



Title: Attaining Better Employee Engagement and a Positive Work Culture through Transformational Leadership

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**Attaining Better Employee Engagement and a Positive Work
Culture through Transformational Leadership**

by

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Abstract

The research area in focus for this study was the public health sector of New Zealand. District Health Board employee engagement, empowerment practices were examined throughout New Zealand DHBs. Northland District Health Board was the chosen specific research area from which respondents for the research questionnaire and Zoom video interviews were selected. The overall purpose of this study was to explore the impact of transformational leadership on employee engagement, motivation and empowerment. The research design for this study utilised mixed, qualitative and quantitative methods. The chosen approach and tools for gathering data consisted of survey questionnaires and an online video interview on the Zoom platform. The findings for objective one showed NDHB needed to address employee disengagement behaviours and patterns to achieve a positive organisational culture. The findings for research objective two confirmed that organisational connectedness and employee loyalty was essential and valued by most interviewees. Employees wanted an organisational culture based on mutual respect from management and staff. Transparent communication and ongoing training initiatives for employee empowerment were also highlighted; transformational leadership was crucial for employee engagement initiatives in NDHB. Previous empirical literature and thematic analysis of video interviews and questionnaires highlighted in the study's findings the need for effective transformational leadership in NDHB. Recommendation for practice would be to implement robust dedicated support systems, ongoing professional development, mentoring programmes, and meaningful employee reward schemes to mitigate employee disengagements and burnouts.

Keywords: Employee engagement; Employee empowerment; Positive work culture; Transformational leadership; Public health sector; District Health Boards

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my “Master’s Dissertation” to my beautiful parents, Kand and Kasturi Swamy. Being academics, you both have always instilled in me the value and importance of education. I remember fond memories of my academic accomplishments of yesteryears and how it would enlighten you both, igniting an immense sense of pride and joy within me. You both always believed in positive encouragements, being passionate teachers yourselves; therefore, I attest that your continued belief in me has been the key inspiration for completing my “Master’s” journey. I hope I have made you both proud.

I would also like to dedicate my “Masters Dissertation” to my beautiful and supportive wife, Kajal Swamy, who has been a pillar of strength and stood over thick and thin times with me. Not forgetting my delightful four-year-old boy, Sidhant Swamy, thanking him also for his patience and putting up with daddy, working throughout the weekends. Sidhant, I can assure you there will be no more excuses for why Daddy cannot play with you anymore, my son.

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List of Acronyms

DHB – District Health Board

NDHB – Northland District Health Board

HR – Human Resources

HOD – Head of Department

FTEs – Full-Time Employees

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

During the last few years, New Zealand's Public Health sector has been under immense stress, with frequent media coverage of District Health Boards having insufficient resources, increased surgery waiting times, unsatisfactory working conditions, strike actions and employee burnout, to name a few. Increased political, economic, and social pressure nationwide has resulted in the DHBs reviewing their tactic and approach in providing health care services to patients and managing their staff and resources (Rook, 2017; Van Kesteren, 2014). The motive for this study stemmed from observing New Zealand's public health crisis and the ripple effects of negative changes that were becoming evident. The shortage of skilled health care personnel in the public health industry caused significant gaps in quality service delivery, forcing HR to recruit and train overseas health care workers. The burnout rate also significantly increased due to staff being overworked. The brain drain was also a significant problem as skilled health care professionals started a trend in relocating overseas to achieve better working conditions and more flexible working hours. Since the human workforce is an organisation's most crucial resource, organisational efforts to motivate, empower, and retain human personnel are critical for an organisation's survivability and success.

This study from a business human resources context is designed to measure staff perceptions regarding employee engagement, empowerment, organisational loyalty, motivation, and leadership effectiveness in their workplace. The study was conducted in Northland District Health Board, in Whangarei, New Zealand. The research participants for the study were full-time laboratory workers. The remainder of the chapter is as follows. Firstly, a statement of the research problem is introduced. This is then followed by the significance of the study and research aim and objectives. Lastly, the thesis structure is briefly explained, highlighting the contents of the remaining chapters of this project.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The research problem will examine how organisations can achieve and foster a positive work culture by effectively promoting employee engagement, motivation and incorporating leadership and support. Employee engagement is significant to organisations because an engaged employee

understands his work role and responsibilities. Engaged employees are more connected, loyal and better performers, achieving efficiency and effectiveness in their day-to-day work roles. Most importantly, organisational leaders must understand that engaged employees display both a psychological state and an emotional state, reflecting on their willingness to strive for excellence through delivery and service to meet organisational objectives (Amoako-Asiedu & Obuobisa-Darko, 2017). Productivity within an organisation is determined by the employees' engagement in their work, and employee job satisfaction is determined by the level of inner enthusiasm stemming from the employee (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Chapter three will offer a complete literature review on employee engagement.

Employee motivation relates to an inner belief system and desire which stems from deep within an employee. This effect can either be beneficial or detrimental to an organisation's productivity levels. Depending on the motivational levels, employees may or may not be motivated. Successful organisations tend to utilise positive and rewarding strategies to build employee motivation to influence desired behaviour. Hence, lifting and improving employee motivation is fundamental for an organisation. Then again, if nothing is done, unmotivated staff can significantly impact and inhibit an organisation's ability to achieve growth and success (Naile & Selesho, 2014).

Organisational culture can impact organisational commitment, potentially affecting an organisation's overall performance in either a beneficial or a disastrous way. When employees fit in and participate actively within the organisation's culture, they lift their work productivity significantly through a sense of self-actualisation. Furthermore, the employee takes an interest and pride in their overall work output, becoming dedicated and self-propelled towards doing good for their work organisation (Nikpour, 2017). Chapter three will offer a complete literature review on organisational culture. Leadership, support and mentorship should be practised in organisations and be deeply embedded in the organisational culture. Effective leadership through the delivery of guidance and support can make work more meaningful to staff. Transformational leaders tend to be highly visible and engaged within the workforce with high energy, drive, and passion. They can easily be recognised, as they constantly keep communications up, facilitating and delivering support initiatives to their followers, bringing vast value to the organisation (Batista-Taran et al., 2013).

Although numerous scholars have conversed on several studies regarding employee engagement and its organisational effects, gaps existed in the theoretical literature on employee disengagements and the effect they had on organisations. This research will aim to highlight literature on employee disengagement. When employees are disengaged and feel powerless at work, they socially isolate themselves from other work colleagues and limit their communication, nonparticipating in

collaborative work. Management must address this trait promptly and take remedial measures to correct employee behaviour, or else the organisational culture mix can get tarnished with other employees also adapting to this form of behaviour (Foulk et al., 2020).

Data was gathered by utilizing a mixed-method approach by incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods for this study. A questionnaire was used as a method to derive data from participants. The rationale for using questionnaires was because questionnaires are popular in organisational research, and it offers anonymity to participants to remain anonymous while sharing information. Also, questionnaires as a research instrument are cheap yet highly effective. Qualitative data were derived from direct one-to-one participant Zoom interviews. The rationale for the direct one to one interview was to derive more enriched and valuable information regarding the subject matter from respondents. The interviews were based on an unstructured design (Munn & Drever, 1990; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Please refer to Chapter four.

1.3. Significance of the study

This study's research area was applied management. This study builds on the earlier works of (Kim et al., 2016; Osbourne & Hammoud, 2017; Wood et al., 2020), which looked at employee engagements, disengagements and effective communication strategies that transformational business leaders use to engage their employees. Also, this study analysed the crucial role management and senior leaders play towards creating a more engaged workforce. This study's contribution with the derived data expectantly adds to other existing works of authors in the applied management and human resources field.

This study also aimed to fill identified gaps in the literature and seek current information from an organisational perspective from a sector that has been under severe pressure over the last few years. First-hand information from the interviewees via video interviews probed new insights and perceptions relevant to the public healthcare industry. This study integrates well with applied management as it showcased the current situation of employee engagement, empowerment, and motivation regarding workforce practices. The healthcare sector has been dogged by employee burnout, underfunding, and employee work-related stress. Consequently, more must be done to research the issues of employee engagement and motivation. By examining past literature and currently obtained data via quantitative and qualitative study, employee behaviour's, perception and motivation were identified. Management's connectedness with their staff, mentoring and support efforts were unveiled (Truss, 2014).

The overall purpose and benefits of current research to an organisation such as NDHB could be that senior management can examine the study's findings and identify critical areas of concern. Senior management can learn about their employees' motivational levels, empowerment and engagement status, and overall connection and loyalty. After that, they can effectively manage and improve on issues not currently handled well in the workforce. Senior management and leaders, on the other hand, can also pick up on valuable employee intel and assess whether current organisational efforts in leadership and transformational management are achieving employee empowerment or not? (Nikpour, 2017).

Some limitations to this study were the small sample size. The research setting was in a busy DHB lab amidst a pandemic with a level 4 lockdown in force. The research participants were difficult to source mainly due to availability and their busy work schedule. This study could have some bias since the participants were additionally stressed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study was conducted on a particular division within a large organisation at a national level. No shortcomings regarding research design and methodology were encountered during the research process. Bias in this research was mitigated by selecting a convenience method of sample selection which gave a fair opportunity for any lab worker to participate in the research instead of the researcher self-selecting samples for the study. Results of this study were generalized by following the research philosophy of pragmatism. Feedback and recommendations were provided to HOD senior managers to understand better issues detected in this study and how to alleviate them for the future to maintain a healthy organisational work culture.

1.4. Research question/aim and objectives

The research question examines ways of attaining better employee engagement and positive work culture through transformational leadership. The research aims to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on employee behaviour regarding employee motivation and empowerment, seeking employee perceptions as to what attributes enable a positive work culture in the workforce.

The research objectives for the current study are:

1. To identify how an organisation can achieve better employee engagement with a positive work culture.
2. To examine employee engagement in the workplace by focusing on key drivers, for example, work behavioural patterns, loyalty and organisational connectedness.

3. To examine factors that foster employee empowerment at the workplace.
4. To ascertain whether transformational leadership in organisations can enhance overall employee engagement and motivation.

1.5. Structure of thesis

Chapter two will investigate empirical literature on employment conditions of public health care workers by analysing the public health care industry from both a broader NZ context and a narrower NDHB Northland focus. The industry analysis aims to determine the reason for increased brain drain, declining staff numbers, job burnouts, and disengagement in the workforce of the public health sector. Chapter three will focus on past research conducted on applied management and human resources management. A selection of broad themes with a close connection to the current research objectives will be examined. Chapter four will include information on the research approach taken for this research, a mixed-method approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This chapter will detail the population and sample size of the study, the sample selection process, data capturing methods, questionnaire design, questionnaire piloting, hurdles and constraints, the validity of the study and ethical considerations. Chapter five will discuss the overall analysis of the study's findings based on derived data from past empirical studies and information derived through conducting video one to one interviews and questionnaire incorporation. Chapter six will detail information regarding possible recommendations. Reference to limitations of the study will also be made along with improvements for future research.

Chapter 2. Theory and Industry Analysis

2.1. Introduction

The shortage of available healthcare personnel severely impacts New Zealand's health sector as more and more qualified and skilled staff are lost due to the brain drain, taking their skills and expertise overseas where better working conditions and pay are on offer. This chapter aims to examine and investigate the employment conditions of public health care workers by analysing the public health care industry from both a broader NZ context and a narrower NDHB focus. The industry analysis will focus on the public health sector in New Zealand and address the key research questions of employee engagement, employee empowerment, and positive workplace culture. This research will probe deeper to conduct a public health industry analysis of New Zealand seeking to find the reasons for the brain drain, falling staff numbers, burnout, disengagement, job satisfaction and empowerment-related agendas in health care workers.

2.2. Theoretical Analysis

The healthcare system in New Zealand is publicly funded and consists of twenty-one District Health Boards in charge of providing and funding health care services to its citizens (Akmal, 2019). New Zealand's public health care is classified as the most significant expenditure category raking up close to 20% of government spending (Gauld, 2005). The public healthcare sector in New Zealand has always been a vital aspect of any government. There have been increased debates regarding public health employees' work engagement, empowerment, and job satisfaction in recent times. A growing number of medical consultants in New Zealand's public health sector have been reported to have higher burnout rates whilst at work. Contributing factors ranged from the consultants not feeling empowered in their roles and having the perception that personal growth in their careers was diminishing resulted in depression, emotional exhaustion and disengagement in their workplace (Carod-Artal & Vázquez-Cabrera, 2013). Ellis and Gardner (2018) acknowledge that public health care employees have demanding jobs, which usually leads to stress, absenteeism, a high rate of staff turnover, careless work practices and increased blunders affecting and impacting civil society and work colleagues. Numerous previous studies have found that organisations exemplifying a solid organisational culture can lessen employee stress, anxiety and disengagement traits and behaviours. Scholars furthermore have identified that when employees find out that the senior leaders and management team in the organisation is competent and supportive of employee growth and

empowerment, staff job satisfaction levels soar (Hart & Cooper, 2002; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). A growing number of medical consultants in New Zealand's public health sector have been reported to have higher rates of burnout whilst at work.

Public sector healthcare funding for the DHBs has not improved to be more realistic and consistent with cost increments related to obtaining resources and skilled personnel, to sustain the survivability of the industry. The media is constantly broadcasting that the DHBs within New Zealand are not meeting their objectives; however, overall DHB spending annually increases. As a result, employees express concerns and frustration, threatening service cutbacks if issues outstanding are not addressed appropriately (Goodyear-Smith & Aston, 2019).

2.2.1. Effective workforce planning

DHBs in New Zealand are continuously improving to effectively conduct workforce planning to ensure that employees' specific needs and organisational objectives are achieved. Every DHB within New Zealand carries out a complete assessment of the current workforce where all job descriptions are thoroughly assessed with competency requirements. From this information, a current and predictable gap analysis is carried out to identify the true extent of existing issues (Bourgeault et al., 2011).

