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Examining the Effects of Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance: A Case Study of Trade Kings Zambia

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of leadership styles on organizational performance at Trade Kings Zambia, a leading firm in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Despite the recognized global importance of effective leadership in driving innovation and productivity, many organizations in Zambia continue to struggle with aligning leadership approaches to desired performance outcomes. A descriptive research design was adopted, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics within the organization. The study targeted employees and managers across four key departments, production, sales and marketing, human resources, and administration. Using stratified random and purposive sampling, a total of 100 participants were selected, comprising 80 respondents who completed structured questionnaires and 20 managers who participated in key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and correlation analysis, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The findings revealed that transformational (38.8%) and democratic (25.0%) leadership styles were predominant at Trade Kings Zambia, reflecting a participatory and motivational culture. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant relationship between leadership style

and organizational performance ($\chi^2(12) = 29.276$, $p = 0.004$), with transformational and democratic leaders strongly correlated with high motivation, teamwork, and innovation. Transformational leadership showed strong positive correlations with motivation ($r = 0.812$) and retention ($r = 0.801$), while democratic leadership correlated positively with teamwork ($r = 0.702$) and retention ($r = 0.721$). Transactional leadership demonstrated moderate effects on productivity, whereas autocratic and laissez-faire styles exhibited negative associations with performance indicators. The qualitative findings reinforced these results, highlighting that departments led by visionary and participative managers experienced greater cohesion, morale, and output. Overall, the study concludes that Trade Kings Zambia's success is driven by a hybrid leadership model that blends transformational and democratic traits, complemented by transactional discipline. This combination promotes innovation, collaboration, and operational efficiency while maintaining accountability. The study recommends reinforcing transformational and democratic leadership practices through leadership training, participatory decision-making, and recognition-based motivation systems to sustain competitiveness and employee engagement.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Organizational Performance, Transformational Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Trade Kings Zambia, Employee Motivation

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Leadership is universally acknowledged as a fundamental element influencing the success or failure of organizations. It encompasses the ability of individuals in positions of authority to guide, influence, and direct others toward achieving common goals. Globally, leadership styles have attracted significant academic and practical interest due to their implications for organizational performance in diverse sectors. Scholars have explored how transformational, transactional, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles affect organizational outcomes, employee engagement, and innovation (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016; Muchiri *et al.*, 2019). For instance, in a global study, Saleem (2020) ^[17] observed that transformational

leadership correlates positively with increased productivity and employee satisfaction in multinational corporations. Similarly, transactional leadership has been noted for its effectiveness in achieving short-term organizational goals (Khan & Ismail, 2022) ^[10]. These observations underscore the role of leadership in shaping performance and sustainability in modern enterprises.

In the Sub-Saharan African context, the dynamics of leadership and organizational performance are further complicated by historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors. Many organizations in the region grapple with issues such as limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and leadership skill gaps, all of which affect organizational effectiveness (Ncube, 2021). Moreover, the legacy of colonial administrative systems continues to shape leadership structures and practices, often resulting in hierarchical and top-down management systems (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2017). However, contemporary studies have shown a gradual shift toward participative and transformational leadership models that emphasize employee motivation, vision sharing, and innovation. For instance, a study by Ochieng and Tubey (2018) in Kenya revealed that organizations led by transformational leaders exhibited higher employee commitment and enhanced performance. In Ghana, leadership adaptability was found to be critical in public sector performance, where leaders had to respond swiftly to policy changes and public demands (Mensah *et al.*, 2020). Such findings suggest that leadership styles are central to organizational development across various sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Zambia, leadership in both private and public sectors has been subjected to growing scrutiny, especially in the wake of economic reforms and increased competition. Local firms are under pressure to deliver results in a challenging macroeconomic environment characterized by fluctuating currency value, inflation, and policy inconsistencies. Leadership practices have, therefore, become a crucial determinant of how organizations navigate these complexities. Research by Banda and Phiri (2019) found that leadership approaches in Zambian enterprises significantly influence employee morale, innovation, and operational efficiency. A case study by Mwansa and Sichone (2022) on manufacturing firms in Lusaka emphasized the need for adaptive and inclusive leadership to cope with market volatility. The study indicated that autocratic leadership was still prevalent in some organizations, leading to high employee turnover and low innovation rates.

Trade Kings Zambia, one of the country's largest manufacturing and distribution companies, provides a unique setting for examining the effects of leadership on organizational performance. Despite its growth and dominance in various sectors including beverages, detergents, and snacks, the company faces intense competition and demands for continual innovation. Internal reports and public discourse have hinted at variations in leadership practices across its departments, which may contribute to performance disparities. However, scholarly literature focusing specifically on leadership styles at Trade Kings is limited, creating a need for empirical investigation. National policy frameworks such as the Zambia Vision 2030 and the Private Sector Development Reform Programme (PSDRP) have emphasized leadership development and managerial training as key to improving corporate

governance and productivity (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2020). These policies reflect a recognition at the national level of leadership's pivotal role in economic development.

Leadership styles play a critical role in determining organizational performance at global, continental, and local levels. While there is considerable global and regional literature on the subject, there remains a paucity of focused studies on leadership within key Zambian firms such as Trade Kings. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge that gap by exploring the leadership styles practiced at Trade Kings Zambia and examining their effects on organizational performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing body of literature globally linking leadership styles such as transformational and transactional leadership to productivity and innovation (Saleem, 2020; Khan & Ismail, 2022) ^[17, 10], many organizations still face challenges in applying appropriate leadership models. Leadership remains a critical determinant of organizational performance, yet many firms struggle to align leadership practices with desired performance outcomes. In Zambia, recent studies reveal a mismatch between leadership approaches and operational performance in key sectors, including manufacturing (Banda & Phiri, 2019). Trade Kings Zambia, being a leading firm in the FMCG sector, operates in a competitive environment that demands visionary and adaptive leadership to sustain growth. However, anecdotal and internal reports suggest inconsistencies in leadership styles across departments, resulting in varying levels of employee satisfaction, productivity, and innovation. The gap between ideal leadership practices and actual implementation raises questions about which leadership styles prevail and their impact on performance. Moreover, limited scholarly focus on leadership practices within Trade Kings creates a knowledge void. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the leadership styles adopted at Trade Kings Zambia and assess how they influence the organization's performance, providing evidence-based insights for leadership optimization.

