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**Strategies to enhance philanthropic organizations' performance
through transformational leadership: A Case of Higherlife Foundation,
Zimbabwe**

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Abstract

This study explores strategies for implementing transformational leadership to enhance organizational performance at the Higherlife Foundation, a philanthropic organization in Zimbabwe. Specific objectives were to evaluate current organizational performance, identify effective transformational leadership practices, and assess their impact on employee engagement and job satisfaction. The study employed an interpretivist research philosophy, utilizing a qualitative research design to explore complex, socially constructed, and subjective phenomena, such as leadership and organizational performance. Documentary evidence, as well as purposive sampling of employees chosen based on their roles, experiences, and insights into leadership dynamics and organizational performance, was used to gather data on job satisfaction, engagement, and leadership effectiveness. Questionnaires and interviews were also conducted to gather data. Based on the thematic analysis, study findings reveal persistent performance gaps in human resource management, work culture, operational efficiency, and internal collaboration. Transformational leadership practices, particularly inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, were found to significantly enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction. The study concludes that adopting transformational leadership practices can address identified performance gaps and improve organizational success. Strategies aimed at enhancing overall performance and ensuring sustainable improvement at Higherlife Foundation include implementing leadership development programs, conducting regular employee assessments, fostering a supportive culture, and utilizing a structured approach to transformational leadership.

Keywords: *Transformational leadership, organisational performance, employee engagement, job satisfaction*

Introduction to the study

The performance of philanthropic organizations is a crucial aspect of societal development. These organizations, unlike their for-profit counterparts, operate under unique conditions characterized by limited financial resources, high stakeholder expectations, and a mission-driven focus. However, the effectiveness of these organizations often hinges on the quality of their leadership, which directly influences their ability to meet goals and maximize impact. Thus, Higherlife Foundation, which provides educational opportunities and health services to vulnerable communities in Africa, exemplifies these challenges stemming from factors that include unclear direction, insufficient recognition, misalignment of personal and organizational goals, and limited professional growth opportunities. The 2023 Annual Report indicated that Higherlife Foundation achieved only 40% of its goals for the Financial Year. Further, an internal survey by Louis Allen Worldwide in 2023 revealed that employee engagement levels were below the expected average of 75%, and staff retention rates dropped from 80% in 2021 to 2022 Financial Year to 50% in 2022 to 2023, 60% of employees expressed feeling disconnected from the organization's mission, viewing their roles as non-essential. Job satisfaction was similarly low, with 40% of employees feeling undervalued and unsupported. Consequently, there are high staff turnover rates, resulting in diminished institutional memory and increased operational costs (Smith & Lewis, 2023). Given the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational performance, it is essential to explore strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of philanthropic organizations.

Transformational leadership presents a promising solution to these challenges as leaders who inspire and intellectually stimulate their followers can drive higher levels of innovation, employee satisfaction, and overall effectiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Taylor & Green, 2021). Despite the documented importance of transformational leadership, there is a gap in the literature regarding specific strategies and an actionable framework that leaders can adopt to enhance performance in philanthropic settings, particularly concerning involvement of staff members serving their notice, organizations undergoing leadership transitions, and the integration of new hires. Thus, this gap is particularly relevant for organizations like Higherlife Foundation, which has been transitioning from directive leadership style to transformational leadership. Understanding how to effectively implement transformational leadership during such periods is essential for maintaining and improving organizational performance. This gap suggests a need

for further research to explore how transformational leadership strategies can be effectively tailored and implemented during both stable and transitional periods to ensure sustained organizational performance. The main objective of this study is to develop actionable strategies that philanthropic organizations can adopt to effectively implement transformational leadership to improve organisational performance. Within Higherlife Foundation, the study seeks to assess current organisational performance; identify specific transformational leadership practices that can enhance organizational performance; and assess impact of transformational leadership on organisational performance metrics.

Theoretical Literature Review

Organisational performance can be defined as the extent to which an organisation can strategically position itself in the industry using an array of financial, human, and information resources (Contu,2020). In philanthropic organizations, performance metrics are different from profit making organizations, they encompass human aspects of the organization, specifically employee engagement and satisfaction (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). In this study, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee retention/staff turnover rate are critical indicators of organizational performance. Effective organizational performance ensures the achievement of the mission and intended social impact through high employee engagement, job satisfaction, adding intrinsic value, and low staff turnover rates. Understanding and enhancing these performance metrics is critical for the sustainability and success of philanthropic organizations like Higherlife Foundation.

