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Project Submission Sheet

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AI Acknowledgement Supplement

MSc Management

"Does leadership style influence the decision-making process in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland"

Your Name/Student Number	Course	Date
Niall Keane 22157158	MSC Management	8th August 2024

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Degree for which thesis is submitted: MSc Management

Title of Thesis: "Does leadership style influence the decision-making process in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland"

Date: 9th August 2024

Material submitted for award

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

This research investigates the influence of different leadership styles on decision making processes in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. Additionally, the research compares the most prominent leadership styles the senior leaders exhibit and identifies the commonalities and differences in approaches. The research also touches on the support needs of leaders in the not-for-profit sector and how they are utilised.

This research employed a qualitive methodology, using semi-structured interviews with ten senior leaders from the not-for-profit sector. Using this approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the participants experiences and how they perceive leadership, decision making and supporting their teams and organisation. This data was then analysed thematically to highlight themes and recurring patterns of behaviour or traits.

The findings discovered that the most prevalent style among the participants was collaborative leadership. The four leaders who adopted this style all highlighted the importance of involving their teams in the decision-making process. They reported by doing this they fostered a sense of shared ownership and collective problem solving with in their teams. Furthermore, working in this way created an open and communicative team environment which is essential for the challenges the not-for-profit sector face in today's climate. These include lack of resources, competitive tendering and a challenging staff recruitment and retention environment.

The second most common leadership style reported was servant leadership where three leaders were identified. The participants responses identified knowing the professional and emotional needs of their teams as being important. They also reported working this way encouraged loyalty and a positive working environment which aligned with the existing literature on servant leadership. This way of leading also enhanced a solid alignment with organisational goals, and an enhanced team building environment.

The third leadership style that featured was transformational leadership where there were two leaders identified. This style is noted for the ability to inspire team members and motivate teams to achieve the organisational and strategic goals set out by the leader.

The last leadership style identified was laissez-faire where there was one leader identified. This leader was open and honest about the style and why it was appropriate for them. They identified this style to enhance the teams' innovations and decision making.

In relation to decision making, the participants interviewed reported a need to be innovative and have a flexible approach. This process was also impacted by the leader's desire to have information to make decisions, when under time pressure to do so. The research discovered that leaders who are collaborative in the decision-making process achieved sustainable and well-informed outcomes.

The research concludes that leadership style does indeed make a difference to decision making processes and outcomes and that leadership style impacts on the organisational performance. Leaders who adopt a collaborative, transformational or servant leadership style, promote engagement with their

teams, have a shared sense of responsibility and encourage innovation. These leaders are better equipped to deal with challenges and achieve better outcomes in the not-for-profit sector. The research emphasises why having a leadership style that is flexible, motivational and inclusive will enable leaders to make informed, well thought out decisions, and in doing so achieve their strategic objectives

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Introduction

Overview of research

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impact leadership styles have on decision making processes in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. The rationale for conducting this research comes working in the not-for-profit sector for over 20 years and seeing firsthand the unique and critical role that leadership plays in how organisations develop in Ireland, particularly where financial gain is not the primary motivation or strategic goals for organisations. The not-for-profit sector is characterised by various degrees of resource constraints alongside the mission and vision of the organisations, that offers a unique range of opportunities and challenges (Bryson, 2018).

The importance of leadership in the not-for-profit sector

For the not-for-profit sector to be sustainable and successful, leadership is crucial (Posner, 2015). Effective leadership can influence an organisations motivation, change the culture and increase the overall performance. According to Osula & Ng (2014) the most effective leadership styles to enhance adaptability and engagement from staff are collaborative and transformational (Osula & Ng, 2014). These leadership styles create an environment that makes employees feel valued and motivated. This is especially true in the not-for-profit sector where intrinsic rewards often outweigh extrinsic rewards.

Research objectives

The main objective of this research is to assess how different styles of leadership impacts decision making in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. The research aims to provide insight into the different leadership behaviours and how they impact the outcomes of an organisation, therefore providing insights that will improve the leadership in the not-for-profit sector.

The research aims to:

1. Explore the most common type of leadership style for senior leaders in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland.
2. What impact the leadership styles have on decision making processes.
3. Assess the challenges the leaders face and how they can adapt their style to face these challenges.

Literature review and theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used in this thesis is based on the research of Saunders et al. (2019), where the importance of different philosophies trying to understand the behaviours in organisations is used. The research uses an interpretivist approach, using qualitative data to gain insights into the perceptions and professional experiences of senior leaders in the Irish not-for-profit sector. Using this approach which is supported by Blumberg et al. (2008), where the importance of the participants subjective experience leads to insights for organisational transformation.

Methodology

This research was based on the findings of ten senior leaders in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. Semi-structured interviews took place, using a qualitative research method. Using this method enabled a comprehensive analysis of the participants perceptions and experiences particularly focused around leadership and decision making. A themed approach was used to analyse the data collected and this information was further distilled into patterns and themes. This approach was used following the guidelines set out by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Relevance of the research

There are a unique set of challenges faced by leaders in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. These challenges include high accountability, limited resources, transparency for spending funds (grants) and the need to be innovative about solving societal issues (Bryson, 2018). To navigate these challenges requires effective leadership. Insights from this research can inform and highlight how training can be used to upskill in tandem with development programmes for senior leadership teams.

This thesis also addresses the gaps in literature by focusing on the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. While there is extensive literature on leadership and decision making in general, there are limited studies dedicated to these specifics and none in the Irish context. To overcome this the scope of the literature was expanded to use the United Kingdom and Australia, where both regions have similar backgrounds in the not-for-profit and socio-economic area (Connolly et al. 2017; Popoviciu et al., 2006; Smith-Ruig, 2018).

Structure of remaining dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation follows the structure set out below.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

This chapter is a comprehensive overview of the existing literature and the different leadership styles in the not-for-profit sector. The discussion themes in this section include context on what is a not-for-profit organisation, as well as the history of leadership and why is that is important. The chapter then explores the different leadership styles and the different decision-making styles. Finally gaps in literature are discussed and identified for future research.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In this section the research design is outlined, including data collection model and analytical framework that was used. This chapter covers the justification to use a qualitive methodology and outlines the semi-structured interviews and how the interviews were conducted (Saunders et al., 2019).

Chapter 4 - Findings

The finding chapter presents the results of the themed data collected form the interviews. Direct quotes from participants are used and themes identified are discussed to illustrate key points and findings.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

In this chapter the findings are interpreted and discussed alongside the existing literature. The discussion forms opinions around the different leadership approaches practiced in the not-for-profit sector and implications for these. This chapter concludes identifying areas for further research.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The final chapter is a summary of the findings, with recommendations for leaders as well as highlighting the limitations of this research and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Not-for-profit sector

The not-for-profit sector has a long history, with many of these organisations recognisable in societies long before the term was used by the law and economics fields following World War II. It originated as a legal term that described organisations that did not share profits with shareholders. These organisations operated in small local ways each identifiable in their own region (Jensen, 2018). It was following the turn of the century that a substantial growth in not-for-profit organisations globally was seen, partly due to the expansions of society and influenced by globalisation (Silver, 2019). This concept has changed over the years to encompass charities, social enterprises, and voluntary organisations.

The not-for-profit sector in Ireland consists of different organisations including, charities, community groups and statutory funded services. These organisations do not make a profit and deliver a cost-effective service to people who really need it. These services are responsible for filling the void for government departments and the private sector (Silver, 2019). The Irish government has relied on the not-for-profit sector to fill the gaps left by social challenges, such as housing, information on rights and emergency housing/homeless support (Breen & Quinn, 2019). In fact, the not-for-profit sector has played an important role providing affordable accommodation to those who need it most, during the most difficult period of the country's housing crisis (Lima, 2020).

Leadership history

Leadership can be described as the ability to change behaviour and to achieve a desired outcome (Armstrong, 2012). To do this the leader must have an ability to motivate people and clearly communicate their vision for success.

The essence of effective leadership lies in fostering growth and maintaining people's engagement to jointly achieve organisational goals. This becomes particularly salient in the not-for-profit sphere, where leadership often gravitates towards boards and senior management teams (Andrews, 2023). They play a pivotal role in setting the organization's tone and seamlessly integrating its mission, goals, and values into everyday operations. Parsehyan (2017) shed light on a growing preference within organisations for middle-level employees to embrace leadership roles (Parsehyan, 2017). This shift aims to equip them to navigate the often volatile and rapidly changing environments they operate in.

Certain leadership styles, particularly servant and transformational leadership, are popular in the not-for-profit sector. Stone et al. (2004) stated that transformational leaders are committed to building a deep commitment to the organization. Servant leaders, on the other hand, place the well-being and requirements of their team members first and foremost. These leadership techniques are inextricably tied to governance ideas, implying that how a company is managed may impact the sort of board members it recruits.

Leaders in the not-for-profit sector have always needed to manage very tight budgetary constraints, especially in the years following financial problems like the global economic difficulties we have faced over the last number of years (Martinez-Cillero et al., 2020). Following these times there is always a

need for capable leaders and renewed sense of management (do Adro, 2020). This is often seen as managing with a tight control over finances. These leaders and indeed many leaders in the not-for-profit sector are described as being altruistic, community centred, being an advocate, trusting, and committed to lifelong learning (Masoud & Basahal, 2023). Having these competencies enable leaders to overcome the difficult challenges and engage with the client base.

Comparative countries

For the purposes of this research comparisons between both Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) were used. With a limited availability of research materials to make coherent arguments the researcher needed somewhere to compare the Irish not-for-profit sector against. It was with these points in mind that Australia and UK were chosen.

Australia

The Irish not-for-profit sector faces the same challenges as the Australian sector. Both countries are progressive when it comes to being collaborative from a social justice point of view (Smith-Ruig, 2018). The Australia - Irish connection is not only linked because of the Irish diaspora in Australia, cultural and emotional similarities tie both countries together (Hall & Malcolm, 2008). Both countries have been through economic challenges, and not-for-profits have been impacted in both countries. The outcome of which was having to work through financial constraints and needed to adapt to a changing environment (Breen & Quinn, 2019).