2.2.2. Continuity of Professional development in the workplace

New Zealand DHBs have dedicated and monitored continuous professional development programmes, offering training opportunities and support to its public health care workers. However, an improved focus will be required regarding recognizing employees for their devotion to the field, with generous rewards and meaningful career progression initiated for the future. Employee empowerment through added work responsibility and newfound trust accelerates motivation and overall work engagement, thus dedicated, loyal and efficient staff should be given roles and responsibilities which empowers them in the workplace (Bourgeault et al., 2011).

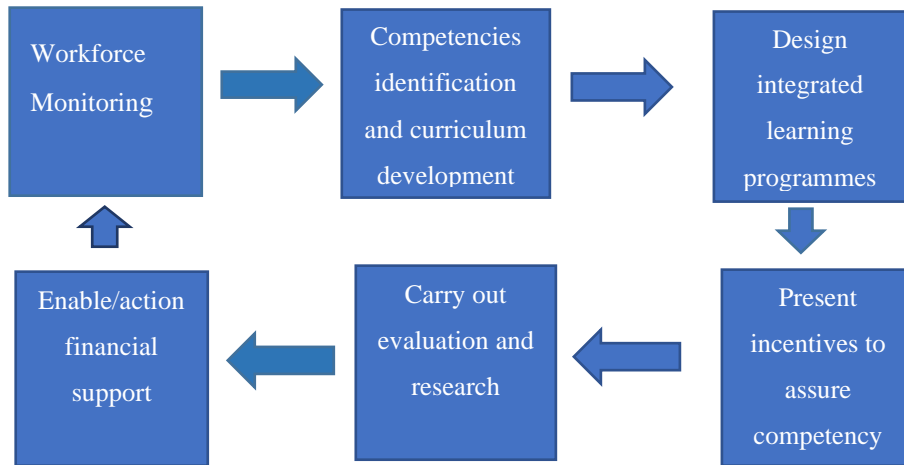
2.2.3. Public health workforce development

New Zealand's public health sector will vastly benefit from adaption to innovative workforce development practices that combine workforce analysis, planning, HR management, and competency development. These initiatives will reinforce the organisation's success by bringing its workforce into line to meet and exceed current and future demands. Successful workforce development should comprise top management support, transparent policies and practices, organisational services and

support for healthcare workers. Therefore, the critical underlying purpose is to sustain remarkable developments and growth throughout the public health sector workforce (Bourgeault et al., 2011).

Figure 1:

Six strategic elements for public health workforce development



Source: Adapted from (Cioffi et al., 2004, pg. 188).

In a study conducted by Brunton (2017), only just 30% per cent of junior doctors indicated they were satisfied with their work arrangements in various New Zealand DHBs. The junior doctors were worried about the deteriorating working conditions in the public health sector and witnessed their skilled and capable colleagues migrating over to other countries with far better working conditions. They also addressed the high financial cost of turnover to DHBs in New Zealand, and perhaps it should be in their best interests to focus on staff development and retraining instead to achieve retention of skilled health care workers (Brunton, 2017). Nearly 40% of employed nurses in NZ relinquish their position due to unfair work practices, being overworked, and not being empowered within their roles. These actions create gaps in the provision of health care services in the public health sector, places stress on DHBs to fill up positions by recruiting from overseas, as statistics indicated that over 25% per cent of registered nurses are overseas qualified. Also, Radiographers, Health Care Assistants and laboratory workers get placed in the same boat and are constantly subjected to unfair working conditions, which get so critical that strike actions are involved. (Brunton, 2017).

A theoretical assessment of the healthcare sector identified two fundamental theories, namely the *conservation of resource theory* and the *attitude theory*. According to Babakus et al. (2003), Bagozzi's (1992) attitude theory consists of appraisal, emotional response and behaviour highly relatable to public sector health care workers in DHBs throughout NZ. The basis of the model illustrates employee perceptions through evidence and transparency of the organisation's commitment, which triggers job satisfaction and loyalty amongst staff. These positive feelings of

satisfaction and emotional commitment cause employees to steadily improve service delivery in the workforce.

Figure 2

Bagozzi's attitude theory conceptual model

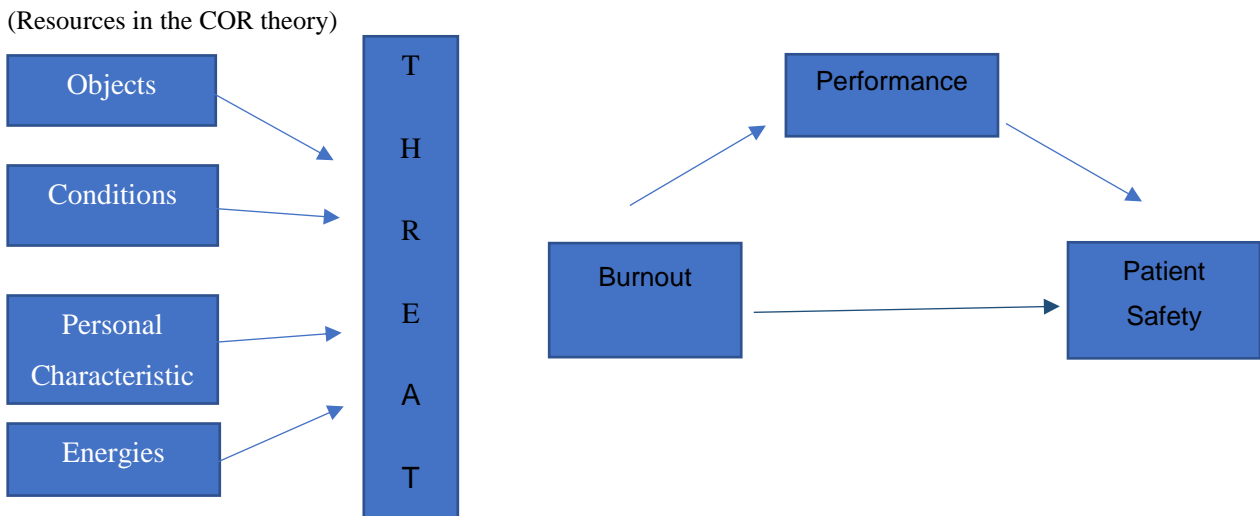


Source: Adapted from (Babakus et al., 2003, pg. 274).

According to Arshad et al. (2021), the Conservation of Resource Theory refers to a situation when an individual gets placed in a confrontable situation and how they try and limit their net resource loss, such as personal characteristics to lessen psychological damage by having abundant resources such as workplace friendships and practising employee resilience to counter-effect abusive supervision/management. In particular, abusive supervision whereby the employee's intrinsic motivation gets diminished, resulting in a decrease of job independence. Consequently, affected employees get disengaged from their work objectives, displaying a rapid decline in the sense of pride and meaningfulness regarding their work outputs faced with constant fear and anxiety (Davis & Bowles, 2018; Larrabee et al., 2003; Tepper, 2000). Based on the Conservation of Resource Theory, past studies have found that a constant resource threat eventually creates burnout. Therefore, this results in poor work performance levels in delivering quality care to patients by public health care workers such as healthcare assistant nurses, surgeons, and anaesthetists. See below the theoretical outline of the COR theory for public health sector workers (Prapanjaroensin et al., 2017).

Figure 3

Conservation of Resource Theory (public health sector workers).



Source: Adapted from (Prapanjaroensin et al., 2017, pg. 3).

Although it is crucial to place the right employee in the proper role teamed with management support to empower them to deliver quality healthcare, health care workers themselves must also effectively deal with challenging situations using interpersonal skills. Numerous studies have also indicated that employees tend to be more loyal and committed to organisations that facilitate training programs (Ashill et al., 2006; Sweetman, 2001). While examining success factors in the hiring and retaining of nursing personnel, dedicated work-related empowerment initiatives actioned by organisations impacted positively on their job satisfaction levels and work effectiveness. Health care workers in the public sector need to be rewarded well because rewards induce staff to provide quality healthcare and encourage them to deal and cope with patient complaints. Public care staff generally view reward systems and policies as a genuine management commitment towards creating a positive work culture (Ashill et al., 2006).

Supportive management is also fundamental as it helps identify organisational needs required to support employee work. Public health care workers become appreciative of commitment, trust and ongoing support from top managers; thus, they excel and improve productivity in overall work output. As a result, organisational commitment and job satisfaction are achieved when employees start carrying out work with pride and regard for their organisation and ultimately positively impacting service recovery through performance (Ashill et al., 2006).

Voluntary staff turnover in New Zealand's public health care sector can be significantly reduced by creating better work opportunities, robust training structures and having rewards for staff, enabling and empowering them to excel in their workplace (Mankin, 2009; Neil & Rodriques, 2015).

Employee turnover is a significant and growing issue presently in New Zealand's public health sector. Employee turnover can be classified as a concept where staff display organisational withdrawal behaviour. These behaviours can include isolating themselves physically and mentally from unpleasant and unsafe workplace settings, staff absenteeism and constant unexplained unpunctuality. Firth et al. (2004) state that health care senior managers affect behavioural patterns and traits within their employees regarding work engagement, organisational loyalty and connectedness and ultimately influence their desire to continue work or leave. Therefore, the importance of having a positive and supportive organisational work culture that enables employee empowerment is crucial to retaining skilled talents in New Zealand's public health care sector. New Zealand's public health system has an ageing workforce. Also, burnout due to the high-stress levels present in the workplace is expected, where staff get disengaged, affecting their work output due to pay issues, inflexible staffing shift rosters and lack of training (Goodyear-Smith & Ashton, 2019). Recent research on psychological empowerment has unveiled constructive and encouraging antecedents like transformational leadership and employee commitment to the organisation. However, minimal information is available on the effects of negative antecedents of psychological empowerment.

2.3. Industry Analysis

There are 20 DHBSs in New Zealand responsible for providing funding and delivering health care services in their respective DHB areas. The Minister of Health for New Zealand, the Rt Hon Andrew Little, governs the health care sector and his team of 11 elected board members. The team is responsible for monitoring and controlling the strategic course of each specific DHB and evaluating its performance. Their respective DHBs fund all public hospitals in New Zealand. The 20 elected CEOs are accountable for overseeing operations in their districts, and they report directly to the Minister and his governance board team members. For the year ended April 2021, total healthcare spending in NZ was NZD 19.223 billion (see Table 1). As part of the financial analysis, a deficit of \$547 million was reported at the end of April 2021. Total staffing in the sector is recorded as having 72,465 full-time equivalents (FTEs). For further details around specific mental, Māori, and public health expenditures, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1: DHB Sector Financial Results YTD to 30 April 2021 - Consolidated Revenue, Expenditure, Net Result, FTEs.

	Actual \$M	Less One-Off Costs \$M	After One-off Costs \$M	Budget \$M	Var \$M	Var %	Full-Year Target Budget \$M	The proportion of Budget spent after 83.3% of the year %	Previous Year to Date \$M
REVENUE	16,503	326	16,019	16,019	157	1.0%	19,223	85.8%	15,107
Operating Costs									
Personnel	(6,742)	(272)	(6,470)	(6,468)	(3)	(0.0%)	(7,780)	86.7%	(6,093)
Outsourcing Personnel	(245)	(17)	(228)	(126)	(102)	(81.1%)	(151)	161.8%	(201)
Total Personnel (Including Outsourcing)	(6,987)	(289)	(6,698)	(6,594)	(105)	(1.6%)	(7,931)	88.1%	(6,294)
Outsourced Services	(574)	(25)	(549)	(520)	(29)	(5.6%)	(624)	91.9%	(493)
Clinical Supplies	(1,489)	(27)	(1,462)	(1,419)	(43)	(3.0%)	(1,709)	87.2%	(1,350)
Infrastructure & Non-Clinical Supplies	(1,407)	(54)	(1,353)	(1,379)	26	1.9%	(1,662)	84.7%	(1,333)
Total Operating Costs	(10,458)	(396)	(10,062)	(9,911)	(151)	(1.5%)	(11,926)	87.7%	(9,469)
Payment to Providers									
MbH-Personal Health	(4,177)	(25)	(4,153)	(4,146)	(7)	(0.2%)	(4,976)	84.0%	(3,934)
MbH- Mental Health	(511)	0	(511)	(507)	(4)	(0.7%)	(6090)	83.8%	(437)
MbH-Public Health	(190)	(161)	(29)	(32)	3	10.0%	(38)	495.5%	(99)
MbH-Disability Support Services	(1,671)	(0)	(1,671)	(1,682)	11	0.6%	(2,019)	82.8%	(1,606)
MbH-Maori Health	(43)	(0)	(43)	(44)	1	2.3%	(53)	81.6%	(42)
Total Payments to Providers	(6,592)	(185)	(6,406)	(6,411)	5	0.1%	(7,694)	85.7%	(6,118)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(17,050)	(581)	(16,468)	(16,322)	(146)	(0.9%)	(19,621)	86.9%	(15,587)
Net RESULTS: surplus/(Deficit)	(547)	(255)	(291)	(303)	11	3.8%	(397)	137.6%	(480)
Average FTEs YTD	72,484	728	71,759	72,351	593	0.8%	72,465		70,146

Source: (DHB, 2021, p. 6).

A combination of relevant past empirical literature indicates that adequate staff training, employee empowerment initiatives, supportive management with leadership attributes, employee rewards and recognition, and facilitation of innovative technologies at work were all considered to be an

organisations management commitment to service quality (Berry et al., 1994; Bowen & Lawler, 1995; Lewis & Gabrielsen, 1998).

Pullon, McKinlay & Dew (2009) stated that an active teamwork culture adapted by healthcare workers where there was evidence of ongoing open communication and mutual respect for ideas and viewpoints of other colleagues fosters organisational efficiency and job satisfaction. New Zealand's poor public health funding and other organisational factors present in District Health Boards across New Zealand created substantial barriers to the practical application of training to facilitate effectual teamwork initiatives (Pullon et al., 2009). Over the past years, New Zealand's health care restructuring has seen rapid changes in techniques towards the management of healthcare systems. As a result, frontline healthcare workers provision of quality healthcare services to the public has been primarily influenced by the organisation's management commitment (Ashill et al., 2006).

