Leadership through lived experience: How remote work shapes leadership practices in non-profit organisations – a grounded theory approach

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Abstract

This study examines how remote work impacts the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership, it does so through the lens of lived experiences. Using a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach, the research investigates how non-profit leaders understand their roles and adapt to challenges in remote settings.

Through 34 in-depth interviews with non-profit leaders, team members, and other key stakeholders, in the UK, the study proposes a practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations. This framework highlights four interconnected dimensions of leadership: building relational connections, maintaining connection with organisational culture and mission, adapting to individual needs and promoting empowerment, and applying continuous reflection. The model builds upon our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process. These findings show that remote non-profit leadership is not build on operational oversight, but it is relational and adaptive in its core.

The study offers a framework that considers the complexities of remote work in mission-driven non-profit organisations. The findings also offer practical insights for non-profit leaders. They highlight the importance of visibility in the digital space, trust-building, personalised leadership approaches, and continuous reflection, to keep the remote non-profit teams engaged.

This study brings an updated perspective for our understanding of non-profit leadership in remote settings, as it frames it as a relational and adaptive experience. The study offers theoretical contributions, as well as practical applications for leaders engaging with a dispersed workforce. This study also aims to provide contribution to the knowledge of the non-profit sector, and through the shared knowledge, support the organisations to continue to provide invaluable services to those in need.

Key words: Grounded theory, Non-profit leadership, Non-profit sector, Relational leadership, Remote leadership.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research and that all sources have been duly acknowledged. The work presented here has not been submitted to any other institute of learning in support of any other degree or qualification.

Some of the material presented herein has already been published in the form of the following:

Buresova, P. (2024) 'Unity in virtuality: Strategies for non-profit team leadership in the era of remote work'. Presented at the *Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference 2024*, 11–12 September, London, UK.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Team leadership has been central to the evolving workplace through changes to the business environment such as globalisation, increased use of ICT, changes to the demographic structures, as well as during the recent stage of the Covid pandemic and the aftermath (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020). Leadership research has often focused on how individuals are recognised as leaders by others, rather than how they themselves understand and internalise their leadership identity (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2005). However, leadership has long been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984). Hollander's (1971) system of relationships understands leadership as an interactive process, which is shaped by relational interactions (style), organisational constraints (structure), and external environmental conditions (setting).

One important characteristic of the recent change to leadership has been the abrupt large-scale move to virtual work (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020), later followed by the introduction of hybrid working and then return or partial return to the office, all in the space of approximately two years (Probert, 2022). Teleworking, or virtual working, refers to the "flexible working method that is not limited by time, location, type of communication technology, and the use of information" (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020). Teleworking, or virtual working, has been a well-known and established concept, growing especially from the early 2000s along with the technological developments (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020). And whilst it has become more common, many workers and their managers have not anticipated a rapid large-scale shift to remote work during the course of their career (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020).

This changed with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early March 2020 (Ho, Wong, Cheung, and Yeoh, 2020). The WHO provided guidance on various aspects of public life including workplace guidance, with information on the management of workplace activities and behaviours at work (WHO, 2020). The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2020) further reiterated the need to adapt the workplace to the unprecedented situation, with guidance on high rates of absences, resuming work after a period of closure, as well as managing workers who are working from home. As national governments implemented a range of these containment measures, the recommendation, and later a requirement, to work from home or work remotely where possible, was widely adopted, resulting in millions of workers worldwide transitioning to remote work (Bouziri, Smith, Descatha, Dab, and Jean, 2020).

This has brought with it a renewed focus on best practices for leadership of remote teams facing their particular challenges, as well as the broader challenges of effective team management, whilst achieving positive business results (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020). The reality of remote work exposed the unpreparedness of companies to undertake this transformation, with employees reporting feelings of lost trust, connection to the company and the lack of understanding of their current responsibilities (Newman and Ford, 2021). At the same time, team leaders reported that their leadership strategies were being side-lined, the value they were adding to the teams was decreasing and their teams were more likely to question rules, the leaders' skills, as well as the company mission and strategy (Verstandig, 2020). This supports the notion that leadership in remote workplaces requires a unique lens, as physical separation fundamentally alters relational dynamics and leadership practices (Bell, McAlpine, and Hill, 2019; Joshi, Lazarova, and Liao, 2009; Liao, 2017). It also highlights the need to view leadership not just as a set of strategies but as a dynamic, relational process shaped by ongoing interactions, organisational constraints, and external demands (Hollander, 1971).