1.3 Objective

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine the effectiveness of community-based renewable energy solutions in addressing clean energy gaps in Chawama Constituency, Lusaka.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To establish the leadership styles practiced at Trade Kings Zambia.
2. To examine the effects of different leadership styles on organizational performance.
3. To ascertain the relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What leadership styles are currently practiced at Trade Kings Zambia?
2. How do different leadership styles affect organizational performance at Trade Kings Zambia?
3. What are the limitations associated with the leadership styles applied at Trade Kings Zambia?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) developed by Bass and Avolio, which integrates transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Transformational leadership emphasizes vision, motivation, and innovation, fostering employee engagement and adaptability critical for firms like Trade Kings Zambia. Transactional leadership focuses on structure, rewards, and compliance, promoting efficiency but limited flexibility. Laissez-faire leadership, by contrast, reflects leadership absence, often linked to poor outcomes. Research in Sub-Saharan Africa and Zambia (Muchiri *et al.*, 2019; Mwansa & Sichone, 2022) confirms FRLT's contextual relevance, demonstrating that combining transformational and transactional elements enhances performance. The model's empirical robustness and adaptability make it suitable for examining leadership behaviors and their impact on organizational performance in Zambia's manufacturing sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leadership Styles Practiced in Organizations

Leadership style refers to how leaders influence, motivate, and direct subordinates toward achieving organizational goals (Robbins & Judge, 2019^[16]; Northouse, 2022). Globally, transformational, transactional, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire styles are the most recognized and empirically studied (Yukl, 2020). Effective leadership determines organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and long-term performance (Goleman *et al.*, 2013).

Transformational leadership, developed by Bass (1985), emphasizes vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, motivating employees toward innovation and shared goals (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006^[6]). Research shows it enhances creativity, adaptability, and organizational commitment, making it essential for dynamic industries (Northouse, 2022; Alrowwad *et al.*, 2023^[3]). Conversely, transactional leadership rooted in structured roles, performance monitoring, and rewards ensures short-term efficiency and control (Burns, 1978; Antonakis & House, 2014). It is most effective in settings requiring compliance and precision, such as manufacturing (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2010). Autocratic leadership enables swift decision-making in crises but can suppress innovation (Chukwusa, 2018), whereas democratic leadership enhances creativity and satisfaction but may slow responses (Bhatti *et al.*, 2012). Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by minimal guidance, may promote autonomy but often leads to role ambiguity and reduced productivity (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

In African contexts, leadership practices blend Western theories with indigenous communal values emphasizing collectivism and moral responsibility (Nkomo, 2011; Mbigi, 2005). The philosophy of Ubuntu centered on interconnectedness and shared humanity underpins participative and transformational leadership approaches that value group harmony and social welfare (Broodryk, 2007). African managers often employ a hybrid of transformational and transactional leadership to balance inspiration with operational control, particularly in manufacturing sectors where efficiency and innovation coexist (Mokgolo, Mokgolo & Modiba, 2012; Ngambi, 2011). Recent studies stress the growing relevance of ethical and authentic leadership, which emphasize transparency,

fairness, and moral integrity as drivers of organizational trust and sustainable performance (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011; Kibua & Fourie, 2017). These hybridized approaches reflect an adaptation to Africa's socio-cultural realities, where participative engagement coexists with respect for hierarchy and authority.

In Zambia, leadership styles mirror global frameworks but are deeply shaped by socio-economic and cultural contexts. Studies show that Zambian firms, especially in manufacturing and distribution, combine transactional and transformational styles to ensure operational discipline while promoting innovation (Sikombe, 2021; Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Transactional leadership dominates production divisions through structured routines, monitoring, and performance-based rewards, ensuring efficiency and compliance (Avolio & Bass, 2004). In contrast, departments such as marketing and R&D rely on transformational leadership to encourage creativity, vision alignment, and market responsiveness (Northouse, 2022). This dual approach allows organizations to balance short-term productivity with long-term growth.

Trade Kings Zambia exemplifies this adaptive leadership model. The company's leaders integrate transactional mechanisms for operational control with transformational practices to drive innovation and employee engagement, ensuring resilience in a competitive and dynamic manufacturing environment (Trade Kings Group, 2023). As the country faces economic volatility and shifting regulations, leaders increasingly adopt flexible, context-responsive strategies blending structure with empowerment. This balance between transformational and transactional leadership underpins sustained performance, continuous improvement, and competitiveness within Zambia's manufacturing sector.

2.2 Effects of Different Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance

Leadership style significantly influences employee motivation, innovation, and overall organizational success (Alrowwad *et al.*, 2023)^[3]. Globally, transformational leadership has been found to enhance innovation by fostering creativity, risk-taking, and strategic thinking among employees (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). In dynamic industries such as manufacturing, transformational leaders drive competitiveness by inspiring continuous improvement and adaptability (Zuraik & Kelly, 2019; Tidd & Bessant, 2020). Through intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, transformational leaders enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity, thereby strengthening organizational commitment and long-term performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006^[6]; Wang *et al.*, 2011). Conversely, transactional leadership characterized by clear structures, performance monitoring, and rewards supports operational efficiency and accountability but may stifle innovation when applied rigidly (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Autocratic leadership, emphasizing centralized decision-making and strict control, has been effective in high-pressure environments demanding quick, decisive actions (Chukwusa, 2018; Lewin *et al.*, 2009^[13]). However, it may reduce employee morale and hinder creativity when used extensively. Democratic leadership, on the other hand, promotes participation, teamwork, and shared responsibility, improving job satisfaction and innovation capacity (Gastil,

1994; Iqbal *et al.*, 2015). Globally, research suggests that organizations integrating both transformational and transactional elements while allowing participative input achieve higher performance and adaptability (Northouse, 2022).

