

Assessing the impact of the charity excellence model on nonprofit organizations in Saudi Arabia: A statistical analysis



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 January 2023

Received in revised form

17 May 2023

Accepted 8 June 2023

Keywords:

Organizational excellence

Nonprofit organizations

Performance improvement

Maturity level

ABSTRACT

Organizational excellence is a dynamic and evolving concept that refers to an organization's capacity to achieve strategic objectives at a fundamental level while consistently enhancing its capabilities to tackle external competition and deliver value to stakeholders. In Saudi Arabia, the Charity Excellence Model has been adopted as a national standard since 2014, aiming to ensure quality and excellence in nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and to enhance the sector's performance. This paper aims to investigate the efficacy of the excellence model and its influence on NPOs. A statistical analysis is presented, examining the results of award assessments carried out over four cycles (2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020). The findings demonstrate that the implementation of the excellence model criteria has positively impacted Saudi NPOs; however, their performance remains below the high maturity level targeted by the sector's leadership. This paper also explores potential improvements to the excellence model, considering recent updates in international and national excellence frameworks, as well as the integration of Industry 4.0 technologies in the nonprofit sector.

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1. Introduction

One of the paramount catalysts for promoting sustainable development is the humanitarian efforts carried out by the nonprofit sector (NPOs). This sector has expanded globally and assumes a crucial role in confronting the multifaceted challenges that afflict human societies, encompassing issues like poverty, deprivation, natural calamities, and the safeguarding of human rights (Treinta et al., 2020).

The philanthropic endeavors and charitable organizations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia receive significant emphasis from the nation's leadership, as evidenced by their direct integration into the Saudi Vision 2030 (Kassem et al., 2020). The vision incorporates numerous objectives pertaining to charitable organizations and volunteerism. These goals encompass enhancing the social impact and financial contribution of the non-governmental sector, encouraging its transition towards more structured organizational practices, and attaining benchmarks of operational efficiency and

sustainability. To this end, the government has introduced procedures to promote charitable initiatives and develop programs with significant social ramifications. Furthermore, it facilitates the establishment of nonprofit organizations (NPOs), thereby fostering sectoral growth and promoting collaboration and partnerships between charitable institutions and government entities. This concerted effort aims to motivate the nonprofit sector to adhere to principles of good governance and to cultivate a culture of volunteering among citizens.

Furthermore, recent studies from esteemed advisory and scientific institutions have examined the role of NPOs in driving sustainable development across countries worldwide, often through the application of business excellence models (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; Cairns et al., 2005; Cordery and Sinclair, 2013; Kong, 2008; Lewis and Madon, 2004). The findings of these studies have illuminated the potential for charitable organizations and the third sector to attain performance excellence by methodically adopting the principles of total quality management and organizational excellence frameworks, exemplified by renowned models like the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA).

In Saudi Arabia, the Excellence Award for the Charity sector was established and officially recognized as a national model to promote quality

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<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2023.07.022>

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and excellence standards within NPOs since 2014, with the primary aim of enhancing the sector's overall performance. The award has been successfully implemented over five consecutive cycles, with the latest cycle occurring in 2022, attracting active participation from a diverse array of charitable organizations and associations (www.tamayuz.com.sa). Comprehensive data from the results of the initial four cycles have been made available by the responsible award management entity. This has enabled researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis to investigate the impact of the excellence model on the performance of the nonprofit sector in the kingdom. The central objective of this research paper is to examine the effects of implementing the excellence model on the performance of NPOs that participated in the award program during the past four sessions.

2. Literature review

Organizational excellence represents a dynamic and progressing concept, characterized by an organization's capacity to accomplish fundamental strategic objectives while consistently developing its capabilities to address external competition and deliver value to customers and stakeholders. In this section, we will conduct a review of the implementation of organizational excellence in the nonprofit sector globally and within the specific context of Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, the charity excellence model, the subject of investigation in this paper, will be presented and discussed, taking into consideration the recent updates of the EFQM and the National Quality Award in Saudi Arabia ([Zairi, 2011](#); [Murthy et al., 2022](#); [Fonseca et al., 2021](#)).