United Kingdom

Due to the geographical proximity and shared economic and social factors, not to mention a long-shared history the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland share important similarities. These similarities provide the basis for comparative analysis for this research. The UK and Ireland have a long history where shared cultural and economic structures enable us to create ties to each other and this is also true in the not-for-profit sector (Popoviciu et al., 2006). As Popoviciu et al. (2006) suggest it is down to this link that we find the Irish and UK's not-for-profit organisations have the same set up, operational practices and challenges. Both countries have a very strong sense of community engagement, where the social issues are at the forefront of issues presenting (Stukas et al., 2016).

Both the UK and Ireland have strong economic ties, and this also extends to the not-for-profit sector. This is one area where there are strong cross border initiatives alongside making use of shared funding streams (Birrell & Hayes, 2004). They both share a similar policy and governance framework, which allows both countries to attain high standards for the not-for-profit sector (Connolly et al., 2017).

While lastly both countries face the same challenges, such as adapting to changing environments, rigorous regulatory oversight and funding constraints (Breen & Quinn, 2019).

Leadership styles

In this section the unique styles of leadership and how they relate to the not-for-profit sector is examined. It also examines why leadership styles are important in the context of leaders and decision making and what are the assorted styles manifest by leaders who use them.

Transformational Leadership

The way Transformational leadership stands out from other model's is its focus on changing the values and goals of an organisation. Leaders who embrace this style motivate their followers to look beyond their interests for the betterment of the organisation and the community it serves (Peng et al., 2020). In Ireland not-for-profits use leadership to boost community involvement and foster social change. This method is essential in a landscape where not-for-profits encounter challenges and where fresh forward-thinking perspectives are needed for resilience and progress (McCarthy et al., 2012). However, this transformative approach has its downsides; it may overlook specifics and pose difficulties when implemented in organisations with traditional setups (Anderson & Sun, 2015). Nevertheless, transformational leadership continues to be an influence in the sector sparking creativity and fostering strong dedication. (Osula & Ng, 2014).

Servant Leadership

In this model of leadership the traditional hierarchy is flipped, putting serving before leading. When applied to not-for-profits this approach highlights the importance of community service and empowerment. A servant leader prioritises the growth and wellbeing of their team and the communities they serve fostering loyalty and alignment with the organisation's values (Miralles et al., 2024). While promoting a culture centred on community within organisations servant leadership can sometimes lead to a lack of direction as leaders focus heavily on supporting their followers. Despite these challenges servant leadership excels in cultivating a culture of service and selflessness which are fundamental to the ethos of profit organisations (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021).

Democratic Leadership

The democratic or participative leadership style values the input of team members and stakeholders in the decision-making process. This style is particularly well-suited to the not-for-profit sector where collaboration and consensus are often key to operational success. Agarwal (2020) conducted a study in the UAE's banking sector and concluded that democratic leadership positively affected employee performance. Reflecting on the Irish context, this style could foster greater employee engagement and retention in Irish not-for-profit organisations, where the mission and collective goals resonate strongly with personal values.

Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership is about working in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders. In Irish not-for-profits, this means integrating local voices into decision-making processes and addressing local issues with a more nuanced understanding (McDermott & Flood, 2010). The strength of this approach is its ability to foster inclusive solutions by considering a broad array of perspectives. However, the potential for decision paralysis emerges when too many conflicting viewpoints are considered, making it a time-consuming process (Kapucu & Garayev, 2011). Collaborative leadership represents a significant shift from more autocratic models, valuing consensus and joint decision-making over centralized control (Oh et al., 2023).

Comparative Analysis

The use and impact of these leadership approaches can differ depending on the sector and cultural environment. Each leadership theory provides a perspective on decision making in the not-for-profit sector. Transformational leadership offers a vision, while servant leadership underscores a service-oriented approach (Schneider & George, 2011). Collaborative leadership promotes participation and ethical leadership emphasises integrity. These models are not mutually exclusive. They can be combined to guide leaders of all organisations in Ireland as they confront the comprehensive challenges of societal transformation (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). The application of these theories within Irish not-for-profit organisations highlights the sectors adaptability in tailoring leadership strategies to fit the social landscape of the community.

Decision making in the not-for-profit sector.

Decision making in the not-for-profit sector involves organisations having a balanced approach as they navigate a unique position where they must be self-sufficient and sustainable while delivering on a strategic plan that is complex (Trevino & Brown, 2004). The many different type of not-for-profit organisations have different needs and different resources available. (Bryson, 2018) The decisions they make need to benefit the organisation while being somewhat risk averse. This also needs to be in line with the organisational values and strategy.

Strategic decision making

This type of decision making is based on setting out a goal for the organisation and implementing the steps along the way to achieve that goal. Strategic decisions involve resources to be available and come with some risk (Schwenk, 1984). This can be challenging for the organisation and in the not-for-profit area will have the people it serves at the forefront. It is also crucial for not-for-profit organisations to engage its stakeholders in the strategic planning process. According to Bryson et al. (2014) engaging stakeholders enables the organisation to gain a different range of perspectives, which in turn enables informed decision making. It is also critical that the not-for-profit sector is adaptable and open to change

and innovative when it comes to strategic decision making. Doing so enables them to be at the forefront of new initiatives and adapt to changing external environments (Nevin Stacy, 2018).

Rational Decision-Making

When organisations want to make decisions in a structured or systematic way they often lean towards the rational decision-making process. This way of making decisions is especially useful for the not-for-profit sector as it enables good governance while not being resource heavy (Hulpke & Fronmueller, 2022). This way of decision-making is process driven whereby the organisation identifies the problem, explores what alternatives are available to them and assesses the best option based on data they have gathered (Simon, 1979). When each step is documented in this way it enables organisations to be informed and make reliable decisions (Oliveira, 2007). However, this process can be time consuming and often will require staff who are specialised in data analytics (Browning et al., 2000).

Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision making in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland is a key area to consider. While all decisions are important, organisations making these decisions need to make sure that they are legally and morally sound. If so, it is of the utmost importance that they align with the organisational values and ethos. Ethical leadership in not-for-profit organisations are directly linked to high levels of trust among funders and stakeholders (Beeri et al., 2013). Within this area of decision making there are three frameworks available, Utilitarian, where the focus of the decision is on the outcomes of actions and how harm is minimised (Jones et al., 2007). Deontological ethics which are duty-based ethics concentrates on following moral rules or organisational principles when making decisions, sometime at the cost of the outcome (Kaptein, 2015). And lastly are virtue ethics. This looks at the character or integrity of the person making the decision and the different traits they possess. The basic premise being that leaders who are honest, and act with compassion and are fair will naturally have ethical decision-making abilities (MacIntyre, 2007). There are drawbacks to this decision-making framework as it can be resources intense and not-for-profit organisations have limited resources. While Freeman et al. (2010) suggests stakeholder management is key when maintaining ethical standards, and not-for-profit organisations can have several stakeholders to mind in the same space (Freeman et al., 2010).

Incremental Decision making

Incremental decision making is the process where small decisions are made in a step-by-step nature and can be referred to as "muddling through" (Flach et al., 2017). It is a useful way to work when resources are limited. According to Lindblom (1979) this method helps reduce the risk and enables organisations to see and deal with unforeseen circumstances (Lindblom, 1979). While Weick & Sutcliffe (2011) argue that small and incremental changes enable organisations to be more responsive and give them the ability to address issues quickly, which in turn leads to a better performance for the organisation. However, as Lindblom (1979) also states this way of working is slow and takes time. This is a draw back when time

is limited and decisions need to be made (Lindblom, 1979). However, this is an effective way for not-for-profit organisations to work and is seen as a pragmatic way to manage risk.

Making strategic decisions aligns the organisations long term goals with their daily activities. The approaches that can be applied are multifaceted. A mixture of rational, strategic, incremental and ethical approaches decision making is needed to meet the challenges faced by the not-for-profit organisations (Elbanna, 2006).

Leadership Styles in the Not-for-Profit Sector in Ireland.
The charitable sector in Ireland is known for its focus on community support and ethical behaviour and provides an opportunity to study leadership approaches and their effects. As an example of how leadership concepts are put into practice in not-for-profit organisations we can look to Collins (2019) who suggests that mentoring programmes like the Carmichael mentor programme, highlight the importance of strategic leadership when working in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. This type of programme provides supports for leaders in the not-for-profit sector and in turn develops strategic thinking, improves decision making skills and helps effectively manage the organisation (Collins, 2019).

Collaborative and Transformational Leadership
The Importance of collaborative and transformational leadership styles in the not-for-profit sector cannot be underestimated. Both enable organisations build resilience and adaptability, which in turn enhances the performance of an organisation (Osula and Ng, 2014). Benevene et al. (2018) found that to enhance commitment from workforce and volunteers in the not-for-profit sector, leaders who use an ethical leadership style achieve this commitment from their staff. Whereas inclusive leadership can be beneficial to both profit and not-for-profit sectors (Sugiyama et al., 2016), where leaders will inspire staff and demonstrate qualities that align with the organisational values.

Comparative Analysis
UK and Ireland; Contrasting with the Irish focus on value-based leadership, the UK's approach in not-for-profit organisations is more transactional and performance-oriented. Megheirkouni (2017) study in the UK reveals significant differences in leadership styles between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, with for-profits slightly more inclined towards transactional mechanisms that emphasise performance outcomes (Megheirkouni, 2017). This suggests a potential area for Irish leaders to explore, particularly in balancing mission-driven leadership with effective performance metrics.

Inclusive and Collaborative Leadership: Insights from Australia
Australia is used as a comparison for several reasons. Both countries have the same sociocultural similarities, social justice, and community welfare (Christine, 2018), which shows the findings from an

Australian context transferable and relevant. The not-for-profit sectors in both countries have similar challenges like being under the same pressures from funders to deliver (Smith-Ruig, 2018).