It is also important to note that the pressures to leadership may manifest themselves in different sectors differently. The non-profit sector felt intense pressure, especially as the mission of many organisations in this area is to provide support and services to those in need, vulnerable, or on low-income (Shi, Jan, Keyes, and Dicke, 2020). Such organisations have experienced an increase in demand for their services (Shi, Jan, Keyes, and Dicke, 2020). Coupled with the loss of funding streams, limits to raising new funds, and significant layoffs, the pandemic meant that non-profit organisations had to adopt new strategies, innovative technologies, and quickly shift their priorities (McMullin and Raggo, 2020).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, 19% of non-profit organisations in the UK had made redundancies and with many also reducing working hours and putting recruitment activities on hold (Hogarth, 2021). The sector had to deal with a fast paced move to remote work, as did other sectors, however, non-profit organisations were slow in adopting strategies and technologies supporting work in the virtual environment, which was partly caused by the apprehension to eliminate the in-person contact, on which the sector heavily relied for provision of services and raising of funds (Kunzler, 2021). When surveyed in 2021, only 60% of the UK non-profit workforce respondents believed that their organisations adapted well to the pandemic driven changes (Blackbaud, 2021). In the same year, 67% of the surveyed organisations reported their continuing to deliver work remotely, two thirds of organisations were planning to implement a hybrid model of work and only 7% were planning for everyone to come back to the office full time (Amar and Ramsay, 2021).

In 2022, demand for digital services in the sector continued, charities were offering more online services and expanding their areas of delivery since moving online (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). Charities were also embedding remote work, with over half of surveyed organisations exploring ways in which to improve remote work (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). More charities have also started to focus on wellbeing, with the aim to support their staff working remotely, without compromising on their wellbeing (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). In 2022, over 60% of surveyed non-profit organisations in the UK reported having hybrid arrangements in place, with hybrid working being common in 76% of medium to large organisations and 54% of small organisations (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). Only 1 in 10 surveyed organisations have reported a plan for the staff to come back to the office full time in the future (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). More than half of the surveyed organisations reported developing skills of the workforce as a priority, with focus on digital skills among the leaders being one of the key areas (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). This is coupled with the fact that charities continue to provide their services to the maximum capacity (CAF, 2023). This is due to the fact that the challenges charities faced during the Covid-19 pandemic have not gone away. They have instead worsened due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis in the UK (CAF, 2023). Recent research reveals that charities are reporting incrased demand for their services on compared to the previous year, and some are even turning those in need away, as they struggle to deal with the increasing demand for their charitable work (CAF, 2023).

Considering the new challenges of work in virtual and hybrid environments outside of the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, as well as getting used to the new dynamics of office and remote work, and the increased demand for charity services - not only due to the pandemic, but also the cost-of-living crisis (CAF, 2023) - non-profit team leaders have reported the need to look beyond the standard leadership practices and the need to work with their teams, to set up new work structures and updated strategies for effective working (CAF, 2023; Verstandig, 2020). This reflects a broader understanding of leadership as a relational and socially constructed process, where leaders are not simply enacting predefined roles, but are actively engaged in constructing their own leadership in response to evolving work environments (Bass and Bass, 2008; Day, Gronn, and Salas, 2006; Denis, Langley, and Sergi, 2012). Hollander's (1971) framework is particularly relevant in this context, as it positions leadership as a system of relationships, where leaders must continuously adapt their style, navigate organisational structures, and respond to shifting external conditions.

