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Date: 17/08/2022

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The role of organisational improvisation in companies objectives: perceptions from people working in Ireland
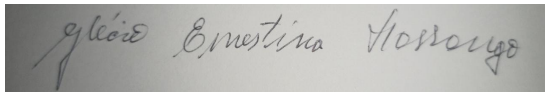
By
Glecio Ernestina Massango
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A Research Project submitted at the National College of Ireland, School of Business

August 2022

DECLARATION

I have not submitted this research project for a degree or other award at any other university. It is entirely my own unique work.

Signature - Glecio ernestina Massango, 17/08/2022

This research project has been carried out by the candidate under my supervision as the university supervisor.

Signature, _____/Date _____

Brendan Cullen

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents (Ernestina Zacarias Massango and Rui Junior Nhancande) for everything there have done for me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Abstract

This research aimed to capture empirical evidence on the Irish professionals' attitudes towards improvisation and assess to what extent socio-demographic factors could play an essential role in explaining improvisation in organisations. For this purpose, the time frame of 2020 to 2022 was considered.

An online survey was launched nationally in Ireland and responded to by 246 participants who worked in were working in Ireland when the survey took place. The survey took place from 1st to 10th July 2022 nationwide.

For the analyses, four aspects of improvisation were considered, (1) the rate of the role of improvisation in organisations; (2) the extent to which internal or external factors provoke improvisation; (3) the level of the leaders' encouragement to improvisation and (4) the perceived level of success. Additionally, few demographic features were considered for the analyses, including (1) the age of the respondents; (2) the age of the organisations; (3) the size of the organisations, (4) the length of experience in the organisation; (5) the gender of professionals; (6) the sector of work and (7) the level of influence in the organisation as well as the geographic region they are from[1]. Similarly, perceived democracy and the perceived level of influence were also analysed regarding its impact on improvisation.

The overall conclusion is that, on average, people working in Ireland are more likely to see benefits from improvisation than negative aspects; they consider external factors as more likely to provoke improvisation than internal; they think of their organisational leaders as more encouraging improvisation than not and; they are significantly optimistic about they improvisation skills. However, the extent to which they assume these positions varies according to the different demographic factors under analysis.

Keywords: improvisation, organisational improvisation, improvisation aspects, demographic factors and Irish professionals.

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[1] According to the Central Statistic Office (2021), newly 13% of the population living in Ireland is not Irish.

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

The last two years (2020-21) have been marked by unexpected changes worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing governments to impose restrictive measures to control the spread of the disease. The evolution of the pandemic, marked by the outbreak of new and more severe variants of COVID-19, resulted in alternation between reinforcement and easing of the restrictive measures, affecting all kinds of enterprises, whether from the public sector, private or not-for-profit sector.

The pandemic came at a moment when the markets were already highly competitive due to the effects of globalisation, rapid flow of information and advances in technology. Recent literature in the management discipline has pointed out challenges to the planning process in contexts of rapid changes. Some authors have stressed that rapid changes could make long-term plans look absolute at times, which forces organisations to be more creative and flexible (Hitt et al. 2012: 112; Hadida et al. 2015:437; Fisher & Barret, 2019; Amorim & Pereira, 2015).

Given fast-changing environments, management discipline authors have increasingly emphasised improvisation's role in the management process. In this context, improvisation is understood as taking and executing decisions to respond to unplanned events, regardless of opportunities or threats (Hadida et al., 2015; Fisher & Barrets, 2019).

As Whalen (2014) points out, unexpected barriers during plans' implementation happen, and companies need to be able to overcome them. Hitt et al. (2012) argue that the dynamism of the contexts where the companies are operating demands plans to be adjusted to the environmental changes since some objectives can become unrealistic or too quickly achieved, which could result in the need to change the initial plans and implementation.

Authors like Hadida et al. (2015:438), Hitt et al. (2012:123), Amorim and Pereira (2015) have warned managers and their companies about the importance of helping employees to recognise and accept the need to adapt plans in real-time and build capabilities to enable them to do so effectively. "In today's dynamic environment, a fixed and rigid plan can be as dangerous as having no plan at all", warn Hitt et al. (2012:123). Mankins and Steele (2006) also advocate adopting more flexible approaches to management to allow the managers to make strategic decisions that can contribute to the organisational objectives. In the same line, Pratt (2007), when talking about the role of intuition in decision-making under uncertain situations, advised managers and firms to promote repetitive practices and continuous learning on how to deal with adverse conditions.

Thus, organisational improvisations have been mentioned in literature as enabling companies to deal with unexpected events (Hadida et al., 2015, Crossan et al., 2005) and helping them overcome barriers, discomfort or constraints (Amorim & Pereira, 2015). However, some authors warn that despite the benefits of improvisation in dealing with unplanned events, their outcomes are not always as intended (Amorin and Pereira, 2015: 1804, Crossan et al., 2005)). The exact position is assumed by Pratt (2007) when talking about the role of intuition in organisational decision-making. Different professionals have shown different abilities to improvise and deal with unexpected changes and attitudes towards improvisation. Some organisations have encouraged improvisation more than others. Similarly, some have improvised more effectively than others.

Even though organisations and their members have always improvised, as a research field, it is relatively new. Only from 1980 onwards that a significant number of researchers cast interest in this

topic, and so increased the understanding of its role in business success (Hitt et al. 2012: 112; Hadida et al. 2015:437; Fisher & Barret, 2019).

Despite efforts to widen the understanding of the role of improvisation on companies' performances and ability to deal with unexpected events, little is known about how professionals from different sectors evaluate its role in their work or even in organisational success. Similarly, little is known about the relationship between social and demographic factors such as place of residency, experience, age, gender of the professionals in different sectors, size of the organisation and the likelihood of the professionals evaluating the role of improvisation positive or negatively and so be willing to encourage it or not. To bridge this gap, the current research aims to understand and explain the relationship between different socio-demographic features and attitudes towards improvisation's role in business success in Ireland.

1.1.Research questions:
Thus, the following are the main questions the research will try to answer.

To what extent can socio-demographic factors matter for attitudes and skills on organisational improvisation? What are the Irish professional's attitudes towards improvisation role in the success of their businesses/organisations?

1.2.Hypotheses
Main hypotheses: Social demographic factors are critical to how organisations and professionals deal with improvisation.

Sub Hypotheses 1: Elder, more experienced and skilled individuals are more likely to deal with unplanned events effectively than their younger, unexperienced, unskilled counterparts;

Sub Hypotheses 2: the more powerful/influential a professional feel in an organisation, the more likely that individual feels confident to improvise when needed

Sub Hypotheses 3: An organisation's perceived level of democracy increases the likelihood of its professionals having favourable attitudes and developing improvisation skills.

Sub Hypotheses 4: Smaller organisations are more favourable to improvisation than their larger counterparts

1.3.Research objectives
Primary objective: the main aim of this research is to produce empirical evidence, based on Irish professionals' experiences, about the relationship between socio-demographic features on organisational improvisation attitudes in Ireland.

1.3.1.Secondary objective:
Contribute to the understanding of the role of improvisation in business operations

Evaluate the role played by improvisation from 2020 to 2022, a context marked by rapid and unpredictable changes related to globalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic.3193

1.4.Key Concepts
Planning, Improvisation/Organisational improvisation will be defined next as the critical concepts of the research.

1.4.1.Planning

Hitt et al. (2012: 113) define planning as a "process to determine and implement actions to achieve organisational objectives". Similarly, (Abraham, 2012:11) describes planning as the process by which individuals and organisations develop strategies to achieve their objectives. In this research, planning will mostly be seen as a process set before the action is implemented, in contrast with the decisions taken while it is being implemented, as is the case with improvisation.

1.4.2.Improvisation and organisational improvisation

Unlike planning, improvisation happens as a response to unplanned events or dysfunctional systematic routines (Hadida et al., 2015; Fisher & Barrets, 2019) and so represents a deviation from plans (Whalen, 2014). Crossan et al. (2005) define improvisation action that occurs extemporaneously in the nick and real-time while blending conflicting concepts like planning and acting, discipline and freedom, control and spontaneity. Aligned to these definitions, Tabesh and Vera (2020:16) state that it is "intuition guiding action spontaneously.

According to Leybourne and Sadler-Smith (2006), improvisation in the context of management involves "moving away from agreed plan Ito accelerate the implementation. Felgueiras e Sousa et al.(2020) define improvisation as an unpredictable, quick answer to change. They add that improvised decisions are implemented simultaneously when they are reformulated. Aligned to this definition, Tabesh and Vera (2020) state that improvisation helps to bring novel organisational action spontaneously and in an action-oriented way.

In literature, improvisation has often been associated with intuition. However, Tabesh and Vera (2020: 16) clarify that the former can occur without the latter, which means that intuition is only part of improvisation but not the same thing.

2. Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research approach, method and data collection technique. It also presents the reasons behind the chosen procedures while recognising their limitations and strengths. Following this introductory paragraph, the research design session will be given; after the research design, the same data collection technique, the weaknesses and strengths of the methodological approach will follow in this order before explaining how the data will be processed after collection.

2.1. Research Design

In terms of research design, the current research is cross-sectional since it evaluates relationships between multiple variables while also analysing different groups, i.e. women, men, elder and younger professionals, more and less experienced.

Considering that the research aims to understand the role of demographic factors on improvisation attitudes and abilities, a quantitative method was found more appropriate. A quantitative approach will help to test the relationship between concepts, namely, the social demographic factors such as age, experience, type of organisation (private, not-for-profit or governmental), place of residency and the likelihood of individuals and organisations to value, encourage and develop improvisational skills.

The independent variables for this research are the socio-demographic factors such as age, place of residency, work sector, experience, and company size. The independent value is the person's or organisational likelihood to value, encourage, develop, and apply improvisational skills.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is not the main focus of this research, it will be used to help respondents recall moments they faced unplanned events in recent years.

2.2. Sample and data collection technique

The primary data to test the hypotheses, a survey was launched nationally in Ireland from the first to the 10th of July 2022. All respondents were above t18 by the time they responded and worked in the country, regardless of their origin, gender, work sector, or anything else.

A total of 246 responses were collected, representing approximately one respondent per 10,000 of the population under study. The gender distribution of the respondents is relatively balanced, with 117 (48%) females and 129 (52% male. This balanced gender distribution will be important in assuring a significant level of representativeness of the target population since a diverse number of men and women participated in the survey.

Survey respondents distributed by gender

Female 117

Male 129
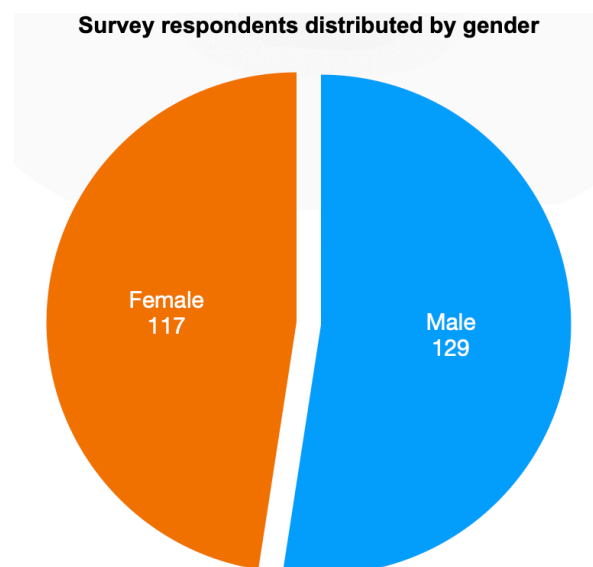
Caption

2.2.1. Respondent's age segregation

The respondents were asked to indicate their age group according to pre-defined options. This question was included to capture potential differences in respondents' attitudes based on age. The

age group of 25 to 34 had the highest number of respondents, with 131 (53%) submitting their responses. The age groups of 18 to 24 and 35 to 49 came second and third with 59 (24%) and 45 (18%) respectively. The age group of 50 years or more ranked last, with only 11 people submitting responses.

It is a weakness that the age groups are not equivalent to the Irish professionals' age segregation. However, this weakness was minimised by the fact that all these age groups are significantly represented in the survey, which helps the study's representativeness.

Survey respondents by age groups
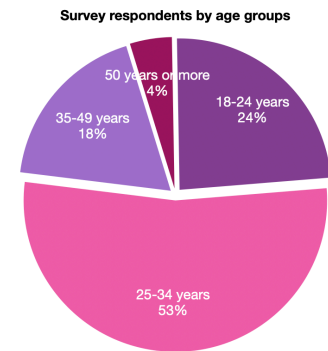
2.2.2.Respondents' geographic area of origin

Aiming to have an insight into how demographic factors like the place of origin could influence professionals' attitudes towards improvisation, participants were asked to indicate the geographic area of origin.

This is particularly important given that a considerable part o people living in Ireland are foreigners. According to the Central Statistics Office, nearly 13% of people living in Ireland by April 2021 were non-Irish. So, the researcher aimed to ensure that this group of people was represented in the survey. However, Irish people are the most represented group in the survey. As shown in the **chart number, 42%** of survey participants were Irish, followed by south Americans, who constituted

Geographic areas where the respondents are from

21% of the respondents, and Europeans, no-Irish, who comprised 13% of the respondents. Africans and Asians constituted 10% of the respondents each, and North Americans 4%.
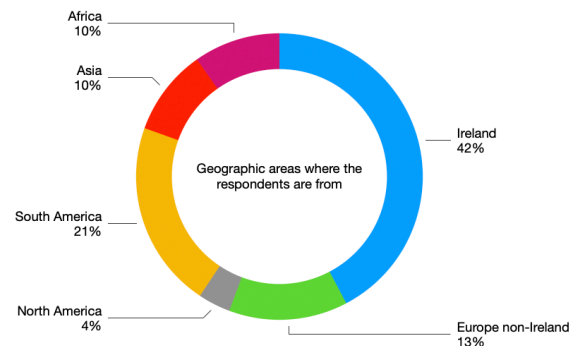
It is a weakness that the proportion of people from different parts of the world is not proportional to the ratio of residents or professionals in Ireland from that region. However, since the research focused on understanding the diverse groups' attitudes, it was helpful that all the areas had a significant number of respondents, which is associated with the significantly more significant number of survey respondents.