Narrowing the research and focusing on Northland District Health Board, in particular, there has been evidence of cases in NDHB where health care workers have been placed under a lot of stress and duress, having to work long hours constantly. Research indicates this negatively impacts employee engagement, positive work culture, morale/empowerment and physical health. Past studies also illustrate that there is a transparent connection between mental health complications such as depression/anxiety problems which are known to be the leading contributor of poor health in chronically overworked staff, causing drastic consequences to both themselves and the organisation (Fiabane et al., 2013; Hills, 2021; McMillan & O'Driscoll, 2004; Poulsen et al., 2014). A first-year doctor employed in Whangarei hospital (NDHB) committed suicide, and the suicide inquest found the young doctor had worked more than 80 hours in the week leading to his death (Essex, 1994). The doctor's father attested that his son was overworked and had difficulty coping with the workload and pressure. As a result of this incident, the chief medical advisor of NDHB stated a review would be conducted on the working conditions of health care professionals in-depth (Essex, 1994). Organisational effectiveness and its success are attainable by fostering commitment towards its employees. Committed and empowered employees are the creators of successful organisational outcomes, and effective senior management and team leaders ensure to make their employees feel competent by acknowledging their interests and passion (Hanaysha, 2016; Mehrabani and Shajari, 2013). In her study, Mackay (2008) stated that a lack of support regarding professional development for nurses was raised in NDHB. As a result, the nurses experienced confusion in their role clarity regarding their varied nature of work, affecting their empowerment and growth aspects regarding attainment of meaningful work. Robust and dedicated support systems and mentoring programmes facilitated by senior nurses were required to address the problem and gaps in providing a lack of professional development (Mackay, 2008).

Another study by Mharapara et al. (2021) focused on identifying antecedents of job satisfaction in midwives related to decision-making, empowerment, and self-professional development whilst working in the public health sector of New Zealand. The findings discovered that employee self-esteem was elevated, enabling high spirits at work when acknowledged as experts and respected contributors from their co-workers and managers. Research evidence also heavily indicated that job satisfaction contributed to the retention of skilled healthcare workers in the public health care industry in New Zealand, slowing the brain drain process (Mharapara et al., 2021).

2.3.1. Transformational leadership

Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002) found that organisations adapted to a transformational organisational culture and valued transformational leadership were on the pathway to success. Through encouraging and supporting innovative and transparent discussions in the workforce, management and senior leaders have successfully transformed challenges into prospects. Past research evidence shows that staff working in organisations practising transformational leadership tend to go far and beyond their interests, taking accountability and responsibility by ensuring that they achieve organisational objectives. Also, in previous studies, authors have noted a strong connection between transformational culture, leadership and good organisational and employee consequences in public sectors (Afsaneh, 1993; Parry & Proctor, 2000).

Despite the alarming and increasing rate of public health care workers having burnouts due to increased work roles, unsuitable working hours and poor work-life balances, a study by Manchester (2012) indicates that there still exist some health care workers who seem to carry on unaffected by the negativities that surround DHB's. This behaviour can stem from their self-desire to seek happiness in meaningful work by integrating positive transformational leadership values from their mentors and leaders in an organisational culture that supports, nurtures and guides its workforce to overcome challenges and carry on.

2.3.2. (Strengths) swot analysis for New Zealand's public health sector

A vital strength of the New Zealand public health sector is its tax-funded national free health service, along with the no-fault accident compensation scheme with ongoing commitment and drive to eliminate health inequalities. The formation of district health boards DHBs funded by the Ministry of Health also brought about a lot of organized structures regarding planning and allocation of resources. As a result, better transparency and management ensued, with the government elected board monitoring and controlling operations to ensure efficiency. Another key strength is the incorporation and broader use of information technology (Standardized systems). Lastly, the NZ

public health sector prides itself on robust nationally run health workforce planning, quality training for health professionals, and state of the art reaccreditations systems to achieve better productivity overall (Goodyear-Smith & Aston, 2019).

2.3.3. Weakness

Over the last couple of years, New Zealand public health care systems have shown a weakened focus and drive towards the commitment of fairness in health consequences, mostly towards Māori and Pacific Island communities. Also, despite several healthcare reforms, the current public health care structure is inadequate, with vast issues still outstanding. Another crucial weakness is that funding does not reflect today's cost increments, and as a consequence, several DHBs throughout the country are facing continued hardship, struggling to meet objectives. Employees are stressed over pay disparity, long-working hours, and as a result, the public health care sector is seeing increased employee burnouts, strike action and brain drain of skilled personnel relocating overseas for better work conditions (Goodyear-Smith & Aston, 2019).

2.3.4. Opportunities

The structural change of the public health care sector can be seen as necessary and required to improve the equity, consistency, reliability, proficiency, and quality aspects to be more aligned to establish better coordination. Also, the focus should be on allocating resources for public health to aid accessibility to health care limiting inequalities. The public health care sector should foster and adapt to innovative ventures that implement streamed line virtual electronic health record and data systems integration, resulting in efficiency and improved transparency of health data transfer between healthcare professionals. NZ's public health care sector should also focus on employee retention strategies, ensuring job satisfaction of public health care staff. Also, NZ's public health sector cannot achieve sustainability long-term by relying on qualified overseas workers as a strategy to fill staff shortage gaps (Goodyear-Smith & Aston, 2019).

2.3.5. Threats

New Zealand's public health care workers are exposed to high levels of stress and pressure to work long hours constantly. Working long hours negatively impacts employee engagement, morale/empowerment, and physical health, resulting in employee burnouts. Employee turnover related to job dissatisfaction was also a significant and growing concern in New Zealand's public health sector, with new graduate nurses only staying in the industry for a year before changing careers (Mankin, 2009; Neil & Rodriques, 2015). Leadership nursing positions appear to be under threat as per the introduction of recent structural changes. DHBs across NZ intend to cut senior nurse positions

to reduce costs paid out in salaries (Nursing leadership positions under threat, 2020). Also, the inability for DHBs to retain young NZ trained doctors is a growing concern being currently faced in the public health care sector. Consequently, recruitment from international labour markets is on the rise, and outsourcing is proving to be very costly for DHBs (Powell, 2007).

2.4. Summary

This chapter focused on the employment conditions of public health care workers by analysing the public health care industry from a broader NZ context and a narrower NDHB context. Relevant studies from numerous authors related to employee engagement, empowerment, positive work culture and leadership in the public health sectors were examined. Some critical issues identified in New Zealand's public healthcare sector were work burnout, pay inequality and longer working hours with little work-life balance. This chapter also looked at the responsibilities of DHBs in New Zealand and how they catered for their employee's work needs and their professional development, focusing on the future to limit brain drain and improve retention of skilled personnel in the public health sector workforce. The industry analysis yielded statistics showing DHBs financial standing for the current year and consolidated revenues, expenditures and net results. The next chapter will be addressing the literature review, examining theoretical findings on past conducted empirical research on employee engagement, empowerment, work motivation and organisational leadership.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

The issue of employee engagement has been well documented within the academic literature (see Gignac et al., 1996; Klitzman et al., 1990; Timms et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2020). Engaged employees can be identified through the level of devotion and dedication they bring to an organisation. Past research has indicated that improved employee engagement benefits the employee and brings a ripple effect. These benefits include enhanced employee work performance, improved financial earnings, increased work accountability and the attainment of meaningful work (see Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Bakker et al., 2012; Salanova et al., 2005; Yan et al., 2017). Scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles were utilized in this literature review with an underlying aim to find current, relatable information which was of relevance to the general theme of this research. The remainder of this chapter will include assessing relevant empirical literature on positive work culture in the workplace. Factors that enable or disable employee engagement and empowerment will be addressed, along with understanding the effectiveness and value add transformational leadership brings to an organisation.

3.2. Employee Engagement

According to Osborne and Hammoud (2017), when work is meaningful, employee participation increases; however, recognition, reward, and guidance are still required to achieve genuine employee engagement. Moreover, the authors add that productivity within an organisation is determined by an employee's engagement in their work. Furthermore, employee job satisfaction is determined by their level of inner enthusiasm stemming from within themselves (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). The critical underlying motive behind facilitating and investing in employee engagement drives in an organisation is to achieve desired optimum organisational objectives (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Abraham (2012) found that today's organisations were developing ways and means to retain talented staff and keep them motivated by lifting employee morale. The author believed that this approach ensured high productivity, innovation, and efficiency in the organisational culture. Cardus (2013) found the five critical controls for successful employee engagement in the workplace were having capable leaders and managers, having transparent and broader goals, progress and relapse

accountability, having adequate resources to facilitate work efforts, and independence to carry out work tasks. These strategies can be helpful in the present research context for Northland District Health Board NDHB, where senior managers can improve structure and control to keep their employees more engaged. Numerous studies have been conducted on employee engagement and its benefits to both the employee and the organisation. However, there seem to be gaps in the literature regarding employee disengagement and why disengagements in the workforce today seems to be a regular and ongoing occurrence. As part of the research objective, this study identified possible reasons for workplace disengagements and the conditions which lead to it. Fehr et al. (2020) reported that adverse attitudes and behaviours amongst employees get triggered when they witness their manager or leader carry out unethical work.

As a consequence, employees stop trusting and respecting their managers and leaders. The authors stress that leaders in an organisation are the benchmark creators of role model exemplary staff, to whom subordinates and followers look up to and follow. Therefore, if the foundations of trust are diminished or tarnished, employee disengagement follows (Fehr et al., 2020). Foulk et al. (2020) believe that when employees are disengaged and feel powerless at work, they tend to socially isolate themselves from other cohorts and refrain from communicating or partaking in collaborative tasks. The author's stress that this employee trait should be addressed by managers promptly, or else the organisational culture mix can be severely impacted for the worse (Foulk et al., 2020).

3.3. Positive Work Culture

Chmura (2016) reported that positive and rewarding work culture was made up of essential and meaningful values such as respect and recognition, ethics and honesty, pro-activity and optimism. These values qualify as notable qualities for employees in an organisation to own. Employer and employee relationships must be strengthened, and the equation of them and we should be removed to achieve trust and transparency. Organisational policies and procedures must be adhered to, and business objectives understood by all parties to ensure an efficient and effective work culture is in place (Chmura, 2016). Sruk (2020) states, diversity, generational differences, gender and ethnicities are all dynamic aspects of the workforce. They can be seen as value adds in the organisational mix, as it promotes growth and innovation through the integration of ideas and ways of thinking. Collaborative group participation must also be encouraged to accomplish tasks collectively.

Furthermore, the author believes that new-generation employees can bring about work resistance when they incorporate their principles and beliefs to change organisational culture. This behaviour

can offset the current organisational culture in the organisation. Hence managers and change leaders should be vigilant and manage this accordingly to avoid disruption and resistance in the workplace. Nikpour (2017) has found that organisational culture impacts organisational commitment, potentially affecting an enterprise's overall performance in either a beneficial or a disastrous way. Nikpour (2017) further states that employees tend to learn, fit in, and participate actively within the organisation's culture. Therefore, through a sense of awakening and self-actualisation, employees lift their work productivity, take interest and pride in their overall work output, become dedicated and self-propelled towards doing good for their work organisation (Nikpour, 2017). Parent (2018), on the other hand, stated that employees also find it hard to keep work relationships with supervisors, team leaders and co-workers positive when the organisational culture mix is toxic and unwelcoming. Resentment, anger, and bottled-up feelings lead towards workers displaying negative work traits, affecting and impacting the business's productivity levels. A study by Lulewicz-Sas (2017) examined key CSR employer and employee responsibilities and their importance. Lulewicz-Sas (2017) believed that organisations should provide their employees with the necessary guidance, information, and resources and actively empower them to achieve success and growth in their roles. CSR objectives in an organisation should be a two-way mutually beneficial strategy, where employers needs and objectives are met, and in return, the employee's needs and requirements are also recognised (Lulewicz-Sas, 2017).

3.4. Employee Empowerment

Past research literature has found employee empowerment positively related to work performance in organisations (Fernandez & Moldogaziev 2011; see also Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Two fundamental theoretical outlooks have become transparent from empirical research, empowerment from a psychological perspective and empowerment from a managerial perspective. Spreitzer (1996) viewed psychological empowerment as a multi-dimensional motivational concept with four key elements: grasping the meaning and the overall message, the overall competence, self-determination, and the reflection through which meaning is rationalised of employee work tasks (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013). From a managerial point of view, employee empowerment looks at people and authority figures who have power and control in an organisation and how they share power, resources, information with those who are lacking. Sazka and Dede (2018) believe employees generally dislike responsibility and depend on instructions and commands that must be managed constantly to be productive. Sahoo et al. (2010) affirm that dedicated employee empowerment efforts in an organisation, based on a participative, collaborative and inclusiveness approach, will result in strong psychological connectivity in employee participation, self-motivation,

work satisfaction and performance. Employee empowerment can be seen as an employee motivation tool that can advance performance by giving authority to low-ranking employees to be more inclusive and participative in the administrative and organisational planning efforts. This effort breaks tense top management and employee barriers, instils a level of trust between the two groups and inspires staff to be more accountable and responsible (Sazka & Dede, 2018). Sahoo and Das (2011) also believe empowerment is a well thought out management technique utilized to lift employee motivation levels by enhancing capability and skill. Graen and Grace (2015) elaborate that it is common practice for business organisations today to assign a specific cluster of employees to work and function in their set designated departments. However, due to poor leadership supervision and sharing, many teams seldom reach their true capabilities of developing better employee orientations or inclusiveness in wider group dynamics in the organisation (Graen, 2012). In the views of Graen and Grace (2015), effective leadership training in organisations should encompass positive aspects of management and team member partnerships and collaborative work efforts with a highlighted focus on combined operational efficiency efforts. Spreitzer and Doneson (2005) also believe employee empowerment to be a critical element in any organisation's transformational change process. Empowerment initiatives easily become appealing for employees to change when the organisational leaders give them recognition and value, accelerating their feel-good factor and showing quality work output. On the other hand, Islam and Irfan (2020) argue that employee empowerment is not guaranteed to uplift organisational values as certain individuals and organisational variables can disallow it. Often employee empowerment initiatives tend to have a minimal organisational effect, mainly due to staff resenting empowerment facilitated training or even due to management's refusal on empowering certain employees. In their research, Haar et al. (2019) investigated whether positive and supportive relationships help foster meaningful work in the workplace. The study results indicated that happy and contented employees displayed a higher level of work commitment, a sense of pride in their work accomplishments and overall increased interest in their work. Numerous authors established that focusing on employee well-being initiatives also improved overall organisational productivity (Di Fabio and Kenny 2019; Taris & Schaufeli, 2015; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Managers, supervisors and team leaders should advocate the value of positive collaborative workplace relationships to sustain a healthy organisational culture in the workplace (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2019). Rewards and recognition are crucial elements in uplifting staff work satisfaction, morale, and work motivation, enabling a value-added ripple effect. The happier and content the workforce, the higher productivity levels in an organisation (Manzoor, 2012). Furthermore, Manzoor believes employee empowerment and employee motivation towards organisational responsibilities are linked to establishing a positive organisational work culture (Manzoor, 2012). Much previous research illuminated work on the positives of employee

empowerment. However, the study by Cheong et al. (2016) discussed that beyond a supportive process of employee empowerment and leadership in organisations, there exists an encumbering process whereby certain behavioural traits of leaders accelerate work-induced tension in their employees. This work-induced tension, therefore, diminishes all positive aspects of employee empowerment. Also, leaders who carried out uncontrolled and unmoderated employee empowerment practices in organisations made employees overconfident and disordered, and as a result, their work error rate increased (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