1.2 Research rationale

There are several important reasons for conducting this research study. Firstly, looking at the future of virtual and hybrid work, across sectors and work environments, evidence collated during the pandemic (Baker, 2020) showed that, prior to the pandemic, approximately 30% of employees reported working remotely at least part of the time, 41% of the surveyed workers reported the likelihood of working remotely for at least part of the time post pandemic (Baker, 2020). A survey of workers in the UK, undertaken during January and February 2021, highlighted that over half of the respondents worked from home at least some of the time during that period (Taneja, Mizen and Bloom, 2021). A year later, the number of home workers has gone down, but still over one third of workers reported working from home at least part of the time (Probert, 2022). In July 2022, over 60% of surveyed non-profit organisations in the UK reported having hybrid arrangements in place, with hybrid working being common in 76% of medium to large organisations and 54% of small organisations (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). The number of non-profit organisations working remotely in 2024 remains high at 39%, this is a higher proportion than in both the public and private sectors (NCVO, 2024).

The existing body of literature also supports the need for a study of this type (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Kaul, Shah and El-Serag, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021, Tourish, 2020):

Companies with an effective remote leadership have viewed the shift to remote work as an opportunity (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020). Contreras Baykal and Abid (2020) find that, when operating in the virtual setting, the use of traditional leadership strategies can result in increased risks for the team and the company. They find that there is a need to adjust the company structure and develop new abilities, all leading towards a less hierarchical organisation with a strong sense of trust, competitiveness, as well as the team wellbeing (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020).

Managing teams during the pandemic meant to make decisions with high impact but in a limited information setting (Kaul, Shah and El-Serag, 2020). This meant that team leaders had to learn to manage these complexities, develop creative ways to solve problems, and apply new strategies to ensure positive results (Kaul, Shah and El-Serag, 2020). Kaul ,Shah and El-Serag (2020) find that leaders had to incorporate principles of clear communication, decisive decision making, humanism, innovation, realism, and focus on core values to succeed.

Newman and Ford (2021) find that leaders who understand the needs of their employees, who may live in different time zones, in different work environments, and accordingly adapt their strategies, build higher levels of trust. Through appropriate communication of organisation updates, these leaders can also sustain the company culture and values (Newman and Ford, 2021).

Tourish (2020) states that the Covid-19 pandemic has created a crisis of leadership practice as well as the leadership theory. Within the leadership practice, the key questions revolve around what systems, dynamics, and relationships can generate positive or negative results in the post-pandemic workplace (Tourish, 2020). Focusing on the leadership theory, the question needs to be asked to what extent can the existing leadership theories help to navigate the unique set of circumstances following the pandemic crisis and if and how they can inform leaders when they are deciding what approaches they should adopt to ensure their teams are generating positive results (Tourish, 2020).

As literature shows, leaders and their leadership strategies have been crucial in shaping work experiences for teams pre-pandemic, during the crisis, and in the period of adjustment moving from the pandemic environment to the 'new normal' (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020). But this has not been an easy task, due to the fast-changing environment and the evolving needs of their teams. They have identified the need to look beyond the existing structures and re-evaluate standard practices (Verstandig, 2020). These demands on leaders point to a broader understanding of leadership as a relational and socially constructed process (Bass and Bass, 2008; Day, Gronn, and Salas, 2006; Denis, Langley, and Sergi, 2012). Rather than leadership being externally conferred, team leaders are asked to actively shape their own self-concept as leaders (DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Hogg, 2001). Hollander (1971) emphasised that leadership is constructed through ongoing social exchanges and organisational adaptation.

With these challenges clarified, it is appropriate to look at the available literature and evaluate how our understanding of leadership can be applied in the changed workspace.