2.2.3.Respondents' sector of work

The respondent's sector or for is another demographic feature that was considered for the research, aiming to assess to what extent it can influence improvisation attitudes.

Literature did not provide enough insights on the relationship between the sector of work and

The respondents' sector of work

improvisation attitudes, which is why this research aimed to bridge the gap.

As shown in the chart, from the total of 246 respondents, 69% were from the private sector, 24% and 8% were from the not-for-profit sector.
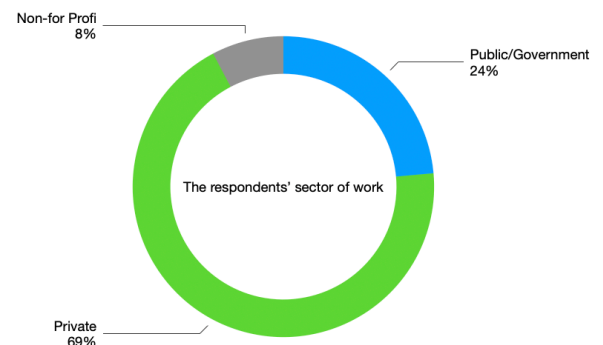
2.2.4.Data collection technique

The survey was created through Google Forms, and its link will be published on social media. To reach the respondents, the researcher used multiple strategies. Initially, a link to the survey form on google forms was shared with the public on the National College of Ireland (NCI) Student Unions Instagram account. Similarly, the researcher shared the link on private Facebook pages composed of Irish resented from different parts of the world. WhatsApp groups the researcher is part of, together with other people who live in Ireland, were also used to spread the survey form asking people to respond and share with their contact. After only getting 50 responses in the first five days, the researcher approached respondents in different crowded places in Dublin, asking potential respondents to answer the survey directly on the researcher's mobile phone. This strategy allowed the intended number of respondents was reached. All respondents had access to the consent form before responding anonymously to the questionnaire.

The sample was primarily probabilistic since all target population members who use social media had roughly the same probability of accessing and responding to the survey online. Similarly, all the members of the population who visit crowded places like bus and Luas stops, public transport users, and people who frequent commercial areas also had roughly similar possibilities to respond to the survey since the research approached the respondents randomly in those places. However, limited resources and time forced the study to integrate some non-probabilistic features to ensure that a reasonable number of respondents could be reached. For example, on social media, members of private groups the researcher is part of had a relatively higher probability of having access to the survey. Regarding people that were approached randomly in the streets, commercial places, buses and Luas stops, the researchers selected only a few, which conveniently means some features of the non-probabilistic sample were introduced.

Similarly, the fact that all respondents had the choice to participate in the survey or not means that the sample also applied some features of convenient sampling.

All questions on the survey will be closed, saving the respondents time and making statistical analysis more accessible. This type of question is also aligned with the choice of the quantitative method in terms of allowing the collection of a significantly higher number of responses with the possibility to process the resulting data with relative ease.

2.3.Some Weaknesses and strengths

One of the weaknesses of a simple sample is that it does not assure fair representativeness of different groups based on indicators such as age, gender, level of seniority, and perceived power inside the populations under study. However, all members of the target population will have the same possibilities to respond to the survey and more so if they are active social media users.

The relatively large number of the collected responses ensures that all relevant groups are fairly represented. It is a weakness that the use of online surveys makes it highly likely that respondents stop responding o the survey when they find anything unclear. Only respondents could decide not to finish the study if they find it unclear instead of asking questions to the researcher. On the one hand, this could mean having a relatively reduced number of responses to the survey. On the other hand, it could result in not securing the most appropriate data stratification. However, the $50 budget to boost a publication with the survey will help to counter this weakness.

2.4.Data processing

Since the data was collected through an online survey, it was saved on the researcher's Google Drive. The researcher downloaded the responses to an excel file to make charts supporting the

analyses. The charts will compare the correlation between different variables and test the hypotheses backed by previous studies about the role of improvisation in business/organisational success.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyse the data. Firstly, descriptive statistics will be used to inform the readers about the main features of the respondents, according to different socio-demographic characteristics included in the survey and the responses they provided. The inferential statistics will be applied to explain more deeply the research finding. While the descriptive statistic will help to understand the method and the data collected, the inferential statistics will help to test the proposed hypotheses.

Data will be disaggregated in terms of gender to test how explanatory it can be to the improvisation attitudes in the Irish working class. Age disaggregation will help to test the relationship between age and the likelihood of people becoming good improvisers or having a positive attitude towards improvisation in the working environment.

Eighteen years is the minimum legal age to work in Ireland. Different international and legal organisations would think of 24 or 34 years as the last year of youth. That's why the age groups were organised to satisfy both perspectives.

Since Ireland has a significant number of foreign workers, a question on the respondent's nationality was included, which captures the continents as the distinctive feature. The choice for the continent was made to make the answers quickly and statistically manageable.

The sector of work of the respondents will be captured in the survey to understand its impact on improvisation. For this purpose, the data will be disaggregated on whether a respondent works for a government, private or charity organisation.

The age and size of the organisation will be captured to assess if it influences the improvisation likelihood of its professionals.

The organisation's size will also be assessed on whether it impacts the professional's attitudes towards improvisation.

3. Chapter 3: Literature review
3.1. Effectiveness of organisational improvisation

The debate on the effectiveness of organisational improvisation has not produced one-size-fits-all conclusions, leading to some organisations being willing to promote and encourage improvisation from their professionals while others discourage it. The negative impact on the organisational hierarchy in more rigid organisations has led their leaders to be relatively more averse to improvising professionals.

Leybourne and Sadler-Smith (2006) highlight that improvisation has been seen as an organisational dysfunction, meaning a deviation from the traditional way of doing things consisting of planning and then implementing. According to these authors, this narrative prevailed until the 1960s.

However, more recently, the number of authors and practitioners who recognise it as an essential skill for the managerial process has been increasing. The acceptance of improvisation's positive role in management resulted from the understanding that many things that happen are unpredictable and impossible to plan a response to. The modern, fast-changing, turbulent business environments make plans ineffective in the execution phase, giving space for improvisation (Leybourne and Sadler-Smith, 2006, Tabesh and Vera, 2020, Crossan et al., 2005))

Eisenhardt (1990) established a difference between slow and fast decision-makers and concluded that the laters were highly likely to meet organisational goals than the formers and so advised companies to prepare their professionals on how to become quick decision-makers.

As the author states, quick decision-makers work more on real-time information and process information from multiple past to present sources. By contrast, slow decision makers spend more time planning processes based on futurist approaches trying to predict the tendencies. As the author states, slow decision-makers consider one or fewer alternatives per time, while their faster counterparts consider multiple of them simultaneously. By considering many options simultaneously, the quick decision-makers can benefit from comparing and ranking them, so they immediately jump to the second option once the first option fails. Quick decision-makers emphasise breadth to the depth of their analysis when using comparative analysis to many alternatives simultaneously, which helps them to create enough confidence to make a decision.

The idea behind improvisation is aligned with what Bob de Wit (2020) call the holistic perspective reasoning for decision making. According to his explanation, this perspective recognises the role of intuitive thinking and so values the role of experience, education and interactions that the decision-maker possesses. This approach is an alternative to the rational thinking perspective, which highlights the role of logical, analytical thinking, which is highly connected to forecasting, planning and implementing the approach.

By definition, improvisation mostly takes place when the decision-makers are under pressure with minimal time and resources, which makes the quick decision-maker more effective improvisers. After noticing the effectiveness of what Whalen and Boush (2014: 455-466) called post-plan improvisation, they suggested that planning capability could indirectly hurt performance.

However, Barbosa and Davel (2021) recognised that, like any process, improvisation does not always produce positive results. It may undermine coordination and inhibit long-term learning.

On the effectiveness of improvised decisions, the survey will include questions to measure the respondent's opinions about its role in their organisation, whether positive or negative and to what extent.

3.2. Improvisation vs experience

Literature suggests that the level of experience and expert knowledge a professional possesses would play a key role in predicting how effective that professional would improvise. For instance, Hadida et al. (2015) argue that spontaneous/improvised actions require a high level of competence that often comes from practice and experience, which suggests that the more an individual is experienced, the more likely that individual is to improvise a solution when needed successfully.

Similarly, the holistic perspective discussed by Bob de Wit (2020) also highlights the role of accumulated experience from the decision maker as a critical asset for the quality decision-making process.

Mannucci et al. (2021) state that improvisation is a crucial enabler of organisational agility. So, professionals who are good improvisers help companies to respond to different types of crises and fast-changing contexts. These authors present three types of improvisation developed sequentially, imitative, reactive and generative. As they explain, imitative improvisation is mainly done by less experienced professionals and is so less effective since it consists of copying what the more experienced professionals do. The reactive improvisation responds to existing threats and opportunities and requires a more experience from its practitioners than the imitative. Lastly, generative improvisation is the most complex and compelling and enables companies to anticipate opportunities and threats. Based on these authors' research, it can be assumed that the more experienced a professional is, the more effective that professional becomes at improvising.

Similarly, research from (Leybourne & Sadler-Smith, 2006) concludes that experienced managers improvise more than those with less experience. Tabesh and Vera also corroborate with the understanding that experience plays a crucial role in improvisation. They argue that decision-makers systematic analytical routines and cost-benefit analyses improve their ability to improvise in unexpected scenarios.

Based on the above premises, one of the hypotheses from the current research is that more experienced professionals are highly likely to improvise and do it more effectively than their less experienced counterparts.

3.3. The role of the structure in improvisation

On the other hand, Whalen and Boush (2014: 455) state that organisations with lower organisational memory are more likely to improvise than those with higher organisational memory. Thus, they suggest that firms with high levels of corporate memory or strong marketing planning capabilities make companies less likely to improvise. However, when they do, they are more successful. Their research found that novice planners were less likely to report successful deviations from plans.

Leybourne and Sadler-Smith (2006) note that the organisation's structure is essential in predicting the likelihood of the organisation to improvise. According to them, intuition (and improvisation are most effective when decision makers have expert knowledge when they face unstructured tasks. Research from these authors suggests a positive relationship between managers' experience and their likelihood to improvise (Leybourne and Sadler-Smith, 2006: 490). These authors also argue that knowledge and expertise play a crucial role in improvisation.

3.4. Impact of organisational culture on improvisation

Barbosa and Davel (2021) argue that minimal organisational structures and simple rules are more likely to incentivise people to improvise flexibly. However, they say that the possible adverse effects of improvisation lead some organisations and leaders not to promote it. They say this is truer

in many highly regulated environments where many managers find improvising aversive, seeing it as "antithetical to the notion of management and organisation".

Barbosa and Davel (2021:155) argue that more traditional and bureaucratic organisations are more likely to avoid or hide improvisation, while organisations seeking novelty are likelier to elicit improvisation. Similarly, Michael C. Mankins and Richard Steele (2006) point out that companies that adopt rigorous planning processes based on calendar and business units produce fewer strategic decisions than those that adopt continuous revision focused on issues. They also found that planning processes have rarely contributed to strategic decision-making. They argue that more flexible approaches to management allow the managers to make strategic decisions that can contribute to the organisational objectives. As they say, the immediate need for action (or reaction) motivates managers to make strategic decisions continuously and then pre-determined calendar periods.

The organisational culture would make some professionals avoid improvisation and even hide when they do use it if they understand that their leaders discourage it (Fisher and Barret, 2019: 149).

Questions regarding the level of democracy felt by professionals were included in the questionnaire to test these premises. Similarly, questions that measure the level of encouragement to improvisation handled by professionals will also be used to measure these premises.

3.5. The role of age on improvisation

When discussing the role of age in improvisation, this research considers two types of generation—the age of the professionals and the age of the organisations.

Regarding the age of the organisation, Barbosa and Davel (2021) state that new organisations or fast-changing are likely to improvise more frequently than their older and stabler counterparts. The current research will test this premise.

When it comes to the age of professionals and its impact on improvisation propensity and effectiveness, the literature does not present significant evidence, a gap this research aims to bridge. By hypothesis, following Barbosa and Davel (2020)'s rationale, it is expected that younger professionals are more likely to improvise and be effective than their older counterparts. These hypotheses were extracted from premises relating to experience and improvisation. Since this research is based on

3.6. Impact of the size on improvisation

Literature has suggested that smaller organisations are more prone to improvise than their bigger counterparts.

For example, O'Toole et al. (2021) argued that due to their smaller size and lack of solid organisational memory, startups had been mentioned in literature as more prone to respond to and seize unexpected events and opportunities than older and larger firms.

There is not much evidence in the literature on the relationship between the size of an organisation and its likelihood to improvise.

Thus, respondents were asked to provide information about the size of the organisations they work for, and further analyses will prove if there is a relationship or not.

Leybourne and Sadler-Smith (2006) note that the organisation's structure is essential in predicting the likelihood of the organisation to improvise. According to them, intuition (and improvisation are most effective when decision makers have expert knowledge when they face unstructured tasks.

3.7.Likelihood to improvise vs quality of improvised decisions

Crossan and colleagues (2005) recognise that improvisation is not a liable predictor of the organisation's success, which means the amount of improvisation does not necessarily represent the quality of the decisions made in a particular organisation. According to the authors, some factors influence improvisation and its effectiveness. So, this research tried to contribute and figure out some of those factors.