2.1. Organizational excellence models in the nonprofit context

Organizational excellence models (OEMs) have been in existence for organizations since the late 1950s, with the establishment of the Deming Prize in Japan in 1954. The subsequent introduction of international excellence models, such as the EFQM and the MBNQA in the late 1980s and early 1990s, emphasized the significance of embracing the excellence philosophy to attain strategic objectives. These models emphasize the necessity of fostering capabilities to achieve quality and customer satisfaction while sustaining a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive environment characterized by continuous disruptions at all levels ([Zairi, 2011](#)).

NPOs and charitable entities across the globe confront comparable challenging circumstances, characterized by rigorous governance standards, stringent governmental regulations, and constrained financial resources. In order to surmount these challenges, it becomes imperative for these organizations to strategically adopt innovative and well-established management philosophies. Consequently, there has been a growing interest

among NPOs in embracing OEMs. This heightened interest is primarily driven by the increasing demands from governments, fund donors, and societal pressures to enhance the performance and long-term sustainability of these organizations ([Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013](#); [Cairns et al., 2005](#); [Kong, 2008](#); [Rojas, 2000](#); [Salih and Dolah, 2019](#)). In search of improving their performance and for their sustainability, NPOs have turned to different tools and management practices ([Chew and Osborne, 2009](#); [Rojas, 2000](#)). While some NPOs have concentrated their efforts on improving individual programs, some have taken a broader perspective on overall improvement initiatives utilizing overall capacity-building strategies. As with other tools and practices, quality has gained widespread in NPOs and is perceived as an essential factor in performance improvement through both efficiency and effectiveness enhancement ([Sweis et al., 2016](#)).

Numerous scholars have investigated the implementation of OEMs within the non-profit landscape worldwide, seeking to ascertain the appropriateness of these models and quality standards as strategies for enhancing performance. Their inquiries focused on exploring the extent to which OEMs and quality management systems, such as the EFQM, the MBNQA models, and the ISO 9001 quality management systems, are suitable for NPOs to improve performance and achieve customer satisfaction. The findings indicate that these organizational excellence frameworks and quality management systems can indeed serve as strategic frameworks for performance enhancement and customer satisfaction within NPOs ([Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013](#); [Sweis et al., 2016](#)).

Since 2016, the non-profit sector in Saudi Arabia has experienced significant transformations on multiple fronts, including economic, social, and regulatory aspects, which have been driven by the official launch of the National 2030 Vision. The overarching objective of this vision is to reduce the country's reliance on oil and diversify the economy. As part of this vision, the third sector, represented by NPOs, is expected to contribute to the national economy by enhancing its capabilities and capacities. To achieve this, strategic objectives have been established for the sector, aiming to attain specific key performance indicators. However, Saudi NPOs now confront novel challenges and issues that could potentially hinder their ability to fulfill their objectives of delivering services to beneficiaries and attaining excellence in managing people, processes, and budgets. Consequently, recent research efforts have emerged to investigate the performance of the nonprofit sector in Saudi Arabia ([Salih and Dolah, 2019](#)). These studies have undertaken an investigation into the willingness of NPOs to embrace quality standards and organizational excellence frameworks as a means of enhancing performance. The frameworks examined include the European Foundation for EFQM, the King Abdul-Aziz Quality Award (KAQA), and the Charity Excellence Award. The majority of these research endeavors

have been rooted in empirical studies, revealing that the nonprofit sector can achieve substantial performance improvements through the implementation of such frameworks. However, several barriers persist, impeding the successful adoption of these models within NPOs and inhibiting their ability to attain high levels of excellence in performance. These barriers, primarily revolving around organizational and cultural issues, encompass challenges related to leadership stability, the scarcity of trained and skilled personnel, limited financial resources, and inadequacies in financial management capabilities within organizations within the sector. Moreover, the lack of robust governance structures and the absence of knowledge management and strategic planning practices further compound these challenges (Salih and Dolah, 2019).

2.2. The national excellence model (King Abdul-Aziz quality award)

KAQA serves as the national excellence model in Saudi Arabia, having been established in 2002. Its development involved a team of experts who drew upon international benchmarks such as the EFQM and MBNQA, along with world-class best practices. The KAQA excellence model underwent its initial revision in 2015, followed by another revision in 2022 to adapt to new updates in international models and the evolving business landscape, particularly concerning the advent of Industry 4.0 technologies.