The literature has shown that, whilst there is a relatively large body of research focused on team leadership within the virtual context, the sources of literature focused specifically on the remote leadership within the non-profit sector are much more limited. Studies on remote leadership published in the post-pandemic period (since 2023) focused primarily on remote leadership in the for-profit sector (Davidson, 2023; Ding, Ren, and Lin, 2024; Dologa, 2024; Flood, 2023; Gan, Zhou, tang, Ma, and Gan, 2023; Gaan, Malik, Dagar, 2024; Shi, Feenstra, and van Vugt, 2024), remote leadership in higher education (Glover, 2024), remote leadership in healthcare and home care (Hurmekoski, Haggman-Laitila, Lammintakanen, and Terkamo-Moisio, 2023; Laaksonen and Backstrom 2023), as well as the links between remote leadership and psychological concepts (Caniels, 2023; Marstand, Epitropaki, and Kapoutsis, 2025). Studies from the same period, and from within the non-profit sector, focused primarily on digital transformation (Jong and Ganzaroli, 2024; Nikita, Azim, Jafor, Shayed, Hossain, and Kahn, 2024), general leadership competencies and positive leadership traits, without remote

focus (Masoud and Basahal, 2023; Muchiri, 2023; Renz, Brown, and Andersson 2024), as well as crisis leadership (Ross, 2023).

Following on from these points, it is important to clearly define the boundary conditions of this study (Holton and Lowe, 2007). The context that can influence leadership and teams can have many forms, from team structure, environmental factors, to collective values (Gibson, 1999; Graça and Passos, 2015; Hackman and Katz, 2010; Morgeson, DeRue and Karam, 2010). However, the context of this study i.e., the boundary conditions of this study, include the team set up: virtual and hybrid and the organisational set up: non-profit organisations. In brief, the focus centres around the virtual and hybrid environment due to the renewed focus on best practices for leadership of virtual and hybrid teams following the Covid-19 pandemic (Bouziri, Smith, Descatha, Dab, and Jean, 2020; Verstandig, 2020; Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020). Within this, there is a specific focus on the non-profit sector, as it has experienced an intense pressure, with the increased demand for their services, the loss of funding streams, limits to raising new funds, and significant layoffs, which meant the organisations had to adopt new strategies, innovative technologies, and shift their priorities (McMullin and Raggo, 2020; Shi, Jang, Keyes, and Dickie, 2020). Furthermore, the challenges charities faced during the Covid-19 pandemic have not gone away. They have instead worsened due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis in the UK (CAF, 2023). Recent research reveals that charities are reporting increased demand for their services on compared to the previous year (CAF, 2023).

Furthermore, the research involves team leaders and team members from across UK non-profit, or charitable, organisations. This study will be working with organisations that are recognised as charities under the UK Charities Act and registered with their appropriate Charity Commission (Charity Commission, 2013b). While organisations such as universities, schools, museums, or housing associations, commonly referred to as 'exempt charities,' are not the primary focus of this study, occasional references to the experiences of leaders from these charities may be made if deemed relevant and appropriate (Charity Commission, 2013a). Whilst these organisations are understood as charities in law, they do not have the responsibility to register with the Charity Commission and are regulated by other relevant bodies (Charity Commission, 2013a). It is important to note that this research is not concerning organisations such as churches, Guides groups or Scouts, as these are known as charities 'excepted' from charitable registration (Charity Commission, 2014). These organisations are charities however, they don't have to register with the relevant Charity Commission (Charity Commission, 2014).

The aim of this thesis is to explore how remote work has shaped team leadership within the UK's non-profit sector. This study builds upon our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984), to understand how non-profit leaders navigate the challenges of remote work while maintaining mission alignment, team cohesion, and organisational culture. Hollander's (1971) system of relationships supports this understanding, positioning leadership as a dynamic process shaped by three key elements: relational connections (style), organisational structures – non-profit sector (structure), and external conditions – remote work environment (setting). This perspective supports the decision to focus on the relational aspects of leadership in the remote work context. By investigating leadership self-identity in remote settings, this research moves beyond traditional leadership models that focus on authority or hierarchical influence.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

