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# Leading Through Uncertainty: How Transformational and Transactional Leadership Shape Employee Satisfaction and Performance in Lebanese NGOs

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the impact of transactional and transformational leadership on job satisfaction and employee performance during crises, focusing on the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector. The paper adopts a quantitative research methodology using an online structured questionnaire. Data from 425 NGO employees in Lebanon were analyzed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling to test the proposed hypotheses. Transactional leadership came to have a modest positive effect on job satisfaction, aligning with previous research that highlights the importance of contingent rewards and supportive supervision. However, it did not significantly influence employee performance, suggesting that its effectiveness may be constrained by the challenges of a volatile crisis environment. In contrast, transformational leadership emerged as a key driver of both job satisfaction and employee performance, emphasizing its critical role in fostering motivation, resilience, and adaptability during turbulent periods. Notably, job satisfaction did not have a significant impact on employee performance, challenging conventional assumptions and underscoring the need for further exploration of context-specific factors in high-stress organizational settings. The findings of the paper contribute to leadership theory and provide actionable insights for enhancing NGO performance in crises.

**Keywords:** leadership styles; transformational leadership; transactional leadership; job satisfaction; employee outcomes; crisis management; non-governmental organizations; human resource management; Lebanon

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## 1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced, unpredictable world, crises arise more frequent and often without warning (Soete, 2021). In response, leaders across all sectors, including non-profits, must adapt swiftly and implement strategic adjustments to maintain strong employee satisfaction and drive exceptional performance. Amid such turbulence, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become increasingly necessary, particularly in developing countries, where they provide essential support to communities facing economic hardship, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. To remain agile in an ever-evolving landscape and ensure long-term sustainability, NGOs must prioritize leadership strategies that invest in human capital, fostering resilience, adaptability, and organizational effectiveness.

As a result, NGOs increasingly recognize the critical role of leadership styles in shaping employee satisfaction and performance (Alsaqqaf, 2023). Effective leaders prioritize

interpersonal relationships, offer support, provide positive reinforcement, and foster open communication and trust. Through these efforts, they empower their teams to achieve greater job satisfaction and improved performance (Al Maalouf & El Achi, 2023; Dirani et al., 2020). By doing so, they aim to meet, if not exceed, the needs and expectations of their employees.

During times of crisis, leadership becomes even more pivotal in guiding organizations through challenges and positively influencing teams (Hakim et al., 2022). Bhaduri (2019) highlights the crucial role of human factors, including strong leadership, cohesive teams, and motivated employees, in successfully managing crises. Crises serve as a true test of leadership strength, demanding resilience and adaptability (Rathi et al., 2021). In this context, leaders must be acutely aware of the profound effects crises have on their employees and adopt leadership styles that effectively enhance both job satisfaction and performance (Mihai, 2021).

Employees are widely recognized as invaluable assets, crucial to an organization's success and competitiveness, as they directly contribute to its performance (Mufti et al., 2020). As a result, cultivating a positive work environment and adopting effective leadership styles are essential for enhancing job satisfaction, improving employee performance, and reducing turnover. Organizations with satisfied employees tend to be more credible and achieve higher performance levels than those with disengaged workforces. Thus, job satisfaction has become a key driver of organizational success and achievement (Mufti et al., 2020). Among the various leadership approaches, transactional and transformational leadership are widely regarded as two of the most influential styles (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Although extensive research underscores the importance of leadership (Mathews, 2020; Shier & Handy, 2020), studies specifically examining leadership within NGOs, particularly in the context of transactional and transformational leadership, remain limited. Most existing research in the NGO sector predominantly explores one type of leadership in isolation, with limited comparative analysis of the impact of transactional versus transformational leadership on employee behaviors and attitudes (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2020; Peng et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

This study addresses this notable gap by offering a comparative examination of transactional and transformational leadership styles within the NGO sector during crises. By doing so, it contributes to the broader leadership literature in two important ways. First, the study contributes by deepening our understanding of how each leadership style influences key organizational outcomes, specifically, job satisfaction and employee performance, during challenging times. Second, this study provides evidence-based insights to guide NGO leadership development and crisis management strategies.

Thus, this study aims to address this gap by examining both leadership styles within NGOs during times of crisis, with a particular focus on their influence on job satisfaction and employee performance. The paper explores two major research questions: How do transactional and transformational leadership styles influence job satisfaction and employee performance in NGOs during times of crisis? What is the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance in NGOs during crises?

The remaining part of this paper presents the literature review on the topic, followed by the research used. It then presents the results, analyzes the findings, and concludes with practical recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

There has been no consensus reached by scholars on the definition of leadership, as the concept continues to evolve. However, most definitions emphasize leadership as a process of impacting individuals to achieve organizational goals (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). Wu et al.

(2021) argue that a leader's true strength is best measured by their ability to navigate and operate effectively during a crisis. In such situations, followers seek guidance, support, and direction from their leaders (Hungerford & Cleary, 2021). A crisis is generally characterized as a sudden, unpredictable, and disruptive event that impends an organization and its stakeholders. With limited time for preparation and response, crises often heighten stress and anxiety, making effective leadership even more critical (Raut et al., 2022).

Riggio and Newstead (2023) highlight that acute crises place immense pressure on organizations, demanding swift and decisive action, which shows the critical role of effective crisis leadership. Their study identifies key leadership competencies essential for navigating crises, including communication and team coordination. Sensemaking is crucial, as leaders rely on intuition and experience to make decisions in high-pressure situations. However, given the unpredictable nature of crises, they must also reevaluate their knowledge, consider diverse perspectives, and adapt their strategies accordingly (Riggio & Newstead, 2023; Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020; Dirani et al., 2020).

Decision-making in crises requires leaders to act quickly, transparently, and justifiably, using the best available information, experience, and intuition while considering the broader impact on stakeholders (Riggio & Newstead, 2023; Kaul et al., 2020). Effective communication is fundamental, as it fosters trust between leaders and employees, reducing stress and uncertainty (Kaul et al., 2020; Stoller, 2020). Clear, honest, and consistent communication keeps employees informed, clarifies their roles, and reassures them of the organization's commitment to supporting them (Riggio & Newstead, 2023; Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022). Team coordination is vital for crisis management, as strong leaders efficiently allocate resources, engage internal and external stakeholders, and empower their teams to respond effectively (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022; Dirani et al., 2020). Facilitating learning during crises presents an opportunity for leaders to gain valuable insights, refine their approaches, and enhance their ability to navigate future challenges (Riggio & Newstead, 2023).

Transparent communication, decisive decisions, appreciation, employee empowerment, and positive reinforcement by leaders in times of crisis foster better employee responses and performance. These practices show that leaders care about their employees and their well-being, which in turn reduces their anxiety and stress, motivates them, and boosts their confidence and morale to navigate these challenging times (Dirani et al., 2020; Stefan & Nazarov, 2020).

### *2.1. Transactional and Transformational Leadership in Turbulent Times*

Transactional leadership (TRL) operates on a system of exchange between leaders and followers, where achieving set goals is based on mutual understanding and contractual obligations (Tintore, 2019). This leadership style is characterized by two key dimensions: contingent rewards and management by exception (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). In contingent rewards, leaders clearly define the actions required from followers to attain specific rewards, through either direct guidance or participatory engagement (Wahyuni et al., 2020). When goals are met, rewards may come in the form of financial incentives, promotions, or public recognition (Abujarad, 2020).

