



# EXAMINING LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: AN INVESTIGATION THROUGH CASE STUDY ANALYSIS ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MALAWI.

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Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping strategic management, acting as a catalyst for establishing a shared vision, defining missions, and formulating long-term strategies. Despite extensive research on leadership and strategic management, there remains a gap in understanding how specific leadership styles manifest within Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), particularly in contexts characterized by resource constraints and diverse stakeholder demands. This study aimed to examine the influence of leadership styles on strategic management within local NGOs in Malawi, addressing this gap by analyzing the prevalence and impact of transformational, transactional, servant, and charismatic leadership approaches. The research assessed the leadership qualities evident in local NGOs, explored how these styles influence decision-making processes, organizational culture, and strategic initiatives, and identified patterns of successful leadership practices. Findings indicate that transformational and transactional leadership styles significantly enhance strategic management effectiveness, whereas autocratic and laissez-faire styles hinder progress. However, the study also highlights challenges in conclusively linking specific leadership styles to measurable organizational performance, emphasizing the complexity of leadership dynamics in NGO operations. These insights provide a foundation for practical recommendations aimed at improving leadership and strategic management in the non-profit sector.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic management was for a long time being applied by leaders in the business firms and little was being done in the public and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) Recently, the need for non-governmental organizations to adopt strategic management has increased and has been necessitated by among others, the donor conditions some of which require NGOs to have clear strategic plans as a pre-condition for funding. Additionally, leaders in the NGO community consider strategic management as the relevant approach that makes the organizations more competitive. Managers of the Local Non-Governmental organizations also apply different leadership approaches in managing people, resources and processes and the most popular leadership approaches include, transformational, transactional and laissez faire and some of the recent approaches include the charismatic leadership. According to Bass and Avalor (1993) transactional leadership hinges on reward system and punishments, laissez faire system is non-leadership at all while transformational leadership focusses on behavioral charisma and inspiration. Some studies have argued that leadership and organizational performance are directly related as they state that leadership influences organizational performance. According to Nahayandi (2002) different leadership styles may affect organizational effectiveness and performance. According to Moesia, (2007), Leadership in strategic management performs three major functions which includes understanding the environment where change should happen, putting in place the winning leadership team and finally formulating the vision and strategy. Additionally, organizational leaders are responsible for directing subordinates to perform the given tasks effectively (Mason, 2011). From this perspective, the study was conducted to evaluate the impact of leadership styles on strategic management in Local NGO's applying strategic management in Malawi. The study analyzed the qualities of leaders in local NGO's and evaluated the leadership styles which are mostly used and applied by leaders in these NGO's and how this influence strategic management.

Strategic management refers to the comprehensive process of defining an organization's objectives, formulating and implementing strategies to achieve

these goals, and continuously evaluating and adjusting the approaches in response to environmental changes. This discipline enables organizations to align their internal operations with external conditions, ensuring resilience, growth, and sustainability in dynamic environments (Johnson et al., 2023; Pearce & Robinson, 2022). Traditionally associated with the corporate sector, strategic management has become increasingly significant for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which operate under unique challenges such as resource constraints and diverse stakeholder expectations. For NGOs, strategic management involves not only operational efficiency but also the alignment of organizational actions with broader social and developmental goals. The process starts with a clear understanding of the organization's mission and values, followed by a rigorous analysis of internal capabilities and external opportunities or threats. NGOs can use frameworks such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to ensure they are strategically positioned to maximize their impact (Mintzberg et al., 2023; Hill et al., 2022). Strategic management is also vital in navigating complex funding landscapes. Increasingly, donors expect NGOs to develop and demonstrate strategic plans that justify resource allocation and promise measurable outcomes (The Guardian, 2024; University of Oxford, 2024). This accountability-driven approach enables NGOs to foster stronger relationships with donors and ensures the sustainability of their initiatives. Moreover, strategic management facilitates adaptability, allowing NGOs to respond effectively to dynamic global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and armed conflicts. By adopting strategies that emphasize resilience and agility, NGOs can mitigate risks and enhance their operational relevance in ever-changing environments (Kaplan & Norton, 2023; Porter, 2022). This adaptability often translates into greater organizational effectiveness and credibility among stakeholders. In recent years, strategic management has also focused on fostering localization, where NGOs empower local communities to take ownership of development initiatives. This approach ensures that interventions are culturally and contextually relevant, while also building the capacities of local actors to sustain long-term impacts (Bridgespan Group, 2024; The Guardian, 2024). Localization reflects the shift from top-down to participatory strategic approaches, which align with modern principles of sustainable development. Another dimension of strategic management is ethical decision-making. NGOs often operate in morally complex environments where balancing donor expectations and community needs becomes challenging. A well-defined strategic framework that incorporates ethical considerations ensures that NGOs

remain focused on the needs of their beneficiaries while maintaining transparency and accountability (Mintzberg et al., 2023; Hill et al., 2022). The importance of strategic management for NGOs cannot be overstated. It enables these organizations to overcome operational challenges, align with donor requirements, and maintain their mission-driven focus while adapting to an ever-evolving global landscape. As the external environment grows increasingly complex, integrating strategic management will remain essential for NGOs aiming to create sustainable social change.

Leadership styles play an integral role in shaping organizational success and are crucial for the effective implementation of strategic management processes. These styles are grounded in various theoretical frameworks, each offering unique insights into how leaders influence their teams and organizational outcomes. Transactional leadership, for example, emphasizes structured roles, clear expectations, and reward-punishment mechanisms to ensure compliance and efficiency. Introduced by Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass (1985), this style is particularly effective in stable, task-oriented settings. It provides a clear framework for achieving specific objectives but can stifle innovation in dynamic environments (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2022). Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is centered on inspiring and motivating teams through vision, charisma, and personal connection. It transcends transactional exchanges by fostering commitment to organizational goals and innovation. Leaders employing this style, as outlined by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), elevate followers' aspirations and align them with broader organizational objectives. Transformational leadership is particularly well-suited for NGOs, where resource constraints and complex socio-political challenges demand innovative and adaptable approaches (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Kotter, 2023). Such leaders often inspire their teams to think creatively and remain resilient, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared purpose. Laissez-faire leadership is another approach, characterized by minimal intervention and granting substantial autonomy to team members. While this style can empower highly skilled individuals, its lack of oversight may lead to inefficiencies and accountability issues, especially in larger organizations. Research suggests that laissez-faire leadership is most effective when applied to well-functioning, self-motivated teams, though it often struggles in contexts requiring strong direction or coordination (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 2022). In the NGO sector, its application can yield mixed results, offering flexibility for community-driven initiatives but potentially limiting organizational cohesion.