3.5. Transformational Leadership

Wright and Pandey (2010) state that transformational leadership is about shifting the attitudes and norms of followers by motivating purposeful behaviour. The key aim for transformational leaders in organisations is to drive and foster awareness regarding the importance of meeting organisational orientated objectives. Caillier (2014) believes transformational leadership is a way of inspiring employees via the construct of mutual understandings and instilling a give and take process, for example, job promotions, fast-track career progressions or even financial rewards in return for aligning their best interests with the organisations best interest by fulfilling set organisational targets. Batista-Taran et al. (2013) state that transformational leaders are often highly present and engaged within the workforce. Their energy, drive, and vigour can easily be recognised, as they constantly keep communications up, facilitating and delivering support initiatives to their followers who bring value. Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) affirm that employee engagement tends to be high when employees have ongoing positive communication with their leaders.

Additionally, Cartwright and Holmes (2006) examined that employee engagement and motivation levels increased when leaders practised and focused on trust and relationship building aspects in the workplace. Also, a supportive management style, an essential trait of transformational leaders, tends to increase employee engagement considerably when exercised in the proper context in business organisations (Bhatnagar, 2007). Numerous empirical researches documented the advantages of transformational leadership on employees and organisations; however, gaps exist in the literature with transformational leadership's dark side. Tourish (2014) states that often too much power can also have detrimental effects on a leaders' judgements, making them pursue and practice unethically. Power in leadership can also elevate egos and alter leaders' perceptions and behaviours that align with their best interests and people. As a result, it casts a wrongful impression for employees and subordinates looking up to transformational leaders as role models. Furthermore, in a study by Harris and Jones (2018), they argue that compliant and quiet staff members often fell target and received further abuse from their leaders than those who were vocal and prevalent within the organisational culture mix.

3.6. Summary

A literature review examined past empirical research on employee engagement, positive work culture, employee empowerment and transformational leadership in organisational workplaces. Firstly, this literature review examined key associated drivers of employee engagement and the level of connectedness in the workforce by looking at employee motivation, work behavioural patterns, and loyalty to the organisation. Secondly, the literature review sheds light on positive work culture in the workforce and its associated benefits to both the employee and the organisation by developing and fostering employee and employer relationships. This literature review also touches on the importance of working and functioning within the policies and procedures of the organisation to achieve positive outcomes for everyone. Management's ability to handle employee resistance with stringent management control practices was discussed to prevent the loss of an already well-established organisational culture. The third part of the literature review focused on employee empowerment, looking at how employees perceived empowerment at their workplace. Psychological and managerial perspectives of employee empowerment were discussed. The importance of collaborative efforts from management and employees was debated, with the highlight being on creating meaningful work to instil empowerment within employees. Lastly, the transformational leadership topic was discussed with the focus on how the transformational leader can successfully shift attitudes amongst followers to align their work interests with the organisation's best interests and be a mentor and role model for employees. Gaps in the literature regarding undesirable transformational leadership traits existed, so this area was further investigated to illuminate how it negatively affected the organisation and its employees. Chapter 4, Methodology, will look at methods and tools used for data gathering and the rationale for chosen methods utilised to gather data with relation to the objectives of this study.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the study was carried out. The research organisation was the Northland District Health Board, Whangarei. The chapter builds upon the research design for the study, a mixed-method approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods for data gathering. (NDHB) laboratory workers were the research participants, and data were obtained through questionnaires and one-on-one Zoom video interviews. Employee engagement, empowerment, positive organisational culture and transformational leadership were the key areas of this research. Information regarding the purpose of the questionnaire, questionnaire design, pilot testing, procedures, participants, sampling and data analysis is provided in detail as the chapter progresses. The correlated data was examined thoroughly by thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns from interviewee responses better to understand the current organisational culture (NDHB). The remainder of the chapter is as follows. Firstly, research philosophy and design are introduced. This is followed by the methods utilized to obtain data for this study, where the questionnaire and video interview process are discussed in detail. This study's limitations, reliability, bias, and ethical considerations are also detailed, followed by a summary.

4.2. Research Philosophy and Design

This research utilized the pragmatism theory due to its workable approach with logical and practical viewpoints to achieve a more holistic understanding and requirements of how better employee engagement can bring about positive changes in an organisation (Clarke & Visser, 2019). Pragmatism also avoids the contentious debates of truth and reality and rationally accepts that there will be multiple dashes of realism available for empirical inquiry and investigation. Therefore, positioning itself towards addressing and solving practical problems in a societal context (Yvonne, 2010). Pragmatic theory and approach were well related to the research objectives of this study as they drew relevant insights from past empirical research conducted by several authors.

The Pragmatism theory provided actionable achievable milestones which helped solve the research problem and research objectives. This study aimed to propose value-added strategies to senior management and change leaders in Northland District Health Board laboratories for future improvements. The research design for this study utilized mixed, qualitative and quantitative methods. The chosen approach and tools for gathering data consisted of survey questionnaires and an online video interview on the Zoom platform. This approach helped understand sample participants feelings and perceptions regarding their organisational work culture in their current work

setting. Research participants were approached to fill out the questionnaires in hard paper copy. The remaining sample participants were engaged for the online video interviews, which were based around seven open-ended descriptive qualitative questions to get more detailed responses to enable rich data collection.

The incorporation of a mixed-method approach for the research was in line with the Pragmatism paradigm. The research design was based on an exploratory purpose where open-ended questions were asked to probe respondents to gather valuable insights regarding the subject matter with a combination of what, why and how questions. The exploratory research design was instrumental as it clarified our understandings of empowerment, employee engagement, and positive work culture. The researcher's role in this research was semi-involved, mainly when conducting the video interviews. The analysis approach for the study was inductive, and data was collected using a mixed-method approach (Thomas, 2006; Saunders et al., 2019).

4.3. Method 1: Questionnaire

4.3.1. Purpose of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was selected and utilized as an essential research tool to answer the research problem questions by analysing employee perceptions and feelings towards their work organisation, work motivation and assessing their level of connectedness to the organisation. The questionnaire was selected to gather data for the research because it is popular and easy to understand in a research context. Also, it was a cheap and efficient way to gather information from participants. Questionnaires offer anonymity to participants to remain unidentified while sharing information. Also, having the possibility of a high respondent return rate was a significant contributing factor in why questionnaires as a research tool for this study were selected (Munn & Drever, 1990).

4.3.2. Questionnaire design

Previous empirical research from scholars focused on employee engagement, employee empowerment, employee motivation, and transformational leadership effects on an organisation. However, some gaps regarding strategy identification and implementation were identified. This research aimed to build upon past empirical studies with an underlying pragmatic philosophy to help (NDHB) facilitate better strategy identification and implementation regarding managing their human personnel. This will achieve efficiency and effectiveness in work output whilst keeping up with the changing times as the nature and scope of work evolve rapidly.

For this research, relevant research questions were drafted, and a questionnaire was designed. This approach builds on previous pertinent studies in the field of employment (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Bakker et al., 2012; Chambel et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2020). The focus of the questionnaire design had been on specificity and simplicity, with the key aim and purpose being on lessening the cognitive load on participants' comprehension. Questions were designed to be exploratory and open-ended, providing the respondents to divulge deeper information (Lietz, 2010). The questionnaire included fifteen questions with a combination of tick boxes, multi choices, short answer and long answer combinations. Also, in the qualitative one to one interview, questions consisting of how, why, what were utilized to derive rich data. The rationale for this was to get respondents critically thinking and drawing on their perceptions, insights and past experiences. The questionnaire covered employee work engagement, empowerment, and motivating transformational management and leadership in an organisation (see Appendix D for questionnaire).

4.3.3. Pilot testing

The pilot testing for the interview questionnaire for this research was carried out using a selective sampling approach. The testing provided a basis for checking irregularities within the study and evaluating its overall design and procedures (Lowe, 2019). The feedback provided from respondents indicated that the questionnaire was well designed and an appropriate means of assessing employee engagement.

4.3.4. Procedure

The questionnaire for the quantitative study for the research was printed out on hard paper and handed over to the HOD for distribution to the research participants. Timeframe for the questionnaires to be filled and returned to the (HOD) was agreed to be for two weeks. This provided sufficient time for possibly any newly interested participants to partake. The questionnaires to be filled out was either at the participant's place of work or elsewhere.

4.3.5. Participants and sampling

The participants for this study were laboratory workers from Northland District Health Board Northland. A total of twenty participants completed the questionnaire. A further five interviewees participated in the video interview hosted on the Zoom platform. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the chosen sample for this study were that participants needed to be between the age of 18 to 65 and currently employed full time by the Northern District Health Board in Whangarei. The sampling strategy to secure participants for the research was based on the convenience method mainly because the method was cheap to conduct, relatively efficient and straightforward to implement (Jager et al.,

2017). This particular group for the study was approached with an underlying focus on New Zealand's health sector and its human resource management capabilities and limitations. Also, the motivation to include this sample for the research stemmed from continuous New Zealand media developments in recent years. The media continually amplified incidents of healthcare workers carrying out strikes demanding better working conditions, fair pay and equality. New Zealand currently faces a health care crisis with a shortage of experienced personnel in the field to deliver quality care.

4.3.6. Data analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Groups, age and gender of participants were compared. Thematic analysis was carried out for open-ended questions in both the questionnaire and the video interview questions. Themes were identified, and findings were presented in bar charts, pie graphs and tables.

4.4. Method 2: Interviews

4.4.1. Purpose of interviews

The purpose of conducting a direct qualitative one to one video interview was to derive more enriched and valuable information regarding the subject matter from respondents. Candid video interviews allow for a more detailed understanding of the workplace environment through descriptive interviewee feedbacks.

4.4.2. Interview design

The interviews conducted were based on an unstructured design. The critical aspects of an unstructured interview that appealed were that the questions and answers were not predetermined, enabling a more spontaneous flow.

Critical emphasis and focus are on relying on social interactions between the participant and the researcher. Also, the unstructured interview enabled the researcher to understand complexities in respondent behaviour and feedback without imposing any set prioritized criteria (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The unstructured interview design was relevant to this study. Moreover, the majority of the research objectives and problem questions regarding employee engagement, empowerment and motivation were addressed to be probed and investigated with the expectation of obtaining rich first-hand data. The researcher's prime objective was to derive any quality enriched feedback from the respondents without pushing or imposing any pre-set scope and structure to the online video interviews.

The underlying theme of the research had been exploratory, valuing and welcoming any spur of moment feedback brought forward from the respondents. Another benefit of an unstructured approach was that it was highly flexible. An unstructured interview permitted the researcher to shadow the respondent's lead regarding what they believed created particular phenomena. Also, further probing themes enabled the researcher to obtain more detailed insights (Low, 2007).

4.4.3. Pilot testing

The pilot testing for this research's online qualitative video interview questions was tested out on a randomly chosen sample to seek and look out for any irregularities and errors. Feedback indicated the online qualitative video interview questions were well designed, and there was no need to change or redesign.

4.4.4 Procedure

Participants interested in participating in the video interview questionnaires forwarded their e-mail details to the HOD, indicating approval and consent to participate in the video interview. The researcher then obtained e-mail details of the video interview participants from the (HOD) and contacted them to confirm a suitable time for the Zoom video interview, working with the timeframe of a week on this also. The location of the video interviews would be at the interviewee's own choice.

4.4.5. Participants

Five participants were video interviewed online via the Zoom platform.

Table 4.1: *Zoom video Interviewee's*

Interviewee 1	Female, four years experience as a laboratory scientist
Interviewee 2	Female, five years experience as a lab technician
Interviewee 3	Female, three years experience as a laboratory scientist
Interviewee 4	Female, ten years experience as a laboratory technician
Interviewee 5	Male, seven years experience as a laboratory technician

4.4.6. Data analysis

The Zoom one to one video interviews were transcribed. Seven open-ended questions were presented to the interviewees, and obtained data were analysed by thematic analysis to identify the relevant themes and key messages. Data was presented in the results sections in chapter five. Implications and critical findings were compared with other studies and presented in the discussion section of chapter five.

4.5. Limitations, Reliability and Bias

Some limitations of this study included working around specific timeframe such as waiting for ethical clearance by SIT Ethics Committee to be completed before carrying out any data gathering. Also, the distributed questionnaires and the video interviews had to be conducted within two weeks but took longer. The (NDHB) laboratory, apart from being extremely busy during this time of the year, was presented with more workload and an increased number of Covid-19 testing's; consequently, confirmation of participant numbers took longer than anticipated. Another limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size obtained for research. The researcher acknowledges this was mainly due to the in-availability of full-time lab workers as the majority worked shifts. Secondly, as mentioned above, some staff were too busy to partake in this research.

