

**Research Article**

## **Strategic Stakeholder Engagement and Performance of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in Nyanza South and Nyanza Central Region**

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### **Abstract**

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission is a constitutional commission established by Kenya's 2010 constitution. It is a body tasked with organizing elections and referenda in the Republic of Kenya. As a result, it is critical to the country's growth, prosperity, and stability. This study sought to establish the relationship between strategic management practices and the performance of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in Nyanza South and Nyanza Central Region, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study included determining the effect of strategic stakeholder engagement, strategic public participation, strategic use of information technology (IT), and strategic leadership style on the performance of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in Nyanza South and Nyanza Central Region, Kenya. The study adopted a survey research design. The target population for this study was 96 respondents and census sampling techniques used to sample all the 96. Questionnaires were used in data collection from the field. Quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was analysed descriptively through the use of means and standard deviation and through regression and correlational analysis. The study findings revealed that strategic stakeholder engagement is a significant positive predictor of performance at IEBC. The study concluded that strategic management practices are significant positive predictors of performance of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in Nyanza South and Nyanza Central regions. The study recommends that to enhance performance, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should enhance its stakeholder mapping processes to include a broader range of voices, ensuring that all relevant groups are identified and engaged. The study also recommends that The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should enhance regular and structured forums for engagement, allowing stakeholders to provide input into the electoral processes. It also recommends that The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should implement robust feedback mechanisms that allow stakeholders to express concern and suggestions.

**Keywords:** Strategic Management Practices, Performance, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

### **Introduction**

Strategic management is the procedure and approach of establishing the goals of an organization, developing plans and regulations to achieve and attain these objectives, and allocating resources so that the policies and plans can be implemented (David, 2005), whereas organizational performance is about creating values for the organization's primary beneficiaries (Al Issa, 2017). Several studies in Africa show that strategic management practices are essential in small scale enterprises and should be part of their method of improving organizational performance to enable them to cope with the changes and challenges of the global economy (Dauda *et al.*, 2010). Agwu (2018) concludes in his study, the impact of strategic management on the performance of SMEs in Nigeria, that for SMEs to be effective in their line of company operations, they must not only define a clear vision and mission, but also diligently apply the principles of strategic management to improve business performance and gain a competitive edge over other businesses. According to studies, achieving firm performance relative to competitors is the primary goal that business organizations should strive for (Muogbo, 2013). Several studies in Kenya have found a beneficial relationship between strategic management and the performance of public organizations (Njagi, 2017).

Furthermore, studies demonstrate that organizations that use strategic management practices are more competitive, because this approach aids in evaluating performance, assessing competition, and creating appropriate goals (Jalang'o, 2018).

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of strategic stakeholder engagement on the performance of Independent Electoral and Boundaries commission in Nyanza South and Nyanza Central Region.

### **Literature Review**

According to Cantu *et al.*, (2012), stakeholders are any group or people who can influence or is influenced by an organization's plans, and this requires managers to recognize all claimants of stakeholder status. However, because there are many types of stakeholders, their interest in a firm will range in attribute and behavior, and as a result, a firm should not try to treat them all the same. Thus, the 'voluntarism' stakeholder philosophy encourages managers to interact with stakeholders and meet the requirements of as many stakeholders as feasible (Cantu *et al.*, 2012). Stakeholder involvement is concerned with how stakeholders become engaged or passive in forward thinking ventures undertaken by a company. Truex and Soreide (2015) observe that stakeholder involvement has recently become increasingly important due to the growing concern for community issues such as natural resource management, the role of organizational players in business growth, and the prospective value of stakeholders to an organization. Furthermore, multi stakeholder approaches are used to maintain transparency in government funded enterprises, such as those in the energy industry.

Stakeholder participation amongst an organization and its shareholders for a specific problem or matter permits stakeholders to participate in a collaborative process to generate the critical resolutions (Melo and Garrido-Morgado, 2011). Furthermore, this practice of mutual decision making is an operational technique to manage dispute and allow stakeholders to collaborate for the common good over collective dreams. As a result, stakeholder involvement may lead to economically, environmentally, and socially defensible plans; nevertheless, company management should be mindful of the numerous and various stakeholders who frequently hold diverse opinions that may derail the organization's goals. As a result, this highlights the importance of establishing good stakeholder management as a component of achieving organizational performance (Melo and Garrido-Morgado, 2011).

