

An analysis of the influence of transformational leadership in a taxation organisation in the KwaZulu-Natal region

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35683/jcm21070.200>

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Leaders are bestowed with the bigger responsibility of channelling all the efforts and activities of their subordinates towards achieving the organisational goals and objectives. Effective and supportive leadership determines the success or failure of the organisation. Management at all levels needs to understand that organisational performance, which is realised through an engaged workforce, is a direct consequence of how people are managed and led. This article investigates the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in a taxation organisation within the KwaZulu-Natal region.

Design/methodology/approach: The study utilised mixed methods to collect data. This means that both quantitative and qualitative data collection methodologies were utilised. From the quantitative data analysis aspect, 231 questionnaires were dispatched to the personnel in the organisation. Eighteen interviews were conducted.

Findings: It was discovered that idealised influential leadership practices fostered teamwork and a collective sense of mission (purpose) and made employees feel valued. It was further found that the character of the leader was a very important attribute, as this considered their moral and ethical conduct.

Recommendations/value: Based on the findings, it is recommended that organisations should make concerted efforts to become employee-centred and promote more employee engagement. If employees are happy and engaged, they will feel motivated, and this can increase their performance, which will inevitably improve organisational performance. It was further recommended that leaders could model healthy relationships and encourage staff to get to know each other by making time to socialise inside and outside of work.

Managerial implications: The idealised influence leadership style makes employees feel valued, and feeling valued makes them part of the team, and they are able to contribute meaningfully to decision-making and direction. Idealised influence promotes trust, and when employees are trusted, their levels of engagement improve. It also promotes job satisfaction.

Keywords

Employee engagement; Idealised influence; Inspirational motivation; Intellectual stimulation; Transformational leadership.

JEL Classification: M12

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current turbulent economic era, leaders are considered to be the most vital and effective machinery of an organisation for overcoming the current changing business trends and limiting socioeconomic issues (Hoon Song *et al.*, 2012). Generally, leadership is a key determinant of organisational outcomes (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). There is a common belief that people leave their managers and not their employers when they resign. The majority of studies have shown a relationship that is very strong between the style of leadership and employee engagement (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2016). This statement signifies that the role of leadership in making or breaking the organisational objectives can never be understated. Organisations deliver their objectives through the collaborative effort of their people. The manner in which human capital is managed determines the future of the organisation. This article investigates the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement, and this will be done by studying the specific constructs of transformational leadership.

The vision of the organisation states that it aspires to become an innovative organisation and enhances economic growth and social development, and supports the integration into the global economy in order to benefit the country. Given such a bigger mandate, this organisation cannot achieve this without the collaborative effort of its workforce. Human capital plays a significant role in the achievement of such ambitious objectives. Therefore, an engaged, motivated, and inspired workforce is of paramount importance for this journey; hence it has been clearly stated that its workforce is a crucial driver of performance, and it has been categorically stated that the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation lie in its people.

In its endeavour to make this objective a reality, the role of transformational leadership was looked at. There is a compelling demand for leaders to mobilise workers all over the organisation to be adaptive in the changing workplace (Subrahmanyam, 2018). Transformational leaders strive for transformational results. Literature has confirmed that "engaged employees are those that are focused, energetic, and fully engrossed in their jobs and are highly motivated to direct their focused energy towards organisational goals" (Rastogi, 2013:3). This ideal can only be realised through leadership.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Annual staff engagement surveys, which have been done over the years, portrayed positive improvement. This improvement can be attributed to the implementation and enhancements of the initiatives that have been identified by staff through these surveys. Although there is an improvement in the employee engagement results, there is a notable decline in the participation rate (the total number of employees who participated in a survey). Employee engagement results for the two successive years showed a decline of 4 to 6 percent in employee participation. In this case, the employee engagement participation rate was viewed as the total number of individuals who participated in a survey, expressed as a percentage of the total population. A decline in participation may have a significant impact in terms of understanding the state of organisational health and wellbeing, which may negatively influence the remedial plans that the organisation may seek to adopt.

Although it is unclear as to what is leading to the decline in the participation rate, it was noted that the lowest scoring dimensions in the employee engagement survey included lack of leadership alignment; a sense of achievement; care and concern for employees; lack of strategic awareness and alignment as well as perceived lack of fairness. These lowest-scoring dimensions are all attributed to organisational leadership.

The majority of studies have shown a relationship that is positive between this style of 'leadership' and the most anticipated outcomes of employee engagement (Ismail *et al.*, 2010) which include job satisfaction, organisational commitment and decreased employee turnover intentions (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). This is what has led to the interest in the study to understand the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in a taxation organisation in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Transformational leadership was identified as a remedial leadership philosophy that uses four leadership pillars such as idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation to show genuine concern for employees. Transformational leaders motivate behaviour by changing their followers' attitudes and assumptions; they direct and inspire individual effort. These leaders transform their followers by raising their awareness of the importance of organisational outcomes, thereby activating their higher-order needs and inducing them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organisation (Wright & Pandey, 2010). Transformational leadership is useful given the organisation's primary role of servicing clients as part of its mission statement. Transformational leadership behaviours are consistently linked to employee performance and satisfaction, even in the government sector.

2.1 Aim of the article

The main aim of the study was to ascertain what influence transformational leadership has on employee engagement in a taxation organisation in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The study sought to investigate the effect that transformational leadership behaviours have on employee engagement. This study also delved into how transformational leadership influences employee engagement from a South African public sector perspective. Recommendations would be beneficial to the organisation's human resources division at a local and national level. Should the study not be conducted, it would remain unknown as to whether 'transformation leadership' would in any way influence employee engagement, and the participation rate will continue to decline.

