analysis, and foster responsiveness to policy shifts, technological trends, and labor market dynamics to enhance both academic and administrative performance outcomes.

Keywords: Strategic Direction, Strategic Leadership, Institutional Performance, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Nairobi City County.

INTRODUCTION

Performance has increasingly emerged as a pivotal construct in educational research, particularly in the context of strategic leadership. For organizations across both public and private sectors, performance serves as a central indicator of governance quality, service delivery efficiency, competitive positioning, and long-term sustainability (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Within this framework, strategic leadership assumes a critical role in influencing performance through the articulation of clear vision, goal alignment, and informed decision-making that enhance institutional effectiveness (Nguyen, 2023). In the education sector, strategic leadership supports institutions in navigating complex operational environments, aligning resources with strategic goals, and fostering sustained performance outcomes (Mui, Basit & Hassan, 2021). Hence, the effectiveness of strategic leadership in setting direction, managing change, and ensuring organizational adaptability is directly linked to institutional success and the achievement of performance excellence.

Globally, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems have been recognized as key drivers of industrial competitiveness and workforce development. Germany's Vocational Education and Training (VET) model operates under a dual apprenticeship framework that integrates classroom learning with workplace experience, exposing learners to career pathways from an early age (Yang, Kaiser, Chen & Diao, 2023). Japan's National Colleges of Technology have built strong linkages with industry, particularly in robotics and artificial intelligence, cultivating a technically competent and innovative workforce (Rashed, 2024). In the United States, Community Colleges and Career Technical Education Programs align curricula with industry standards, bridging secondary and postsecondary education to promote employability (McBride, 2024). Likewise, Brazil's technical education model emphasizes large-scale industry-driven training under modular curricula, promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) integration and innovation (Camargo, Lima, Riva & Souza, 2018).

Across Africa, TVET systems are undergoing transformation to meet the demands of evolving labor markets and technological change (Gyimah, 2020). Rwanda's integration of digital technologies into training programs has enhanced graduates' adaptability and employability (UNESCO, 2023). In Tunisia, partnerships with German institutions have harmonized TVET curricula with global standards, improving graduate competitiveness (African Development Bank, 2023). Similarly, Morocco's *Maroc PME* initiative demonstrates how aligning TVET training with industry requirements fosters workforce readiness and economic growth. Nigeria and South Africa have also made significant progress in integrating digitization, entrepreneurship, and mechatronics within TVET curricula to promote innovation-driven employment (African Development Bank, 2023).

In Kenya, TVET institutions are integral to national socio-economic advancement as they furnish trainees with technical skills essential for economic productivity (Wahungu, Wawire & Kirimi, 2023). The Kenya Vision 2030 and the Constitution of Kenya (2010) underscore TVET's role in achieving industrial growth through human capital development. The enactment of the TVET Authority (TVETA) Act of 2013 and the subsequent 2015 regulations sought to enhance governance, quality assurance, and institutional performance (Mwancha, 2023). Despite these reforms, recent reports indicate that TVET performance remains below expectations in areas such as curriculum alignment, infrastructure adequacy, and industry partnership (TVETA, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2023).

Within this context, performance challenges persist among TVET institutions in Nairobi City County, where issues of curriculum relevance, graduate employability, and infrastructural limitations continue to hinder service delivery and operational efficiency. Addressing these concerns requires effective strategic direction a leadership strategy that refers to a process undertaken by an organization to determine what kind of image and character it would like to display in the future (Lerai, Rintari, & Muguche, 2019). Strategic direction augments performance through improved decision-making, optimization of resources, competitive advantage, stakeholder engagement, and sustained growth (Hanson, Backhouse, Leaney, Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2021; Naburuki, Kiplagat, & Kipchumba, 2024). Therefore, strategic