Regionally, African leadership studies reveal a unique integration of Western leadership theories and indigenous cultural values emphasizing collectivism and moral responsibility (Mbigi, 2005; Nkomo, 2011). The philosophy of Ubuntu promotes communal leadership, empathy, and collaboration, aligning closely with transformational and democratic styles (Broodryk, 2007). Empirical studies highlight that transformational leadership enhances innovation and employee engagement within African firms, particularly in manufacturing and service industries (Mokgolo, Mokgolo & Modiba, 2012; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2011). However, autocratic and transactional approaches remain prevalent due to hierarchical traditions and respect for authority (Ngambi, 2011). Overreliance on such styles can limit creativity, though a balanced model integrating participative decision-making and empowerment is increasingly recognized as optimal for organizational performance across African contexts (Lerutla & Steyn, 2022).

In Zambia, leadership practices reflect a hybrid of transformational, transactional, and participative approaches. Studies show that Zambian firms often combine transactional leadership to ensure operational discipline with transformational leadership to promote innovation and employee motivation (Sikombe, 2021; Chanda *et al.*, 2020). At Trade Kings Zambia, transactional leadership dominates production and supply chain management to maintain quality and efficiency, while transformational leadership is emphasized in marketing and product development to foster creativity and strategic growth (Mwansa & Sichone, 2022). Democratic elements are increasingly used in innovation-driven departments to enhance collaboration and problem-solving (Mumba & Mwanza, 2020). This blend allows the company to maintain stability while adapting to evolving market demands.

Overall, evidence from global, regional, and local studies confirms that no single leadership style guarantees success. A hybrid model balancing transformational vision with transactional structure and participative inclusivity most effectively drives sustained organizational performance, innovation, and competitiveness in Zambia's manufacturing sector.

2.3 Relationship between Leadership Styles and Organizational Performance

Globally, leadership style is recognized as a primary determinant of organizational performance, influencing innovation, productivity, and employee engagement (Bass & Riggio, 2006) ^[6]. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision sharing, motivation, and intellectual stimulation, consistently correlates with higher innovation, adaptability, and profitability (Wang *et al.*, 2011; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Transactional leadership, grounded in structure and reward systems, enhances short-term efficiency and compliance but often limits creativity in dynamic environments (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lee & Kim, 2021 ^[12]). Conversely, democratic leadership encouraging participation and inclusivity improves job satisfaction and

innovation, especially in knowledge-driven industries (Wang & Xu, 2019) ^[19]. Autocratic and laissez-faire styles, however, are generally linked to low morale and weak performance outcomes (Adiguzel *et al.*, 2020) ^[2]. Recent scholarship emphasizes leadership agility, suggesting that effective leaders flexibly blend transformational and transactional behaviors to sustain performance in volatile markets (DeRue *et al.*, 2020).

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, leadership studies highlight the strong positive relationship between transformational leadership and performance outcomes such as innovation, staff motivation, and customer satisfaction (Ochieng & Tubey, 2018; Wambua & Bwisa, 2020). Democratic and servant leadership styles also enhance collaboration and trust, promoting long-term organizational growth (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2021; Agyemang & Osei, 2017). Transactional leadership remains valuable for ensuring compliance and operational control but contributes little to strategic adaptability (Mtey & Ngirwa, 2019). Regional evidence underscores the influence of African cultural values such as ubuntu, which prioritizes empathy, participation, and collective responsibility, aligning closely with transformational and servant leadership ideals (Muchiri, Cooksey & Walumbwa, 2019). However, autocratic and laissez-faire approaches though still prevalent in hierarchical institutions are often associated with low engagement, weak innovation, and reduced efficiency (Mukamana & Habimana, 2022). Thus, a hybrid leadership approach balancing vision, ethics, and structure appears most effective for sustaining organizational performance in African contexts.

In Zambia, leadership research shows similar trends, linking transformational, democratic, and servant leadership styles with improved productivity, innovation, and employee retention. Banda and Phiri (2019) found that transformational leadership significantly enhanced morale, participation, and efficiency in manufacturing firms. Mwansa and Sichone (2022) further demonstrated that leaders who inspired trust and intellectual stimulation achieved higher innovation and lower turnover rates. In the financial sector, Mweemba and Muleya (2020) reported that democratic and transformational leaders improved profitability, customer loyalty, and team cohesion. Similarly, Zulu and Kalimaposo (2018) observed that participatory leadership in public institutions strengthened service delivery and community trust. Overall, transactional leadership contributes to operational stability and short-term goals but must be complemented by transformational and participative elements for sustainable growth. Autocratic and laissez-faire practices, though occasionally useful for enforcing discipline or autonomy, generally correlate with low motivation and poor long-term performance.

Collectively, global, regional, and local evidence confirms that no single leadership style guarantees success. The most effective leaders integrate transformational vision with transactional structure and participative inclusivity, adapting to situational and cultural contexts. For firms such as Trade Kings Zambia, adopting such a balanced leadership model grounded in ethics, empowerment, and adaptability is critical to sustaining innovation, competitiveness, and high organizational performance in an evolving manufacturing environment.

2.4 Establishment of Research Gap

Although the literature offers substantial insights into the types and effects of leadership styles across organizational settings, several key gaps persist. For Objective One, most studies focus on theoretical classifications of leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic but offer limited empirical data specific to Zambian firms. The actual leadership styles practiced within organizations like Trade Kings Zambia remain underexplored, particularly across departments and hierarchical levels. Regarding Objective Two, while the effects of leadership styles on performance have been widely documented, few studies assess these effects within Zambia's competitive manufacturing sector. Sector-specific performance metrics such as employee output, innovation rate, and operational efficiency are often generalized or inconsistently measured. For Objective Three, there is a notable absence of research evaluating the relationship between specific leadership styles and performance outcomes in Zambian firms. Most studies isolate leadership impacts without statistically or contextually mapping how styles correlate with tangible performance indicators. Moreover, employee perspectives on leadership remain underrepresented, and the role of hybrid or situational leadership approaches is rarely addressed. This study fills these gaps by investigating the leadership styles practiced at Trade Kings Zambia and examining both their effects and their measurable relationship with organizational performance.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive design to examine relationships between leadership styles and organizational performance at Trade Kings Zambia. The approach integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to capture behavioral patterns, attitudes, and managerial experiences. Structured questionnaires will provide measurable data on leadership and performance, while key informant interviews will yield in-depth insights. Combining both methods enhances the reliability, validity, and contextual understanding of leadership dynamics, providing a balanced foundation for analyzing performance outcomes (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