2.2 Problem statement

The decline in the employee engagement participation rate was what led to the interest in the study. The objective of the study was to understand whether transformational leadership influences employee engagement. Various mechanisms are utilised by transformational leadership in order to enhance the morale, performance and motivation of 'followers' (Stoner *et al.*, 2011). In essence, it includes connecting the followers' sense of identity to the identity of the organisation; stimulating followers to assume control of the work assigned to them; understanding the capability of followers in order to ensure proper alignment with tasks that enhance their performance; and being the role model that inspires and makes followers interested (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

2.3 Study objective

The main aim of the study was to ascertain what influence transformational leadership has on employee engagement in a taxation organisation in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The study investigated the effect that transformational leadership behaviours have on employee engagement.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The current turbulent economic era, coupled with the fourth industrial revolution disruption, considers leadership to be the most vital and effective machinery of an organisation for overcoming the current changing business trends and limiting socioeconomic issues (Hoon Song *et al.*, 2012). The shift from the traditional models of hierarchical and legitimate power practices is challenged by the new generation of workers that are entering the workplace (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Current trends such as competition, deregulation, e-commerce and

efficiency, as well as the organisational demands to deliver numbers, are forcing leaders to strive for alternative ways of working. This requires strong and effective leaders whose role will be to guide subordinates, lead in times of uncertainty and make effective changes where required to properly channel the organisation to deliver positive outcomes. Consequently, leadership becomes a key determinant of organisational outcomes (Yukl, 2008).

Leadership is one of the most widely studied concepts in various sectors. There are many different approaches to leadership, which are not competing but complement one another. Just to mention a few of the most influential leadership approaches, such as trait approach, behavioural, situational, authentic leadership, servant leadership and transformational leadership (April *et al.*, 2013).

Transformational leadership is differentiated from other contemporary theories. It originates from the full range leadership theory (FRLT). Full-range leadership evolved from the work of James McGregor Burns (1978), who argued that leadership was either transactional or transformational. Transformational leadership "influences followers to transcend 'self-interest' and commit themselves" to strive for higher order needs and excellence (Naidoo & Khan, 2015:8). These leaders embolden their followers in order to accomplish 'higher-order' needs like self-actualisation and self-esteem (Bass, 1985). They are also influential in surging the motivations of the followers in the direction of 'self-sacrifice' and the achievement of organisational goals over personal interests (Bass, 1985).

Supported by the study of Breevaart *et al.* (2016), transformational leadership is unique in the sense that it encourages self-leadership among followers. Transformational leaders inspire employees, and there is a higher probability that these leaders will reach out to them regarding their individual needs; however, this cannot be seen or felt on a daily basis (Breevaart *et al.*, 2016). Inevitably, transformational leaders may project varying behaviours on different days (Breevaart *et al.*, 2016). Transformational leadership positively influences organisational innovation, and this is measured by the task-oriented commitment of team members and empowerment (Paulsen *et al.*, 2013). It also plays an important role in creating a team that is collaborative and characterised by mutual respect among its members (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). It further uses different processes in order to enhance the motivation, performance and morale of followers (Stoner *et al.*, 2011).

Transformational leaders inspire employees, and this increases the meaningfulness of work and group cohesion (Breevaart *et al.*, 2016). Based on the transformational leadership approach, it can be suggested that the quality of leadership can be determined by the effect that the leader has on the followers.

In the South African context, transformational leadership is underpinned by the concept of Ubuntu with a Zulu expression of "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" which means, I am because you are, you are because we are. This is a widely embraced value system in black Africans which unites them across national boundaries, which implies that we all share in the human condition and we should recognise our commonality and show humility, compassion and tolerance (Khoza, 2006). We should also realise that others have their innate yearnings, hopes, fears and love calling forth empathy from others. The concept of *Ubuntu* is relational in nature, putting emphasis on mutual respect and care that human beings should transmit to each other. It inspires a collective work ethic, offering leaders a way of winning over followers to a shared vision and creative teamwork (Khoza, 2006). In the corporate environment, this concept refers to effective teamwork, which has replaced individual efforts.

3.1 Models of transformational leadership

Transformational leaders motivate their followers to transcend their self-interest in favour of the interests of the group, are sensitive to the needs of their followers and stimulate high performance by increasing the intrinsic value of work and showing confidence in their followers' abilities (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015). Transformational leaders elevate the consciousness of their followers by appealing to higher ideals and values such as liberty, justice, peace and equality (Hays, 2016). Bass (1985) argued that transformational leadership consists of four related components (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014), and this variable is measured from the following dimensions and indicators.