direction emphasizes on strategic vision, strategic goals, and strategic direction of institutional resources with evolving industrial and policy landscapes. This study, therefore, seeks to determine the effect of strategic direction on the performance of TVET institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions play an essential role in Kenya's economic growth by equipping trainees with technical and entrepreneurial skills relevant to industry needs (Wahungu, Wawire & Kirimi, 2023). Despite their strategic significance, the overall performance of TVET institutions has not met national expectations, particularly in areas of industry partnership, curriculum responsiveness, and infrastructure adequacy (TVETA, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2023). The institutions continue to lag behind in adopting public–private partnerships, dual training models, international collaborations, and digital transformation (African Development Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Persistent misalignment between TVET curricula and industrial requirements has resulted in notable skill mismatches. Reports indicate an enrollment imbalance with a 7:1 ratio favoring STEM over non-STEM courses, leading to enterprises conducting 73.1% of in-house training to bridge competency gaps (KICD, 2020; TVET CDACC, 2021; FKE, 2023). Furthermore, 82% of accredited TVET institutions report challenges in securing industrial attachments and apprenticeship opportunities for their trainees (NITA, 2021; TVETA, 2023). Infrastructure inadequacy also remains a key constraint, with many institutions operating with insufficient classrooms, workshops, and laboratories factors that limit the implementation of competency-based curricula and hands-on training (TVETA, 2023; National Treasury and Planning, 2022). Existing empirical studies have explored strategic leadership and performance in educational settings, but significant contextual and methodological gaps remain. UNESCO (2022) examined school leadership in fostering systemic educational reform across developed economies, where TVET systems are technologically advanced and well-industrialized. However, these findings cannot be generalized to less industrialized nations such as Kenya due to differing institutional and environmental dynamics. Similarly, Mazibuko (2022) analyzed strategic leadership in public vocational colleges in South Africa using a qualitative approach confined to a single region, limiting generalizability and excluding quantitative measures of key performance indicators such as industry partnership and infrastructure adequacy.

In Kenya, Maina and Muathe (2023) explored TVET revitalization through strategic interventions including staffing, knowledge management, and innovation but did not explicitly assess strategic leadership dimensions. Consequently, despite the growing recognition of strategic leadership as a driver of institutional performance, limited empirical evidence exists on how strategic direction specifically influences the performance of TVET institutions in Nairobi City County. This study therefore sought to determine the effect of strategic direction on performance of TVET institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Research Objective

The study sought to determine the effect of strategic direction on performance of TVETs in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this survey were:

H_o: *Strategic direction has no statistically significant effect on performance of TVETs in Nairobi City County, Kenya.*

H_a: *Strategic direction has a statistically significant effect on performance of TVETs in Nairobi City County, Kenya.*

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was anchored on the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Upper Echelon Theory and the Resource Based View Framework which collectively offered the theoretical basis for linking and explaining the research variables.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

This theoretical perspective originates from the contributions of Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997), who posited that an organization's strengths are rooted in its capacity to assimilate, develop, and restructure both internal and external competencies in response to a rapidly evolving environment. The process of ascertaining capabilities in an individual or an organization can be referred to as dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). They further suggested that these capabilities enable any organization to develop and preserve value which enhances differentiation points. Therefore these capabilities connote an organization's capacity in deploying resources that have already been thoroughly incorporated in achieving an anticipated goal.

Dynamic capabilities theory emphasizes managerial attributes, systems in management, and designs available in an organization that assist in keeping the organization alert in the face of future opportunities and threats (Bellner & MacLean, 2015). Furthermore, dynamic capabilities has been defined as precursor strategic and organizational practices by which managers and leaders modify their resources, acquiring and shedding resources, incorporating them together in producing new value which consequently creates strategies (Pitelis & Wagner, 2019). Dynamic capabilities therefore is relevant to this study as it justifies that it is neither knowledge base nor organizational resources, but rather it is intangible assets that matter most in organizations. Such as organizational values and culture, technological understanding, proper understanding of the organization, and intellectual property (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997).

This theory has several limitations as scholars (Lawson & Samson, 2001; Collis & Anand, 2019) argue that it is repetitive, deficient in clarity, and effectively may not outline how organizations should adapt to the ever-changing business environment. Researcher (Teece, 2007) indicates that because emergence of dynamic capabilities is from internal processes rather than external competitive factor markets, interpreting a lack of restriction on the number

of firms that are able to develop their own capabilities variation. Moreover, it has been suggested (Collis & Anand, 2019) that as organizations become more proficient in new market identification, strategic combinations, and resources they inevitably encounter competition from other organizations. According to Lawson and Samson (2001) the theory's capabilities are difficult to define and implement, and in some instances, they may cause a core capability to become a core rigidity. Ultimately, scholars conclude that dynamic capabilities theory remains challenging to apply in practice unless its specific capabilities are further refined, and clearly identified.

