

Exploring Leadership Dynamics and Their Influence on Institutional Performance: A Qualitative Case Study of the Federal Housing Corporation in Ethiopia

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Abstract: A growing challenge in Ethiopia's housing sector is the need for effective leadership strategies to improve institutional performance and achieve sustainable development goals. Grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore leadership strategies used by leaders within the Federal Housing Corporation (FHC) to drive institutional performance. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with six senior leaders who had extensive experience in managing housing development initiatives. The participants were selected based on their demonstrated success in implementing leadership practices that influence organizational outcomes. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through four steps: data transcription, data organization, coding, and validation using NVivo 14 software. The analysis revealed five major themes: Leadership Approaches and Styles, Strategic Alignment and Institutional Performance, Sustainability and Community Impact, Accountability and Transparency, Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership Effectiveness and Capacity Building. The key recommendation is for FHC leaders to institutionalize transformational leadership practices by fostering innovation, aligning strategies with national housing priorities, embedding sustainability principles, and strengthening accountability and stakeholder engagement. The implications for positive social change include improving housing delivery systems, enhancing organizational integrity, and promoting inclusive community development, which collectively contribute to Ethiopia's long-term socio-economic growth.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how leadership dynamics influence institutional performance within the Federal Housing Corporation (FHC) in Ethiopia. Public sector institutions play a critical role in national development, particularly in emerging economies where agencies are responsible for delivering essential services such as housing and infrastructure (Gupta & Sharma, 2023). The World Bank (2023) shared that the FHC serves as a central institution in Ethiopia's housing sector, addressing urban housing shortages and supporting sustainable development goals. As Ethiopia continues to experience rapid urbanization and increasing demand for affordable housing, leadership effectiveness within such institutions becomes essential for achieving organizational goals and improving service delivery (Yohannes & Dinku, 2024; Markos, 2024).

Over the past decade, Ethiopia's housing sector has expanded alongside policy reforms aimed at improving

access to residential housing and strengthening institutional capacity (Emiru et al., 2023; Mesganaw & Kitila, 2025). Abera et al. (2025) and Yohannes and Dinku (2024) stated that despite policy reforms, public housing institutions continue to face persistent challenges, including leadership gaps, weak strategic alignment, and insufficient stakeholder coordination. These challenges often contribute to project delays, inefficient resource utilization, and reduced institutional performance, limiting the sector's ability to meet growing housing demands. As a result, leadership has emerged as a critical factor in addressing these operational inefficiencies and enhancing institutional effectiveness.

The Ethiopian economy increasingly relies on urban development and infrastructure expansion, placing additional pressure on public institutions such as the FHC to deliver services efficiently while maintaining transparency and accountability (World Bank, 2023). In support of these national development efforts, Ethiopia is implementing the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda to transform its economy from a predominantly state-led development

model into a more open, competitive, and private sector-driven system. Through this reform program, the government prioritizes macroeconomic stability, structural modernization, and deeper integration into the global financial system to promote sustainable economic growth, attract investment, and enhance economic competitiveness (Embassy of Ethiopia, Washington, D.C., 2025). In this context, leadership extends beyond administrative functions to include strategic vision, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive decision-making. Many scholars, including Asefa et al. (2024) and Nyoach et al. (2024), emphasized that transformational leadership is particularly effective in improving public sector performance by fostering innovation, aligning organizational objectives, and strengthening stakeholder relationships. However, many reforms fail to achieve desired outcomes when leadership strategies are not fully integrated with organizational processes, workforce capabilities, and governance systems.

The current research study enabled us to examine how leadership dynamics shape institutional performance within the FHC. Although the FHC has implemented initiatives to improve housing delivery, persistent inefficiencies such as project delays, coordination challenges, and weak strategic alignment continue to affect performance (Yohannes & Dinku, 2024; Markos, 2024). By exploring the experiences of senior leaders and managers, this study aimed to understand how leadership strategies influence outcomes such as service delivery, operational efficiency, and institutional sustainability at the FHC. The findings from the current study could contribute to support evidence-based leadership strategies that strengthen governance, enhance institutional performance, and contribute to sustainable housing development in Ethiopia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership within public institutions has emerged as a critical priority in response to increasing demands for efficient service delivery, pressures of urbanization, and the need for sustainable development outcomes in emerging economies (Alamri, 2023; Nyoach et al., 2024; World Bank, 2023). However, many public sector organizations, particularly in developing countries, continue to face systemic challenges such as weak strategic alignment, limited stakeholder coordination, and leadership inefficiencies that constrain institutional performance. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore leadership dynamics and their influence on institutional performance within the FHC in Ethiopia, with particular attention to leadership strategies, organizational effectiveness, and stakeholder engagement practices.