The reliability of this research was enhanced through mixed-methods convergence of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to improve credibility in the research findings. Also, it permitted research findings to be generalized for upcoming studies (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Bias in this research was mitigated by selecting a convenience method of sample selection. This provided a fair opportunity for any lab worker to participate in the study. Results of this study were generalized by following the research philosophy of pragmatism to offer feedback to (HOD) and senior managers. Constructive feedback will help decision-makers understand issues and problems detected in this study and how to mitigate them in the future to maintain a healthy organisational work culture.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

As soon as the ethical approval from the SIT Ethics Committee was approved, the researcher was permitted to carry out data gathering for this research. This study utilized mixed methods. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured and practised regarding the survey questionnaires and the video interview. This study was Overt research, and all information regarding the interviewer and the institute through which the research was carried out had been handled with complete transparency

with all participants before any data gathering started (Dawson, 2019). Please refer to Appendix A for the ethics approval.

4.6.1. Method 1: questionnaire

The sample participants who completed the questionnaire did not have to sign the consent form. A statement in the information participation sheet had been included, which stated upon participants completed return of the research questionnaire, implied their consent participation. Please refer to Appendix C to see the questionnaire information statement.

4.6.2. Method 2: interviews

All participants for the online video interview had to sign a consent form before being interviewed for this study. The researcher delivered the consent form to the (HOD) of the lab, who distributed the questionnaire to the interview participants, who then signed to confirm their consent and participation in the video interview, returning the completed forms to the (HOD). All video interviewee names and identities remained anonymous, research data was not shared with any party or group, and all interview data was stored in password-protected electronic files. Personal interviewee information will be destroyed at the end of this project. Also, the raw data required for this project will be destroyed in five years. Please refer to Appendix B for the participant information sheet and Appendix E for the consent form.

4.7. Summary

In summary, this chapter focused on the rationale for the chosen mix-method study at Northland District Health Board. Indication of selected population and sample size were discussed along with participant sample selection process and data capturing methods: the questionnaires and direct online video interviews. The methods selected proved highly useful to answering and gathering essential data for the research objectives. The quantitative method of using a questionnaire assisted in reaching a larger sample population. Also, the questionnaire was well designed, not confusing and was not time-consuming to complete as well. The qualitative methods supported the study by providing valuable in-depth information via one-to-one online video interviews. Interviewees provided rich first-hand viewpoints, perceptions, and feelings regarding current work empowerment, engagement, leadership management practices (NDHB). Interviewees elaborated on how it positively or negatively impacted them from an organisational cultural development perspective at Whangarei Hospital. Possible limitations to the study were discussed, with elements such as reliability and bias

explained in detail. Lastly, ethical considerations and implications of the two chosen methods, the questionnaire and the direct one-to-one video interview, were also explained. All gathered information was directly related and in line with the research questions, aims and objectives. The next chapter will be addressing the findings and analysis of the study, concentrating on the results of the conducted research.

Chapter 5. Findings and Analysis

5.1. Introduction

The questionnaire included fifteen questions with a combination of tick boxes, multi choices, short answer and long answer combinations. A total of twenty questionnaires were distributed and completed yielding a 100% completion rate. The respondents took close to three weeks to complete and return the questionnaire to the Head of the Department of specimen services in the Northland District Health Board (NDHB) lab. After the questionnaires were physically collected, i.e., in hard copies, the raw data were analysed and coded in an excel spreadsheet. Research findings were concluded by analysing open-ended questions using thematic analysis to seek common themes present in written feedback, establishing a deeper understanding of the respondent's feedback. The issue of employee engagement with emergent behavioural themes in the workforce has been well documented within past academic literature (see Gignac et al., 1996; Klitzman et al., 1990; Timms et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2020). Joffe and Yardley (2004) all used thematic analysis in their study to identify specific patterns found in data. They viewed thematic analysis as a practical approach to analysing data as thematic analysis provided a significant consideration to the obtained qualitative data.

The research data of this study were triangulated to build coherent themes. Findings were linked with three broad themed categories; (1) Individualised consideration is when the manager or leader is needed to focus on specific employees to help with motivational guidance and growth within the organisation to achieve meaningful recognition from the employees; (2) Inspirational motivation, whereby the manager's efforts are expected to encourage staff to actively think and develop strategies to face complex and challenging situations. This managerial task eventually enables the organisations to have an atmosphere of trust; (3) Intellectual stimulation, where the manager is expected to partake in active one to one employee conversations and encourage staff to participate in innovative tasks to develop their cognitive skills (Richardson, 2011). The results of this study were presented in bar graphs, pie charts and transcribed texts obtained from the Zoom participant video interview.

5.2. Results

Data were analysed from the respondent feedback received from both the questionnaire and the direct Zoom video interviews. Of the 20 participants that completed the questionnaire, 50% were male and 50% female (see Figure 5.1). This resulted in a well-balanced and proportioned sample feedback

return. In addition, 5 participants carried out the qualitative direct one-to-one video interview on Zoom, providing a richer context to the research with their viewpoints and perceptions. Obtained questionnaire results and the video interview results for this study will be presented in section 5.2 and discussed in section 5.3 concerning research objectives; 1) To identify how an organisation can achieve better employee engagement with the positive work culture; 2) to examine employee engagement in the workplace by focusing on key drivers, for example, work behavioural patterns, loyalty and organisational connectedness; 3) to examine factors that foster employee empowerment at the workplace; 4) to ascertain whether transformational leadership in organisations can enhance overall employee engagement and motivation. Empirical literature findings and theatrical models will also be used to recognise this research's findings fully. Obtained results and conclusions of the current study will be triangulated.

Figure 5.1: Gender of Participants by percentage

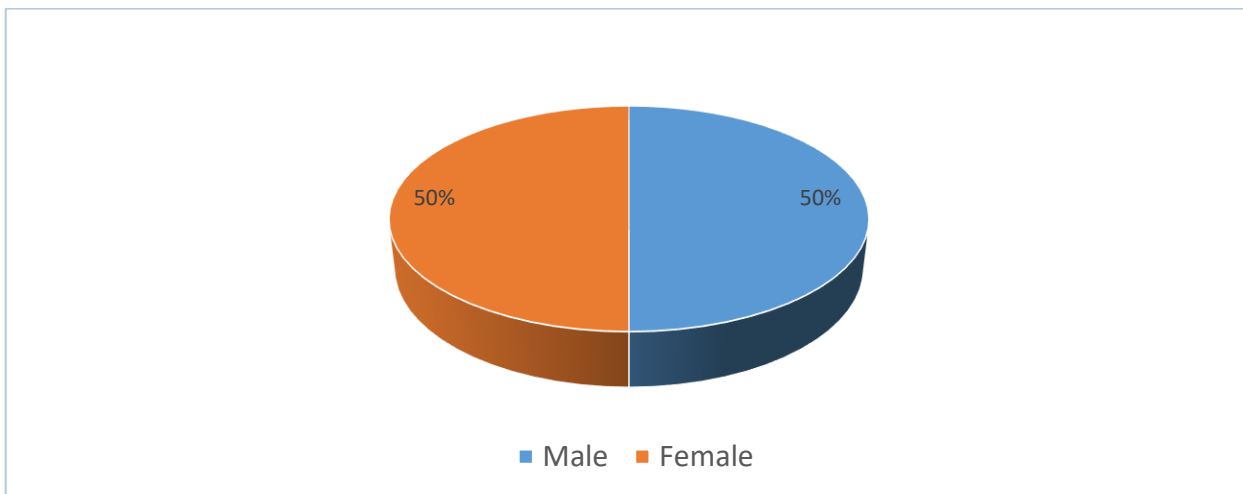
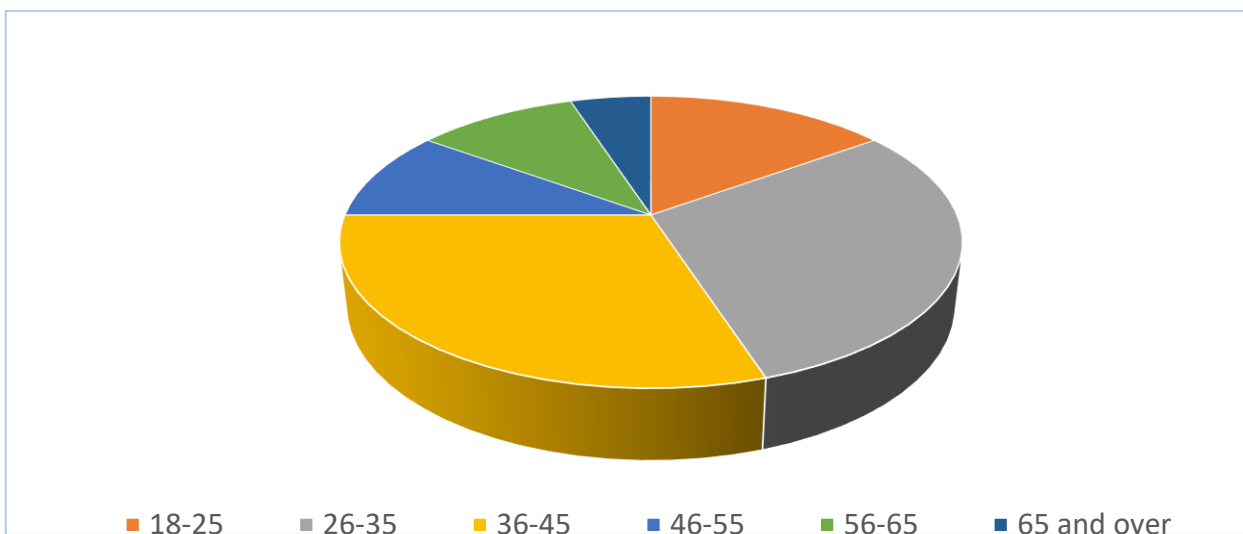


Figure 5.2: Respondent age



5.2.1. Research objective 1:

Identify how organisations achieve better employee engagement and positive work culture.

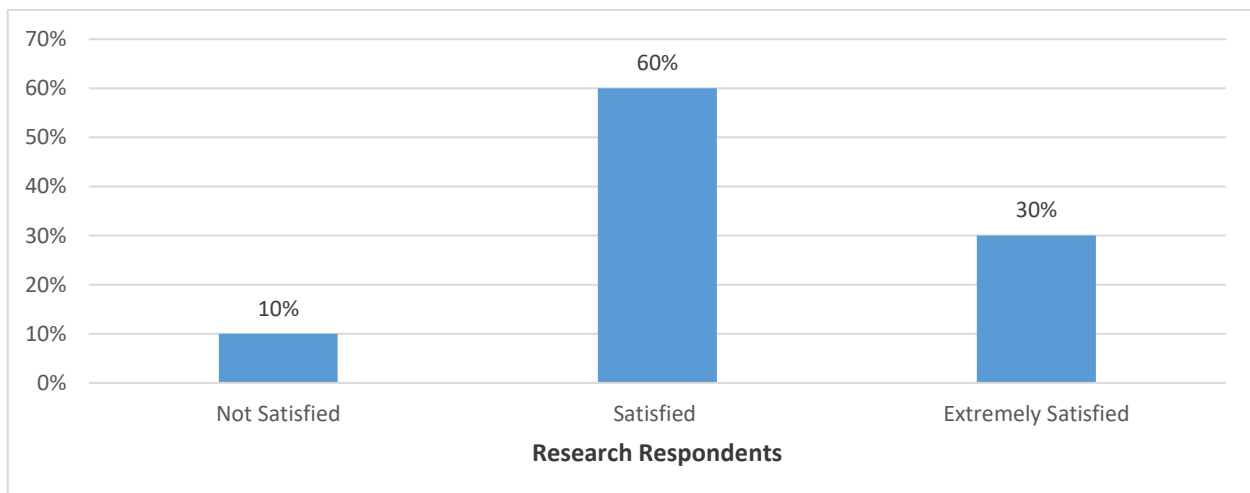
In question 14 of the research questionnaire, respondents were asked how satisfied they were in their current roles regarding personal motivation and empowerment efforts from their supervisors, management and top management. Table 5.1 shows the findings from respondents’ feedback derived from raw data.

Table 5.1: *Employee feedback findings on motivational and empowerment effort levels from supervisors, Management and top Management.*

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
From Supervisors	2	12	6
From Management	1	13	6
From Top Management	7	10	3

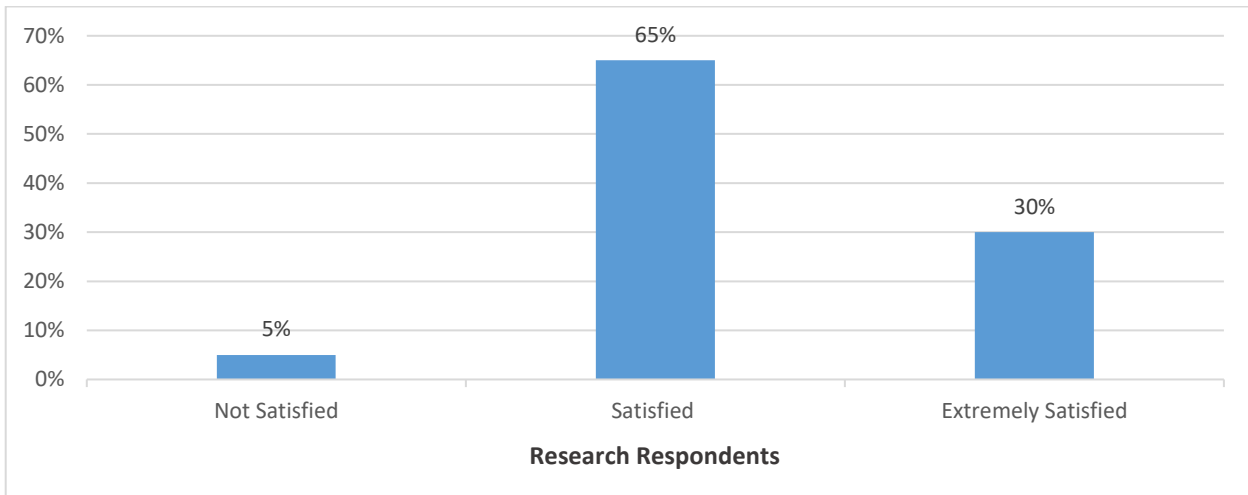
The bar graph below depicts employee satisfaction based on their supervisor’s efforts towards developing their motivation and empowerment capabilities in the workplace.