Eisenhardt & Martin (2000) further invested insights into dynamic capabilities theory by expanding its framework to explore how capabilities such as strategic direction, permit organizations to renovate competencies in achieving comparison with the ever-changing business environment. This theory has been applied in research studies in encompassing various contexts (M'mboga, Kinyua, & Kung'u, 2023; Legeny & Kinyua, 2023; Mbogo & Kinyua, 2023) for anchoring capabilities that support performance. Therefore this theory was used to anchor strategic leadership and performance as key variables in this study.

Upper Echelon Theory

Upper echelon theory is grounded on the underpinning that management at the topmost is a basis for decision-making, competitive advantage, and the general well-being of the organization. Hambrick and Mason (1984) postulated upper echelon theory suggesting that the level of leadership is directly influenced by expertise, knowledge, and experience. Overall performance for any organization is based on inherent leadership. Furthermore, Hambrick and Mason (1988) argued that a connection exists between leadership and the organization. Upper echelon theory opinions propose the indulgence of strategic leadership practices on organization performance. Menz (2012) further argued that linking organization performance and strategic leadership is vital as efforts by strategic leaders originate from decision-making, tasks and performance. Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2009) allied the concept of strategic leadership by forecasting environmental fluctuations while supporting individual-growth by enabling them.

Various assumptions revolve around upper echelon theory especially on its significant influence towards outcomes and strategic choices of an organization. This is due to the features of top executives revolving around their education, age and experiences in career (Edmondson, 2018). Accordingly, Fischer, Dietz and Antonakis (2024), criticize upper echelon theory use of apparent demographic features serving as reliable alternatives as values and cognitive frames for executives. Priem, Douglas, and Gregory (1999) criticized upper echelon theory as being centered demographically on top management, forfeiting construct validity, illuminating prescription, and power realism. Upper echelon theory has been used in previous studies (Kabii & Kinyua, 2023; Mwasiri & Muchiri, 2022; Ngiro & Osoro, 2024) in establishing the effects of strategic direction on performance. In this study, upper-echelon theory demonstrates that choices and outcomes of an organization are shaped significantly by the values, experiences and cognitive orientations of senior management, guiding therefore the overall strategic

direction of an organization (Wangrow, Schepker & Barker, 2015) as an input to augment performance in technical and vocational education and training institutions.

Resource Based View

The RBV stems from Edith Penrose's pivotal work on how specific firm-factors contribute to competitive advantage (Penrose, 1959). The RBV focuses on the need for organizations to record superior performance by remaining competitive, thus emphasizing the essential resources that should be upheld to attain this goal (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Various scholars over time have refined and expanded this theoretical review, providing deeper insights into its core assumptions (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Peteral & Barney, 2003). RBV central tenet asserts that performance variations arise from resource availability differences among organizations operating within the same sector (Barney & Hesterly, 2008). These resources can either be intangible or tangible, serving as valuable assets organizations leverage to develop and execute strategic initiatives in their respective environments.

The Resource-based view is built upon two key assumptions regarding capabilities and resources of a firm (Madhani, 2010). The first, resource heterogeneity, suggests that firms operating within the same industry own varying levels of intangible and tangible resources. The second, resource immobility, emphasizes that they are difficult to develop or transfer between firms (Barney 2007). These principles underscore ability of a firm to organize, utilize, and manage effectively its resources towards gaining a competitive edge and achieve superior performance as compared to its rivals (Barney, 2000; Kinyua, 2015). Competitive advantage and performance emanate from leveraging firm-specific assets that are too difficult to replicate and are immobile.

Resource-based view has encountered considerable criticism. One major critique is that it oversimplifies the existing relationship between firm capabilities, resources, and external factors in achievement of competitive advantage. Moreover, the model fails to adequately address the role of dynamic capabilities over time to sustain competitive advantage (Simon, Hitt & Ireland, 2007). Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) argue that RBV is centered overly on the internal resource base of the firm, ignoring the impact of external forces such as key stakeholders' relationships including regulators, suppliers, and customers on performance. Proposition of the resource dependence model addresses this limitation by integrating both internal and external factors to address performance. This model proposes that reliance of organizations on external shareholders for vital resources, their actions and decisions, affects an organization capacity significantly in achieving its objectives and generating value (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

According to Ouma, Kinyua and Muchemi (2022), in dynamic business environments, corporate success depends on the development and the application of tactics that set a company apart from its rivals. However, for a sustained creation of value and delivery, these strategies must be adaptable to ensure firm's alignment with evolving circumstances (Kamandi, Kinyua & Muchemi, 2021). The RBV emphasizes the significance of identifying and acquiring vital resources that enhance ability of an organization to establish a competitive edge, therefore

improving performance (Sund, Bogers, Villarroel & Foss, 2016). Resources deemed valuable, uncommon, hard to replicate, and non-replaceable enable businesses to set themselves apart from rivals and strategically shape their positioning (Madhani, 2010). The RBV model was relevant to the study anchoring performance as the dependent variable in this study.

