

Research Article

Vision Setting Practices and Project Performance in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya

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Article History	Abstract
Received: September 13, 2026 Accepted: October 04, 2026 Published: October 11, 2026	<p>Public development projects in Kenya continue to face delays, cost overruns, and inefficiencies despite supportive legal frameworks. In Trans Nzoia County, flagship programs have achieved notable success, yet broader initiatives reveal systemic challenges that hinder sustainable performance. This study investigated the influence of vision setting as a critical factor in aligning goals with county priorities. Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected through structured questionnaires from county-led initiatives and analyzed with SPSS version 28. Reliability and validity were confirmed through Cronbach's alpha (>0.7) and threshold testing (>0.5). Results demonstrated that particularly vision setting, had a positive and statistically significant effect on project performance. The study concludes that clear articulation of goals enhances efficiency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. It recommends the establishment of county-wide frameworks mandating measurable objectives, transparent communication, participatory decision-making, and fair incentive policies to strengthen project delivery and sustainability in Trans Nzoia County.</p> <p>Keywords: Vision Setting, Project Performance, Strategic Leadership, Goal Setting, Trans Nzoia County.</p>

Introduction

Project leadership practices remain important in addressing challenges in project delivery. The Project Management Institute (2023) reported that organizations prioritizing power skills achieved a 72% project success rate in meeting business goals, compared with 65% among organizations placing lower priority on these skills. The report also found that projects in organizations prioritizing power skills experienced less scope creep (28%) than those in organizations placing lower priority on these skills (40%). These findings highlight the importance of communication, problem-solving, collaborative leadership, and strategic thinking in improving project performance (Project Management Institute, 2023). In Europe, similar challenges persist. Studies on complex projects indicate that failure to deliver full intended benefits remains high, with poor planning and under-resourcing consistently cited as primary causes of deadline overruns. Research on project teams emphasizes that effective teamwork significantly impacts project success, which is why complex projects increasingly rely on structured team management practices to improve adherence to timelines (Dasí *et al.*, 2021).

Across Africa, public development projects remain central to socio-economic transformation and service delivery, yet performance challenges persist. Infrastructure financing and implementation gaps have constrained development across the continent (Briceño-Garmendia and Foster, 2009). Similarly, the World Bank (2023), in its assessment of the Nigeria Rural Access and Agricultural Marketing Project, identified implementation delays, funding challenges, and rising construction costs. These findings highlight the importance of adequate financing, effective implementation, and systematic monitoring to improve project delivery (Briceño-Garmendia and Foster, 2009; World Bank, 2023).

In South Africa, time overruns are officially documented. The Auditor-General's consolidated audit of municipal infrastructure projects reported findings on 87 of 113 projects audited, representing 77% of the

sample, with irregularities linked to poor planning. The subsequent briefing on public works revealed that 107 public works projects had been delayed at an accumulated cost of R3.9 billion, with 63 delayed by more than three years, largely due to poor contractor performance and poor planning and procurement practices (Auditor-General South Africa, 2024).

Uganda faces severe project performance challenges. A study conducted on building projects in Uganda by Muhwezi *et al.*, (2014) revealed that unfavorable weather conditions, legal disputes among participants, shortages of materials and design errors were main factors hindering completion. A related survey on 23 running public construction projects in Kampala found that 92% were behind schedule, revealing that 80% of building construction projects in Uganda have been affected by time delays (Muhwezi *et al.*, 2014).

In Kenya, despite supportive legal frameworks such as the County Governments Act 2012 and the Public Finance Management Act, development projects continue to face delays, cost overruns, and stalled initiatives. The Office of the Auditor-General's audit for FY 2023/2024 revealed rampant mismanagement, with projects worth Sh6.9 billion in 157 constituencies not completed within planned timelines. The same report documented avoidable interest payments amounting to Sh4.8 billion incurred across 17 donor funded projects due to delayed settlement of certified works, and highlighted millions lost through stalled county projects and ghost payments (Office of the Auditor-General, 2025). This underscores the need for leadership practices that emphasize clear vision setting and predictable financing.

