

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effectiveness of Transformational Leadership in National and International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Yangon

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses into the organizational effectiveness and leadership dynamics of national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Yangon. Myanmar. The study's objectives include profiling NGO leaders, evaluating transformational leadership styles, and assessing organizational effectiveness. A quantitative research strategy is employed, with a structured questionnaire survey distributed to professionals in the NGO sector. The findings reveal a balanced leadership demographic with a slight predominance of younger leaders, higher levels of educational attainment, and a typical hierarchical structure. Leadership tenure is diverse, reflecting both short-term and long-term service among leaders. Although leadership and management training are common, a notable proportion of leaders lack formal training, indicating opportunities for enhanced professional development. Overall, performance metrics such as employee morale, motivation, and leadership effectiveness are rated as satisfactory, with age differences influencing leadership perspectives and organizational outcomes. These insights highlight the importance of tailored transformational leadership strategies to address specific needs within the sector.

KEYWORDS

Transformational Leadership; Performance Effectiveness; Non-Governmental Organizations;

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Transformational leadership elements have various effects on performance effectiveness.
 - ❖ External relationship building suggests relatively better performance in managing and building external relationships.
 - ❖ It is recommended that the sector prioritize leadership development programs to ensure that all leaders have access to relevant professional development opportunities.
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INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing and complex world, effective leadership is more crucial than ever for organizations to thrive and make a meaningful impact (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021). Among various leadership styles, transformational leadership has emerged as a particularly effective approach, as it empowers leaders to inspire, motivate, and empower others to achieve extraordinary results (Deng et al., 2022). This approach is particularly significant in the context of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which play a vital role in addressing pressing social and environmental issues worldwide (Rigolon & Gibson, 2020).

This study highlights the significance of transformational leadership styles among the national and international NGO heads, recognizing the crucial role they play in shaping the organization's overall direction and culture (Valldeneu et al., 2021). Transformational leadership, as depicted in the framework of this study, encompasses key dimensions such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Saad Alessa, 2021). It underscores the direct impact of NGO heads' transformational leadership styles on the organization's effectiveness, highlighting the importance of leadership in driving organizational outcomes and overall performance (Kusi et al., 2021). By fostering a conducive learning environment, effective leadership can catalyze success and boost organizations forward (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023)

Myanmar's complex political landscape, marked by decades of military rule and recent democratization, has had a profound impact on the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country (Win, 2024). In the 1980s, NGOs emerged to provide humanitarian aid and relief efforts in response to the country's economic crisis, exacerbated by international sanctions and mismanagement in Myanmar (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Organizations such as the Red Cross and CARE International played a pivotal role in delivering vital assistance to affected communities.

Throughout the years, national and international NGOs in Myanmar shifted their focus from providing emergency aid to tackling long-term development challenges (Myanmar Information Management Unit, 2017). They addressed pressing issues like education, healthcare, and human rights, making a tangible impact on local communities. The emergence of local organizations, such as the Myanmar Egress Foundation and the Myanmar Development Research Institute (MDRI), marked a significant milestone in this journey as well. The MDRI has been dedicated to researching and analyzing development issues in Myanmar, shedding light on the country's development needs. Today, these organizations are key players in Myanmar's development landscape, working closely with international partners to drive positive change.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

MATERIALS

Software

The study employs SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) as the principal instrument for data analysis, given its robust capabilities in handling a wide range of statistical procedures essential for social science research (Rahman & Mukhtadir, 2021). SPSS enables researchers to efficiently manage, analyze, and interpret large datasets, making it an ideal choice for quantitative studies involving complex variables and relationships.