Empirical Review

Ng'iroo and Osoro (2024) did a study in Pokot County Government on strategic direction and organizational performance. The study acknowledged that successful organizations have direction and purpose that define the goals and objectives. This investigation was grounded in Strategic Choice Theory and Upper Echelon Theory as its foundational frameworks. A descriptive research approach was adopted, utilizing standardized questionnaires to gather original data. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to evaluate the strength of the association between the research variables. The results showed a strong positive correlation between institutional performance and strategic direction. However, contextual gaps exist in this study in that it is limited to West Pokot County which might not be a representative of other Counties in Kenya. The study incorporated Pearson correlation which does not establish causation therefore difficult to distinguish between dependent and independent variables. However, the current study was carried out in Nairobi City County, incorporating linear regression to establish the causal link between strategic leadership and performance.

Okongo, Riungu, and Nzioki (2024) investigated how strategic orientation affected the institutional efficacy of government-funded youth empowerment organizations in Kenya. The research was grounded in Strategic Leadership Theory and employed the Balanced Scorecard model as the evaluative framework. A descriptive research methodology was adopted, integrating stratified random sampling to account for the diversity among governmental organizations. The results demonstrated that strategic orientation positively impacted organizational performance, where 43.6% of organizational performance, was explained by strategic direction. However, the study is limited to Government-Sponsored Youth Empowerment Organizations therefore generalizability of the findings may not be similar to other sectors. The study adopted descriptive research design which only provides mere phenomenon description and does not establish relationship between variables. The current study adopted explanatory research design because it is more insightful and robust establishing relationship and causation between strategic leadership and performance.

Umuhire and Irechukwu (2023) conducted an investigation into strategic orientation mechanisms and the operational effectiveness of media institutions within Rwanda. The investigation recognized the importance of media institutions effectively aligning strategic orientation with operational practices to fulfill their societal mandates. The research was grounded in Managerial Leadership Theory and employed a descriptive research approach. A combination of qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques was utilized. Primary data were obtained through the use of semi-structured questionnaires. The association between study variables was examined using correlation analysis. Findings indicated that strategic orientation exerts a notable influence on institutional performance. Nonetheless, a contextual limitation was identified, as the study focused exclusively on media entities within Rwanda,

thereby constraining the applicability of the results to other industries and geographical contexts. Additionally, the study relied on correlation analysis, which assesses relationships between only two variables. In contrast, the present research employed multiple linear regression, enabling the evaluation of the influence of several independent variables on a dependent variable, thus offering a more robust analytical framework.

Ramadhan (2022) conducted a census-based investigation involving 50 insurance firms in Kenya to examine the influence of strategic orientation on organizational performance. The research was grounded in Strategic Leadership Theory and employed a descriptive design, utilizing a census methodology to distribute questionnaires. The analysis applied a simple linear regression model, yielding an R^2 value of 0.6747, indicating a strong association between strategic orientation and the performance of insurance entities. Nonetheless, the study's scope was confined to insurance companies, thereby limiting the applicability of its findings across different sectors and geographical regions. The study adopted descriptive research which merely describes a phenomenon. The current study adopted explanatory research design which is robust and insightful illustrating relationships and causation of variables.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework that outlines the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

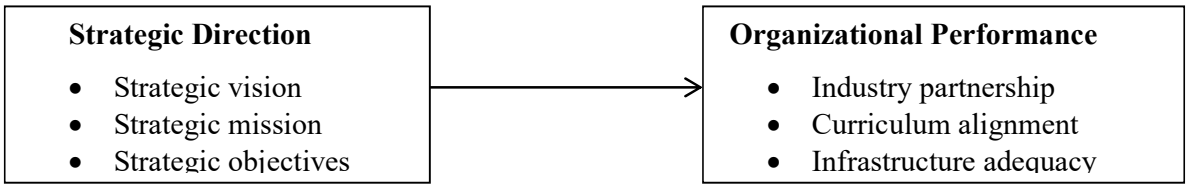


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2025)