Servant leadership, a concept popularized by Greenleaf (1977), takes a more human-centric approach by prioritizing the needs of team members and stakeholders. This style emphasizes empathy, stewardship, and community building, aligning closely with the missions of many NGOs. Servant leaders are particularly effective in promoting inclusive decision-making and fostering trust among diverse stakeholders. For NGOs operating in marginalized communities, servant leadership enhances collaboration and ensures interventions are tailored to the needs of beneficiaries (Laub, 2023; House et al., 2022). Charismatic leadership relies on the leader's ability to inspire and connect emotionally with followers. Grounded in Weber's (1947) concept of charismatic authority, this style is particularly impactful in mobilizing support for ambitious initiatives and navigating crises. Charismatic leaders excel in advocacy and resource mobilization, rallying stakeholders around a shared vision. However, the sustainability of this approach can be a concern, as its success often hinges on the leader's personal qualities rather than institutional strength (Kotter, 2023; Yukl, 2022). Increasingly, scholars and practitioners advocate for an integrative perspective on leadership, blending elements from multiple styles to address the complexities of modern organizational challenges. For instance, a transformational leader might employ transactional mechanisms to ensure accountability while also incorporating servant leadership principles to enhance stakeholder engagement. This flexibility is especially important in NGOs, which operate in diverse and unpredictable environments. Leaders in these settings must be adept at switching between styles based on situational demands, ensuring both operational efficiency and mission alignment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2022). The relationship between leadership styles and strategic management is particularly pronounced in NGOs. Effective leadership not only influences team dynamics but also shapes organizational culture, decision-making processes, and strategic direction. Transformational and servant leadership styles are especially aligned with the participatory ethos of NGOs, enabling leaders to mobilize resources, engage stakeholders, and drive sustainable impact. By understanding and leveraging the strengths of various leadership styles, NGO leaders can enhance their strategic management practices and navigate the complexities of achieving social missions (Kotter, 2023; House et al., 2022).

The intersection of leadership styles and strategic management has been extensively studied in corporate environments, where organizations prioritize profit maximization, efficiency, and market dominance. However, there is a

significant research gap in understanding how leadership influences strategic management within non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly in developing countries like Malawi. This gap arises due to the unique operational contexts of NGOs, which prioritize social impact, community engagement, and sustainability over traditional corporate goals. Existing studies frequently extrapolate findings from corporate settings, ignoring the nuanced challenges NGOs face, such as resource dependency, donor accountability, and the need to navigate diverse stakeholder relationships (Northouse, 2022; House et al., 2022). In Malawi, NGOs play a pivotal role in addressing socio-economic challenges, including poverty alleviation, health care delivery, and education access. The effectiveness of these organizations often hinges on their ability to manage scarce resources strategically while remaining true to their missions. Leadership within this context is not only about guiding teams but also about fostering collaboration with local communities, managing donor expectations, and ensuring organizational resilience. Despite this, there is limited empirical research on how leadership styles influence strategic management in Malawian NGOs, creating a knowledge void that this study aims to fill. The study addresses this gap by examining the application of various leadership styles thus transformational, transactional, servant, and charismatic leadership within the context of Malawian NGOs. Transformational leadership, known for its emphasis on vision and motivation, is particularly relevant for NGOs striving for innovation and adaptability in resource-constrained environments. On the other hand, transactional leadership, with its focus on structure and accountability, provides insights into maintaining operational efficiency in the face of donor scrutiny. Servant and charismatic leadership styles further highlight the relational and inspirational aspects of NGO leadership, which are critical for community engagement and stakeholder alignment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977). Through an in-depth case study approach, this research explores how these leadership styles shape strategic decision-making, influence organizational culture, and enhance or hinder strategic management practices. It delves into specific scenarios where leadership style directly impacts the formulation and implementation of strategies, such as resource mobilization, stakeholder negotiations, and crisis management. By focusing on NGOs in Malawi, the study not only contextualizes these dynamics within a unique socio-economic and cultural framework but also identifies actionable insights that can improve leadership practices across the sector. Moreover, this research challenges the generalized assumptions of leadership theories developed in Western corporate

contexts by testing their applicability in NGOs operating in a developing country. For instance, transformational leadership is often hailed for its universality, but its effectiveness in Malawian NGOs might be contingent upon cultural factors, such as communal values and power distance, which differ from Western norms. Similarly, while servant leadership aligns closely with the humanitarian missions of NGOs, its implementation may be limited by hierarchical structures or external pressures from donors (Laub, 2023; Kotter, 2023). By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the academic discourse on leadership and strategic management in two significant ways. First, it broadens the understanding of leadership's role in strategic contexts beyond the corporate domain, emphasizing the distinct needs and challenges of NGOs. Second, it offers practical recommendations for NGO leaders, donors, and policymakers to enhance strategic outcomes through adaptive and contextually relevant leadership practices. These contributions are particularly critical as NGOs in Malawi and similar settings face mounting pressures to demonstrate impact and accountability amidst limited resources and increasing social demands (Yukl, 2022; Northouse, 2022). The research also holds implications for global NGO practices, as insights gained from Malawi's experience may inform strategies for NGOs in other developing countries facing similar challenges. For instance, understanding how servant leadership fosters trust and cooperation in resource-constrained environments can be invaluable for NGOs operating in marginalized communities worldwide. Additionally, exploring the limitations of transactional leadership in dynamic and uncertain settings can guide leaders in balancing control with flexibility (House et al., 2022; Kotter, 2023). In conclusion, the research gap in understanding the interplay between leadership styles and strategic management in NGOs, particularly in Malawi, underscores the need for context-specific investigations. This study not only addresses this gap by analyzing the applicability and impact of various leadership styles but also provides a foundation for developing tailored leadership frameworks that enhance strategic outcomes. As NGOs continue to play a critical role in addressing global and local challenges, equipping their leaders with evidence-based strategies becomes increasingly imperative. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this research contributes to the advancement of leadership and strategic management in the NGO sector.