3.1.1. Idealised Influence

Idealised influence means that the followers identify with their leaders and they respect and trust them. Idealised influence is associated with charismatic leadership. Transformational leaders take a direction that permits them to perform their duties as role models for their followers (Yasin Ghadi *et al.*, 2013). These leaders provide a role model for high ethical behaviour, instil pride and gain respect and trust. Transformational leaders who have a great deal of idealised influence are consistent rather than arbitrary and are willing to take risks (Yasin Ghadi *et al.*, 2013). They display convictions and behave in admirable ways (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). They demonstrate high "standards of ethical and moral conduct" and do the right thing (Yasin Ghadi *et al.*, 2013). Followers associate themselves with their leaders and desire to imitate them. Leaders are bestowed by their followers as having exceptional capabilities, determination and persistence. The key element of idealised influence includes modelling, providing meaning and a sense of purpose, creating and articulating values and instilling confidence, self-determination, self-esteem and emotional control in followers (Hays,

2016). A transformational leader with idealised attributes displays a sense of power and confidence and is able to reassure others that they can overcome obstacles (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

3.1.2. Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational Motivation is the extent to which the leaders are extraordinarily effective in articulating their mission, beliefs and vision, thus inspiring followers (Rahman & Ferdausy, 2012). Leaders challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about the future achievement of goals and provide meaning for the task at hand (Yasin Ghadi *et al.*, 2013). Leaders raise the consciousness of their followers about the organisation's vision and mission, encourage others to commit to and understand the vision (Hays, 2016), and arouse team spirit. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed by the followers (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The importance of communication skills can never be understated, as they support the visionary aspects of leadership that make the vision understandable and precise, powerful and engaging (Uzonwann, 2017). Inspirational motivation encourages the followers to be optimistic about the future and becomes eagerly devoted to putting more effort into their tasks and believing in their abilities (Rahman & Ferdausy, 2012). The key indicators of inspirational motivation include working with workers and challenging them, autonomy, encouragement, organisational vision and communication (Hays, 2016).

3.1.3. Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual Stimulation refers to those transformational leaders who stimulate their followers to question old paradigms, encourage their innovation, reframe problems and approach old situations in new ways (Rahman & Ferdausy, 2012). According to Bass and Riggio (2006), creativity is encouraged by these leaders and mistakes made by individual members are not publicly criticised. They develop and nurture independent thinkers. Ideas that are new and problem-solutions that are creative are obtained from the followers, and they (followers) are made part of the process of tackling problems and finding the appropriate solutions (Rahman & Ferdausy, 2012). Followers are encouraged to explore different solutions, and their solutions are not censured because they differ from the leaders' ideas and solutions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). For such a leader, unexpected situations are seen as opportunities to learn, and learning is seen as a value add (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Followers are encouraged to figure out better ways to execute their tasks, to think deeply about things and ask questions (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Sarros and Santora (2001) suggested the fundamental elements of intellectual stimulation, such as supporting involvement, consensus decision-making, rationality, coaching and challenging.

3.1.4. Individual Consideration

Individualised Consideration means that transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential. Individualised consideration is practised when new learning opportunities are created, along with a supportive climate. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognised (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The leader pays attention to each individual's needs, expectations and wants, offers support and empathy, ensures transparent communication and places challenges before the followers (Rahman & Ferdausy, 2012). Generally, the leaders act as coaches or mentors (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013) and have the ability to identify what is necessary for each follower, thus furthering their development (Rahman & Ferdausy, 2012). The core characteristics of individualised consideration include caring for, encouraging, and coaching individuals and an open and consultative approach (Deinert *et al.*, 2015).

3.2 Employee engagement

Literature has provided that "*engaged employees are those that are focused, energetic and fully engrossed in their jobs and are highly motivated to direct their focused energy towards organisational goals*" (Rastogi, 2013:103). Employee engagement has been defined in many different ways. One of them is the individual's involvement with, satisfaction with and enthusiasm for the work he/she does (Robbins *et al.*, 2013). Other authors often see it as the "*commitment that is emotionally and intellectually projected towards their employer or an amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs*" (Sundaray, 2011:54). It is also defined as the psychological state of employees which leads towards the most desired employee behaviour and better business results (Rastogi, 2013).

3.3 Transformational leadership and employee engagement

Employee engagement is a concept that contains the value of the understanding and improvement of individual and organisational performance and can be influenced by the leader. In theory, the impact of leadership on employee engagement is a leadership style that is adopted to improve employee engagement at work (Ariani, 2014). Leadership style can also improve employee engagement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work (Ariani, 2014).

Empirical studies have found that the influence of leadership, among others, can increase public confidence in the followers of the higher purpose of one's work and improve employee perceptions of their work so as to obtain positive results, such as organisational citizenship behaviour (Ariani, 2014). Increasing employee engagement is highly dependent on the

leadership to establish two-way communication and transparency between leaders and employees on the job by looking at the individual as well as appreciating and respecting the individual (Sahoo & Mishra, 2012).

According to the Social Cognitive Theory presented by Bandura (2001), the behaviour of employees (in this case, organisational citizenship behaviour) is a combination of situational resources (for example, supportive leadership) and dispositional resources (for example, employee engagement). This was confirmed in a study that explored how perceptions of leadership style and employee engagement as individuals can affect subordinate organisational citizenship behaviour (Ariani, 2014). There is an empirical relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement (Carasco-Saul *et al.*, 2015).

4. METHODOLOGY

The mixed-methods approach was used in the study to aid the researcher in achieving the objectives that are preferred, whereas many studies in the area were conducted using quantitative research methodology. Mixed methods research is an approach to knowledge that attempts to consider various points of view, standpoints, positions and perspectives (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The benefit of using the mixed-methods approach is that it allows for the combination of qualitative and quantitative research, thus providing participant enrichment of the study sample (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

An ***explanatory sequential*** design was chosen for this study, whereby quantitative data was collected and analysed (Tashakkori *et al.*, 2015). This was followed by qualitative data collection, thus offering more credible results (Creswell, 2014). This method contributed to more understanding of the problem using more than one form and provided an ability to follow up on certain demographics to explain important variables.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, whereas in-depth interviews were used to collect qualitative data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSP) was used to analyse quantitative data, and thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data.