The independent variable is strategic direction operationalized as strategic vision, strategic mission, and strategic objectives. Performance is the dependent variable operationalized as industry partnership, curriculum alignment and infrastructure adequacy. Strategic direction provides the institutional roadmap that defines purpose, priorities, and long-term aspirations. Through a well-articulated vision, mission, and set of objectives, management can guide decision making, align resources with organizational goals fostering coherence in institutional activities. When effectively implemented, strategic direction enables TVETs to strengthen collaboration with industry partners, ensure curriculum responsiveness to labor market needs, and improve infrastructural capacity all of which contribute to enhanced performance outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an explanatory research design, which is appropriate for investigating cause-and-effect relationships between strategic direction and performance. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), explanatory design helps determine how and why one variable influences another. The design was suitable because it enabled a comprehensive understanding of how strategic leadership, and specifically strategic direction, affects the performance of TVET institutions. Explanatory designs have been applied successfully in prior studies (Gachagua & Kinyua, 2022; Hilda, Maina & Kinyua, 2023; Legeny & Kinyua, 2023; Muithya,

Muathe & Kinyua, 2022; Muthimi, Kilika & Kinyua, 2021; Mwarenge & Kinyua, 2022), demonstrating their relevance for empirical research on organizational strategy and performance.

The study targeted 25 TVET institutions within Nairobi City County. The unit of analysis was the institutions, while the unit of observation comprised management staff across senior, middle, and lower levels. These officers are directly engaged in strategy formulation, implementation, and policy execution within their respective institutions. The target population consisted of 2,082 management staff.

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Substituting into the formula yielded a sample size of 336 respondents.

$n = N \div (1+N (e)^2)$
n= Sample size
N= Population size (2082)
e= Margin of error (typically 0.05 for a 95% confidence level)
$n = 2082 / [1+2082 (0.05)^2]$
$= 2082 / (1+2082(0.0025)$
$= 2082/6.255$

n= 336

In essence, drawing from the sample size (n) and the population size (N), a sampling factor (k) relevant for this study was computed as follows.

Sampling factor (k) = sampling size (n) ÷ population size (N)

Therefore;

$k = 336 \div 2082$

$= 0.16$

Stratified proportionate sampling was applied to ensure adequate representation from each management level. This approach minimized bias and enhanced the generalizability of the findings across the three strata of management. The distribution of the sample for the study is illustrated in Table 3.2.

Table 1: Sample Size of Respondent Categories

Management Levels	**Population Size (N)**	**Sampling Factor (k)**	**Sample Size (n = k *N)**	**Proportion**
Senior-level Management	102	0.16	16	5%
Middle-level Management	352	0.16	57	17%
Lower-level Management	1628	0.16	263	78%
Total	**2082**		**336**	**100%**

Source: Researcher (2024)

Table 1 shows a sample of 336 respondents selected from the three management categories. The most dominant sample was drawn from the lower-level management where 263 respondents constituted 78% of the total respondents observed. Senior-level management had least contribution of 16 respondents making 5% of the total respondents observed.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire, deemed appropriate for collecting standardized responses efficiently in survey-based research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The instrument used a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions on the construct, enabling reliable quantitative analysis (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014). The questionnaire comprised three sections thus section A captured demographic information, sections B captured strategic direction, while Section C focused on performance.

A pilot study was conducted at Thika Technical Training Institute in Kiambu County involving 34 respondents (10% of the sample size) to evaluate the instrument's validity and reliability. This institution was excluded from the main survey to prevent response bias. The pilot helped identify ambiguous items and refine the questionnaire to improve clarity and consistency (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Validity was examined through face, content, and construct validation techniques. Expert opinions from academic staff in the Department of Business Administration confirmed that the instrument accurately captured the intended constructs (Orodho, 2017). Content and construct validity were further enhanced through comprehensive literature review aligning questionnaire items with theoretical and empirical insights on strategic leadership and performance (Taherdoost, 2016).

Reliability was assessed through internal consistency testing using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Table 2 presents the Cronbach's alpha results for the pilot study.

Table 2: Reliability Test Results

Research Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Strategic Direction	10	0.834	Acceptable Level
Performance	9	0.812	Acceptable Level
Aggregate Score	**38**	**0.830**	**Acceptable Level**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

All constructs yielded coefficients above the recommended threshold, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The results demonstrate that the instrument was both valid and reliable for the main data collection exercise.