The literature review provided a critical synthesis of scholarly research on leadership dynamics and institutional performance in the public sector. The review drew primarily from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and institutional reports published between 2020 and 2025. Sources were identified using major academic databases, including Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, Sage Premier, and Emerald Insight. Key search terms

included *transformational leadership*, *public sector leadership*, *institutional performance*, *leadership strategy*, *stakeholder engagement*, and *organizational effectiveness* in Ethiopia. Aligned with best-practice standards, the review adopted an integrative approach by drawing on diverse disciplines, including public administration, leadership studies, organizational behavior, and development studies, instead of examining studies in isolation.

➤ Conceptual Framework Grounding the Research

The current study was grounded under the transformational leadership theory. James MacGregor Burns (1978) originally introduced the transformational leadership theory as a framework leaders can use to inspire and motivate followers, so they exceed expectations by appealing to higher ideals and moral values. Many researchers shared that leaders who demonstrate transformational traits, including positive influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized considerations, are more effective to create a shared vision, foster commitment among team members, and promote institutional learning and innovation (Asefa et al., 2023; Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023).

In the case of the FHC in Ethiopia, transformational leadership offers a powerful conceptual framework for exploring leadership dynamics and their influence on institutional performance. Since the FHC navigates challenges related to housing delivery, stakeholder engagement, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, understanding how transformational leaders affect organizational culture and team performance can provide key and valuable insights. Many researchers emphasized that transformational leadership is effective in environments undergoing reform or institutional change, because it enables us to create alignment between individual goals and organizational objectives and promotes a sense of appropriation and accountability (Asefa et al., 2023; Nyoach et al., 2024). Therefore, I applied transformational leadership theory to the current research study because it enabled me to identify the leadership behaviors and dynamics that either facilitate or hinder performance with the FHC in Ethiopia.

➤ Public Sector Leadership

Public sector leadership refers to the strategic, ethical, and administrative practices used to guide government institutions in delivering services and implementing policy. Unlike private sector leadership, which emphasizes profitability and competition, public leadership prioritizes accountability, equity, and service to the public interest (Goodwin, 2025). Gede and Huluka (2024) and Hailu (2025) shared that public leadership's role is particularly critical in contexts such as Ethiopia, where institutional effectiveness can be constrained by resource limitations and bureaucratic complexities, making strong leadership essential for improving organizational performance and restoring public trust. Many researchers highlighted the increasing importance of adaptive and transformational leadership in addressing complex governance challenges, such as housing shortages and service delivery gaps, which traditional hierarchical approaches often fail to resolve.

(Kant et al., 2023). Agazu et al. (2026) emphasized that transformational leadership plays a significant role in promoting innovation, motivating employees, and aligning organizational objectives with broader national development priorities.

Effective public sector leadership also shapes institutional performance through strategic vision, stakeholder engagement, and a strong commitment to ethical governance (Ayalew, 2024). According to Onson et al. (2025) and Radović-Marković (2024), leaders who promote participatory decision-making, clear communication, and collaboration contribute to enhancing organizational resilience and sustainability. Within Ethiopia's Federal Housing Corporation, leadership must integrate multiple priorities, including urban planning, social equity, and economic development, while demonstrating emotional intelligence and professional integrity. Furthermore, ethical leadership strengthens accountability and transparency, fostering trust and high performance in environments with increasing public scrutiny ((Awasthi & Walumbwa, 2023; Puansah et al., 2026). By adopting transformational leadership approaches that emphasize inclusiveness, adaptability, and integrity, public sector leaders can support meaningful institutional reform and improve service delivery outcomes, reinforcing the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational culture, governance practices, and sustainable development.

➤ *Institutional Performance*

Institutional performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its goals efficiently, effectively, and sustainably (Alamri, 2023; Ali et al., 2024). According to Boyanov (2024), leaders should evaluate institutional performance using indicators such as service delivery outcomes, effective use of resources, stakeholder satisfaction, and successful policy implementation. In the context of Ethiopia's Federal Housing Corporation (FHC), performance is not limited to internal efficiency but also reflects the organization's ability to deliver inclusive and accessible housing in line with its public mandate. Given increasing public expectations and persistent resource constraints, institutional performance becomes a critical measure of governance quality and leadership effectiveness for the FHC.