So, the data will also be analysed to check the relationship between the propensity to improvise and the effectiveness of improvisation.

4. Chapter 4: Research findings and analysis

This chapter is reserved for presenting the research results regarding findings and analyses. For a better reader's experience, it is divided into two parts. The first part presents the overall results regarding the Irish professionals' attitudes towards improvisation, regardless of the respondents' demographic factors. The second part presents the findings and analyses of the effect of the demographic characteristics on those attitudes.

4.1. A generic overview of improvisation by people working in Ireland

A few variables were considered to understand the Irish professionals' attitudes about improvisation. The survey included questions aiming to understand (1) how respondents rate the role of improvisations in their organisations, whether it is positive or negative, (2) the factor provoking improvisation in organisations, whether they are internal or external, and (3) the level of encouragement of improvisation by organisations leaders as well as (4) the perceived success when improvising.

To answer the questions, respondents were provided with a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 and 5 represent the two extremes of the variables under analysis and 3 is the middle and neutral point of the two extremes. Then 2 and 4 represented the points between the neutral point in the middle and the two extremes. Details on the scale description can be found in the survey attached in appendix 1.

From the collected data, averages to answers to each question were calculated and represented in charts. The chart number 1 below describes the overall answers provided by all the 246 survey respondents.

As evidenced in the chart, the average answers to all four questions fall between the neutral point, 3 and 4, which represents the midpoint between the neutral point and the positive extreme on the right.t
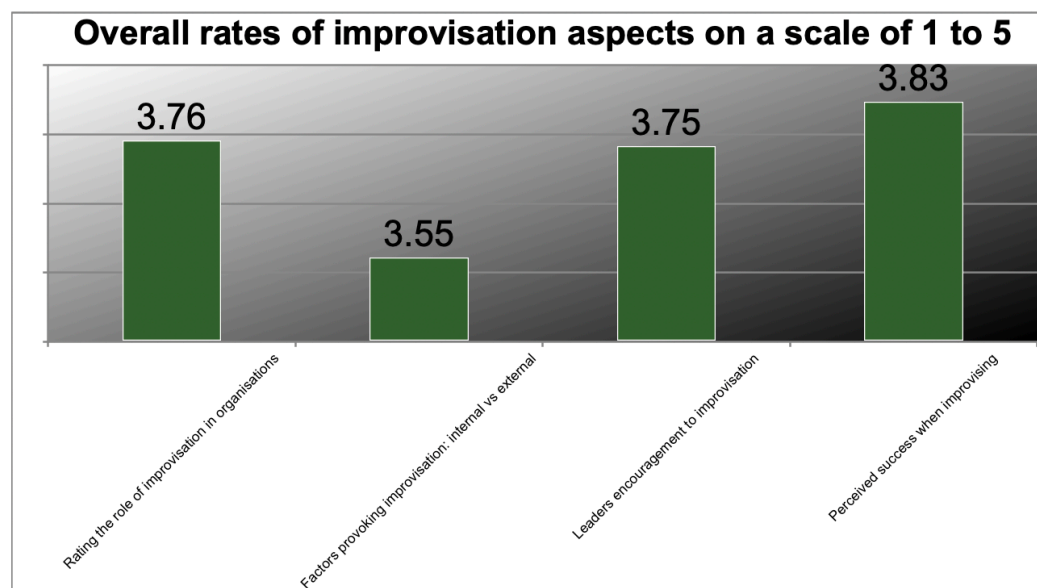
4.1.1. Rating the role of improvisation

Respondents were asked the question: How do you rate the role of improvisation in your organisation? For an answer, they were asked to choose a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means entirely negative, 2 mostly negative, 3 neutral, 4 mostly positive, 5 positive, and five very positive.

The average answer from the 246 was 3.76, which is approximately 4, meaning mostly positive. So, based on the chart 1 above, it can be concluded that Irish professionals regard improvisation as having a mostly positive impact on their organisation. It is essential to recognise that the average answer does not intend to ignore the fact that not all the study's target population share the same opinion. As shown in the chart number x below, 5 respondents responded 1, entirely negative, 14 responded 2, mostly negative, 71 responded 71, neutral, 100 responded mostly positive, while the remaining 56 responded 5, entirely positive.

How do you rate the role of improvisation in your organisation?
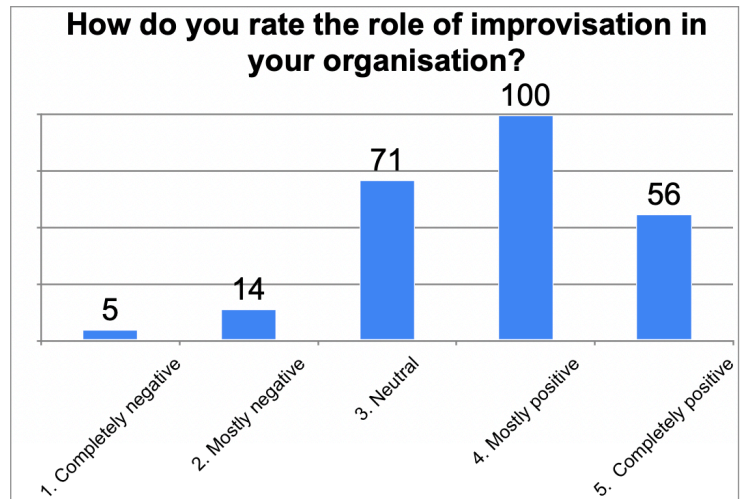
4.1.2.Factors provoking improvisation: internal vs external

The survey participants were asked to tell which factors provoke improvisation the most, whether they think it's internal or external. For the answer, they were given a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents only internal factors, 2 mostly internal factors, 3 neutral, 4 mostly external factors and 5 only internal.

As evidenced in the abovementioned chat 1 above, the average answer is 3.55, which is approximately 4, mostly external. Based on these numbers, it can be concluded that, on average, Irish professionals consider that external factors more than internal ones mostly provoke organisational improvisation. However, it should also be recognised that the population under study is not homogeneous, so the participant's responses vary accordingly. So, 11

What factors are highly likely to force your company to improvise? Rate from 1 to 5

participants chose 1, only internal, 25 chose 2, mostly internal, 75 chose 3, neutral, 87 chose 4, mostly external and the remaining 48 chose 5, only external.
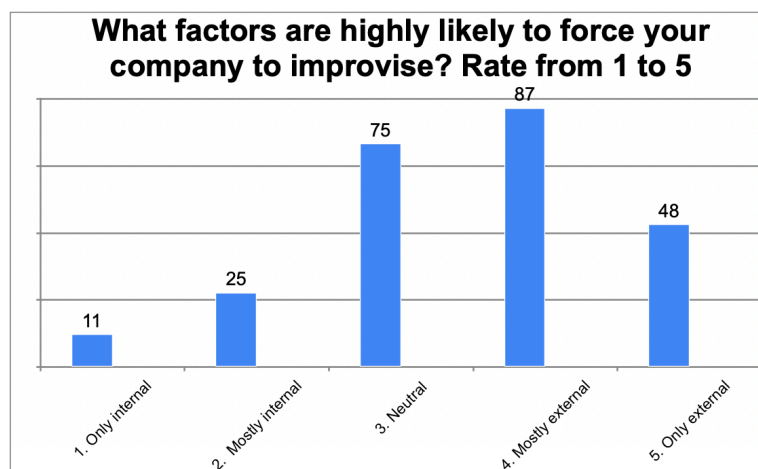
4.1.3.Leaders encouragement to improvisation

Survey participants were asked to inform about the level of encouragement to improvisation they think their organisational leader has. For that purpose, they were given a choice from 1 to 5, where 1 means they believe their corporate leaders are fully discouraging to improvisation at all, 2 they think they are mostly discouraging, 3, neural, 4 mostly encouraging and 5 entirely encouraging.

As evidenced in the chart 1 above, the average answer is 3.75, which is approximate 4, corresponding to mostly encouraging. This rate means that, on average, Irish professionals consider their organisational leaders mostly encourage improvisation.

However, as in other aspects of improvisation, it should be recognised that the population under study is not homogeneous, as evidenced by the survey participants' responses.

As shown in the chart

xx below, 5 respondents consider their leaders fully discouraging to improvisation, 20 consider them mostly discouraging, 74 consider them neutral, 75 consider them mostly encouraging, and 69 think them intimidating. The remaining 3 did not answer the question[2].

How do you think your organisation's leaders value improvising professionals? Rate from 1 to 5.

Category	Value
1. Fully discouraging	5
2. Mostly discouraging	20
3. Neutral	74
4. Mostly encouraging	75
5. Fully encouraging	69
(blank)	3
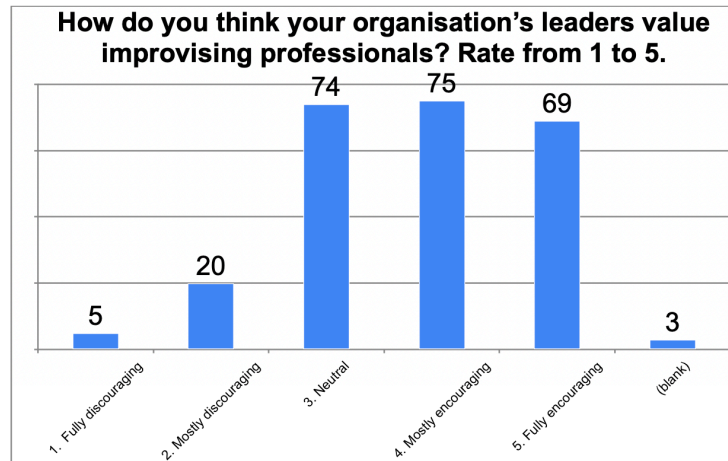
4.1.4.Perceived success when improvising

The research aimed to understand how confident the population under study was about their improvised decisions or action when they do. For a response, participants were given a choice on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 stands for always unsuccessful, 2 for mostly successful, 3 for neutral, 4 for mostly successful and 5 for always successful.

As shown in the chart number xx, above, the average response was 3.83, which is approximately 4, corresponding to mostly encouraging. So, based on this data, it can be assumed that, on average, Irish professionals consider their organisational leaders mostly encourage improvisation.

However, similarly to other aspects of improvisation, it should be recognised that the population under study is not homogeneous, and so aren't their answers regarding how they evaluate their leaders' encouragement of improvisation. These differences are evidenced in the chat number xx below. From a total of 246 respondents to the question, 3 said they were always unsuccessful when improvising, 7 said they were primarily unsuccessful, 62 were neutral, 130 were mostly successful, and the remaining 44 said they were always successful when improvising.

On average, how successful do you think you are when you improvise? Rate on a scale of 1 to 5.

Category	Value
1. Always unsuccessful	3
2. Mostly unsuccessful	7
3. Neutral	62
4. Mostly successful	130
5. Always successful	44
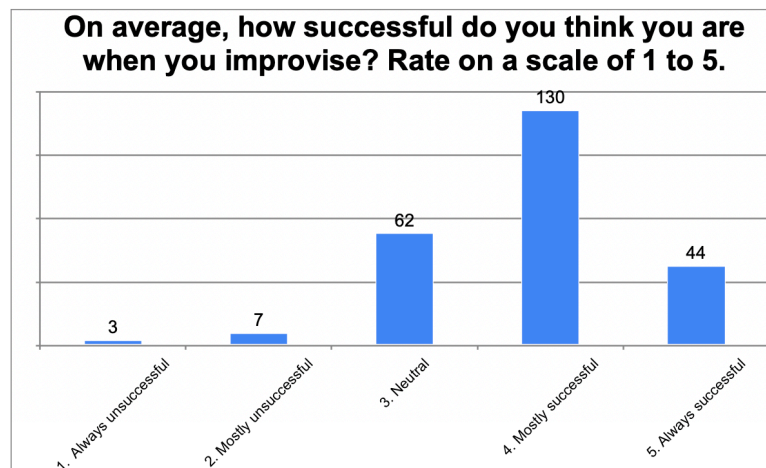
[2] Differently from other question where responding was mandatory to submit the survey responses, for this question respondents were mistakenly allowed not to answer.

4.2.The role of social demographic factors on improvisation

After a general overview of the Irish professional's attitudes towards improvisation, the current session will discuss the impact of social demographic factors on improvisation. So, aspects like age, length of experience, sector of work, geographic area of origin, level of influence in the organisation, and perceived democracy are considered.

4.2.1.The role of age on improvisation attitudes

The current research has revealed that age plays a relevant role in improvisation. An analysis of the survey participants' responses suggests consistent differences in answers given to different questions related to improvisation based on age groups.

To test the suggestion, responses to five questions were analysed in the research, and all of them revealed consistency in the answers given by respondents based on their age groups. The study aimed to understand age groups based on differences in questions seeking to capture the respondents' evaluation of (1) the role of improvisation in organisations: whether its impact is positive or negative; (2) self-evaluation of success rate when improvising, (3) whether organisations' leaders are perceived as encouraging or discouraging to improvisation, (4) which factors are highly likely to provoke improvisation: whether internal or external and (5) which of them external/internal are highly likely to create a positive impact in organisations.

In the following paragraphs, these different questions will be analysed separately.

4.2.1.1.Rating the role of improvisation (negative vs positive) in organisations based on age

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they consider the overall role of improvisation in their organisations as positive or negative. To capture their assessment, they were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means entirely negative; 2 mostly negative, 3 neutral, 4 primarily positive, and 5 entirely positive.