Upon receiving authorization from Kenyatta University and a research permit from NACOSTI, data collection commenced. The researcher personally visited institutions to schedule data collection days and used the drop-and-pick-later method, allowing respondents ample time to complete the questionnaires. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, and participation was strictly voluntary. Informed consent was sought prior to participation, and no incentives were offered to respondents.

Quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations, summarized the data, while inferential analysis involved multiple linear regression to determine the effect of strategic direction on performance. The regression model adopted is expressed as:

$Y=\beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$………………………………………………………….. (i)

Where:

Y = Performance

X = Strategic Direction

β_0, β_1= Beta Coefficients

ε = Error Term

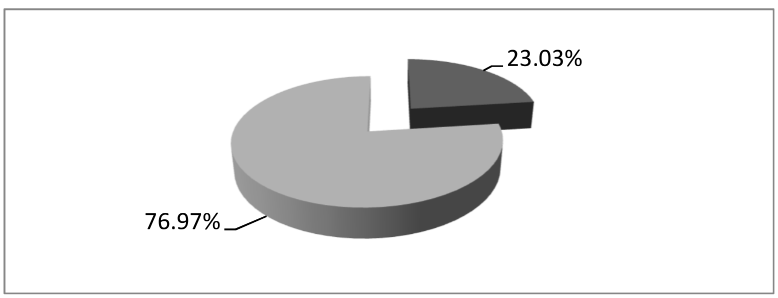
Regression coefficients were evaluated at a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). The results were presented through tables and figures to facilitate interpretation and clarity.

Descriptive Results

The analysis and interpretation of the response rate, sample mean, and standard deviation are outlined in this section.

Response Rate

A total of 304 questionnaires were distributed to senior, middle, and lower-level managers across the 25 TVET institutions that participated in the study. Out of these, 234 questionnaires were duly completed and returned within the stipulated period. Figure 1 presents the analysis of the response rate.



Source: Field Observations (2025)

Figure 1 indicates that the response rate was 76.97%, representing the proportion of questionnaires duly completed and returned by senior, middle, and lower-level managers. Despite follow-ups and reminders, 23.02% of the targeted respondents did not return their questionnaires. According to Bryman (2016), a response rate exceeding 60% is considered satisfactory in social research, as it enhances representativeness and minimizes non-response bias. Similarly, Lindeman (2018) established that the average response rate for field surveys is approximately 57%. Therefore, the achieved response rate of 76.97% was deemed adequate and reliable for subsequent statistical analysis.

Descriptive Results for Strategic Direction

The descriptive analysis results for strategic direction are outlined in this section, with a summary of the outcomes presented in Table 4

Table 4: Descriptive Results on Strategic Direction

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	CV
Strategic Vision				
The institutional vision provides clear guidance in strategic decision-making.	234	3.68	1.02	0.277
The strategic vision of the institution offers a sense of direction for the institution.	234	4.38	0.87	0.199
The institution has a clear vision inspiring staff effort towards long-term goals.	234	3.85	0.97	0.252
Aggregate Scores for Strategic Vision		**3.97**	**0.95**	**0.243**
Strategic Mission				
Day-to-day activities within the institution align with its core mission.	234	3.89	1.12	0.290
The mission is effectively communicated by the management to all institutional stakeholders.	234	3.92	1.09	0.278
The institution regularly reviews its vision, mission, and objectives to reflect changes in the industry.	234	3.52	1.14	0.324
Aggregate Scores for Strategic Mission		**3.78**	**1.12**	**0.297**
Strategic Objectives				
The strategic objectives inform the day-to-day activities in various institutional units.	234	4.15	0.94	0.227
Managers consistently pursue well-defined strategic goals to enhance institutional performance.	234	4.01	0.88	0.220
Institutional objectives are structured according to SMART criteria.	234	4.51	0.56	0.124
Teaching staff are regularly involved in the development of departmental objectives.	234	3.71	1.18	0.318
Aggregate Scores for Strategic Objectives		**4.10**	**0.89**	**0.222**
Overall Scores for Strategic Direction	**234**	**3.95**	**0.98**	**0.249**

Source: Field Observations (2025)

The observations obtained on the construct of strategic direction as outlined in Table 4.2 provide the foundation for understanding the summary of measures that are significant for subsequent statistical analysis. The mean values indicate that respondents largely agreed strategic direction was evident in the processes and practices assessed. Nevertheless, some statements demonstrated higher variability, such as the regular review of vision, mission and objectives with a mean of 3.52 and a std. deviation of 1.14, and staff involvement in developing departmental objectives with a mean of 3.71 and a std. dev. of 1.18. The relatively high variability in these responses suggests that participants expressed divergent views across the five point Likert scale. However, the overall composite measure of strategic direction with a

mean of 3.96 and a std. deviation of 0.98 reflects moderate consistency in responses, suitable for drawing population inferences.