3.2 Target Population

The target population includes employees and managers from four departments: production, sales and marketing, human resources, and administration representing diverse operational and leadership levels. Participants encompass departmental heads, supervisors, and general employees to ensure broad perspectives on leadership influence. Trade Kings Zambia provides an appropriate context due to its scale, workforce diversity, and strategic role in Zambia's fast-moving consumer goods sector. This population enables comprehensive assessment of leadership effects on motivation, innovation, productivity, and overall organizational performance (Ngoma *et al.*, 2020).

3.3 Sampling Design and Sample Size

A mixed sampling approach combining purposive and stratified random techniques will be used. Purposive sampling will identify 20 knowledgeable managers for key informant interviews, while stratified random sampling will select 80 employees proportionally from each department for questionnaires. Stratification by role ensures representativeness and reduces bias. This 100-participant sample provides both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth, enabling reliable and valid findings that capture leadership perceptions across organizational hierarchies (Etikan *et al.*, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data will be collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data will involve structured questionnaires administered to employees and key informant interviews with selected managers. Questionnaires will measure leadership styles, motivation, and performance, while interviews will explore managerial insights and leadership challenges. Secondary data company reports, policy documents, and performance records will supplement primary findings. Triangulating multiple sources strengthens validity, reliability, and contextual richness, providing a holistic understanding of leadership practices at Trade Kings Zambia (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires will be analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics (frequencies) and inferential tests such as Chi-square and correlation to examine relationships between leadership and performance indicators. Qualitative data from interviews will undergo thematic analysis to identify patterns and key managerial insights. Integrating both approaches enhances analytical depth and credibility, enabling holistic interpretation of leadership-performance dynamics and supporting both theoretical and practical implications for organizational improvement (Guest *et al.*, 2017).

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Background Characteristics of Respondents

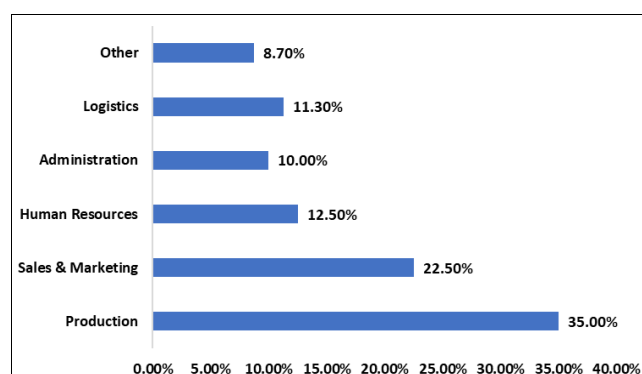


Fig 1: Distribution of Respondents by Department

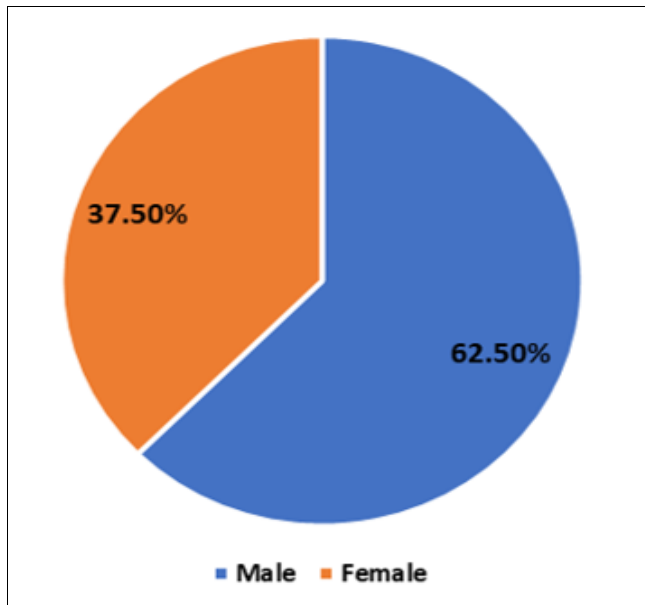


Fig 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

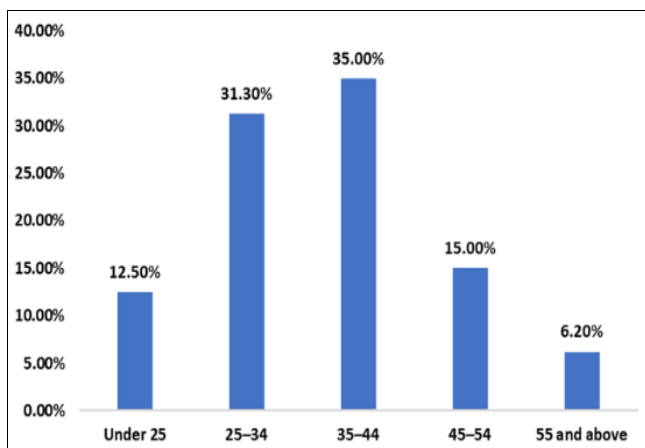


Fig 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

This section presents the demographic profile of the 80 respondents, representing a 100% response rate. These characteristics provide essential context for understanding variations in leadership perceptions and performance across departments at Trade Kings Zambia. Most respondents were from the Production Department (35.0%), followed by Sales and Marketing (22.5%), Logistics (11.3%), Human Resources (12.5%), and Administration (10.0%), with the remainder (8.7%) from support units such as procurement and maintenance. This reflects Trade Kings' production-oriented structure.