The score for this answer is indicated in the chart 1 by the blue colour. The average response is 3.76, which means Irish professionals regard improvisation as having a mostly positive impact on their organisations. All age groups' answers could be approximated to 4, suggesting that the differences are not huge. However, the age groups' relevance to how Irish professionals regard the role of improvisation is highlighted by the fact that there is a tendency to increase the average score as the age group increases.
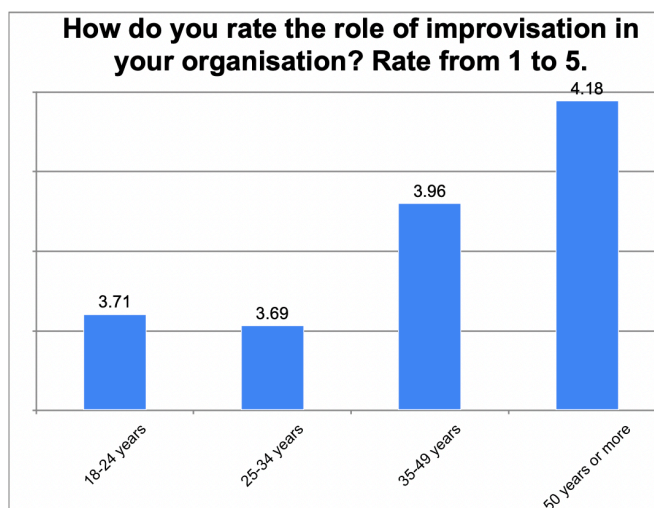
This suggests that older people are more likely to regard improvisation as positive than their younger counterparts. So, managers and organisational leaders should expect more collaboration and proactiveness to react to unplanned events from older professionals than the younger ones. Similarly, they should expect relatively to face resistance to improvisation than more ageing.

4.2.1.2.The perceived success in improvisation based on age

The research aimed to understand the relationship between age and the level of confidence in one's ability to improvise. For this matter, answers to two questions were analysed together. One regarding the respondents' age group and the other regarding their confidence in their abilities to improvise on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is always unsuccessful; 2 is mostly unsuccessful; 3 is neutral; 4 is mostly successful, and 5 always successful, when they improvise.

The age group analyses of the professionals' confidence in their improvisation skills are represented in chart 1, above by the red colour bars. On average, the 246 respondents revealed a significant confidence level in their improvisation abilities, having had an average of 3.83, which is approximately 4, mostly successful.

When desegregated age groups, the most significant differences were noticed between people under and over 50. The age groups of 18 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years and 35 to 49 years revealed higher confidence levels, having all been between 3.8 and 4. These averages suggest that, on average, professionals under the age of 50 consider that when they improvise, they are mostly successful. On the other hand, people with 50 years or more had an average answer of 3.45, which is approximately 3, meaning neutral. Thus, it can be concluded that people 50 years or more are relatively likely to less confident about their abilities to improvise.
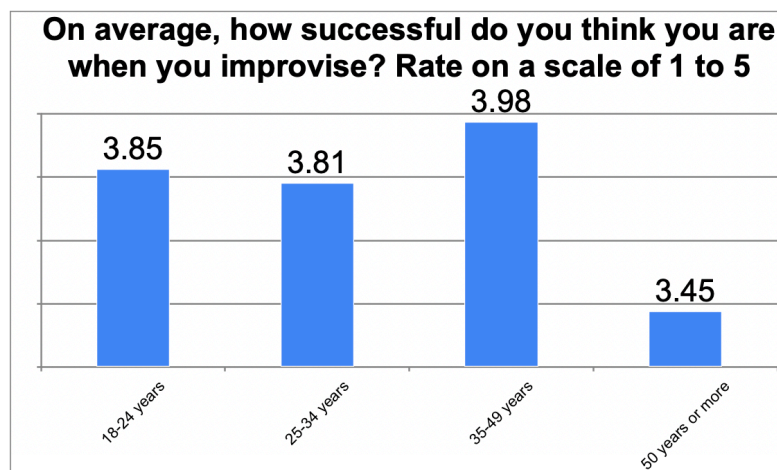
While older professionals show more approval of improvisation impact, the study suggests that they are relatively less confident about their abilities to improvise than their younger counterparts. This indicates that despite showing less approval of improvisation role in the organisation, younger professionals could improvise more frequently due to their confidence.

4.2.1.3.Perceived level of improvisation encouragement by leaders based on age

The research aimed to understand how different age groups perceived their organisational leaders' level of improvisation encouragement. Respondents were given a chance to rate the level of encouragement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 stands for entirely discouraging, 2 mostly discouraging, 3 neutral, 4, mostly encouraging and 5 altogether encouraging.

Desegregation of the participants' answers based on age groups reveals that all of them would fall into the same category, mostly
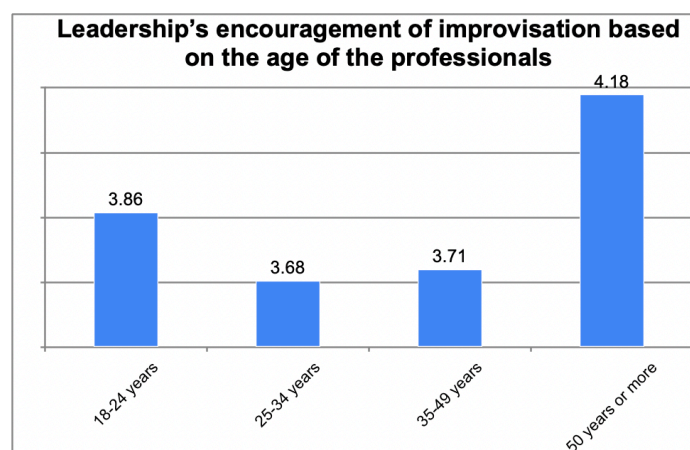
encouraging since their answers could be approximated to 4. However, a significant difference is noticeable in professionals with 50 years or more, being the only age group with an average answer above 4 (4,18). This suggests that people 50 years or older are more likely to feel free to improvise than their younger counterparts.

These results suggest that despite professionals who are older than 50 years being sceptical about their abilities to improvise, they feel relatively more encouraged by their organisational leader to improvise.

4.2.1.4. The role of age on the perceived factors provoking improvisation: external vs internal

Literature has presented some discussions on whether internal or external factors provoke improvisation the most, with no conclusive answers regarding the matter. This research tried to capture and present more evidence to feed this debate.

To understand whether the professionals' age is relevant to predicting whether one will consider each of the two categories of factors to provoke improvisation, the answers were desegregated into the four age groups. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether internal or external factors were more relevant to provoking improvisation. On the scale, 1 stands for only internal, 2 for mostly internal, 3 neutral, 4 mostly external and 5 for only external.

Factors provoking improvisation based on age: internal vs external

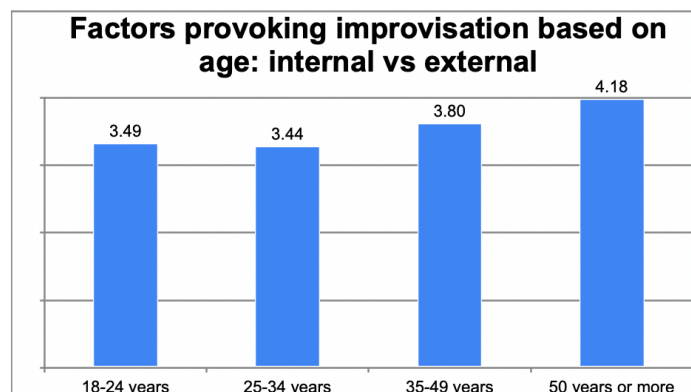| 18-24 years	25-34 years	35-49 years	50 years or more
3.49	3.44	3.80	4.18

As shown by chart number 1 above, in green bars, the overall conclusion from this analysis is that Irish professionals consider external factors more relevant to provoke organisational improvisation than external. The overall rake given by the 246 respondents is 3.55, suggesting a slight inclination to regard external factors as pertinent to encourage improvisation than external.

This perception increases proportionally according to age. Despite younger people agreeing that external factors are more relevant to provoke improvisation than internal, they suggest believing so in less intensity than their elder counterparts and recognise the role of internal factors.

As an overall conclusion regarding the relationship between age and improvisation, the findings from this research reveal that professionals over 50 years are more likely to rate the role of improvisation relatively more positively; to feel more encouraged by their leaders to improvise, and to emphasise the role of external factors on causing improvisation than their younger counterparts. However, they are relatively more sceptical about their improvisation skills.

4.2.2. The role of gender in improvisation

A gender analysis was made of the improvisation patterns based on the Irish professionals' responses.

To understand the relationship between improvisation and gender, answers to five questions from the survey were analysed, discriminating the male and female participants' responses. All the five questions were answered on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 and 5 represent the two extremes of the

variables under analysis, 3 the neutral point and 2 and 4 illustrate the gap between the neutral point and the two extremes.

Despite male and female respondents falling in the same categories of responses on average, considerable differences were evidenced, suggesting that gender plays a vital role in improvisation.

According to the chart number 2 below, it can be assumed that, on average, male professionals a relatively more confident about the results/quality of their improvisation, understand their organisations' leaders as more encouraging to improvisation and consider external factors as more influential on forcing improvisation, they consider improvisation as having a positive impact to their organisations, and they consider their organisations as more democratic than they female counterparts.

Average scores on improvisation aspects based on gender: scale 1 to 5
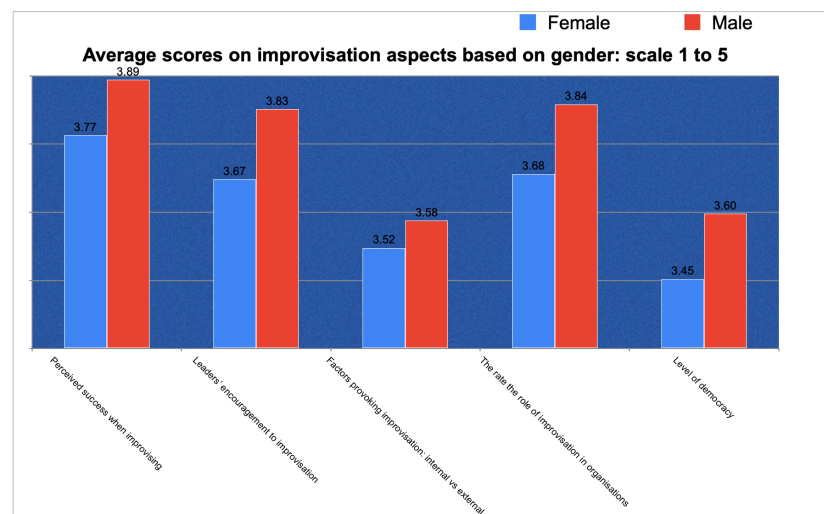
From the gender analyses of improvisations aspects, it can be concluded that male professionals rate the role of improvisation more positively; report higher levels of encouragement to improvisation for their organisational leaders, to consider external factors as more relevant to cause improvisation than internal and relatively more confident about their improvisation skills than female. Similarly, male professionals report higher levels of democracy in their organisations than females.

While this data presents solid quantitative evidence about relationships between these variables, more qualitative future research could deepen understanding of their causalities.

4.2.3.The role of professionals' experience in improvisation

As evidenced in the literature review, many authors emphasise the role of professional experience in improvisation. Authors like Hadida et al. (2015), Bob de Wit (2020), Mannucci (2021), Leybourne & Sadler-Smith (2006) and Tabesh and Vera (2020) are among the defendants of the idea that the more experienced professionals are the more likely they are to become good improvisers. One of the reasons behind this rationale is that improvisations involve fast processing information from multiple sources.

While most of these authors did not present much empirical data to back this suggestion, the current research aimed to bridge this gap and collected some evidence. So, the study aimed to understand to which extent professional experience influences improvisation skills.

While recognising that many indicators can be valuable to measure professional experience, for the current research, the length of experience, in years, was the only indicator taken into account. For this purpose, answers to four questions regarding improvisation were analysed according to the length of respondents' experience in the organisations they worked for when they responded to the survey.

In all four questions, respondents were asked to provide their answers on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 and 5 are the two extremes of opposite sides of the variables under analysis, and 3 represents the middle and neutral points. In contrast, 2 and 4 represent somewhere between the extreme and the neutral points.

To make the analyses easier, the respondents were divided into four groups according to the length of experience in the organisations they worked for when the survey was held. The groups based on the length of experience are (1) less than a year, 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, and more than 10 years.

More detailed analyses of the relationship between the length of professional experience and improvisation follow in the next paragraphs.

4.2.3.1. The rate of the role of improvisation in organisations based on the length of professional experience

As shown in the chart below, there is consistency in how the rate of the role of improvisation varies according to the length of one's professional experience in a specific organisation.

Overall, professionals with 5 years of professional experience in their organisation are highly likely to rate the impact of improvisation than those with five or fewer years of professional experience. The chart shows that the average scores were 3.66 and 3.76 for professionals with less than a year and one to five years, respectively. The average score then increases to 4.29 and 4.18 for professionals with six to ten years and over 10 years of professional experience, respectively. Despite these considerable differences, all groups of professionals fall in the same category according to the length of their professional expertise in the organisations they work for. On average, they consider the role of improvisation as mostly positive since all the average scores are approximate 4.