At the specific level, the highest mean score of 4.51 was recorded for the statement on institutional objectives being structured according to SMART criteria, accompanied by the lowest std. deviation of 0.56. This clearly indicates that the consensus among respondents is in favor of adopting SMART objectives as a strategic practice. Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.52 was observed in relation to the institutional regular review of its vision, mission and objectives to reflect changes in the industry, coupled with a higher std. deviation of 1.14 signifying greater variability in responses and comparatively weaker agreement on this aspect.

Overall, the observations suggest that the surveyed TVET institutions have significantly embedded strategic direction in their management practices, particularly in aligning objectives to SMART criteria, providing a sense of institutional vision, and guiding day-to-day activities. These summary observations resonate with the view of Backson, Backhouse, and Leaney (2021), who argue that clear strategic direction enhances institutional alignment, motivates staff, and improves performance by ensuring efforts and resources are directed towards long-term goals.

Descriptive Results for Performance

Performance is a multifaceted concept that reflects the effective application of organization resources to accomplish established objectives and has been construed through curriculum alignment, industry partnership and infrastructure adequacy. Gathered observations on activities manifesting performance are analyzed in tabular form below.

Table 4: Descriptive Results on Performance

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	CV
Curriculum Alignment				
The curriculum is regularly updated to align with industrial needs in the job market.	234	4.17	0.81	0.194
Courses equip trainees with skills that are relevant to current labor market demands.	234	4.02	0.74	0.184
Courses offered by the institution are applicable both locally and globally.	234	4.21	1.01	0.240
Aggregate Scores on Curriculum Alignment		**4.13**	**0.85**	**0.206**
Industry Partnership				

Industry experts regularly conduct workshops and seminars on emerging market trends.	234	3.92	1.08	0.276
The institution collaborates actively with industry partners to enhance hands-on training.	234	3.87	0.56	0.145
Attachment and internship programs are well-structured, improving trainees' employability.	234	3.78	0.94	0.248
Aggregate Scores on Industry Partnership		**3.86**	**0.86**	**0.223**
Infrastructure Adequacy				
The institution possesses modern infrastructure and sufficient training equipment.	234	4.12	1.12	0.272
Digital learning and research tools are easily accessible to trainees.	234	4.61	0.88	0.191
There is adequate infrastructure to facilitate practical training activities.	234	4.11	0.78	0.189
Aggregate Scores on Infrastructure Adequacy		**4.28**	**0.93**	**0.217**
Overall Scores on Performance	**234**	**4.09**	**0.88**	**0.215**

Source: Field Observations (2025)

Operational aspects of performance, as presented in the tabulated statements, were analyzed into summary measures of sample mean and std. deviation to provide foundation for further statistical analysis. The pattern for mean responses provided evidence that to a large extent management employees agreed that the performance outcomes envisaged were visible within the TVET institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya. It is evident that there was a wide response variability regarding the aspect of industry experts' regularity in conducting workshops on current job market trends with a mean of 3.92 and a corresponding std. deviation of 1.08. This implies that there are differing assessments concerning this performance outcome among TVET institutions.

Additionally, it is also evident that there is a favourable response relating to the institution having modern infrastructure and adequate training equipment with a mean of 4.12 and a std. deviation of 1.12. This outcome implies that infrastructure is viewed as supportive of performance in TVET institutions. Additional indicators that recorded relatively high mean scores are on availability of digital learning and research tools, relevance of courses offered both locally and globally, curriculum updated to align with industrial needs in the job market, and courses equip trainees with skills relevant to the job market.

Performance mean response of 4.09 and the corresponding std. deviation of 0.88 confirmed that participants, to a large extent, agreed the measured performance outcomes were evident in the context of TVET institutions. In elucidating performance heterogeneity from an inside-out perspective, strategic leadership not only shapes decision-making but also enables institutions to mobilize resources and develop capabilities that translate into sustainable advantage (Golensky & Hager, 2020).