Michelon *et al.*, (2013) investigated the relationship between strategic CSR and business performance by examining the best organizations' stakeholders. "They used KLD data from 188 companies over a three year period covering seven aspects of corporate social responsibility (CSR), namely; environment, community, corporate governance, diversity, employee relations, human rights, and product quality" in their research. According to the findings, when an organization pursues CSR initiatives that are linked to stakeholder preferences and allocates resources to these initiatives in a strategic manner, the positive effect of its CSR initiatives on corporate performance improves in terms of both markets based and accounting based measures of performance. This link, however, was not observed across the board for all seven areas of CSR."

Nthia (2015) investigated stakeholders' participation and performance in Lamu County, Kenya's marine security approach. The study was a descriptive cross sectional survey in which information was gathered through structured questionnaires distributed to key stakeholders such as Beach Management Units, Boat Users, Kenya Wildlife Services, Maritime Police Unit, Ministry of Transport Lamu County, and Kenya Maritime Authority. To determine the relationship between stakeholder involvement in maritime safety strategy and performance in Lamu County, a multiple regression approach was used. The results of the regression analysis revealed that the involvement of stakeholders in the execution of the Lamu County maritime safety policy had no meaningful effect. This outcome is due to the short period following the implementation of the Lamu County Maritime Safety Strategy and the study.

According to Barney (2018), stakeholders that provide more or better resources to the organization than their agreements should be eligible for a portion of the additional value provided. According to Kaplan and Norton (2012), a firm's purpose should be to maximize not only shareholder value but also the interests of all other stakeholders. According to Kaplan and Norton's balance scorecard, a firm's performance should be judged not only by traditional financial measurements, but also by its relationship with its customers, ability to innovate and learn, and increased internal efficiency. Employees, suppliers, customers, and shareholders are the key groups of stakeholders, according to Tantalo and Priem (2016). They argue that in the case of employees, for example, if they have confidence that the firm has their best interests at heart and offers them

a good deal in terms of overall worth from the firm in comparison to their opportunity cost, they are more likely to exert effort and allegiance beyond what would otherwise be the case. This shift in mentality is projected to result in increased performance in the form of lower cost products that ensure its customers' value offer.

Adewale and Esther (2012) discovered in their study that a lack of stakeholder involvement resulted in poor performance due to a lackluster implementation of the plan set forth, and so stakeholder buy in are vital in the success of a strategy. Different stakeholders are a store of various types of information, expertise, and experience that they have, and successful utilization of this knowledge is expected to contribute to the development of the organization plan. According to Dess *et al.*, (1993), involving stakeholders as early as the planning stage of strategy formulation promotes the effectiveness of programs established and the realization of organizational performance. Thus, including stakeholders provides quality input to the organization in terms of inventiveness, which finally leads to quality decision making. Stakeholders gain higher satisfaction from the same involvement, and the odds of effective implementation rise as more stakeholders feel committed to the plan, since what is accomplished represents their actual desires. Lynch (2012) advises organizations to incorporate stakeholders not simply as a "public relations" exercise, but to embed it in the stakeholders because of the value they offer to the strategy creation and implementation process. The intricacy of the stakeholder web necessitates a full awareness of the context in which the strategies will be implemented, which can only be understood in depth by those who are directly affected or not by the approach.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Adam Smith created this theory in 1937, and it focuses on the interaction between one or more principals and other parties (agents) to carry out service and work for the principle. Agency theory is based on the idea that the IEBC is a public body established by the Republic of Kenya's constitution, and the people charged with administering the commission's operations are mandated to conduct those affairs in accordance with the constitution and the rules governing elections. In this situation, the principals are the people of Kenya, and the agents are the commission members. Commissioners sign a contract with the people of Kenya through the constitution to conduct the affairs of the IEBC on their behalf, and they are assumed to be fair and unbiased in their behavior to please the principals, who are the people of Kenya. As a result, the commission is expected to operate in the best interests of Kenyans by ensuring openness, accountability, responsibility, independence, and justice in its operations.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design. The target population for this study was 96 respondents and census sampling techniques used to sample all the 96. Questionnaires were the primary source of data used to collect quantitative data from the targeted respondents. Quantitative data referred to numerical measurements expressed not through natural language descriptions but rather in terms of numbers. The questionnaire allowed for unbiased data collection from many respondents, saving time and making it easy to analyze, while the documentary analysis was useful in obtaining data that tested the dependent variable (performance at IEBC). To establish the reliability of research instruments, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha model was used to achieve a reliable figure of 0.73. Quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was analysed descriptively through the use of means and standard deviation and through regression and correlational analysis.

### **Findings of the Study**

#### **Descriptive Analysis**

The study sought to establish the effect of stakeholder engagement and organizational performance. The respondents were asked to give their opinion using a Likert scale of 1-5 with 1 being the strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree as recorded in Table 1.