The research objectives of this study are systematically designed to explore and analyze the relationship between leadership styles and strategic

management in NGOs, addressing a critical gap in the literature. The first objective is to assess the prevalent leadership styles within NGOs, focusing on transformational, transactional, servant, and charismatic leadership. These styles are examined through an integration of theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, emphasizing their relevance to the unique operational dynamics of NGOs. Understanding these leadership styles is crucial, as it provides a foundation for analyzing their impact on strategic management practices (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2022). The second objective delves into the influence of these leadership styles on strategic management. This involves investigating how various leadership approaches shape decision-making processes, foster organizational culture, and drive the formulation and execution of strategic initiatives. For instance, transformational leadership may enhance innovation and adaptability, while transactional leadership could reinforce accountability and operational efficiency. Examining these dynamics within the context of NGOs provides insights into how leadership can align organizational strategies with mission-driven goals, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Kotter, 2023). Another critical objective is to identify patterns and best practices by analyzing case studies of NGOs that have demonstrated exemplary strategic management outcomes. This approach not only highlights successful leadership strategies but also distills actionable insights that can inform future practices. By identifying commonalities in leadership behaviors that contribute to effective strategy implementation, the study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for NGO leaders. These findings will have implications for leadership development programs, enabling NGO leaders to navigate complex challenges and enhance their organizations' impact (House et al., 2022; Laub, 2023). By achieving these objectives, the study contributes to both academic and practical discourses on leadership and strategic management in NGOs. It bridges the gap between theoretical understanding and real-world application, offering practical guidance for enhancing organizational effectiveness. This alignment of research and practice is especially relevant for NGOs operating in developing countries, where leadership plays a pivotal role in addressing pressing socio-economic challenges (Northouse, 2022; Yukl, 2022).



## 2. METHODOLOGY

### ***Research Design***

The research conducted was designed as a descriptive quantitative study, employing a survey as the primary method of data collection. This methodological approach is commonly employed when researchers aim to systematically gather and analyze numerical data to describe and understand various aspects of a phenomenon. To collect data, a structured questionnaire was utilized as a well-defined tool. The questionnaire was carefully designed to elicit specific information relevant to the study's objectives. Structured questionnaires are advantageous in quantitative research as they allow for standardized data collection, ensuring consistency in responses and facilitating statistical analysis. Once the data collection phase was completed, the next step involved the analysis of the gathered information. In this study, the researchers opted to employ the Scientific Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) as the chosen software for data analysis. SPSS is a widely used statistical software package that provides researchers with the tools necessary for conducting various statistical analyses, making it particularly suitable for quantitative research studies. The utilization of SPSS enabled the researchers to apply statistical tests and techniques to derive meaningful insights from the collected data. Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and other relevant analyses were likely performed to examine patterns, relationships, and associations within the dataset. Overall, the combination of a descriptive quantitative study design, a survey methodology, a structured questionnaire, and the application of SPSS for data analysis reflects a systematic and rigorous approach to investigating the research questions or objectives outlined in the study.

### ***Population and sample of the study***

The study focused on a specific population, namely the members of staff associated with the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) known as the Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (CYECE). This organization, dedicated to fostering youth empowerment and civic education, boasts a total workforce comprising 35 dedicated individuals. The decision to select 20 staff members out of a total of 35 at the Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (CYECE) for the study was influenced by a combination of statistical considerations, feasibility, and the need for a representative sample. Firstly, selecting 20 participants allowed the study to maintain a manageable sample size

that is large enough to provide meaningful insights while still being feasible in terms of time, resources, and access to participants. A sample of 20 from a total workforce of 35 represents a significant portion of the organization, ensuring that the research findings reflect the diversity of experiences, perspectives, and insights within the staff. From a statistical standpoint, a sample size of 20 is often adequate to achieve a balance between ensuring sufficient representation and avoiding excessive complexity in data collection and analysis. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a sample size of 20 would be deemed statistically valid for a population size of up to 100, provided the sampling method is sound. Additionally, the sampling approach likely aimed for diversity in terms of roles, experience levels, and personal backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the findings within CYECE's specific organizational context. Furthermore, the decision was based on the pragmatic considerations of feasibility, particularly given the organization's size and the resources available for the study. A smaller sample allows for more in-depth interviews and data collection, which can lead to richer qualitative insights. The inclusion criteria were likely based on the importance of capturing a variety of staff perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive view of the organizational dynamics. This targeted, manageable sample size aligns with common practice in organizational studies, particularly when conducting case studies or qualitative research where the goal is to gain in-depth insights rather than achieve statistical generalizability. It also ensures that the study remains relevant to CYECE's context and useful for improving internal decision-making and practices, as well as contributing to broader insights in the field of youth empowerment and civic education (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019).

### ***Study location***

The research study was strategically conducted in Lilongwe District, the capital city of Malawi, due to several compelling reasons. This location was chosen with a thoughtful consideration of various factors that could significantly impact the research outcomes. First and foremost, Lilongwe serves as the political, economic, and cultural hub of Malawi. Being the capital city, it hosts key governmental institutions, international organizations, and diplomatic missions. This concentration of administrative and decision-making entities makes Lilongwe an ideal location for studies related to government policies, socio-economic dynamics, and the overall governance structure. Researchers may find valuable insights into the impact of national policies on local communities and the effectiveness of government initiatives. Moreover, Lilongwe District is

characterized by a diverse demographic composition, including urban and rural areas, different ethnic groups, and varying socio-economic statuses. This diversity provides researchers with a rich pool of participants, allowing for a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of social, economic, and cultural phenomena. By conducting the study in Lilongwe, researchers can capture a microcosm of the broader Malawian society, enhancing the generalizability and applicability of their findings. Furthermore, Lilongwe's unique historical and cultural background adds a distinctive dimension to the research context. The city's history, traditions, and local narratives contribute to a more holistic understanding of the studied phenomena, ensuring that the research findings are culturally grounded and contextually relevant. The selection of Lilongwe District as the location for this research study is a strategic decision based on its status as the capital city, demographic diversity, accessibility, infrastructure, and cultural significance. These factors collectively contribute to the robustness and relevance of the research outcomes, providing a solid foundation for meaningful insights and potential applications in both academic and practical contexts.

### *Sampling techniques and procedure*

The sampling methodology employed in this study was a non-random convenience sampling technique. This approach involved selecting participants based on their accessibility and convenience rather than using a random selection process. Specifically, members of the organization's staff were chosen for the survey in a way that was convenient for the researchers. To implement this sampling technique, the staff members were grouped according to their respective departments. Additionally, eligibility criteria were established to ensure a specific level of experience and responsibility among the participants. Only those staff members who had been working with the organization for more than 12 months were considered eligible to participate in the survey. Furthermore, the survey targeted individuals within the middle and senior management staff tiers, excluding other levels of the organizational hierarchy. This sampling strategy likely aimed to focus on individuals with a more substantial tenure and managerial roles, possibly in an effort to gather insights from those with a deeper understanding of the organization's internal dynamics and strategic decision-making processes. While convenience sampling can offer practical advantages, such as ease of access to participants, it's important to acknowledge its limitations, as the results may not be fully representative of the entire staff population.