Inferential Analysis

An evaluation on effect of strategic direction on performance on performance was using a simple regression analysis, and the outcomes are summarized in Table 5

Table 5: Regression Results

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.768[a]	0.551	0.513	0.392	2.103

F-Statistics

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.461	3	14.487	96.17	.000[b]
	Residual	35.420	230	0.154		
	Total	**78.881**	**233**			

a. Regressand: Performance
b. Regressor: (Constant), Strategic Direction

Source: Field Observations (2025)

The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.768, as shown in Table 4.6, demonstrates a strong and positive association between strategic direction and institutional performance among TVETs in Nairobi City County. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.551 indicates that 55.1% of the variations in performance can be explained by the independent variable incorporated in the model, notably strategic direction. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.513, which accounts for the number of predictors, confirms that the model exhibits substantial explanatory power. This suggests that strategic direction, when integrated with other dimensions of strategic leadership, has a considerable effect on the performance outcomes of TVET institutions.

The F-Statistics results in Table 5 indicate that the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F(3,230) = 96.170$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that the combined effect of the strategic leadership variable significantly predicts performance within TVET institutions. The high F-value further reinforces the model's robustness and its suitability for explaining performance variations. Therefore, the results affirm that strategic direction, together with other strategic leadership dimensions, plays a pivotal role in enhancing performance among TVETs in Nairobi City County.

Table 8: Coefficients of Regression Analysis

	Unstructured Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Constant	.842	.112		7.518	.010
Strategic Direction	.278	.059	.312	4.712	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Direction,

Source: Field Observations (2025)

The statistical results of the regression analysis reveal that the parameters obtained from the unstandardized coefficient values produced the estimated model presented.

Performance = 0.842 + 0.278 Strategic Direction

The regression model indicates that when strategic direction is held constant, the predicted performance level of TVET institutions would be 0.842 units. However, a single-unit increase in strategic direction is associated with a corresponding 0.278 unit improvement in performance, assuming other factors remain constant.

The finding that strategic direction has a positive effect on performance is validated by relevant existing empirical literature (Ngiro & Osoro, 2024; Okongo et al., 2024; Umuhire & Irechukwu, 2023). The review by Ngiro and Osoro (2024) in Pokot County Government in Kenya, strategic direction was determined to have a direct effect on performance revealing a consensus from both theoretical and empirical literature. Additionally, regression analysis conducted by Okongo et al. (2024) revealed that performance of Government-Sponsored Youth Empowerment Organizations in Kenya was affected by strategic direction. Similarly, the findings from correlation and linear regression analysis by Umuhire and Irechukwu (2023) showed that strategic direction has a direct effect on performance of media organizations in Rwanda. The findings further validate the premise of upper echelon theory that choices and outcomes of an organization are shaped significantly by the values, experiences and cognitive orientations of senior management, guiding therefore the overall strategic direction of an organization (Wangrow, Schepker & Barker, 2015).

Conclusion

This study concludes that strategic direction exerts a significant positive influence on the performance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The findings imply that TVET institutions can enhance their performance by formulating and effectively communicating a clear strategic vision, mission, and well-defined objectives that guide institutional operations. Establishing shared direction and alignment across departments fosters coordinated action and strengthens institutional responsiveness to changing educational and market demands. Furthermore, regular review and

adaptation of institutional goals in line with national development priorities and industry needs promote continuous improvement in performance. In essence, a strong and coherent strategic direction enables TVET institutions to optimize resources, enhance accountability, and sustain competitiveness within the evolving technical education landscape.

Recommendations

The conclusions of this study have significant implications for policies and practices on TVETs within Nairobi City County in Kenya. With regard to strategic direction and performance, there is need for management to establish policies that nurture skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to strengthen responsiveness, alignment, and efficiency of both academic and administrative functions with goals of the institution. Adequate resources should be allocated to support modern learning and teaching infrastructure, promote digital learning platforms, and ensure use of inclusive learner centered communication approaches across TVETs.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study investigated the effect of strategic direction on the performance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Some respondents were cautious in disclosing detailed institutional information due to the sensitivity of management-related data. To mitigate this challenge, the researcher assured all participants of strict confidentiality and clarified that the data collected would be used exclusively for academic purposes. Additionally, no personal identifiers or information that could reveal the identity of respondents was included in the study instrument. The scope of the study was confined to TVET institutions in Nairobi City County, and therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other contexts.

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