Recent literature reveals that there is an increasing prevalence of virtual and hybrid work within the non-profit sector (Baker, 2020; Probert, 2022). The remote work is affecting how non-profit organisations operate (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Kaul, Shah and El-Serag, 2020). And whilst there is an important body of literature on the topic of leadership within the remote context (Verstandig, 2020), the combination of remote work and non-profit team leadership remains an underexplored area (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). Studies on remote leadership published in the post-pandemic period (since 2023) focus primarily on remote leadership in the for-profit sector (Davidson, 2023; Ding, Ren, and Lin, 2024; Dologa, 2024; Flood, 2023; Gan, Zhou, Tang, Ma, and Gan, 2023; Gaan, Malik, Dagar, 2024; Shi, Feenstra, and van Vugt, 2024), remote leadership in higher education (Glover, 2024), remote leadership in healthcare and home care (Hurmekoski, Haggman-Laitila, Lammintakanen, and Terkamo-Moisio, 2023; Laaksonen and Backstrom 2023), as well as the links between remote leadership and psychological concepts (Caniels, 2023; Marstand, Epitropaki, and Kapoutsis, 2025).

Moreover, leadership has been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process, rather than a purely top-down or formalised role (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984), but leadership studies continue to focus on how individuals are recognised as leaders by others, rather than how they themselves understand their role (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2005). This study builds on the relational perspective of leadership (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984) but shifts the focus away from external recognition, to examining how leaders are perceived by others, it focuses on how leaders themselves construct and make sense of their role. Hollander's (1971) perspective supports the decision to focus on the relational aspects of leadership because it frames leadership as a dynamic and interactive process, which is

shaped by relationships, organisational structures, and external conditions, which are all highly relevant in the context of remote work. Outlined below are the key research objectives:

- (1) To examine how leaders understand their role in response to the unique challenges of remote work in the non-profit sector.
- (2) To understand how the unique circumstances of the non-profit sector, when compared to the for-profit sector, affect the work of leaders, specifically in the remote set up.
- (3) To evaluate and develop a contribution to the existing literature on remote leadership and provide insights relevant specifically to the non-profit sector.
- (4) To provide meaningful contribution to the third sector, and through the shared knowledge, support the organisations to continue to provide the invaluable services to those in need.

To achieve this, the following research question has been formed:

- How does remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership?

To answer the research question, the following points will be addressed:

- How do non-profit leaders understand their roles and adapt to the unique challenges of the remote work environment while maintaining alignment with organisational mission and values?
- How do non-profit leaders define their leadership practices in response to the complexities of remote work?
- What strategies do non-profit leaders employ to ensure organisational alignment in the remote work context?

To achieve its aim, this research applies a theory building approach, more specifically the constructivist grounded theory approach, to provide a deep understanding of the studied phenomenon. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of lived experiences of team leaders, team members and other key stakeholders, and it enables to explore the interplay between leadership identity, team members' needs, and the organisational mission. Through this approach, the study aims to provide recommendations to practitioners in the non-profit sector, and it aims to contribute to the academic literature through the development of a theoretical framework.

1.4 Thesis roadmap

This thesis is arranged into seven key chapters covering the research background and the problem statement, research methodology, data analysis, and finally findings, contributions and conclusions. Chapters one and two focus on the research background, identification of the gap in literature, and formulation of a research question. Chapter three, methodology, provides a detailed account of the design of the research. Chapters four, five and six focus on the data analysis, the findings, and a presentation of the theoretical framework. Chapter seven provides the final conclusions, contributions of the study, and a reflection on meeting the study's objectives, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

1.4.1 Research background and problem statement

Chapters one and two present existing knowledge within the key themes of remote work, non-profit sector, and the leadership theory. They provide a theoretical foundation concerning these themes and they identify research gaps that are addressed in the subsequent chapters. The literature review reveals that there has been an increase in remote work, with the growing trend in remote working in the non-profit sector being also highlighted. The literature review will argue that the implications of remote leadership in the non-profit sector, particularly its impact on leadership self-identity, understanding, and lived experiences, remain underexplored. This presents an opportunity to investigate how leaders in the non-profit sector navigate the complexities of remote work, define their roles, and adapt their practices to promote connection and alignment within their teams. The application of our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984) will be examined in detail, including how this perspective informs the study and extends existing frameworks on leadership.

