How Leadership Behaviours Influence Organisational Culture Within a Change Environment: A Study of a Non-food Multi-channel Retail Operation in The Republic of Ireland.

By

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ABSTRACT

Company Y is a multinational food retailer headquartered in the United Kingdom. In 2016 company Y acquired company X, a multi-channel non-food retailer. Company X has operations throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Throughout the United Kingdom a rapid transformation was undertaken to integrate the non-food retail operations of company X into the food retail operations of company Y. The migration of company X stores to operate under the same roof as the food business of company Y, throughout the United Kingdom, was and continues to be successfully implemented creating cost efficiencies throughout the organisation. The integration of both businesses has and continues to lead to operational changes, redundancies, and new ways of working with technology at the forefront of organizational change.

The operations of company X in the Republic of Ireland has experienced a few store closures. The online channels continue to grow sales, while in-store sales continue to fall and resource allocations are subsequently negatively impacted. Colleague retention in the Republic of Ireland has lately come to the forefront of discussions as middle-management and employees are choosing to leave the business.

This study aims to understand the reasons behind colleague retention issues and understand what leadership components are important to retain colleagues into the future.

A qualitative research approach was taken, interviewing 8 existing store managers throughout the Republic of Ireland. The key themes were assessed, and recommendations, together with the required supports, were made following the finding of the importance of key elements of transformational leadership and their positive impact on retention levels.

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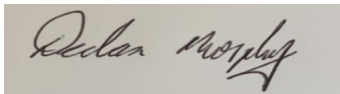Research Student Declaration Form

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In an ever changing environment when new technologies are applied, new processes and procedures are quickly implemented and the role of a Store manager continues to change, requiring constant learning, a change mindset, and the ability to adapt quickly. "Successful retail management decisions require a clear understanding of the relationships and interactions of the variables present in the retail environment" (Anderson, 1986). Technologies are changing how we work and with the introduction of 5G powered automation, as an enabler, will create greater efficiencies and increased productivity across all industries (Weldon, 2020). Store managers face many challenges in decision making in an ever changing environment. A decision-making process is largely based on gathering the relevant information required and setting out a series of steps to be taken over the short and long term to attain the desired outcome. With COVID-19, social distancing, logistics issues, and constant change there is a need for re-evaluation, pivoting and directional change. Colleagues within departments have now found themselves working from home, while frontline managers deal with customers face to face daily. Communications have changed with the use of technology at the forefront. Teams and zoom meetings have become the norm and information comes from every direction via email, activity apps, social media, and on-line communications. Deciphering information and what's important has never been more challenging. New technologies and upgrades are regularly introduced to improve performance across human resource information systems, warehouse execution systems, and communication processes. However, such changes do not always deliver the required benefits as many colleagues fail to effectively use the new technologies which is commonplace across many organisations (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). The process of constant change can be traumatic for people as though they had experienced a traumatic event like a natural disaster, a death in the family or a marriage breakup (Lazarus, 1993).

Decisions based on emotions, preconceived ideas and biases often resulting in actions being taken by individual managers and their teams which are not based on facts distort the reality within the organisation and lead to less effective outcomes

(Janis & Mann, 1978). Managers experiencing anxiety, anger, fear, or distress are much more likely to make bad and ineffective decisions and miss obvious indicators resulting in bad judgments and inefficient operations (Ganster, 2005).

Leadership is now more important than ever to create and sustain successful organisations (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015) and moreover transformational leadership is preferred to increase job satisfaction within organisations (Hussain & Khayat, 2021). Organisations will be successful if the proper leadership styles are implemented across the whole organisation (Vasilescu, 2019).

Leadership involves influence to reach a shared purpose with followers' intent on reaching agreed goals within a changing dynamic throughout the organisation. Leadership involves personal responsibility, integrity, and dogged determination to succeed. For this to exist an organisation requires a strong vision for where the organisation envisages themselves to be at a point of time in the future.

1.2 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The study aims to investigate how leadership influences organizational culture within a change environment. The study is based on interviews undertaken with participants from the store manager population of a non-food multi-channel retail operation in the Republic of Ireland. The research questions been investigated are as follows:

(i) How does leadership styles and behaviours influence the culture within the workplace?

(ii) How does the in-store culture impact on employee retention?

The purpose, in answering these two questions is to determine what future actions may be taken to enhance employee relations, employee well-being, and create a better place to work.

1.3 Overview of Dissertation Structure

A brief overview of each chapter is as follows: -

- **Literature Review**

The literature analysed for this study is categorised as follows: -

- Leadership
- Leadership Styles
- History and Centralized Operations
- External Shocks Impacting the Organisation
- Networking and Building Strong Relationships
- Collaboration and Efficient Teams
- Work Life Balance
- Leadership Behaviours and Traits
- Culture and the Cultural Web

- **Research Questions; Aims and Objections**

A brief overview of the research objectives and the questions the study will answer.

- **Research Methodology**

A brief overview of the research methodology to include: -

- Research Philosophy
- Research Approach and Design
- Population Sample and Demographics
- Data Gathering Process
- Ethical Considerations
- Limitations for the Dissertation

- **Statistics and Findings**

In this chapter relevant statistics are presented together with the data collected using thematic analysis.

- Descriptive Statistics
- Performance Statistics

Data collected following six interviews are categorized as follows

- Processes, Procedures and Getting Things Done
- Communication
- Building Strong Teams
- Networking and Collaboration
- Culture

- **Discussion**

This section links the learnings from the literature review to the findings from the interviews to form the basis for recommendations for future studies, and recommendations for implementation in the organisation, together with the strengths and limitations of the study.

- **Conclusion**

This chapter summarises the findings and results achieved from the study. Furthermore, practical implications with timelines for implementation and cost implications are included. A personal learning statement is attached evaluating the researcher's learnings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Leadership

There have been many Leadership definitions put forward by theorists (Smith, et al., 2004). Burns (1978) viewed leadership as a process of giving and taking based on a broad set of values together with economic and political influences, to enable both leaders and followers to achieve their goals. Bass (1990) viewed leadership as the mix of power and influence to achieve goals. Yukl and Gardner (2020) stated "*Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared goals*". The key elements within this definition are influence, shared goals, what and how to do and importantly the facilitation of individual and collective efforts, and thus will be the definition considered throughout the dissertation.

2.1.1 A Vision for Change

Transformational leaders are more likely to create forward-looking compelling visions which inspire confidence hope and optimism in followers and furthermore the content of the vision is critical to drive successful outcomes (Berson, 2001). A strong compelling vision can create a more social work environment where personal growth, learning, and development builds self-esteem in employees leading to self-actualisation as represented in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Robbins, et al., 2016).

