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The Effects of Strategic Leadership on Organizational Performance: A case study of Hibret Bank

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Abstract

This study examines the determinants of organizational performance, with a specific focus on key managerial and strategic factors. The objective was to identify significant predictors of organizational performance and assess their relative influence using empirical evidence. Employing a quantitative research approach, primary data were gathered from 250 respondents selected via appropriate sampling techniques using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression. The regression results demonstrate a strong, positive relationship between the independent variables and organizational performance, with the coefficient of determination indicating that 78.1% of the variation in organizational performance is explained by the combined effect of the explanatory variables. Furthermore, the model is statistically significant and explains a substantial proportion of the performance variance. The findings reveal that strategic decision-making, innovation orientation, and talent development exert positive and statistically significant effects on organizational performance, implying that organizations excelling in these areas achieve superior outcomes across financial and non-financial dimensions. Consequently, the study recommends that organizational leaders strengthen evidence-based strategic decision-making, foster a culture of innovation, and implement systematic talent development programs to enhance long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

Keywords: Organizational performance, strategic decision-making, innovation orientation, talent development.

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Introduction

Strategic leadership has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational success in today's dynamic and competitive business environment. It refers to a leader's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic changes that ensure long-term viability. In the banking sector—where rapid technological innovation, regulatory shifts, and evolving customer expectations constantly reshape the competitive landscape—strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in aligning organizational resources with external opportunities and internal capabilities (Hassen & Lemma, 2026). Without effective strategic leadership, organizations often struggle to maintain profitability and adapt to changing environments. Globally, the banking industry has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades (Duressa & Kidane, 2024); (Felipe et al., 2025). The rise of digital banking, competition from fintech, and increasingly stringent regulatory oversight have compelled banks to rethink their leadership approaches. Consequently, strategic leadership entails more than just managing day-to-day operations; it involves setting a vision, fostering innovation, and ensuring organizational resilience. In developing nations like Ethiopia, these challenges are even more pronounced due to financial dualism, underdeveloped infrastructure, and an evolving regulatory framework (Hordofa & Ionaşcu, 2025); (Alsoukini et al., 2025). In this context, the role of strategic leadership in enhancing organizational performance becomes both urgent and crucial. Ethiopia's banking sector is experiencing rapid growth, with both private and state-owned banks expanding operations to meet the rising demand for financial services (Ejigu & Desalegn, 2023); (Biresaw & Sibindi, 2025).

However, this growth also exposes banks to various challenges, such as intense competition, customer dissatisfaction, and technological gaps (Dafri & Al-Qaruty, 2023); (Nefla & Jellouli, 2025). Studies indicate that many Ethiopian banks fail to meet profitability targets due to inadequate strategic leadership practices. A reactive rather than proactive leadership style often results in inefficiencies, poor customer service, and limited innovation (Enaifoghe, 2026); (Alsobai & Aassouli, 2025). Thus, the need for strategic leaders capable of balancing short-term operational efficiency with a long-term strategic vision is paramount. Hibret Bank represents a significant case in this regard. It has grown into one of Ethiopia's leading private banks, boasting an extensive branch network and a diverse range of financial products (Dinka & Asfaw, 2026); (Elmahdy et al., 2025). The bank has undergone several strategic transformations, including digitalization initiatives, the expansion of customer services, and the restructuring of its leadership framework. Despite these efforts, questions remain regarding the extent to which strategic leadership directly influences organizational performance (Ayobami & Azhar, 2026); (Xu et al., 2025). A recent study at Addis Ababa University highlights that, although Hibret Bank has implemented strategic management practices, gaps persist in translating these strategies into measurable performance outcomes. This underscores the importance of examining the relationship between strategic leadership and organizational performance within the specific context of Hibret Bank (Ageli et al., 2025); (Ng et al., 2024).