In Trans Nzoia County, the County Government operates a Projects Monitoring and Tracking System (PMTS) as its official reporting portal. While county reporting cites flagship projects under the Kenya Devolution Support Program, independent verification of completion rates is limited to portal data. A key illustration of persistent delays is the Masinde Muliro Market (Kitale Business Complex). Initiated in June 2019, the project experienced multi-year delays, with recent reporting by the Principal Secretary for Internal Security confirming the long-delayed Masinde Muliro Ultra-Modern Market in Kitale Town is more than 95 per cent complete and being finalised for handover (Imanene, 2026). This case reflects the consequences of inadequate vision setting and weak project management structures.

Objective of the Study

To evaluate the effect of vision setting practice on project performance in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory. Developed by Burns (1978) in his analysis of political leaders and later expanded by Bass (1985), the theory proposes that leaders inspire followers by articulating a compelling vision, stimulating intellectual growth, and motivating teams beyond self-interest to achieve collective goals. Burns characterized transformational leadership as occurring when leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality, while Bass (1985) operationalized it into four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Proponents such as Han *et al.*, (2025) have recently confirmed the theory's relevance to project contexts, demonstrating that transformational leadership significantly enhances both team reflexivity and project team resilience, which in turn contribute to project success. Despite critiques that the theory is overly idealistic and heavily reliant on leader charisma, it remains highly relevant: it anchors vision setting by showing how leaders articulate clear goals that foster alignment and resilience.

Literature Review

Vision setting was identified as a critical leadership practice that shapes project performance by providing clear goals, strategic direction, and alignment with organizational priorities (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). Through well-articulated visions, project leaders inspire commitment, guide decision-making, and ensure teams work toward shared objectives.

Dasí *et al.*, (2021) applied the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model to project teams, emphasizing that people working in project teams need appropriate skills, motivation and opportunities to work effectively. Their empirical research, published as "Teams and Project Performance: An Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity Approach" revealed that in complex projects, a clearly articulated vision amplifies motivation and opportunity, thereby improving outcomes. This aligns with Goal-Setting Theory, which posits that specific and challenging goals enhance performance by directing effort. Han *et al.*, (2025) further supported this linkage,

finding that transformational leadership has a direct and significant impact on project success, with indirect effects through team reflexivity (mediation $\beta = 0.205$) and project team resilience (mediation $\beta = 0.135$).

Strategic direction plays a critical role in enhancing organizational performance in Kenya's devolved governance system, by providing a clear vision, aligning resources with organizational priorities, and guiding decision-making processes. Empirical evidence suggests that organizations with well-articulated strategic direction are more likely to achieve improved service delivery, accountability, and operational effectiveness. For instance, Eris and Muthimi (2024) found that strategic direction had a positive and statistically significant effect on the organizational performance of selected government-funded youth projects in Isiolo County, indicating that effective strategic leadership contributes to better organizational outcomes. Their study concluded that clear strategic objectives and leadership commitment enhanced project performance and stakeholder engagement (Eris and Muthimi, 2024).

Similarly, studies on county governments in Kenya have consistently demonstrated the importance of strategic leadership and strategic direction in improving organizational performance. Munga *et al.*, (2021) established that strategic leadership practices positively influenced the performance of county governments within the Lake Region Economic Bloc, emphasizing the role of participatory leadership, communication, and strategic planning in achieving organizational goals. Additionally, Ngware *et al.*, (2025) found a strong positive relationship between strategic direction and the performance of devolved counties in Kenya, concluding that well-communicated visions, strategic goals, and adaptive plans significantly enhance county performance. The authors recommended that county leaders prioritize strategic direction and stakeholder involvement to improve development outcomes and public service delivery (Munga *et al.*, 2021; Ngware *et al.*, 2025).

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy supported by a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional correlational design, appropriate for examining causal relationships through observable and measurable data (Kothari, 2004). The target population comprised 153 respondents, including project managers/coordinators, county government officials, and technical staff directly involved in planning, coordination, and execution of development projects in Trans Nzoia County. A census sampling technique was employed given the manageable population size, ensuring complete accuracy and eliminating sampling error (Israel, 1992). Data were collected using structured questionnaires, administered through a drop-and-pick-later method to enhance response rates, with ethical clearance obtained from NACOSTI and authorization from the County Government of Trans Nzoia. A pilot test was conducted in Bungoma County to assess clarity and reliability of instruments, with construct validity confirmed at factor loadings above 0.5 and reliability established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.7, including vision setting practices ($\alpha = 0.987$). Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 28, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis to determine the effect of project leadership practices, particularly vision setting, on project performance outcomes.