2.2 Leadership Styles

Research and theories in leadership is vast and much has been written from differing perspectives. Three areas of focus namely characteristics of leaders, followers, and the situation have become the focus areas for much research. Leadership behaviours influence processes and follower attitudes, and behaviours are directly affected by the leadership behaviours within a given situation (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Historically

entrepreneurs, as Scott and Shackleton, were viewed as great leaders even though they relied predominantly on controlling and coercive power. In the modern day employee and employer relationships are very different whereby leaders engage with their employees, clearly set out job roles and responsibilities, set key performance indicators (KPI's) to monitor progress and performance, while renumeration, bonuses, rewards and benefits are clearly defined in line with performance and contribution (Bass, 1990). Weak leadership will negatively impact employee satisfaction rates while strong leadership focused on improving colleague well-being and satisfaction will lead to higher employee retention rates and furthermore transformational leadership styles lead to higher retention rates than that of transactional leadership (Kleinman, 2004).

2.2.1 Task Oriented and Relations Oriented Behaviours

Task oriented behaviors among leaders were focused on production and repetitive processes to meet output targets with little or no regard for people or their welfare, while relations oriented behaviors among leaders were primarily focused on people well-being and ensuring employees were motivated and engaged in a supportive environment (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Relations oriented behaviours are underpinned by the interactions and communications between leaders and their followers. Management at all levels of the organisation must engage in goal setting activities with their teams, set boundaries within their individual units within the organisation, and be individually responsible for integrating their areas of responsibility and to coordinate with other units within the organisation to facilitate organisational performance and success (Zaccaro, 2001). Confidence, communications, clarity, and ownership are key attributes to be a successful leader (Dill, 2021); doubt, fear, anger, frustration, resentment, pressure, and stress are inhibitors to leading a successful team (Higgins, 2020)

2.2.2 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership exists when leaders are focused on the goals of the organisation and pay attention to processes and procedures to achieve those goals. Transactional leaders focus on what to do with little regard to how to do (Burns, 1978). Renumeration, pay and bonuses are directly linked to performance and results, the corollary applies for underperformance, often perceived as punishment (Bass, 1990). Research by Bass concluded that while transactional leadership can lead to high commitment and high work ethic within the organisation resulting in monetary gains for employees, over time commitment erodes as employees seek a more participative and inclusive environment where they feel valued. Furthermore, employees will seek alternative employers where their opinions and feelings are considered in the decision making process. Adapting the use of emotional intelligence can also increase efficiencies resulting in better financial outcomes for the organisation in a transactional leadership environment Empowering middle-management to use their own emotional intelligence also increases job satisfaction (Thapa & Parimoo, 2022).

2.2.3 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is follower-centered and allows for colleagues to see beyond the day-to-day tasks and encourages learning and development facilitating greater input and democratic interactions, over time leading to a participative environment, with better outcomes for employee morale and greater organizational performance (Mumford, et al., 2000). In the modern economy management and colleagues are better educated, labour resources are scarce, and employees will change employers if their personal needs are not fulfilled. Thus, today's workplace demands transformational leadership to engage and support colleagues at all levels in the organisation. Research has shown transformational leadership led projects have higher outcomes and better performance outputs than transactional leadership led projects (Abbas & Ali, 2021). Characteristics as being charismatic, inspirational by nature, a strong communicator, a good listener, and being empathetic towards followers are all synonymous with transformational leaders.

2.2.4 Continuum of Leadership behaviour.

The continuum of leadership behaviour analyses three leadership behaviours namely, Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-faire leadership styles (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973).

The autocratic leader operates in a telling and selling environment where decisions have already been made and employees are told what and how to do tasks with little regard for colleagues who are tasked with carrying out the work (Lewin, et al., 1939). In an autocratic leadership environment where colleagues are told what and how to do, employees feel undervalued, are excluded from the decision-making process, and thus work routines become boring and employee satisfaction rates are low ultimately leading to higher employee turnover rates than those in a more democratic leadership environment (Kennedy, 2021).

Moving to a more democratic environment leaders will ask questions and look for feedback, often making suggestions to prompt ideas, creating a more participative environment where employees engage in the decision-making process (Avolio, 1999). In a democratic environment leaders will often present the problem and consult with employees to find a solution. The laissez-faire leader creates an environment whereby a vision for a future position, product, or process is communicated and employees have complete freedom, with minimal barriers or restrictions, to make the decisions and take the actions to allow them to reach the end goal, with little or no direction from the leader (Braybrook, 2020)

2.3 History and Centralised Operations

Management decision making has substantially changed in the last 50 years. In the 1960s supermarket retailing in the UK adapted a mixed approach towards the autonomy of retail store managers to make decisions. Many of the large food retailers at that time had a decentralised approach to decision-making. Retail store managers had full autonomy to stock and merchandise their store to meet the needs of their customers at the local level. Other supermarket retailers adapted a centralised approach, whereby decisions were made at head office level and the role of the store manager was predominantly to oversee the implementation and execution at store

level. By the 1980s the centralised approach to decision-making became dominant to create efficiencies across the business operations and retail organisations started to invest in developing integrated systems and operations to create greater efficiencies across the organisation (Alexander, 2015). The level of autonomy for the Store manager to make local decisions had greatly diminished.

In 2021 Store managers are predominantly preoccupied with tasks, checks, and balances, processes, and procedures to be carried out daily as directed from head office. Often many of the directives are acted upon in good faith without question, and without a full understanding of the facts that lead into those decisions. This repetition of acting on directives day after day may result in Store managers failing to take the simplest of decisions, procrastinating and often waiting for direction from the center. Saghiri & Mirzabeiki (2021) highlight key take-aways from their research on information and digital technologies within omni-channel retailing industry.

- Understanding the processes and procedures in omnichannel retailing is essential for Store managers to make informed decisions in a timely manner.
- The flow of products through the store and online channels must be seamless both for the business and the consumer.
- Where managers have instant access to the required information and data, they are best positioned to make autonomous decisions to meet customer needs.
- Store managers making timely and quality decisions have a direct impact on the company's competitiveness.

2.4 External shocks Impacting the Organisation

The COVID-19 pandemic has created shockwaves through many organizations. In the retail environment we saw the implementation of mask wearing, social distancing and the responsibility to implement rules and regulations set out by the government. We saw the impact on relationships with family, friends, colleagues and loved ones, much of which created anxieties in the workplace, and absenteeism grew to previously unseen levels creating stresses within the organization. Research suggests that the decision-making in spring 2020 was of an iterative nature literally changing as decision makers tried to make sense and assess the ever changing situation at that time (Foss,

2020). Store managers who interact positively with their teams in decision-making have better outcomes. Team autonomy takes advantage of the capabilities of the individual colleagues to deal with environmental complexities (Cordery, et al., 2010).