Management by exception, on the other hand, involves leaders overseeing performance and intervening when standards are not met or when problems arise. This can be either active, where leaders closely monitor progress and take corrective action proactively, or passive, where they step in only when significant issues occur (Abujarad, 2020).

TRL has been recognized as beneficial during crises, as it helps enforce structured processes and facilitates the execution of complex operational tasks under pressure (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). In urgent situations requiring swift and decisive action, this leadership

style can enhance efficiency and drive immediate results. However, some scholars argue that TRL may not necessarily be the most suitable approach during crises. Balasubramanian and Fernandes (2022) suggest that rigid adherence to rules and procedures can stifle creativity, flexibility, and the long-term strategic thinking necessary for navigating complex crisis scenarios.

On the other side, transformational leaders inspire followers to surpass expectations by providing support and encouragement, and aligning individual interests with organizational goals to achieve shared success (Chalise & Paudel, 2023; Jabbour Al Maalouf et al., 2025a; Tintore, 2019). These leaders are visionary, instilling confidence in their teams while fostering intellectual growth and emotional support. By driving positive change within their followers, transformational leaders enhance organizational effectiveness and goal attainment (Tintore, 2019).

This leadership style is defined by four key dimensions. First, idealized influence involves leaders who act as mentors and role models, prioritizing the personal and professional growth of their followers. They instill confidence, particularly during crises, by demonstrating integrity and commitment (Gachira & Ntara, 2024; Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Second, inspirational motivation involves leaders who encourage followers to exceed expectations by assigning meaning to their roles, setting clear objectives, and cultivating an optimistic and purpose-driven work environment (Gachira & Ntara, 2024). Third, intellectual stimulation is where leaders promote creativity and innovation by challenging assumptions, encouraging new perspectives, and fostering problem-solving skills among their followers (Gachira & Ntara, 2024; Reza, 2019). Finally, individualized consideration involves leaders who recognize and address each follower's unique needs, offering personalized support and mentorship (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020).

These attributes enable transformational leaders to guide organizations through turbulent times by empowering employees, reducing stress, and turning challenges into opportunities (Niessen et al., 2017). However, while transformational leadership (TFL) emphasizes communication, inspiration, and collective decision-making, some critics argue that in highly uncertain situations requiring rapid, structured decision-making, this style may not always be the most effective (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022).

While both transactional and transformational leadership styles are theoretically and empirically linked to enhanced organizational outcomes, their applicability during crises remains context-dependent. Transactional leadership's focus on structured guidance and short-term performance is particularly relevant in high-pressure environments requiring clear direction. However, its rigid reward–punishment mechanism may limit adaptability and creativity in dynamic crisis settings. Conversely, transformational leadership promotes innovation, emotional engagement, and resilience—traits critical for navigating uncertainty. Nonetheless, its emphasis on inspiration and collaboration may slow down decision-making processes in urgent scenarios. In the NGO sector, where resource constraints and emotional labor are prevalent, the comparative effectiveness of both styles during crises is not well established. This underscores the need for a nuanced investigation that considers the interplay between leadership behaviors and crisis-driven employee dynamics.

### *2.2. Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance in Turbulent Times*

Employees are widely recognized as the primary drivers of organizational success, playing a vital role in achieving its objectives (Mufti et al., 2020). Their job satisfaction is associated with their contributions, which directly impact overall performance (Abdelwahed et al., 2023; Mufti et al., 2020; Uddin et al., 2019). It is defined as the sense of fulfillment and motivation an individual derives from their work and affiliation with an organization (Cubay, 2020). Uddin et al. (2019) indicate that job satisfaction is subjective and varies

among employees based on their expectations, beliefs, organizational characteristics, and personal norms. Aspects such as organizational climate and individual needs influence the degree of job satisfaction, meaning an employee may feel content with certain aspects of their job while dissatisfied with others (Al-Maaitah et al., 2021; Barasa & Kariuki, 2020). Low job satisfaction can lead to negative workplace behaviors, including absenteeism, ultimately diminishing work performance (Syabarrudin et al., 2020). During crises, job satisfaction tends to decline due to heightened anxiety and reduced control over one's work environment(). Crises expose employees to financial, physical, and psychological strain, further affecting their overall health and workplace engagement (Kim et al., 2021).

Employee performance refers to the outcomes and accomplishments of individuals or groups within a given period (Purwanto, 2020). It involves meeting job expectations while maintaining ethical and professional standards (Fakhri et al., 2020). Performance is influenced by an employee's unique skills and abilities, making it a highly individualized measure (Purwanto et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2021). It can be assessed through various factors, including work quality, productivity, efficiency, punctuality, autonomy, and commitment (Purwanto et al., 2023; Popov, 2023). Crises often lead to increased stress and frustration, which can negatively impact employee performance and create concerns about job security (Rajapakshe, 2021). Feranita et al. (2020) emphasize that effective leadership is essential in maintaining and even improving performance during challenging times. Building strong relationships, fostering understanding, and ensuring harmony between leaders and employees can help sustain productivity and morale even amid uncertainty.

In 1959, Herzberg proposed the two-factor theory of job satisfaction, which identifies hygiene and motivation as its two key components (Rai et al., 2021). Hygiene factors include elements such as job security, personal life, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, salary, and organizational policies and administration (Thant & Chang, 2021). These factors address the basic needs related to the job environment rather than the job itself. In contrast, motivation factors involve elements such as growth opportunities, career advancement opportunities, authority and responsibility, recognition, and achievement, which are directly linked to job content and the self-actualization needs of employees (Thant & Chang, 2021; Koncar et al., 2022). Alrawahi et al. (2020) mentioned that hygiene factors should be met first, as they cannot create motivation but can only reduce and prevent dissatisfaction. Hence, the absence of hygiene factors can result in dissatisfaction, while their existence alone does not guarantee satisfaction. Conversely, motivational factors affect employee satisfaction, and their absence does not necessarily cause job dissatisfaction (Thant & Chang, 2021).

Another theory, namely the leader–member exchange theory (LMX), which is rooted in social exchange theory, emphasizes the importance of leader–follower relationships (Choi et al., 2021). This theory emphasizes the quality of interaction between leaders and followers, emphasizing the importance of reciprocity in these relationships (McLarty et al., 2021). It describes how leaders, over time, build an individual and unique relationship with followers, shifting the focus from the collective relationship between leaders and the group to the personalized relationship between leaders and their followers (Hojaili, 2024; Jufrizen et al., 2023). Leaders build differentiated and special relationships with their employees, treating each one of them differently, which results in a few high-quality relationships with followers (Premru et al., 2022). Moreover, these unique relationships have pushed leaders to adopt different leadership styles with each follower (Hojaili, 2024). Consequently, this differentiation ultimately leads to the creation of an in-group and an out-group within a leader's team (Hojaili, 2024). The strength of these leader–follower relationships is largely determined by the level of mutual respect, support, and trust shared by both parties (Hojaili, 2024; Asif et al., 2023). High-quality relationships are

marketed by high levels of trust, respect, and support, with followers being privileged with more responsibilities, decision-making power, delegated authority, higher levels of support, and special incentives (Choi et al., 2021). Being part of the in-group fosters higher levels of outcomes, increased commitment, enhanced performance, job satisfaction, and low turnover rates. Nonetheless, lower-quality relationships are characterized by lower levels of support, fewer responsibilities, and limited decision-making influence, which ultimately decrease employee performance and increase job dissatisfaction and turnover levels (Premru et al., 2022).