The data provided offers insights into the dimensions of stakeholder engagement and its impact on organizational performance. Table observed that, identification of relevant stakeholders attracted a mean score of 3.27 (SD = 1.498) suggesting a moderate perception among respondents regarding the organization's ability to identify all relevant stakeholders. The relatively high standard deviation indicates a significant variation in individual opinions, implying that some respondents feel the organization is effective in stakeholder identification, while others do not. The study also reveals that inclusion of key stakeholders in decision making with a mean of 3.44 (SD = 1.335), there is a slightly positive perception that key stakeholders are included in decision making processes. The lower standard deviation compared to other

items suggests more consensus among respondents about this aspect, though there is still room for improvement in ensuring comprehensive stakeholder inclusion.

**Table 1.** Stakeholder engagement performance at IEBC.

Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
The organization effectively identifies all relevant stakeholders.	93	1	5	3.27	1.498
I am confident that all key stakeholders are included in decision making processes.	93	1	5	3.44	1.335
There is clear communication about who the stakeholders are within the organization.	93	1	5	3.46	1.383
The organization has well defined criteria for determining the level of engagement with different stakeholders.	93	1	5	3.31	1.587
Stakeholders are engaged based on their relevance and influence on organizational decisions.	93	1	5	3.54	1.288
The engagement criteria are transparent and accessible to all stakeholders.	93	1	5	3.31	1.446
There are effective mechanisms in place for stakeholders to provide feedback to the organization.	93	1	5	3.52	1.368
The organization responds promptly to feedback received from stakeholders.	93	1	5	3.54	1.429
Stakeholders are informed about the actions taken in response to their feedback.	93	1	5	3.67	1.358

The study further observed that communication about stakeholders with mean score of 3.46 (SD = 1.383) reflects a moderate perception of the clarity of communication regarding stakeholder identification within the organization. The standard deviation indicates varied opinions on whether the organization effectively communicates who the stakeholders are.

The study further observed that the criteria for engagement use by the institution with the mean score of 3.31 (SD = 1.587) for the clarity and definition of engagement criteria shows that respondents view this aspect as moderately effective. The high standard deviation suggests a notable range of perspectives, pointing to possible inconsistencies or uncertainties about how engagement criteria are determined.

It was further engagement based on relevance and influence with a mean of 3.54 (SD = 1.288), stakeholders perceive that the organization engages them based on their relevance and influence on decisions. This score is relatively higher compared to other items, indicating a generally positive view, though the standard deviation still reveals some variation in responses.

Transparency of engagement criteria the mean score of 3.31 (SD = 1.446) indicates moderate perceptions of the transparency and accessibility of engagement criteria. This suggests that while there is some level of transparency, it may not be consistently perceived across all stakeholders. It was also revealed that mechanisms for feedback with a mean score of 3.52 (SD = 1.368) indicates that respondents feel there are effective mechanisms for stakeholders to provide feedback. This score is relatively higher, suggesting a favorable view of the feedback channels in place.

Responsiveness to feedback with a mean of 3.54 (SD = 1.429), respondents believe that the organization responds promptly to feedback. This reflects a positive view of the organization's responsiveness, although, like other aspects, there is some variation in perceptions. Finally, communication of actions taken attracted the highest mean score of 3.67 (SD = 1.358) represents the respondents' view that stakeholders are informed about actions taken in response to their feedback. This indicates a stronger perception of the organization's effectiveness in communicating post feedback actions, though the standard deviation still shows some level of disagreement among respondents.

### **Regression Analysis**

The Model Fitting Information table provides insights into the performance of the logistic regression model by comparing the model with just the intercept (no predictors) to the final model that includes the predictors.

**Table 2.** Model fitting information for strategic stakeholders engagement.

Model	2 log-likelihood	Chi-square	df	Significance
Intercept only	243.058	-	-	-
Final	.000	243.058	1	.000
Link function: Logit.				

Table 2 reveals that the degrees of freedom associated with the Chi square statistic is 1, indicating that only one predictor or group of predictors was added to the model. The significance level is 0.000, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This suggests that the improvement in fit provided by the predictors is statistically significant, indicating that the model with predictors fits the data significantly better than the intercept only model.

**Table 3.** Goodness of fit for strategic stakeholders engagement.

	Chi-square	df	Significance
Pearson	35.729	419	1.000
Deviance	44.752	419	1.000
Link function: Logit.			

The goodness of fit statistics presented in the table evaluates how well the observed data fits the model being tested. The two primary measures provided are the Pearson Chi-square and the Deviance, both of which are crucial in assessing the fit of logistic regression models. The Pearson Chi-square statistic is 35.729 with 419 degrees of freedom (df). The associated significance level (Sig.) is 1.000, indicating that the observed data fits the model extremely well.