2.5 Networking and Building Strong Relationships

Gone are the days of regional monthly meetings where store managers meet in person, debate ideas and groupthink for consensus. These meetings were critical in building self-confidence to make the right decisions at the right time back in store. New business initiatives, training and best practices were high on the agenda and key aspects of the monthly meeting. Without these meetings and networking opportunities to create strong relationships built on trust, a key foundation for influence (Hill & Lineback, 2011) Store managers are potentially isolated and feel vulnerable when making decisions in store impacting negatively on their teams. Store managers who create a network of people whom they can look to for advice, support, information, and feedback (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007), envelope themselves in an environment where they can be their best. Store managers must build strong relationships across many departments on whom they are dependent to acquire power and exercise influence (Hill, 1999). The networks and the relationships built are mutually beneficial and creates confidence in decision making. Store managers who seek advice and counsel together with coaching and mentoring, consistently working on personal and professional development are better set up for intuitive decision making (Garvin & Margolis, 2015).

2.6 Collaborative and Efficient Teams

Collaborative teamworking creates a supportive environment in the workplace and enhances the feel good factor and has a positive impact on individual well being (Chen, et al., 2018). Store managers need to be clear and concise in communicating decisions to the team to positively impact the working environment and the well-being of colleagues in store. Each team member must have the same opportunity training and support as the next. Some bosses treat team members differently, whereby some colleagues are the go-to people making an in-group while others linger on the sidelines

in the out-group (Manzoni & Barsoux, 1998). When teams are well managed, with good positive interactions through asking questions, and seeking clarity to gain a clear understanding, dynamics are created which engages colleagues to willingly contribute to store excellence (Poth, et al., 2020). Previous research has identified a positive link between strong relationships and engagement in the workplace (Ancarani, et al., 2019). Gratitude, enthusiasm, hope, forgiveness, humility, compassion, and learning are all key ingredients in a recipe for successful leadership, building strong cohesive powerful and resilient teams (Higgins, 2020).

2.7 Work Life Balance

Work life balance has become a large area of discussion in recent times. Burnout is a reality in many organisations due to increased workloads and always on communications make it difficult to switch off (Gupta & Srivastava, 2021). Organisations must take steps to ensure work demands and deadlines are fair and reasonable. Organisations must encourage decision autonomy at all levels and strive to build a culture of amicable relationships up and down the organisation. Managers and colleagues must look out for each other and recognise signs of discomfort or stress and support in an appropriate manner. A recent study carried out by Gupta and Srivastava (2021) found there was a significant positive relationship of burnout with work life Conflict, and family and organisational support is critical to minimise the potential risks.

2.8 Leadership Behaviours and Traits

Yukl (2006) defined leadership as a "*process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives*".

Behavioural strategy has an ever growing part to play in strategic management. Company culture plays a critical role in maintaining a competitive advantage through intuitive decision-making. Intuitive decision-making is essential to gain a competitive advantage within an organisation. Past experiences can negatively impact decision

making and authenticity (Ibarra, 2015) ,and to show vulnerability is a core trait essential to create participative teams. Company culture will set the tone for intuitive decision-making and unless leaders are willing to be receptive, open, honest, vulnerable, curious, and willing to listen to others, then intuitive decision-making will be lacking in the organisational culture (Snyder, 2019). Two key factors cause poor decision making, namely lack of motivation and cognitive biases (Beshears & Gino, 2015).

2.9 Culture and the Cultural Web

Culture can be defined as *"basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operates unconsciously and define in a basic taken for granted fashion an organisations view of itself and its environment"* (Schein, 2004). Edgar Schein created a culture model by which organisations can undertake evaluations to understand their respective current cultural position and make up. The model consists of three components namely, values, beliefs and behaviours which together feed into a paradigm of activities and behaviours which exist in an organisation, a culture, it's just the way we do things around here. Organisations evaluate existing cultures based on the current values, beliefs and observed behaviours which feed into the repetitive actions throughout the organisation and these combined evaluations amount to the existing culture of the organisation at that moment in time. Only through understanding the existing organisational culture can organisations adapt and change to a new and improved culture.

This study will specifically focus on the management behaviours that feed into the organisational culture, and furthermore how those behaviours impact on employee retention rates.

The cultural web, developed by Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes in 1992 is another tool used to analyse organisational culture and gives a deeper insight into the existing culture (Johnson, et al., 2017). The cultural web has six components namely,

- stories: the stories that are told of an organization represented by the general population or the perceptions held by independent observers.

- symbols: symbols of an organization that portray a perception as luxurious office buildings which may be associated with the banking and finance industry, symbolising wealth, and success.
- Power structures: Power and influence may be held by one or two senior executives, or perceived to be, like Michael O'Leary of Ryanair.
- Organizational structure: Organisations may have varying structures like hierarchical or matrix structures which maps out the various levels within an organization and illustrate where the power and influence sit at various levels in the organisation.
- Control systems: The control systems are the processes and procedures in place by which employees carry out their day-to-day duties and role responsibilities.
- Rituals and routines: the rituals and routines are the day-to-day activities, acceptable behaviors observed, just the way things are done around here, and the actions and activities of employees reflected by management expectations and set standards.

This study encompasses the power and influence management have over their employees in a retail store environment, the control systems and the rituals and routines which have become part of everyday life within the store environment.

CHAPTER 3: Research Questions; Aims and Objectives

3.1 Research Aims and Objectives

This research study aims to discover the key leadership behaviours affecting the in-store culture in a non-food multi-channel retail operation in the Republic of Ireland. Company X is currently trading within a change environment following a takeover by a multinational food retailer, Company Y, in 2016. This qualitative study focuses on identifying leadership behaviours which will positively impact the in-store culture and furthermore will positively impact on employee retention.

Furthermore, this study aims to identify what support is required and how they may be implemented to positively impact the culture and employee retention during a period of change.

3.2 Research Questions

This research study aims to answer the following questions

1. what are the key leadership behaviours required to positively impact the culture in-store?

Research shows that a transformational leadership style has positive implications for a positive and collaborative working culture. This style of leadership creates a participative and engaging environment where people can be themselves and learn and develop to be their best. This qualitative study, through store manager interviews, aims to determine the reality in stores, to identify the nature of leadership that exists within each store and how the culture is affected.

2. How do leadership behaviours Impact on colleague retention?

Research shows that the cultural environment where employees work is a significant factor for employee retention. No longer is pay and rewards enough to retain colleagues as their focus has changed to better working conditions, a better work life balance, and being happy and fulfilled in their respective roles. This qualitative study will compare the leadership styles within stores against existing retention rates.

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Much of the research undertaken in this field is of a quantitative nature. Data has been collected cross-sectionally over time horizons through surveys. Over time theory has been developed from deductions based on a positivist epistemological research philosophy. This study focuses on a qualitative approach to gather and analyse data to ascertain the root causes within a specific company, X, and findings of an inductive nature are made based upon an ontological interpretivism philosophy.

Much of the research around management decision making and behaviours in the organisation are of a quantitative nature (Dulov, 2021), (Foss, 2020), and largely theoretically based. However, these research papers' conclusions are based on the ideal conditions, constructs, and organisational behaviours. To determine feelings and opinions Gupta (2021) carried out interviews to capture those feelings and opinions at a moment in time under real live conditions. As the purpose of this research is to determine how leadership behaviours impact organisational culture and in turn impact on colleague retention, a qualitative approach is undertaken. The research instrument will be interviews conducted with Store managers as in the case of (Alexander, 2015).