1.4.2 Research methodology

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research design and specific procedures applied by this study. It presents a justification for selection of the guiding methodology, and it demonstrates how it aligns with the nature of the research topic. This chapter also outlines the details of procedures concerning sampling, sample size, ethics and ethical considerations, as well as details of the data collection process and research participants. Moreover, it also outlines the data analysis process, and it discusses potential limitations of the chosen method and how these can be addressed.

The constructivist grounded theory has been identified as the most appropriate approach for this study, as it can interpret complex phenomena, such as the challenges that the non-profit team leaders in the remote work set up face and the need for these leaders to re-evaluate standard practices and look beyond the existing structures. As the constructivist grounded

theory approach doesn't require a creation of previous assumptions, it allows the researcher to analyse, explain and interpret the lived experiences of non-profit leaders and team members, as shared through their own accounts, to develop a theoretical explanation grounded in contextual understanding.

1.4.3 Research findings, contributions, and conclusions

Chapters four, five, six and seven focus on data analysis, the findings of the study, the theoretical framework, and the conclusions and contributions concerning the study overall. Chapter four explains in detail the process of data analysis, chapter five provides a critical discussion of the findings, and it sets up the foundations for the theoretical framework development. The following chapter, six, then introduced the theoretical framework, it debates in detail the presented findings and contributions, and it highlights connections with existing academic debates. The chapter presents the developed theoretical framework, and it discusses the contributions to academia, as well as the practitioners' world, highlighting any links between this study and the broader academic community. The thesis concludes with chapter seven, where the final summary of the thesis is presented and final conclusions, contributions, and limitations of the study, as well as possible areas for future research, are discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Remote work

2.1.1 Remote work definitions

The idea of remote work, or as originally called, telecommuting, dates back to the 1950s, when it stemmed from literature on new inventions in technology (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015). Allen, Golden and Shockley (2015, p. 44) defined telecommuting as a "work practice that involves members of an organisation substituting a portion of their typical work hours, to work away from a central workplace—typically from home—using technology to interact with others as needed to conduct work tasks." In early literature teleworking was described as an alternative mode of work, stating that work is what you do, not a place where you go (Davenport and Pearlson, 1998). It suggested that telecommunications, together with computing technology, could enable work being located away from the traditional offices (Toffler, 2022). In the 1980s it was believed that teleworking, or "flexible working method that is not limited by time, location, type of communication technology, and the use of information," (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020), could be the next workplace revolution and that it could lead to the creation of virtual organisations as the next step in organisational development (Baruch, 2001; Duffy, 1994; Handy and Mokhtarian, 1996; Shamir and Salomon, 1985).

Table 2.1 Telework, telecommuting and remote work definitions in literature

Term used	Descriptors	Author(s)
Teleworking	Teleworking could be the next workplace revolution and it could lead to the creation of virtual organisations as the next step in organisational development. Organisations will continue to offer this alternative to traditional work, and it will continue to rise in importance with the technological progress.	Shamir and Salomon, 1985
Teleworking	An alternative mode of work. Work is what you do, not a place where you go. Teleworking means working from home for some time, or all the time, or working while on the move, or working from a remote site of the organisation.	Davenport and Pearlson, 1998
Telecommuting	A work practice that involves members of an organisation substituting a portion of their typical work hours, to work away from a central workplace—typically from home—using	Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015

	technology to interact with others as needed to conduct work tasks. May have a negative impact on work-family balance and the advancement, or the lack thereof, work and career opportunities.	
Teleworking	Flexible working method that is not limited by time, location, type of communication technology, and the use of information.	Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020
Remote working	The term remote work acknowledges various settings that exist, beyond work from home, and it also acknowledges the range of practices that are enabled by technology.	Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021

The literature on remote work has been varied and so has been the term used to describe the phenomenon, terms telework, telecommuting, homeworking, working at a distance, as well as remote working can be found as overlapping and sometimes interchangeable terms (Baruch, 2001) (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Davenport and Pearlson, 1998; Huws, 1993; Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, Bendz, 2020). Whilst the term telecommuting has been used historically, the term remote work has emerged as a more encompassing term which reflects the continuously evolving nature of flexible work (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021; Davenport and Pearlson, 1998; Huws, 1993; Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai and Bendz, 2020). The term remote work acknowledges the various settings that exist, beyond work from home, and it also acknowledges the range of practices that are enabled by technology. This thesis will therefore rely on the term remote work, beyond the chapter exploring the historical development of the concept (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021; Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, and Bendz, 2020).