In Australia, the not-for-profit sector exhibits a strong inclination towards inclusive leadership, particularly given the high percentage of female leaders who bring communal and collaborative traits to their leadership roles. Smith-Ruig (2018) highlights that over 60% of senior managers in the sector are women and are more likely to adopt inclusive and communal leadership styles (Smith-Ruig, 2018). This style fosters an environment of empowerment and collaboration, which is essential for the non-profit sector's sustainability and growth.

Collaborative Leadership in Ireland

Adopting a collaborative approach, which integrates authoritative and participative leadership styles, has shown promise in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by Irish not-for-profits. Osula & Ng (2014) propose that modern not-for-profits would benefit from adopting a collaborative and transformational leadership model, which aligns with the sector's evolving needs for agility and innovation (Osula & Ng, 2014).

The not-for-profit sector in Ireland stands out for its focus on values and transformative leadership. This sets it apart from the transactional models used in the UK and the inclusive methods seen in Australia. Irish not-for-profit organisations have an opportunity to gain experience from these models to improve their leadership approaches, integrating performance driven and inclusive elements to strengthen governance and organisational effectiveness. By blending these styles Irelands not-for-profit sector could become more flexible and resilient and better equipped to succeed in evolving economic environments.

Leadership style and decision making

How decisions are made in organisations depends on the leadership style, and this is what is driving organisations and pushing them in any given direction. Leaders who are transformational, motivate and inspire others by creating a vision and bringing people on the journey. These leaders are innovative and encourage staff to be involved in decision making (Bass, 1999). From an Irish point of view Gallegos Peña (2022) found that this style is very effective in increasing employee engagement and in turn increasing organisational commitment, leading to a healthy decision-making framework (Gallegos Peña, 2022).

Does leadership style influence risk-taking and innovation?

For organisations to be successful, leaders need to be innovative and are enabled to take risks. Leadership style plays a part in this as they need to be willing and able to do so. A transformational leader will be willing to be innovative and embrace uncertainty to achieve their vision (Bass, 1999). In an Irish context we see this in the pharmaceutical and technology sectors (McCarthy et al., 2021), where

creating an advantage through innovation is key. This is especially true when responding to market changes. Contradicting this is the Laissez-faire approach where the leader will be hands off and allow the team to self-direct their work. This is problematic as it can lead to a static team and no innovation (Łukowski, 2017).

Cultural context and decision-making consistency

Effective leaders have a consistent decision-making ability. In the Irish context our culture plays an important part, where community and collaboration play a big part (Hofstede, 2001). This way of leading aligns well with the transformational and democratic leadership styles, where decision making, and a unified team are important. In Ireland and elsewhere the leaders who embrace these styles are more likely to uphold the values of the organisation and be consistent with decisions (Wallis & McLoughlin, 2007).

Leadership style and decision-making quality

The quality of decisions a leader makes is often linked to their leadership style. Those who identify as a transformational leader often make high-quality decisions. They do this through a culture of critical thinking and being collaborative with their team. This type of team led by this type of leader leads to greater creativity and in turn great problem-solving capabilities (Para-González et al., 2018). However autocratic leadership can lead to quicker decisions as the decision-making powers are held in one place. This can have adverse effects on teams as morale can dip and teams are less likely to be solution focused (Lewin et al., 1939). Sheehan (2016) found that autocratic leadership stifled creativity in the decision-making abilities, and this had a future impact on team innovation.

Gaps in Literature

Comparative Studies within Cultural Contexts

Much of the current literature, such as the studies by McDermott & Flood (2010), tends to focus on the implementation and impacts of various leadership styles within Irish not-for-profits without substantial comparative analysis to similar sectors in other countries. This gap leaves room for exploring how Irish leadership styles might uniquely evolve from or contrast with those in culturally similar countries, such as the UK or Australia. For instance, Megheirkouni (2017) provides comparative insights between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations in the UK, but similar detailed comparative research is scant in Irish contexts (McDermott & Flood, 2010; Megheirkouni, 2017).

Impact of Gender on Leadership Styles

Another notable gap is the impact of gender on leadership styles within the Irish non-profit sector. While Smith-Ruig (2018) discusses the prevalence of female leaders in Australian not-for-profit organisations, the role of gender in shaping leadership styles in Ireland is not extensively covered. This oversight

misses critical insights into how gender dynamics might influence leadership effectiveness and organisational culture in Irish non-profits (Smith-Ruig, 2018).

Link between Leadership Styles and Organisational Performance

There is also a lack of focused research on the direct correlation between different leadership styles and measurable organisational outcomes in Irish non-profits. While general assertions are made about the effectiveness of transformational or democratic leadership styles, there is a scarcity of empirical data that links these styles with specific performance metrics such as employee retention, fundraising effectiveness, or program success (Osula & Ng, 2014; Agarwal, 2020).

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the technique and procedure used in the study, as well alongside the framework and research philosophy that support this thesis. A summary and overview about the data gathering process and tools used to analyse the data will be provided. The approach this study aims to explore is does leadership style influence the decision-making process in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland, as well as including information regarding the research tool (semi-structured interviews). Attention to privacy protection for personal data and ethical issues will be outlined.

Using a framework developed by Saunders et al. (2019), the methodology employed in this study is illustrated in Figure 1. It displays several layers, such as research philosophies, approaches, tactics, choices, time horizons, and processes, that could affect the outcomes attained. According to Saunders et al. (2019) the research onion illustrates how those subtopics might be compared to an onion to understand the issues in this chapter and provide an overview from which the study comes. Furthermore, the ethical concerns as well as limitations of the research will be addressed.
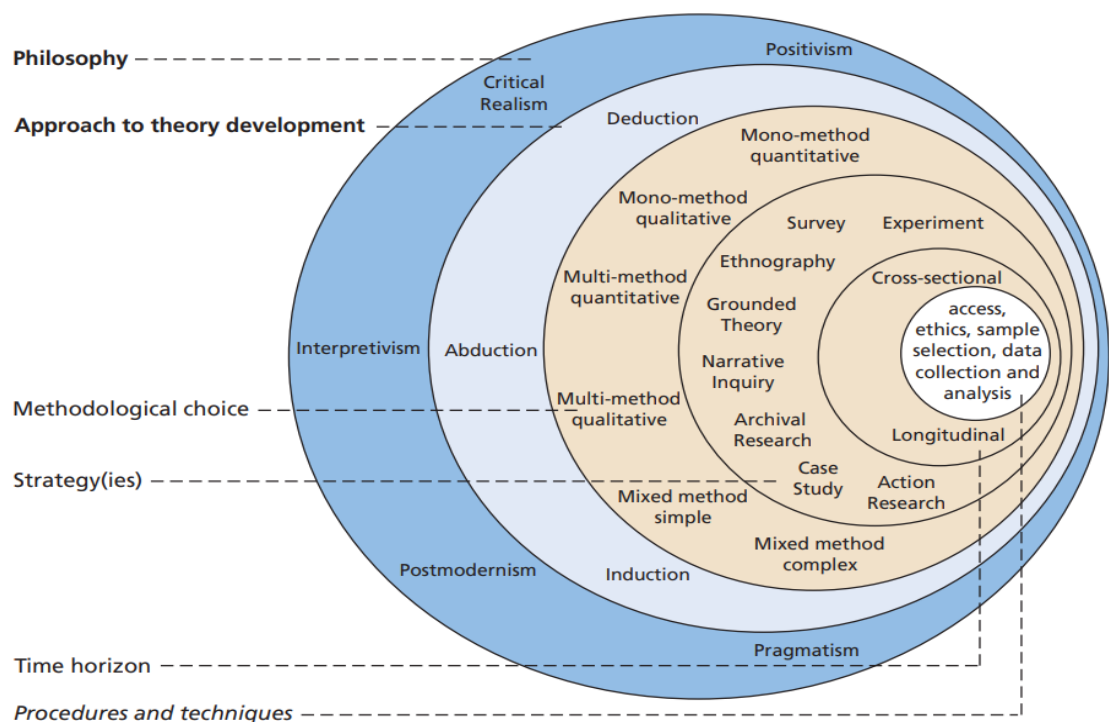
Figure 1: The Research 'Onion' (Saunders et al., 2019)

Research Philosophy

As defined by Blumberg et al. (2008), research philosophy is a concept of how a study should be conducted as well as the relationship and organisation between theory and the data acquired. Saunders et al. (2019) cites positivism and interpretivism as the most appropriate research philosophies, where positivist theory maintains that there are no generic laws or rules that applies to everyone, while interpretivism theory suggests that that those generic laws can be used and offer clear insights that

would not be spotted otherwise (Saunders et al., 2019). According to (Saunders et al., 2019), an interpretive method is deemed most appropriate for gaining a critical understanding of subjects like business, entrepreneurship, and organisational behaviour.

Kankam (2019) asserts that the selection of a research philosophy is dependent on the nature of the topic under investigation as well as the researcher's individual preferences for philosophical frameworks. There are four research philosophies that will be reviewed in line with this study. Namely Pragmatism, Interpretivism, Critical realism, and Positivism (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

Positivism

 This approach is objective and dependable as it stresses all the observable occurrences in the study. In using this approach Agarwal (2020), states that it enables the systematic study and enables the quantification of data. This is important for deciding how effective the different leadership philosophies are. To back this up, positivism's empirical rigor allows theories to be developed and tested about how effective leadership is. Hansen & Villadsen (2010) argue that effective leadership is fundamentally measurable against results like key-performance indicators and satisfaction surveys (Hansen & Villadsen, 2010). Nonetheless, there are certain restrictions on how positivism can be used. The possibility that it will overlook the breadth of knowledge needed to value subjective and contextual experiences in leadership positions is a serious disadvantage. Within the nonprofit sector, ethical considerations and community impacts are typically linked to leadership effectiveness; these are qualitative elements that are difficult to quantify (Kuntadi et al., 2023)

Interpretivism

By highlighting people's subjective experiences, interpretivism provides a deep level of comprehension. In the not-for-profit sector this strategy is effective as leadership is based on relationships and interactions with stakeholders. These motivations are instilled in the culture of not-for-profit organisations and the individuals who work in them (McDermott & Flood, 2010). Interpretivism where the focus is on qualitative data, enables a thorough evaluation about how responsible leaders are and to what level they rely on their personal beliefs (Chowdhury, 2014). This provides for a deep understanding of the processes and results of leadership.