Beyond leadership, institutional performance is also shaped by organizational culture, accountability mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement (Djunaedi, 2024). According to Hosseini Tabaghdehi and Ayaz (2025), leaders who prioritize transparency, ethical behavior, and inclusive decision-making foster environments where performance goals are clearly defined and consistently pursued. In the Federal Housing Corporation, this includes timely and cost-effective project delivery while adhering to national standards and responding to public needs. Performance evaluation in such contexts requires a multidimensional approach that combines quantitative indicators, including housing output and budget utilization with qualitative

measures such as leadership influence, employee commitment, and citizen satisfaction. Accordingly, this study explored institutional performance as a central lens for understanding leadership effectiveness within the FHC, emphasizing how transformational leadership practices influence organizational culture, strategic alignment, and service delivery, and ultimately contribute to institutional resilience and reform in Ethiopia's public housing sector.

➤ *Leadership Strategy*

Leadership strategy is the purposeful deployment of communication and managerial practices organizational leaders use to influence employee behavior, ensure alignment with strategic priorities, and support the effective implementation of public sector goals (Jacobsen & Salomonsen, 2021). Harmen et al. (2025) stated that in public sector organizations, strategic leadership involves aligning internal operations with external mandates while fostering a culture of accountability and innovation. Effective strategies integrate key elements such as vision-setting, stakeholder engagement, and continuous performance monitoring to ensure institutional objectives are achieved despite bureaucratic challenges (Moussa, 2026). Within Ethiopia's Federal Housing Corporation (FHC), strategic leadership is crucial for managing housing policy complexities, coordinating across departments, and addressing evolving community needs. Transformational leadership is particularly relevant in this context, as it emphasizes innovation, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support to build adaptive and resilient teams capable of meeting increasing demands and resource constraints.

Strategic leadership also requires effective communication, delegation, and coordination mechanisms to ensure alignment across organizational units and improve service delivery (Asefa et al., 2023; Jacobsen & Salomonsen, 2021). Harmen et al. (2025) shared that by fostering collaboration and data-driven decision-making, leaders can reduce inefficiencies and promote continuous improvement. Additionally, leadership strategies must remain responsive to external pressures, including political priorities, stakeholder expectations, and citizen feedback, requiring adaptability, risk management, and transparent governance (Moussa, 2026). In Ethiopia's FHC, this responsiveness involves aligning institutional activities with national development plans while addressing local realities through inclusive engagement and collaboration. Overall, transformational leadership strategies play a vital role in strengthening institutional performance by shaping vision, empowering teams, and supporting sustainable reforms within the public housing sector. Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework showing how transformational leadership principles drive strategic leadership components, including (a) vision setting, (b) stakeholder engagement, (c) ethical governance and (d) performance monitoring, which collectively lead institutional outcomes like strategic alignment, sustainability, accountability, adaptability, and public trust.



Fig 1 Leadership Strategy Framework for Institutional Performance in Public Housing Agencies

➤ Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness in Ethiopia's public sector is increasingly understood as a multidimensional concept that includes service delivery, efficient resource use, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional adaptability (Asefa et al., 2023; Gebretsadik, 2022). Asefa et al. (2023) shared that several factors, including leadership style, strategic clarity, and employee empowerment influence organizational effectiveness. In agencies such as the Federal Housing Corporation (FHC), effectiveness extends beyond achieving housing targets to ensuring alignment with national development priorities and responsiveness to community needs. Ongoing public sector reforms have introduced performance-based management and accountability systems to strengthen institutional outcomes (Duressa & Debela, 2025; Ferede et al., 2024). Leadership plays a central role in this process, with transformational leadership linked to improved performance, innovation, and employee engagement across public organizations (Kant et al., 2023). However, the absence of visionary leadership and clear accountability structures continues to hinder effective service delivery in many institutions (Duressa & Debela, 2025, p. 6), whereas inclusive and forward-looking leadership enhances resilience and responsiveness.