Central to the KAQA model is the definition of excellence as the outcome of systematic and sustained endeavors aimed at meeting and surpassing the expectations of all stakeholders. This achievement is not left to chance but rather results from the adoption of fundamental principles that guide managerial and motivational leadership toward making sound decisions that contribute to overall success and long-term sustainability.

The KAQA model is structured around eight criteria, consisting of five enabler criteria and three results criteria:

- Enabler criteria:

1. Leadership
2. Strategic planning
3. Human resources
4. Partnerships and resources
5. Managing processes, products, and services

- Results criteria:

6. Customer results
7. Human resources results
8. Key performance results

These criteria collectively constitute the foundation for organizations to pursue excellence

and optimize their performance within the framework of the KAQA model.

2.3. The charity excellence model

Despite the KAQA model being developed as a national framework for all organizations in Saudi Arabia, a bespoke excellence model tailored specifically for the nonprofit sector was introduced in 2014. This excellence model for charity organizations was established and is overseen by the Al-Tamayuz Foundation (www.tamayuz.com.sa), with the primary goal of fostering performance improvement among nonprofit organizations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Launched in 2014, the excellence award is based on nine criteria, categorized into Enablers (comprising six criteria) and Results (comprising three criteria):

1. Leadership and strategy
2. Human resource and volunteer management
3. Managing and developing financial resources and endowments
4. Resources and partnership management
5. Processes and services management
6. Governance and Transparency
7. Human Resources Results
8. Beneficiaries' Results
9. Main Performance

The charity excellence model has been implemented over five cycles (2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022), with active participation from over 200 NPOs. However, the authors highlight the dearth of studies investigating both the KAQA and the charity excellence models within the context of Saudi organizations as a whole, and particularly within the nonprofit sector. Most of the studies conducted in this area have been produced within the framework of a master's program run at the University of Hail.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of implementing the charity excellence model on Saudi NPOs. To achieve this aim, the investigation will rely on authentic data obtained from the assessment process across various award cycles. Fig. 1 illustrates the research methodology adopted for this study. The specific objectives of this research are as follows: (1) To conduct a comprehensive scientific study on the Award for Excellence in Charitable Work as a national model for achieving excellence in charitable organizations, and to highlight its impact on enhancing institutional performance, (2) To measure the effectiveness and impact of implementing the Excellence Award in Charitable Work within organizations in terms of attaining sustainable institutional performance, and (3) To emphasize the role of the Excellence in

Charitable Work Award in elevating the level of quality and operational efficiency in charitable organizations operating in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

3.2. Data collection

The data pertaining to organizations that participated in the Excellence Award since its inaugural launch in 2014, along with the corresponding assessment results, were made available by the Al-Tamayuz Foundation (www.tamayuz.com.sa). This foundation is responsible for managing and overseeing the administration of the award. The present study considers data from four award cycles, namely, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020. For each cycle, detailed assessment results were obtained for the nine criteria specified in the excellence model. A sample of the data to be analyzed within this study is provided in Table 1. The available data encompassed assessment results for all four cycles, with detailed criteria results accessible for cycles 2, 3, and 4. However, for cycle 1 (2014), detailed data for the nine criteria were missing, and only the total score for each organization was available.

Table 1: Sample of data from award results

Organization	Total score	C1	C2	C3	C..	C9
Org 1	333	59	38	38	..	27
Org 2	296	54	29	30	..	29
Org 3	371	58	35	38	..	46
Org 4	435	72	45	41	..	45
Org N

Enablers criteria: C1. Leadership and Strategy; C2. Human resource and volunteer management; C3. Managing and developing financial resources and endowments; C4. Resources and partnership management; C5. Processes and services management; C6. Governance and Transparency

Results criteria: C7. Human Resources Results; C8. Beneficiaries' Results; C9. Main Performance Results

3.3. Data analysis procedure

The data analysis in this study will employ descriptive statistics and fundamental quality tools to assess the current level of organizational excellence, as measured by the award criteria. The excellence maturity of the participating NPOs in the award will be inferred, and the impact of the award on the performance of charity organizations will be evaluated and analyzed. Opportunities for enhancing the excellence award will be proposed and discussed, taking into account advancements in OEMs at both the national and international levels. Fig. 1 provides a summary of the data analysis procedure adopted in this study.