METHOD

Quantitative Research Method

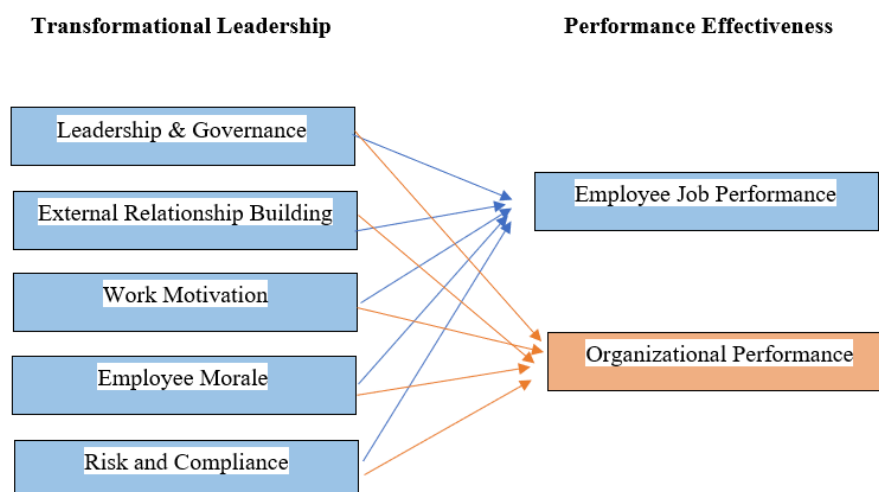
The study utilized a quantitative research method to evaluate the effectiveness of transformational leadership within national and international NGOs. Data are gathered using a structured questionnaire

survey designed to capture numerical feedback on leadership effectiveness. To reach the target respondents, the survey was distributed through specific Facebook groups, consisting of individuals who work for NGOs in Yangon, Myanmar and as well as through LinkedIn connections associated with national and international NGOs who work in Yangon, Myanmar. This approach aims to engage a broad and relevant audience, including professionals actively involved in these organizations.

Research Framework

The study's conceptual framework outlines the relationships between respondent's profile, leadership styles of national and international NGO heads, and performance of national and international NGOs. Two hypotheses test the relationships between respondent's profile and leadership styles (H1), and between leadership styles and organizational performance (H2). The hypotheses are derived from the conceptual framework, which shows that individual characteristics affect leadership styles and that leadership styles are independent of organizational performance. By considering dependent variables (leadership styles and performance) and independent variables (respondent's profile), the study aims to investigate statistically significant associations between them, which will reveal the relationships between individual characteristics, leadership styles, and organizational performance.

Figure 1. Research framework



Survey Development

For data collection, a structured survey questionnaire is employed to gather insights on transformational leadership from professionals working in national and international NGOs based in Yangon, Myanmar. The questionnaire is distributed electronically through targeted channels, including specialized Facebook groups and LinkedIn connections focused on employees of national and international NGOs. This method aims to reach a diverse and relevant pool of respondents who are actively engaged in these organizations (Lietz, 2010). The researcher used the questionnaire as the measuring channel in gathering and collecting data. The questionnaires are rated according to four degrees to be chosen by the respondents namely; 4 – Very Satisfactory (VS), 3 – Satisfactory (S), 2 – Unsatisfactory (U), and 1 – Poor (P). The weighted arithmetic mean is the statistical tool used to determine the acceptable variables.

The population for this study consists of professionals working in national and international NGOs based in Yangon, Myanmar. The study is focused on individuals actively engaged in these organizations who are able to provide valuable insights into transformational leadership practices. The aim is to capture a broad range of perspectives from professionals involved in various aspects of leadership and organizational operations within the targeted sector.

ANOVA Test

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical method employed to ascertain whether significant differences exist among the means of three or more independent groups (Liu & Wang, 2021). This method is particularly useful for comparing multiple groups at the same time to identify any significant differences among them regarding a specific dependent variable.

The fundamental concept of ANOVA is to examine the variance inside each group and juxtapose it with the variance among the groups. If the between-group variance substantially exceeds the within-group variation, it indicates that at least one group mean differs from the others (Wooditch, 2021).

RESULTS

The results provide a broad overview of the outcomes observed during the research. They reflect patterns, trends, and key observations that emerged from the data, providing invaluable knowledge about the effect of transformational leadership elements on employees' attitudes. These findings help illustrate the relationship between different factors and contribute to a better understanding of the subject matter. While some results confirmed initial expectations, others revealed unexpected developments that may warrant further exploration. Overall, the results serve as an essential basis for drawing conclusions and guiding future work.

Table 1. Overall Mean Values of Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Organizational Performance	96	3.16	Satisfactory
Employees Performance	96	3.24	Satisfactory
Employee Morale	96	3.13	Satisfactory
Work Motivation	96	3.25	Satisfactory
Risk and Compliance	96	3.14	Satisfactory
External Relationship Building	96	3.37	Satisfactory
Leadership and Governance	96	3.17	Satisfactory

Table 4.7 depicts the following information:

All variables are rated as "Satisfactory" based on their mean scores, indicating that the overall performance, morale, motivation, risk management, external relationships, and leadership are adequately met but have room for improvement.