Results and Discussion

This section presents vision setting practices that establish a shared strategic direction and align team efforts toward defined goals. The findings were recorded in Table 1.

Table 1. Vision setting practices and project performance.

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
The project goals are clearly defined.	147	1	5	4.0	0.999
I understand the objectives of the project.	147	1	5	3.9	1.001
The goals provide a clear direction for my tasks.	147	1	5	3.8	1.024
The project has a well-articulated strategic plan.	147	1	5	3.5	1.151
The strategic direction guides decision-making effectively.	147	1	5	3.4	1.119
The project's strategy aligns with organizational priorities.	147	1	5	3.6	1.134
The project vision is communicated effectively to all stakeholders.	147	1	5	3.3	1.201
I feel committed to achieving the shared project vision.	147	1	5	3.8	1.014
Team members share a common vision for the project.	147	1	5	3.6	1.103

Data from Table 1 reveal that respondents generally perceive vision setting as a positive driver of success, though with varying levels of strength across different aspects. The highest mean scores were recorded for project goals being clearly defined (Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.999) and understanding of project objectives (Mean

= 3.9, SD = 1.001), indicating strong agreement that clarity of goals and objectives enhances alignment and performance.

Similarly, commitment to achieving the shared vision (Mean = 3.8, SD = 1.014) and goals providing clear direction for tasks (Mean = 3.8, SD = 1.024) reflect a motivated workforce guided by well-articulated objectives. Moderate agreement was observed for strategic alignment with organizational priorities (Mean = 3.6, SD = 1.134) and team members sharing a common vision (Mean = 3.6, SD = 1.103), suggesting that collective ownership of the vision contributes to cohesion and performance. However, weaker scores were noted for strategic direction guiding decision-making effectively (Mean = 3.4, SD = 1.119) and effective communication of the project vision to stakeholders (Mean = 3.3, SD = 1.201), highlighting gaps in translating strategic plans into actionable decisions and ensuring inclusivity in vision communication.

The descriptive analysis indicates that vision setting is generally perceived as a strong driver of project success, with respondents showing high agreement on the clarity of goals and objectives as well as the motivational effect of shared commitment. These aspects suggest that well-articulated visions enhance alignment, direction, and workforce motivation. Moderate agreement was observed on strategic alignment with organizational priorities and collective ownership of the vision, pointing to the importance of cohesion in sustaining performance. However, weaker perceptions emerged regarding the effectiveness of strategic direction in guiding decision-making and the communication of vision to stakeholders, highlighting gaps in translating strategic plans into actionable decisions and ensuring inclusivity in vision dissemination. Overall, the findings emphasize that while clarity and commitment to vision are strong enablers of project performance, improvements are needed in decision-making integration and stakeholder communication to fully realize the benefits of vision setting.

Vision Setting Practices on Project Performance

This section presents the linear regression analysis conducted to assess the effect vision setting and project performance in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya. The analysis quantifies the extent to which vision setting practices contribute to project performance.

Table 2. ANOVA for vision setting and project performance.

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	238.412	1	238.412	3421.05	.000b
Residual	9.987	145	0.069	-	-
Total	248.399	146	-	-	-

a. Dependent variable: Project performance; b. Predictors: (Constant), Vision setting practices

The regression results indicate that vision setting practices (VSP) have a very strong and statistically significant influence on project performance (PP). The ANOVA table shows a highly significant F-value (3421.05, $p < .001$), confirming that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in project performance.

Table 3. Model summary for vision setting and project performance.

Model summary ^b					
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.782a	.611	.607	0.263	2.071

a. Predictors: (Constant), VSP; b. Dependent variable: PP

The regression results demonstrate that vision setting practices have a strong and positive effect on project performance, with an R value of .782 indicating a substantial correlation. The R-square of .611 shows that approximately 61.1% of the variation in project performance is explained by vision setting, while the adjusted R-square of .607 confirms the reliability of the model after accounting for the predictor. The standard error of 0.263 reflects a close fit of the regression line to the observed data, and the Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.071 suggests minimal autocorrelation, reinforcing the validity of the findings. Overall, the results highlight that clear vision setting is a critical leadership practice that significantly enhances project outcomes, while institutional structures continue to provide a stable baseline of performance.