The study used transformational leadership and employee engagement theories as robust frameworks for understanding and enhancing organisational performance, particularly in philanthropic organisations. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers beyond immediate self-interests for the greater good of the organization (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Bass, 1985). These leaders obtain extraordinary performance from their followers through

idealized influence, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Such leadership is particularly needed in non-profit sectors where the workforce is driven by values and commitment to a social cause rather than financial incentives.

Engagement Theory underlines the importance of employees' emotional and cognitive investment in their work. This theory posits that engaged employees exhibit higher levels of dedication, vigour, and absorption in their roles, which significantly enhances organizational performance (Schaufeli et al., 2002, Bakker and Demerouti, 2018, Bass & Riggio, 2006). This theory underscores the critical role of leadership in cultivating an environment where employees feel valued and invested in their work, leading to sustained organizational success. Thus, the theory is integrated into this study to help expose the mechanisms through which transformational leadership can contribute to improved organizational outcomes. Furthermore, by promoting a culture of respect, integrity, and inspiration, transformational leaders can enhance the psychological conditions such as psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and the psychological availability necessary for optimal employee engagement.

Empirical Literature Review

Empirically, Case et al. (2015) observes that World Wildlife Fund (WWF) serves as a prominent example of a philanthropic organization that has effectively implemented transformational leadership to advance its mission of global conservation. The case of WWF provides valuable insights into the practical application of transformational leadership principles, directly relevant to research on enhancing performance of philanthropic organizations through transformational leadership, with a specific focus on Higherlife Foundation. As WWF aims to protect biological diversity and encourage the sustainable use of natural resources, the clear vision that ignites global action and achieve significant conservation milestones (supporting world-class science and ground-level conservation solutions to address emerging environmental threats like climate change, habitat loss, and wildlife trafficking) aligns with transformational

leadership's tenets. The ability to drive innovation is crucial for philanthropic organizations like Higherlife Foundation, as it can lead to more effective and impactful interventions. By delegating authority and encouraging employees to take ownership of projects that align with the organization's mission, WWF created an environment where staff feel valued and motivated. For Higherlife Foundation, adopting similar strategies can help to address issues of low employee engagement and high turnover, thereby enhancing organizational performance.

On one hand, Save the Children aims to improve children's lives by providing access to economic, health, and educational opportunities. The case of Save the Children highlights key issues and strategies in implementing transformational leadership, offering valuable insights relevant to the research on enhancing philanthropic organizations' performance through transformational leadership, with a focus on Higherlife Foundation. Child (2015) observed that Save the Children faces significant funding and resource limitations, which hinder their ability to invest in innovative programs, staff training, and infrastructure improvements necessary to support transformational leadership efforts. Despite these challenges, the organization has sought to maximize its resources to drive meaningful change. Bagga, Gera, and Haque (2023) posit that the established cultures and operational procedures within nonprofit organizations often prioritize stability and risk reduction. Implementing transformational leadership was met with resistance from stakeholders accustomed to conventional hierarchical systems. This resistance posed a challenge to the organization's efforts to foster a more dynamic and adaptive leadership style. Save the Children recognized the importance of gaining support from a diverse range of stakeholders, including employees, funders, affiliated organizations, and local communities. By engaging these stakeholders through open communication and participative decision-making processes, the organization was able to build consensus around transformational leadership initiatives and overcome resistance to change. This approach aligns with transformational leadership's emphasis on collaboration and shared vision. To address resource limitations and reduce resistance to change, Save the Children adopted a phased implementation strategy for transformational leadership approaches. This incremental approach allowed Save the Children to manage change effectively and build momentum for broader transformational efforts. These insights are relevant to the research on enhancing philanthropic organizations' performance through transformational leadership, providing practical examples and strategies that can be applied to Higherlife Foundation and similar organizations.

Leadership has a profound impact on employee engagement and job satisfaction in non-profit organisations. Leadership styles, particularly directive leadership and an authoritarian style of leadership, can lead to low morale and employee disengagement. Conversely, transformational leadership, which is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate, is linked to higher levels of satisfaction and engagement. Miller's research (2020) indicates that transformational leaders, by valuing individual contributions and encouraging participation, can greatly enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Research by Vecchio et al. (2010) also supports the positive impact of transformational leadership on job satisfaction, demonstrating that it empowers employees to achieve higher performance through increased engagement. This style of leadership can be important in non-profits where the motivation often stems more from mission alignment than financial incentives. The effectiveness of transformational leadership in non-profits is exemplified by the success seen at Habitat for Humanity, where leadership has focused on empowering employees through mission-driven work, thereby enhancing engagement and reducing turnover (Brown, 2021).