Highest Score: External Relationship Building (3.37) – suggests relatively better performance in managing and building external relationships.

Lowest Score: Employee Morale (3.13) – indicates that employee morale is the area with the most potential for improvement.

The data suggests a generally positive but modest assessment across all areas. While the performance in each category is acceptable, there are opportunities for improvement. Specifically, enhancing employee

morale and addressing any specific issues related to organizational performance could lead to a more "Very Satisfactory" overall rating. Focused efforts in these areas could improve overall satisfaction and effectiveness.

Table 2. ANOVA by Respondent's Age

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Source of Variations</i>	<i>Sum of Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Organizational Performance	Between Groups	1.02	1	1.02	6.04	0.16	Not significant
	Within Groups	15.87	94	.17			
	Total	16.89	95				
Employees Performance	Between Groups	1.86	1	1.86	10.58	.002	Significant
	Within Groups	16.69	94	.18			
	Total	18.55	95				
Employee Morale	Between Groups	1.53	1	1.53	8.23	.005	Significant
	Within Groups	17.51	94	.19			
	Total	19.04	95				
Work Motivation	Between Groups	.75	1	.75	3.34	.071	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.25	94	.23			
	Total	22.00	95				
Risk and Compliance	Between Groups	.22	1	.22	1.30	.257	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.52	94	.17			
	Total	15.74	95				
External Relationship	Between Groups	.69	1	.69	3.07	.083	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.19	94	.23			
	Total	21.88	95				
Leadership and Governance	Between Groups	.78	1	.78	4.91	.029	Significant
	Within Groups	14.99	94	.16			
	Total	15.78	95				

In summary, the ANOVA results indicate significant differences in *Employees Performance*, *Employee Morale*, and *Leadership and Governance* based on age groups, as evidenced by their p-values being below the 0.05 threshold. Conversely, the differences in *Organizational Performance*, *Work Motivation*, *Risk and Compliance*, and *External Relationship Building* are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These findings suggest that age may influence certain aspects of organizational assessments, but not all variables show significant variations based on Age.

Table 3. ANOVA by Respondent's Education Attainment

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Source of Variations</i>	<i>Sum of Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Organizational Performance	Between Groups	.54	1	.54	3.12	.081	Moderately Significant
	Within Groups	16.35	94	.17			
	Total	16.89	95				
Employees Performance	Between Groups	.50	1	.50	2.62	.109	Not Significant
	Within Groups	18.05	94	.19			
	Total	18.55	95				
Employee Morale	Between Groups	.60	1	.60	3.08	.083	Moderately Significant
	Within Groups	18.44	94	.20			
	Total	19.04	95				

Work Motivation	Between Groups	.13	1	.13	.56	.457	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.87	94	.23			
	Total	22.00	95				
Risk and Compliance	Between Groups	.07	1	.07	.44	.510	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.67	94	.17			
	Total	15.74	95				
External Relationship	Between Groups	.00	1	.00	.01	.929	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.88	94	.23			
	Total	21.88	95				
Leadership and Governance	Between Groups	.23	1	.23	1.39	.241	Significant
	Within Groups	15.55	94	.17			
	Total	15.78	95				

The analysis indicates that educational attainment may have a somewhat significant impact on Organizational Performance and Employee Morale, but it does not have a significant effect on Employees Performance, Work Motivation, Risk and Compliance, External Relationships, and Leadership and Governance. The results suggest that while there might be some trends worth exploring further, there is no strong, consistent evidence that educational attainment significantly impacts these performance metrics in the studied context.

Table 4. ANOVA by Respondent's Position

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Source of Variations</i>	<i>Sum of Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Organizational Performance	Between Groups	1.18	2	.59	3.49	.035	Significant
	Within Groups	15.71	93	.17			
	Total	16.89	95				
Employees Performance	Between Groups	1.08	2	.54	2.88	.061	Somewhat Significant
	Within Groups	17.47	93	.19			
	Total	18.55	95				
Employee Morale	Between Groups	2.34	2	1.17	6.51	.002	Significant
	Within Groups	16.70	93	.18			
	Total	19.04	95				
Work Motivation	Between Groups	.33	2	.16	70	.499	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.67	93	.23			
	Total	19.04	95				
Risk and Compliance	Between Groups	.60	2	.30	1.84	.164	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.14	93	.16			
	Total	15.74	95				
External Relationship	Between Groups	1.55	2	.77	3.54	.033	Significant
	Within Groups	20.34	93	.22			
	Total	21.88	95				
Leadership and Governance	Between Groups	.87	2	.43	2.71	.072	Somewhat Significant
	Within Groups	14.91	93	.16			
	Total	15.78	95				