Accordingly, this study embraces interpretivism as a philosophy, recognising that individuals are different, gaining diverse perspectives on life; for example, what signifies to one person may not mean the same to another. Because of the respondents' varied origins and experiences with various social realities, as acknowledged by the author, this research has concentrated on gaining a perception of attitudes, behaviours, and sentiments of the respondents (Saunders et al., 2019).

Pragmatism

In leadership studies, pragmatic approaches are praised for their adaptability and usefulness. The reason that this approach works is because in the not-for-profit sector the organisational strategy alongside styles of leadership can differ greatly. This practical approach is used to problem solve by being selective about the way leaders approach the problem.

There are challenges to maintaining the methodological standards while achieving theoretical depth. Pragmatism is practical and adaptable and a good match for research in the not-for-profit area, researchers need to balance the theory and how practical the methods are (Gilchrist & Simnett, 2019).

Research approach

Inductive and deductive are two of the approaches used by researchers. The two approaches differ as deductive starts with a hypothesis and will aim to show if these hypotheses apply to the topic being researched (Hyde, 2000). Alternatively using the inductive method uses the participants experiences which in turn indicated the direction of the research. This approach will start out with a stated goal and objectives, which are followed throughout the study (Liu, 2016).

This dissertation took an inductive approach to research, with no pre-conceived hypotheses to guide the findings. This study was led by its target and subsequent objectives, allowing for conclusions to be drawn from the findings. The rationale for choosing this strategy is that the interpretative quality of the inductive approach guides this study, which fits with its goal: 'Does leadership style influence the decision-making process in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland'.

The inductive research approach in this thesis aims to compress large amounts of information, identify relationships between them, and create a summary of findings to generate a theory about the topic under study (Thomas, 2006).

Research Tool

There are many ways to conduct qualitative research, such as focus groups, interviews and observation (O'Loughlin, 2011). All of which enable the participants to express their thoughts in an open and honest manner. Some will offer more freedom by virtue of how it is set up, for examples focus groups. (Walle, 2015). Considering the literature on qualitative research methodologies, semi-structured interviews were deemed more suited for this study and thus implemented.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher creates a list of preplanned questions that will be answered in conversation with the interviewee. These questions will be discussed in the next chapter. This research method allows individuals to communicate their thoughts and opinions on a certain topic in their own words (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Furthermore, this strategy has been shown to yield reliable data about people's experiences, attitudes, and perceptions while also creating a relaxing environment in which people feel more comfortable answering questions (Queirós et al., 2017). These qualities of semi-

structured interviews are crucial for the research carried out since it was imperative that the participants could recall experiences in a space where they felt safe to share their thoughts.

Interview questions

The interview questions for each participant consisted of fifteen semi-structured questions that were contained with-in five main themes namely - Leadership and philosophy, Decision making, challenges, the impact they had on their organisation and learning and motivation. To understand how leaders think work and act in the not-for-profit sector is the motivation behind this study. There are five sections to be considered when answering the research question. The leadership style and philosophy section will shed light on how the leaders think and where they see themselves as leaders (Andri et al., 2020). The inclusion of this section will also inform the researcher about the most common leadership type in the not-for-profit sector. As the decision-making process is at the core of the research question it needs to be explored. How this is done when under pressure and what pressures do leaders face is why this section is crucial for inclusion (Garvin & Roberto, 2001). The third section in this research is a section on challenges and adaptations. In the not-for-profit sector leaders can face challenges that are unique such as homelessness and sociological issues (Lancione et al., 2018). This section enquires as to what these are and how innovative the leaders must be to achieve success. What impact the leaders had on their organisations allows the researcher to investigate the successes of the leader and distil down the outcomes to see if there is a link to the leadership style. The last two sections, learnings and motivation looked at how the leader and leadership style has changed over the years. Again, these sections are included to ascertain if there is a link to style or decision-making process (Klein et al., 2013; Aboramadan, 2019). The questions and relevance for inclusion are set out below.

Leadership style and philosophy

In this interview section there are four questions. Leadership style and philosophy helps us understand how they view leadership and how it is present for them (Bryman et al., 2011). The first question relates to the type of leader they are and how they view themselves as a leader. By answering this question, it enables the researcher to correlate specific styles with answers on decision making and motivation which take place later in the interview. The second question also relating to leadership asks the participants what they believe makes a good leader. This is designed to gain an understanding of experience participants may have had and identify leadership skills in the not-for-profit sector. To ascertain the participants ethical views on leadership they were asked what the principles that underpin their decision making were. This was a way to enquire about their moral compass in an indirect way. To conclude the section on leadership the participants were asked if their leadership style developed over time. By asking this question the researcher gained insights into how leaders developed and to what extent. This is a crucial factor when discussing the outcomes of style of leaders in tandem with other research questions.

Decision making process

To understand the decision-making process, it was important to view it through the lens of when a leader was under pressure (Useem et al., 2005). This first question elicits a response from the participants that enables the researcher to identify any traits or ways of thinking that enable them to make sound decisions when under pressure. This is a key area of the research as not all decisions are made with the comfort of time and information available (Keeney, 2004). The next question in this section is designed to seek out how the leader involves their teams. This question is designed to ascertain if a leader is involving teams in decisions and why, the research shows that if teams are involved it leads to sustained success and buy in from the team (Meyer et al., 2016). The last question in this section links decisions making and finances, the purpose being to understand the links between decision around finances and non-financial matters.

Challenges

In this section the first question the researcher delves into the challenges faced as a leader, and how these were overcome. This section was used to link different challenges to leadership style and provide information on different approaches to dealing with such problems. The second question in this section is in relation to how leaders adapted with insight into how they respond to pressures both inside and outside their control.

Impact on organisation

By including this section, it enabled the researcher to assess the direct impact that the leader had on their organisation. Insights can be gained on how different leadership styles help or add value to an organisation (Majeed et al., 2010). It is important to understand the impact the leaders have had on their organisations and if there is a link between the different styles.

Learnings and motivation

Asking leaders what advice they would give to emerging leaders uncovers an insight into what advice they would have liked to receive when they were starting out as leaders. Information from this section can be used to distil down the information and offer training and development programmes for young leaders. The next question explores if leaders have enough time to reflect. It is an important question as it tries to understand if leaders carve out enough time to reflect or if they lack resources (Martin, 2007). The third question in this section is around motivation and what leaders think motivate them. Working in the not-for-profit sector is not as financially rewarding as the private sector (Andrade & Westover, 2023), and therefore must need another motivation or job satisfaction to keep leaders in the sector. This question sets out to examine any link between leadership and motivation.

Sample

Sampling provides a cost effective and accomplished way to gather data for a specific research purpose. Sampling is particularly effective when resources are limited (Bhardwaj, 2019) as is the case for this research. When it comes to sampling, you can utilise either the probability or nonprobability method. When considering probability sampling, all members of the population have the same chance to be

chosen. Alternatively, when considering non-probability sampling this does not apply as not all the population is considered for selection (Taherdoost, 2016). This research is conducted by selecting a particular group of senior leaders from the not-for-profit sector, and as a result non-probability sampling has been chosen. Furthermore, this research is using two sampling methods purposive and convenience. Convenience sampling can be defined by the researcher interviewing everyone who is willing to partake (Walle, 2015). Because of the nature of the questions utilised in the research interview and the fact that not everyone may have time for a 45-minute interview, the option of doing the interview through Teams was offered. As a result, a sampling strategy in which people choose to participate voluntarily appeared to be the greatest fit for this research and was adopted in the study.

Selection of participants

The selection of participants for this research was based on seven requirements. All participants were in a leadership role. They all have at least 15 years working at a senior level. All participants are currently working in the Irish not-for-profit sector. They all came from different types of organisations and different sizes. There was a gender balance. They were willing to and available to participate in the research. Below is a table setting out the participants who were interviewed.

ID	Leadership style	Gender	Years in leadership	Area of work	Position in organisation
001	Collaborative	M	25 +	Local Authority	Director
002	Servant	M	20 +	Homeless Charity	Director
003	Collaborative	M	25 +	Research NGO	Director
004	Servant	F	20 +	Information service	CEO
005	Collaborative	M	15 +	Mental health	Head of Service
006	Transformational	F	20 +	Charity general	CEO
007	Collaborative	F	15 +	Homeless Charity	Director
008	Servant	F	20 +	Information service	Head of Service
009	Laissez-Faire	F	15 +	Homeless Charity	CEO
010	Transformational	M	25 +	Charity General	Director

Figure 2: Participant breakdown

The researcher forwarded an email seeking volunteers to ten senior leaders in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. All leaders contacted were working at a senior level and involved in the decision making and strategic development of their organisation. The email included background to the research, what the aims of the study were and what was expected from the participant. The email also included a word document attached with an overview of the research and the areas that the questions would cover (materials are accessible in appendices B). The participants were chosen as they represent a cross section of the not-for-profit sector. All who were contacted agreed to participate and fill in the consent

form provided (available as appendix C). This process of selecting participants based on the qualities and experience they possess is called the purposive sampling (Bhardwaj, 2019).

All ten of the participants asked to take part accepted, which totalled over 200 years' experience in management of not-for-profit organisations. This experience ranged from the charity sector, local authorities, HSE, and state funded public services. While most participants were Dublin based, over half represented national organisations. The gender breakdown was 50% male and 50% female.

Pilot Study

Pilot research was conducted before interviews with the indicated participants. A pilot study is a method used to demonstrate the research feasibility while helping to enhance the quality of the answers from participants. This can be conducted by a feasibility study or a pre-testing pilot test. When we consider feasibility pilots the model used is a small version of the research. Alternatively, pre-testing as used in this research is designed to test a specific instrument (Malmqvist et al., 2019). The pilot was done to validate the interview questions, assess the amount of time required to complete them, and to find any flaws.