Organizational performance in the banking sector is typically measured through indicators such as profitability, customer satisfaction, employee productivity, and innovation capacity (Tefera & Abebe, 2024); (Wang et al., 2020); (Opoko Apendi et al., 2025). Strategic leadership influences these outcomes by shaping organizational culture, motivating employees, and aligning resources with strategic goals. For instance, leaders who adopt a participatory and visionary approach tend to foster higher employee engagement, which in turn boosts productivity and service quality. Conversely, authoritarian or shortsighted leadership styles often stifle innovation and adaptability, leading to stagnation. In Ethiopia, where banks are striving to modernize and compete against global standards, the leadership styles adopted by executives can significantly determine success or failure. Furthermore, strategic leadership is closely linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical governance—both increasingly recognized as vital components of organizational performance. Banks in Ethiopia, including Hibret Bank, face pressure to demonstrate social responsibility by supporting community development, promoting financial inclusion, and adhering to ethical standards. Leaders who integrate CSR into their strategic vision not only enhance the bank's reputation but also contribute to sustainable performance. This dimension of leadership is highly relevant in Ethiopia, where financial institutions are expected to play a role in national development goals.

Methodology

To examine causal relationships between variables and test hypotheses, this study adopts a quantitative research approach rooted in post-positivist assumptions, utilizing an explanatory research design. The study was conducted at the Head Office of Hibret Bank S.C. in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The target population consisted of 1,050 management personnel and professional staff. Using Yamane's formula (1967), the calculated sample size was set at 285 respondents to ensure reliable representation at a 95% confidence level. Stratified random sampling was employed to divide the population into three strata—top-level management, middle-level management, and professional staff—to minimize selection bias.

Primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. The collected quantitative data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software (version 26). Data analysis encompassed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means), Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analysis to examine the influence of independent variables (Vision Articulation, Strategic Decision-Making, Innovation Orientation, Ethical Leadership, and Talent Development) on the dependent variable (Organizational Performance).

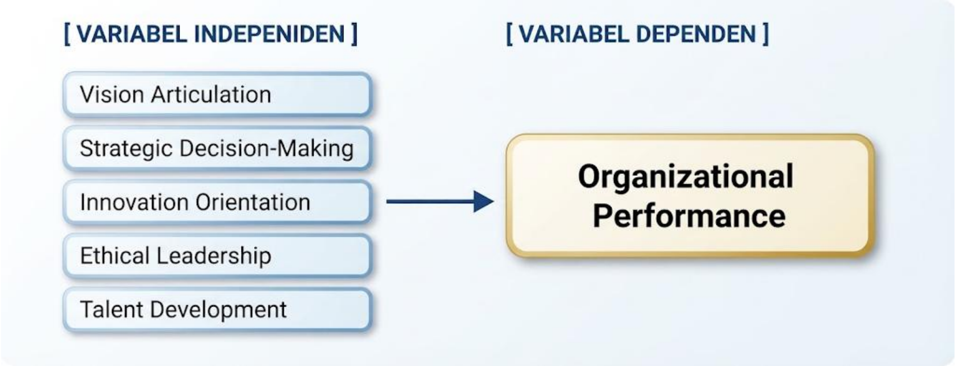

Figure 1. Research conceptual framework

Results

The questionnaire response rate in this study was highly satisfactory and sufficient for statistical analysis. Out of 289 questionnaires distributed to selected respondents, 250 were correctly completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 86.5 percent. This high response rate reflects strong participation and cooperation from the respondents, thereby enhancing the reliability and representativeness of the collected data. According to methodological standards, a response rate exceeding 70 percent is generally considered adequate for survey-based quantitative research. The respondents' demographic profile indicates that the majority of workers were male (149 individuals or 59.6%), while 101 were female (40.4%). Regarding age, the majority of respondents fell within the productive age groups of 25–30 years (37.6%) and 31–40 years (22.8%). In terms of education, the respondents possessed strong qualifications; 153 individuals (37.1%) held a Bachelor's degree (S1), and 73 (18.6%) held a Master's degree (S2). Work experience varied among the respondents, with the largest groups having two years (22.3%) and one year (13.1%) of experience.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	149	59.6
	Female	101	40.4
Age	<25 yea	43	17.2
	25-30 year	94	37.6
	31-40 year	57	22.8
	41-50 ear	29	11.6
	>50 year	27	10.8
Education status	Diploma	24	5.8
	Degree	153	37.1
	Masters	73	18.6
Working experience	1 years	54	13.1
	2 years	92	22.3
	3 years	47	11.4
	4 years	45	10.9
	5 years	12	2.9