The existing literature clearly demonstrates a strong association between job satisfaction and employee performance. Nevertheless, most studies focus on stable organizational environments and do not adequately capture how this relationship shifts under extreme stress or crisis conditions. During turbulent times, traditional predictors of job satisfaction such as financial compensation or job security may be undermined by external shocks, such as economic collapse or political crises. Furthermore, cultural norms and socio-political instability may impact how employees perceive satisfaction and performance. In the Lebanese context, where workers face ongoing systemic pressures, the drivers of satisfaction and their impact on performance may diverge significantly from those observed in more stable environments. Therefore, more localized and context-sensitive research is needed to validate these constructs under crisis conditions.

### *2.3. Employee Satisfaction, Leadership Style, and Hypothesis Formulation*

While a broad body of research supports the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes, much of this literature has focused on corporate or public-sector settings under relatively stable conditions. However, NGOs, especially in crisis-affected regions like Lebanon, operate under unique constraints, including limited resources, donor pressures, and emotionally demanding work environments. During crises, leadership becomes even more critical, as employees seek clarity, support, and reassurance amid uncertainty. Therefore, this study draws upon well-established leadership theories but contextualizes them within the operational realities of NGOs during turbulent times. The following paragraphs elaborate on how each leadership style is expected to influence job satisfaction and performance within this specific setting.

Leadership theories propose that adopting the right leadership style can significantly enhance job satisfaction (Bernarto et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2023). Effective leaders understand their employees, recognize their skills, and identify key motivators (Skopak & Hadzaihmetovic, 2022). Many studies have established a strong link between leadership style and job satisfaction. Buil et al. (2019) found that the leadership approach directly influences employee job satisfaction, while Shobe (2018) highlighted that the ineffective application of leadership styles often leads to low job satisfaction and poor performance.

In the context of NGOs, leadership plays a particularly vital role. Li (2019) noted that NGOs often function with small teams, sometimes resembling a one-person operation. Thus, the success or failure of NGO projects heavily depends on leadership effectiveness (Shier & Handy, 2020). During turbulent times, leadership styles become even more critical in shaping employee satisfaction. TRL, which is based on a reward-driven approach to achieving set goals, has been consistently associated with higher job satisfaction. Lumbantoruan et al. (2020) emphasized that transactional leaders motivate employees through tangible incentives such as bonuses, competitive salaries, promotions, and recognition. These rewards not only enhance job satisfaction but also encourage employees to align with organizational objectives.

Specchia et al. (2021) further identified the contingent reward aspect of TRL as a major driver of job satisfaction. This approach recognizes and rewards strong performance

through career advancement opportunities, thereby reinforcing both motivation and organizational success. Additionally, transactional leaders provide structured supervision and support, boosting employees' confidence and their ability to meet responsibilities.

Empirical research supports a positive association between TRL and job satisfaction. Studies by Chalise and Paudel (2023) and Skopak and Hadzaihmetovic (2022) revealed that employees under TRL report significantly higher job satisfaction. However, some research presents a nuanced perspective. Asbari (2024) and Sunarsi et al. (2021) argued that TRL does not universally enhance job satisfaction, suggesting that factors such as organizational culture and crisis intensity may influence this relationship. Building on the previously presented research, the following hypothesis is proposed in the context of NGOs:

**H1.** *Transactional leadership has a significant impact on job satisfaction during times of crisis.*

TFL is extensively acknowledged for its focus on valuing employees' intrinsic worth and fostering their independence, which in turn boosts their confidence and overall job satisfaction. By promoting creative and critical thinking, as well as encouraging innovative problem-solving, transformational leaders inspire greater commitment and active participation among their teams (Baffour-Awuah & Agyei, 2020). Additionally, they cultivate a supportive and dependable work environment, significantly contributing to an enhancement in job satisfaction.

Extensive research highlights the ability of transformational leaders to maintain strong engagement with their followers, especially during challenging times. Mufti et al. (2020) noted that these leaders navigate high-pressure situations with a combination of warmth and support, fostering a work culture built on trust and motivation. Sürücü and Sağbaş (2021) further emphasized that the supportive environments created by transformational leaders significantly contribute to higher job satisfaction.

The impact of TFL becomes even more pronounced during crises when employees experience increased stress and uncertainty. Leaders who possess key attributes such as influence, effective communication, a strong vision, and collaborative decision-making—core traits of TFL—are well equipped to alleviate workplace stress. Kim et al. (2021) found that transformational leaders play a critical role in alleviating employee stress during crises, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction and promoting workforce resilience. Similarly, Almohtaseb et al. (2021) observed that during critical periods, TFL behaviors positively impact employee confidence and satisfaction, reinforcing the effectiveness of this leadership style.

Empirical studies further validate the connection between TFL and job satisfaction. Studies by Bagga and Verma (2024), Pan and Chen (2021), and Paais and Pattiruhu (2020) confirm the positive influence of TFL on employee well-being. However, contrasting findings by Purwanto et al. (2023) suggest that this relationship may vary depending on specific organizational contexts and external factors. To examine the influence of TFL on job satisfaction within NGOs during turbulent times, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2.** *Transformational leadership has a significant impact on job satisfaction during crises.*

Transactional leaders set clear guidelines to guarantee that employees possess a thorough understanding of their duties and responsibilities, fostering trust between leaders and employees and ultimately enhancing performance (Lee et al., 2023). Samson and Ilesanmi (2019) noted that transactional leaders motivate employees by offering precise directions and clarifying task requirements and roles, leading to improved performance. This interaction between leaders and employees is shaped by the use of contingent rewards and management by exception.

Young et al. (2021) noted that TRL aligns with LMX theory, as it involves an exchange of rewards or punishments between leaders and followers. Positive leadership behavior fosters a dyadic relationship where employees receive support and resources to optimize their performance. Nevertheless, the relationship between TRL and employees is a "double-edged sword". The reward and punishment aspects of TRL can influence employee performance either positively or negatively. While they may motivate employees to improve their performance, they could also demotivate them, leading to decreased performance, competence, and autonomy.

Moreover, in times of crisis, when the entire organization is threatened and employees are tense, the TRL style has proven to be efficient in improving employee performance (Layek & Koodamara, 2024). Especially during such times, the organization should prioritize the basic requirements and needs of its employees to maintain high levels of performance (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021; Layek & Koodamara, 2024). By adhering to routines and delivering on promises of rewards for good performance, the organization can ensure timely and efficient results during these challenging times (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020).