From the quantitative data analysis aspect, 231 questionnaires were despatched to the personnel in various departments of the taxation organisation in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Two hundred twenty-one questionnaires were returned, and this gave a 96 per cent response rate. From the qualitative data analysis aspect, data was collected from 18 participants who were purposefully selected and interviewed to understand the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement within the organisation. The two most important aspects

of precision, which are reliability and validity, were tested through Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability scores for all sections exceeded the recommended Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

The study was undertaken to understand the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in a taxation organisation in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The constructs of transformational leadership, such as Idealised Influence (II), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), Inspirational Motivation (IM) and Individualised Consideration (IC), were used in order to establish if they had any influence on employee engagement. The questionnaire was the primary tool used to collect data. It was distributed to personnel in this organisation across the KZN area. Responses from this primary data were analysed using the SPSS version 26.0, whereas qualitative data adopted thematic analysis.

The research instrument consisted of 22 items, with a level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The two most important aspects of precision are reliability and validity. To determine the reliability of the 22 items in the research instrument that was used in this study, Cronbach's Alpha was computed, which is generally recognised by scholars as the standard normative measurement of instrument reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable. The Cronbach's Alpha for all items in the study ranged between 0.866 and 0.904, which indicated a degree of acceptable and consistent scoring for these sections of the research (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Score for All the Items that Constituted the Questionnaire

	Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
B1	Experience of Idealised Influence	4	0.866
B2	Experience of Intellectual Stimulation	4	0.881
B3	Experience of Inspirational Motivation	4	0.927
B4	Experience of Individualised Consideration	4	0.904

Source: Authors' own compilation

The biographical characteristics of the respondents indicated that approximately 97 percent were above the age the 35, 83.6 percent had a post-school qualification, and a little more than one-fifth of the respondents (22.7%) had a post-graduate degree. The evidence presented indicated a high literacy level, suggesting that the responses gathered would have been from an informed (learned) source. The non-managerial level comprised about 79.6 percent, whilst

the management level was 20.4 percent. More than half of the respondents (53.8%) had been employed for more than 15 years, with a cumulative figure of approximately 95 per cent of the respondents having at least four years' experience ($p < 0.001$).

5.1 Section analysis

This section analyses the scoring patterns of the respondents, per variable, per section. The statement construction was orientated to measure the effect on employee engagement by the stated factors.

Section B1: Idealised Influence

This section examined the impact of the influence of idealised influence on employee engagement. Idealised influence means that the followers identify with their leaders and they respect and trust them. These leaders provide role models for high ethical behaviour, instil pride and gain respect and trust. These leaders provide meaning and a sense of purpose. Table 2 summarises the scoring patterns.

Table 2: Idealised influence scoring patterns

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi-Square
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	p-value
A leader who talks to me about their most important values and beliefs influences employee engagement	B1.1	9	4.1	28	12.7	125	56.8	58	26.4	0.000
A leader who specifies the importance of having a strong purpose influences employee engagement	B1.2	6	2.7	15	6.8	133	60.7	65	29.7	0.000
A leader who considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions influences employee engagement	B1.3	5	2.3	10	4.5	118	53.4	88	39.8	0.000
A leader who emphasises the importance of having a collective sense of mission influences employee engagement	B1.4	5	2.3	14	6.4	115	52.3	86	39.1	0.000

Source: Authors' own compilation

Based on the figures in Table 2, it was evident that all of the statements showed (significantly) higher levels of agreement, whilst other levels of agreement were lower (but still greater than the levels of disagreement). There were no statements with higher levels of disagreement, and the significance of the differences was tested and is shown in the table.

Section B2: Intellectual stimulation

This section examined the impact of the influence of intellectual stimulation on employee engagement. Intellectual stimulation refers to those transformational leaders who stimulate their followers to question old paradigms, encourage their innovation, reframe problems and approach old situations in new ways. The scoring patterns are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Intellectual stimulation scoring patterns

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi-Square
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	p-value
A leader who re-examines the appropriateness of critical assumptions to question influences employee engagement	B2.1	6	2.7	26	11.9	136	62.1	51	23.3	0.000
A leader who seeks differing perspectives when solving problems influences employee engagement	B2.2	2	0.9	21	9.5	113	51.1	85	38.5	0.000
A leader who gets me to look at the problem from different angles	B2.3	4	1.8	20	9.0	101	45.7	96	43.4	0.000
A leader who suggests new ways of looking at how to complete our assignments or do our jobs	B2.4	3	1.4	16	7.3	99	45.2	101	46.1	0.000

Source: Authors' own compilation

Respondents agreed that a leader who seeks differing perspectives when solving problems influences employee engagement. Of this, 89.6 percent agreed with the statement, and another 89.10 percent of the respondents were in total agreement that a leader who gets them to look at the problem from different angles influences employee engagement. Employees feel valued, trusted and appreciated when they are allowed to contribute to the organisational success.