Rate of the role of improvisation in organisations according to the length of experience in the organisations
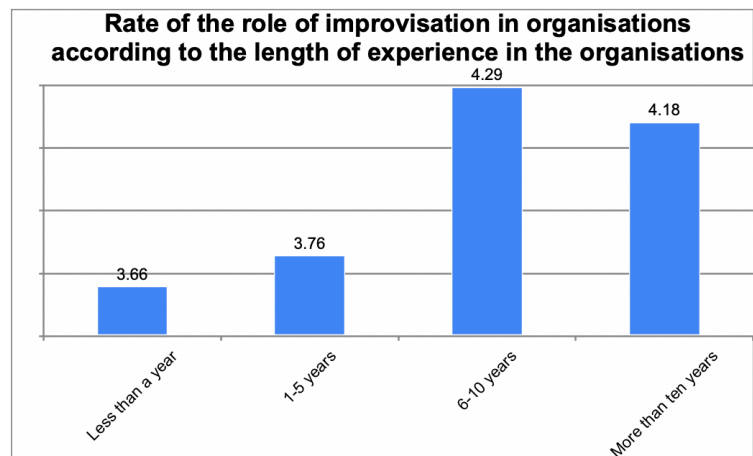
The positive correlation between the rate of the role of improvisation in organisations based on the length of professional experience is consistent with the idea that more experienced professionals are better improvisers as authors like Hadida et al. (2015), Bob de Wit (2020), Mannucci (2021) Leybourne & Sadler-Smith (2006) and Tabesh and Vera (2020) suggest. So, it could be assumed that more experienced professionals are likelier to see the benefit of improvisation than their less experienced peers.

4.2.3.2. Perceived leader's encouragement to improvisation according to the length of professional experience

Regardless of the length of professional experience in organisational, all groups of respondents, based on their professional experience, consider that their corporate leaders are mostly encouraging improvisation. Based on the length of professional experience, all groups scored averages of approximately 4.

Even though some differences were noticeable, people with over 10 years of experience in their organisation reported feeling their organisational leaders were relatively more encouraging to

improvisation than their less experienced counterparts, being the only group to score over 4:00.

Despite significant differences in average scores based on the length of professional experience, the variation suggests inconclusive results. From an initial 3.71 from people with less than a year of professional experience in their organisation, the average score increased to 3.77 for those with one to five years. Then it decreased to the lowest of 3.65 for professionals with 6 to 10 years, and it rose

Leaders encouragement to improvisation according to the length of professional experience

4.18

3.71   3.77   3.65

Less than a year   1-5 years   6-10 years   More than ten years

again to its highest at 4.18 for professionals with over ten years of professional experience.
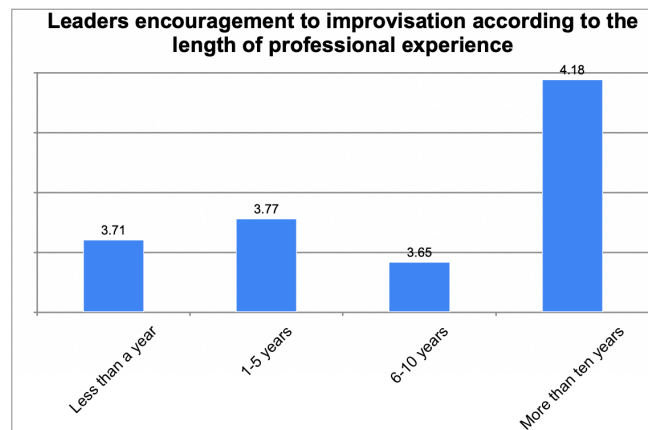
This irregular variation of the average scores suggests a weak-to-none connection between the two variables. So, the length of professional experience has proven to be an unreliable predictor of whether that professional will think of his organisational leaders as more encouraging or not to improvisation.

4.2.3.3. Perceived success when improvising based on the length of professional experience

The perceived success when improvising seems not to have a solid connection to the length of professional experience.

The chart shows that the average professionals' scores initially decreased from 3.89 to 3.76, from those with less than one year of professional experience to those with one to five. Then, it increased to its highest of 4.06 for professionals with 6 to 10 years and then decreased to its lowest at 3.45 for professionals with over 10 years of professional experience.

Perceived success when improvising based on the length of experience

4.06

3.89   3.76

3:45

Less than a year   1-5 years   6-10 years   More than ten years
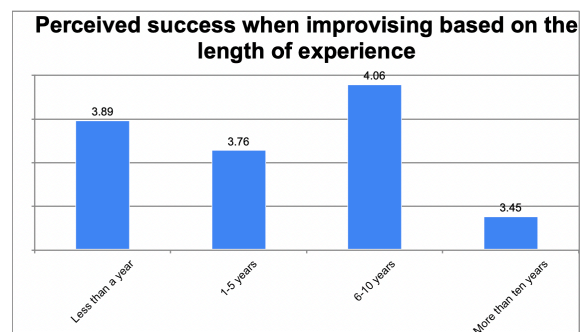
While in literature, more experienced professionals are expected to be better improvisers, the finding from this research suggests that they are not proportionally confident about their ability to improvise. This does not deny the result from the literature but raises curious entering points for future research endeavours.

4.2.3.4. Factors provoking improvisation based on the length of experience: internal vs external

The relationship between the perceived factors provoking improvisation, whether internal or external and the length of professional experience suggests that more experienced professionals are more likely to consider external factors as more likely to cause improvisation than their less experienced peers. However, the relationship between these two variables is relatively weak. As the length of professional experience increases, there are some ups and downs, as shown in the chart.

The overall tendency is ascending, with the minimum score being for professionals with less than 1 year and the highest score for those with over 10 years of professional experience in the organisations they were working for when they responded to the survey.

After an initial of 3.33 for professionals with less than a year of professional experience, it increased to 3.77 for those with one to five years. After that, it shows a decline in those with 6-10 years and the increases to its highest at 4.27 for professionals over ten years.

The score of professionals with less than a year of professional experience and those with 6 to 10 years fall in the neutral category since they are approximately 3. This means these see relatively balanced relevance of external and internal factors in provoking improvisation.

Factors provoking improvisation: internal vs external
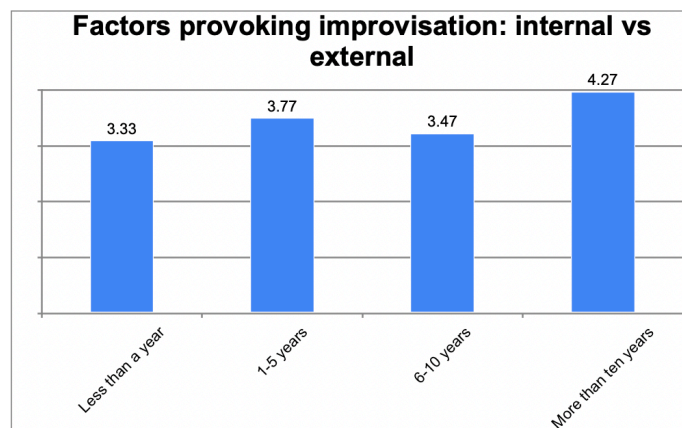
On the other hand, the average scores of professionals with over ten years of professional experience and those with 1 to 5 years fall in the category of mostly external, since they are approximate 4. This means that this group of professionals emphasises external factors in provoking improvisation.

Overall, the length of one's experience in an organisation matters to some aspects of improvisation and doesn't matter to others. As different charts in this section suggest, more experienced professionals are more likely to rate the role of improvisation more positively; their organisational leaders encourage improvisation and external factors are more relevant to improvisation than their less experienced peers. However, despite some inconsistencies, the more experienced professionals working for more than 10 years for their organisation were relatively less confident in their ability to improvise.

4.2.3.5.The relationship between the sector of work and improvisation

The current research attempted to assess whether the work sector influences different aspects of improvisation. The work sectors were divided into three categories, not for profit, private and public/governmental.

The chart xx below represents differences in different aspects of improvisation according to the work sector. For a better understanding of the chart, each group of three bars together should be analysed separately since they compare the average answers to each question according to the sector of work of the respondents.

As done in the previous session, (1) the rate of the role of improvisation, whether it is positive or negative, (2) factors more likely to provoke improvisation, whether they are internal or external, and (3) the leaders (dis) encouragement level to improvisation as well as the (4) perceived level of success by respondents when they improvise at work.

In all aspects under analyses, respondents were given a choice from 1 to 5, where 1 and 5 represent the two extremes, 3 the middle/neutral point. In contrast, 2 and 4 illustrate the neutral and extreme extremes midpoint.

The overall conclusion from these analyses is that the work sector plays a vital role in how different professionals think about various aspects of improvisation. However, how the work sector

influences other aspects of improvisation varies accordingly. The following sections will evaluate these differences.

Regarding the rate of the role of improvisation in organisations, all sectors fall in the category of primarily positive. The average answers to these questions were 3.63, 3.72 and 3.95, all approximately 4. However, significant differences in the

Survey participants answers to questions on scale of 1 to 5, based on the sector of work

Legend: Non-for Profit (blue), Private (red), Public/Government (yellow)

The rate of the role of improvisation in organisations: 3.63, 3.72, 3.95
Factors provoking improvisation: internal vs external: 3.63, 3.49, 3.71
Leaders' encouragement to improvisation: 3.53, 3.78, 3.76
Perceived success when improvising: 3.37, 3.86, 3.90

there sectors were noticeable. In other words, professionals from the state or governmental sector are more likely to consider the impact of improvisation as positive than their pairs from the private and not-for-profit sectors. Professionals from the private sector come second, and those from the non-for-profit sector come last, less likely to see the benefits of improvisation.

An analysis of the relationship between the work sector and whether professionals consider internal or external factors as most relevant to determine whether an organisation or individual will improvise reveals significant differences. On average, professionals from the non-for-profit and private sectors consider that external factors rather than internal mostly cause improvisation. Their scores on the respective question resulted in averages of 3.63 and 3.78, which are approximate 4. On the other hand, professionals from the public or governmental sector assumed a more balanced position between the two extremes (interns vs external factors). The average score of their responses, 3.49, is approximate 3, the neutral point.

A close look at the role of the work sector and the likelihood of considering the organisation's leaders as encouraging or discouraging place three categories of professionals in similar positions. The three categories think of their organisations' leaders as mostly encouraging improvisation. However, with an average score of 3.53, professionals from the non-for-profit sector assume a more cautious position than their peers from the private and public/governmental sectors, with an average of 3.78 and 3.76, respectively.

Lastly, regarding the perceived success when improvising, professionals from the non-for-profit sector, on average, assumed a relatively less favourable position. With an average score of 3.37, their answers fall in the neutral category on whether they considered themselves successful or unsuccessful. On the other side, professionals from the private and public sectors provided more optimistic answers, scoring 3.86 and 3.90, respectively, on average.
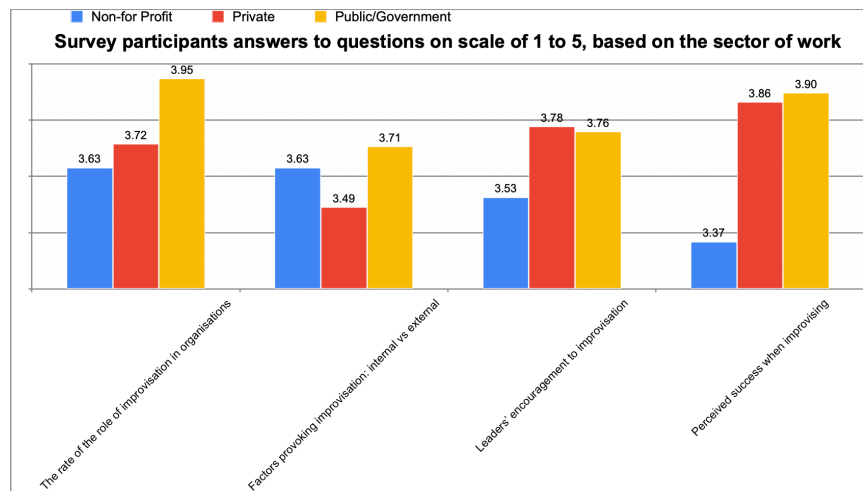
4.2.4. The role of the size of the organisation on improvisation

Aiming to taste theoretical frameworks that connect the organisational structure and improvisation, the research considered the number of employees in the organisation as an indicator of its size. Five groups of organisations were created to differentiate them according to their size, 1 to 5 employees, 6 to 10 employees, 11 to 20 employees, 21 to 100 employees and more than 100 employees.

Similar to previous sections, the critical aspect for analyses based on the size of organisations are (1) the rate of the role of improvisation, whether it is positive or negative, (2) factors provoking

improvisation, whether they are internal or external, (3) the extent to which the organisation's leaders encourage or not improvisation and (4) the perceived success when improvising by the professionals.

The following subsections will discuss the relationships between aspects of improvisations and different demographic factors.

4.2.4.1. The rate of the role of improvisation based on the size of the organisation

An analysis of the role of improvisation in organisations revealed that, on average, professionals working for smaller organisations are highly likely to rate the role of improvisation more positively than their peers from bigger organisations. As evidenced in the chart number, professionals from smaller organisations, with one to five and six to ten employees, scored the highest averages regarding the threat of improvisation. Their averages were 4.00 and 3.90, respectively.

However, after a consistent descending tendency, professionals from organisations with over 100 employees rated the role of improvisations more positively than those with 11 to 20 and 21 to 100 employees.

Despite this slight incongruence in the tendency, it is, however, to recognise that professionals from all organisations fall in the same category, rating the role of improvisation as mostly positive. All the average answers from different age groups are approximate 4.

The rate of improvisation in organisations based on the size of the organisation
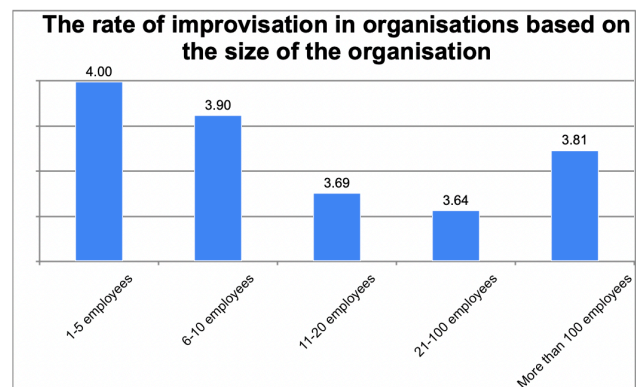
4.2.4.2. Factors provoking improvisation based on the size of the organisations

An inconsistent tendency is shown in answers to the question regarding the factors prompting improvisation, whether they are positive or negative. This inconsistency suggests that the size of the organisations where professionals work is not an indicator of whether they will consider internal or external factors more relevant to force improvisation.