A seminal study by Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) show that higher levels of employee engagement correlate directly with superior organizational performance. Further, Judge and Piccolo (2004) found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment. This relationship is under-guarded by the leaders' ability to communicate a clear vision, provide support, and encourage professional development, which normally results in increased employee engagement (Bass, 1990).

A study by Wright and Pandey (2010) postulates that in non-profit organizations, transformational leadership can significantly enhance organizational performance by promoting higher job satisfaction and commitment among employees. In philanthropic organizations, transformational leadership fosters engagement through its impact on volunteer retention and donor satisfaction (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2007).

Overall, the empirical review of literature highlights significant advancements and practical insights into the application of transformational leadership within philanthropic organizations. However, despite the documented benefits and successful applications of transformational leadership, a notable research gap remains in the literature. While the general

principles of transformational leadership are well-established, there is a lack of practical, actionable strategies that philanthropic organizations under unique contexts of limited resources, high stakeholder expectations, and mission-driven objectives have not been thoroughly explored. This study addresses this gap and contributes to the development of practical guidelines that can help organizations like Higherlife Foundation to overcome performance challenges and achieve their mission-driven goals more effectively.

Methodology

This study implemented an interpretivism research philosophy to understand the subjective understanding of a social phenomenon and how these meanings are constructed and individually understood (Saunders *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the research philosophy emphasized on understanding of the organization from lens of participants, (Smith, 2021). In this study, interpretivism approach enabled an in-depth exploration of how transformational leadership practices are perceived and experienced by employees at different organogram levels, providing nuanced insights into their impact on organizational performance.

The qualitative research design was used for exploring complex socially constructed and subjective phenomena such as leadership and organizational performance, providing a comprehensive understanding of the context-specific changing aspects at play within the study which involved a deeper examination of a single organization to gain knowledge that can be generalized to similar contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

For the purposes of the study, a population of 40 respondents comprising ten senior level management, 10 middle management, and twenty program officers from Higherlife foundation were purposely targeted as they were directly involved in program implementation, providing varied perspectives and a holistic understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on organizational. Given the target population of 40, the study utilized purposive sampling technique. According to Patton (2015), Palinkas *et al.* (2015) and Saunders *et al.* (2021), purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants who have specific knowledge on research questions. Thus, a sample of four senior managers, four middle managers and eight program officers were selected where the sample was considered sufficient to attain data saturation while still ensuring rigorous data collection (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Boddy, 2016; Vasileiou *et al.*, 2018).

Data collection methods utilized by the study were a survey, key informant interviews and a documentary search. Five strategic documents were analysed, while ten questionnaires were sent to surveyed employees and six semi-structured interviews were conducted three of which were exit interviews, resulting in holistic and detailed data on the impact of transformational leadership on organizational performance being gathered.

Electronic questionnaires delivered to participants using Google Forms and mails were used to collect qualitative data on the leadership style and how it affected organizational performance. Semi-structured interviews that were administered using both face to face means and virtually via Zoom were also used for in-depth exploration of the research objectives.

A pilot study for both the questionnaire and the interview guide was performed in February 2024, for the purpose of ensuring the validity of data that was extracted using such instruments. Full-scale data collection occurred between end of March and July 2024. Data collection procedures involved several steps to ensure comprehensive gathering of data. As advised by Bryman (2016), informed written consent was acquired from all participants to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study, the procedures to be taken as well as their rights as participants. Data from the document analysis were collected, using written notes, simultaneously with the interviews. Relevant documents, that include Annual Board packs, Programs Quarterly reports and Human Resources reports were identified and reviewed to gather contextual information on the Higherlife Foundation's leadership practices and performance metrics.

Triangulation (Patton, 2015), member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), thick description (Ponterotto, 2006; Geetz, 1973), audit trail (Ravitch & Carl, 2020, Ravitch *et al.*, 2020) were used to augment the validity as well as reliability of the study.