A person who was not one of the ten research participants was chosen from a backup pool of participants. The completion of the pilot research demonstrated that the questions were simple to grasp and allowed for ample opportunity for personal clarification. The desired time limit was met, and no flaws were discovered. Nonetheless, this phase of the research underscored the researcher's confidence to conduct the interviews as designed.

Having conducted the pilot study, the researcher found not all the questions applied to the participants chosen and as such a slight adjustment on the structure of the questions was made and implemented for the first interview.

Analysis of Data

All ten participants were interviewed using Microsoft Teams following the receipt of their signed copy of consent. Following the interviews this information was transcribed to a word document and grouped in different sections for thematic analysis. The benefits of using this kind of analysis are that it allows for different events to be grouped together and explored under a core notion, that in turn enable the formulation of the cause-effect theories that can assist with the understanding of phenomena (Turan, 2020).

Grouping

The different themes were grouped together to identify common patterns and any relationships within the data collected. The researcher used overarching topics to identify issues and similarities between the leaders' answers. The answers were broken into five sections Leadership, Decision making, Challenges, Impact on organisation, Learning and motivation. Each section was further broken down by sub-questions. The next stage of the process was picking keywords for each section and sub section and analysing the similarities and differences. Breaking down the answers into keywords or phrases and

colour coding them enabled the researcher to identify key trends and similarities to use in the discussion section. As stated in the interview questions section all the questions were grouped into themed sections, which enabled the researcher to ask the questions in a different way if the participant was going off track or they already answered the question.

The ten participants all worked in the not-for-profit sector in the Republic of Ireland. All the participants in this study are leaders in their organisations and have fifteen to twenty years' experience working this the area. As the study is trying to understand leadership style, decision making and motivation, a thematic approach was viewed the best option. As this approach lent itself to allowing the researched identify themes that were common to all participants and develop theories on the leadership style and associated traits.

Braun & Clarke (2012) created this themed theoretical framework in 2006. This research provided a guide for conducting a theme analysis, including recognising patterns and developing interconnections, as well as explicit recommendations for its rigorous execution (Braun & Clarke, 2012). There are six phases identified in this process and all were used in this research. Below are the descriptions for each of the phases.

1. Data familiarisation: To obtain an understanding of the material content and context, the researcher will need to be fully immersed. This involves reading and re-reading, all the data available to identify any trends or patterns. This immersion assists researchers in identifying nuances, relevant details, and prospective themes that may arise later in the analysis. Researchers acquire a basic understanding of data through familiarisation, which drives theme creation, ensuring that the analysis remains grounded in the data. To achieve this the researcher read the transcripts various times to discover and understand the main ideas in each transcript.

2. Generation of codes: This phase entails rigorously finding and tagging key data aspects that are pertinent to the research issue. To catalogue the different dataset identified, the researcher will need to add labels to the different patterns identified. These are known as codes. When applying the codes the researcher will review the data in detail oftentimes line by line (Williams & Moser, 2019). For this research study the researcher used coloured highlighters to identify different themes to be grouped together.   In doing so resulted in a visual reference to help match themes easily.

3. Theme searching: The next phase in this process is identifying patterns within the data.

    This step extends the coding process by evaluating the codes and determining how they might be combined to produce overarching themes. Researchers look for noteworthy patterns and connections among the codes, arranging them into likely themes that capture key characteristics of the data relevant to the study objectives.

Researchers frequently use visual representations, such as mind maps, when searching for themes to assist them visualise how different codes and themes relate to one another. This iterative process requires researchers to review and refine themes to ensure they are cohesive and unique from one another. The goal is to develop a set of potential themes that accurately represent the data and provide useful insights into the research issue. In this research the researcher used a mind map to identify themes. Alongside the themes and sub-themes, a brief description was noted which enabled the data to be interpreted.

4.   Theme review: The Theme review involved filtering the initial themes previously identified, where the data is checked for accuracy. There are two different sections to this process.

Section One: Reviewing the Code – the researcher reviews each section for themes and ascertains if there is any discernible pattern. They will also look at the answers in each theme and see if they are a pattern. The researcher will then see if these themes fit together overall and if there are other themes not previously identified. It is at this point that some themes may need to be re written or discarded.

Section Two: Once consistency has been achieved the researcher can start to explore the themes in the overall dataset. This will involve reviewing the data again with a macro lens to ensure the themes are following the main research. It is important at this stage to make sure no sections of data have been missed.

The goal is to refine the themes to a point where they provide a clear, comprehensive, and nuanced understanding of the data, ready for final definition and naming in the subsequent stage. In this study the theme map was assessed and reordered to reflect the full amount of the information acquired. It was at this point that the interview transcripts were again reviewed to ensure no information was missing.

5.   Defining and naming themes: This process of defining and naming themes involves refining all the themes to provide a clear and deep meaning. The examination of themes involves assessing their breadth, focus, and interactions with sub-themes to ensure logical consistency.

Themes, once established, are assigned succinct and informative titles that accurately represent their fundamental concepts. In this research the themes that were found in the mind map were listed and descriptions of each one was recorded in relation to the transcriptions.

6.   <u>Producing the report</u>: In this; the last stage of the thematic analysis a report is written up. This report will contain a robust investigation of the themes. The information is outlined in this section to inform the reader of the quality and validity of the research. The aim for this report is to be brief, have a good rational, and be non-repetitive. The conclusions from this study will be discussed in Chapter 6

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Using this tool to analyse the data is an easy and flexible way to examine qualitative data. Like all tools, there are negatives to using thematic approach to research. The legitimacy of that data can be compromised if the researcher is biased, and this bias influences the outcomes of the themes. As this way of analysing data is considered a summary and an easier way to rationalise it, careful consideration should be made to ensure it outlines what the data means and not only the summarisation. There needs to be strong safeguards put in place by the researcher to ensure the similarities between theory and analysis (Javadi & Zarea, 2016)

Ethical Considerations

Before any interviews took place the researcher received signed consent from each participant. Part of the consent form was the agreement that their identity and organisation would remain anonymous. Therefore, all participants were identified by a code ranging from ID001 - ID010. This consent form is available in appendix C. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw consent at any time and the transcript would be destroyed and any information used in the study would be removed. At any point in the interviews the participants could refuse to answer any questions, and this would not impact on the rest of the interview for them. To prepare in advance an outline of the questions, arranged in themes was sent to the participants. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the researcher to ask any follow up questions if needed. The interviews started with an informal chat to put participants at ease, before starting with the questions. (Decker et al., 2011)

Before and after the interview

An ethics form was submitted to National College of Ireland ethics committee before this research commenced. To ensure that all participants were fully aware of the purpose of the study, the format being used and how their information was going to be used, a letter with all the information needed was emailed alongside a consent form, which needed to be returned before the interview started (van Deventer, 2009).   While conducting the interviews, all participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research, not answer a question or cease the interview.

Data and Storage

It is vital to ensure that the data collected from this research is treated as confidential and stored appropriately. The data was anonymised following collection and each participant given an ID to prevent identification as outlined in the consent form. As outlined to the National College of Ireland's

(NCI) ethics committee the data will be stored securely using a password protected document for each interview (Bishop, 2009). All the protected files were then saved in a password protected folder and stored on the personal drive of the researcher's computer's. All the data is kept in accordance with NCI's policy on research data retention. Following this timeframe all the data will be destroyed (Carusi & Jirotka, 2009).

Participants

The researcher carried out all interviews over MS Teams platform. Each interview was approximately 45minutes long. To encourage the participants to be open and honest in a relaxed environment the call started with a catch-up chat. This created a warm friendly environment in which to interview. The researcher tried to always maintain eye contact and demonstrated active listening by using both verbal nonverbal techniques.

The questions were formulated to be simple and straightforward to understand, and participants were reassured that if they could not answer or wanted to skip to the next question they could. There was space in the interview allowed for participants to expand on a point if needed and the researcher included follow up questions when needed to further clarify a point or to understand more effectively the answer given.

Following the interviews the researcher contacted each participant to thank them for their honesty and to seek feedback on the interview. This was also an opportunity to check in with the participants and make sure that the questions did not bring anything up for them that needed further processing. The researcher also hoped to improve the validity of the study by communication in a positive proactive way.

Findings

Introduction

This chapter of the research study will be analysing and discussing the findings from the questions set out in the interview process. The answers will be themed into six distinct groupings to answer the research question "Does leadership style influence the decision-making process in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland". In answering this question, the research will aim to assess the key leadership behaviours impacting senior management in Ireland's not-for-profit sector and identify commonalities and divergences in their approaches. The findings will also determine how leaders face the challenges they encounter and if the necessary support mechanisms are in place to assist. The research will also assess the different leadership styles and views on decision-making, particularly where profit-generation is not the principal aim. And lastly the research will probe into the impact the leaders had on their organisations and what they have learnt in their role, what motivates them to keep working in the sector. The research will provide quotes from the participants who interviewed to back up or illustrate key areas in the study.

Theme 1 - Leadership style and Philosophy

In this research the most common style reported was Collaborative leadership. The respondents highlighted involving team members when making decisions and making sure that they had as much information as possible and input from their teams. They felt that this was conducive to an open team where collaboration, ability to solve problems and good communication were key.

> *"I like to ensure that people have an input into decisions. I like to hear other people's contributions before I would make decisions myself."* Participant 001.
>
> *"I see myself as having a very collaborative leadership style. I like to ensure that people have an input into decisions."* Participant 005.
>
> *"I like to listen to people and take on board their thoughts and input. I do like to empower people to be able to come up with suggestions and feel that they can kind of be heard."* Participant 007

This is an example of how collaborative leaders involve their teams and value the opinions to create a sense of shared ownership in their teams.

Servant leadership also featured strongly in the interviews, this style which has its roots in serving the individuals in a team to create a positive growth focused environment, where the leaders' needs are never put in front of what the team needs.

> *"Servant leadership... it's something that I tried to hold very close to my heart. It's very central value... It's very much about bringing people along and helping them reach their own potential."* Participant 002.
>
> *"Everything we do, we do for our clients. Integrity is a massive thing for me. It's probably one of my biggest values."* Participant 009.