4. Results and discussion

This section focuses on the analysis and discussion of the scores obtained in the four cycles of the excellence award. The main objectives are to evaluate the impact of the excellence model on NPOs and to identify potential areas for enhancing the model criteria.

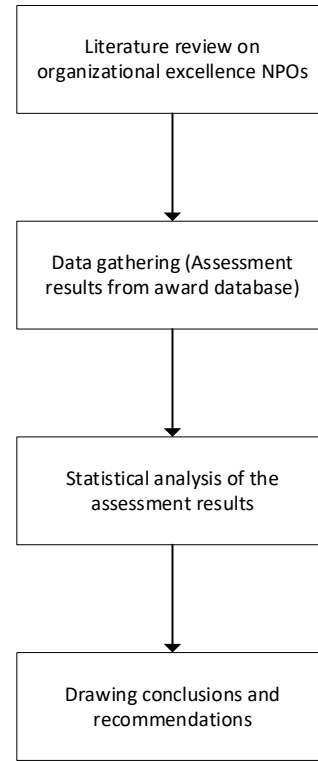


Fig. 1: Data analysis procedure

4.1. General analysis of NPOs excellence performance

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of statistics pertaining to all NPOs that participated in the award during the four cycles spanning from 2014 to 2020. Both Table 2 and Fig. 2 illustrate a consistent increase in the number of participants over the years. The initial cycle in 2014 saw the participation of 7 organizations, which then increased to 35 in 2016 (5-fold increase) and further expanded to 49 in 2018 (7-fold increase). This substantial growth reflects the keen interest of charity organizations in Saudi Arabia to adopt and implement the organizational excellence model, which can be attributed to the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016, with a clear focus on the non-profit sector. However, a reduction in participation occurred in 2020, possibly attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown enforced in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, Table 2 summarizes the total scores recorded by all participating NPOs across the four award cycles. The Maximum score represents the high performers, the Minimum score indicates the lower performers and the Average score signifies the average performance observed in each cycle of the award. A noteworthy observation from these statistics is a consistent improvement in the performance of all NPOs participating in the award throughout the four cycles. This trend strongly suggests that the charity excellence model has a positive impact on the organizational performance of NPOs involved in the award.

Fig. 2 illustrates the minimum, maximum, and average scores, thereby confirming these

observations. A comparison between the actual performance of NPOs in the excellence model (Max score, Min score, and Average score) and the total score of the model (1000) reveals a considerably low level of performance concerning the implementation of the organizational excellence concept and criteria.

These results highlight significant opportunities for improvement within the organizations, particularly if the NPOs aspire to make a substantial and positive contribution to the attainment of the goals set forth in the Saudi Vision 2030.

Table 2: Data analysis of participant NPOS during the four cycles (2014-2020)

Award cycle	Year	Number of NPOs	Max score	Min score	Average score	Standard value
First cycle	2014	7	288	184	242.5	1000
Second cycle	2016	35	389	164	248	1000
Third cycle	2018	49	440	242	351.18	1000
Fourth cycle	2020*	23	450	281	363.9	1000