4.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a broad term incorporating the gathering and analysis of data, the underlying beliefs and assumptions, the use of data, and particularly "the development of knowledge" and "the nature of that knowledge" (Saunders, et al., 2016). The main assumption and belief held by the author is that through store manager interviews the data collected mirrors the reality at a given time.

The ontological research philosophy approach aligns with interpretivism (Holden & Lynch, 2004) while understanding and recognising the subjective nature of the data collected and consequently noting the importance of how that data was interpreted. Although the findings are of an inductive nature the truth of the matter might be very different from the perceived reality (Saunders, et al., 2016).

4.3 Research Approach and Design

Qualitative research is a unique method to gather insights into people's first-hand experiences their feelings their individual viewpoints all of which cannot be attained through quantitative research methods and furthermore qualitative research is underrepresented in current research (Ayre & McCaffrey, 2022), (Southam-Gerow & Dorsey, 2014). A qualitative research approach with a thematic analysis was conducted through store management interviews, not to fully understand why middle management and colleagues have decided to leave the business, but to understand what leadership behaviours exist, or are absent, and if those leadership behaviours were in place, might they have deterred those same colleagues from exiting the business. Thematic analysis was preferred as it can support the formation of new policies, procedures, and training programs to meet the required needs of the store management population. Furthermore, a recent study, based on the analyses of 317 independent studies concluded that to enhance the methodological integrity qualitative research should focus on procedures and approaches taken by the interviewees of a particular study (Sanchez & Delgado, 2022), in this case the procedures and approaches taken by the retail store management population was the focus for this study.

4.4 Population Sample and Demographics

It is neither feasible nor possible to capture research from a complete targeted group as the research would be restricted by time, cost, and access (Saunders, et al., 2016). For this study, the sample Was randomly select it based on two criteria namely location and the ranking performance of the retail store within the region. Within the Republic of Ireland there are two regions namely Republic of Ireland north and the Republic of Ireland South. Each region consists of eighteen stores and those stores were categorised into the top, middle and bottom six based on the individual store performance against the core company key performance indicators (KPI's). Following the store categorisation, one store was selected from the top, middle, and bottom ranking categories in each area.

Following the selection of the six stores the respective store managers were contacted by way of telephone conversations and each store manager was willing and happy to participate in the study.

Participants ranged in age from 28 – 58, with varying years of industry experience from 8-40 years and length of service within Company X as a store manager from.

4.5 Data Gathering Process

4.5.1 Initial Invitation

The author telephoned each store manager from the randomly selected stores to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. A brief overview of the research to be undertaken was explained including the purpose of the research, the selection of the sample population, the interview process, and timescales. The guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity for each participant was assured. It was agreed interviews would take place over Teams and suitable dates and times were scheduled. Interviews were scheduled to last for up to 60 minutes. The provision of a consent form (Appendix 1), to be signed and returned by each interviewee, together with an information sheet (Appendix 2) was sent to each participant. The information sheet included details of the study, notes on participation, together with contact details should any participant have further queries or concerns. Both parties discussed the use, storage, retention, and security of all information.

The interview questions and the data collected will be based around a thematic approach (Appendix 2), and a theme sheet will be developed to encompass the core areas which impact the culture within stores. The data is analysed in line with the suggested step by step process put forward by Saldana, Miles, and Huberman, to ensure data is analysed in a rigorous manner (Miles, et al., 2014). The use of this method helped to catalog and code the data collected and is a simple process to follow, even for a novice in qualitative data analysis (Hashimov, 2015).

4.5.2 Interviews and Structure

The researcher conducted six interviews between June 12 and June 28, 2022, via Teams. The researcher received signed consent forms prior to the meetings, one from each participant. The researcher forwarded an overview of the questions (Appendix 3) for discussion during the interview to each of the store managers in advance.

On the day of the interview and prior to commencement the researcher made clear that the meeting would be recorded. Each participant was reminded that the interview content was anonymous and that under no circumstances would the individual manager be identifiable. In the interest of open and honest conversations the interviewee also had the freedom to not answer or discuss any of the questions where he/she may be uncomfortable in answering. A final check-in to ensure the participant was happy to proceed and the interviews were conducted.

Permission has been sought and granted by Company Y to interview Retail Store managers from Company X within the Republic of Ireland. Interview questions were prepared in advance and tested with two Store managers well known to the author. This allowed the author to check-back for understandings, redesign the questions and make any necessary changes to produce interview questions fit for purpose.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The key consideration for all participants was anonymity. There was a real and genuine concern that senior management, and their peers might somehow obtain or hear some of the information discussed. To that end the researcher assured all participants of the confidentiality of the interviews and the storage of all information would only be accessible by the researcher. Furthermore, contact details for the researcher's supervisor were supplied to each of the participants, should they have found the need to make contact for re-assurance. Finally, the researcher sought and received authorisation to conduct the study at Director level from the UK head office, with the assurance that senior management within the Republic of Ireland were unaware of the data sampling detail.

For ethical considerations ground rules were applied, prohibiting personalisation of data, or referring to anyone in a manner that might be considered damaging or inappropriate. Company names, brands or other identifiable information will not appear within the dissertation. All data collected will be anonymous and treated as highly confidential. The data stored will be password protected. The data will be kept only for a period required by National College of Ireland and the external examiner. Thereafter all data and recordings will be destroyed.

4.7 Limitations for the Dissertation

As it was not reasonable to interview the full population of the targeted group within the Republic of Ireland the researcher must decipher the key themes based on the opinions, feelings, and lived experiences of the six individuals interviewed. Thus, the findings cannot fully be attributed to the wider target group within the organisation. However, based on the findings it might prompt a further study to be conducted across a greater sample.

With the best intentions, and the best will in the world, and assurances of anonymity the researcher was aware of the possible reluctance of the participants to be fully open with sharing their views and opinions as they are currently employed by Company X. The researcher understood the level of fear existed that a breach of anonymity might occur. Furthermore, the researcher was aware that participants might feel the need to answer questions in a manner whereby they answer with what they believed the correct answer should be as opposed to the actual reality of how they feel, act, and behave.

CHAPTER 5: Statistics and Findings

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The main descriptive statistics are listed below in Table 1. Six retail store managers were interviewed of which three (50%) were female and three (50%) were male. Each store manager has been managing their respective store more than three years. Industry experience at retail store manager level varies from eight years to 30 years.