According to Firda and Ferine (2023), TRL style positively influences employee performance. This finding aligns with studies by Setiani and Rizaldy (2021), Makambe and Moeng (2020), and Kabiru and Bula (2020), which also demonstrated that TRL positively impacts employee performance. However, contrary to these findings, Susanto et al. (2023) found no positive effect of TRL on employee performance. Based on this part of the literature review, theoretical perspectives, and prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3.** *Transactional leadership has a significant impact on employee performance during crises.*

According to Yücel (2021), transformational leaders motivate their subordinates by providing feedback, paying attention to their needs, and encouraging them to embrace creative and innovative thinking, which empowers individuals to exceed their highest expectations. This leadership style encourages group goals, shares the organization's vision, prioritizes employees' needs, and transforms employees' attitudes, beliefs, and values, leading to improved performance (Purwanto, 2020; Buil et al., 2019). Employees supported by a transformational leader building a positive relationship show greater commitment to their organizations, increase work efforts, and contribute new ideas for better performance (Wang et al., 2022). TFL impacts employee performance through its four dimensions, enhancing employee motivation and creating a supportive work environment (Purwanto et al., 2023). Amidst crises, transformational leaders should motivate and inspire their employees by fostering intellectual growth and offering individual support. It has been observed that leaders who remain optimistic and share a clear vision for the organization can help employees adapt to the prevailing situation and instill confidence in them, positively impacting their performance.

Moreover, transformational leaders who build high-quality LMX relationships mitigate burnout stemming from unfamiliar work conditions and general uncertainty (Reyes et al., 2021). The LMX theory proposes that these positive relationships serve a vital role in connecting TFL with employee performance, reinforcing commitment, and enhancing long-term performance (Vermeulen et al., 2022). Consequently, the role of TFL is salient amidst crises, influencing employees and helping them cope with uncertainty, thereby reducing anxiety and prompting an increase in overall performance (Kim et al., 2021). Studies have shown a significant positive correlation between TFL and employee performance (Hakro & Solangi, 2023; Top et al., 2020), although some research, such as that of Eliyana et al. (2019), found no significant relationship. Building on the literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4.** *Transformational leadership has a significant impact on employee performance during crises.*

To optimize employee performance, organizations should prioritize job satisfaction. Unsatisfied employees who do not experience appreciation are unable to concentrate on their tasks and may not reach their full potential (Sari et al., 2021). According to Hajiali et al. (2022), job satisfaction is a crucial factor influencing employee performance; thus, emphasizing its importance can lead to enhanced performance levels. Several studies have proven the positive correlation between job satisfaction and employee performance. Badrianto and Ekhsan (2020) examined in their study various factors influencing employee satisfaction and concluded that job satisfaction is a key factor influencing performance. Alsafadi and Altahat (2021) similarly found that higher job satisfaction among employees is related to improved performance.

Several studies tested the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance (Prami et al., 2022; Sunarsi et al., 2021). The substantial correlation between job satisfaction and employee performance was supported by many studies conducted by Jufrizen and Kandhita (2021), Goetz and Wald (2022), and Wayoi et al. (2021), indicating that employee performance improves when employee satisfaction increases. Likewise, Purwanto (2020) confirms that job satisfaction significantly influences employee performance. Based on previous studies and observations, the hypothesis is as follows:

**H5.** *Job satisfaction has a significant effect on employee performance during crises.*

The strong correlation between leadership style and employee satisfaction is well supported across various organizational settings. Nevertheless, few studies critically assess how different leadership approaches interact with satisfaction and performance, specifically in NGO settings, particularly during times of crisis. Moreover, the role of situational variables—such as cultural factors, resource limitations, or emotional burnout—has not been thoroughly integrated into leadership performance models. In fragile states like Lebanon, where NGOs often replace state functions, leadership must be examined not only for its motivational value but also for its capacity to sustain morale and engagement under prolonged duress. This study, by comparing TRL and TFL in relation to satisfaction and performance in Lebanese NGOs, contributes to filling this critical contextual gap.

### *2.4. The Lebanese Context: A Collapsing Country*

Lebanon, a small middle-income country on the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, has a population of approximately six million, including 1.5 million refugees (Kharroubi et al., 2021). It holds the highest proportion of refugees per capita globally (Mawad & Makki, 2023; Hakim et al., 2022). Despite its rich history, Lebanon has long grappled with economic and political instability. In October 2019, nationwide protests erupted, demanding sweeping economic, political, and social reforms (Yacoub & Al Maalouf, 2023). Since then, the country has faced severe financial turmoil, characterized by income reductions, hyperinflation, and currency devaluation, which have pushed a growing number of people below the poverty line (Al Maalouf et al., 2025). This crisis is further exacerbated by the fact that most of the population earns wages in LBP, which have significantly depreciated in value (Jabbour Al Maalouf et al., 2024). As a result, Lebanon has witnessed a devastating economic collapse, leaving many citizens struggling to afford basic necessities (Al Maalouf & Al Baradhi, 2024; Hakim et al., 2022).

The crisis was further intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed weaknesses in Lebanon's social protection systems. Many businesses were forced to shut down (Mawad & Makki, 2023), leading to widespread job losses and driving the unemployment rate to approximately 29.6% in 2022. Additionally, on 4 August 2020, Lebanon experi-

enced one of the most devastating explosions in history—the Beirut Port explosion—which claimed the lives of nearly 100 individuals, injured over 6500, and damaged more than 300,000 residences (Mawad & Makki, 2023). In response, donations poured in to support affected individuals, primarily through emergency relief programs managed by local and international NGOs and UN agencies (Mawad & Makki, 2023).

Throughout Lebanon's turbulent history, NGOs have played a crucial role in fostering stability. They have been instrumental in driving positive social change, providing essential services, supporting community development, advocating for marginalized groups, and raising awareness among vulnerable populations. This highlights their indispensable role in addressing Lebanon's ongoing crises.

Lebanon's NGO sector has a deep-rooted history, dating back to the late nineteenth century (AbouAssi, 2014; Chaaban & Seyfert, 2022). Today, around 5000 NGOs are registered with the Lebanese Ministry of Interior, making Lebanon one of the Middle Eastern countries with the highest number of NGOs (AbouAssi, 2014). However, research indicates that only around 700 of these organizations maintain sustainable and continuous operations (AbouAssi, 2014). Since the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, the number of NGOs has grown significantly, with an average of 200 new organizations registered annually (Makdissi et al., 2023). This rapid expansion is largely linked to the government's inability to sufficiently address communal needs, especially in times of crisis (Hakim et al., 2022).

Lebanon's NGOs operate with considerable autonomy, as they can be established and function without direct government control or supervision (Jabbour Al Maalouf et al., 2025b). They either work independently or collaborate with other organizations to conduct social analysis, propose policy improvements, and promote awareness of human rights and citizenship issues. Notably, despite the presence of international organizations, UN agencies, and joint donors, the Lebanese population often prefers engaging with NGOs rather than governmental institutions (AbouAssi, 2014).

In light of Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crises, there is an urgent need for recovery initiatives. These efforts are led by local and international NGOs, as well as by activist movements, to tackle the country's escalating challenges. The presence of international NGOs has notably increased since the 2006 war and expanded further following the Syrian refugee crisis in 2012. These organizations have played a vital role in rebuilding homes, delivering humanitarian aid, and meeting the basic needs of those affected by the Beirut Port explosion. Most of these relief efforts rely heavily on international donor funding (Mawad & Makki, 2023).