The data organization and analysis procedures involved several steps to ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis of the data that include transcribing interview recordings verbatim and organizing the transcripts and document analysis notes into a coherent and manageable format using NVivo; thematic analysis; and data presentation. Anonymity of participants was guaranteed using pseudonyms for example, first study participant was tagged "SP01." Key informant interviewees were also given an alpha-numeric tag with the six

informants tagged K01, K02, K03, K04, K05, K06. The study was done in compliance with the relevant research ethics guidelines by getting prior approval to conduct the study at Higherlife Foundation, Harare, Zimbabwe, abiding by principles of participants' confidentiality, voluntary consent, avoiding harm, and professional and ethical standards.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

An overview of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, length of service, and level of education of sixteen participants is considered. A 100% response rate was recorded in this study, signifying a high level of engagement and commitment of the respondents. The study findings, as shown in Figure 1, show an organisation with a relatively young workforce, presenting opportunities for the effectiveness of transformational leadership practices. The age distribution indicated a concentration of professionals in their mid-career while at Higherlife Foundation. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 35. Only 31 percent of respondents were over the age of 45, suggesting a lower representation of senior professionals. Many philanthropic organizations tend to attract young professionals who may be passionate about sustainable development, as the sector is lucrative to new graduates and young professionals who are looking for employment opportunities. According to a Council on Foundations (2022) report, there is an increasing involvement of younger generations in philanthropy. The findings from this research corroborate findings by a Non-profit Human Resource (2019), which discovered that the largest demographic of non-profit workforce was within the 30-40 age group.

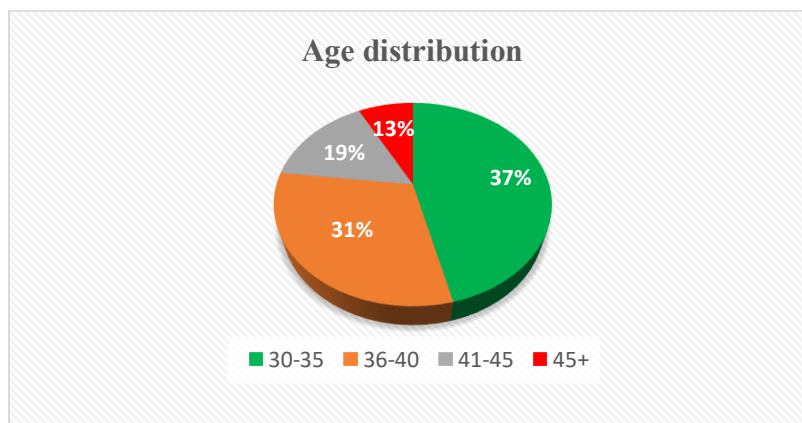


Figure 1: Showing age of respondents**Source: Field work (2024)**

Figure 2 shows that although Higherlife Foundation supports girl child empowerment, males still make up 62% while females account for only 38% of the total employees. These findings of the study concur with Alcaraz-Minnick (2020) who found out that philanthropic organisations with an operating annual budget of more than USD5 million were male-dominated. This pattern is also confirmed by Smith and Johnson (2023) who observed that women only occupy 19 percent of leadership roles. The gender distribution among the research participants in the study highlights the importance of considering the dynamics of gender inclusivity when implementing transformational leadership strategies, and/or in leadership practise in general.

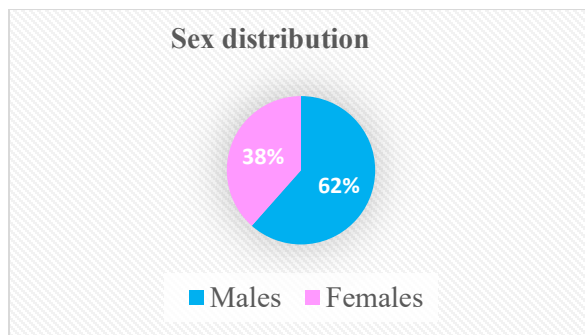
**Figure 2: Showing sex distribution****Source: Field work (2024)**

Figure 3 shows that most respondents (38%) have been with the organization for less than one year, indicating that they are relatively new employees at the organisation. Thus, the new group of employees brings a fresh perspective to the organisation as well as innovative ideas, both of which are critical components of transformational leadership.

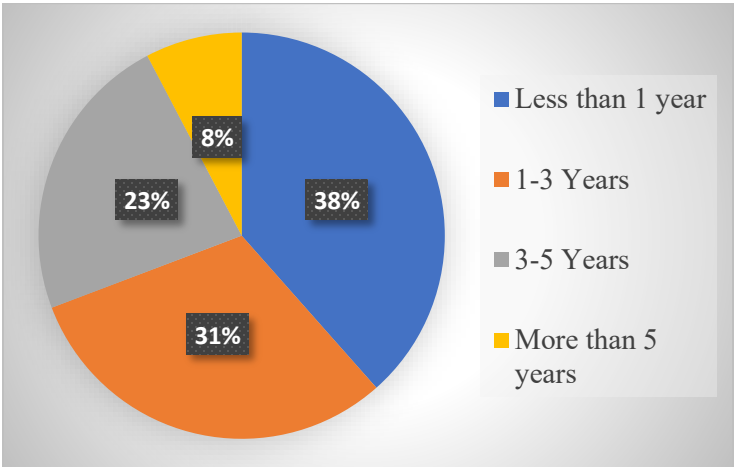


Figure 3: Period of service in organization

Source: Field work (2024)