*: COVID-19 pandemic

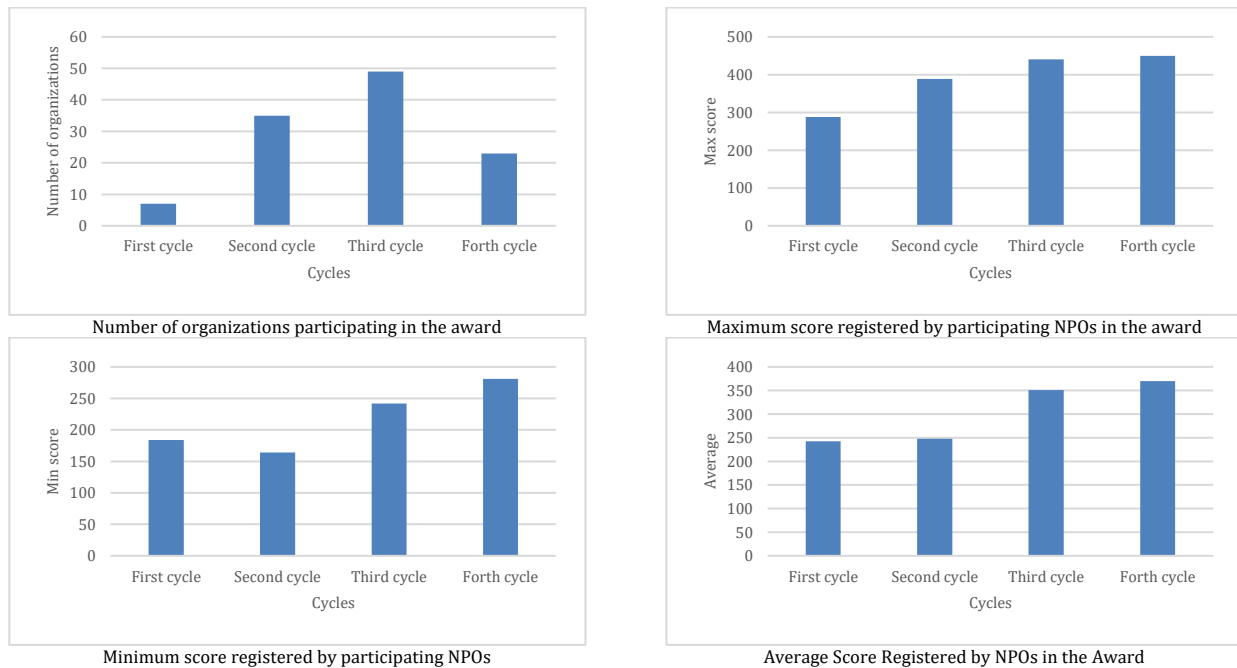


Fig. 2: Score registered by participating NPOs in the four cycles of the award

From the depicted figures and the statistics presented in Table 2, it is evident that all the NPOs participating in the award achieved either a preliminary excellence maturity level (total score > 250) or an excellence maturity level at the growth stage (Total score: 251-500). Notably, none of the organizations, including the winners, were able to attain the excellence maturity stage (total score: 501-750) or the guiding stage (total score > 751). The minimum score exhibited an increase from 163.75 to 281, indicating that the award criteria facilitated the progression of less-performing NPOs from the preliminary stage to the growth stage. Similarly, a slight increase was observed in the maximum score. This clearly underscores the positive impact of the excellence model on the performance of charity organizations (Zairi et al., 2020).

4.2. Detailed analysis of the NPOs during the cycles of the award

As mentioned earlier, detailed data were obtained for the assessment results for the four award cycles (2014, 2016, 2018, 2020). Except for the first cycle (2014), these data include assessment results for

each organization, results for the 9 criteria, and the total assessment score. Descriptive statistics were then obtained for the 9 award criteria as shown in Table 3. It can be seen from these statistics that the overall excellence performance of the NPOs is well below world-class level, as measured by the standard value for each criterion; This latter can be considered as an international benchmark for the organizations that sought to achieve world-class excellence performance level. In general, the NPO sector showed a steady and slow improvement in excellence performance level. The improvement is more pronounced in the Results criteria rather than in the enablers criteria. These statistics would confirm the initial observation and place a greater emphasis on the criteria of the excellence model in order to motivate NPOs to develop their capabilities, especially in terms of enablers criteria (Leadership and Strategy, Human resource and volunteer management, Managing and developing financial resources and endowments, Resources and partnership management, Processes and services management, Governance, and Transparency) to achieve sustainable performance results in terms of Human resources, Beneficiaries' Results, and Main Performance. These can be achieved through the

systematic implementation of total quality management systems and OEMs as advocated by organizational excellence guru Zairi (2011) and researchers such as Sweis et al. (2016), Al-Tabbaa et al. (2013), and Salih and Dolah (2019). Recent research works showed that charity organizations in Saudi Arabia face a lack of a continuous improvement culture, a lack of strategy, insufficient staffing, an inability to focus on the customer's needs, and defined roles and duties as the top five obstacles to their success. These obstacles can

refrain the Saudi NPOs from really contributing to the achievement of their objectives within the framework of the Saudi Vision 2030 (Salih and Dolah, 2019). In organizational excellence assessment, it is always believed that there are causal relationships between enablers and results criteria (Zairi, 2011). In this regard, we performed correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between the total score and the enables criteria, as well as the results criteria, of all participating NPOs in cycles 2, 3, and 4.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the assessment results