Despite their significant contributions, the NGO sector in Lebanon faces persistent challenges, including weak coordination with the government, reliance on external funding, and sustainability concerns. These issues highlight the need for ongoing research into the sector's dynamics, its role in crisis response, and its potential for driving long-term societal change.

In brief, Lebanon's prolonged socio-economic collapse presents a unique backdrop for examining leadership effectiveness. While the literature highlights the growing role of NGOs in national crisis management, few studies empirically link leadership styles to organizational performance and employee well-being in this fragile context. Additionally, the overreliance on international funding, political fragmentation, and governance voids introduce variables that may mediate or moderate leadership effectiveness. Thus, existing leadership theories must be re-evaluated within this localized framework. This study adds value by embedding the leadership–satisfaction–performance model within a high-crisis national setting, offering context-rich insights with practical relevance for NGOs operating in similarly unstable environments.

Based on the above-presented literature, the conceptual model (Figure 1) shows the relationships between the variables.

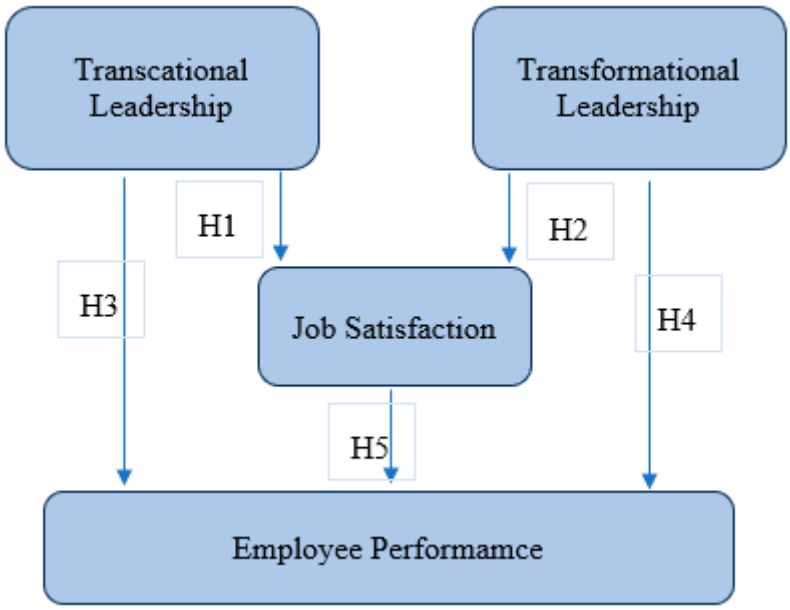



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model.

## 3. Method

This paper adopts a quantitative methodology, guided by a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach, to test the proposed hypotheses. Data were collected through an online structured questionnaire specifically designed for this paper, which consisted of closed-ended questions and utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." It was divided into two main sections. The first section included demographic data related to gender, age, education level, work experience, job role, and NGO type, using nominal-scale measurements. The second section included hypothesis testing statements and included three items on TRL, four on TFL, four on job satisfaction (JS), and three on employee performance (PRF).

A pilot test with 20 participants was conducted before data collection to ensure the clarity of the questions and their alignment with the paper's objectives. Based on the feedback, redundant questions were removed to enhance clarity and improve comprehension. The study targeted employees working in NGOs across Lebanon, a country currently facing significant socio-economic challenges. Using Cochran's formula, the required sample size was determined to be 385. A random sampling method was employed to ensure adequate representation of NGO personnel across various demographics and roles.

To implement the random sampling in practice, a list of NGOs was obtained from the relevant directories. From this list, a random selection of 100 NGOs was contacted via email and phone. Within each selected NGO, an invitation to participate in the anonymous online survey was sent to employees through internal communication channels (HR mailing lists/administrative offices), ensuring wide internal distribution. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were selected based on availability, with no restrictions on position or role, allowing for stratification across departments and hierarchies. This approach ensured diverse participation while preserving randomness in selection. Data collection took place between April 2024 and December 2024, resulting in a final valid sample of 425 participants, reflecting an 85% response rate.

To ensure ethical practices, participants' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and informed consent was obtained before the questionnaire was completed. (see

Appendix A). Data analysis was conducted using JASP 0.18.3, incorporating descriptive statistics, factor analysis, validity and reliability tests, and structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses.

## 4. Findings

Table 1 shows the sample profile. The sample consisted of 73% females and 27% males. Concerning age, the largest group (49%) was aged 30–40, followed by 20–30 years (28%), 40–50 years (14%), and 50 years and above (9%). Concerning educational background, 54% held a master's degree, 38% had a bachelor's degree, and 8% possessed a doctorate. Years of experience in the NGO sector varied, with 39% having 1–5 years of experience, 28% with 6–10 years, 29% with more than 10 years, and 4% with less than 1 year. Most participants (71%) worked full-time, while 26% were part-time employees and 3% were volunteers.

**Table 1.** Sample profile.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | |
| Female | 73% |
| Male | 27% |
| **Age** | |
| 20–30 | 28% |
| 30–40 | 49% |
| 40–50 | 14% |
| 50 and above | 9% |
| **Educational Background** | |
| Bachelor | 38% |
| Master's | 54% |
| Doctorate | 8% |
| **Years of Experience in the NGO Sector** | |
| Less than 1 year | 4% |
| 1–5 years | 39% |
| 6–10 years | 28% |
| More than 10 years | 29% |
| **Job Occupancy** | |
| Full-time | 71% |
| Part-time | 26% |
| Volunteer | 3% |
| **Position/Role in the NGO** | |
| Administrative/office worker | 28% |
| Frontline/field worker | 24% |
| Fundraising | 4% |
| Management/executive | 39% |
| Project coordinator | 5% |
| **Type of NGO** | |
| Development | 27% |
| Educational | 9% |
| Environmental | 3% |
| Healthcare | 11% |
| Humanitarian aid | 40% |
| Protection | 2% |
| Women's empowerment | 2% |
| Other | 6% |

In terms of their roles, 39% held management or executive positions, 28% were administrative or office workers, 24% were frontline or field workers, 5% were project coordinators, and 4% were involved in fundraising. The NGOs represented in the sample spanned various types, with the majority focusing on humanitarian aid (40%), followed by development (27%), healthcare (11%), education (9%), environmental causes (3%), protection (2%), and women's empowerment (2%). Additionally, 6% of participants worked in NGOs categorized as "other."

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for all observed indicators used to measure the study's latent constructs: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance. These descriptive statistics provide an overview of the data distribution before testing the measurement and structural models.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

| Descriptive Statistics | TRL1 | TRL2 | TRL3 | TFL1 | TFL2 | TFL3 | TFL4 | JS1 | JS2 | JS3 | JS4 | PRF1 | PRF2 | PRF3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 4.340 | 4.484 | 4.159 | 3.937 | 4.003 | 3.983 | 3.934 | 3.124 | 3.738 | 3.775 | 3.291 | 3.695 | 3.746 | 3.646 |
| Std. deviation | 0.752 | 0.539 | 0.830 | 0.992 | 0.996 | 0.973 | 1.002 | 1.072 | 1.058 | 1.089 | 1.180 | 0.943 | 1.067 | 1.064 |

To assess the adequacy of the measurement model, four widely accepted goodness-of-fit indices were examined: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). As shown in Table 3, all values meet the recommended thresholds (Hu & Bentler, 1999), indicating an acceptable overall model fit and supporting the suitability of the proposed measurement model within the structural equation modeling (SEM) framework.