Section B3: Inspirational motivation

This section examined the impact of Inspirational Motivation and its influence on employee engagement. Inspirational motivation is the extent to which the leaders are extraordinarily effective in articulating their mission, beliefs and vision, thus inspiring followers. Inspirational leaders challenge their employees by setting high standards, communicating about future goals and giving meaning to the job at hand. The results of the scoring patterns are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Inspirational motivation scoring patterns

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi-Square
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	p-value
A leader who talks optimistically about the future, influences employee engagement	B3.1	9	4.1	24	10.9	109	49.3	79	35.7	0.000
A leader who talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished influences employee engagement	B3.2	6	2.7	28	12.7	106	48.2	80	36.4	0.000
A leader who articulates a compelling vision of the future, influences employee engagement	B3.3	4	1.8	30	13.6	113	51.1	74	33.5	0.000
A leader who expresses confidence that goals will be achieved influences employee engagement	B3.4	7	3.2	19	8.6	110	49.8	85	38.5	0.000

Source: Authors' own compilation

About 88.3 percent of the respondents agreed that a leader who expresses confidence that goals will be achieved influences employee engagement, and 85 percent agreed that a leader who talks optimistically about the future influences employee engagement. The pattern was similar for the remaining statements in the theme of inspirational motivation. There was a smaller percentage of respondents who disagreed with the inspirational motivation statements, and these percentages ranged from 1.8 percent to 4.1 percent. Therefore, based on the higher proportion of respondents that agreed, it can thus be deduced that inspirational motivation influences employee engagement.

Section B4: Individualised consideration

This section examined the impact of the influence of individualised consideration on employee engagement. Individualised consideration means transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. The leader pays attention to each individual's needs, expectations and wants, offers support and empathy, ensures transparent communication and places challenges before the followers. The results appear in Table 5.

Table 5: Individualised consideration scoring patterns

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi-Square
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	p-value
A leader who spends time teaching and coaching subordinates, influences employee engagement	B4.1	8	3.6	24	10.9	93	42.1	96	43.4	0.000
A leader who treats me as an individual rather than just a member of a group influences employee engagement	B4.2	9	4.1	20	9.0	89	40.3	103	46.6	0.000
A leader who helps me develop my strengths influences employee engagement	B4.3	8	3.6	12	5.4	89	40.3	112	50.7	0.000
A leader who considers me as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from others influences employee engagement	B4.4	6	2.7	20	9.0	88	39.8	107	48.4	0.000

Source: Authors' own compilation

The last section of this analysis suggests a strong agreement with the statements in this theme. About 91 percent of the respondents agreed that a leader who helps followers develop their strengths influences employee engagement. All the statements in this theme had lower levels of disagreements compared to agreements. The results suggest that individual consideration influences employee engagement.

5.2 Cross tabulations

The traditional approach to reporting a result requires a statement of statistical significance. A p-value is generated from a test statistic. A significant result is indicated with $p < 0.05$. A second Chi-square test was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables (rows vs columns). The null hypothesis states that there is no association between the two. The alternate hypothesis indicates that there is an association. Table 6 summarises the results of the chi-square tests.

Table 6: Table of Significance

Pearson Chi-Square Tests							
		Gender	Age	Highest Qualification	Current Grade	Level of work	Number of years working for
A leader who talks to me about their most important values and beliefs influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.344	0.46	0.321	0.053	.028*	0.209
A leader who specifies the importance of having a strong purpose influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.181	0.216	0.197	0.649	.021*	0.268
A leader who considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions influences employee engagement	Sig.	.004*	0.358	0.753	0.076	.000*	0.284
A leader who emphasises the importance of having a collective sense of mission influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.091	0.233	0.727	0.565	.012*	0.827
A leader who re-examines the appropriateness of critical assumptions to question influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.353	0.131	0.997	0.484	.015*	0.074
A leader who seeks differing perspective when solving problem influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.234	0.204	0.532	0.136	.003*	0.987
A leader who gets me to look at the problem from different angles	Sig.	0.085	.020*	0.914	0.093	.004*	0.552
A leader who suggest new ways of looking at how to complete our assignments or do our jobs	Sig.	.021*	0.194	0.587	0.299	.034*	0.976
A leader who talks optimistically about the future influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.056	0.65	0.41	.033*	.002*	0.802
A leader who talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.059	0.468	0.795	0.194	.002*	0.478
A leader who articulates a compelling vision of the future influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.291	0.91	0.703	0.241	0.057	0.659
A leader who expresses confidence that goals will be achieved influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.127	0.239	0.745	.001*	.000*	0.627
A leader who spends time teaching and coaching subordinates influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.356	0.207	0.674	0.129	0.141	0.744
A leader who treats me as an individual rather than just a member of a group influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.149	0.29	0.411	.020*	.007*	0.19
A leader who helps me develop my strengths influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.621	0.49	0.643	0.335	0.067	0.372
A leader who considers me as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from others influences employee engagement	Sig.	0.581	0.804	0.663	0.921	0.496	0.193