Figure 5.3 *Employee satisfaction by Supervisory efforts regarding motivation and empowerment in current role*



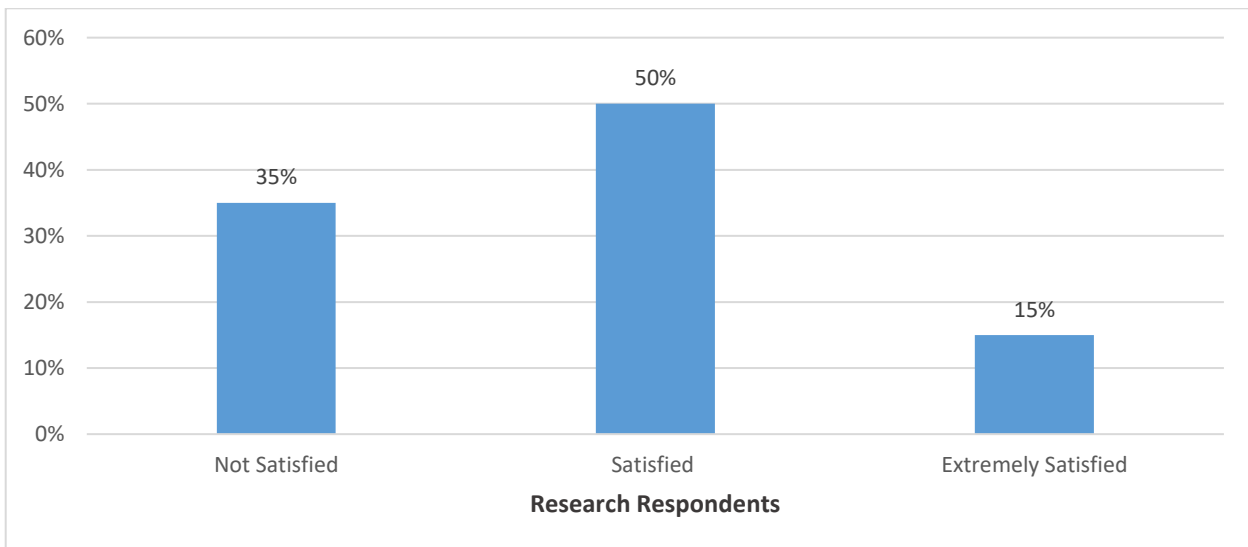
The bar graph below depicts employee satisfaction based on their manager’s efforts towards developing their motivation and empowerment capabilities in the workplace.

Figure 5.4 *Employee satisfaction by management efforts regarding motivation and empowerment in current role.*



The bar graph below depicts employee satisfaction based on their top manager’s efforts to develop their motivation and empowerment capabilities in the workplace.

Figure 5.5 *Employee satisfaction by top management efforts regarding motivation and empowerment in current role.*



The study findings illustrated that interviewee 4 expressed some concerns around NDHB organisational culture and collaborative teamwork synergies. The interviewee believed management proactiveness and support were transparent during the employee induction period. However, support and care faded rapidly after a year and a half. The respondent further elaborated that the factors against effective employee engagement were the organisational culture that inhibited them from efficiently engaging in their work tasks. For instance, asking questions or asking for help from

subordinates was frowned upon, and the respondent felt a strong culture of bullying present in the workforce.

“Management is all right, yeah. They offer support in the first instance when you start working there, but after a year and a half, you are expected just basically to know everything. And that is not supportive in my eyes. When you are too scared as an employee to start asking questions that you do not know the answers to, you get told to stop asking questions. And there is also silent bullying. So that is the sort of culture that is currently present, and it is not pleasant” (Interviewee 4).

Interviewee 1 mentions in the one-to-one video session that they valued open communication from their leaders and managers in the workplace. The interviewee believes having direct conversations openly and freely elevated employee engagement. Furthermore, Interviewee 1 goes on to add that their lab manager comes in contact with them regularly.

“He comes and checks with me like how the work is going as I am still under training in the department. He checks how my work-life balance is working out, especially during this lockdown. He also supports me at the same time by checking to see if I am happy and content and enjoying work. So yeah, this makes me feel very engaged and connected in the NDHB work setting” (Interviewee 1).

5.2.2. Research objective 2:

Examine employee engagement in the workplace by focusing on key drivers such as employee work behavioural patterns, loyalty and organisational connectedness.

Interviewee 1 strongly believed that they were loyal to their work organisation. The respondent stated:

“I strongly believe that I am loyal to my organisation. I can say this strongly because I get self-satisfaction when I finish my work each day. So yeah, it makes me feel proud of myself for being useful for the organisation and helping needy people. Because we are in such a place where we have to act quickly and be precise.” (Interviewee 1).

Organisational connectedness emerged as a strong theme after conducting a thematic analysis of feedback. Interviewee 3 stated

“Concerning blood bank where I work, the department has recently had a change of leadership which I think has been a positive influence. So, our new manager sort of

listens to us more and engages with us more. He makes us feel important and give us some tasks which motivate us. Also, the new manager offers help when needed, we have had a sit-down, and he wants to work on my leadership skills. He is an excellent communicator” (Interviewee 3).

Idealized work behavioural patterns based on mutual respect and trust between management and employee emerged as a theme after feedback analysis. Interviewee 3 stated:

“In my department, I feel like not everyone contributes, other than I think like some of us have, like extra roles and responsibilities apart from just the routine work. So, like, for example, I get to do a lot of admins and filing and all that sort of background stuff, but they do not do anything. Once the routine work is done, they are just sitting there and not motivated to do anything. Maybe the management can get them more involved to do the extra activities, which would be good” (Interviewee 3).

Organisational connectedness, employee loyalty, enriched work behavioural patterns were identified as critical drivers and themes for employee engagement at NDHB after analysing respondent feedback. Interviewee 1 stated:

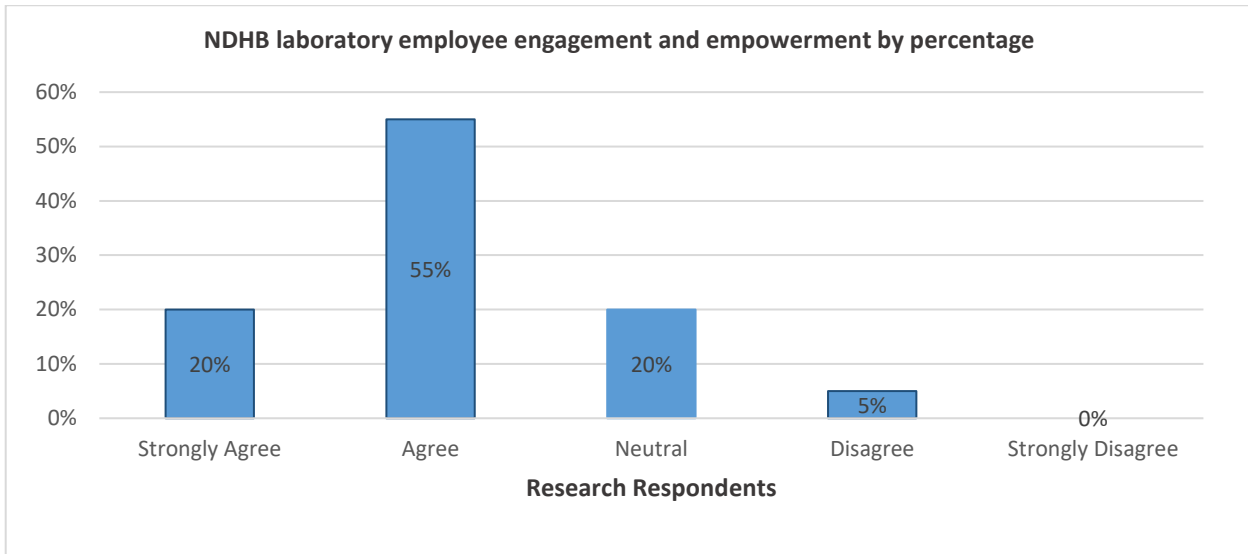
“By coordination and cooperation efforts between the employees and the manager. This should originate from both the employee and the employer. That is what an organisation is. None of them can make an organisation by themselves. This should be a combined effort and ongoing from both employee and employer to make and build up the organisation” (Interviewee 1).

5.2.3 Research objective 3:

Examine factors that foster employee engagement in the workplace. See section 5.3 for a more detailed findings discussion.

Analysis of the Likert Scale for question 4 of the questionnaire, where NDHB employees were asked to indicate how engaged and empowered they felt in their workplace, is shown in Figure 5.3 below. The results indicated that only 20% strongly agreed, 55% agreed, 20% neutral, 5% disagreed about feeling engaged and empowered in the workforce.

Figure 5.6 NDHB laboratory employee’s engagement and empowerment assessment



Interviewee 5 valued the involvement of management with employees welcoming a new organisational culture change in the organisation.

“Managers support us do our best and get the work done to an optimum standard, which is great. For example, in the last three weeks, I was doing the pm shift and being the second person in the pm shift, my manager created something else for me to do and learn apart from the usual. This also keeps me focused and on track whilst constantly upgrading my skills” (Interviewee 5).

Interviewee 2 stated:

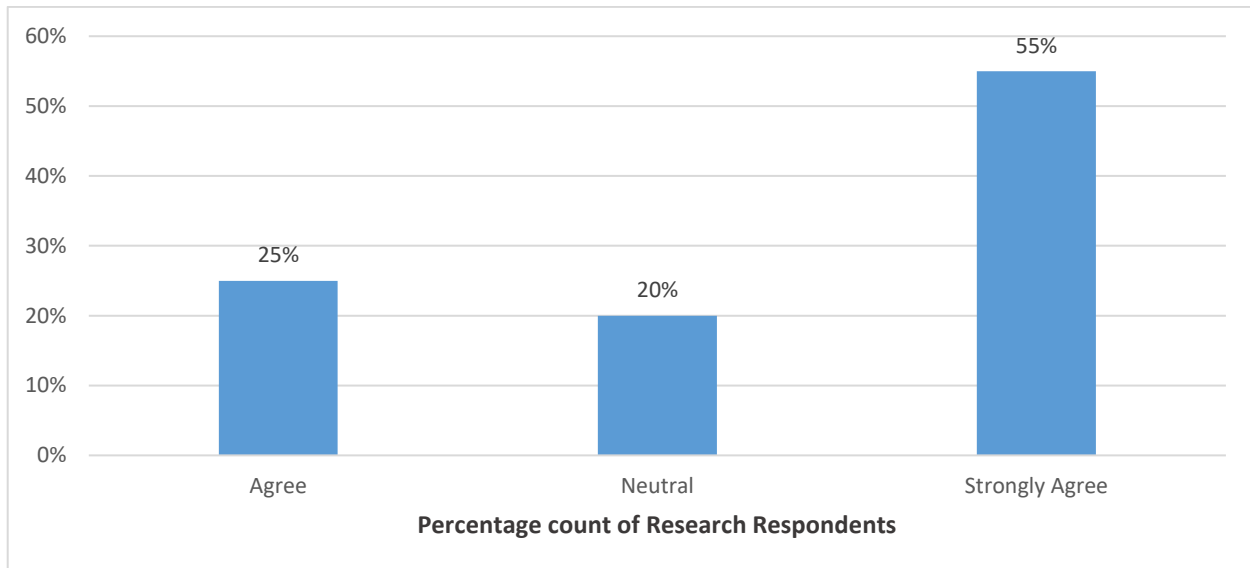
“Action is needed along with necessary changes when it achieves something good. Employee willingness and drive should be there. Constant ongoing staff learning initiatives that maintain employee focus and connectedness with the organisation is also important. Senior management needs to be more involved with all employees” (Interviewee 2).

5.2.4 Research objective 4:

Research objective 4 was to ascertain whether transformational leadership in organisations can enhance overall employee engagement and motivation. See section 5.3 for a more detailed findings discussion. A Likert scale was used in question 6 of the questionnaire. The 20 respondents were asked to indicate their preferences regarding whether management and team leaders enable, motivate and

develop them to grow in their respective roles within the organisation. 55% of respondents strongly agreed, 25% agreed, and 20% chose to stay neutral.

Figure 5.7 *Managers and team leaders input towards employee development and growth in NDHB. Management and team leaders’ contribution towards staff motivation and growth assessment.*



Three relevant themes in transformational leadership management were identified in the thematic analysis process. They were *individualized considerations* where the transformational leader focuses on a specific employee to help, motivate, coach, and offer guidance to grow and develop. *Inspirational motivation* is when leaders inspire their followers to engage in the thought creation process within themselves to create valuable strategies when facing difficult situations. The key motive here is to instil courage and perseverance in subordinates to get them to self-think and grow personally. The last identified element was *intellectual stimulation*, whereby the leader encourages associates to participate in ongoing innovative work and training initiatives to develop their cognitive skills (Richardson, 2011). See table below.