From the groups of professionals working for smaller organisations with 1 to 5 employees, the average answer was 3.5, which increased to 3.90 for the following group of 6 to 10 employees. The number then decreases twice to 3.69 and 3.64 to size groups of 11 to 20 and 21 to 100 employees, respectively. After this slight descending tendency, the average responses increased again in organisations with over 100 employees.

Factors provoking improvisation based on the size of the organisation: internal vs external
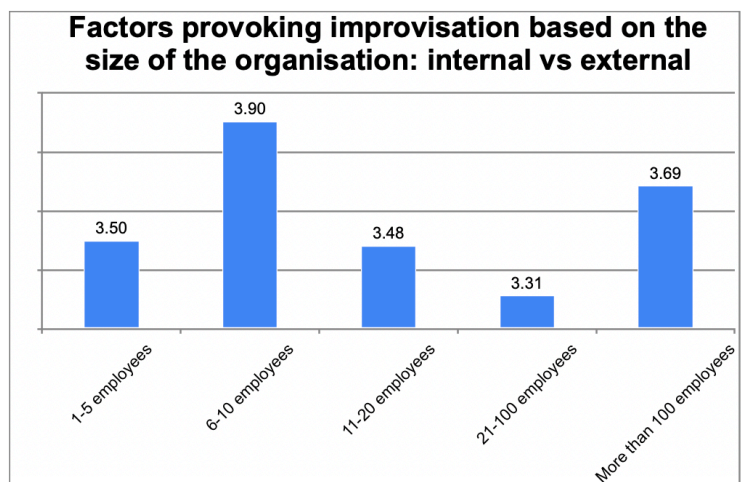
4.2.4.3. Perceived leader encouragement to improvisation based on the size of the organisations

Differently from the previous two aspects of improvisation, it can be assumed that leaders from larger organisations are more likely to be seen as less encouraging to improvisation than their smaller counterparts. As shown in chart number xx, smaller organisations present a higher level of belief that their leaders are more favourable, which overall scores being 3.93 and 4.29 for the size groups of 1-5 and 6 to 10 employees, respectively. On the other hand, an organisation with over 100 employees present the lowest average, with 3.66, followed by those with 21 to 100 and 11 to 20, with 3.67 and 3.76 respectively.

Leaders encouragement to improvisation based on the size of improvisation
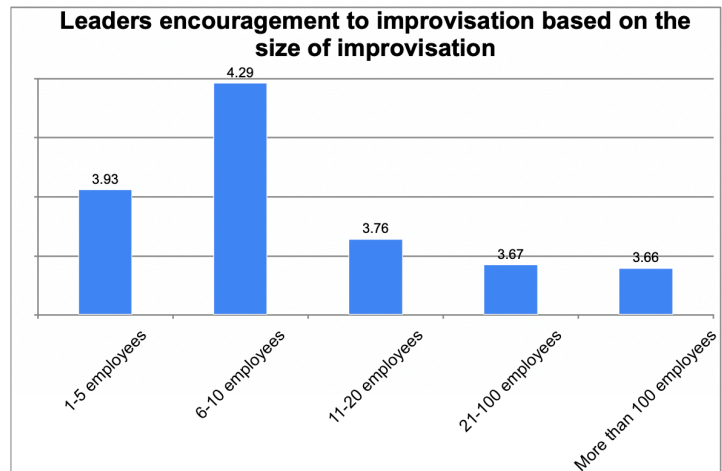
Despite slight differences in the scores regarding the level of encouragement to improvisation from leaders according to the size of the organisations, it should be recognised that all sizes of organisations fall in the category of mostly encouraging. All size group average scores are approximate 4.

4.2.4.4. Perceived level of success when improvising according to the size of the organisation

Lastly, the perceived level of success shows no direct connection to the size of organisations a professional works for. The chart number xx shows an inconsistent variation of this indicator based on the organisation's size. Starting from an average of 3.86 for professionals working in an organisation with 1 to 5 workers, it increases slightly to 3.95 for those working in organisations with 6 to 10 workers. Then it decreases to 3.93 for professionals working in organisations with 11 to 20 employees and then increases and decreases again to 3.94 and 3.76 for professionals working for organisations with 21 to 100 and those working in organisations with over 100 professionals.

Perceived success when improvising according to the size of organisations
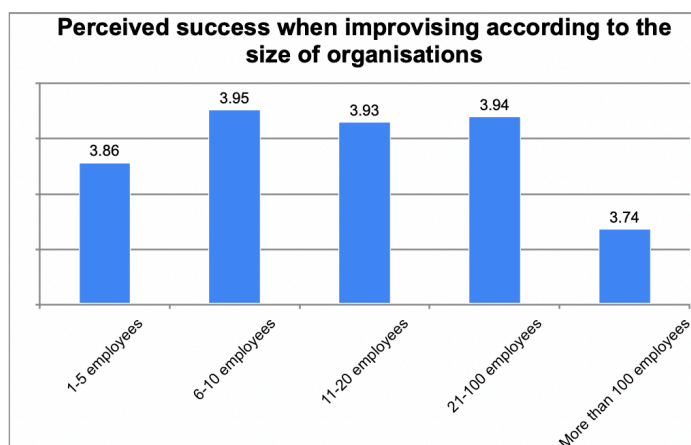
So, based on the data collated by this study, it can be assumed that the size of an organisation people work for does not play a significant role in how confident its professionals feel about their improvised decisions and actions.

It should, however, be noticed that professionals from all sizes of organisations, on average, consider their leaders as mostly encouraging improvisation since their average scores on the respective question are approximate 4.

4.2.5. The role of the perceived level of democracy on improvisation

The extent to which the perceived level of democracy in organisations affects improvisation was tested in this research. Four aspects of improvisation were considered for the test, (1) the rate of the role of improvisation in the organisation, whether it is negative or positive, (2) the factors provoking improvisation, whether they are internal or external, (3) the perceived level of success when improvising and (4) the level of encouragement to improvisation by organisational leaders.

4.2.5.1. The rate of the role of improvisation based on the perceived level of democracy

The general conclusion is that the level of perceived democracy in an organisation increases the likelihood that professionals will consider improvisation as having a positive impact. As shown in the chart, professionals who described their organisations as entirely or primarily authoritative described the effect of improvisation as neutral, scoring 3.40 and 3.14 on a scale of 1 to 5, which is approximate 3, representing the neutral point. On the other hand, professionals who described their organisations as neutral, mostly democratic and fully democratic scored 3.63, 3.73 and 4.48, respectively, and all are proximate to 4, representing the idea that the role of improvisation is primarily positive.

The rate of the role of improvisation based on the perceived level of democracy
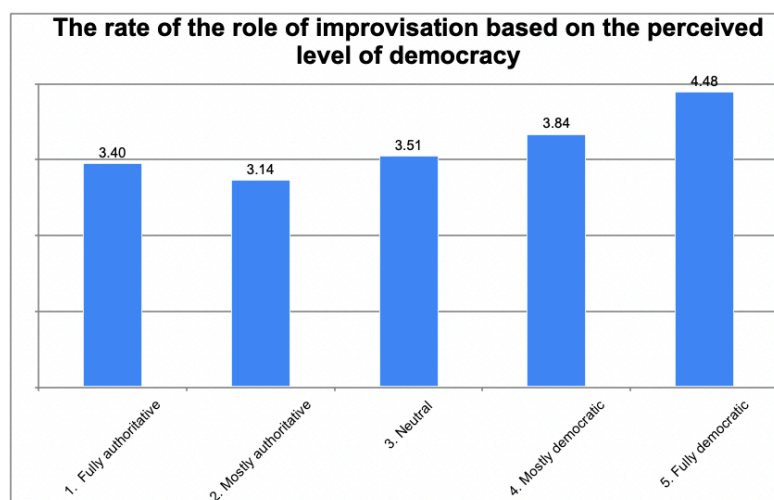
4.2.5.2. Factors provoking improvisation based on the level of perceived democracy: internal vs external

A higher level of perceived democracy in organisations is also essential to explain the likelihood of a professional considering external factors as more relevant to provoke improvisation than internal. As evidenced in the chart number xx, professionals who considered their organisations as authoritative, mostly authoritative and neutral scored relatively lower averages when asked to tell whether they think internal or external factors as relevant to provoking improvisation. Two groups of respon 3. These positions mean that these professionals assume a relatively more balanced position between internal and external factors as provocative to improvisation.

Factors provoking improvisation based on the perceived level of democracy: internal vs external

On the other hand, people who described their organisations as mostly democratic or fully democratic scored relatively
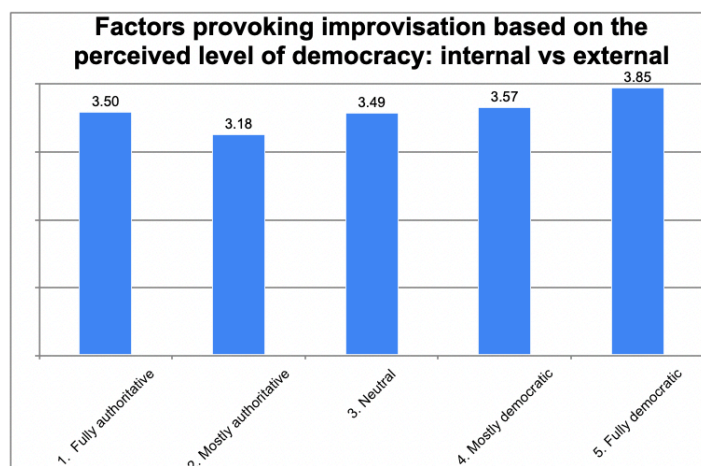
higher, 3.78 and 3.85, respectively. This means that they emphasise external factors as responsible for provoking improvisation.

4.2.5.3.Perceived success when improvising based on the perceived level of democracy

Analysing how successful professionals think they are according to perceived democracy in their organisations produced inconsistent results.

As shown by chart number xx, people who consider their organisations as fully democratic scored highest on the level of success they think they have when improvisation. However, the last two groups, those who described the level of democracy as neutral and mostly democratic, scored lowest, with average scores of 3.63 and 3.78, respectively. On the other hand, people who describe their organisations as entirely or primarily authoritative scored significantly higher (not the highest), with average scores of 3.8 and 3.82, respectively.
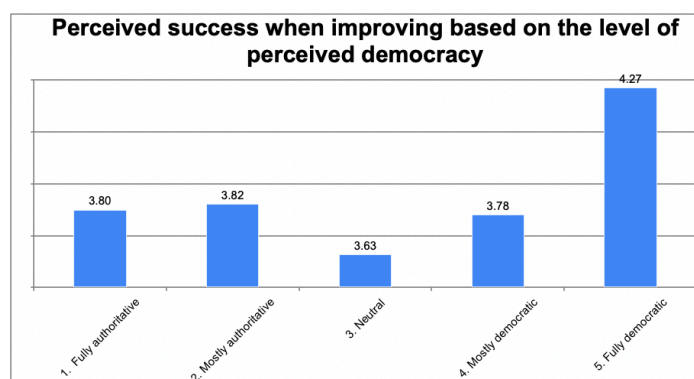
4.2.5.4.Leaders encouragement to improvisation based on the perceived level of democracy

Lastly, leaders of organisations described as more democratic were also considered relatively more encouraging to improvisation. On the other hand, leaders from the organisations described as fully authoritative or mostly authoritative were somewhat favourable to improvisation. As evidenced by the green bars in the chart, professionals who told their leaders as entirely or primarily authoritative scored an approximate 3 and 3.14, respectively), which corresponds to the neutral position on whether their leaders encouraged improvisation. On the other hand, professionals who describe their organisations as democratic scored averages that are approximate 4. The average scores were 3.72, 3.80 and 4.15 for professionals who said their organisations were neutral, mostly democratic and fully democratic, respectively.
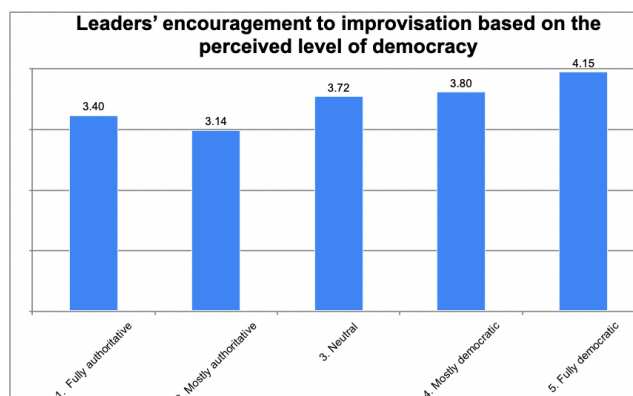
4.2.6. The role of the perceived level of influence in the organisation on improvisation

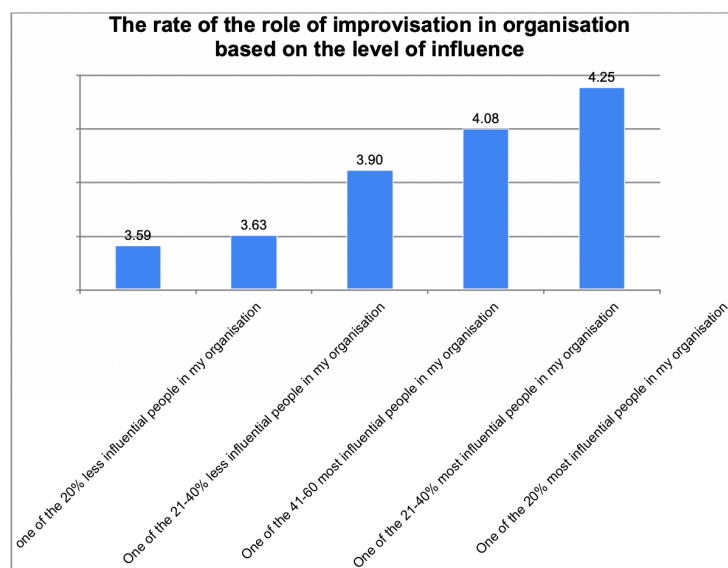The level of influence professionals feel in their organisations is essential to explain some aspects of improvisation but not for others. In the research, four elements were considered for analyses, (1) the rate of the role of improvisation, (2) the perceived leaders' encouragement to improvisation, the perceived success when improvising and (4) the factors providing improvisation, whether they are internal or external.