Source: Authors' own compilation

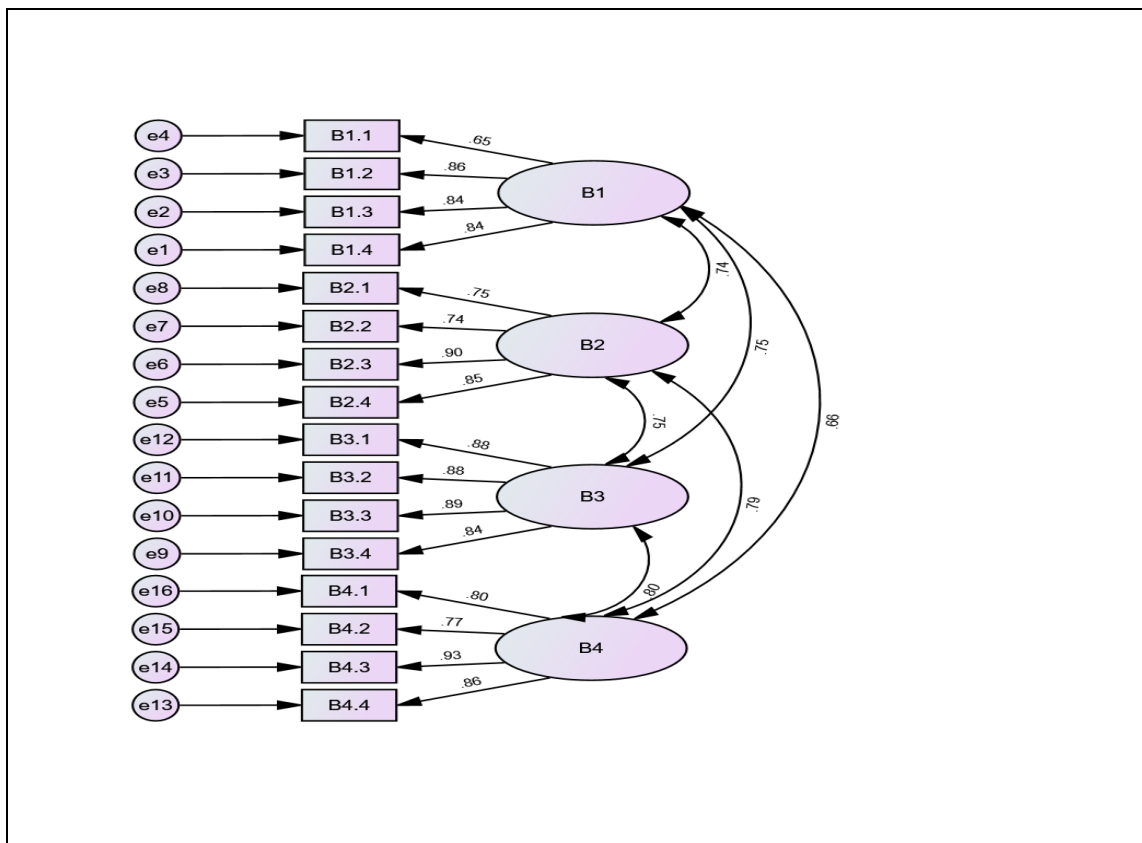
It was quite interesting to observe that three of the sixteen items were significantly related to *both the current grade and level of work*. The grade distribution indicates the level of the job relative to other jobs in the organisation. This implies that the level of work and grade have a significant relationship with the statements such as 'a leader who talks optimistically about the

future influences employee engagement' (p-value of 0.33 for the current grade and .002 for the level of work). Furthermore, the statements such as 'a leader who expresses confidence that goals will be achieved influences employee engagement' also showed significant levels (p = .001) for the current grade and (p = .000) level of work. Overall, the results from different data analysis techniques show that transformational leadership influences employee engagement.

5.3 Structural Equation model

The structural equation model is covered below. Figure 1 indicates the path diagram for the interactions between the various latent variables in the experiment.

Figure 1: Structural Equation Model Output



Source: Authors' own compilation

The figure above confirms how the constructs of transformational leadership correlate with each other. It further shows how each transformational leadership construct influences the specific items on employee engagement and has revealed strong correlations. For example, B4 correlates with B1 and further correlates with B3, B2 and all the specific elements of B4 yielding an engaged workforce. Therefore, according to this model, an individualised

consideration leader who spends time teaching and coaching subordinates, who treats them as an individual rather than just a member of a group, a leader who helps them develop their strengths and consider their different needs, abilities, and aspirations have a greater influence on positively creating and engaged workforce.

5.4 Qualitative results

The study adopted a mixed method approach; therefore, the qualitative aspect of the data that was collected was analysed using the NVIVO qualitative data analysis. Numerous techniques such as word clouds, word trees, cluster analysis and tree maps, were used in order to understand the key themes of the study. The four pillars that make up transformational leadership were understood in terms of their influence on employee engagement.

5.4.1 Idealised leadership

Respondents were asked to describe the approach followed by their leaders in order to develop a strong sense of purpose and the effect that chosen approach had on employee engagement. Some responses were short and brief, indicative of a lack of engagement by leadership and have responded as follows:

"Management follow a top-bottom approach type of engagement with no opportunity to provide input". Findings also suggested that meetings, where important communication is required to happen, are very irregular, and the participant said, "They hold quarterly meetings in order to engage with all the staff members in the Division; there is no one-on-one engagement that happens... these meetings are not effective, as they are not held regularly."

One participant also said, "Engagement is scarce and happens in an unstructured manner"., while another one said, "A sense of purpose (meaning) is needed to motivate and drive employees towards reaching the set goals and to drive the employee to a satisfying future ".

One participant said that "this approach is very demotivating, as it leads to dissatisfaction which then results in disengagement.... this has a direct impact of poor or non-performance and an increase in unplanned leave.... employee morale and motivation is ultimately at an all-time low."

Overall, findings indicated that the idealised leadership approach has an influence on employee engagement. Respondents suggested that there was minimal engagement occurring in the organisation; this was justified by ineffective meetings where little or vague

information was shared. Employees had no opportunity to give input in the decision-making process. Leadership style characterised by poor idealised influence in the organisation led to staff dissatisfaction, demotivation, low morale and employees feeling undervalued. All these factors affected employee productivity. This was also confirmed by a participant who said that *"This approach is very demotivating, as it leads to dissatisfaction which then results in disengagement. This has a direct impact of poor or non-performance"*, and another was said that *"It has a negative influence on my engagement levels because we don't get to understand what is required of us."* However, in departments where idealised influence attributes were implored, employees were happy to be at work as they felt valued and trusted and generally, they were satisfied with their jobs.