### ***Data Analysis***

In this research endeavor, the methodology employed a dual approach, utilizing questionnaires as the primary tool for data collection and a computer-based system for the subsequent analysis of gathered data. The amalgamation of these techniques aimed to ensure a comprehensive and efficient examination of the research variables. The focal point of the study was the exploration of strategic management, which served as the sole dependent variable. This central aspect was meticulously scrutinized to unravel its nuances and intricacies in response to variations in the independent variables. The independent variables, acting as catalysts in this investigative process, comprised two key dimensions: leadership qualities and leadership styles. The research delved into the multifaceted realm of leadership, acknowledging its diverse facets by dissecting the influence of distinct leadership qualities and styles on the overarching concept of strategic management. Leadership qualities, as one set of independent variables, encompassed a spectrum of attributes and traits possessed by individuals in leadership roles. These characteristics, ranging from communication skills to decision-making process, were scrutinized to discern their impact on the strategic management paradigm under investigation. Simultaneously, the second set of independent variables, leadership styles, introduced an additional layer of complexity to the study. The varied approaches to leadership, such as transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire styles, were meticulously examined to discern their role in shaping the strategic management landscape. Quantitative data analysis involves systematic examination of numerical information to derive meaningful insights. Initially, data is collected through surveys, experiments, or observations. Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, provide a summary of the dataset. Inferential statistics help draw conclusions and make predictions about a population based on a sample. Data visualization through graphs, charts, and tables enhances understanding and facilitates communication of findings. Statistical software like SPSS or Excel often aids in computations. The process ensures rigorous interpretation, pattern recognition, and informed decision-making, promoting clarity and accessibility in conveying the numerical aspects of research or analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### ***Participants Demographic Information***

The demographic information of the members of staff who participated in the survey were based on their age, Education Status, Management Level, Department, Years in the Organization, Religion and Ethnicity. According to the analysis of results Out of the 20 participants of the survey, 7 were males which represents 35% while 13 participants were female members representing 65%. In programmes, a total number of 13 members participated in the survey that is 5 males and 8 females representing 38.5% and 61.5% respectively. In Finance and Administration department, a total number of 4 participated that is 1 male and 3 females. On the other hand, a total number of 2 members from the department of Research Monitoring and Evaluation comprising 1 male and 1 female participated while only 1 respondent from others took part in the survey. 45% were within the age category of 18-25, while 35% were of ages 25-30 and only 20% were of ages 30-35. According to education Status, 70% of the respondents had University Bachelor's Degrees, 20% were Diploma holders, 5% possessed a Master's Degree and the remaining 5% had an MSCE. It was observed that more participants who were surveyed were those in possession of Bachelor's Degree seconded by those with Diplomas.

#### ***Qualities of Leaders in Local NGO's***

The study assessed the qualities available in the leaders of the organization as observed by employees and the findings show that majority represented by an average score of 73.8% of the members of management and staff at CYECE who participated in the survey mentioned that their leaders possess both relevant knowledge for their job and analytical skills, demonstrate ability to build teams and have confidence in performing their leadership roles. In addition, the survey further established that employees at CYECE also perceive that communication, analytical and listening skills, are among the visible characteristics that their leaders portray in their day-to-day execution of strategic management as represented by 65% and 60% of responses respectively. The findings show that leaders in this organization demonstrate knowledge of relevant information and good communication skills which are prerequisites for applying strategic management as members of the organization 75.0 and 65.0 % respectively cited these as key in enabling the leaders in applying strategic management.

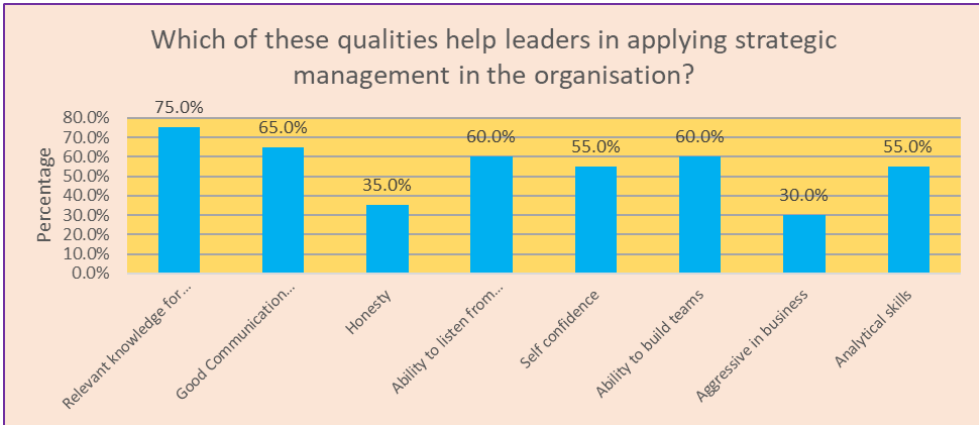


Figure 1. Leadership qualities for strategic management.

### **Leadership Styles Applied by Managers in the Local Organizations**

The third section of the questionnaire captured information regarding the leadership styles that are commonly applied by managers in local organizations. The participants/respondents were asked questions regarding the characteristics of leaders being reflected in the organization so as to determine whether the leaders in the organization were practicing either transactional, Transformational, Charismatic, Autocratic or Laissez Faire type of leadership. Below are findings according to different variables on leadership styles. In relation to this variable, the survey sought to acquire information on whether employees in the organization were promised rewards for achieving good performance and results. In addition, respondents were further asked whether their leaders in the organization provide rewards to employees for achieving good performance. The findings of the survey present that 90% of the respondents accepted having been promised rewards both for achieving good results and demonstrating outstanding performance. However, it was further noted that out of 90% of respondents, only 85% responded that their leaders provide rewards for good performance which means that 15% of the respondents do not agree that their leaders do provide the rewards on good performance. Table 1 below shows distribution of responses regarding some questions relating to Transactional leadership style.

Table 1. Distribution of responses on transactional leadership.