Organizational effectiveness is further shaped by internal systems such as performance monitoring, coordination, and knowledge management, as well as external pressures including regulatory demands and stakeholder expectations (Gebretsadik, 2022). Ferede et al. (2024) shared that strategic leadership support change management, with knowledge sharing acting as a key enabler of improved institutional outcomes. In the FHC, this requires adaptability to policy changes, strong stakeholder engagement, and a culture of transparency and continuous improvement. Moreover, institutions that foster collaboration and adopt adaptive governance approaches are better positioned to maintain performance and legitimacy (Nauman et al., 2024; Zada et al., 2024). Asefa et al. (2023) stated that transformational leadership enables managers to navigate external pressures, identify opportunities during crises, and cultivate a positive organizational culture. In this study, organizational effectiveness served as a key lens for understanding how leadership strategies within the FHC influence institutional performance and contribute to improved governance and service delivery.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology using a single case study design to explore leadership dynamics and their influence on institutional performance within Ethiopia's Federal Housing Corporation (FHC). A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand complex leadership behaviors, decision-making processes, and organizational practices through rich, non-numerical data. Qualitative methods are particularly useful for exploring social phenomena in depth and capturing participants' perspectives within their natural context (Mardani et al., 2023; Mwita, 2022; Saunders et al., 2023). Additionally, the case study design enabled an in-depth investigation of leadership strategies within a real-world institutional setting, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how leadership practices shape organizational outcomes in the FHC.

The study was guided by a central research question: What leadership strategies do leaders within the FHC use to drive institutional performance? The target population consisted of six senior and mid-level leaders, including department heads, project managers, and strategic planners who were directly involved in decision-making and organizational performance. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, ensuring that only individuals with relevant leadership experience and knowledge of institutional processes were included. To enhance diversity of perspectives, maximum variation sampling was also applied, allowing representation from different departments and leadership levels. The final sample size was determined by data saturation, the point at which no new themes emerged from the interviews.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, which allowed for consistency across participants while providing flexibility to probe deeper into emerging themes. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed insights into leadership practices, strategic alignment, and institutional performance. Interviews were conducted via secure virtual platforms, audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. To enhance credibility, the

study employed member checking, where participants reviewed their interview transcripts to confirm accuracy. Additionally, field notes were maintained to capture contextual details and non-verbal cues that enriched the data. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the data collection process.

IV. RESULTS

Data analysis yielded five major themes that explained how leadership dynamics influence institutional performance within the Federal Housing Corporation (FHC), including (a) Leadership Approaches and Styles, (b) Strategic Alignment and Institutional Performance, (c) Sustainability and Community Impact, (d) Accountability and Transparency, and (e) Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership Effectiveness and Capacity Building. These themes emerged through systematic thematic analysis using NVivo 14 and reflect the core dimensions of transformational leadership.

Participants consistently emphasized that transformational leadership practices, including vision-setting, employee motivation, and innovation were central to improving institutional outcomes. Leaders highlighted the importance of aligning organizational strategies with national housing priorities, balancing short-term performance with long-term sustainability, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Additionally, accountability, transparency, and stakeholder engagement were identified as critical for building trust and enhancing service delivery.

➤ Theme 1: Leadership Approaches and Styles

All participants indicated that transformational leadership is fundamental to organizational success at the FHC. Leaders emphasized participatory decision-making, innovation, and individualized support as key practices that enhance employee engagement and institutional performance. These leadership practices collectively foster a collaborative organizational culture that drives adaptability and continuous improvement.

Table 1 Leadership Approaches and Styles (N = 6)

Subtheme	Participants	Percentage
Transformational leadership as central to success	6	100%
Vision-setting and shared organizational goals	3	50%
Participatory/collaborative decision-making	2	33.3%
Encouraging innovation and recognizing contributions	2	33.3%
Individualized consideration and mentorship	1	16.7%
Ethical leadership and trust-building	1	16.7%

➤ Theme 2: Strategic Alignment and Institutional Performance

Participants emphasized that aligning organizational goals with Ethiopia's national housing policies is essential

for improving institutional performance. Leaders highlighted vision communication, performance monitoring, and integration with socio-economic priorities as critical strategies.

Table 2 Strategic Alignment and Institutional Performance (N = 6)

Subtheme	Participants	Percentage
Alignment with national development plans	6	100%
Linking departmental goals to organizational vision	4	66.7%
Communication of vision and performance indicators	3	50%
Continuous monitoring and evaluation	2	33.3%
Integration with socio-economic priorities	2	33.3%
Transparency and stakeholder confidence	1	16.7%

➤ *Theme 3: Sustainability and Community Impact*

Sustainability emerged as a key leadership priority. Participants described balancing immediate performance

goals with long-term environmental, economic, and social outcomes. Leaders emphasized inclusive housing, community engagement, and innovative building practices.