Table 1: Frequency and Valid Percentage for Data Sample

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	3	50.0
Female	3	50.0
Age		
20-30	1	16.7
30-40	1	16.7
40-50	2	33.3
50-60	2	33.3

5.2 Performance Statistics

Table 2 illustrates the performance statistics attributed to each store managed by the respective store managers (A-F). Within the Republic of Ireland three store managers were selected from each of the two regions, one was selected from the top, middle, and bottom third based on their regional performance ranking. Employee satisfaction rates, and colleague engagement scores were attributed to each store following the latest we're listening survey carried out in September 2021 and are shown below

Table 2: Performance Ranking Employee Satisfaction and Colleague Engagement

Store Manager	A	B	C	D	E	F
Performance Ranking (KPI's)	Top	Top	Middle	Middle	Bottom	Bottom
Employee Satisfaction	89%	91%	84%	82%	72%	64%
Colleague Engagement	92%	90%	78%	79%	84%	68%

5.3 Data Gathered

5.3.1 Processes, Procedures and Getting Things Done

Each of the store managers spoke of the volume of paperwork, checks, online activities to be completed for compliance, and self-audits to be completed were somewhat cumbersome and time consuming. Each of the managers referred to the fact that labour resource is tighter now than ever before, and although the volume of trade has decreased over the past number of years the number of tasks to be completed have remained pretty much the same.

However, there were differences from store to store on how the store managers ensured the completion of all the tasks. Store manager A & B both referred to a weekly overview checklist whereby they mapped out all the major activities to be completed for the week and allocated them in order of importance and timing. Both managers referred to the multi-skilling of all team members, meaning they were fully trained to carry out all duties front of house dealing with customers, and back of house dealing with stockroom issues, the picking of stock for customers, putting away deliveries, completing store transfers, dealing with excess and return to manufacturer transfers. Both managers referred to this multi-skilling of colleagues as being essential for smooth and efficient operations. It was unimportant as to what colleagues worked on a particular day, or when colleagues were on a day off, as the multi-skilling of the team members allowed for any tasks to be completed on any given day. This was achieved through the online training portal, which contains training materials for all aspects of in-store operations, together with role swapping in store and a buddy system whereby new colleagues to the business were coached and supported by an experienced colleague. This allowed management the time and space to complete the many checks and balances. Store manager A said, "*I always try to make myself redundant, and if something has to be done, I always think who I can give it away to*".

Store managers C, D, E, and F spoke of daily checklists being in use and what was not completed today is carried over to the next day. Each of the four managers spoke of the repetitive nature of the tasks to be completed from week to week and the difficulty in maintaining high standards particularly when some colleagues or members of management are on holiday. When asked about multi-skilling of team members a

range of arguments were put forward. Each of the four managers spoke of individual cases where a colleague, with back trouble or other ailments, were unable to work in the stockroom, while managers E and F commented that some colleagues were unwilling to undertake new tasks or responsibilities.

5.3.2 Communication

Store manager A, B, C, and D hold a weekly management meeting on a Monday. The meeting usually takes two to three hours at which the stock manager reports on the results and activities from the previous week and presents a plan of action for the week ahead. The Customer Service Manager (CSM) presents on all front of house activities and measures to include customer satisfaction scores, competitor activity, what went well, and what needs to improve for the week ahead. The store manager gives an overview on sales, costs, and any other relevant information. Each manager referred to the importance of the meeting to understand and plan for the week ahead and to identify any issues or anomalies which needs to be addressed like absenteeism or underperformance, and then plans are put in place to address these. Store manager C said, *"even if I am the only manager on duty on a given Monday, I will still take the two hours and have a meeting on my own, that way I know where I'm coming from, and I know where I'm going".*

Store manager D, and E also hold a weekly meeting on a Monday. However, if there is one member of management absent the meeting does not go ahead. They merely have one-to-ones throughout the day on an informal basis, in the belief it saves time and gives an opportunity to catch up on work yet to be completed.

Store manager F does not have a meeting every Monday and prefers to catch up with the other managers on a one to one informal basis randomly throughout the week, believing this is more efficient than *"wasting two to three hours every week sitting in the office talking about the same thing".* Store manager F completes the weekly trading meeting template document with little or no input from the management team other than some information gathered from the one to ones. Occasionally the management team will have a meeting, but only if they have time.

Store manager A and B write up a weekly briefing document which details the key highlights for the past week together with the key activities to take place in the week ahead. Furthermore, they include a section where they specifically focus on reward and recognition, recognising individual colleagues following positive customer feedback for great customer service. Individual great colleague behaviours are also recognised for going above and beyond. Both store managers, in the knowledge that not all colleagues read the notice board regularly take the document and do one-on-one or group huddles with colleagues, allowing time for quality conversations with colleagues and an opportunity to gain feedback. Both managers spoke of the importance to continually engage all colleagues to ensure they feel valued, and their opinion is important to them to create an inclusive environment.

Store manager C and D complete a weekly briefing like store manager A and B. However, both post the briefing on the colleague notice board. They do not conduct huddles with colleagues due to time constraints.

store manager E and F also complete a weekly briefing document and post it on the colleague noticeboard. However, the management take turns in completing the document to allow for a greater focus on stockroom one week, front of house the next week, an overall view on another week, all dependent on the individual manager who completes the briefing.

Store manager A, B, and D were very clear on colleague communications being a two-way conversation. Conversations start with an informal check-in to ensure all is well with the individual colleagues. Store manager A initiates a work-related conversation with *"What is the plan for today"?* And store manager B, with *"Okay, tell me what I need to know today and what you need me to do"?* All three managers were very clear that colleague conversations were open and honest, whereby the colleagues spoke freely about their daily work routine and plans for the day ahead and only through asking open questions the managers would direct the conversation to ensure all tasks are completed. Manager D said, "*I don't like anyone telling me what to do, so I am not going to tell anyone else what to do".* The three managers spoke of the importance of clarity in communications with the wider team. It was important that the full team were aware of all the activities planned in daily to ensure the active participants were supported by the full team.

Store managers C, E, and F focus on creating lists of activities daily. Furthermore, members of staff are allocated tasks daily by the management team, and colleagues are briefed at the start of their shift.

Manager C said, *"You must get your best people to put away deliveries and marketing changeovers, otherwise you end up with a mess. If I allow everyone do what they want to do it would be mayhem"*. Manager C relies on three or four colleagues to deliver high standards while the remaining colleagues cover menial tasks such as, picking stock for customers, manning tills, and covering the shop floor.

Managers E and F said, "*colleagues know exactly what is expected of them"*. Both managers talked about how they keep on top of the colleagues, letting them know when deliveries are taking too long, regularly checking in to ensure tasks are completed on time, and pushing colleagues on when required. Manager E said, *"If you don't keep on top of them the work never gets done on time"*.

The six store managers spoke of the importance of setting clear goals and objectives on a weekly basis to ensure they achieve the overall monthly KPI scores and targets. All six managers spoke of how the key measures are tracked daily and the results are posted on the colleague noticeboard for all to view.

Store managers A and B talked at length on how they communicate with team members to ascertain the current position and collectively agree on the next steps required to maintain and improve performance. Both managers spoke about best practice and colleagues interacting and sharing information to lead to better outcomes. Store manager B said, *"it was not unusual for colleagues to get together and support one another to hit individual targets. I have colleagues in store who give away financial services sales to other colleagues to help them meet their weekly target"*.