Variable	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	I don't know
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Are employees in this organization promised rewards for achieving good results?	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (10%)
Do employees in this organization promise rewards for good performance?	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (10%)
Do employees in this organization provide rewards for good performance?	7 (35%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (15%)

***Type of rewards provided to employees***

According to the findings presented on Graph 3.0 on the type of rewards provided to employees, the majority of the respondents represented with 85% mentioned Performance award as the main reward provided to those employees who have performed well in the year, 35% mentioned gifts, another 35% promotion, 15% stated bonuses, and only one respondent represented with 5% mentioned salary increases as the main reward that is provided by management to those employees who have performed well in the organization. In addition to this question, participants were further asked if those who have been provided with different kinds of rewards are motivated to do more on their work or not. The findings have shown that more employees represented by 40% of responses provided feel always motivated when provided with rewards, 25% feel frequently motivated and another 25% said that they are sometimes motivated by the rewards. On the other hand, 10% of the survey respondents answered not being aware of whether the rewards provided contribute towards employee motivation on their job.



Figure 2. Type of rewards provided to employees.

### Motivation of employees by Rewards

In relation to employee motivation the survey further captured information on whether the rewards provided to CYECE members of employees were part of the motivating factor for them to do more on their work or not. During the survey, 90% of the respondents replied that the act of rewarding employees by leaders in the organization does contribute towards inspiring the worker to do more and this in the end ensures effective implementation of strategic management. On the other hand, some few respondents represented by 10% indicated that they were not aware whether rewards would motivate employees regarding the type of rewards that registered a higher score in the survey for the organization. In addition to the rewards and employee motivation question, the survey also captured information regarding whether leaders in the organization recognizes staff accomplishments or not. The findings indicate that respondents in the survey felt that their accomplishments in the organization were being recognized as evidenced with 40% on always, 45% on frequently and 15% on Sometimes. With regards to whether leaders in the organization watches and searches for deviations from rules and standards, survey results indicated that most leaders in the organization are able to monitor adherence to the rules and standards as evidenced by 45% responses on frequently, 40% on always and 5% of those who responded sometimes. This further reflects that the organization was to a greater extent serious on adherence to standards and best practices. However, 10 % of the respondents indicated that they did not know whether their leaders in the organization were checking on any deviation from the rules and standards as required.





Figure 3. Employee motivation rewards.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

Under this variable, respondents were required to provide information relating to whether leaders in the organization provide vision and sense of mission, are respected and trusted by employees, possess ability to demonstrate methodology in a simple way, can inspire staff, promotes rationality and decision making, or present the ability to listen to employees, coach them and advise them. As presented in table 2 below, 90% of respondents said that at CYECE leaders are always able to provide vision and sense of mission in running the affairs of the organization. This is a clear reflection that CYECE values the importance of creating a common platform where its vision and mission as stipulated in its strategic plan can be shared and translated for everyone to ably contribute towards the growth of the organization. Findings of the survey further revealed that in terms of respect and trust towards leaders at CYECE, 55% of the participants responded that leaders at CYECE are always respected and trusted while those replying sometimes and frequently were awarded 20% each. This shows that to some extent leaders at CYECE can be trusted and therefore respected by employees, however there is need to work on improvements so that all the leaders win trust and respect from all the employees to ensure that strategic management processes are effectively managed. In terms of inspiring staff, 95% of participants comprising 60% on always, 20% on frequently and 15% on sometimes responded that the leaders in the organization do inspire employees by communication high expectations to them. In the survey, respondents were also able to provide information whether leaders in the organization had capability to present the methodology in a simple way and it was realized that the majority represented by 50% stated that the leaders were always able to demonstrate the methodology in a simple and understandable way, followed by 35% and 10% of those who replied frequently and sometimes respectively. This therefore indicates that most leaders at CYECE have skills and capacity to translate the methodology into implementation while making it easy for others to learn in the process. In addition,

the researcher further captured information on how the leaders in the organization treat other employees or attend to them. What came out during the survey is that a greater majority of respondents represented by 70% stated that most leaders at CYECE were always able to treat other employees well, offer them constructive advice and pay attention to their concerns and complaints when approached. As shown in the Table 4.3.2 below, 45% of the respondents stated that their leaders were always promoting rationality and careful problem-solving skills through diverse means and platform, seconded by 40% of those who said they do but frequently.

Table 2. Distribution of responses regarding transformational leadership.

Variable	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	I don't know
Leaders in this organization provides vision and a sense of mission	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Leaders in this organization are respected and trusted by all employees	11 (55%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)
Leaders in this organization inspire staff by communicating high expectations	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)
Leaders demonstrate the methodology in a simple way	10 (50%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)
Leadership in this organization promotes rationality and careful problem solving	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	2 (10%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)
Leaders in this organization give personal attention, treat each employee individually, coaches, advises	14 (60%)	1 (20%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0.0%)

### *Charismatic Leadership*

With respect to a theme on charismatic leadership, the survey was able to generate information on characteristics of leadership such as whether leaders in the organization under study were able to set and articulate a vision, take personal risks and engage in personal sacrifice, were able to make assessments on environmental constraints and resources or project a powerful, confident, and dynamic presence, or if they are sensitive and responsive to the needs and feelings

of staff. In addition, the assessment was meant to determine whether leaders in the organization were able to articulate an overarching goal and present high-performance expectations. With respect to setting and articulating a vision, the survey revealed that 95% of respondents comprising 65% of those who said always and 30% of those who responded frequently, accepted that their leaders were good at setting and articulating the vision for the organization. On the other hand, 40%, 30% and 15% of respondents recorded on always, frequently and sometimes during the survey replied that their leaders were able to take risks and engage in self-sacrifice. However, some improvement needs to be done because 15% represent those respondents who did not believe that their leaders were risk takers. The findings of the study further established that most leaders at CYECE were responsive and sensitive, could make realistic assessments of constraints and resources, projected a powerful, confident and dynamic presence, possessed ability to articulate an over-arching goal and communicate high expectations as represented by a majority responses of 90%, 95%, 100%, and 100% respectively.

Table 3. Distribution of responses on charismatic leadership style.