Male respondents constituted 62.5%, while females accounted for 37.5%, illustrating a gender imbalance typical of manufacturing organizations where physical roles dominate. Nonetheless, female participation was notable in Human Resources and Administration.

In terms of age, the largest group was between 35–44 years (35.0%), followed by 25–34 years (31.3%), with smaller proportions aged 45–54 (15.0%), under 25 (12.5%), and 55 and above (6.2%). This suggests a predominantly youthful yet experienced workforce.

4.2 Leadership Styles Practiced at Trade Kings Zambia

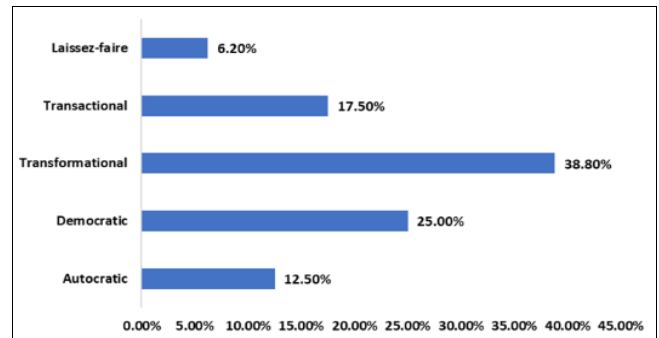


Fig 4: Leadership Styles Practiced at Trade Kings Zambia

About 38.8% of respondents identified transformational leadership as dominant, followed by democratic (25.0%) and transactional (17.5%) styles. Smaller shares cited autocratic (12.5%) and laissez-faire (6.2%) approaches. This suggests a shift from control-based management toward inclusive, motivation-driven leadership, with key informants noting Trade Kings' growing emphasis on participation, innovation, and shared performance goals.

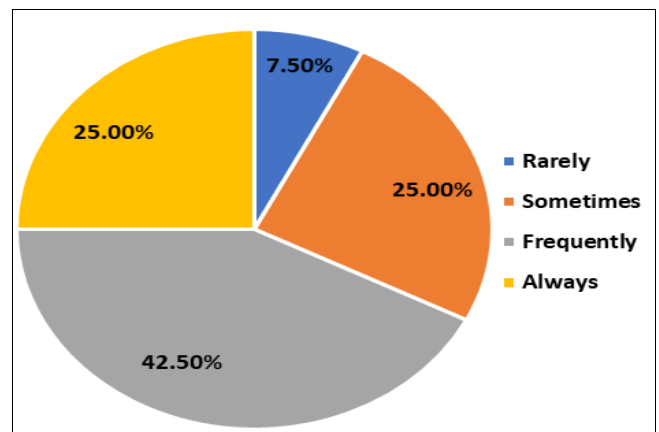


Fig 5: Frequency of Employee Involvement in Decision-Making

The majority of respondents (42.5%) indicated that they are frequently involved, while 25.0% said they are always consulted. Only 7.5% reported rare or no involvement. These findings reinforce the earlier observation that participatory leadership is becoming embedded in Trade Kings' management culture. One key informant noted that "in production and logistics, consultation is frequent because it improves coordination and output accuracy."

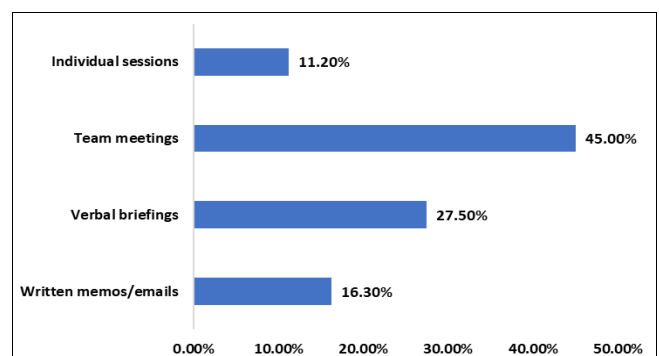


Fig 6: Common Channels for Communicating Work Goals

45.0% indicated that team meetings are the main channel, while 27.5% cited verbal briefings. A smaller proportion (16.3%) mentioned written memos or emails, and 11.2% cited individual sessions. The predominance of meetings and briefings suggests an emphasis on real-time, collective communication rather than top-down written directives. Key informants explained that “face-to-face meetings help clarify targets and resolve operational issues immediately.”

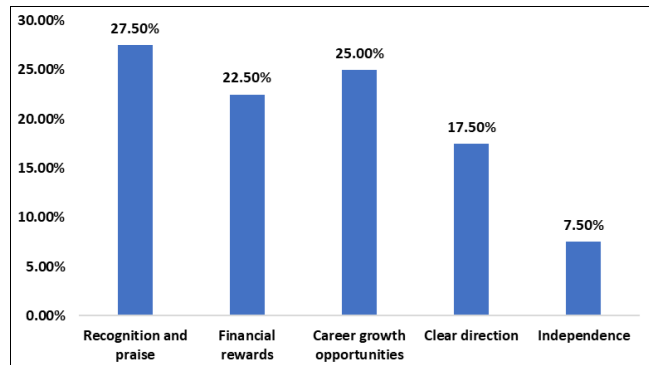


Fig 7: Sources of Employee Motivation under Current Leadership

About 27.5% of respondents identified recognition and praise as their main motivators, followed by career growth (25.0%) and financial rewards (22.5%). This indicates a shift toward intrinsic motivation appreciation, growth, and empowerment over monetary incentives. Fewer valued clear direction (17.5%) or independence (7.5%), aligning with managers' views that acknowledgment enhances performance and engagement.