**Table 3.** Model fit.

| Fit Index | Value | Recommended Threshold | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| CFI | 0.904 | ≥0.90 (acceptable) | Acceptable fit |
| TLI | 0.901 | ≥0.90 (acceptable) | Acceptable fit |
| RMSEA | 0.078 | ≤0.08 (acceptable) | Acceptable fit |
| SRMR | 0.076 | ≤0.08 (acceptable) | Acceptable fit |

The results of the factor analysis (Table 4) highlight the robust relationships between the constructs, with all *p*-values indicating strong statistical significance (<0.001).

**Table 4.** Factor analysis.

| Indicator | Estimate | Std. Error | z-Value | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRL1 | 0.139 | 0.025 | 5.635 | <0.001 |
| TRL2 | 0.074 | 0.013 | 5.906 | <0.001 |
| TRL3 | 0.446 | 0.037 | 11.990 | <0.001 |
| TFL1 | 0.241 | 0.023 | 10.278 | <0.001 |
| TFL2 | 0.147 | 0.017 | 8.423 | <0.001 |
| TFL3 | 0.151 | 0.017 | 8.669 | <0.001 |
| TFL4 | 0.246 | 0.024 | 10.347 | <0.001 |
| JS1 | 0.812 | 0.065 | 12.590 | <0.001 |
| JS2 | 0.131 | 0.028 | 4.617 | <0.001 |
| JS3 | 0.343 | 0.034 | 10.107 | <0.001 |
| JS4 | 0.626 | 0.055 | 11.311 | <0.001 |
| PRF1 | 0.341 | 0.043 | 7.978 | <0.001 |
| PRF2 | 0.567 | 0.060 | 9.392 | <0.001 |
| PRF3 | 0.488 | 0.055 | 8.866 | <0.001 |

Following the CFA, Table 5 presents the intercorrelations among the study's latent constructs. These standardized correlations provide preliminary insights into the relationships between the two leadership styles, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

**Table 5.** Correlations among latent variables based on confirmatory factor analysis.

| Variable | TRL | TFL | JS | PRF |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRL | 1 | 0.30 | 0.29 | 0.18 |
| TFL | 0.30 | 1 | 0.64 | 0.43 |
| JS | 0.29 | 0.64 | 1 | 0.64 |
| PRF | 0.18 | 0.43 | 0.64 | 1 |

The average variance extracted (AVE) values (Table 6) provide insights into the convergent validity of the constructs: TRL (Factor 1), TFL (Factor 2), job satisfaction (Factor 3), and employee performance (Factor 4). TFL (AVE = 0.800) exhibited the strongest convergent validity, indicating that its indicators explain a substantial proportion of the variance within the construct. Job satisfaction (AVE = 0.604) and TRL (AVE = 0.572) also demonstrated acceptable levels of convergent validity, suggesting that their indicators adequately represent their respective constructs. Employee performance (AVE = 0.556) met the minimum threshold of 0.50. These AVE values confirm the validity of the constructs.

**Table 6.** Average variance extracted.

| Average Variance Extracted | |
|---|---|
| **Factor** | **AVE** |
| Factor 1 | 0.572 |
| Factor 2 | 0.800 |
| Factor 3 | 0.604 |
| Factor 4 | 0.556 |

The heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio analysis in Table 7 assesses the discriminant validity of the constructs. The HTMT values fell within acceptable thresholds (<0.85), supporting the notion that the constructs are conceptually distinct while maintaining the interrelatedness expected within the theoretical framework.

**Table 7.** Heterotrait–monotrait ratio.

| Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor 1** | **Factor 2** | **Factor 3** | **Factor 4** |
| 1.000 | | | |
| 0.341 | 1.000 | | |
| 0.280 | 0.658 | 1.000 | |
| 0.211 | 0.651 | 0.427 | 1.000 |

The reliability analysis in Table 8, as measured by coefficient omega (ω) and coefficient alpha (α), provides insights into the internal consistency of the constructs. Internal consistency was strong across constructs, with ω and α values exceeding 0.7. TFL displayed the highest reliability (ω = 0.943, α = 0.940), while overall reliability was excellent (ω = 0.897, α = 0.896).

**Table 8.** Reliability test.

| | Reliability | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Coefficient ω** | **Coefficient α** |
| Factor 1 | 0.801 | 0.782 |
| Factor 2 | 0.943 | 0.940 |
| Factor 3 | 0.843 | 0.852 |
| Factor 4 | 0.796 | 0.784 |
| Total | 0.897 | 0.896 |

Table 9 and Figure 2 present the regression analysis results. First, TRL had a small but statistically significant positive effect on job satisfaction (B = 0.095, *p*-value = 0.038), suggesting that TRL influences job satisfaction to a limited extent. Second, TFL had a strong and significant positive effect on job satisfaction (B = 0.407, *p*-value < 0.001), indicating that it is a more influential predictor of job satisfaction than TRL. Third, job satisfaction did not significantly predict employee performance (B = 0.049, *p*-value = 0.594 > 0.05). Fourth, TRL did not significantly influence employee performance (B = −0.015, *p*-value = 0.818 > 0.05). Finally, TFL strongly and positively impacted employee performance, making it the most influential predictor (B = 0.528, *p*-value < 0.001).

**Table 9.** SEM results.

| Predictor | Outcome | Estimate | Std. Error | z-Value | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRL | JS | 0.095 | 0.046 | 2.075 | 0.038 |
| TFL | JS | 0.407 | 0.049 | 8.239 | <0.001 |
| JS | PRF | 0.049 | 0.092 | 0.534 | 0.594 |
| TRL | PRF | −0.015 | 0.065 | −0.231 | 0.818 |
| TFL | PRF | 0.528 | 0.067 | 7.932 | <0.001 |