Transformational leaders are viewed as wanting to understand both the professional and emotional needs of their teams. They want to understand so they can support them in the correct way. The use of empathy, and concern for the well-being of the team members is conducive to creating a supportive work environment. In this research two leaders identified themselves in this category.

> *"I tend to lead with empathy... As a leader in the organisation, I try to lead by example. I'm professional and I try. I like to have structure around me because structure then reinforces how I see things."* Participant 006.

> *"I'd never ask you to do something that I will never do myself. I would be very much into recognition and appreciation... Feedback and praise are all very important."* Participant 004.

When this style of leadership is used it can create a supportive and understanding environment, where team members feel respected and valued. This in turn enhances their performance and engagement with tasks.

The different approaches to leadership style and how leaders work with their teams as highlighted above is testament to the ways leaders support, enhance and understand their teams. Each style is different however all styles strive to achieve the same outcome: creating a positive and effective leadership environment. Below is a table setting out the findings

ID	Leadership style	Traits	Philosophy
001	Collaborative	Direct, collegiate, task-oriented	Believes in setting standards, empowering others, being a role model, having a vision, and supporting others to achieve their best.
002	Servant	Servant leadership, occasionally autocratic when necessary	Values authenticity, humility, and celebrating the potential of others. Emphasizes the importance of integrity and honesty.
003	Collaborative	Forward-facing, accountable, and transparent	Communicative, reflective, considerate, and decisive. Values trust and mission-focused leadership.
004	Servant	Non-confrontational, engaging, professional.	Believes in recognition, appreciation, and the importance of motivation and engagement. Prioritizes staff welfare
005	Collaborative	Collaborative, consensus-building	Values reputation, impact on stakeholders, honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, and accountability.
006	Transformational	structured yet flexible, non-micromanaging	Focuses on empathy, leading by example, and providing autonomy to the team.
007	Collaborative	Collaborative, open, and transparent	Values a collaborative approach, being well-informed, and empowering others to contribute.
008	Servant	Participative, consultative	Values active participation, consultation, and the importance of involving people in processes.
009	Laissez-Faire	Participative	Values serving the clients, integrity, and creating a positive culture for staff and clients.
010	Transformational	consensus-building, trusting,	Values a collaborative approach, leading by example

Figure 3: Leadership style

Theme 2 – Decision making

Leaders in the Irish not-for-profit sector face many unique problems including making decisions with limited resources, competitive tendering and limited scope to be innovative. For leaders in this sector, it can contribute to a sense of isolation (Bortnowska, 2021). To try and alleviate these issues Ardo and Leitão (2020) proposed implementing a flexible inventive and inclusive leadership style.

The respondents of this research, when asked about decision making under pressure, stated that they would focus on solving the problem in a quick and confident way, while balancing how urgent the decision was with having all the information to hand.

> *"It's about making sure you try and do the right thing for people at the right time but you're also... if you don't ever make mistakes, you've probably never made a decision."* Participant 001.
>
> *"My comfort zone is making decisions quickly. Yeah, I'm confident. I feel competent if I know the information I'll make a decision."* Participant 002
>
> *"Peer support is really important... I'm one of those people who has to take the really low hanging fruit out of my way first so that I can actually focus on a bigger decision."* Participant 004
>
> *"I'm thinking, how quickly do we need to make this decision? What are the impacts? What's at stake here?"* Participant 005.

The participants here demonstrate how they use, quick thinking, support from colleagues and problem-solving techniques to work through high pressure situations.

Involving team members in this process was also demonstrated in the responses where it is common practice to have input from team members. This was beneficial in two ways, the decisions made are well informed and this process created a culture of collaborative working and buy in from team members.

> *"It can literally be you know those weekly or fortnightly or a monthly meeting where you know we would have a set agenda... taking staff out of the building for a planning day to brainstorm."* Participant 009.
>
> *"I very much do a community development ground up and then meet it from the top down as well."* Participant 004.
>
> *"Encouraging people to come up with ideas and then saying right you've come up with it. So off you go. You make it happen."* Participant 001.
>
> *"I have to constantly be cognizant of the fact that they do sometimes wait on my opinion... I have to step away from that."* Participant 002.

This way of involving team members can have a positive impact on a team, whereby it is creating a sense of ownership in the decision-making process.

In the literature there is a distinct contrast between leadership styles in the not-for-profit and private sector where the private sector being more competitive and profit driven (Rexhepi et al., 2020). Overall, the participants responded to the questions around financial decisions highlighting a need to be innovative, using the resources at hand in a considered way. All the participants were conscious of the impact when making financial decisions, and what impact these decisions would have for their organisation.

"Financial decisions are very much set out for us because we have financial control from the funders... non-financial decisions...are much easier." Participant 004.

"Finances are very much a budget. You can either spend or you don't spend... non-financial decisions need innovation as they are part of the day-to-day work. There is a contrast between them." Participant 005.

"When finances are limited, you have to be innovative in order to get thing done otherwise you'll just stand still." Participant 009

In the Irish context the not-for-profit and private sectors both have varied decision making styles that are impacted by the organisational setting and leadership responsibility. The leaders who participated in this study outline a process that was broadly the same, they were managing the pressures, involving their teams in decisions and thinking differently about the financial and non-financial decisions. This way of working highlighted that decisions are inclusive, adaptive of the situation and informed. The findings are outlined below.

ID	Decision making style	Traits
001	Rational	problem-solving by identifying the issue, researching, and involving the right people to come up with a solution
002	Strategic	Makes decisions quickly and confidently, considering the information available and adapting their style when needed
003	Incremental	This participant discusses taking a step back and allowing for thought and reflection
004	Rational	Emphasis is placed on time management and taking low-hanging fruit to focus on more significant decisions
005	Rational	Focuses on gathering information, assessing the urgency, and being responsive to the situation
006	Rational	This participant stresses the importance of gathering facts, considering consequences, and learning from past decisions.

007	Ethical	The participant discusses staying true to core values and making decisions based on what feels right
008	Strategic	This participant mentions feeling pressure during decision-making and describes the need to process and measure reactions before finalizing a decision
009	Incremental	They describe a struggle with decision-making in a small team and emphasize self-reflection and reaching out to the board for input.
010	Rational	Looks at the situation and what has been done in the past. Uses team to look for different angles

Figure4: Decision making style

Theme 3 – Challenges

Subtheme 1 Leader challenges

The challenges facing the leaders in not-for-profit organisations was varied and different than the private sector. Isolation was noted by most participants, where the responsibility of making decisions, other people may not agree with was dominant.

> *"The biggest challenge you can have as a leader is being isolated in that role."* Participant 003.
> *"Sometimes you'll be the problem for teams, even though you're not. And that's OK. That's sometimes your role and that can be hard if you want to be loved."* Participant 002.

Resistance to change was another challenge for leaders, who have experienced resistance from long serving staff members. This is especially true when assuming responsibility of a new team or function.

> *"Coming in fresh and new wanting to make a good impression... having people just completely disengage."* Participant 006.
> *"Resistance to coming into a particular role and to replace somebody who was previously in a role."* Participant 005.
> *"The only thing that does not change is change itself and people don't like change"* Participant 010.

Staffing and the ability to keep a full team was a particular challenge that all the participants faced. Some organisations worked with very limited financial budgets, and this was a big challenge to attract people to the organisation and keep them motivated and engaged.

> *"The motivation for staff on the front line... ensuring that your supporting teams don't get burned out."* Participant 008.
>
> *"People resourcing is probably sometimes... yeah, always a challenge."* Participant 004.

Subtheme 2 Adaptation strategies

With all the challenges presented to the leaders interviewed they also have adaptation strategies to help them overcome these challenges. All the leaders demonstrated an ability to adjust their leadership style depending on the person they were dealing with or the situation they faced.

> *"Your leadership style needs to be changing with the audience that you especially when you don't know them."* Participant 001.
>
> *"There are times when you have to put the hand around the shoulder... and times when you just have to direct."* Participant 002.
>
> *"Depending on the audience and what the situation is, I have a toolbox to go to. It should never be a one size fits all for leadership style."* Participant 010.

To avoid push back and get buy in from teams they need to feel involved in decision making, using their ideas to promote an idea or new way of working reduces the resistance to change.

> *"Making sure that the team get time to plan and do strategy workshops away from the hustle and bustle of the office environment is important as it ensures everyone is heard."* Participant 010.
>
> *"Working with a team to take ownership of an idea and following that through is very worthwhile."* Participant 001.

Good leaders adapt and create good team dynamics by being involved with their team and taking an interest in how they are performing. This in turn offers the opportunity to receive feedback on their own leadership style.

> *"As I've grown in my career and in my confidence, I think my style adapts naturally."* Participant 006.
>
> *"Good leadership is about not being afraid to look at your own strengths and weaknesses."* Participant 005.
>
> *"As a leader you learn the best lessons from when things did not work out well. It is important to take time to review your own part in these situations."* Participant 010

The most common challenges faced by leaders in the not-for-profit sector are isolation, change management and lack of resources. The examples above have shown how leaders are adaptive to

respond to these challenges. Leaders involve teams in decisions, are flexible in how they respond to challenges and want to continuously learn and adapt to navigate these ongoing challenges.

Theme 4 – Impact on organisation

The impact that leaders have on an organisation can often be overlooked by the leader themselves. Lack of feedback from peers and line managers contribute to this lack of awareness. However, there are several ways the leaders in this study did reflect on the impact they had on their teams or organisations. One such example is that they focus on the outcomes that are tangible and measurable rather than the planning or journey to success.

> *"Actions have created change. At an operational level and at a policy level."* Participant 001
>
> *"When I started here as a senior manager... we now have 46 services."* Participant 002.

Energy and motivation are noted as a way of engaging teams and fostering a sense of positivity in the workplace.

> *"People would see me as quite motivational because of my energy... there's not been a day where I didn't want to get out of bed and come into work."* Participant 004.
>
> *"I would hope that it's created some degree of loyalty and understanding."* Participant 005.

Building up trust in team members and empowering them to be innovative and responsible for the performance of the team was also an area that was apparent in the feedback.