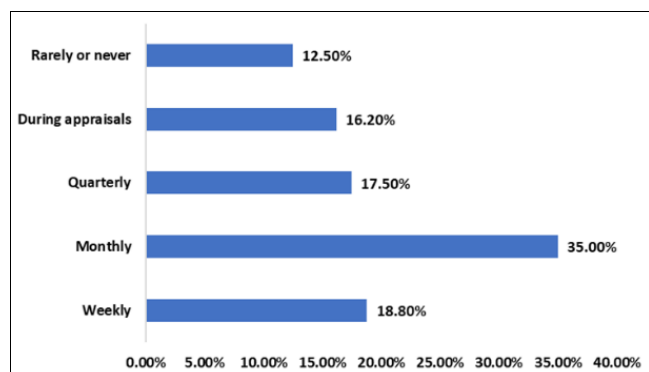


Fig 8: Frequency of Management Feedback on Employee Performance

Most respondents (35.0%) reported receiving monthly feedback, 18.8% weekly, and 33.7% quarterly or during appraisals, indicating periodic evaluation. Meanwhile, 12.5% rarely or never received feedback, showing inconsistency across departments. Key informants noted that

feedback is more regular in production and sales, where performance metrics are easier to track and assess.

4.3 Effects of Different Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance

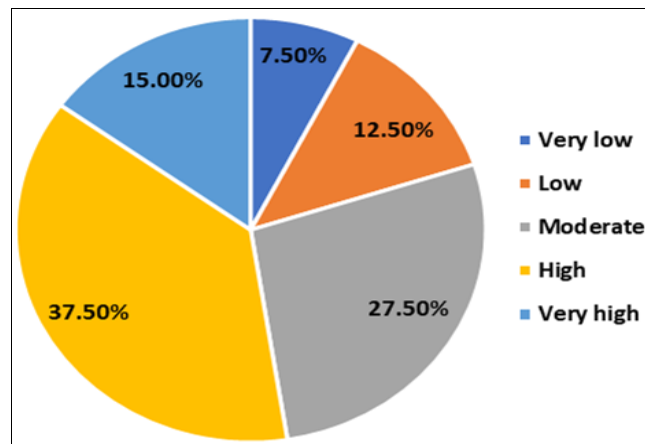


Fig 9: Employee Motivation Levels under Current Leadership

Majority of respondents (52.5%) rated motivation levels as high or very high under their current leadership. About 27.5% reported moderate motivation, while 20% indicated low or very low. This suggests that leadership at Trade Kings Zambia has a generally positive influence on employee morale. Department heads attributed this to “leaders who recognize effort and involve workers in decision-making.”

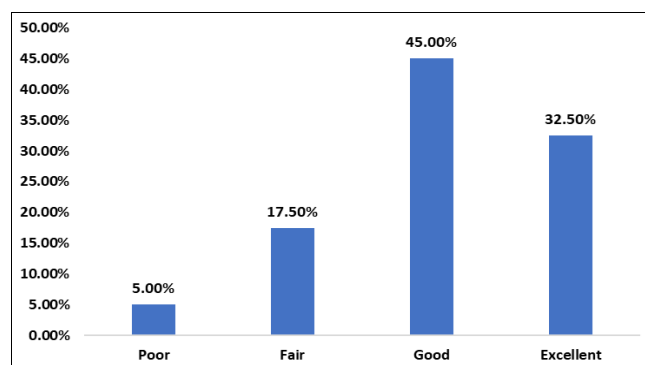


Fig 10: Teamwork within Departments

Most respondents (77.5%) rated teamwork as good (45.0%) or excellent (32.5%), reflecting a strong collaborative culture at Trade Kings Zambia. Meanwhile, 17.5% rated it fair and 5.0% poor, showing slight variation across departments. Department heads noted that leadership styles directly influence teamwork, particularly when supervisors promote open communication and shared objectives.

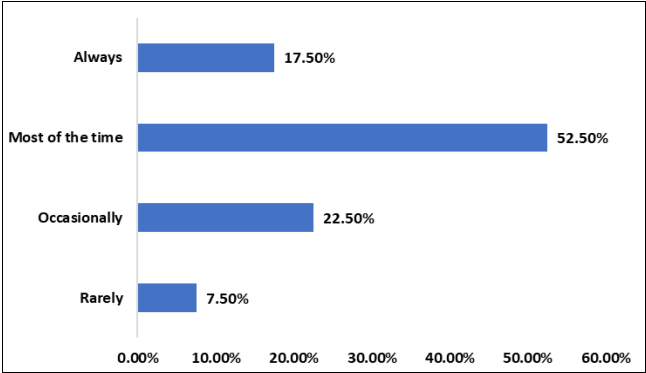


Fig 11: Frequency of Departmental Target Achievement

Most respondents (70.0%) indicated that departmental targets are achieved most of the time (52.5%) or always (17.5%), while 22.5% reported occasional success and 7.5% rarely met targets. This suggests that Trade Kings Zambia’s leadership generally supports operational performance, though some departments face consistency challenges. Key informants emphasized that motivated, communicative, and attentive leaders outperform those relying only on control.

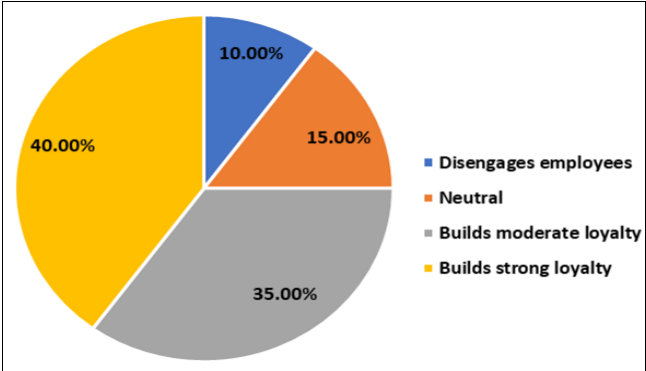


Fig 12: Influence of Leadership on Employee Commitment

75% of respondents reported that leadership at Trade Kings fosters employee loyalty, with 35% rating it moderate and 40% strong. Conversely, 15% were neutral, and 10% felt

disengaged. This suggests most leaders inspire commitment, though some employees experience detachment, likely due to inconsistent supervision. Interviews highlighted that “employees are more dedicated when supervisors show respect, communicate transparently, and recognize effort.”