Variable	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	I don't know
Leaders in this organization sets and articulate vision	13 (65%)	6 (30%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)
Leaders in this organization take personal risks and engage in self-sacrifice to achieve the vision	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (10%)
Leaders in this organization are able to make realistic assessments of the environmental constraints and resources to bring about change?	8 (40%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Leaders in this organization are sensitive and responsive to the needs and feelings of staff	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)
Leaders in this organization project a powerful,	11 (55%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

confident, and dynamic presence					
Leaders in this organization articulate an over-arching goal	11 (55%)	8 (40%)	1 (5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Leaders in this organization communicate high-performance expectations	16 (80%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

### ***Autocratic Leadership***

In relation to autocratic type of leadership, the survey sought to find out whether leaders in the institution were able to consult their employees on critical decision making, determine whether leaders make decisions on their own and communicate them later for implementation, or if leaders were flexible. In addition, the survey also captured information regarding whether leaders in the organization simply communicate already made decision to staff or not. With regards the variables being addressed under autocratic leadership, the survey found out that 40% of respondents were in agreement that sometimes their leaders do not consult them whenever critical decisions are being made while 5% said that their leaders do not always consult employees whenever such decisions are being made. On the other hand, only 20% said that leaders have never made any critical decision without consulting them. In other words, results on this variable indicate that CYECE needs to improve in the area of engaging its staff at all times whenever critical decisions are being made as those people who accepted that some critical decisions are made minus consultation is 65% signaling a serious problem on this aspect of leadership. According to findings of the survey on leadership, the respondents in the representation of 60% accepted that some leaders at CYECE make decisions on their own and communicate them to employees for implementation. This calls for an immediate solution because decisions that are not unanimously done become very difficult to implement by those not included at the point of formulation. Despite 35% of participants responding not having witnessed decisions made solely by leaders, CYECE should still more do something so that every decision made finds no hindrance at implementation stage. It has to be borne in mind that decisions jointly made do not affect the implementation of strategic plan for the organization in any way.

### ***Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles***

In response to the theme above, the survey generated information on whether employees in the organization were given authority and liberty to do things in their own way without interference by Managers in the areas of programme planning, implementation and monitoring. The responses generated by the researcher through the survey indicate that employees at CYECE are not completely liberated nor completely deprived of authority and liberty on all things. In summary, 45% of respondents agreed that there is slight liberty and autonomy in doing some things at CYECE while 35% replied never and 20% answered not aware of either.

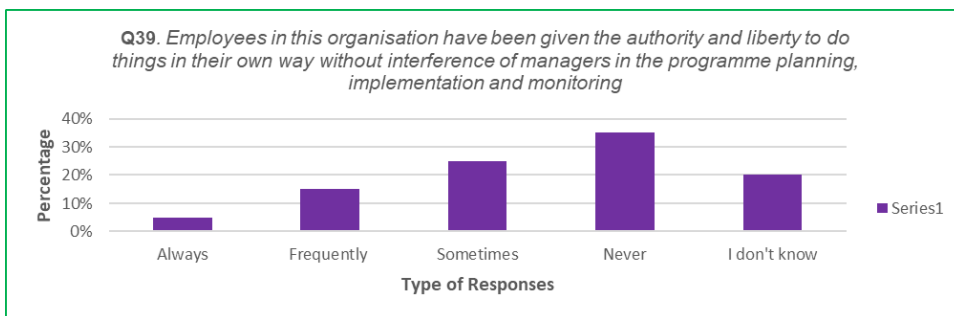


Figure 4. Distribution of responses on Laissez-faire leadership styles.

### ***Effects of Leadership Styles on Strategic Management***

*The study assesses effects of leadership styles on strategic management by looking at involvement of employees setting the plans, ability of leaders to assign roles and responsibilities, whether staff plan for results in the organization and also whether the monitoring is done in the implementation of the strategic plan and the following were the results of the analysis. The data captured during the survey in relation to the above thematic area established that most employees at CYECE were involved in strategic planning processes as evidenced by 90% responses on Always, Frequently and Sometimes. The findings of the survey further revealed that more employees were involved at setting organization vision represented by 70%, seconded by 65% on developing operational plans, and 60% both at environmental scanning and development of organizational strategies while a 50% of respondents mentioned having been involved at developing results frameworks. The figure below depicts that employees are least involved at setting organizational priorities as represented by 45% respectively.*

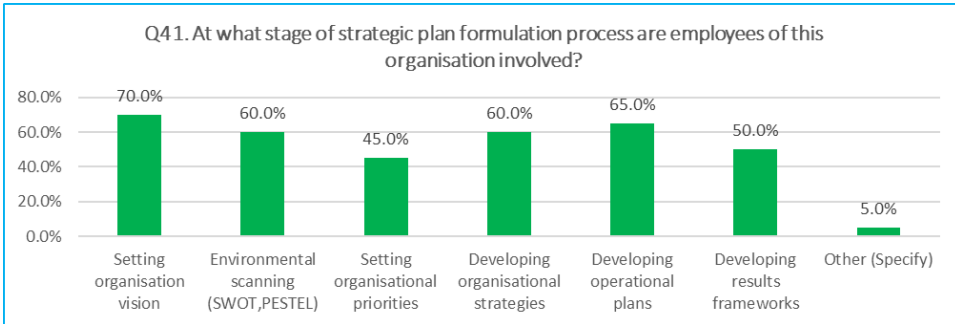


Figure 5. Participation of employee in strategic planning.

### Assignment of roles and responsibilities to employees

When looking at the information presented in the Table 4 below, responses provided during the survey indicate that at CYECE roles and responsibility are clearly assigned to employees as evidenced by a 95% score which comprises 70% on always and a 25% on frequently. In similar aspect, CYECE seems to have done a good job regarding prioritizing the need to clarify and inform all employees about the organization vision and mission. The findings of the survey respondents reported indicates that 80% of the employees who participated in the survey were aware of the vision and mission of the organization and attributed their awareness of the two to regular forums where leaders are able to clarify and talk about the organization including its mission and vision.

Table 4. Assignment of roles and responsibilities to staff.

Variable	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	I don't know
Do leaders in this organization clarify the vision and mission to all employees?	16 (80%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Are roles and responsibilities clearly assigned to employees in the implementation of the strategic plan?	14 (70%)	5 (25%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0.0%)

**Planning for results**

In terms of results, it has been established that CYECE through its leaders are able to plan for results and they value it as evidenced by 95% responses on Always. Graph 5 below shows the distribution of responses as captured during the survey in relation to results planning.

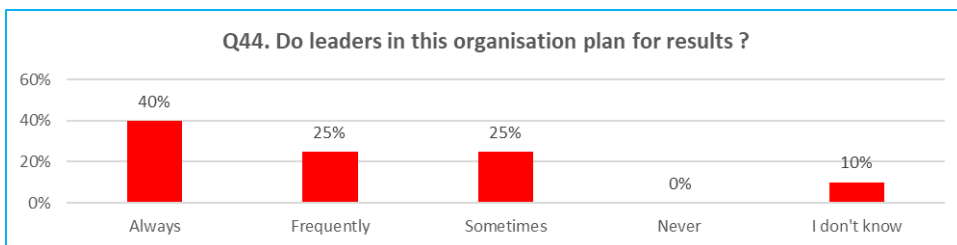


Figure 6. Results planning.