To this effect, factor analysis that was done in this study showed that a leader who considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions influences employee engagement. There was a significantly higher number of respondents (93.2%) who agreed with this statement. This tied in well with the literature, which showed that transformational leaders who have a great deal of idealised influence are consistent rather than arbitrary and are willing to take risks (Yasin Ghadi *et al.*, 2013). They display convictions and behave in admirable ways (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). They demonstrate high standards of ethical and moral conduct and do the right thing (Yasin Ghadi *et al.*, 2013). Followers associate themselves with and desire to imitate their leaders. Leaders are bestowed by their followers as having exceptional capabilities, determination and persistence.

5.4.2 Inspirational motivation

Respondents were asked about the frequency through which their leaders talk to them about the future of their Business Unit and what needs to be accomplished. They are further asked about the types of leadership attributes that their leaders displayed when they were articulating about the future of their department and the effect that this had on their engagement levels. In their responses, they indicated as follows:

"We engage once a year – he has no clue of what he is doing."

"Once a year, there is a discussion that takes places. It is guided, and again, action plans are put in place, but there is never a follow through."

"Almost never, or only when the leadership changes."

There, this subtheme suggested that there was poor or no clear communication of business strategy in the organisation. The vision was not clear and organisational priorities were not known. All these factors led employees to feel incompetent, and they have indicated as follows

"It leads to frustration and results in poor performance as well as low morale."

"Demotivating, uninspiring to even go the extra mile, and it exacerbates the feeling of being disillusioned."

Analysed data also indicated minimal or haphazard communication in organisations regarding the detrimental effects on employee engagement. Communication skills support the visionary aspects of leadership that make the vision understandable and precise, powerful and engaging (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders raise the consciousness of their followers about the organisation's vision and mission and encourage others to commit to and understand the vision (Sarros & Santora, 2001). Where there was a clear vision and strategy, the employee felt empowered and motivated to achieve their goals. Respondents suggested that the inspirational leadership style improved their levels of performance, and teamwork, reduced micro-management, were self-driven, felt they were included in decision-making, and their input was valued. In general, they enjoyed their work and felt positively engaged. As suggested by the literature, the intellectual stimulation leadership style enabled the employees to be empowered to make decisions on their own. Intellectually stimulating managers produce a supportive organisational climate (Avolio & Bass, 2004) which can play a role in the development of employees' feelings of work engagement. By creating a supportive atmosphere where leaders encourage dialogue with followers and where the leaders act as coaches or mentors, team creativity and innovation are enhanced, and this increases the level of worker engagement (Hoon Song *et al.*, 2012).

5.4.3 Individualised consideration

In this theme, respondents were asked how their leaders accommodated their varying needs, abilities and aspirations in their respective departments and the extent to which it impacted their engagement levels. They responded that leaders are not flexible; they do not understand their capabilities and are less empathetic. All these factors make them feel disengaged and demotivated, which ultimately affects their performance. Some of their responses indicated as follows:

"I come to work and do my job and go home. Nothing inspires me to be motivated about my job or the organisation. I can say that I do the minimum and do not stretch myself to greater heights when it comes to my work. "

It was further confirmed that a lack of individualised consideration leadership style had a negative effect on employee engagement in that employees became demotivated. This consequently affects their discretionary effort (willingness to go above minimal job

responsibilities) in that they become behaviourally disengaged. This means that they show an unwillingness to invest personal resources, and they do not bring their full range of senses to inform their work (Khan, 2018). Some researchers have linked what we see employees do to extra efforts, such as in-role performance, organisational citizenship behaviours and an intent to stay versus an intent to turnover (Macey & Schneider, 2008). This, in turn, causes a decrease in organisational productivity.

Some respondents asserted that individualised consideration leadership style enhances confidence and employees' aspirations; furthermore, they also felt they are treated as valuable employees as opposed to just being numbers.

"It shows that the working relationship between myself and the leader is getting stronger, and I can always engage with her about my shortcomings."

"It helps enormously to make you feel confident."

"Employee Engagement is favourably impacted, as my interests and aspirations are taken seriously."

5.4.4 Intellectual stimulation

In this theme, respondents were asked whether their leaders afforded them opportunities of looking at new ways or approaches to solving problems and job assignments or if they (leaders) preferred to solve problems individually. Many respondents indicated that when they were given opportunities to look for new ways of solving problems became innovative and creative and felt very much engaged. They also felt empowered as opposed to when opportunities were not given or when decisions were imposed on them. Respondents also indicated that the intellectual stimulation leadership style enhanced unity and trust. It made employees feel valued, appreciated and also felt included. This enhanced the feeling of liberation and respect that the organisation trusted them to carry on with their tasks independently. The intellectual stimulation leadership style enabled the employees to be empowered to make decisions on their own. Intellectually stimulating managers produce a supportive organisational climate (Avolio & Bass, 2004) which can play a role in the development of employees' feelings of work engagement. By creating a supportive atmosphere where leaders encourage dialogue with followers and where the leaders act as coaches or mentors, team creativity and innovation are enhanced, and this increases the level of worker engagement (Hoon Song *et al.*, 2012). Trustful and supportive leadership may aid in yielding improved levels of work engagement of employees.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Various recommendations were provided which would aid in improving transformational leadership in relation to employee engagement. These are listed as follows:

- **Focus on people, happiness and satisfaction:** This was naturally the highest-ranked recommendation. An organisation cannot function without its people. Hence, the organisation should make concerted efforts to become employee-centred and promote more employee engagement. If employees are happy and engaged, then they will feel motivated, and this can increase their performance, which will inevitably improve organisational performance. Employees will also be more loyal. It was further stated leaders could model healthy relationships and encourage staff to get to know each other by making time to socialise inside and outside of work.
- **Vision and alignment:** Leadership and staff must know the vision of the organisation and align with it. This can promote a common goal and engagement thereof. The organisation must also align performance to organisational goals in order to improve performance.
- **Leadership commitment and coaching:** Leaders are encouraged to show more commitment towards the organisation to promote employee engagement and drive the completion of tasks. Leadership coaching should also be considered in order to improve engagement levels. The leadership of the organisation should consider drafting their own leadership promise to the employees that they lead. A "leadership promise" is a set of obligatory promises that leaders create that they will abide by for the sake of the people that they lead. These serve as an accountability measure to improve employee engagement.

Statements that may be included are:

- ✓ I promise to provide clear instructions about what I expect and what constitutes good performance.
- ✓ I promise to provide training and resources and the encouragement that you need to achieve good performance.
- ✓ I promise to cultivate a culture of connection where colleagues respect, encourage and support one another so that everyone can do their best.
- ✓ I promise to get to know you, including your career aspirations and when possible, place you in a role and give you opportunities to learn and grow in ways that will help you advance toward your career aspirations.

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- ✓ I promise I will keep you informed about matters that affect you or matters that are important to you, including matters that affect your performance, and that I will seek and consider your ideas and opinions where possible.
 - **Define the culture and tone of leadership:** Leadership needs to set the culture and tone of the organisation. They cannot be indecisive or lack direction. They need to promote communication as part of organisational culture, which allows employees to engage better.
 - **Requirement of agile leaders who can stand challenges and endurance:** Future leaders should be strong and not change based on situations that they face. This means that the organisation needs a strong leadership succession with potential who also have the ability to dream big and not be afraid of challenges. There is a need to have leaders who are driven by ethical principles and a strong morality, who will stand firm and not change. There is a strong requirement to have leaders who will not be afraid to tackle new challenges.
 - **More communication needed:** Communication is the lifeblood of any institution. Leaders should be better communicators, and the organisation should communicate with staff to ensure that they are given direction and uplifting morale.
 - **Redefine capability:** The concept of capability should be redefined and refocused. It should encompass the aspects of ability, motivation, capacity and leadership. It has been noted that people tend to use the word 'capability' loosely without any understanding. This should encompass the following:
 - ✓ Ability – One's technical ability to get a task done;
 - ✓ Motivation – An individual must be motivated to get a task done efficiently;
 - ✓ Capacity – One must have adequate staff to achieve objectives; and
 - ✓ Leadership – Leadership must support staff in reaching their objectives.
 - **Creativity and positivity:** Leadership should promote a more creative and positive attitude within their respective business units. People are good thinkers, and they are full of energy. Employees should be given job assignments or projects that will encourage creative thinking rather than routine and mundane task-driven assignments. The organisation has an educated workforce that can provide solutions to organisational problems.
 - **Measurement of engagement:** There must be a measurement or evaluation of employee engagement done by leadership. This will allow them to see what is currently going on when it comes to employee engagement. The organisation must have a barometer mechanism that will gauge the impact of employee engagement, not only regarding ordinary team members but senior or middle management as well, to ensure balance.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE AND FUTURE STUDIES, CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Looking at the history of South Africa, which was regulated by apartheid laws where white supremacy dominated, this perpetuated inferiority of other race groups leading to an autocratic leadership style. With large conglomerates entering the South African market with Western value systems, leadership culture was Eurocentric. This presented problems in the highly diverse South African country.

Moreover, the South African public sector also faced leadership challenges, and there has been a lack of harmonious cooperation and coordination within the organisations. Power relations have become a common feature in our public sector, where there are battles over resources between politicians and the administration. These factors cause a disconnect between leaders, managers and employees which leads to mistrust as employees feel alienated. These factors also affect the morale of the staff, leading to non-performance, which impacts service delivery.

The world of work has changed; it has introduced complexities that require an effective leadership approach. The new world of work is characterised by VUCA, fourth industrial revolution dynamics and demographical changes. These changes require the disbandment of conventional leadership approaches and the adoption of approaches that advocate strong synergies between leaders and followers.

The study has shown that the transformational leadership approach is able to remedy the abovementioned leadership challenges. The added contribution of the study is that it examined transformational leadership using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, offering richness in data. Transformational leadership emphasises the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which is an important contributor to ethics in leadership. Transformational leadership gives rise to a collective sense of identity among members of the organisation. It enhances cohesiveness in the attainment of organisational objectives. Members of the organisation are inspired to commit to a shared vision; they are encouraged by being given opportunities of using their intellectual capacity to be creative problem solvers. Positive results of transformational leadership are high levels of staff engagement. Research has indicated that when employees are engaged, they contribute more to the organisation, they give their discretionary effort to the organisation, they dedicate themselves to excel, and they go beyond the call of duty to serve. This leads to improved performance, improved organisational effectiveness and improved service delivery.

The study could contribute to the field of human resources at local and national levels within the organisation. Furthermore, the study will contribute to other South African public institutions because it has been argued that employee engagement improves if the organisation instils leadership behaviours that are associated with the four pillars of transformational leadership, such as idealised influence, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration leadership behaviours. This insight provides an influential debate on the generation of an organisation's leadership philosophy.

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