It is revealed that Organizational Performance, Employee Morale, and External Relationships show significant differences based on position. While Employees Performance and Leadership and Governance

show trends towards significance but do not meet the 0.05 threshold are somewhat significant. Work Motivation, Risk and Compliance do not show significant differences based on position. These results suggest that the position within the organization plays a crucial role in determining perceptions of organizational performance, employee morale, and external relationships, while its impact on work motivation and risk and compliance is less clear.

Table 4. ANOVA by Respondent's Length of Service

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Source of Variations</i>	<i>Sum of Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Organizational Performance	Between Groups	.37	2	.19	1.04	.356	Not Significant
	Within Groups	16.52	93	.18			
	Total	16.89	95				
Employees Performance	Between Groups	.16	2	.08	.41	.663	Not Significant
	Within Groups	18.39	93	.20			
	Total	18.55	95				
Employee Morale	Between Groups	.38	2	.19	.94	.396	Not Significant
	Within Groups	18.66	93	.20			
	Total	19.04	95				
Work Motivation	Between Groups	.03	2	.01	.06	.945	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.97	93	.24			
	Total	22.00	95				
Risk and Compliance	Between Groups	.23	2	.12	.69	.503	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.51	93	.17			
	Total	15.74	95				
External Relationship	Between Groups	.09	2	.05	.20	.817	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.79	93	.23			
	Total	21.88	95				
Leadership and Governance	Between Groups	.96	2	.48	3.01	.054	Almost Significant
	Within Groups	14.82	93	.16			
	Total	15.78	95				

This table's analysis, the Leadership and Governance (0.054) shows a trend towards significance but does not fully reach the 0.05 threshold, while the Organizational Performance, Employees Performance, Employee Morale, Work Motivation, Risk and Compliance, and External Relationship all show no significant differences based on length of service. Therefore, it can be concluded that length of service appears to have limited impact on most of the variables studied, with the exception of a potential trend in leadership and governance.

Table 5. ANOVA by Respondent's Number of Years in the Managerial or Leadership Position

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Source of Variations</i>	<i>Sum of Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Organizational Performance	Between Groups	1.91	2	.96	5.94	.004	Significant
	Within Groups	14.98	93	.16			
	Total	16.89	95				
Employees Performance	Between Groups	3.10	2	1.55	9.34	.000	Significant
	Within Groups	15.45	93	.17			
	Total	18.55	95				

Employee Morale	Between Groups	2.16	2	1.08	5.96	.004	Significant
	Within Groups	16.88	93	.18			
	Total	19.04	95				
Work Motivation	Between Groups	1.75	2	.87	4.01	.021	Significant
	Within Groups	20.25	93	.22			
	Total	22.00	95				
Risk and Compliance	Between Groups	.62	2	.31	1.91	.154	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.12	93	.16			
	Total	15.74	95				
External Relationship	Between Groups	.42	2	.21	.92	.403	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.46	93	.23			
	Total	21.88	95				
Leadership and Governance	Between Groups	1.78	2	.89	5.93	.004	Significant
	Within Groups	13.99	93	.15			
	Total	15.78	95				

The findings show that the Organizational Performance, Employees Performance, Employee Morale, Work Motivation, and Leadership and Governance all show *significant* differences based on years as a manager, while Risk and Compliance and External Relationship do *not* show *significant* differences based on years as a manager. Finally, years of experience as a manager have a considerable impact on organizational performance, employee performance, employee morale, work motivation, and leadership and governance but do not significantly influence risk and compliance or external relationships.