Table 5.2: *Transformational leadership improving employee morale, connectedness and motivation in the workplace*

R	Feedback	Individualised consideration	Inspirational motivation	Intellectual stimulation
1	Leaders creating time to address employee concerns	*		
2	When leaders work hard to coach, train and support staff	*		
3	Leaders should be supportive of employee inputs			*

4	Leaders must inspire and acknowledge work ethics		*	
5	Regular catch-ups/check-in with employees	*		
6	Leaders ensure that employee voices are heard	*		
7	Leaders valuing employee involvement in innovation			*
8	A leader who welcomes group collaboration synergy			*
9	Leaders attending to employee needs fosters loyalty	*		
10	Leaders must recognise staff strengths and reward			*
11	Right leader in improving staff and better their potential	*		
12	Leaders should not restrict staff from utilising their knowledge			*
13	Leader behaviours should motivate staff to perform		*	
14	A leader should show interest and concern towards staff	*		
15	Manager's willingness to hear employee problems	*		
16	Involving staff inputs in the decision and helping staff grow			*
17	Leaders work also should motivate and inspire staff		*	
18	A good leader must constantly motivate staff to be better		*	
19	A leader, through his actions, should create positive change		*	
20	Leaders need to reward employees for high-quality work	*		

R= Respondents

Table 5.2 depicts participant responses on how transformational leadership can improve employee morale, connectedness and motivation in the workplace. Feedback was carefully analysed by conducting an inductive thematic analysis from open-ended responses. Feedback was then linked and plotted to the specific identified theme. A strong positive correlation was found between managerial transformational leadership behaviours and staff job satisfaction and motivation levels. The results of a study by Richardson (2011) confirms that leadership traits significantly affect, impact, and changes employee behaviours and perceptions.

“Supervisors and the people above me need to let me do what I do without being condescending. I think if you give people they trust, they will give you back 110%. You know, it is like a few drag me down. Why should I work for you?” (Interviewee 4)

Interviewee 5 states that recent new management in the laboratory was welcoming and seen as a refreshing change and seemed hopeful that the unique leadership style would enhance overall employee engagement.

“Well, recently the organisation culture has been changed. So, I would feel that they are most likely heading for success with recent management as they seemed to be more involved with staff. It is much different to before. You can feel it from the atmosphere of the workplace. Also, you can feel it from the confidence of some of the staff. So, it is a good sign” (Interviewee 5)

The findings show that respondents’ feedback regarding how transformational leadership can improve employee morale, connectedness and motivation in the workplace answers the current study’s proposed research objective question well. All respondents indicated in the questionnaire that transformational leadership could certainly foster employee engagement, boost staff morale and increase work motivation.

5.3. Discussion

The research design for the study was a mixed-method approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods for data gathering. The research design was based on an exploratory purpose where open-ended questions were asked to probe respondents to gather valuable insights regarding the subject matter. Inductive analysis was utilized for this study. The discussion section aims to interpret participant results in detail with reflection on the research objectives of this current study.

5.3.1. Objective one identified themes

To identify how organisations can achieve better employee engagement with the positive work culture. The study provided evidence that 35% of the respondents were not satisfied with top management efforts to build and foster employee motivation and empowerment in their work roles. 65% of the respondents were satisfied with management efforts, with 30% being extremely satisfied. Respondents satisfied with the supervisor’s actions were 60% similar to management scores, and 30% satisfied. The results indicate gaps in top management efforts towards employee engagement, motivation, and empowerment at NDHB.

Research objective one finding is consistent with Fehr et al. (2020) findings where adverse attitudes and behaviours amongst employees get triggered when they witness their manager or leader carry out unethical work, hence immediately trust and respect is lost. Leaders in an organisation are the benchmark creators of role model exemplary staff, to whom subordinates and followers look up to and follow. When the foundations of trust are lost and tarnished, employee disengagement follows. See Chapter 3 literature review. NDHB must constantly strive to uplift employee engagement and empowerment practices to maintain a positive work culture.

After analysing respondent feedback, the themes identified in research objective 1 were employee disengagement, management and employee diminished trust, lost commitment, and drive towards work tasks. Furthermore, a of lack employee recognition theme was also shown in NDHB organisational culture. This finding confirms the results of a study by Osborne and Hammoud (2017) where the authors believed that when work is meaningful, the employee participation level increases, however recognition, reward and leadership through guidance is still required to achieve genuine employee engagement at the workplace.

The findings show that organisations must effectively address employee engagement and disengagement to achieve a positive organisational work culture. Also, employees seek exemplary leadership behaviour to motivate and engage themselves at work. Effective workplace communication theme was also identified where open conversations with subordinates and managers engaged staff, showcasing perceptions of meaningful work. Research objective one has been met for this study, and any existing gaps closed.

5.3.2. Objective two identified themes

To examine employee engagement in the workplace by focusing on key drivers, for example, work behavioural patterns, loyalty and organisational connectedness. Research objective two findings are consistent with the study carried out by Osborne and Hammoud (2017). The study found that productivity within an organisation was determined by the level of an employee's engagement in their work, and employee job satisfaction was determined by the level of inner enthusiasm stemming from the employee. These findings are also consistent with the study carried out by Nikpour (2017), who believed that organisational culture impacts overall employee commitment, which can potentially affect an enterprise's overall performance in either a beneficial or a disastrous way. When employees feel the presence of a positive organisational culture in the workforce, they lift their work productivity. After that, staff start taking interest and pride in their overall work and become dedicated and self-propelled towards doing good for their work organisation.

The study's objective two findings were consistent with a study carried out by Chmura (2016), where positive and rewarding work culture was made up of essential and meaningful values. These values were respecting, recognizing and strengthening management and employee relationships and removing the equation of "us and them" to achieve trust and transparency.

Objective 2 research findings were also consistent with a study carried out by Foulk et al. (2020). It was identified that employees disengaged at work tend to socially isolate themselves from other cohorts and start refraining from communicating and partaking in collaborative teamwork. The authors further stressed that this employee trait should be addressed by managers promptly, or else the organisational culture mix could be severely impacted for the worse.

After feedback analysis, the key themes identified were undesirable employee work behaviour patterns, employee disengagement, and organisational disconnect. Research objective two has been met for this study, and any existing gaps closed.

5.3.3. Objective three identified themes

To examine factors that foster employee empowerment at the workplace. Research objective three findings confirm Cardus's (2013) study where five critical controls for successful employee engagement in the workplace were discussed. Having capable leader's transparent organisational goals, progress, accountability and monitoring, adequate resources to facilitate work, and staff independence to carry out work tasks. Identifiable themes were recognition of meaningful work, organisational connectedness, and employee work behavioural patterns.

The findings of study objective three also confirm the study results carried out by Mabasa (2019). The theme evident from respondent feedback analysis was the creation of an atmosphere of trust in the workplace. It was found that when managers and leaders foster trust in their staff, it creates an overall work atmosphere where they can practice autonomy at work, thus empowering them to work harder.

Furthermore, objective three findings confirm the results of Heikkeri's (2010) study where it was established that the organisational environment impacted employee engagement. When relationships in work organisation are upright and fulfilling, it generates and fosters a relaxed and respectable organisation in which employees thrive to improve their level of engagement. Also, psychological meaningfulness through conducted work is attained when the organisation facilitates staff development and growth opportunities for career advancements (Heikkeri, 2010). Identifiable themes after participant response analysis were meaningful work, effective management and employee relationships. Research objective three has been met for this study, and any existing gaps closed.

5.3.4. Objective four identified themes

To ascertain whether transformational leadership in organisations can enhance overall employee engagement and motivation. Research objective four findings confirm the results of a study by Caillier (2014) where the author believed transformational leadership was a way of inspiring employees via mutual understandings and a give and take process. For example, job promotions, fast-track career progressions and financial rewards in return for aligning their best interests with the organisations best interest by fulfilling set organisational targets.

Theme evident after analysis of respondent feedbacks were managing work relationships through a give and take construct, transparency towards mutual trust between employee and management.

Research objective four findings are also consistent with the study carried out by Sahoo et al. (2010). The study established dedicated employee empowerment efforts in an organisation based on a participative, collaborative and inclusive approach were lucrative. The organisational empowerment efforts accomplished solid psychological connectivity in the employees' participation, self-motivation, work satisfaction, and performance. After analysing participant feedback, the themes that promoted employee engagement in NDDHB were valuing the importance of a well-balanced and robust organisational culture and having continual employee empowerment initiatives in the workplace. Research objective four has been met for this study, and any existing gaps closed.

5.4. Summary

A mixed-method approach had been utilized to derive rich data and feedback from the research participants. The designed questionnaire for this study yielded a crucial response that provided valuable insight into the research's key objectives. Equally, the one-to-one Zoom interviews unveiled vital information needed for the researcher to grasp current employee engagement practices in NDHB.

This present study's findings align with Bagozzi's attitude theory conceptual model (1992 Bagozzi's model is highly relatable to public sector health care workers in DHB's throughout NZ. The basis of the model illustrates that employee perceptions and job satisfaction are increased when they see evidence through transparency in the organisation's commitment, which then accelerates loyalty amongst staff. As a result, these positive feelings of satisfaction and emotional commitment causes

employees to steadily improve their service delivery in the workforce (Babakus et al., 2003). Please see Chapter 2 for the detailed conceptual model.

The findings of this study's data were triangulated by seeking convergence across both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research data was collected and integrated roughly at the same time and then carefully interpreted to detect prominent themes coming through that were relatable to this study's objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research findings satisfied all research objectives, closing any existing gaps in the study.

The next chapter of the project will focus on recommendations that will be based on Pragmatism research philosophy. Logical and practical viewpoints will be discussed on how continuing employee engagement and empowerment initiatives at NDHB can be mutually beneficial to both the employee and the organisation for the ongoing future.

Chapter 6. Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

The study explored the impact of transformational leadership on employee engagement, motivation and empowerment. The research explored various employee perceptions that enable a positive work culture in the organisation. The remainder of the chapter is as follows. Firstly, the purpose of the research is discussed, where the aim and objectives of the study are briefly restated along with highlights of contents covered in chapters two and three. This is then followed by relationships to previous research, where implications for industry and practice are discussed. Significance of the study, connection to past empirical research, limitations of the study are also detailed, followed by a recommendation for future research and a conclusion.

6.2. Purpose of the Research

The objectives of this study were to 1) Identify how an organisation can achieve better employee engagement with a positive work culture; 2) Examine employee engagement in the workplace by focusing on work behavioural patterns, loyalty and organisational connectedness; 3) Examine factors that foster employee empowerment at the workplace; 4) Ascertain whether transformational leadership in organisations can enhance overall employee engagement and motivation. In order to achieve these objectives, this research adopted a qualitative approach that drew on questions that were based on extant literature (see Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Cardus, 2013; Chmura, 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Osbourne & Hammoud, 2017; Wood et al., 2020).

A vital component of this study was the theory and industry analysis that was conducted in Chapter two. This assessment examined the employment conditions of NZ public health care workers working in a broader NZ public healthcare context and the specific confines of the (NDHB). The analysis identified the key concerns faced by New Zealand's public health care personnel to be work burnout, pay inequality, and prolonged working hours. The industry analysis also yielded valuable statistics regarding the financial performance of DHBs throughout the country. Chapter three examined relevant empirical literature on positive work culture in the workplace, assessing factors that enable and disable employee engagement and empowerment. It explained how effective transformational leadership adds value to an organisation. Gaps in literature were identified regarding undesirable transformational leadership and management traits in the workforce. Literature was further examined to clarify detrimental effects on the organisation and its employees. The current

study's findings further contribute to the existing literature by highlighting undesirable leadership behaviours and their detrimental effects on public health workers found in NDHB.

The benefits of this study will be on filling existing gaps in previous literature in the business and HR management field. Also, the senior management in NDHB, along with other decision-makers in the public health sector of NZ, can benefit from this study as the results will showcase the level of employee connectedness, employee motivation, engagement patterns and trends present in the public health care sector of New Zealand. This study's findings can improve management efforts to effectively engage and align employees with their co-workers, managers and the job task (Cardus, 2013). Policymakers and senior management can then focus on identified critical areas where employee engagement initiatives will require strengthening to create a work environment where personnel can achieve a good work-life balance (Wood et al., 2020). This study contributes to the applied management field by offering new insights and solutions based on the data derived from current research. Also, current findings will add and build on existing works by numerous authors (see Kim et al., 2016; Osbourne & Hammoud, 2017; Wood et al., 2020), who looked at employee engagements, disengagements and effective communication strategies that transformational business leaders use to engage their employees.

6.3. Relationship to Previous Research

This study investigated the effectiveness of employee engagement, empowerment, positive work culture and transformational leadership in the public health care sector in NZ. The research was carried out at the Northland District Health Board in Whangarei. The research aim was to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on employee behaviour concerning employee motivation and empowerment.

6.3.1 Research objective 1: To identify how an organisation can achieve better employee engagement with a positive work culture.

This study is relatable to another study conducted by Bakker et al. (2012), where research findings also affirmed that employee work engagement is crucial for an organisation's survivability. Conclusions of the study established that organisations could create employee engagement by redesigning work approaches that create better engagement-evoking work environments. Moreover, work environments that consisted of autonomy, employee performance feedback, and employee growth structures achieved a high level of employee engagement. Another study by Conger and Kanungo (1988) supports the findings of this study whereby the author sheds light on the employee empowerment process. Therefore, the study implied that the need to empower employees becomes

crucial when staff become powerless. Thus, managers need to recognise circumstances present in the organisation that brings about powerlessness amongst employees. When circumstances relating to powerlessness are identified, then employee empowerment strategies be implemented to change past practices

The findings for objective one showed (NDHB) needed to address employee disengagement behaviours and patterns to achieve a positive organisational culture. Management also needed to display exemplary leadership behaviour continually in order to keep staff motivated and engaged.

6.3.2. Research objective 2: To examine employee engagement in the workplace by focusing on work behavioural patterns, loyalty and organisational connectedness.

This current study is relatable with numerous other authors who have also established that (see Albdour and Altarawneh, 2014; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Chmura, 2016) positive organisational culture in a workplace can be achieved by aligning human psychological capacities. These human psychological capacities can be measured, advanced and appropriately managed for overall performance improvements in the workplace. The present study's findings confirmed that existing practices at (NDHB) affected staff empowerment, motivation, and engagement in the workforce. These studies support this study's findings that (NDHB) can achieve a positive organisational culture if they invest in their most valuable asset, human capital.

The findings for research objective two confirmed that organisational connectedness and employee loyalty was essential and valued by most interviewees. A recent change in organisational culture (NDHB) lifted staff work productivity and considerably enriched their work behaviour.