Store managers C, D, E, and F Spoke in terms of individual performance targets and weekly store targets as non-negotiable. They spoke of how each member of management and each colleague alike were aware of the measures and performances expected. The four managers were clear how they would have direct conversations with colleagues who were not hitting their individual targets in the belief that those direct conversations would lead to an automatic improvement in performance. Store manager E said, *"When I'm on duty all of the colleagues hit their targets because I'm on top of them throughout the day, but when I take a day off or am on holidays*

colleagues miss their targets and I put that down to the management team not keeping on top of the colleagues". Store manager F said, *"when I have a colleague who has missed their individual performance target for financial services two weeks in a row, I bring them into the office and have a record a conversation and that sorts them out".*

5.3.3 Building Strong Teams

Manager A and B spoke of the importance of a multi-skilled team as the foundation to have a strong and cohesive team, and that enabled colleagues to pick and choose and arrange tasks between themselves depending on individual preference on a given day, and without management input. Both managers talked about the freedom colleagues have, to make decisions among themselves and the many benefits to ensure a smooth and efficient operation. Manager B said, *"Colleagues are more engaged and less likely to get bored when they decide where they want to work".* Both managers said colleagues take more ownership over daily tasks and use their initiative to help and support each other during busy trading times or helping on large deliveries without being asked. Both managers spoke about their role and inspiring and motivating colleagues through praising and thanking their colleagues on a regular basis focusing on the positives and continually offering support. Both managers spoke of the difficulty they would have in completing their own roles if they did not have a strong team. In the existing environment with so much change and new technological applications a strong team gives them the space and time to keep up to date learning the new processes and procedures for themselves before rolling out training and development for the full team. Neither manager had any performance issues of note. Both managers spoke of the importance of regularly talking to colleagues and genuinely taking an interest in their well-being. Both managers spoke of the importance of accommodating colleagues on preferred days off and working hours and this is achieved directly because of strong teams supporting each other. Both managers talked how colleagues were aware of the goals and objectives, were very keen to monitor progress daily and how they took great delight and enjoyment in beating targets and being recognised as top performers.

Managers C, D, E, and F Spoke about the pressures they were under due to all the changes being rolled out from a head office perspective month after month. Managers C and E have lost a member of management, having moved to an alternative employer, while manager D and E have lost a few key colleagues within the last year. Due to the current cost challenges and stores being overcommitted these colleagues will not be replaced. All four managers spoke of their reliance on a few key individuals to carry the team. Managers C and D spoke about how they are currently training colleagues to work in other areas of the business, where they have not worked before. All four managers spoke about how they themselves had to partake in daily activities such as putting away deliveries and supporting front of house during busy trading periods. All four Spoke about a lack of time to pay due attention to training and developing the team and this has a negative impact on colleague morale.

Managers E and F spoke of colleagues within their respective stores, who had more than 20 years' experience and they had no interest in new technologies, were unwilling to try and this was creating operational inefficiencies and negatively impacting morale throughout the team. both managers had many performance conversations with these colleagues, however, there has been no material improvements or change in attitude towards learning and development. Store manager E said, *"some of my team are in their 60s and they just don't want to learn anything new, some of them have said to me that they are just waiting for redundancy"*. Both managers spoke about how it was unfair for some colleagues to be working hard while others were doing the bare minimum just to keep their jobs, and this has created tension and division among colleagues in store.

5.3.4 Networking and Collaboration

Store manager A and B talked about the large networks they had built up overtime prior to company Y taking over company X in 2016. Following the merger, and as both head offices integrated many roles became redundant and many of the people who worked in what was the old head office exited the business. Both managers spoke about creating new contacts as a priority, taking every opportunity to build those networks. Both managers referred to their peer group as a vital source of information

as many of the store managers have a keen interest and great knowledge in particular fields such as HR issues, disciplinaries, and expertise in all matters pertaining to stock. What manager spoke of the importance of networking upwards and downwards and building and creating strong relationships with their management teams and colleagues was equally important. Engaging with colleagues professionally and personally was important to both managers to maintain a cohesive and supportive team. Manager A said, *"I am aware there are many managers struggling at the moment, and I always offer to help and support, but the truth is not many ask for help".*

Store manager C, D, E, and F talked of how they no longer know who was responsible for what in head office. They talked how of old when regional meetings took place in person there were regular guests from head office departments would travel to Ireland to attend the meeting. They talked about how difficult it is to connect with your peers now that regional meetings are held virtually over Teams. Store manager E said, *"The only person from head office I see is my regional manager on a store visit".* All four managers predominantly rely on the policy and procedures documentation for making decisions. Furthermore, where there is ambiguity, they are more likely to turn to their peers for advice rather than seek clarification from a regional manager or an expert at head office. Store manager F said, *"since they introduced the new website, I spend half my time tearing my hair out trying to find the information I need, I don't see what was wrong with the old website".* Neither of the four managers mentioned colleagues when discussing creating networks.

5.3.5 Culture

Store managers A and B both talked of a very positive culture in store. Both store managers described the culture as fast-paced, supportive, and friendly where colleagues lookout for each other and share the workload. Learning and development is active in store with many colleagues completing online courses in areas of interest to themselves, from leadership to well-being and much more. Both managers commented that their operations might well be easier to run as they are over committed on labour resources. However, both managers stated that the positive culture is the reason why colleagues are not leaving the business. Store manager B

said, *"I'm not joking you, all my staff are so good, and so good to each other that I really have very little work to do myself and I keep telling them that and they never let me down".* Both managers spoke about how COVID-19 had impacted on management and colleagues' well-being with many being affected personally, having contracted COVID-19, and a few colleagues had lost loved ones close to them. Both managers spoke of how they did everything in their power to support management and colleagues through that difficult time, such as extra time away from the business and working shifts to meet their individual needs and create a better work life balance to reduce pressure and stress.

Store managers C, D, E, and F All commented that the culture in store was not great, and it used to be much better. The four managers talked about the pressure in work with limited resources as they had lost key people in the business that will not be replaced. Many of the colleagues are not working well together as they perceive many of the colleagues are not pulling their own weight. Store manager C said, *"I hate coming back to work after a day off as somebody has kicked off when I'm not there and I have to resolve it".* Store manager E said, *"I often work six days a week, otherwise the work won't get done".* Collectively the four store managers used words as stressful, anxious, stretched, and exhausting to describe the culture in store.

The four managers spoke about the effects of COVID-19 and the anxiety and stress experienced by members of management and colleagues. They spoke of the isolation experienced, the wearing of masks, the social distancing, and the lack of social interaction. This they said had a profound impact on the store culture and they believed that many members of management and colleagues are not back to their old selves a pre COVID-19 times. Store manager D said, *"I have a number of colleagues who I find it very difficult to talk to, as they refer to COVID-19 having and negative impact on them and I feel if I put them under any pressure at all they will just go out sick again".* Store managers E and F both talked about the lack of decisions and direction given from head office regarding COVID 19 regulations in the early days of the pandemic. Absenteeism was substantial to create pressure, stress, and anxiety among the rest of the colleague population and the management who continued to go to work. Both managers talked about the focus and supports put in place to support colleague absences and yet management were expected to work extra hours and longer days to make up the shortfall in store, and on some occasions had to work on their day off.