> *"My team... are quite empowered now. They know my leadership style."* Participant 007.
>
> *"I've given them the opportunity to think for themselves and work differently."* Participant 006.

In the not-for-profit sector funding for organisations can be hard to put in place and when it is in place there is a very heavy burden on oversight and governance that unless an organisation is stable and displaying good governance it is at risk from funders.

> *"I have brought amazing stability to the organization... finances are extremely stable."* Participant 009.
>
> *"I think... I have developed a good analysis in relation to disadvantage and inequality."* Participant 008.
>
> *"There is oversight everywhere, when dealing with funding from government or the public you need to show good stewardship and governance."* Participant 010.

There is also a need to be able to adapt to different situations and challenges, this can be done by communicating effectively while adapting style to the audience. Communication being of the utmost importance.

"Adapting to what's in the room and what we've got." Participant 002.

"Changing my communication style for different people." Participant 004.

"Planning and more communication... explaining a lot more." Participant 010.

"Don't underplay your hand and don't deflect credit when you deserve it." Participant 005.

Being inclusive and collaborative is crucial to lead a team. Creating buy-in and being collaborative by involving team members was viewed as crucial.

"Involving people in the organization... consulting and taking ideas and views on board." Participant 009.

"It's crucial to create a culture where everybody has value to the overall objective." Participant 005.

The impact that leaders have on teams and organisation includes motivating staff, creating an environment of empowering team members, being motivational, adapting to different situations while being collaborative and achieving outcomes in a tangible way. This way of working enables managers to become leaders by driving positive outcomes and managing change in a proactive way.

Theme 5 – Learnings

Whan asked what learning the leaders took from their years of experience there was a wide range of answers. This suggests that different leaders use their strengths to lead and create a good work environment. Being authentic and true to your beliefs was a key learning. This way of maintaining morals and not selling out to gain favour was pivotal in building trust and credibility with a team.

"Be yourself and don't try to be somebody else... always be true to what your ethos is, what your morals are." Participant 001.

"Be authentic... don't try to be something that you're not because people will see right through you." Participant009.

"Be open to learning... push your comfort zone." Participant 007.

"Learn, learn, learn as you go. Listen, learn. Pick up bits from everyone." Participant 010.

The ability to form strong relationships with your team as well as building strong networks is essential to provide effective leadership. Balancing this with managing criticism and embracing challenges also showed strong emotional intelligence which allowed the leaders to understand how they evolve into leaders.

Get to know the people... get a sense of what's going on." Participant 004.

"You're not an island... you have people you will report to and people who report to you."
Participant 002.

"Embrace the role... understand that what you did before is not what you do now."
Participant 005.

"Try not to apologize too much... it's important to admit when you're wrong but also to maintain confidence." Participant 008.

Strong leaders should also be able to learn from others and be humble. They don't know everything and shouldn't try to be perceived as if they do.

"Be humble and give yourself the chance to learn... find a peer or someone to support you."
Participant 006.

"Knowing yourself and being comfortable with yourself... develop your weaknesses."
Participant 007.

Just as important as giving credit to the team it is also important to celebrate the wins, no matter how small. This creates a positive motivation in a team and is crucial for morale.

"Celebrate the small wins... it helps in maintaining motivation and feeling part of the bigger picture." Participant 009.

Theme 6 – Motivation
Motivation for leaders can be difficult as they face ongoing obstacles and situations to solve while keeping their team and themselves motivated. Getting buy in from their teams and stakeholders can be hard and can affect motivation levels.

"Trying to get a collegiate buy-in from all different actors... trying to get entities to think laterally." Participant 001.

"Trying to get out of the operational and into more strategy... without any buffer of middle management." Participant 009.

"Keeping my team well and motivated versus keeping myself well and motivated."
Participant 004.

Leaders are judged by results and how well their teams perform. It is often a two-way process where the team performs well and motivation of the leader rises.

"Knowing what you're doing can actually have a real impact." Participant 007.

"Seeing someone grow within the organization... that's very rewarding." Participant 009.

"Seeing the fruit of your labour... you can see change." Participant 010.

Leaders are also propelled by their values and beliefs, and these will align with the organisational mission. This is a common theme in this research, the leaders are aligned with their organisation's values, mission and vision.

"It's the people, values, and mission that keep me motivated." Participant 006.
"I believe in what we do as an organisation… it's a way to keep me going when things are not going smoothly" Participant 010.

Ongoing learning for leaders is also a motivational factor. Continuous personal development keeps leaders involved and in touch with what is happening on the ground.

"Every day is different... there's always something new to learn." Participant 008.
"Focus on the output and continuous improvement... that's motivating." Participant 003

Limitations of Study

This study aims to investigate how leadership style and decision making among senior leaders in the not-for-profit sector, is viewed and what areas these leaders view as important in their own style. As with all research there are limitations to this study which include the design of the study, the methodology and how the data is collected.

Sample Size and Sampling Method: As the study size is a small sample (limited to ten leaders), it may not be representative of the not-for-profit sector in Ireland and in turn restricting the findings. (Bhardwaj, 2019). In this study the researcher used convenience and purposive sampling. This method can introduce an element of selective sampling as not every member of the population had the opportunity to be a participant (Taherdoost, 2016).

Research Approach: Inductive Approach: In this research study an inductive research approach was used. This approach could limit the study as it enables the researcher to get answers to specific questions and observations, possibility limiting the study to expand to a wider context (Thomas, 2006).

Data Collection Method: The semi structured interviews used in this study allowed for in-depth questions and specific follow up questions, they can also allow bias to creep into the interview. The way the interviews were conducted could leave the answers open to subjectivity and enable the researcher to look for bias in the answers. This bias and subjectivity can have an influence on the reliability of the findings (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Another bias that needs to be considered is the unconscious bias of the participants when answering questions. This self-reporting data can be open to exaggeration or recall bias. (Queirós et al., 2017)

Geographical and Sectoral Focus: this research focused solely on the not-for-profit sector in the Republic of Ireland. In narrowing the focus of the study in this way there is a risk that other data and

information from different countries is not evaluated alongside the information collected in this study. As well as the wider geographical focus, this study focused only on the not-for-profit sector. Insights that were gained in this study may not directly relate to other sectors in Ireland. When considering the different organisational strategies and goals between the not-for-profit and the private sector this could have an impact on leadership style.

Confidentiality and Ethical considerations. Through this research process the researcher always highlighted the confidential nature of the study. While great care was used when meeting to, talking with and collating data from the participants, there is always a risk that if the participants do not feel safe and understand that their data is safe, then this will impact on the participants desire to be honest and open, which could affect the outcome of the study (Saunders et al., 2019).

Overall, this study on leadership style and decision making in the not-for-profit sector in the republic of Ireland, has value, there are several limitations. The small sample size, potential bias in data collection, the geographical and sectoral limitations and ethical considerations could be addressed in future studies and enable a more robust collection of data.

Discussion

This section will focus on how different leadership styles can impact on decision making in the not-for-profit sector. Leadership style, decision making process, what challenges leaders face and how they adapt to these challenges all have an impact on organisations.

Leadership style

This study finds that the collaborative style of leadership is the most prevalent style in use among the participants interviewed for this research. This was evidenced through creating a shared ownership of decisions and generating a collective problem-solving environment. To create this, the leaders needed to include their teams in these decisions. The literature suggests that transformational and collaborative leadership styles enhance the adaptability and engagement from teams which is in line with the study findings (Osula & Ng, 2014; Benevene et al., 2018).

The participants in this study regarded servant leadership as an important style which allowed them to develop their teams and prioritise staff wellbeing. Servant leadership was displayed by being able to enhance team building and cohesion in tandem with aligning to the values of the organisations and wider sector. (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021 ; Amir et al., 2021). Christensen-Salem et al. (2021) also identifies this style of leadership with encouraging loyalty and using the organisational values to create a positive working environment. The research findings align with this way of thinking, where the needs of the team are put first creates a positive environment (Ogochi et al., 2022). In the research participants who worked in this way commented about bringing staff along to reach their own potential.

When discussing transformational leadership, the research and the literature are aligned around the positive effect on teams and the organisation. The role leaders play is important when creating a culture of support, which leads to job satisfaction (Benevene et al., 2018). This is evident in the research where the participants who identified as transformational identified praise and feedback as important. This ability to understand the emotional needs of a team dovetails with the literature where Grant (2012) identified this way of working to enhance team performance.

Transformational leaders are motivated and have a vision for the organisation (Manu, 2022). This research finds that participants inspired their teams, and by doing so created a committed team to work towards the organisational goals (Zaman et al., 2020).

In an environment such as the not-for-profit sector, requirements such as innovation and creativity are needed (Lewin et al., 1939), and transactional leadership suppress this way of working.

Decision making processes

Leaders in this research reported that they needed to be more innovative and flexible in their approach to making decisions. As there are limited resources available leaders in this sector often find themselves in challenging situations like competitive tendering. It is in environments like these that they need to find a balance between gathering all the relevant information and the urgency of the situation. When team members are involved in decision making a culture of collaboration leads to informed decisions and is very beneficial to the organisation, Again the literature supports this position, when teams are

included in a collaborative way the outcomes are sustainable and have a lasting effect on the organisation (Bryson et al., 2014). In this research the participants were broken down into four groups in terms of decision-making style. Five participants identified as rational, two participants identified as incremental and two identified as strategic. There was one participant who identified as ethical.

Challenges

Leaders who work in the not-for-profit sector face unique challenges. Isolation and resistance to change were reported by the participants in this research. The need to pivot position and move resources to meet unexpected challenges was a point almost all the participants stated. This was very evident during the Covid-19 pandemic where all not-for-profit organisations responded by changing how they operated and used the resources they had to make sure they offered the best service possible (Savić & Dobrijević, 2022). Another such challenge that was referenced during the interviews is the recent Peter McVerry Trust scandal. The negative media scrutiny for all not-for-profit organisations has required a higher level of governance and oversight that was not needed before. This challenge needed to be dealt with appropriately from current funding.