Table 3 Sustainability and Community Impact (N = 6)

Subtheme	Participants	Percentage
Environmental sustainability practices	4	66.7%
Social equity and inclusive housing	4	66.7%
Long-term community development	2	33.3%
Stakeholder participation in planning	3	50%
Transformational mechanisms supporting sustainability	3	50%
Economic and operational sustainability	1	16.7%

➤ *Theme 4: Accountability and Transparency*

Participants highlighted accountability and transparency as essential for strengthening institutional

performance and maintaining stakeholder trust. Leaders reported implementing reporting systems, audits, and participatory governance mechanisms.

Table 4 Accountability and Transparency (N = 6)

Subtheme	Participants	Percentage
Reporting systems and performance audits	4	66.7%
Transparent communication and public reporting	3	50%
Stakeholder engagement and participatory governance	3	50%
Resource accountability and risk management	3	50%
Continuous improvement and organizational learning	1	16.7%
Ethical leadership and integrity	1	16.7%

➤ *Theme 5: Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership Effectiveness*

The final theme highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement and leadership capacity building.

Participants emphasized collaboration with communities, government agencies, and private partners, along with leadership development initiatives such as training and mentorship.

Table 5 Stakeholder Engagement and Leadership Effectiveness (N = 6)

Subtheme	Participants	Percentage
Inclusive stakeholder engagement	2	33.3%
Stakeholder trust and resource mobilization	3	50%
Leadership capacity building (training, mentorship)	3	50%
Collaboration and knowledge sharing	2	33.3%
Organizational resilience through partnerships	1	16.7%
Transformational leadership mechanisms	3	50%

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of transformational leadership in shaping institutional performance within the Federal Housing Corporation (FHC). The results indicate that leadership practices such as vision-setting, participatory decision-making, and employee empowerment contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness, aligning with existing literature that positions transformational leadership as a driver of innovation and

performance in public sector institutions. The emphasis on strategic alignment further demonstrates that effective leaders ensure coherence between organizational goals and national development priorities, thereby enhancing accountability and operational efficiency. Additionally, the integration of sustainability and community impact underscores the importance of balancing short-term outputs with long-term societal benefits, reflecting the evolving expectations placed on public institutions.

Moreover, the results reveal that accountability, transparency, and stakeholder engagement are not merely supporting functions but central components of leadership effectiveness. Leaders who foster open communication, participatory governance, and continuous learning create environments that strengthen trust, collaboration, and institutional resilience. The findings also suggest that leadership capacity building and stakeholder partnerships are essential for sustaining performance in complex and resource-constrained contexts like Ethiopia's housing sector. Overall, the study contributes to the broader understanding of the leadership-performance nexus by demonstrating that transformational leadership strategies operate as interconnected mechanisms that enhance governance, service delivery, and long-term institutional success.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role of transformational leadership in enhancing institutional performance within Ethiopia's Federal Housing Corporation (FHC). The results demonstrate that leadership practices such as vision-setting, participatory decision-making, innovation, and individualized support significantly contribute to improved organizational effectiveness and service delivery. Additionally, the alignment of organizational goals with national development priorities, along with a focus on sustainability and community impact, highlights the multidimensional nature of institutional performance. The study further reveals that accountability, transparency, and stakeholder engagement are essential for building trust, strengthening governance, and ensuring long-term institutional resilience. Overall, the findings confirm that transformational leadership serves as a critical foundation for driving organizational reform and achieving sustainable housing outcomes in Ethiopia's public sector context.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the FHC institutionalize transformational leadership practices through continuous leadership development, training, and mentorship programs. Strengthening strategic alignment mechanisms and embedding sustainability principles into housing projects will further enhance organizational effectiveness. Additionally, improving accountability and transparency through robust reporting systems and participatory governance structures will help build public trust and institutional credibility. The organization should also prioritize stakeholder engagement by fostering collaborative partnerships with communities, government agencies, and private sector actors. Finally, investing in leadership capacity building and knowledge management will ensure long-term adaptability and resilience, enabling the FHC to effectively respond to evolving housing demands and contribute to sustainable national development goals.

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