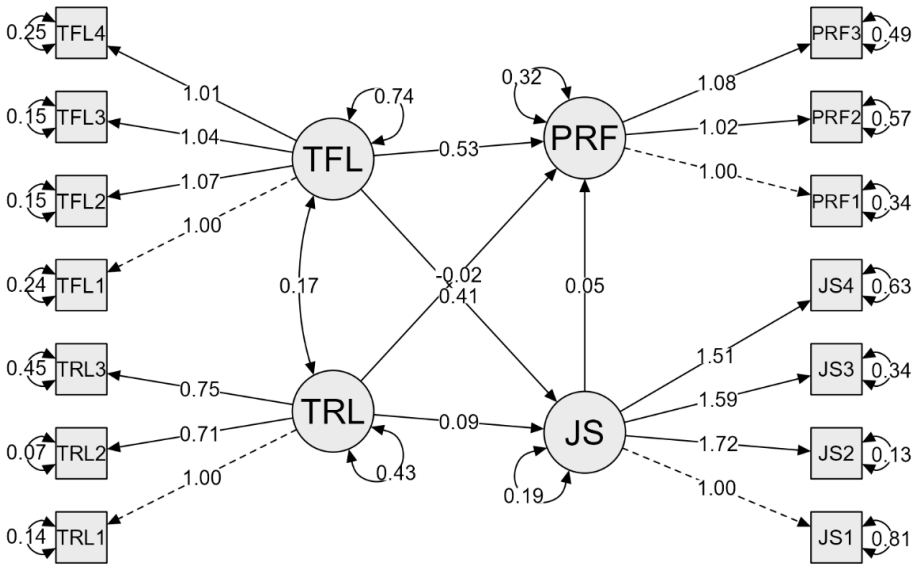



**Figure 2.** Path diagram.

In summary, within NGOs operating in turbulent environments, TFL emerged as a key driver of both job satisfaction and employee performance. While TRL had a modest positive impact on job satisfaction, it did not influence employee performance. Additionally, job satisfaction was found to have no significant effect on employee performance and did not mediate the relationship between leadership styles and performance in this context.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Hypothesis Evaluation and Interpretation

The findings support the first hypothesis, indicating that transactional leadership has a small positive effect on job satisfaction. This aligns with prior research by Lumbantoruan et al. (2020) and Specchia et al. (2021), which emphasized the role of contingent rewards and supportive supervision in enhancing job satisfaction. Similarly, studies by Chalise and Paudel (2023) and Skopak and Hadzaihmetovic (2022) affirm this positive correlation, highlighting how transactional leaders use incentives to drive employee motivation. However, the modest effect observed in this study reflects contextual nuances, as suggested by Asbari (2024) and Sunarsi et al. (2021), indicating that factors such as the challenging NGO environment may moderate this relationship.

The second hypothesis was confirmed, with transformational leadership emerging as a key driver of job satisfaction. This is consistent with research by Baffour-Awuah and Agyei (2020) and Sürücü and Sağbaş (2021), which emphasizes the supportive and motivational environments fostered by transformational leaders. During crises, the ability of transformational leaders to inspire and instill confidence aligns with the observations of Kim et al. (2021) and Almohtaseb et al. (2021), who highlight the role of transformational leadership in reducing stress and uncertainty. These results further corroborate the positive impact identified by Bagga and Verma (2024) and Paais and Pattiruhu (2020), underscoring the importance of transformational leadership in enhancing job satisfaction, even in adverse conditions.

The third hypothesis was not supported, as transactional leadership was found to have no significant effect on employee performance. This contrasts with studies by Firda and Ferine (2023), Setiani and Rizaldy (2021), and Makambe and Moeng (2020), which identified a positive relationship between transactional leadership and performance. The lack of a meaningful effect in this study may be attributed to the "double-edged sword" nature of transactional leadership, as described by Young et al. (2021), where the reward–punishment dynamic may fail to sustain long-term performance in volatile environments. Additionally, crisis intensity and contextual factors may have limited the effectiveness of transactional leadership (Susanto et al., 2023).

The fourth hypothesis was supported, identifying transformational leadership as a key driver of employee performance. This aligns with the findings of Purwanto (2020) and Buil et al. (2019), who emphasize the motivational and supportive role of transformational leaders in improving performance. The study also echoes the insights of Kim et al. (2021) and Reyes et al. (2021), which highlight the ability of transformational leaders to mitigate burnout and foster resilience during crises. By employing intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, transformational leaders cultivate high-quality relationships that drive superior performance, as noted by Vermeulen et al. (2022) and Hakro and Solangi (2023).

The fifth hypothesis was not supported, as job satisfaction was found to have no significant impact on employee performance. This diverges from previous studies, such as those by Jufrizen and Kandhita (2021), Goetz and Wald (2022), and Wayoi et al. (2021), which reported a strong correlation between job satisfaction and performance. The lack of a significant relationship in this study may stem from the high-stress environment within NGOs during crises, where external factors, such as organizational resources and leadership, may overshadow the influence of job satisfaction on performance. Additionally, these findings challenge the universal applicability of previous conclusions by Badrianto and Ekhsan (2020) and Alsafadi and Altahat (2021), suggesting that the relationship between job satisfaction and performance is highly context-dependent. One possible explanation for this deviation is the presence of unmeasured mediators or moderators that may disrupt the direct link between satisfaction and performance in crisis-affected NGOs. For

instance, factors such as emotional exhaustion, burnout, role ambiguity, or even employee resilience could mediate this relationship, weakening the direct effect. Moreover, contextual moderators like leadership style, workload intensity, or availability of organizational support may condition when job satisfaction translates into performance. These results highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of performance determinants under crisis conditions.

### 5.2. Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the paper integrates the two-factor theory and LMX theory to provide a more comprehensive insight into leadership dynamics and job satisfaction in crisis settings. It reinforces Herzberg's two-factor theory by demonstrating how hygiene factors mitigate dissatisfaction during crises, while motivational factors drive job satisfaction. Moreover, by incorporating LMX theory, the paper illustrates how high-quality leader–member relationships enhance the impact of motivational factors while buffering against deficiencies in hygiene factors. This research expands the application of both theories within crisis-driven organizations, providing a refined framework for understanding leadership effectiveness in high-pressure environments.

The results of this study reaffirm the value of transformational and transactional leadership in enhancing employee satisfaction and performance, particularly in NGOs under crisis conditions. However, the findings also suggest the need to re-evaluate traditional leadership frameworks in light of rapidly evolving workplace demands. Thus, although transformational and transactional leadership models have provided robust foundations for understanding leadership effectiveness, their contemporary relevance requires reflection in light of increasingly volatile and digitally driven environments. Transformational leadership's emphasis on vision, inspiration, and individualized support remains highly valuable for motivating teams during crises. However, newer paradigms like digital leadership, agile leadership, and crisis-adaptive leadership highlight additional competencies such as technological fluency, rapid decision-making, and iterative problem-solving, which are increasingly critical in today's crisis management contexts. Therefore, while transformational and transactional leadership models continue to offer important insights, they should be considered alongside emerging leadership frameworks to fully capture the complexities of leading in modern, high-stress environments.

### 5.3. Practical Implications

The findings have significant implications for human resource management (HRM) within NGOs operating in crisis-prone environments. Leadership style should be viewed as a strategic HRM tool, tailored to situational needs to optimize employee satisfaction and performance. Transactional leadership can be used to establish clear goals, enforce accountability, and offer structured rewards such as promotions, bonuses, and public recognition, especially during urgent or task-oriented phases. In parallel, transformational leadership should be emphasized to inspire, motivate, and emotionally support employees, fostering long-term commitment, adaptability, and innovation.

To further enhance employee outcomes, NGOs should integrate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators into their HRM practices. This includes implementing structured reward and recognition programs, offering professional development opportunities, and promoting work–life balance initiatives. These strategies can elevate job satisfaction while also supporting sustainable performance during prolonged crises.

Moreover, leadership development programs should be introduced to build competencies in both transactional and transformational leadership, enabling managers to flexibly adapt their styles based on team needs and organizational dynamics. Training should focus

not only on goal-setting and reward systems but also on emotional intelligence, active listening, and individualized consideration.