Both managers commented on the lack of support that was put in place for the store management population and furthermore, regional managers now behave as though there was never a pandemic, and all is now back to normal.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion

The dilemma facing managers today is the wrestle between being democratic with employees and at the same time maintaining control and authority to deliver organisational goals. The truth is there are many situations where autocratic decision making is acceptable and on the other hand democratic leadership is more appropriate. Simple tasks easily understood by everyone may be autocratic by nature whereas highly skilled colleagues may well be designated a task whereby the colleagues themselves will decide on the path to follow to solve the problem.

Blake and Mouton (1964) and Zaccaro (2021) identified that better performance outcomes and successes are achieved through relationship oriented leadership than task oriented leadership. There is clear evidence that much of the leadership style of store managers C, D, E, and F is task oriented. The very nature of creating worklists and allocating the work to colleagues based solely on the best person approach inhibits others from learning and contributing to the wider team and will ultimately negatively impact on the store culture. However, Manager D displayed some transformational leadership characteristics when communicating with team members.

Berson (2001) concluded that strong leadership requires a vision which provides clear direction for followers and leads to more successful outcomes. Although there is evidence of a clear direction mapped out by store managers A and B, there is little evidence to support any substantial forward-looking direction mapped out by the other four store managers. In fact, there is more evidence that operations in the stores managed by store managers C, D, E and F are executed daily and that colleagues and management struggle with operational efficiencies, which negatively impact on organisational culture. Yukl and Gardner (2020) stated that colleague behaviours and attitudes are directly affected by the attitudes and behaviours of the leadership team. In the four stores C, D, E and F there appears to be little difference between the behaviours of the leadership teams and that of the colleagues as the leadership team would appear to be anxious and stressed. Bass (1990) concluded that followers needed clear goals and objectives.

Transformational leadership styles were dominant in stores A & B while transactional leadership styles were dominant in stores C, D, E, and F. According to Kleinman

(2004) transformational leadership styles lead to higher rates of colleague retention than those of a transactional leadership style. Stores A & B spoke of being over committed on labour resources as management and colleagues in their stores had not left the business. However, stores C, D, E, and F all faced challenges as some management and colleagues decided to leave the business and move to an alternative employer, which aligns with Kleinman's conclusion.

There was clear evidence of goals and objectives being monitored by all six store managers. Barnes (1978) concluded that transactional leaders focused primarily on achieving goals with little regard to how they are achieved, and Bass (1990) concluded colleague engagement is eroded overtime in a transactional environment. There is clear evidence that store managers C, D, E, and F display transactional leadership behaviours in their approach to hitting targets and furthermore this environment feeds into lower employee retention rates. Lewin et al (1939) alluded to the negative impacts on culture driven by an autocratic leadership style. Store managers E and F displayed leadership traits of an autocratic leadership style particularly when dealing with underperformance, negatively impacting on organizational culture and employee retention rates.

Thapa & Parimoo (2022) concluded that encouraging employees to use their own judgment and emotional intelligence leads to higher employee engagement resulting in better outcomes. There is strong evidence that store managers A and B engage with their management teams and colleagues and allow them the freedom to use their own emotional intelligence to solve problems and create solutions. This is further evidence of transformational leadership behaviours creating a more participative environment where colleagues grow and learn, are more highly engaged and in turn supports the theory which leads a more positive and inclusive culture and higher employee retention rates.

Hill and Lineback (2011) put forward that trust was a key foundation in building strong relationships. Trust is built through the interactions and communications between management and colleagues alike. It is evident that strong relationships built on trust exist among the store teams managed by store manager A and B. These strong relationships allow for open and honest conversations enabling all to learn grow in a supportive environment, enhancing the organizational culture and employee retention

rates. There is evidence to suggest that the same level of trust does not exist among the teams of the other four store managers. This has a negative impact the organizational culture and employee intent retention rates.

Ibarra and Hunter (2007) deducted that leaders who create large networks of people acquire more power and influence due to those networks where they can find support, information, and gain feedback efficiently. There was evidence that store managers A & B were actively building their respective network bases, which allows them to acquire the information and necessary support to deliver a continuous program of personal learning and development for all management and colleagues in their stores. This again has a positive impact on the organisational culture and employee retention rates. The opposite was the case for the other four store managers negatively impacting on organisational culture and employee retention rates.

Manzoni and Barsoux (1998) alluded 2 in-groups and out-groups where leaders depend on the same few colleagues to complete important tasks creating in-groups while other colleagues are excluded creating out-groups. This practice was evident in the stores managed by store managers C, E and F and while it might appear to be a quick win in completing tasks the reality is those managers are setting up groups within their stores which ultimately may lead to conflict, as the members of the outgroup will become more disengaged and resentful to those within the ingroups who they might justly believe are shown to receive favouritism from the management team, negatively impacting on the organizational culture and employee retention rates.

Gupta & Srivastava (2021) concluded that there was a direct link between increased workloads, stress, and anxiety. Store managers C, D, E, and F Spoke at length about the challenges they had in completing daily workloads due to absenteeism, key colleagues had left the business, and even because of key colleagues being on a day off or away on holiday. This really highlights the need for all teams to be multi skilled across departments. With individual managers and colleagues being overworked and under pressure, for whatever reason, can only have a negative impact on the store culture and employee retention rates.

6.1 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has clearly shown that transformational leadership behaviours exist in high performing stores. However, the transactional leadership behaviours present in the other stores indicates a sizeable gap exists between these stores and the high performing stores. Further studies could be carried out with a larger sample to determine more accurately as to the actual management behaviour leadership styles that exist throughout the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, a quantitative survey capturing the full management teams may yield valuable insights.

Cordery et al. (2010) alluded to the importance of autonomy in quick decision-making in complex environments. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly had a negative impact on both management and store colleagues, and it appears that some store managers have coped throughout the pandemic quite well while others struggled and continue to deal with the fallout from the pandemic particularly in relation to staff morale and well-being. Further study could be carried out to assess the short and long term impacts of COVID-19 on organizational culture to identify what supports, trainings or other mechanisms could be implemented to support the well-being and development of both management and employee teams.

6.2 Strengths and Limitations

This study by its qualitative nature represents a moment in time and it must be noted that the study was undertaken during a period at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2022. Thus, it is worthy to note that the information gathered from the interviews may be clouded because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the researcher is confident that the data gathered is a true reflection of the actual leadership behaviours that exist in the stores at that period due to the anonymity afforded to all the store managers who agreed to be interviewed.