Award Cycle	Average	Std. dev	Coef var (%)	Min score	Max score	Standard value
Enablers criteria 1: Leadership and strategy						
2016	38.58	8.06	20.89	23.58	56.58	150
2018	57.53	8.98	15.62	37.00	76.00	150
2020	59.43	6.75	11.36	44.00	72.00	150
Enablers criteria 2: Human resource and volunteer management						
2016	24.81	4.84	19.52	15.66	35.33	100
2018	35.67	5.78	16.23	25.00	51.00	100
2020	37.39	4.00	10.72	29.00	45.00	100
Enablers criteria 3: Managing and developing financial resources and endowments						
2016	26.66	6.60	24.76	16.50	44.50	100
2018	39.02	6.33	16.25	25.00	58.00	100
2020	40.65	4.08	10.05	30.00	50.00	100
Enablers criteria 4: Resources and partnership management						
2016	19.83	4.39	22.15	12.00	28.66	80
2018	28.98	5.03	17.38	17.00	40.00	80
2020	29.39	3.47	11.82	23.00	37.00	80
Enablers criteria 5: Processes and services management						
2016	38.76	8.72	22.48	23.83	55.17	150
2018	57.39	8.14	14.18	28.00	74.00	150
2020	58.70	6.17	10.52	46.00	71.00	150
Enablers criteria 6: Governance and transparency						
2016	14.76	3.43	23.23	9.00	21.33	60
2018	23.36	4.29	18.38	14.00	35.00	60
2020	23.73	2.59	10.94	20.00	28.00	60
Results criteria 7: HR results						
2016	18.50	4.95	26.79	11.00	33.25	80
2018	24.76	7.51	30.33	9.00	40.00	80
2020	26.00	8.68	33.37	9.00	42.00	80
Results criteria 8: Beneficiaries' results						
2016	37.24	11.01	29.55	21.00	67.50	160
2018	49.82	13.75	27.60	15.00	74.00	160
2020	51.17	13.45	26.28	23.00	74.00	160
Results criteria 9: Main performance results						
2016	29.24	8.22	28.12	16.50	53.94	120
2018	38.63	11.36	29.40	14.00	67.00	120
2020	37.48	11.85	31.62	14.00	59.00	120

Typical results of this analysis are shown in Fig. 3 for cycle 4. From Fig. 3 and the calculated p-value and R^2 , it can be deduced that there are statistically significant correlations between the total score and enables and results criteria. The high value of R^2 indicates that the model criteria (enables and results) are strongly related to the overall performance of the NPOs. From this observation, it can be concluded that the actual nine criteria of the excellence model effectively contribute to the achievement of excellence for NPOs in the Saudi context. This is in agreement with early research (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; Salih and Dolah, 2019). These researchers agreed on the positive impact of implementing OEMs on the performance of charity organizations (NPOs) worldwide.

5. Conclusions

This paper presents a statistical analysis of the excellence award for charity organizations in Saudi

Arabia, focusing on the assessment results of four award cycles (2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020). The main conclusions drawn from the analysis are as follows:

1. All Saudi NPOs that participated in the award during the considered cycles demonstrated a level of excellence ranging from poor to moderate, as measured by the model criteria. Their excellence maturity levels were categorized between the preliminary maturity level (with a total score > 250) and the growth stage level of excellence (total score between 251 and 500).
2. The statistical analysis of the assessment results indicates a continuous improvement in the performance of all NPOs participating in the award over the four cycles. This suggests that the charity excellence model positively impacts the organizational performance of these NPOs.
3. The analysis reveals the positive impact of the excellence model from cycle 2 to cycle 4 on the

registered NPOs. However, it is evident that even the best performers among the charity organizations did not achieve the standard value of each criterion, highlighting the relatively poor

performance of the sector in meeting excellence criteria and standards. Consequently, more efforts are needed by NPOs to enhance their capabilities toward organizational excellence.