According to Figure 3, 31% of study participants have been with the organisation for the period between 1-3 years, indicating that the experiences that they have may be able to provide valuable information on early impacts of transformational leadership. The findings corroborate findings by Zulu, Chety and Karedia (2017) who observed that non-profit making organisations have high employee turnover rates where employees seldom stay in organizations for a period exceeding three years. Twenty-three percent of the respondents have been with the organisation between 3-5 years thus individuals may have a balanced view of the organisational culture vis-à-vis the effects of the new transformational leadership practices.

Table 1 indicates a highly educated workforce within Higherlife Foundation, which is essential for effective transformational leadership in philanthropic settings. With such a well-educated pool of respondents, the findings from the research will be informed by deep theoretical as well as practical insights which can lead to more impactful conclusions pertaining to the study objectives.

Table 1: Showing respondents educational qualifications

Level of Educational qualification	Number of respondents	Percentage
Masters/post-graduate	16	100

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 2 shows that most (13) employees are permanent staff and three employees were serving their three-month notice. Including employees with different contracts is crucial when studying strategies to enhance organizational performance through transformational leadership as such employees can provide unique insights into the organization's strengths and weaknesses from a perspective that is both reflective and forward-looking.

Table 2: Showing respondents employment status

Type of Contract	Number of Employees/Participants
Permanent	13
Temporary	0
Serving 3 months' notice	3
Total	16

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 3 shows a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.704 which shows the instruments have acceptability and reliability credentials. The Cronbach Alpha based on standardised items score of 0.691 further supports the internal consistency of the research questionnaire used. Taber (2021) propounds the view that a value above 0.70 is considered as indicative of acceptable reliability.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha test results

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of variables
0.704	0.691	17

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

According to study findings from Table 4, significant gaps in human resource management exists, particularly in addressing staff issues and managing resources effectively. Despite having Human Resources (HR) systems in place, systems fail to address serious staff concerns, such as insufficient support for high workloads, staff retention, staffing shortages and inconsistent application of policy. This inadequacy contributes to employee disgruntlement, burnout and health risks, which negatively impact overall on employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Table 4: Thematic analysis from questionnaires and interviews

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Example quotes
Human Resource management	Human resource system effectiveness	Effectiveness of human resource function in addressing serious staff issues and managing resources.	"There might be systems in place, but the Human Resource function does not address the serious issues of the staff members" SP01
	Staffing and workload	Challenges related to staffing shortages, high workloads, and inadequate rest periods.	"Staffing shortages and burnout due to high workload without adequate rest periods pose risks to employee health." (SP06)
	Staff retention	Challenges related to staff retention and business continuity	K05 & K06 highlighted they were left in their respective department alone after their mates left the organisation for other opportunities due to push-factors such as toxic organisational culture and heavy workloads.
Work culture and environment	Work Culture Improvement	Need for creating a supportive work environment with safe spaces for discussions and realistic workloads.	"The work culture within the organisation could be improved by creating a safe space for healthy discussions." (SP03)
	Employee treatment	Ensuring fair treatment and a supportive environment where employees feel free to speak up without fear of repercussions.	"Treatment of staff & a workplace where employees are free to speak up & the organisation's tools aren't used to come after people who speak up." (SP04)
Operational efficiency	Program Implementation	Effectiveness of implementing programs, including resource availability and staff training.	"HLF thrives in achieving targeted goals, availing resources for work to be executed, organising trainings for staff." (K01)
	Administrative Processes	Delays and inefficiencies in administrative processes such as budget approvals and payments.	"Delays in administrative processes such as budget approvals and payments affect stakeholder relations and organizational progress." (K02)
	Communication gaps	Issues related to unclear expectations, conflicting information, and communication breakdowns within the organization.	"Disorganized timelines and communication gaps impact the quality and timeliness of work submissions." (SP10)
	Operational clarity	Lack of clarity in expectations and processes causing confusion and	"Lack of clarity in expectations and processes, leading to confusion and frustration among employees. For example, tasks may be assigned without prior discussion or preparation." SP06