Company data on actual employee retention rates was not used as a measure. However, it is unlikely to assume that colleagues were leaving the business in stores where transactional leadership behaviors existed while colleagues working in stores where transformational leadership behaviors existed decided to remain with the

business was coincidental. It is more likely to conclude that colleagues working in stores where transformational leadership behaviours existed were happier in their roles. It is also worth noting that employee satisfaction ratings and colleague engagement scores were substantially higher in the high performing stores managed by store managers A & B than in those stores managed by the other four store managers.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to discover what leadership behaviours existed in a sample of retail stores, operating in the non-food retail industry within the Republic of Ireland. The research was designed to ascertain how leadership behaviours impact on the organisational culture and employee retention.

The literature review identified that transformational leadership behaviours create a strong and positive culture where employees experience personal development, feel valued as part of a high performing team, are more engaged and are less likely to leave the business than employees working in a transactional leadership behavioural environment.

Higgins (2020) alluded to the key feelings as doubt, anger, pressure, and stress that leads to a culture which inhibits growth and successful outcomes for the business and employees, and the key feelings as enthusiasm, humility, compassion, and gratitude that create a more positive culture where employees can learn and experience personal growth to perform at their best.

A strong store culture driven by transformational leadership behaviours creates an environment where strong teams can flourish and great communication encourages and builds everyone, where all feel valued as a team member, fully engaged with the will and determination to succeed. This environment builds high self-esteem in individuals and a sense of belonging which can be hard to let go and therefore is much more valuable to individual employees then pay and rewards.

This study has shown that the more positive cultural elements exist where the leadership behaviours are in line with transformational leadership behaviours. Furthermore, where these behaviours exist performance outputs are better, colleague satisfaction and colleague engagement scores are higher leading the researcher to conclude that transformational leadership behaviours improves the in-store culture and leads to a higher employee retention rate.

7.1 Practical Implications

Transformational leadership behaviours drive a better in-store culture, supports higher rates of employee retention, and delivers greater performance outputs for the business. However, from the six store managers who were interviewed these leadership behaviours were only present in two store operations, meaning that 67% of the stores operating in the Republic of Ireland could potentially deliver greater performance outputs for the business. To that end the researcher recommends the introduction of a leadership training program, whereby all store managers can reap the benefits. Educating every store manager of the benefits of transformational leadership behaviours will dramatically transform their stores, support a better in-store culture, and certainly will begin to alleviate some of the pressures and stresses that exist today.

Best practice approaches should be shared amongst all store managers. For example, multi-skilling colleagues to enable them to work across all departments in store will help to reduce workloads, tensions, and anxiety. Another example is store managers can support each other when managing difficult conversations or dealing with underperformance. Peer groups constructed, with a minimum of one store manager from a high performing store, in groups of four or five could meet once a month to share best practice.

To support managers, an expert from each department in head office could be invited to the monthly regional team call to share information and allow store managers the opportunity to build greater networks.

7.2 Timelines for Implementation

A leadership development program should be implemented at the earliest opportunity. External companies are available to deliver such programs, however there is a transformation department at head office in company Y and as such the expertise and know-how to deliver the program is available in-house. The leadership program could be delivered over two days in groups of five or six. Thus, a full leadership rollout could

be implemented and completed throughout the Republic of Ireland in a four to six week period.

Support groups of four or five store managers chaired by a high performing store manager could be constructed without delay and implemented in a couple of weeks. The individual groups could have full autonomy as to how often they meet to satisfy the needs of each member of the group.

Invitations to head office personnel could be issued immediately to ensure a representative from one of the departments in head office would be available to attend the monthly regional call from next month forward and present to the store managers.

7.4 Cost Implications

The only major cost implication would be if the business decided to recruit an external company to deliver the leadership program. However, the researcher believes as the capability exists within the organisation that the leadership program can be delivered from our own resources at minimal cost.

There is no cost involved in creating consultative peer groups, or for inviting departmental experts to the monthly regional call other than their time as all these meetings take place over Teams.

7.5 Personal Learning Statement

This study, although challenging at times was very rewarding. So often conversations take place but are we truly listening and absorbing the information in any meaningful way. The researcher has learned that if you truly listen there is so much more to be learned. To dissect a conversation, and record and review the information to discover underlying themes and root causes was incredibly rewarding. Furthermore, the researcher in reviewing literature found it was quite fascinating to now understand the meaning of the information gathered. In understanding the wider impacts and implications based on the information given and knowing there are actions which can

be taken to make a difference, improving workplaces, improving working environments, and improving human behaviour is quite profound.

While completing this dissertation and indeed through many of the modules throughout the two year MBA program there were times I had to dig deep to keep going. I learned that almost anything is possible to achieve regardless of the external circumstances. I have learned to always ask for help and support and the generosity and willingness to help I received from all my colleagues in the NBA was nothing short of incredible and for that I am so grateful.

The greatest learning and take away for me is that if you want something and desire it badly enough then you can absolutely achieve anything.

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Consent Form and Information

Thank you for agreeing to allow me to interview you and supporting me in the completion of my dissertation towards my MBA studies at The National College of Ireland.

The aim of the dissertation is to better understand how leadership behaviours influence the culture within the organisation and furthermore how those behaviours might impact on colleague retention rates.

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to conduct and will be discussion based. Information gathered will be strictly confidential and anonymous. Company names, brands, or personal details will not be disclosed in the dissertation. The information will only be used for the purposes of the dissertation. This study will be completed under guidance by my supervisor Dave Cormack who's contact details I have included below along with my own should you have any queries or questions.

You are under no obligation to answer any of the questions where you may feel uncomfortable to do so.

All the data will be stored electronically, password protected and accessible only by the researcher. The data will be held for a period as directed by the National College of Ireland and thereafter will be destroyed.

My supervisor is Dave Cormac, and he can be contacted at dave.cormack@ncirl.ie or alternatively you can contact me at x20137079@ncirl.ie Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any queries.

Thank You again for your support.

Declan Murphy

MBA Student

National College of Ireland.

Appendix 2 Interview Questions

Completing Tasks and Getting Things Done

How do you schedule work to be completed throughout the week?

Who does what? and how are the team multi-skilled?

How do you allocate tasks among your team?

What tasks do you take full ownership for?

What gets in the way of getting tasks done?

Communication

How do you communicate with your management team?

How do you communicate with your colleagues?

How do you ensure both management and colleagues understand what is required of them?

How do your management team and colleagues communicate with you?

Building Strong Teams

What does teamwork feel and look like in your store?

How do you ensure management and colleagues are happy in their role?

How do you recognise great performance?

How do you address underperformance?

What do you consider are the key elements to create strong teams?

How do you promote personal learning and development in store?

Networking and Collaboration

Where do you get your information on policies and procedures?

How do you find clarity around vague issues?

Where do you go to look for support and advice?

What networks have you created throughout the organisation?

How important are networks to support you?

Culture

How would you describe the current culture in your store?

What do you believe to be the reason for the existing culture?

What actions do you take to improve or maintain the current culture?

What do you believe are the key elements required to create a better culture?

What will you do to create a better culture?