The descriptive analysis for the Vision Articulation variable yielded a grand mean of 3.13, placing it in the average (moderate) category. The highest score was recorded for the item regarding employees' understanding of how their individual roles contribute to the bank's vision (mean = 3.33). However, the communication of the vision through formal channels—such as meetings and official communications—scored relatively low (mean = 2.88). This indicates that while the organizational vision exists and is generally understood, its dissemination and internalization across operational levels still require improvement. For the Strategic Decision-Making variable, a grand mean of 3.21 was obtained (moderate category). Employees rated the consistency of top management decisions with the bank's long-term goals (mean = 3.50) and the timeliness of decisions (mean = 3.35) most highly. Conversely, employee involvement or consultation in the strategic decision-making process received the lowest rating, with a mean of 2.84. These findings suggest that decision-making at the bank tends to remain centralized.

The Innovation Orientation variable produced a grand mean of 3.63, falling into the "good performance" category. The highest levels of perception were observed regarding employees' freedom to experiment with new ways of working (mean = 4.25) and the contribution of innovation initiatives to performance improvement (mean = 4.32). Nevertheless, certain aspects—such as active support for product or service innovation (mean = 3.06)—still require attention and consistent improvement efforts. Ethical Leadership recorded a high grand mean of 3.87 (good category). Respondents gave very positive ratings regarding management's fair treatment devoid of favoritism (mean = 4.32) and the honesty and integrity demonstrated in leaders' actions (mean = 4.15). This demonstrates that ethical values and integrity are firmly embedded within the work environment at Hibret Bank S.C. The Talent Development variable achieved a grand mean of 3.75 (categorized as good). The highest-scoring indicators were leadership efforts to identify and nurture high-potential employees for future leadership roles (mean = 4.36) and the provision of regular training programs (mean = 4.12). However, perceptions regarding the clarity of career advancement paths received a lower score (mean = 3.18).

Overall Organizational Performance achieved a grand mean of 3.38 (categorized as moderate). Aspect-specific results indicate that the bank's financial performance was rated very highly (mean = 4.24), as was its adaptability to the external environment (mean = 4.09). Conversely, employee productivity received the lowest rating (mean = 2.56), followed by perceptions of the industry competitive position (mean = 2.84), highlighting a disparity between strong financial results and internal human resource performance. Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the independent variables and organizational performance. Innovation orientation showed the strongest positive relationship with organizational performance ($r = 0.852$, $p < 0.01$), closely followed by strategic decision-making ($r = 0.841$, $p < 0.01$) and vision articulation ($r = 0.797$, $p < 0.01$). Talent development also demonstrated a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.289$, $p < 0.01$), whereas ethical leadership showed a correlation with performance that was not statistically significant ($r = 0.113$, $p = 0.075$). Multiple linear regression assumption tests indicated that the regression model met the necessary requirements. Multicollinearity testing yielded an average Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 1.22 (below 10) and Tolerance values above 0.10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues. Additionally, the Breusch-Pagan heteroskedasticity test resulted in a p-value of 0.6563 (> 0.05), confirming that the residual variance is constant (homoskedasticity). Normality test results indicate that the residuals are normally distributed. The histogram forms a symmetrical bell-shaped curve, suggesting that the majority of residuals are concentrated around a mean of zero.