In the early definitions, it was stressed that teleworking means working from home for some time, or all the time, or working while on the move, or working from a remote site of the organisation (Davenport and Pearlson, 1998; Huws, 1993). Moreover, IT has been used as the key denominator that enables telework (Baruch, 2001; Huws, 1993; Mitchell, 1996). And with the fast-paced development of technologies, it was predicted already in the early days of research into then teleworking, that organisations would continue to offer this alternative to traditional work, and that it would continue to rise in importance (Shamir and Salomon, 1985). The concept was not without its controversies, as there were fears that it would deepen issues surrounding work-family balance or the advancement, or the lack thereof, work and career opportunities (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015).

Given the complexity of virtual team characterisation, researchers set up to clarify and embed the virtual team characteristics (Lu, Watson-Manheim, Chudoba and Wynn, 2006). Griffith, Swayer and Neale (2003), recognise three dimensions that characterise a virtual team. These are physical distance, time spent apart, as well as the level of technological support (Griffith, Sawyer and Neale, 2003). Based on these characteristics, traditional, virtual, and hybrid teams can be identified (Griffith, Sawyer and Neale, 2003; Lu, Watson-Manheim, Chudoba and Wynn, 2006). However, this has been further developed by other researchers. Notably by Kirkman and Mathieu (2005) who defined virtuality by three dimensions including the extent to which teams use virtual tools (including emails, video calls, group decision support systems etc.), the amount of information value that these tools provide, and lastly synchronicity of the virtual interactions of the team (Kirkman and Mathieu, 2005). With the application of these dimensions, teams are less virtual with the higher resemblance of their interactions (direct and indirect) to those that would occur without the application of the mediating technologies (Kirkman and Mathieu, 2005).

Reviewing the existing literature, Schweitzer and Duxbury (2010) concluded that for a team to be considered virtual, it must have members who do not work either in the same place or at the same time. This means they cannot collaborate face-to-face all the time. Thus, virtual teams must rely on communication technology to complete their work (Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010). They further show that reliance on technology should be viewed as a consequence of virtuality, rather than its characteristics (Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010) and conclude with the following dimensions of virtuality: distance between team members, the extent to which the team doesn't work face-to-face, the team's configuration patters, and the extent to which the team works asynchronously (Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010).

With the understanding of the remote work development and its characteristics, the remote work landscape can now be looked at more closely.

2.1.2 Remote work landscape

Examining the numbers of remote workers pre-Covid-19 pandemic, it can be observed that in 2015, 20-25% of employees globally worked remotely at least to some extent, with the growth in remote work between 2005 and 2015 being 115% (Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018). Recent numbers from within the UK (pre-pandemic) showed that around 30% of employees worked remotely to some extent (Baker, 2020). The numbers have indeed risen sharply during the pandemic, with forced lockdowns, but even in early 2021, with the restrictions easing, approximately half of the workforce worked remotely at least some of the time (Taneja, Mizen and Bloom, 2021) and during the summer of 2021 still one third of workers continued to work remotely to some extent (Probert, 2022). The distinct difference between pre-pandemic and

post-pandemic remote work is that, in the case of the former, this was mainly a choice, either driven by the organisation in order to promote more flexibility, or to access their dispersed global talent, or driven by the individual's and their preference for flexible work (Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021).