In order to understand how effective the results planning process was, the survey further requested information from respondents on whether the results framework was linked successfully to the organization strategic plan. In relation to this, 100% of the respondents comprising 70% on Always and 30% on Frequently indicated that CYECE puts more effort toward linking the results framework to its strategy with an aim of ensuring that the implementation of the Strategic plan is effectively monitored. In addition, the questionnaire also captured information to understand how roles and responsibilities are being shared in the implementation of the organization strategy. Results generated through the survey on the same reflects that there is a clear assignment of roles and responsibilities at CYECE which makes it very easy for leaders to both apply strategic management by implementing its strategy effectively.

**Strategy Implementation Monitoring**

The survey further sought to find out if the organization targeted was monitoring the implementation of its strategic plan. With regard to this, 75 % of respondents indicated that the organization always monitor the strategy as it is being implemented, 15% said the implementation was being frequently monitored by the organization while 10% stated that the strategic plan in its implementation is monitored sometimes. However, looking at the average representation of the scores from the survey it can be summarized that the organization under discussion monitors the implementation of its strategy. The respondents were

further asked to provide information regarding how monitoring of the strategic plan is done. Based on the survey results, it is clear that CYECE monitors its strategy through Annual Retreats represented greatly by 40%. On the other hand, 35% of the responses indicated that the organization monitors its strategic plan through Annual organizational capacity assessment while the smaller group of respondents represented by 15% said that the organization monitors its strategy through annual participatory reviews.



Figure 7. Strategic plan implementation monitoring.

### Strategic Plan Reviews

With regards to review of the strategic plan, the survey found out that 95% of respondents comprising 40% on frequently, 30% on always and 25% on sometimes, replied that the organization conducts periodic reviews of its strategic plan. When further asked on when the organization carries out its reviews of the strategic plan, respondents revealed that most reviews of the strategic plan for the organization happen annually represented by 35%.

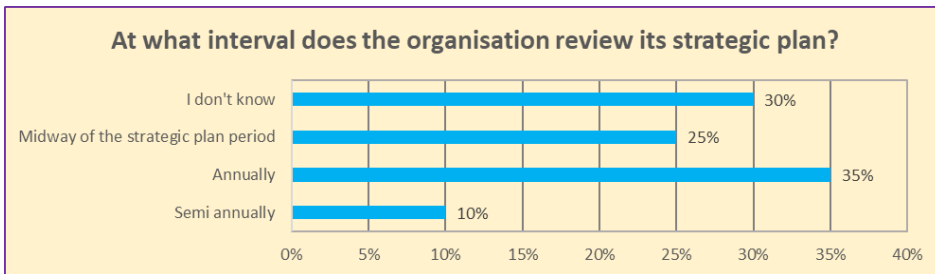


Figure 8: Review period/intervals for the strategy.



The pie chart below presents the distribution of responses regarding whether the organization being assessed carries out period reviews of its strategic plan or not.

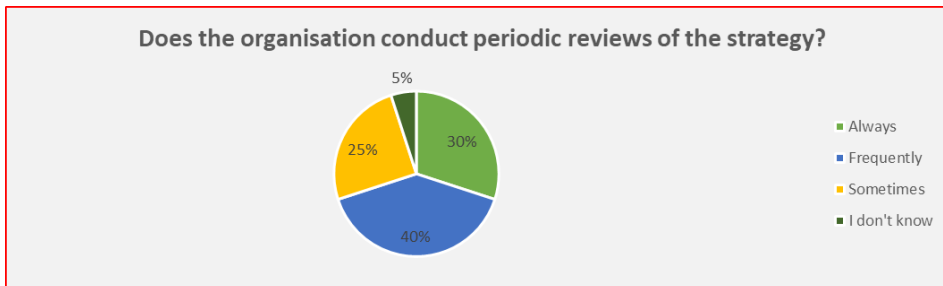


Figure 9. Pie chart showing how strategic plan review distribution.

### ***Qualities of Leaders in Local NGO's applying strategic management***

This study has revealed that leaders in local NGOs in Malawi have average mix of good leadership qualities as almost every participant mentioned a set of skills that are observed in the organization leaders. The majority represented by 73.8% of the members of management and staff at CYECE mentioned that their leaders possess both relevant knowledge for their job and analytical skills, demonstrate ability to build teams and have confidence in performing their leadership roles. Most outstanding in all the qualities are the communication (65%) and listening skills, (60%). The participants scored their leaders very low on the honesty and aggressiveness in conducting business and this is something leaders of local NGO need to improve on to gain public confidence and donor trust as well as respect by the service beneficiaries and other stakeholders. In this study, it was reported that leaders in this organization motivate their staff through performance-based rewards to improve staff productivity and increased motivation. The study noted staff of the organization are motivated by promised rewards as 90% of the respondents accepted having been promised rewards and this was one of the reasons for their commitment to work. The study has also shown that when employees are promised rewards which are not fulfilled then they get demotivated and it affects their productivity and overall company performance. The study further showed that leaders in local NGOs are able to provide vision and sense of mission, are respected and trusted by employees, possess ability to demonstrate methodology in a simple way, can inspire staff,

promotes rationality and decision making and they have the ability to listen to employees, coach them and advise them.

### ***Effects of Leadership Styles on Strategic Management***

The findings of the survey further revealed that employees in local NGO's applying strategic management with transformational and transactional leadership styles are able to involve employees in different processes as more employees in the study reported were involved at setting organization vision represented by 70%, seconded by 65% on developing operational plans, and 60% both at environmental scanning and development of organizational strategies. Furthermore, the study has shown that transformational and transactional leaders have the capability of allocating and assigning both human and material resources for the achievement of results as 95 % of the respondents indicated that the roles in the organization are properly assigned and clearly assigned. Organization leaders applying transactional and transformational leadership prioritize the need to clarify and inform all employees about the organization vision and mission as 80% of the employees who participated in the survey were aware of the vision and mission of the organization and attributed their awareness of the two to regular forums where leaders are able to clarify and talk about the organization including its mission and vision. The study further shows that in organizations whose leaders apply transformational and transactional leadership, results are planned at different levels but overall, there's one strategic results framework that provides guidance in the setting of the milestones and progress markers at lower level. The study found that 100% of the respondents comprising 70% on Always and 30% on Frequently indicated that CYECE puts more effort toward linking the results framework to its strategy with an aim of ensuring that the implementation of the Strategic plan is effectively monitored. The study has also revealed that local organizations monitor strategy implementation through retreats, annual organizational assessments and strategy reviews. According to the study, the monitoring of strategy implementation is a key to aligning what the organization is doing to its core business.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the significant impact of leadership styles on strategic management practices and overall organizational performance, particularly within NGOs. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision,