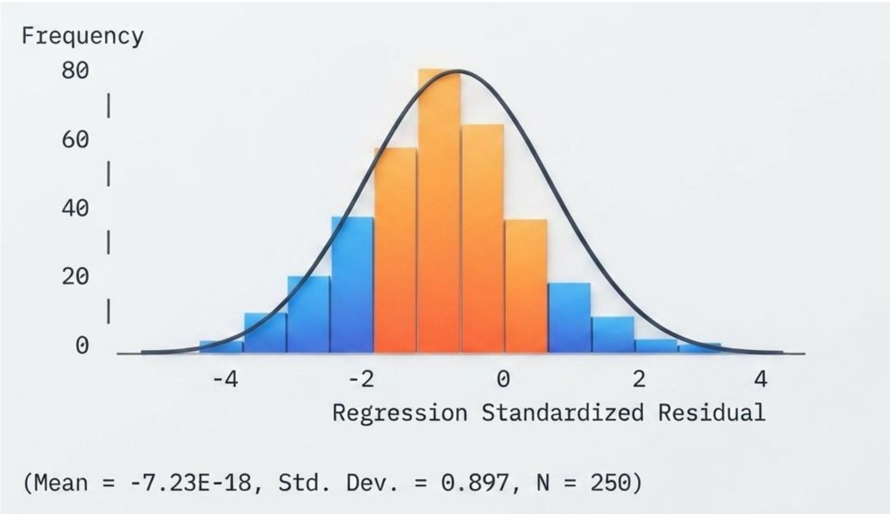

Figure 1. Regression residual normality test

The linearity assumption test results, assessed via the Normal P-P Plot, show that data points are scattered and consistently follow the diagonal line. This demonstrates that the relationship between the predictor variables and the dependent variable is linear. Based on the Model Summary, a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.883 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.781 were obtained. This indicates that 78.1% of the variation in organizational performance at Hibret Bank S.C. can be jointly explained by the five strategic leadership variables. The Adjusted R-Square value of 0.775 confirms the model's strong explanatory power, while the remaining 21.9% is explained by factors outside the model. The ANOVA results show an F-statistic of 172.935 with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). This confirms that the regression model is statistically significant overall and that the strategic leadership variables simultaneously exert a significant influence on organizational performance. Partial regression analysis results indicate that Innovation Orientation is the most dominant predictor of organizational performance (beta = 0.471, $p = 0.000$), followed by Strategic Decision Making (beta = 0.371, $p = 0.000$) and Talent Development (beta = 0.098, $p = 0.010$). Meanwhile, Vision Articulation (beta = 0.149, $p = 0.068$) and Ethical Leadership (beta = -0.033, $p = 0.360$) did not show a statistically significant direct influence at the 5% significance level. These findings emphasize that the drive for innovation, evidence-based decision-making, and the enhancement of human resource capabilities are the key pillars driving performance at Hibret Bank S.C.

Discussion

The finding that Innovation Orientation is the most dominant predictor (beta = 0.471) underscores the importance of a culture of experimentation within the highly regulated and dynamic banking industry. Employee freedom to experiment with new work methods and the effectiveness of innovation initiatives are shown to be directly correlated with increased operational efficiency and competitiveness. This aligns with dynamic capabilities theory, which posits that an organization's ability to continuously adapt and innovate is key to maintaining optimal performance amidst market uncertainty. On the other hand, the significant contribution of Strategic Decision-Making (beta = 0.371) reflects the importance of timeliness and consistency in the direction of top management's policies. Although the current decision-making process is still considered centralized (mean involvement = 2.84), the clarity of long-term targets set by management has successfully provided a sense of direction for the organization. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategic decisions would be greatly enhanced if management were to adopt a participatory approach that incorporates input from the operational level (Gandrita, 2023); (Holm et al., 2026).

Talent development was shown to have a significant positive partial impact (beta = 0.098), validating the importance of investing in human capital. The high level of emphasis placed on developing future leaders and conducting regular training programs indicates that Hibret Bank S.C. possesses a solid foundation for leadership continuity. However, the lack of clarity regarding career paths (mean = 3.18) represents a critical gap that, if left unaddressed, could undermine the long-term motivation of high-performing employees. The research findings indicate that the articulation of the vision does not have a significant direct effect on performance (beta = 0.149, $p = 0.068$). This suggests that a compelling vision will not automatically enhance performance if it remains merely at the level of rhetorical understanding without being translated into concrete action. Given that formal communication channels are still perceived as relatively ineffective (mean = 2.88), management needs to bridge the gap between the understanding of the vision at the upper level and the execution of daily tasks at the operational level (Arévalo et al., 2025); (Höglund et al., 2018).