6.3.3 Research objective 3: To examine factors that foster employee empowerment at the workplace.

This study is relatable with other past research findings, where it was established that employee empowerment was positively related to work performance in organisations (Fernandez & Moldogaziev 2011; see also Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Sahoo et al. (2010) affirm that dedicated employee empowerment efforts in an organisation, based on a participative, collaborative and inclusiveness approach, will result in reliable psychological connectivity in employee participation, self-motivation, work satisfaction and performance. Spreitzer and Doneson (2005) also believe empowerment is a crucial part of any organisation's transformational change process, instead of always being firm on employees to change.

Empowerment encourages employees to embrace change when the organisational leaders give staff recognition and value, accelerating their feel-good factor and showing quality work output.

Objective three findings showed that employees wanted an organisational culture based on mutual respect from management and staff. Transparent communication, ongoing training initiatives for employee empowerment to take place were also highlighted.

6.3.4 Research objective 4: To ascertain whether transformational leadership in organisations can enhance overall employee engagement and motivation.

This study is relatable to another study conducted by Batista-Taran et al. (2013), where it was established that when transformational leaders were present and engaged within the workforce, employee engagement soared. Moreover, when not visibly present amongst the workforce, staff morale and employee engagement levels dipped. Similar patterns were established in the (NDHB) workforce. A dedicated transformational leader's energy, drive, and vigour can easily be recognised, as they constantly keep communications up, facilitating and delivering support initiatives to their followers who bring value.

Another study's findings related well with the current study where Cartwright and Holmes (2006) examined that employee engagement and motivation levels increased when leaders practised and focused on trust and relationship building aspects in the workplace. Also, a supportive management style, an essential trait of transformational leaders, tends to increase employee engagement considerably when exercised in the proper context in business organisations (Bhatnagar, 2007). Caillier (2014) believes transformational leadership is a way of inspiring employees via the construct of mutual understandings and instilling a give and take process; for example, job promotions, fast-track career progressions or even financial rewards in return for aligning their best interests with the organisations best interest by fulfilling set organisational targets.

The findings for objective four suggested that transformational leadership was crucial for employee engagement initiatives in (NDHB). The key identified themes from interviewees were managing work relationships through a give and take construct, transparency in communication and ongoing mutual trust between employee and management for transformational leadership efforts to be successful.

6.4. Limitations of the Present Study

Some limitations of the present study were the small sample size. As the context of the study was based on the public health sector, amidst a pandemic with level 4 lockdown in force, research

participants were difficult to source mainly due to availability and their busy work schedule. DHBs operate on a rotating roster, which meant staff often had long working hours due to the nature of shift work and had other family priorities and responsibilities. Therefore, some staff could not devote additional time to this research. The (NDHB) laboratory, apart from being extremely busy during this time of the year, was presented with more workload and an increased number of Covid-19 testing's; consequently, confirmation of participant numbers took longer than anticipated. Another limitation, in addition to being overworked, staff were dealing with the extra stress of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, which may have created additional psychological stress, generating some form of bias in the study results.

6.5. Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Recommendations for future research and practice will be based on pragmatism philosophy, the underlying paradigm for this study. The focus will be on people-focused strategies and actions that are achievable, practical and useful for organisations to implement, bringing about positive change. Future in-depth research on employee engagement, motivation, empowerment, and transformational management should include the private health care sector. Future research could unveil richer data by comparing and contrasting patterns and behaviours of employee engagement in both the public and the private health care sectors in NZ. Other researchers should consider more geographical locations, such as other DHBs, to attain a mixed variety of research data for future study purposes. Perhaps in the future, researchers could conduct a more detailed study to investigate and probe varied reasons as to why employees are not effectively engaged in organisations in today's era. Also, researchers can look at increasing the sample size of their study and incorporate random sampling methods to achieve better rationality for the study (Mabasa, 2019).

Despite the increase in healthcare personnel employed in the public health sector in NZ today, the industry still cannot retain them. Due to unfair working conditions and pay inequalities, the new graduates are not staying long in the field. NZ's public health sector cannot achieve sustainability long-term by relying on qualified overseas workers as a strategy to fill staff shortage gaps. Recommendation for practise would be to implement robust dedicated support systems, ongoing professional development, mentoring programmes, and meaningful employee reward schemes that need to be in place to minimize job walk-offs and the brain drain syndrome (Mackay, 2008). The focus should be on giving preference to locally trained health care graduates and professionals (Goodyear-Smith & Aston, 2019). Another key recommendation for practice would be to continually address and manage work-induced stress on employees, as employee burnout can have severe implications on staff health and organisational functionality.

Also, DHBs need to emphasize human relationships and not treat their personnel as machines that need control. Effective transformational change in an organisation can only be attained through positive energy present in the workforce, so the DHBs must continually prioritize providing and sustaining a positive work culture (Manchester, 2012). Clear communication must also be the norm for the practice where all concerned parties understand incentives, expectations, and mutual benefits for the employee and the employer. DHBs must continually communicate and evaluate shared vision strategy in the workplace by getting employees to align their endeavours to meet the organisation's vision, mission and values. Implementation of fair and equitable management practice will also be advisable to all practising DHBs as it contributes primarily towards employee engagement and effectiveness (Mabasa, 2019). Some possibilities for enhancement for management at (NDHB) could be a better understanding of employee concerns, needs, and wants to identify service gaps in operation. Management should then develop effective work strategies that engage staff and empower them to engage in different work areas, enabling development and growth.

6.6. Conclusion

This project was undertaken for the requirements of the Masters of Applied Management programme at the Southern Institute of Technology. The study's primary objective was to better understand the issues of employee engagement and positive work culture through transformational leadership in the New Zealand healthcare industry setting. This study had an underlying business human resources context, designed to measure staff perceptions regarding employee engagement, empowerment, organisational loyalty, motivation, and leadership effectiveness in their workplace in the public health care sector. Data was gathered by utilizing a mixed-method approach by incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods for this study. The research area was Northland District Health Board in Whangarei (NDHB). All participants for the study were from the (NDHB) laboratory. Past empirical literature and themes on employee engagements, behaviours and empowerment were analysed along with first-hand interviewee data and questionnaire feedback from the respondents to base. The findings of the study highlighted that transformational leadership and management efforts needed improvement in (NDHB). However, employee empowerment efforts in (NDHB) based on a participative, collaborative and inclusiveness approach resulted in robust psychological connectivity in employee's participation, self-motivation, work satisfaction and performance.

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Appendix B. Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



"Attaining better employee engagement and a positive work culture through transformational leadership"

Information Sheet for Participants

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, I thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and I thank you for considering my request.

Introduction

I am Gav Swamy, currently studying Masters of applied Management at Southern Institute of Technology and this project which I am carrying out is for the purpose of Masters research paper MGT 901.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of this research is to explore the impact of transformational leadership on employee behaviour in the workforce regarding motivation and empowerment. The research will seek employee perceptions towards what attributes enable a positive work culture in their organisation.

What type of participants are being sought?

Full time health care workers/participants who work in the laboratory department at the Northern District Health Board (NDHB) in Whangarei, New Zealand.

What will participants be asked to do?

Interview participants will be required to participate in a short online video interview, answering 7 open ended questions which will explore data from a qualitative angle

Can participants change their minds and withdraw from the project?

Participants can change their minds and withdraw from the project, *before* the research data is actually utilised and incorporated into the report.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?

Data, from online video interview recording will be collected by the researcher (myself). The data will be used for exploring the effect of transformational leadership, on employee behaviour in the workforce regarding motivation and empowerment and finding what enables a positive work culture in the workforce.

What will happen to the results?

Results of this research and a copy of the research report will be held at the Southern Institute of Technology library for which you will be able to request a copy for.

How will the data be stored?

Data records will be stored confidentially where the researchers will only have access. Data will be stored in password protected electronic files. All personal respondent information will be destroyed after the end of the project. Raw data which was required for the project will be kept in secure storage and destroyed after five years.

What if you have any questions about the project?

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

*Researcher: Gav Swamy
Southern Institute of Technology*

Supervisor: Dr Jacob Wood

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at SIT.

If you have concerns about the **ethical conduct** of this research or the researchers, the following procedure should occur.

Write to the following:

The Secretary of the Human Research Ethics Committee
Southern Institute of Technology
133 Tay St
INVERCARGILL 9840 NZ
Tel: 03 211 2699

All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.

Appendix C. Questionnaire Information

Questionnaire Information:

Hi, my name is Gav Swamy and I am a student at the Southern Institute of Technology in Invercargill currently studying the Master of Applied Management.

My research project is about exploring the impact of transformational leadership on employee behaviour in the workforce regarding motivation and empowerment. This research will seek employee perceptions regarding what attributes enable a positive work culture in the work organisation.

I am doing this research to further add and contribute to the body of past research conducted with the aim of filling existing gaps in literature and adding new perspectives. The benefit and use of this research can be useful to top management in understanding their employee perceptions regarding positive work culture, empowerment and effects of transformational leadership on employee behaviour.

Respondent's name and identities will be anonymous. Respondents are free to participate and their data will not be shared with any party or group. All research data will be security protected and password locked which will get destroyed in five years.

This project is being conducted under ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee. Please contact my supervisor Dr Jacob Wood [REDACTED] if you may have any questions.

Thank you once again for helping me with this research.

Gav Swamy

Southern Institute of Technology.

Appendix D. Questionnaire

Research Project Questionnaire

"Attaining better employee engagement and a positive work culture through transformational leadership"

1. What gender do you identify with?

- male
- female
- gender diverse
- prefer not to say
- other

2. What age category do you belong to?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 65 and over
- Do not wish to state

3. Out of the given options, what type of organisational culture do you have at your workplace?

Mark only one oval.

- Hierarchy (Focus being on structure and control)
- Clan (Focus being on leadership & mentoring, enabling, group collaboration and participation)
- Adhocracy (Focus more towards innovative developments)
- Market (Focus based on results and getting the job done)
- Other

4. "I am engaged and empowered in my current role" Using a Likert Scale (where 5 means strongly agree, 4, agree, 3, neutral, 2 disagree and 1, strongly disagree), tick a box to indicate your preference.

- 5) Strongly agree
 4) Agree
 3) Neutral
 2) Disagree
 1) Strongly disagree

5. How engaged and empowered do you feel in your current role? Please tick one oval.

- Extremely empowered and engaged
 Somewhat empowered and engaged
 Not at all empowered and engaged.

6. "Team leaders and managers enable, motivate you to develop and grow in your role in the organisation" Using a Likert Scale (where 5 means strongly agree, 4, agree, 3, neutral, 2 disagree and 1, strongly disagree), tick a box to indicate your preference.

- 5) Strongly agree
 4) Agree
 3) Neutral
 2) Disagree
 1) Strongly disagree

7. How do you believe better employee engagement and a positive organisational culture can be achieved in your workplace?

8. Do you believe transformational leadership has the ability to uplift employee morale, connectedness and work motivation in the workplace? If yes, how so and if no, please explain.

9. Which of the following does your manager/team leader do to empower you in the workplace?

- By recognising your work efforts
- by delegating you important task
- By welcoming your viewpoints and suggestions in staff meeting
- By delivering adequate and timely training to get your competencies up
- All of the above

10. Has workplace leadership, mentoring and training available through your organisation considerably transformed you as an employee?

Mark only one oval.

- Not really
- Somewhat
- Very much so
- Not entirely sure

11. What would you say motivates you the most in your work setting?

Mark only one oval.

- Seen as a valuable member of a team
- My managers personal acknowledgement of a task well done
- Being given challenging tasks to perform individually

12. How engaged and empowered do you feel in your current role?

Mark only one oval.

- Extremely empowered and engaged
- Somewhat empowered and engaged
- Not at all empowered and engaged

13. How do you believe; your workplace can foster a more supportive and engaging organisation culture?

14. How satisfied are you in your current work role with regards to personal motivation and empowerment?

Tick all that apply.

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
From supervisors			
From management			
From top management			

15. Which of the following in your view is crucial towards achieving a rewarding workplace environment?

Tick all that apply.

- Competitive pay structures
- Good work/life balance
- Professional development
- Creativity & Innovation
- Effective communication
- A supportive organizational culture

Appendix E. Interviewee Consent form



"Attaining better employee engagement and a positive work culture through transformational leadership" Research Project MGT 901

I have had the scope and nature of the research fully explained to me. Any questions about the research have been satisfactorily answered, and I understand that I may request further information at any stage.

I accept and note that:

1. My participation in this research is entirely voluntary.
2. I may withdraw from participation in the research at any time up to the point at which the data is anonymized and amalgamated, without explanation, disadvantage or disincentive.
3. Any information given during the interview is being utilized solely for the purpose of the specific research project and will not be disclosed to any other person or agency without my express consent.
4. The interview will be recorded for later transcription.
5. This information may be incorporated into the research report, but actual names or other characteristics that may lead to identification of individuals or organisation's will not be disclosed.
6. I may request to view any completed drafts or sections of the research report to which I have contributed, at any time.
7. A copy of the completed research report will be made available to me, on request, at the conclusion of the research.

DECLARATION

I have read and understood the information set out on this form, and give my informed consent to be interviewed in accordance with the stated terms and conditions.

Name of Research Subject/Participant

Name of Researcher

.....

.....

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Appendix F. Interview Questions

Video Interview questions: Part 2. (Qualitative)

- 1) How do you believe your organisation can improve on its overall employee work engagement and achieve a more positive work culture?
- 2) Does your work organisation have a positive and supportive work culture? If yes, please provide some examples and if no, please state why.
- 3) Do you feel that you are loyal and connected to your work organisation? If yes, please explain how and if no please explain why.
- 4) With reflection to your current work, what factors do you believe will help provide and achieve employee empowerment in your workplace?
- 5) How do you feel the current leadership and mentoring efforts from top management at your workplace are at present?
- 6) Do you believe transformational management and leadership in your workplace, will have an effect in enhancing overall employee engagement and motivation? If yes, please say how and if no please explain why.
- 7) How will you feel if your organisation carried out significant changes without providing full transparency and disclosure to all staff?