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Example quotes
		frustration among employees.	
Management and Strategic Decision-Making	Training needs	The need for ongoing training for senior and middle management on strategy and decision-making.	"Senior and middle management may need constant training especially on strategy, making strategic/objective decisions." (K03)
	Inconsistency in strategy implementation	Need to be consistent in strategy and policy implementation	K05 highlighted that the strategy changed too often which affected operations on the ground and made stakeholders to be reluctant work with the organisation.
Collaboration and Visibility	Internal collaboration	Improving collaboration across different organizational pillars and enhancing visibility through various channels.	"There is a need for more collaboration across all pillars, enhance visibility through better advertising and social media presence." (SP06)

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 4 also shows that the current work culture and environment require substantial improvement. Participants expressed the need for a more supportive work culture that allows for open discussions and realistic workloads. There is also a clear call for fair treatment and recognition of employees. The current environment, where employees may fear repercussions for speaking up, and the need for better workload management, suggests a disconnect between organizational policies and employee needs. Addressing these concerns is essential for boosting employee morale and engagement, and ultimately staff turnover rate.

Findings in Table 4 further highlight several operational inefficiencies affecting organizational performance. Although Higherlife Foundation has made strides in program implementation and staff training, issues such as delays in administrative processes, communication gaps, and lack of clarity in expectations hinder effective operation. These inefficiencies lead to frustration among employees and impact the quality and timeliness of work.

The need for ongoing training for senior and middle management is evident from the findings in Table 4. Participants indicated that management would benefit from continuous development in strategic decision-making and engagement with support recipients. This suggests that current management practices may not fully support effective strategy implementation or stakeholder engagement, which could be impacting organizational performance.

The findings as presented in Table 4 also reveal a need for improved internal collaboration and greater visibility for the organization. Participants suggested that enhancing collaboration across organizational pillars and increasing visibility through better advertising and social media presence could positively impact the organization's effectiveness. This indicates that while some programs are successful, greater coordination and external engagement are required to fully leverage the organization's resources and capabilities.

Overall, the interpretation of these findings reveals persistent performance gaps underscoring the need for strategic interventions to address identified gaps in HR management, work culture, operational efficiency, management practices, and internal collaboration. By addressing these issues, Higherlife Foundation can enhance its organizational performance, improve employee engagement and satisfaction, and achieve its goals more effectively.

Building on the first objective, the second objective aims to identify the specific transformational leadership practices that enhance organizational performance in philanthropic settings.

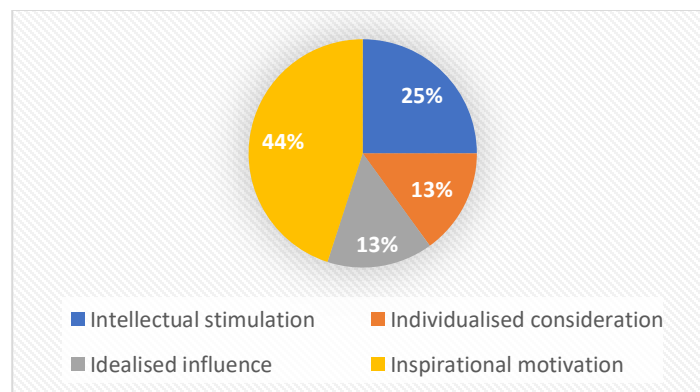


Figure 4: Transformational leadership traits that enhance organisational performance
Source Fieldwork 2024

Figure 4 reveals that most of the respondents highlighted inspirational motivation as a key practice of transformational leadership that can enhance organisational performance. This leadership trait involves leaders communicating a compelling vision and fostering a sense of purpose among employees (Wiltshire, Malhotra, and Axelsen, 2018). SP02 highlighted that the vision and mission of Higherlife Foundation serve as an inspiration to those who work under it.

SP04 added that the way the vision is articulated in prayer meetings creates a sense of motivation and makes employees feel like they are making a positive difference in the world. SP06 emphasized that inspirational motivation can be done through leaders sharing a clear and compelling vision, setting clear goals, and empowering the team. SP10 also remarked that “The articulation and reiteration of the mission inspires me and motivates me to work harder as I believe that what we are doing is meaningful.” Furthermore, SP02 noted that raising leaders who will take on a leadership mantle can be done through equipping youth with different mentorship initiatives. The phenomenon of inspirational motivation being an important trait of transformational leadership in philanthropic settings also resonates with studies by Khuram and Hasan (2023) who discovered that inspirational leadership was an effective leadership trait that drove organisational performance. Findings also corroborate with those of Tuan (2017) who found out that inspirational motivation was a key driver of promoting exploitation and exploration activities within organisations operating in environmental awareness activities, leading to increased agility. The implication of this finding is that inspirational motivation may have a positive bearing on employee motivation and engagement. Motivated and inspired team members are highly likely to have heightened levels of job satisfaction and employee morale; inspired workers are also highly likely to be enthusiastic about their work and dedicated to furthering the organization’s objectives.