Creating a psychologically safe and supportive environment is another essential HRM priority. NGOs should establish formal policies that prioritize employees' basic needs and well-being, such as flexible work arrangements, access to mental health support, and transparent, responsive leadership structures. These practices contribute to stress reduction and foster resilience, especially under conditions of uncertainty and resource scarcity.

Finally, NGOs should incorporate job satisfaction metrics into performance management systems, using regular employee feedback, participatory goal-setting, and alignment between individual and organizational objectives to drive continuous improvement. By adopting these HRM-driven strategies, NGOs can enhance their organizational agility, support employee development, and ensure long-term sustainability amidst ongoing crises.

### *5.4. Limitations and Future Studies*

Despite its valuable implications, this study has certain limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the sample was limited to NGOs operating in Lebanon, a country experiencing prolonged socio-economic and political crises. While this context provides rich insights into leadership and employee outcomes in high-stress environments, it may limit the generalizability of findings to NGOs operating in more stable or culturally distinct regions. Future studies should consider expanding the geographical scope to include NGOs across diverse cultural, economic, and political settings. Second, the random sampling strategy, though methodologically sound, relied on voluntary participation through internal NGO communication channels. This approach may have inadvertently introduced self-selection bias, as individuals more engaged or satisfied with their roles may have been more inclined to respond. Moreover, while the sample was demographically diverse, future studies could benefit from more stratified sampling across job levels, departments, or types of NGOs (e.g., humanitarian vs. advocacy-based) to examine role-specific differences. Third, the timing of data collection between April and December 2024 coincided with ongoing crises in Lebanon, including inflation, public-sector instability, and political turbulence. These external pressures may have influenced participants' perceptions of leadership and performance, potentially overshadowing the role of job satisfaction. As such, contextual variables specific to timing should be accounted for in future research. Additionally, the study relied exclusively on self-reported data through a cross-sectional survey. Future studies may adopt a mixed-methods design incorporating qualitative data or multi-source feedback to enrich and validate responses. Longitudinal research is also encouraged to capture how leadership practices, satisfaction, and performance evolve over time and in response to shifting organizational dynamics. Furthermore, while this study focused on direct relationships among key variables, it did not account for potential mediators and moderators that may influence the link between job satisfaction and performance. Variables such as burnout, emotional exhaustion, organizational commitment, perceived support, or resilience could mediate this relationship. Moreover, factors such as leadership style, NGO structure, crisis severity, or workload intensity could serve as moderators. Exploring these mechanisms would deepen theoretical understanding and offer more targeted recommendations for NGO leadership practices in fragile states. Finally, it is important to note that while this study employed well-established transformational and transactional leadership models as its theoretical foundation, it is important to acknowledge that these constructs, though robust, were developed several decades ago. In light of recent organizational challenges, particularly those posed by digital transformation, remote work, and continuous crisis scenarios, emerging leadership paradigms such as digital leadership, agile leadership, and crisis-adaptive leadership have gained prominence. These newer models

emphasize adaptability, rapid decision-making, real-time communication, and the ability to lead distributed teams through technological means. Although transformational leadership in particular overlaps with some of these elements (e.g., vision-setting, empowerment), it may not fully capture the technological fluency, decentralized structures, and iterative leadership cycles emphasized in agile or digital leadership. Therefore, while the findings of this study reaffirm the utility of both leadership styles in NGO crisis contexts, future research should consider integrating or comparing these traditional frameworks with more contemporary leadership approaches to address the evolving nature of organizational leadership in volatile environments.

Thus, this study both aligns with and challenges existing literature. While transformational leadership consistently emerged as a critical driver of satisfaction and performance, as shown in prior studies (e.g., Kim et al., 2021; Bagga & Verma, 2024), the absence of a significant relationship between job satisfaction and performance under crisis conditions diverges from traditional findings (e.g., Jufrizen & Kandhita, 2021; Wayoi et al., 2021). Moreover, while transactional and transformational leadership models remain valuable, the findings highlight the need for integrating more contemporary leadership frameworks, such as agile, digital, and crisis-adaptive leadership, to fully capture leadership dynamics in complex and volatile NGO environments. This suggests that leadership theory must continue to evolve to remain responsive to rapidly changing organizational contexts.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper underscores the crucial role of transformational leadership in enhancing both job satisfaction and employee performance within NGOs operating in turbulent environments. While transactional leadership demonstrates a modest positive impact on job satisfaction, it does not significantly influence employee performance. Furthermore, job satisfaction neither directly affects performance nor mediates the relationship between leadership styles and performance. These findings highlight the superiority of transformational leadership in fostering employee engagement and effectiveness under crisis conditions, emphasizing the need for leadership strategies that inspire and support employees during challenging times.

This paper contributes to the existing literature by identifying key factors influencing job satisfaction and leadership effectiveness in NGOs. By addressing these factors in dynamic work environments, the research provides practical recommendations for improving organizational policies, strengthening leader–employee relationships, and enhancing overall workplace satisfaction and performance. These insights provide a solid framework for NGOs striving to build resilient and motivated teams in challenging circumstances.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author due to ethical reasons (confidentiality and privacy).

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A. Questionnaire

| **Demographic Questions** |
|---|
| 1. Gender<br>• Male<br>• Female |
| 2. Age<br>• 20–30<br>• 30–40<br>• 40–50<br>• 50 and above |
| 3. Educational Background/Level<br>• High School<br>• Bachelor<br>• Masters<br>• PHD<br>• Other; please specify |
| 4. Years of experience in the NGO sector<br>• Less than one year<br>• 1–5 years<br>• 6–10 years<br>• More than 10 years |
| 5. Job occupancy<br>• Full-time<br>• Part-time<br>• Volunteer |
| 6. Position/Role in the NGO<br>• Frontline/Field Worker<br>• Administrative/Office Worker<br>• Management/Executive<br>• Other (Please Specify) |
| 7. Type of NGO<br>• Humanitarian Aid<br>• Environmental<br>• Educational<br>• Healthcare<br>• Development<br>• Other (Please Specify) |
| **Transactional Leadership (TRL)** |
| 8. My leader clearly defines who is responsible for achieving performance goals. |
| 9. My leader provides rewards or incentives for achieving performance goals and improving motivation and productivity. |
| 10. My leader expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations. |

| **Transformational Leadership (TFL)** |
| --- |
| 11. My leader behaves in a way that fosters respect and trust. |
| 12. My leader communicates a compelling vision that motivates me to work toward organizational goals. |
| 13. My leader encourages me to think outside the box. |
| 14. My leader provides individualized support and encouragement to team members. |
| **Job Satisfaction (JS)** |
| 15. My job is highly appreciated and recognized. |
| 16. I feel that my skills and abilities are effectively used in my current job. |
| 17. I am happy with the amount of support that my leader offers. |
| 18. I feel personally fulfilled by my work at the NGO. |
| **Employee Performance (PRF)** ***(During Crises)*** |
| 19. I am able to maintain high levels of performance even under stress. |
| 20. I adapt quickly to changes in priorities and tasks during crises. |
| 21. I have all the necessary support and resources to perform my job effectively during crises. |

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