Table 6. ANOVA by Respondent's Types of Training Attended

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Source of Variations</i>	<i>Sum of Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Organizational Performance	Between Groups	.93	8	.12	.63	.750	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.96	87	.18			
	Total	16.89	95				
Employees Performance	Between Groups	1.75	8	.22	1.13	.348	Not Significant
	Within Groups	16.80	87	.19			
	Total	18.55	95				
Employee Morale	Between Groups	2.15	8	.27	1.39	.213	Not Significant
	Within Groups	16.88	87	.19			
	Total	19.04	95				
Work Motivation	Between Groups	3.18	8	.40	1.84	.080	Somewhat Significant
	Within Groups	18.82	87	.22			
	Total	22.00	95				
Risk and Compliance	Between Groups	.99	8	.12	.73	.667	Not Significant
	Within Groups	14.75	87	.17			
	Total	15.74	95				
External Relationship	Between Groups	.71	8	.09	.36	.937	Not Significant
	Within Groups	21.18	87	.24			
	Total	21.88	95				
Leadership and Governance	Between Groups	.77	8	.10	.56	.807	Not Significant
	Within Groups	15.00	87	.17			
	Total	15.75	95				

In this finding, it shows that none of the variables show a significant difference based on training. However, Work Motivation shows a trend towards significance but does not meet the conventional 0.05 level. The Organizational Performance, Employees Performance, Employee Morale, Risk and Compliance, External Relationship, and Leadership and Governance do not show significant differences based on training. Therefore, it can be said that training does not significantly impact most aspects of organizational outcomes measured, with the possible exception of work motivation, which shows a potential but not statistically significant trend. Further research might be needed to explore these relationships more deeply or to investigate other factors that might be influencing these variables.

Table 7. Correlations between Variables

OP = Organizational Performance

EP = Employees' Performance

EM = Employees Morale

WM = Work Motivation

RC = Risk and Compliance

ER = External Relationship

LG = Leadership and Governance

Var	r	OP	EP	EM	WM	RC	ER	LG
OP	r	1.00	.76	.69	.71	.08	.44	.61
	sig (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.437	.000	.000
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
EP	r	.76	1.00	.64	.71	.80	.07	.39
	sig (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.437	.000	.000
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
EM	r	.69	.64	1.00	.58	.11	.41	.43
	sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.282	.000	.000
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
WM	r	.71	.80	.58	1.00	.03	.32	.57
	sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.745	.002	.000
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
RC	r	.08	.07	.11	.03	1.00	.21	.12
	sig (2-tailed)	.437	.512	.282	.745		.041	.259
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
ER	r	.44	.39	.41	.32	.21	1.00	.36
	sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.002	.041		.000
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
LG	r	.61	.58	.43	.57	.12	.36	1.00
	sig (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.259	.000	
	N	96	96	96	96	96	96	96

Thus, the results further suggest that organizational performance is positively correlated with employee performance, morale, and work motivation. Employee performance is positively correlated with employee morale and work motivation. Furthermore, leadership and governance have a positive impact on all variables except risk and compliance, and the risk and compliance may be related to external relationships, but the relationship is not statistically significant.

In addition, the analysis suggests that effective leadership and governance can lead to improved organizational performance, employee performance, morale, and work motivation. However, there may be a need for further investigation into the relationship between risk and compliance, as well as external relationships.

DISCUSSION

Based on the conclusions drawn from the analysis, several recommendations are made to improve the leadership and organizational performance of the NGO sector in Myanmar. First and foremost, it is recommended that the sector prioritizes leadership development programs to ensure that all leaders have access to relevant professional development opportunities. This can include training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives that foster a culture of growth and learning. Additionally, promoting age diversity among leaders is crucial, as it allows for a mix of young and experienced leaders to bring different perspectives and approaches to the table (Leso et al., 2023). This can be achieved by creating opportunities for younger leaders to take on more senior roles and providing mentorship programs for older leaders (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021).

Furthermore, it is essential to focus on improving employee morale, particularly among older leaders. This can be done by recognizing and rewarding employee contributions, providing opportunities for growth and development, and promoting a positive work culture. Investing in training and capacity building initiatives is also crucial to ensure that all leaders have the skills and knowledge needed to effectively lead their teams (Day et al., 2021). The organization should also review its leadership governance structure to ensure that it is effective and responsive to the needs of its employees (Tagscherer & Carbon, 2023). This can involve revising the organizational structure, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and establishing clear communication channels.

Prioritizing employee engagement and motivation is also critical, as it has a direct impact on overall performance and morale. Finally, risk management should continue to be a top priority, ensuring that the organization has effective policies and procedures in place to mitigate risks and protect its employees (Power, 2004). By implementing these recommendations, the NGO sector in Myanmar can build a strong, diverse, and effective leadership team that is capable of driving positive change in the community.

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