Figure 4 shows that intellectual stimulation was a second ranked transformational leadership trait which focuses on an effective transformational leadership practice that can solve poor organizational performance through the ability of a leader to stimulate innovation and creativity through challenging traditional practices. It was observed by Alrowad et al. (2017) that intellectual stimulation is often rife in philanthropic settings where there is a need for radical initiatives. SP01 emphasized the importance of supporting staff development through LinkedIn courses, leadership workshops, and programs like the Global Leadership Summit as this fosters a culture of continuous learning and innovation. SP05 mentioned that intellectual stimulation can be practiced through Power Hour sessions where staff members are encouraged to share their experiences and ideas for improvement. SP08 added that these sessions also promote reading, connecting with industry experts, and pursuing educational support, while SP02 and SP03 also observed the value of working meetings and ideation processes during planning and

implementation phases. The presence of such sessions could enable intellectual stimulation and innovation of ideas to be effectively practiced.

According to Figure 4, idealised influence and individualised consideration were least cited by participants as an effective transformational leadership practice. SP05 and K02 noted that leaders at Higherlife Foundation inspire and motivate others through their integrity, dedication to the organization's mission, and ethical conduct. SP10 emphasized that at the highest levels, values are lived and demanded, which can be cascaded to other levels of influence within the organization. This ensures consistency and alignment with the organization's vision and fosters a strong organizational culture. Furthermore, SP08 and SP10 suggested implementing more custom tailored development plans and mentorship opportunities to enhance individual growth and satisfaction. K01 added that getting to know the team through one-on-one meetings and understanding their interests and career goals can help in strategic delegation and recognizing individual contributions. SP05 stressed the importance of striking a balance between employee capacity and organizational work needs, ensuring that employees feel valued and supported in their roles. Thus, the findings highlight the significance of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration in enhancing organizational performance at Higherlife Foundation.

According to Table 5, 19% of employees exhibit very low engagement, which poses a significant challenge for the organization and its leadership. Very low employee engagement can lead to decreased productivity, higher absenteeism, and increased turnover rates, negatively impacting overall performance (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

Table 5: Rates of Employee Engagement

Level of Engagement	Respondents	Percentage size
Moderate	7	43
High	5	31
Very high	1	6
Low	0	0
Very low	3	19
Total	16	100

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5 shows that most (43%) of the respondents had a moderate engagement rate, suggesting a level of involvement where employees may feel connected to an organisation and its mission, but may not necessarily demonstrate high levels of initiative or show a lot of emotional investment for their work. While workers with moderate engagement levels might do a good job of carrying out their duties and making a positive impact on the organization's objectives, they might not be as passionate as workers with higher engagement levels. This degree of involvement may result from things like job satisfaction, alignment with organizational ideals, or other obligations that affect their level of commitment.

Table 5 also shows that 31% of the total respondents, reported high levels of employee engagement often implying proactive behaviours such as taking initiative, seeking opportunities for growth and improvement, and actively contributing ideas and efforts beyond their immediate responsibilities. Employees with high engagement are valuable assets to philanthropic organizations because they often drive innovation, foster a positive organizational culture, and inspire their colleagues. They are more likely to go above and beyond in their roles, contributing to enhanced organizational performance and the achievement of impactful outcomes.

According to Table 5, the least number of participants (6%), reported a very high engagement rate. Very highly engaged workers frequently exhibit excellent initiative, leadership abilities, and a pro-active attitude towards their duties. Zhang, Liu and Wang (2024) also posit that change management would be easier when you have such a group, which overall contributes to attainment of organisational objectives.

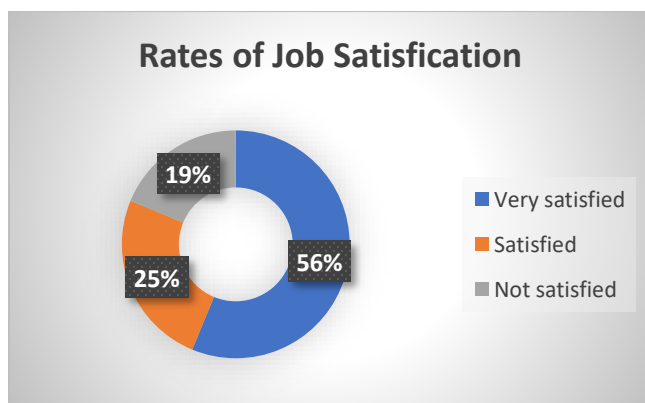


Figure 5: Showing job satisfaction rates at HLF

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

According to Figure 5, most (56%) of respondents mentioned that they were very satisfied with their jobs, while a quarter of the respondents were satisfied with their jobs, implying that HLF currently meets most employees' expectations in terms of work conditions and management. High job satisfaction levels are advantageous to organizations because they boost employee morale, promote motivation, and lower turnover rates. Such findings from the research are in line with Jnaneswar and Ranjit (2020) who observed that job satisfaction rates in philanthropic settings are often very high.