A rather surprising finding emerged regarding the Ethical Leadership variable, which did not show a significant direct influence (beta = -0.033, $p = 0.360$). Although descriptive scores for leadership integrity and fairness were very high (grand mean = 3.87), ethical leadership appears to function as a "hygiene factor" or an enabler of the work climate, rather than as a direct primary driver of financial performance (Oise, 2026); (Kant et al., 2023). High ethical standards foster trust and compliance; however, achieving high performance still requires strategic execution and a tangible drive for innovation (Setyawan, 2024); (Wako Jio & Kero, 2024). An interesting paradox emerges regarding the Organizational Performance variable: financial effectiveness is rated highly (mean = 4.24), whereas employee productivity falls into the lowest category (mean = 2.56). This phenomenon suggests that the bank's current financial growth is likely driven by external market factors or asset efficiency rather than the optimization of human resource productivity. If internal productivity continues to be overlooked, this disparity risks becoming a latent threat to the stability of future financial performance (Biondi & Russo, 2022); (Bubenik et al., 2022).

In terms of theoretical implications, this study enriches the literature on strategic leadership within the banking sector of developing nations (Hummel & Jobst, 2024); (D’Oria et al., 2021). The analysis demonstrates that not all dimensions of strategic leadership exert the same influence on organizational output. A combination of a strong innovation orientation and decisiveness in strategic decision-making emerges as the key driver, whereas ethical leadership and vision articulation serve more as supporting foundations than as direct accelerators (Caldeira & Infante-Moro, 2025); (AlNuaimi et al., 2022). Regarding practical implications, the management of Hibret Bank S.C. is advised to promptly reformulate its internal communication strategy(Felipe et al., 2026); (Gaviyau & Godi, 2025). More interactive, two-way communication channels should be implemented to replace rigid, formal meetings. By fostering employee involvement in decision-making and brainstorming processes, the bank can not only improve participation scores but also strengthen employees' sense of ownership regarding bank policies (Men et al., 2023); (Viera Trevisan et al., 2024).

To address issues of low employee productivity and unclear career paths, the Human Resources (HR) division needs to establish a transparent, merit-based career pathway. Restructuring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)—integrating them directly with incentive schemes and skills development—will help align individual productivity with the bank's ambitious financial targets. Overall, the regression model—which explains 78.1% of the variance in performance ($R^2 = 0.781$)—confirms that strategic leadership is a vital determinant of Hibret Bank S.C.'s business continuity. Future research should explore moderating variables such as organizational climate or job satisfaction and expand the sample scope to include other financial institutions to enhance the generalizability of the findings (Abuzaid et al., 2024); (Ranczakowska & Kuznetsova-Bogdanovitsh, 2025).

Conclusion

This study examines the impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance at Hibret Bank S.C. across five key dimensions: vision articulation, strategic decision-making, innovation orientation, ethical leadership, and talent development. Employing a quantitative approach—using structured questionnaires analyzed via descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression—the findings indicate that the bank's leadership practices range from moderate to relatively high levels. Positive and significant relationships were found between most strategic leadership dimensions and organizational performance. Multiple regression analysis confirms that innovation orientation is the most influential determinant of the bank's performance, followed by strategic decision-making and talent development. Conversely, ethical leadership and vision articulation did not demonstrate a statistically significant direct impact on performance. Therefore, it is recommended that Hibret Bank S.C. strengthen its innovation-driven culture, facilitate participatory and data-driven decision-making, and optimize investments in digital banking technology to enhance its competitive advantage sustainably.

Conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest

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Author contributions

Y. T: Conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation; and original draft writing, review, editing, and visualization.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

The authors acknowledge the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools exclusively for language editing, grammar refinement, and enhancing the academic phrasing of this manuscript. The AI assistance was utilized solely to polish the text and improve readability. The authors reviewed, edited, and verified all final content to ensure accuracy and take full responsibility for the integrity of the research.

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