4.4 Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Organizational Performance

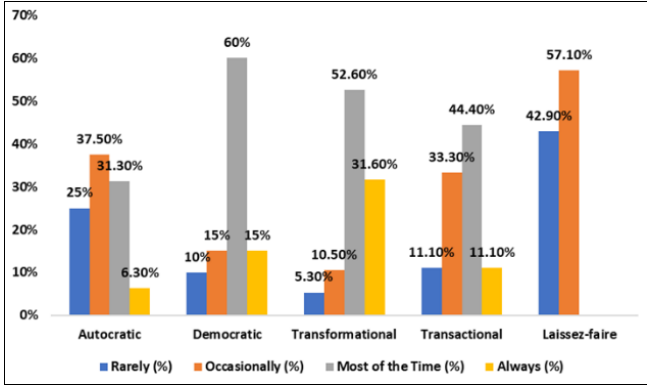


Fig 13: Leadership Style × Departmental Performance

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.276	12	0.004
Likelihood Ratio	30.481	12	0.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.633	1	0.002
N of Valid Cases	80		

There is a statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2(12) = 29.276$, $p = 0.004$) between leadership style and departmental performance. Departments led by transformational (53%) and democratic (60%) leaders were more likely to achieve their performance goals “most of the time” or “always.” In contrast, autocratic and laissez-faire styles recorded weaker outcomes. A department head noted that “transformational leaders inspire collaboration and innovation, leading to consistent departmental output.”

Leadership Style × Employee Retention

Leadership Style	Poor leadership increases turnover	Supportive leadership improves retention	Little influence	Total
Autocratic	Count: 10 % within Leadership Style: 62.5%	Count: 4 25.0%	Count: 2 12.5%	16 100%
Democratic	Count: 2 % within Leadership Style: 10.0%	Count: 16 80.0%	Count: 2 10.0%	20 100%
Transformational	Count: 1 % within Leadership Style: 5.3%	Count: 16 84.2%	Count: 2 10.5%	19 100%
Transactional	Count: 4 % within Leadership Style: 22.2%	Count: 10 55.6%	Count: 4 22.2%	18 100%
Laissez-faire	Count: 5 % within Leadership Style: 71.4%	Count: 1 14.3%	Count: 1 14.3%	7 100%
Total	Count: 22 % within Leadership Style: 27.5%	Count: 47 58.8%	Count: 11 13.8%	80 100%

Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.087	8	0.001
Likelihood Ratio	32.445	8	0.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.541	1	0.001
N of Valid Cases	80		

A significant relationship exists between leadership style and employee retention ($\chi^2(8) = 31.087$, $p = 0.001$). Both democratic (80%) and transformational (84.2%) leadership styles were associated with higher retention levels, while autocratic and laissez-faire leaders corresponded with greater turnover intentions. Key informants noted that “departments with open communication and recognition systems have the lowest resignation rates.”

Pearson Correlation Analysis: Leadership Styles and Key Performance Indicators

Variables	Employee Motivation	Teamwork	Productivity	Innovation	Retention
Transformational Leadership	0.812	0.776	0.733	0.695	0.801
Democratic Leadership	0.744	0.702	0.668	0.612	0.721
Transactional Leadership	0.543	0.498	0.602	0.422	0.531
Autocratic Leadership	-0.484	-0.516	-0.422	-0.390	-0.471
Laissez-faire Leadership	-0.562	-0.538	-0.489	-0.401	-0.553

(All correlations significant at $p < 0.05$)

Results show strong positive correlations between transformational leadership and all performance indicators ($r = 0.695$ – 0.812), indicating that visionary and motivational leadership enhances individual and organizational outcomes. Democratic leadership also shows moderate positive relationships, particularly with teamwork ($r = 0.702$) and retention ($r = 0.721$). In contrast, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles exhibit negative correlations, suggesting adverse effects on morale and output. Key informants also highlighted that “performance peaks in departments led by managers who communicate openly, coach employees, and reward innovation.”

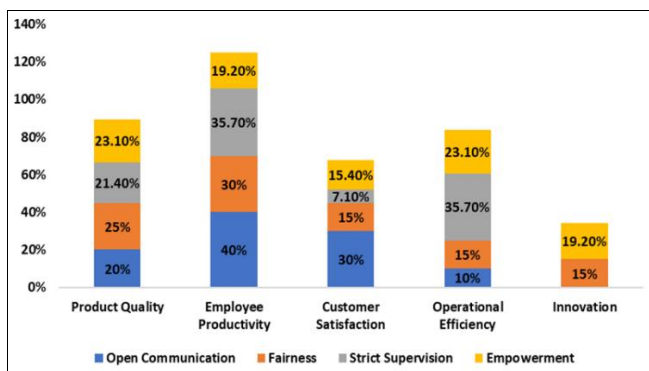


Fig 14: Leadership Behaviors × Performance Outcomes

Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.417	12	0.005
Likelihood Ratio	29.631	12	0.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.872	1	0.002
N of Valid Cases	80		

A significant relationship ($\chi^2(12) = 28.417$, $p = 0.005$) exists between leadership behaviors and performance outcomes. Empowerment and open communication strongly correspond with productivity, innovation, and efficiency. Key informants confirmed that “leaders who empower teams to make decisions achieve quicker problem-solving and product improvements.” Strict supervision yielded weaker outcomes, underscoring that excessive control limits creativity.

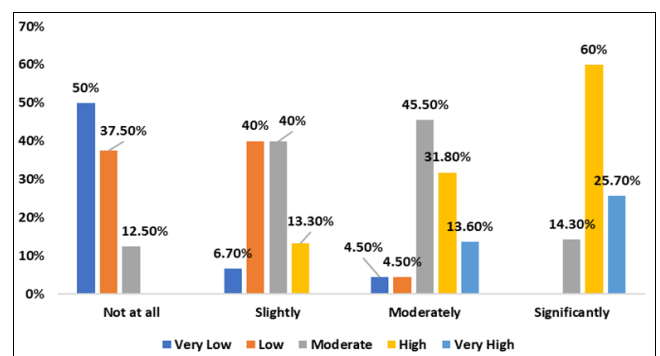


Fig 18: Leadership Style Influence × Employee Motivation

Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.892	12	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	38.004	12	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.557	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	80		

A highly significant relationship ($\chi^2(12) = 36.892$, $p < 0.001$) was found between leadership influence and employee motivation. Over 85% of respondents reporting significant influence also rated motivation as high or very high. Interviews revealed that “leaders who set clear expectations and coach employees sustain enthusiasm and morale.”