Conversely, Figure 5 indicates the least proportion (19%) of employees that report no job satisfaction, which poses a significant challenge for the organization and its leadership. Low job satisfaction can lead to decreased productivity, higher absenteeism, and increased turnover rates, negatively impacting overall performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). This statistic suggests underlying issues within the organizational culture or management practices that need to be addressed.

Thus, transformational leadership, especially individualized consideration, involves tailoring leadership approaches to meet the unique needs of each employee, thereby improving job satisfaction and engagement. Providing personalized career development opportunities and consistent feedback can strengthen employees' connection to their roles and the organization. For example, K03 mentioned, "More personalized career development opportunities and consistent feedback further strengthen my engagement and satisfaction." Individualized consideration also involves recognizing and addressing individual strengths, which can lead to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. This approach aligns with Avolio and Bass's (2004) findings that personalized support contributes to better employee outcomes.

Clear communication and well-defined expectations are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and engagement. SP06 highlighted this connection: "The leadership practices at Higherlife Foundation have influenced my job satisfaction positively in many ways, particularly when there are clear communication and defined expectations." Effective communication helps in setting realistic expectations and providing feedback, which are essential for maintaining high levels of engagement and satisfaction (De Cremer & Van Knippenberg, 2002).

Research supports the positive impact of transformational leadership practices on employee engagement and job satisfaction. Judge and Piccolo (2004) found a strong correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. Wang et al. (2011) emphasized that leadership practices significantly affect employee engagement. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also highlight the role of supportive leadership in enhancing engagement levels. These studies corroborate the findings from the Higherlife Foundation, demonstrating that transformational leadership practices can effectively improve organizational performance metrics.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study aimed to explore strategies for implementing transformational leadership to enhance organizational performance in philanthropic organisations, using Higherlife Foundation, Harare, Zimbabwe, as a case study. Data for the study were collected through documentary search as well as a survey and key informant interviewees involving sixteen respondents where questionnaires as well as a semi-structured interview guide were utilised. Guided by a qualitative research design, the data sets obtained through these methods were analysed using thematic analysis with the data presented in the form of pie charts and tables.

The first objective was to assess the current organisational performance of Higherlife Foundation. Study findings reveal persistent performance gaps underscoring the need for strategic interventions to address identified gaps in HR management, work culture, operational efficiency, management practices, and internal collaboration. The second objective was to identify the specific transformational leadership practices that enhance organizational performance in philanthropic settings. The findings highlight the significance of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration in enhancing organizational performance at Higherlife Foundation. The third objective focused on the impact of transformational leadership on organisational performance metrics such as employee engagement and job satisfaction within the Higherlife Foundation. The findings indicate that transformational leadership practices, particularly inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, play a pivotal role in enhancement of employee engagement and job satisfaction at Higherlife Foundation. Final objective sought to develop actionable strategies that philanthropic organizations can adopt to effectively implement transformational leadership

and improve organisational performance. Based on study findings, the following strategies are recommended:

- Continuous transformational leadership training and development that provide thorough leadership development courses at all levels of authority.
- Standardisation of transformational leadership practices and strategies among all departments through innovative ways that encourage a culture of creativity and critical thinking.
- Enhanced employee engagement by introducing mentorship schemes and employee recognition programs that celebrate employees' accomplishments and contributions.
- Continuous evaluation and adaptation of leadership techniques as well as their effects on organizational performance.
- Aligning organizational culture and values with the transformational leadership methods for sustained benefits of transformational leadership style.

Given that the study was confined to one organisation which often makes it difficult to make generalisations across the whole sector, there may be a need to compare the effects of transformational leadership across various organisations within the sector to identify universal principles and context specific adaptations. This can help ascertain how organisational size influences the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Studies can also be done to ascertain the impact of technology and hybrid work-roles on the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Future research may delve on whether factors like virtual teams, remote work arrangements, presence of multi-cultural teams may enhance or hinder leadership effectiveness and employee outcomes.

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