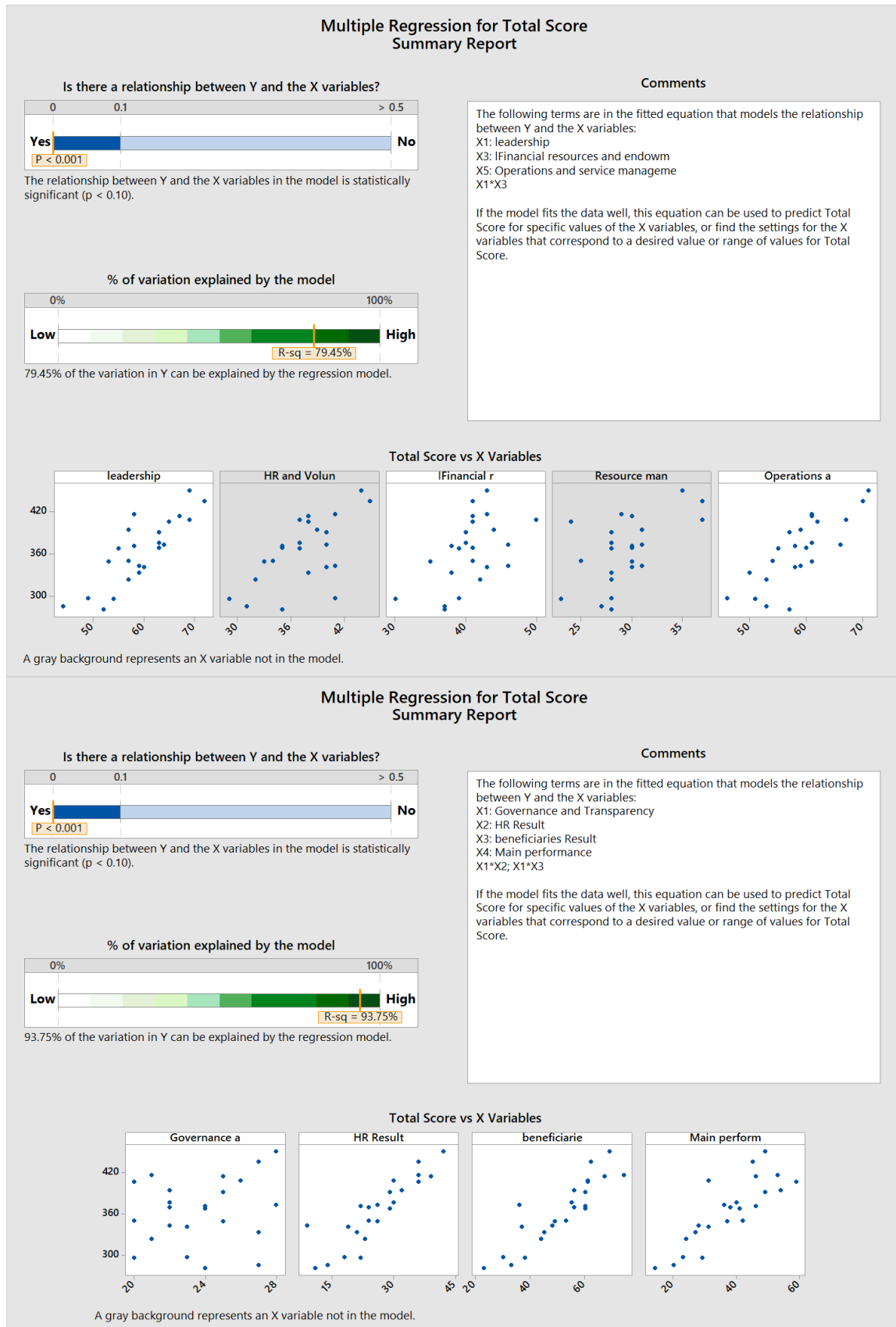


Fig. 3: Correlations analysis between assessment results for cycle 4 of the award

Based on the findings of this research, which emphasize the impact of the charity excellence model on the performance of Saudi NPOs, the researcher recommends further investigations in the following areas:

- Exploring Critical Success Factors that influence excellence performance of NPOs.
- Investigating the effect of new technologies on the excellence performance of Saudi NPOs.
- Revising the criteria of the excellence model to align with the new developments of quality 4.0, in line with the new EFQM model and the KAQA model.

Acknowledgment

This research has been funded by the Scientific Research Deanship at the University of Ha'il-Saudi Arabia, through Project Number: GR-22 065.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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