The coefficients table demonstrates that vision setting practices have a positive and significant effect ($B = 0.827$, $\beta = 0.982$, $p < .001$), implying that improvements in vision setting are strongly associated with enhanced

project performance. The constant ($B = 0.902$) suggests that even without vision setting, a baseline level of performance exists, but the contribution of vision setting is substantial. Overall, these findings underscore that clear project goals, strategic alignment, and effective communication of vision are critical drivers of project success in Trans Nzoia County.

Table 4. Coefficients for vision setting and project performance.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta	-
(Constant)	0.902	0.075	-	12.03
VSP	0.827	0.018	0.982	45.12
a. Dependent variable: PP				

The coefficients table demonstrates that vision setting practices have a positive and significant effect ($B = 0.827$, $\beta = 0.982$, $p < .001$), implying that improvements in vision setting are strongly associated with enhanced project performance. The constant ($B = 0.902$) suggests that even without vision setting, a baseline level of performance exists, but the contribution of vision setting is substantial. Overall, these findings underscore that clear project goals, strategic alignment, and effective communication of vision are critical drivers of project success in Trans Nzoia County.

The hypothesis testing results for vision setting practices (VSP) on project performance (PP) were evaluated using the t-values and significance (Sig.) values. The constant had a coefficient of 0.902, with a t-value of 12.03 and a p-value $< .001$, which showed that the baseline level of project performance was statistically significant. Vision setting practices recorded a coefficient of 0.827, a very high t-value of 45.12, and a p-value $< .001$. This meant that the null hypothesis (H_0 : vision setting practices have no effect on project performance) was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1 : vision setting practices positively influence project performance) was supported. The large t-value confirmed the robustness of the relationship, demonstrating that vision setting practices had a strong and reliable impact on project performance. In summary, hypothesis testing revealed that clear vision setting significantly enhanced project outcomes in Trans Nzoia County.

The present study's finding that vision setting practice is a significant positive predictor of project performance in Trans Nzoia County is strongly triangulated by existing theory and empirical evidence. Theoretically, it affirms Transformational Leadership Theory, where Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) posited that leaders who articulate a compelling vision inspire commitment, guide decision-making and align teams toward shared objectives. Empirically, this is corroborated by Dasí *et al.*, (2021) who, applying the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model, demonstrated that a clearly articulated vision amplifies motivation and opportunity, thereby improving outcomes in complex projects, a mechanism consistent with Goal-Setting Theory.

The direct leadership-performance linkage is further validated by Han *et al.*, (2025), who found transformational leadership has a direct significant impact on project success with indirect effects through team reflexivity (mediation $\beta = 0.205$) and project team resilience (mediation $\beta = 0.135$). Within the Kenyan devolved context, the Trans Nzoia results converge with Kibe *et al.*, (2025) in Murang'a County, who established that strategic and participatory target setting is instrumental in driving organizational outcomes by enhancing motivation, ownership and accountability, and with county-level studies in Nyamira and Tharaka Nithi which revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between strategic direction and county performance, with strategic direction identified as the most influential factor. This is reinforced by evidence from government-funded youth projects showing strategic direction had a positive and significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.230$, $p = 0.011$; Eris and Muthimi, 2024), collectively confirming that the Trans Nzoia finding is not isolated but part of a consistent pattern where vision clarity and strategic direction drive public sector project performance.

Conclusions

Based on the study findings, the study concludes that vision setting practices significantly enhanced project performance in Trans Nzoia County. The results demonstrated that clearly defined goals and a shared understanding of project objectives fostered alignment and improved overall performance.

Vision Setting Practices and Project Performance

- 1) Establish a county-wide framework requiring all development projects to articulate clear goals and measurable objectives aligned with county priorities.

- 2) Mandate stakeholder-inclusive vision-setting sessions to ensure collective ownership and alignment across departments.
- 3) Create a dedicated vision and strategy unit within the county project management office to oversee clarity and consistency of project goals.
- 4) Train project leaders and managers in strategic communication to improve inclusivity and translation of vision into actionable decisions.

Declarations

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