Leadership Trait Combination × Departmental Target Achievement

Leadership Trait Combination	Rarely	Occasionally	Most of the Time	Always	Total
Visionary + Participatory	Count: 1	3	10	6	20
	% within Trait: 5.0%	15.0%	50.0%	30.0%	100%
Reward-Driven + Disciplined	2	4	9	3	18
	11.1%	22.2%	50.0%	16.7%	100%
Controlling + Directive	3	6	3	0	12
	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	100%
Delegative + Flexible	2	4	8	2	16
	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	100%
Other/Mixed	4	4	5	1	14
	28.6%	28.6%	35.7%	7.1%	100%
Total	12	21	35	12	80
	15.0%	26.3%	43.8%	15.0%	100%

Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.705	12	0.008
Likelihood Ratio	27.189	12	0.007
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.214	1	0.004
N of Valid Cases	80		

A statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2(12) = 26.705$, $p = 0.008$) exists between leadership trait combinations and departmental target achievement. Visionary and participatory combinations were most effective, while controlling and directive styles underperformed. Informants stated that “inclusive visioning fosters ownership, while rigid control hinders adaptability.”

4.5 Discussion of Results

Thematic Area 1: Leadership Styles Practiced at Trade Kings Zambia

The findings indicate that Trade Kings Zambia practices mainly transformational and democratic leadership, reflecting a participatory, motivation-oriented culture. Leaders emphasize communication, recognition, and professional growth over rigid control. Feedback and coaching are common, showing a supportive, learning-based environment. This leadership style encourages employee engagement, creativity, and loyalty, consistent with transformational theory. Trade Kings' approach aligns with African hybrid leadership models that balance participation, innovation, and accountability within communal values. The company's shift from authoritative to collaborative management demonstrates adaptability to modern manufacturing demands, where inclusion and empowerment enhance productivity and commitment. Overall, Trade Kings illustrates an evolving leadership culture that blends performance discipline with emotional intelligence and respect for employees. This transformation reflects both strategic intent and cultural resonance, reinforcing the importance of participatory decision-making and continuous communication in sustaining organizational excellence and competitive advantage in Zambia's manufacturing industry.

Thematic Area 2: Effects of Different Leadership Styles on Organizational Performance

The study shows that leadership at Trade Kings Zambia significantly shapes performance through its effects on motivation, teamwork, productivity, and innovation. Transformational and democratic leaders create high morale, collaboration, and consistent target achievement, while transactional practices maintain structure and accountability.

Leaders who communicate clearly, recognize effort, and coach employees foster loyalty, creativity, and operational efficiency. Departments led by inclusive supervisors demonstrate stronger teamwork, better conflict resolution, and higher output quality. The balance between transformational inspiration and transactional discipline enables adaptability without compromising control. Occasional use of autocratic or laissez-faire styles supports quick decisions and innovation in specialized roles. Overall, Trade Kings' hybrid leadership approach aligns with both global and African leadership models, blending motivation, discipline, and participation to enhance productivity and employee satisfaction. This adaptive leadership culture has strengthened organizational cohesion, innovation, and competitiveness across the company's manufacturing operations.

Thematic Area 3: Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Organizational Performance

The study demonstrates a strong relationship between leadership style and organizational performance at Trade Kings Zambia. Transformational and democratic leadership consistently enhanced motivation, teamwork, innovation, and retention, while autocratic and laissez-faire approaches weakened morale and productivity. Departments led by visionary and participatory leaders achieved their targets more frequently and exhibited lower turnover, confirming that empowerment and open communication drive superior outcomes. These findings align with global research showing that transformational leadership inspires innovation and commitment, and democratic leadership fosters engagement and retention. Transactional leadership proved useful for maintaining discipline and efficiency but lacked creativity. Autocratic and laissez-faire practices, though occasionally effective in urgent contexts, generally reduced motivation and performance. Overall, the results affirm that Trade Kings' strongest performance stems from hybrid leadership combining transformational vision, democratic participation, and transactional accountability an adaptive approach consistent with both global theory and Zambia's evolving leadership landscape in the manufacturing sector.

5. Conclusion

The study examined how leadership styles affect organizational performance at Trade Kings Zambia. Findings show that leadership is a key determinant of performance, with transformational and democratic styles most dominant and effective. This hybrid approach supported by transactional elements has fostered collaboration, empowerment, and accountability, strengthening productivity and employee commitment.

Transformational leaders who inspire vision and personal growth enhance motivation and innovation, while democratic leaders promote participation, trust, and retention through inclusive decision-making. Transactional leadership ensures operational discipline and efficiency but is most effective when balanced with inspiration. In contrast, autocratic and laissez-faire styles weaken morale and innovation, highlighting the need for consistent leadership development. Statistical analysis confirmed significant links between leadership style and outcomes such as motivation, productivity, teamwork, and retention. Overall, Trade Kings reflects a shift toward participatory, visionary, and emotionally intelligent leadership, demonstrating that adaptive, people-centered management drives sustainable performance in Zambia's competitive manufacturing sector.

5.1 Recommendations

The study recommends strengthening transformational leadership through continuous development programs emphasizing vision sharing, coaching, and empowerment to sustain innovation and commitment. Trade Kings should institutionalize participatory decision-making by formalizing employee consultation across departments and balance transactional discipline with transformational flexibility. Leadership coaching is needed to minimize autocratic or laissez-faire tendencies, while consistent feedback and recognition systems should be standardized companywide. Emotional intelligence training will enhance communication and reduce workplace conflict, and professional development initiatives should promote creativity and continuous learning. Additionally, leadership succession planning should be institutionalized to ensure continuity of effective practices, and leadership behaviors aligned with corporate values. Future research should examine how culture, engagement, and gender dynamics mediate the leadership-performance relationship in Zambia's manufacturing sector.

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