Conclusions from these analyses are contradictory. In some aspects, the level of influence is essential. In others, it is not as important.

4.2.6.1. The rate of the role of improvisation in organisations based on the perceived level of influence

A clear positive tendency between the rate of the role of improvisation and the perceived level of influence in the organisation was evidenced. As the blue bars in the chart, number suggest, the more influential a professional is, the likelihood that professional is to rate the role of improvisation positively. However, it is essential to recognise that all groups of the level of influence scored averages equivalent to primarily positive. The average scores were 3.59, 3.63, 3.90, 4.08 and 4.25, respectively, from the less influential groups, all approximate 4.

The rate of the role of improvisation in organisation based on the level of influence

4.2.6.2. The perceived leaders' encouragement of improvisation based on the level of influence

The level of encouragement to improvisation has also, on average, produced a positive proportion compared to the magnitude of influence professionals feel in their organisations. As evidenced by the chart number,… the average scores were 3.65, 3.69, 3.93, 3.54 and 4.25.

This suggests an average positive tendency. However, the second most influential group, made of professionals who consider themselves part of 21 to 40 per cent of the most influential people in their organisations, scored the lowest, disrupting the overall tendency. With this

Leaders encouragement to improvisation based on the level of influence
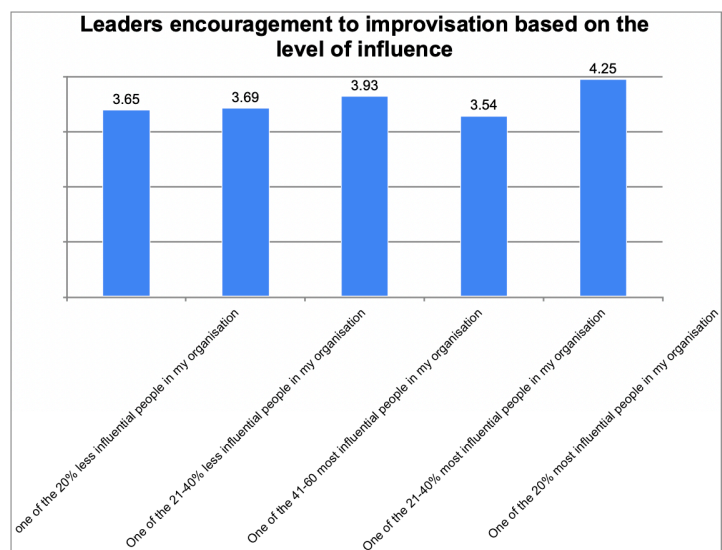
irregularity, the relationship between the two variables is relatively inconclusive. So, further research could help deepen the understanding of their relationship.

4.2.6.3. Perceived success when improvising based on the perceived level of influence in organisations

Similarly, a proportional relationship between the level of influence and the perceived level of success when improvising was evidenced i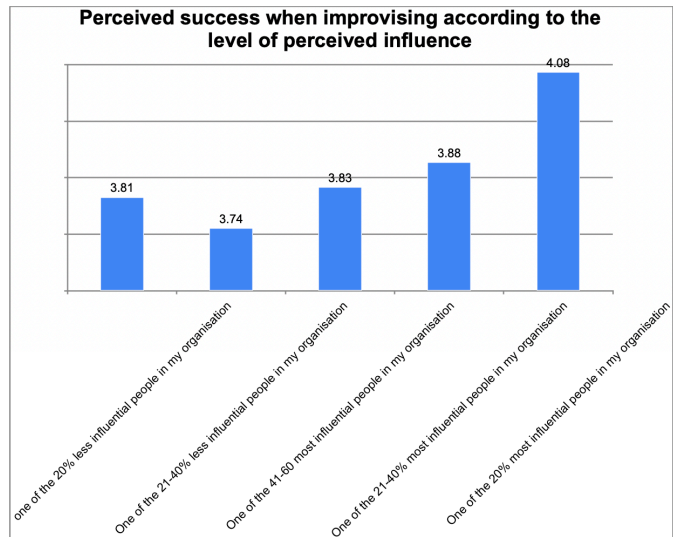n the chart number. This suggests that, on average, the more influential a professional is, the more likely he is to evaluate his improvisation skills positively. With average scores of 3.88 and 4.08, respectively, the two most influential groups of respondents scored highest averages of perceived success when improvising than their less influential counterparts, having varied from 3.8 to 3.7 and then to 3.8 again, in this order, as the level of influence increased.

Perceived success when improvising according to the level of perceived influence

3.81   3.74   3.83   3.88   4.08

one of the 20% less influential people in my organisation
One of the 21-40% less influential people in my organisation
One of the 41-60 most influential people in my organisation
One of the 21-40% most influential people in my organisation
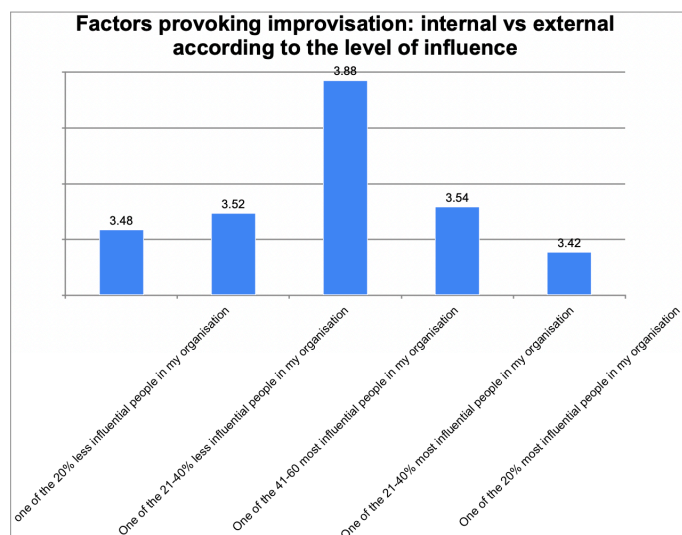One of the 20% most influential people in my organisation

Despite differences in the average scores of perceived success according to the level of influence, all the groups of the level of power scored averages equivalent to primarily successful. All the average scores are approximate 4.

4.2.6.4. Factors provoking improvisation based on the level of the perceived influence

Lastly, whether internal or external factors are more likely to provoke improvisation suggests that the most and the less influential professionals are more likely to emphasise internal and external factors as essential to generating improvisation in a more balanced way. At the same time, people with a moderate level of influence would be more likely to emphasise external factors as more important to predict improvisation than internal.

As shown in chart number, professionals who declared having less influence and those who reported having more power scored the lowest averages, 3.48 and 3.42, respectively. The two average scores are equivalent to neutral since they are approximate 3. The chart bars increase as they move to the centre, suggesting a higher likelihood of people with moderate influence to emphasise the role of

Factors provoking improvisation: internal vs external according to the level of influence

3.48   3.52   3.88   3.54   3.42

one of the 20% less influential people in my organisation
One of the 21-40% less influential people in my organisation
One of the 41-60 most influential people in my organisation
One of the 21-40% most influential people in my organisation
One of the 20% most influential people in my organisation

external factors.

4.2.7.The role of the region of origin and improvisation

Literature has not provided much discussion on what the region professionals are from could have an impact on improvisation. `this research attempted to capture evidence about the relationship between these two variables.

While cultural issues could impact how people from different regions respond to other questions, further research should be carried out to confirm or reject the findings of this research. Qualitative studies in contexts other than the Irish could help explain the relationships between different variables, and quantitative analysis could also help test the findings from this research.

4.2.7.1.The rate of the role of improvisation according to the geographic place of origin

As shown in the chart, professionals from different regions, on average, rate the role of improvisation differently. Asians and Africans rate the role of improvisation more positively, with average scores of 4.09 and 4.00, respectively, which is equivalent to primarily positive. On the other hand, professionals originally from North and South America rate the role of improvisation less positively, with their average scores being 2.80 and 3.40, respectively, which are equivalent to a neutral position since they are approximate 3. This means that for an average American working in Ireland, improvisation does not have either a positive or negative impact on their organisations. Lastly, European citizens working in Ireland, including those from Ireland, assume a more favourable position than their American counterparts regarding the role of improvisation in their workplace. Still, they are not as optimistic as Asians and Africans. Their average score as 3.67 and 3.95,

The rate of the role of improvisation in organisations according to the geographic areas of origin

respectively. This means that for an average Irish and European citizen working in Ireland, improvisation positively impacts their organisations, the same category as the Asians and Africans.
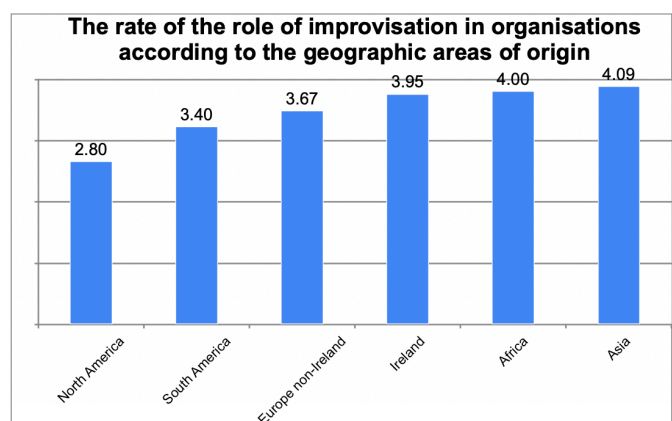
4.2.7.2.Perceived success when improvising according to the geographic area of origin

Similar to the rate of the role of improvisation, where Africans and Asians scored the highest, data from the current research suggests that they are relatively more confident about their abilities to improvise effectively. To the questions regarding their perceived success when improvising, they scored 4.09 and 3.95, respectively. O the other side, professionals from North America were revealed to be relatively less optimistic about their abilities to improvise, scoring an average of 3.50. Irish, South Americans and Europeans scored 3.78, 3.83 and 3.85, respectively, meaning

Perceived success when improvising according to the region of origin
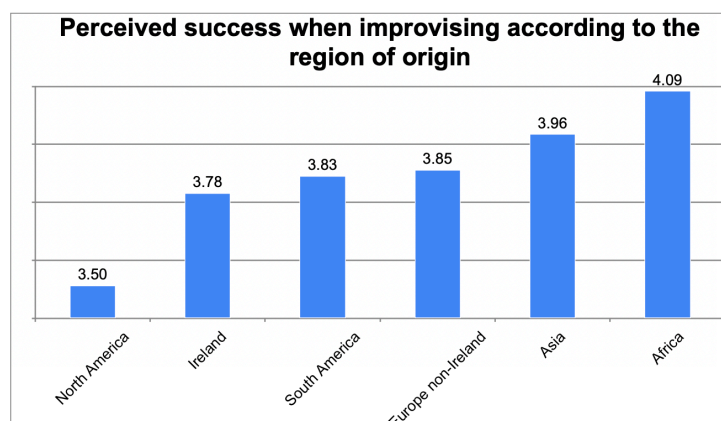
intermediate positions between the two extremes of Africans and Asians on one side and North Americans on the other.

Despite differences in scores among professionals from different parts of the world, all of them had an equivalent to mostly positive since their average scores are approximate 4.

4.2.7.3. The place of origin and the perception of whether internal or external factors are more relevant to provoke improvisation

Significant differences were evidenced in whether internal or external factors are more relevant to provoking improvisation. Irish and Asian citizens working in Ireland reported believing external factors were relatively more important than internal. Their average score of 3.77 and 3.74,

respectively, are the only ones that are approximate 4. This means that people from these geographic areas, on average, consider that external factors more than internal ones mostly provoke improvisation.

Professionals from all the remaining regions, North America, Africa, South America and Europe non-Ireland, assumed relatively more neutral positions. Their average scores were 3.20, 3.26, 3.32 and 3.42, respectively,

Average scores on whether internal or external factors are more likely to provoke improvisation

North America: 3.20; Africa: 3.26; South America: 3.32; Europe non-Ireland: 3.42; Asia: 3.74; Ireland: 3.77

all approximate 3. However, even though people from all these regions assume relatively more neutral positions, it is evident that external factors a relatively more relevant than internal since all their averages are above 3.
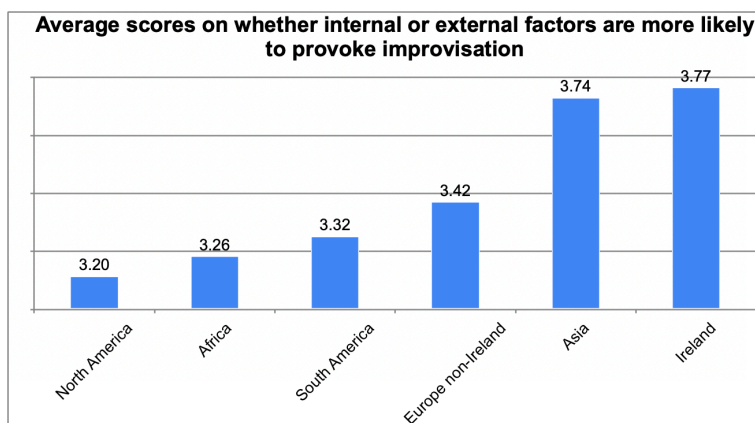
4.2.7.4. Perceived level of leaders' support for improvisation according to the place of origin

While the North and South American citizens working in Ireland were revealed to be less optimistic about the role of improvisations and their abilities to improvise (charts above previous), they also report feeling less encouraged to improvise. Their average scores for the level of encouragement to improvisation from their leaders are 3.30 and 3.40. Both these scores are equivalent to a neutral position since they are approximate 3.