The participants also reported resistance to change from long standing staff as well as the desire not to make unpopular decisions. To try and overcome these challenges the leaders in this research used strategies to adapt, where they change the style of leadership, depending on the audience or the situation (Lindblom, 1979). Being able to adapt in this way is documented by Weick & Sutcliffe (2011) as being crucial to effective leadership.

Impact of leaders on organisational performance

Leaders impact the organisations they work for in many ways, for example by problem solving, inspiring, motivating and challenging teams. This research highlights that the leaders who participated gained trust of their teams by engaging and involving them in decisions. In such a highly regulated arena, the necessity for not-for-profit organisations to operate in trust and compliance is crucial. Motivational leadership, where they inspire teams is also highlighted in the literature, where the energy leaders exhibit and commitment to inspire is present (Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Grant, 2012). The literature also supports the notion that leaders who are flexible in their approach and can change their leadership style in different situations, as well as being effective when communicating deliver better outcomes and navigate the complex not-for-profit sector (Kapucu & Garayev, 2011).

Decision making

The style of leadership which senior leaders exhibit in an organisation impacts the decisions made at a senior management level. In the not-for-profit sector where this research has identified, collaborative, servant and transformational styles as the most common, play a significant role in how decisions are made. This has an impact on the organisational and strategic goals and how they are achieved. This section will use this research, and the literature reviewed to draw findings on what impact this has.

In the research collaborative leadership was the most common style identified, the leaders highlighted involving teams in decision making alongside creating a culture of shared ownership over decisions and being inclusive. Kapucu & Garayev (2011) indicate that collaborative leadership will use local voices (the team) when making decisions and as a result deal with problems where there is a nuanced understanding of what the problems are (Kapucu & Garayev, 2011). This style of leadership fosters solution focused teams, where they assess the wider impacts of the situation and decisions that need to be made (McDermott & Flood, 2010). However, the research did highlight a caveat in relation to this style and that was the time constraints. The participants identified delays due to conflicting views and possible solutions (Broadwell, 2023). Overall collaborative leadership is a positive style when making decisions in the not-for-profit sector where resources are limited, and the impact of decisions can be far reaching.

Servant leadership fosters a supportive atmosphere, where the wellbeing of the team is a high priority (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021). This level of trust and support from leaders towards their teams leads to a community focused decision-making process. From the research we can establish that leaders want the team to reach its potential and serve their teams and priorities well-being. This is backed up in the literature where Aboramadan et al. (2022) suggests servant leadership has a positive impact on teams. This trust and support impacts decision making abilities by creating an environment of trust and care that is focused on ethical decision making (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021).

Feedback and praise were both identified as important traits in the research by leaders who identified as transformational as they understood the professional and emotional needs of their teams. This in turn led to higher levels of trust and job satisfaction (Benevene et al., 2018). The literature also supports how important empathy is in the not-for-profit sector (Jian, 2021). This ability to create an understanding and supportive work environment was key, as these leaders reported a partnership approach, where they would not ask their team to do anything they would not. This directly impacts on decision making as teams feel valued and understood, which in turn adds to better engagement and more thought-out well-rounded decisions (Grant, 2012).

Three of the leaders in the research identified as transformational, the traits of this style could be found throughout the feedback. The ability to inspire teams and organisations with their vision was evident in the responses to interview questions. Matching that feedback with the literature was conclusive where Osula & Ng (2014) identified this style as one that focuses on aligning the organisational values and goals while being the motivational factor that allowed teams to transcend their personal interests to achieve organisational goals (Osula & Ng, 2014). While Bass (1999) concluded that transformational leaders were adept at using the resources available to develop their team to be enthusiastic about achieving the organisations goals (Bass, 1999).

Transactional leaders did not feature in this research, which suggests that this is not a leadership style used in the not-for-profit sector. Hansen & Villadsen (2010) suggests that this style is more suited to sectors where there is a rigid structure in place and therefore teams do not need to be creative or altruistic (Hansen & Villadsen, 2010). This style of leadership impacts decision making by highlighting

compliance and systems (Mufti et al., 2020). This style is less effective in the not-for-profit sector where creativity and being flexible are needed to achieve organisational goals.

Conclusion

The leadership style adopted, impacts the organisational performance in the not-for-profit sector (Agarwal, 2020). Leaders who are transformational, collaborative or adopt a servant leadership style, encourage innovation, shared responsibility and engagement (Amir et al., 2021). Leaders who are adaptable and inclusive of their teams can overcome challenges and produce lasting outcomes (Andrews, 2023; McCarthy et al., 2012). In this research the findings align with the literature and in doing so emphasize the importance of flexible, motivational and inclusive leadership. Being a transformational leader enables the leader to be innovative and strategic in their vision of where the organisation needs to go.

The decision-making process was also reviewed in this research, where the findings suggest that leaders need to be innovative and flexible. There was also an identified need to balance the speed at which decisions were made with the information which was available. Making decisions in a collaborative manner where teams members were involved was identified as effective. This is supported by the literature where Bryson (2018) indicates that this way of working enhances organisational performance. The challenges leaders reported in the research were isolation, resistance to change and decisions the teams did not agree with. Leaders who were adaptable dealt with these challenges in a more effective way. This ability to adapt is crucial for leaders to be successful (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011).

The practical implications of this study for the not-for-profit sector in Ireland are firstly, collaborative leadership can enhance problem solving skills and team engagement. Secondly, to foster a good working environment and attain high levels of employee satisfaction a servant leadership approach is best. Thirdly, transformational leaders create a positive culture in an organisation. Lastly leaders need to be adaptable and flexible, to deal with the challenges faced in the not-for-profit sector.

Overall, this research highlights the impact leadership styles have on decision making processes and this impacts the performance of the organisation. Three distinct styles were found to be effective in this context, collaborative, servant and transformational. What is clear is that the leaders interviewed did not have only one style and adapted to the audience or situation as required. This in turn enabled them to make decisions based on the situation and information they had at that time. The logical conclusion is that leaders in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland make decisions based on the situations and the style of leadership they are currently interpreting. While there is a natural leadership style (Sieweke & Santoni, 2020), the situation and audience will dictate the response.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Questionnaire

Q1	**Welcome**	Welcome, and thank you for joining us today. To start, could you describe your current role and responsibilities?
	Leadership Style and Philosophy	
Q2		How would you describe your leadership style?
Q3		What are the values or principles that inform your decision-making process?
Q4		What makes a good leader?
Q5		Has your leadership style developed over time?
	Decision-Making Process	
Q6		When under pressure how do you approach decision making?
Q7		How do you involve your team or key members of your staff in this decision-making process?
Q8		What is the difference between finance and non-finance decisions?
	Challenges and Adaptation	
Q9		What are the biggest challenges you have faced as a leader?
Q10		How have you adapted your style in response to these challenges?
	Impact and Outcomes	
Q11		What impact does your leadership have on your organisation?
	Learning and Development	
Q12		What advice would you give to emerging leaders?
Q13		Do leaders have enough time to reflect?
Q14		What motivates you?
	Closing Thoughts	
Q15		Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a leader?

Appendix B Participant sheet

Sample of Appendix containing a Participant Information Sheet

Consent to be Interviewed and Understanding of the Ability to Withdraw Consent

Dear XXX

Thank you for participation in my research study titled "Does leadership style influence the decision-making process in the not-for-profit sector in Ireland," as part of my Master's in Management at the National College of Ireland.

Purpose   of   the   Interview:
The purpose of this semi-structured interview is to explore the dynamics of leadership and decision-making within the not-for-profit sector in Ireland. Your expertise and experience are incredibly valuable to this study, which aims to enhance our understanding of these areas.

Interview Details:

- **Duration:** Approximately 35-40 minutes

- **Format:** Can be conducted face-to-face or online, depending on your preference and availability

- **Scope:** The interview will cover topics related to leadership styles, decision-making processes, challenges, outcomes, and motivational factors within your organization.

Consent:
By agreeing to participate, you provide your consent to use your responses in my research. Please rest assured that all information will be treated confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Confidentiality:

The information provided for this research will be confidential, and no personal or identifiable information will be recorded in the dissertation. The transcription of the interviews will be stored in my personal computer, unidentifiable and password protected. If during the interview process information is disclosed that is likely to cause serious harm to others, it will have to be disclosed to the pertinent authority

Voluntary   Participation   and   Right   to   Withdraw:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, for any reason, without any adverse effects. If you choose to withdraw, any information provided will be excluded from the study at your request.

Next   Steps:
If you agree to participate, please let me know your available times, and we can arrange a schedule that is most convenient for you. Should you have any questions or require further details about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you once again for considering this opportunity to contribute to our understanding of leadership in the not-for-profit sector. I look forward to potentially working with you and appreciate your valuable time and insights.

Warm regards,

Niall Keane

Email: x22157158@student.ncirl.ie

Appendix C Sample of consent form

Sample of Appendix containing a Consent Form

Consent to participate in the research

- I……………………………………… of my own accord agree to participate in this research.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to
- respond any question without any penalties.
- The purpose and nature of this research has been explained to me and the opportunity to ask
- questions have been given.
- I understand that my participation in this research requires to undertake an interview of 30 to 45 minutes.
- I consent to the recording of the interview
- I understand that all the information provided to this research will remain confidential
- I understand that my identity will remain anonymous, changing my name and concealing any
- identifiable information provided during the interview process that might reveal my identity.
- I understand that some extracts from my interview may be cited in the findings of the research
- carried out.
- I understand that any information provided to the researcher that could incur in the harm of
- others or I must be reported to the pertinent authorities by the researcher.
- I understand that a copy of the interview recording, transcript and consent form will be kept in a password protected folder to which only the researcher has access.
- I understand that a copy of the interview recording, transcript and consent form will be stored until the result of the research have been published.
- I understand that all the information provided will be available for me to access it
- I understand that I can contact any of the parties involved in conducting this research for further clarification if needed

Niall Keane (researcher)

Telephone XXX XXX XX x22157158@student.ncirl.ie

Desmond Gibney (Supervisor)

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Signature of participant