**Table 4.** Pseudo R square for strategic stakeholders engagement.

Cox and Snell	.994
Nagelkerke	.999
McFadden	.958
Link function: Logit.	

The provided pseudo R square values-Cox and Snell (.994), Nagelkerke (.999), and McFadden (.958) are indicative of the model's goodness of fit in the context of logistic regression, where the link function applied is Logit. In summary, these pseudo R square values collectively indicate that the logistic regression model exhibits an excellent fit, with the independent variables explaining almost all of the variation in the dependent variable.

**Table 5.** Test of parallel lines for strategic stakeholders engagement.

Model	2 log-likelihood	Chi-square	df	Significance
Null hypothesis	.000	-	-	-
General	.000 <sup>b</sup>	.000	19	1.000
The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.				
a. Link function: Logit.				
b. The log likelihood value is practically zero. There may be a complete separation in the data. The maximum likelihood estimates do not exist.				

The output from the "Test of Parallel Lines" provides insights into the assumption that the location parameters, or slope coefficients, are consistent across different response categories in an ordinal regression model. In this case, the log likelihood value is essentially zero, as indicated by the entry of '.000'. This suggests that there is no divergence between the observed data and the model under the null hypothesis, which posits that the slopes are indeed equal across categories.

The logit link function is used for this ordinal logistic regression model, which is typical when modeling ordered categorical outcomes. The logit link transforms the probability of the outcome into a linear combination of the predictors. The thresholds are all highly significant, indicating that the categories of the dependent variable (OP) are well-separated. "Strategic stakeholder engagement" has a strong, positive, and significant effect on the dependent variable, with higher engagement increasing the likelihood of being in higher outcome categories (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Parameter estimates for the general model.

		Estimate	SE	Wald	df	Significance	95% confidence interval	
							Lower bound	Upper bound
Threshold	[OP = 1.00]	13.060	2.528	26.693	1	.000	8.106	18.014
	[OP = 1.11]	17.010	3.084	30.424	1	.000	10.966	23.054
	[OP = 1.22]	18.322	3.291	30.997	1	.000	11.872	24.772
	[OP = 1.67]	19.520	3.435	32.297	1	.000	12.788	26.252
	[OP = 1.78]	24.806	4.245	34.149	1	.000	16.486	33.126
	[OP = 2.11]	26.194	4.397	35.483	1	.000	17.575	34.813
	[OP = 2.22]	28.455	5.060	31.626	1	.000	18.538	38.372
	[OP = 2.78]	31.207	5.456	32.718	1	.000	20.514	41.900
	[OP = 2.89]	33.729	5.854	33.195	1	.000	22.255	45.204
	[OP = 3.11]	36.057	6.379	31.948	1	.000	23.554	48.559
	[OP = 3.33]	37.717	6.678	31.898	1	.000	24.628	50.806
	[OP = 3.44]	39.379	6.780	33.732	1	.000	26.090	52.668
	[OP = 3.67]	39.939	6.814	34.354	1	.000	26.584	53.295
	[OP = 3.78]	40.424	6.846	34.866	1	.000	27.006	53.842
	[OP = 3.89]	40.881	6.878	35.333	1	.000	27.401	54.361
	[OP = 4.00]	43.291	7.154	36.617	1	.000	29.269	57.313
	[OP = 4.11]	43.978	7.276	36.536	1	.000	29.718	58.238
	[OP = 4.33]	45.649	7.611	35.978	1	.000	30.733	60.566
	[OP = 4.44]	47.560	7.993	35.401	1	.000	31.893	63.226
	[OP = 4.67]	48.515	8.201	34.999	1	.000	32.442	64.588
Location	SE	10.419	1.738	35.923	1	.000	7.012	13.826
Link function: Logit.								

### Conclusion

The study also concludes that strategic stakeholder engagement is a significant positive predictor of performance of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in Nyanza South and Nyanza Central Region since the variable is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). It suggests that for each unit increase in strategic stakeholder engagement, the dependent variable increases by approximately 10.419 units, holding other factors constant.

### Recommendations

To enhance performance, the study recommends that Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should enhance its stakeholder mapping processes to include a broader range of voices, ensuring that all relevant groups are identified and engaged. This includes civil society organizations, political parties, media, and community-based organizations.

The study also recommends that to enhance performance, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should enhance regular and structured forums for engagement, allowing stakeholders to provide input into the electoral processes. This should be institutionalized to foster continuous dialogue and trust-building.

It also recommends that, The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should implement robust feedback mechanisms that allow stakeholders to express concerns and suggestions. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission should systematically analyze this feedback and integrate it into strategic planning and decision-making processes.

### Declarations

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