On average, professionals from all other regions, Africa, Europe no-Ireland, Ireland and Asia, consider the. Leaders of their organisations as primarily encouraging. Their average scores of 3.61, 3.79, 3,89 and 4.23 are approximate 4.

Asians, having been revealed to be one of the most confident groups about their improvisation skills and the impact of improvisation in their organisations, are also relatively more likely to consider their organisational leaders as relatively more

The perceived leaders encouragement to improvisation according to the region of origen

North America: 3.30; South America: 3.40; Africa: 3.61; Europe non-Ireland: 3.79; Ireland: 3.89; Asia: 4.23

supportive of improvisation than their peers from elsewhere. Irish citizens working in Ireland were
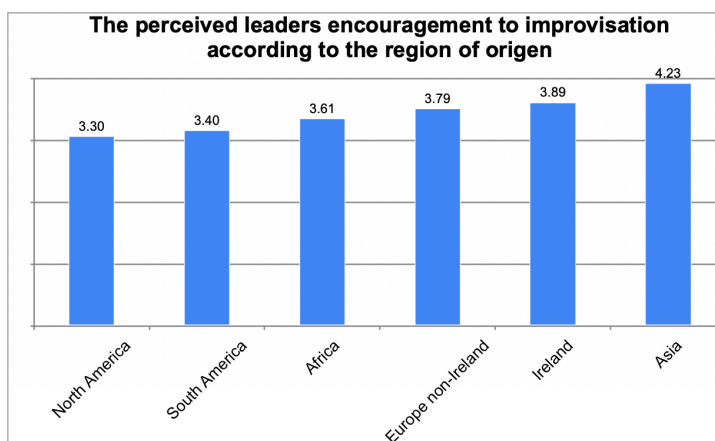
the second in terms of understanding their corporate leaders as supportive of improvisation, followed by European non-Irish, in third.

Despite Africans revealing a higher level of confidence about their abilities to improvise (1st) and rating the role of improvisation more positively (2nd), they are 4th when it comes to feeling the support for improvisation from their leaders.

The fact that the geographic area of origin has a relationship with professionals' attitudes towards improvisation suggests that there are significant cultural aspects[3] that could affect it. So, organisational leaders should consider them when preparing their organisations for unexpected events or when responding to them.

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[3] more qualitative research in future could haven and deepen the understanding about those factors.

5. Chapter 5: Discussion

While there is not enough evidence suggesting whether improvisation is positive or negative, it is highly recognised that it plays a vital role in business success, at least at times. So, having professionals who can improvise when necessary and improvise effectively is essential to organisations operating in fast-changing environments like the current days.

The average understanding from professionals working in Ireland, improvisation is essential to the success of their improvisation. However, this understanding is not consensual, meaning that managers aiming to promote improvisation should consider the possibility of facing some resistance from professionals who think differently.

Since demographic factors are relevant to explaining improvisation attitudes, organisational leaders should consider them facing unplanned events. For example, less experienced professionals are less likely to rate improvisation positively and their improvisations skills compared to their more experienced peers. This example means that more resistance to improvisation should relatively be expected from the less experienced professionals than the more experienced.

Age was revealed to be an essential factor in explaining improvisations attitudes. As an overall conclusion regarding the relationship between age and improvisation, the findings from this research show that professionals over 50 years are more likely to rate the role of improvisation relatively more positively; to feel more encouraged by their leaders to improvise, and to emphasise the role of external factors on causing improvisation than their younger counterparts. However, they are relatively more sceptical about their improvisation skills.

Gender analyses on improvisation attitudes also produced some interesting findings. It can be concluded that male professionals rate the role of improvisation more positively, report higher levels of encouragement to improvisation for their organisational leaders, consider external factors as more relevant to cause improvisation than internal and be relatively more confident about their improvisation skills than female. Similarly, male professionals report higher levels of democracy in their organisations than females.

Experience: Overall, the length of one's experience in an organisation matters to some aspects of improvisation and doesn't matter to others. As different charts in this section suggest, more experienced professionals are more likely to rate the role of improvisation more positively; their organisational leaders encourage improvisation and external factors are more relevant to improvisation than their less experienced peers. However, despite some inconsistencies, the more experienced professionals working for more than 10 years for their organisation were relatively less confident in their ability to improvise.

The level of democracy, the group of influence professionals, feel in organisations, the size of their organisations, and the length of their professional experience are all relevant to improvisation. However, the relevance of these factors to explaining improvisation is significantly when different variables are considered.

While this data presents solid evidence about relationships between these variables quantitatively, more qualitative future research could deepen the understanding of the causalities between them.

While the survey was based on the professionals who live and work in Ireland, regardless of their place of origin, it can inform how different cultures think about improvisation aspects selected for the research. However, more quantitative analysis in other contexts away from Ireland could help test this research's findings, including confirming or rejecting them.

6. Chapter 6: Conclusions

This research aimed to capture empirical evidence on the Irish professionals' attitudes towards improvisation and assess to what extent socio-demographic factors could play an essential role in explaining improvisation in organisations. For this purpose, the time frame of 2020 to 2022 was considered.

An online survey was launched nationally in Ireland and responded to by 246 participants who were working in Ireland when the survey took place.

For the analyses, four aspects of improvisation were considered, (1) the rate of the role of improvisation in organisations; (2) the extent to which internal or external factors provoke improvisation; (3) the level of the leaders' encouragement to improvisation and (4) the perceived level of success. Additionally, few demographic features were considered for the analyses, including (1) the age of the respondents; (2) the age of the organisations; (3) the size of the organisations, (4) the length of experience in the organisation; (5) the gender of professionals; (6) the sector of work and (7) the level of influence in the organisation. Similarly, perceived democracy was also analysed regarding its impact on improvisation aspects.

For the first research question, the research concludes that people working in Ireland, on average, have positive attitudes towards improvisation. For the second research question, the study concludes that socio-demographic factors are relevant to understanding professionals' attitudes towards improvisation. Given this conclusion, managers aiming to strive or take advantage of adverse and unplanned situations should consider the different demographic features of their employees.

Considering demographic factors can help managers better shape their expectations about their employees' responses to unplanned situations. Similarly, it can help the managers and companies leader shape the strategies to prepare their teams for unexpected situations.

Despite recognising that comprehensive/analytical and intuitive/improvisational decision-making uses different approaches and sometimes contradictory logics, they are not mutually exclusive. Managers must understand them to make rapid and quality decisions, mainly in crises (Tabesh & Vera, 2020).

Since intuitive thinking and improvisation are also associated with creativity (Tabesh & Vera, 2020), companies must harness it in favour of their prosperity, even when not in crisis.

Despite recognising that comprehensive/analytical and intuitive/improvisational decision-making uses different approaches and sometimes contradictory logics, they are not mutually exclusive. Managers must understand them to make rapid and quality decisions, mainly in crises (Tabesh & Vera, 2020). So, it is expected that by depending on the understanding of improvisation as this research tries to contribute, practitioners could find better ways of complementing their planning process with improvisation to get better results.

6.1. For future research

The level of qualification of the professional is an essential factor that should be taken into account to assess to what extent, if it does, influence improvisation by not including a question about the

place. So, it would be vital that it is considered in future endeavours to understand the role and attitudes related to improvisation in organisations[4].

While the quantitative analyses presented in this research evidenced significant relationships between aspects of improvisation and different demographic factors, it does not make enough questions to explain the resigns behind those relationships, a work that should be considered in future research. The current study did not make deep "why" questions to explain the reasons behind the correlation. So, the future should consider this gap, mostly applying qualitative research techniques.

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[4] This research collect some data regarding the relationship between improvisation and the level of academic qualification. However, the data was not included in the analyses since the researcher found out letter that the question regarding this issue was collected in a way that made it difficult to process in the available time for the research.

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8. Appendices
8.1.Appendices 1: Survey questions

National College of Ireland

Name

Glecio Ernestina Massango

Student Number: 20251939

Email: x20251939@student.ncirl.ie

Status: Postgraduate

Survey on Irish professionals' attitudes about the role of improvisation in decision-making at the place of work in Ireland

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are kindly invited to participate in this survey which is part of the research project titled "The role of organisational improvisation in companies objectives: perceptions from Irish workers in COVID-19 context". The research is being conducted by Glecio Massango, an MSc in Management student at the National College of Ireland.

The main objective of this research is to assess which social demographic factors (age, gender, professional qualifications, sector of work) influence attitudes towards the role of improvisation in a working environment in Ireland.

By organisational improvisation, the research refers to decisions and actions that professionals take rather than planned, mainly to deal with new events that were not previously forecasted. These could be responses to opportunities or threats in the organisation.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous. We are asking people over 18 years of age working in Ireland to participate. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete the survey.

If you have questions you would like to discuss with me; please feel free to do so through my email at x20251939@ncirl.ie.

Consent Form

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that I must be 18 or older to consent to this survey.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequences or penalties.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my survey within two weeks after the survey, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the survey.

I understand that participation involves participating in a 5–10-minute online survey.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.

I understand that signed consent forms and online surveys gathered will be retained in a secure encrypted, password-protected hard drive, and only the researcher and research committee will have access to this data up until the period from when the exam board confirms the results of the student's dissertation.

I understand that data gathered from this survey will be destroyed five years after the study's completion in line with National College of Ireland guidelines.

I understand that I am free to contact any people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Please note: By acknowledging the above text and continuing with the survey, you are giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Researcher name: Glecio Ernestina Massango

Researcher Email address: x20251939@student.ncirl.ie

This survey aims to understand the role of improvisation in the decision-making process in working set-ups in Ireland. For this research, improvisation should be understood as taking decisions and actions other than planned.

Any professional over 18 living and working in Ireland can complete the survey.

Section one: Demographics

Appendices 1: Survey questions

Gender - Demographics

Male

Female

2. Your age

18-24 years

25-34 years

35-49

50 years or more

3. Which geographic area best describes where you are from?

Irish

European

North American

South American

African

Asian

Australian

Other (specify)

4. Which Sector of work best describes your occupation:

Public/government

Private

The non-governmental (not-for-profit sector)

5. How many people work in the same organisation as you?

1-5

6-20

21-50

51-100

More than 100

How would you describe the level of power or influence you have in your organisation?

(Rate from 1 to 5, where 1 means not influential at all, 2 title influence, 3, moderate influence, 4, very influential and five the most influential person in the organisation.

1…..Not influential at all……2. Little influence…..3.Moderately influential 4. Very Influential; 5. Main Decision Maker

6. How long has your organisation existed?

Less than a year

1-5 years

6-10 years

More than ten years

7. How long have you worked for this organisation?

Less than one year

1-3 years

4-10 years

More than ten years

Section 2: Attitudes towards organisational improvisation

Note: By organisational improvisation, the research refers to decisions and actions that professionals take rather than planned, mainly to deal with new events that were not previously forecasted. These could be responses to opportunities or threats in the organisation.

1. How do you rate the role of improvisation in your organisation

(Rate from 1 to 5, where one means entirely negative, two mostly negative, three neutral, four mostly positive, entirely positive, and five very positive).

2. (Likelihood to improvise) In your organisation, which is more likely to improvise when facing unplanned events?

(Select all that apply)

Younger professionals

Older professionals

Men

Women

People in non/less managerial/leadership positions

People in middle management positions

People in top management positions

People without a third-level degree

Bachelor's degree holders

MBA holders

Masters degree holders

PhD degree holders

3. (Quality of the improvised decision) When improvising, who is more likely to be successful at improvising in your organisation

(Select all that apply)

Younger professionals

Older professionals

Men

Women

People in non/minor managerial/leadership positions

People in middle management positions

People in top management positions

People without a third-level degree

Bachelor's degree holders

MBA holders

Masters degree holders

PhD degree holders

SECTION 3

4. Factors provoking improvisation: What factors will force your company to improvise?

Rate from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for only internal factors; 2 mostly internal factors; 3 neutral, 4 mostly external factors and 5 for only external factors

1-5

5. Quality of decisions vs internal/external factors: What factors are more likely to bring positive results after improvisation?

Rate from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for only internal factors; 2 mostly internal factors; 3 neutral; 4 mostly external factors and 5 for only external factors

6. How do you think your organisation's leaders value improvising professionals?

(Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where one is very averse to improvisation; 2 mostly hostile; 3 neutral; 4 mostly friendly/encouraging and 5 completely friendly and encouraging)

7. How democratic do you feel your organisation is?

Rate on a scale of 1 to 5.

Non-democratic at all/authoritative

A mostly non-democratic/authoritative

Semi-democratic

Mostly democratic

Fully democratic

Part 4: your personal experience with improvisation – Important to understand what that is>?

1. During 2020 and 2021, how often did you take an unplanned strategic decision at work?

0

1-3

4-10

More than 10

Can you Give an example of this improvisation?

2. On average, how successful do you think you are when you improvise from 1 to 5? (Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is always unsuccessful; 2 mostly unsuccessful; 3 half successful; 4 mostly successful and 5 always successful)