inspiration, and trust-building, has a substantial influence on aligning organizational strategies with long-term goals. This style fosters commitment, motivation, and engagement, which are crucial for the successful implementation of strategic plans. As noted by Bass (1997) and Avolio & Bass (2004), transformational leaders inspire their teams and cultivate an adaptive organizational culture, making this leadership style particularly effective for NGOs working in dynamic and resource-constrained environments. Conversely, transactional leadership, with its emphasis on structured tasks, rewards, and punishments, plays a key role in ensuring operational efficiency and meeting short-term objectives. The study reveals that transactional leadership enhances motivation to achieve specific goals, contributing to the broader success of strategic initiatives (Chung et al., 2009). While transformational leadership inspires long-term commitment, transactional leadership ensures efficient task completion, thus creating a balance that optimizes organizational performance. On the other hand, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles, though occasionally useful in specific contexts, do not yield sustainable results when applied regularly. Autocratic leadership is often necessary in crises requiring quick decisions, while laissez-faire leadership may result in lack of direction and accountability, hindering strategic progress. To enhance the leadership effectiveness within NGOs, several key recommendations emerge from this study. Firstly, it is essential for NGOs to implement leadership development programs that focus on both transformational and transactional leadership qualities. These programs should target skills such as emotional intelligence, effective communication, and visionary leadership for transformational leaders, as well as performance monitoring, accountability, and reward systems for transactional leaders. Developing leaders who possess a balance of these skills will help NGOs better navigate both short-term challenges and long-term strategic goals. Secondly, NGOs should establish mechanisms for regular self-reflection and feedback. Tools such as 360-degree feedback, peer reviews, and self-assessments are vital for leaders to evaluate their effectiveness and refine their leadership approach. Additionally, training programs should focus on improving communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, as well as decision-making processes. Effective communication ensures that leaders can engage their teams, clarify expectations, and foster a collaborative work environment. Finally, NGOs should develop reward systems that reinforce transactional leadership behaviors, providing both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives to motivate staff and improve organizational commitment (Chung et al., 2009). To improve the practical

implications of the study and enhance the leadership capabilities within local NGOs, several recommendations are proposed. These recommendations focus on enhancing both transformational and transactional leadership styles, which have proven to be most effective in motivating staff and achieving organizational goals. One of the key recommendations is to implement leadership development programs specifically aimed at enhancing both transformational and transactional leadership qualities. These programs should focus on developing skills such as emotional intelligence, effective communication, and vision-setting, which are central to transformational leadership (Northouse, 2018). On the other hand, transactional leadership programs should concentrate on performance monitoring, accountability, and reward systems. Such development initiatives will ensure that leaders are well-equipped to inspire and manage their teams, leading to more effective strategic management outcomes. In addition to leadership development programs, it is essential for NGOs to establish regular reflection and feedback mechanisms for leaders. Self-reflection, peer reviews, and 360-degree feedback are vital tools for leaders to assess their leadership qualities and effectiveness (Antonakis & House, 2014). These processes will help leaders identify areas for improvement and ensure that they align their leadership style with the goals and needs of the organization. Developing strong communication skills is another crucial area. As communication was highlighted as a critical quality in the study, NGOs should offer training on clear and effective communication. This includes both verbal and non-verbal communication, listening skills, and transparent decision-making processes (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Effective communication ensures that expectations are clear, staff feel engaged, and the overall organizational culture remains collaborative and transparent, which is essential for the success of strategic management. Reward systems should also be designed to reinforce transactional leadership behaviors. NGOs can establish performance-based incentives, including both intrinsic rewards like recognition and extrinsic rewards such as bonuses or promotions. Research by Chung et al. (2009) has shown that well-structured reward systems increase staff motivation and satisfaction, which in turn improves commitment to the organization's mission and strategic objectives. Additionally, while the study found that autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles were less effective, it is important to recognize their potential applicability in specific situations. For example, autocratic leadership may be necessary in times of crisis when quick decision-making is required. However, these styles should not dominate regular operations. Leaders should be encouraged to use these approaches sparingly and

to assess their effectiveness in various contexts (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Lastly, NGOs should encourage a balanced leadership approach that combines elements of both transformational and transactional leadership. This hybrid approach allows leaders to be visionary while also ensuring that tasks are completed efficiently and effectively. Training programs should therefore focus on how to integrate both leadership styles to meet the dynamic needs of the organization (Bass, 1997). Such a balanced approach has been shown to lead to sustainable success in strategic management, especially in resource-constrained environments like those often faced by NGOs. By implementing these actionable recommendations, NGOs can strengthen their leadership structures, enhance staff engagement, and improve the effectiveness of their strategic management practices. These steps will help leaders navigate the complexities of leadership in NGOs, ensuring that their strategic initiatives align with the mission and goals of the organization. Future research in this area could explore several dimensions to further understand the interplay between leadership styles and organizational outcomes. One critical area is the cultural and contextual factors that may influence leadership effectiveness in different regions. Leadership styles that work in one cultural context may not necessarily be as effective in another, and future studies should examine how local norms and values shape leadership preferences and practices. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impacts of hybrid leadership approaches integrating transformational and transactional styles on organizational growth and stability. While the current study highlights the immediate benefits of balancing leadership styles, it is important to investigate whether this balance leads to sustained success over time. Another important direction for future research is the role of emotional intelligence in leadership. Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of leadership success (Goleman, 1995), and future studies should explore how it interacts with transformational and transactional leadership styles to enhance decision-making, conflict resolution, and team engagement. Lastly, exploring leadership's role in fostering innovation within NGOs could provide valuable insights. NGOs often operate under resource constraints and must innovate to remain effective. Investigating how leadership styles influence innovation processes will deepen the understanding of how transformational and transactional leadership contribute to organizational creativity and problem-solving. Such research will contribute to developing best practices for NGO leadership, helping organizations achieve both strategic and social objectives more effectively.

## 5. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest whatsoever in this study. It is also hereby declared that the paper is free from plagiarism.

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