Furthermore, as the pandemic progressed, the move to hybrid working set up, and new formats and strategies for the return to the traditional office, became a new element of challenge (Probert, 2022). The rise in hybrid working has exposed the need for different leadership approach, going beyond the traditional team leadership, in order to be an effective leader (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021; Verstandig, 2020). A study involving 5,000 full-time workers in the UK, collated in the period of January - February 2021, highlighted that 52% of respondents worked from home at least some of the time during the observed time period (Taneja, Mizen and Bloom, 2021). A year later, in January 2022, the number of home workers has gone down, as the Covid-related restrictions had been gradually eased, still 36% of working adults in Great Britain reported working from home at least part of the time (Probert, 2022). In 2022, over 60% of surveyed non-profit organisations in the UK reported having hybrid arrangements in place, with hybrid working being common in 76% of medium to large organisations and 54% of small organisations (Amar and Ramsay, 2022). The number of non-profit organisations working remotely in 2024 remains high at 39%, this is a higher proportion than in both the public and private sectors (NCVO, 2024). It is important to note here that whilst majority of the global workforce cannot work remotely, approximately 25% of the workforce in advanced economies has the potential to work remotely for three to five days a week (Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020). In the UK, it has been estimated that around 26% of the workforce has the potential to work remotely three to five days a week and 22% of the UK workforce has the potential to work remotely for one to two days a week (Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020). This section of the workforce is thus potentially open to the new hybrid set up.

At the start of the pandemic, in early 2020, leaders, equipped with the knowledge of the leadership best practices and knowledge of the available strategies to implement, were suddenly faced with significant uncertainty which has rapidly exacerbated the issues and challenges connected with decision making (Ahern and Loh, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way people work (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020). Large and small businesses had to adapt to the new set up of work (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai and Bendz, 2020). Therefore, during the pandemic, a large-scale behavioural change was necessary for successful management (Ahern and Loh, 2020). Without a successful broad adoption, the collective benefits stemming from successful leadership would have not been guaranteed (Ahern and Loh, 2020). The pandemic therefore presented a challenge, and an opportunity,

to reflect and review on leadership practices and the challenges and opportunities during this period and beyond (Ahern and Loh, 2020; Stoller, 2020).

2.1.3 Remote work opportunities and challenges

To gain an insight into the evolving nature of remote work, the advantages and unique challenges it presents will be analysed. By examining the pre-pandemic experiences of remote work and contrasting these with the post-pandemic experiences, some shifting perspectives can be observed surrounding the remote work.

In a study examining work commitment in the remote set up, Allen, Golden and Shockley (2015) suggested that the extent of remote work had a positive association to a greater commitment to the organisation. At the same time, there was a negative association between remote work (telecommuting) and the intent to leave the organisation (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015). Moreover, remote workers with a high extent of remote work, and with high-quality supervisory relationships, experienced the highest level of commitment, job satisfaction, as well as job performance (Golden, Timothy and Veiga, 2005). However, social isolation had been identified as a key challenge for remote workers (Allen, T. D., Golden and Shockley, 2015), with higher prevalence of remote work shown as associated with less satisfaction with coworkers among those employees, who did not partake in remote work (Golden, Timothy, 2007). Moreover, face-to-face interactions were shown as most important to create and maintain workplace-based friendships, mentoring relationships and networks in general (Sias, Pedersen, Gallagher and Kopaneva, 2012; Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015).

When focusing on job satisfaction, Golden and Veiga (2005) suggested that there was a positive association between job satisfaction and a lower extent of remote work, up to approximately 15 hours per week, where the job satisfaction plateaus. Gajendran, Harrison and Delayney-Klinger (2007) suggested that remote work (or telecommuting) was positively associated with job performance, in both rated by supervisor, as well as objectively measured performance. Moreover, their study showed that remote workers displayed higher contextual performance, in supervisor-rated tasks, than those who weren't telecommuting (Gajendran, Harrison and Delaney-Klinger, 2015). In studies surrounding work-life relationships, Golden (2006) reported that the more individuals worked remotely, the less their work interfered with their family. Duxbury and Halinski (2014) argued that there was a significantly lower association with work-role stress, due to the increased control provided through the remote work arrangements (Duxbury and Halinski, 2014)

Later studies, and in particular studies covering the period during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, can be seen to reflect some of the transformed structures within organisations (Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021). Remote work continued to be viewed as offering a

greater level of flexibility to the workers and the organisations (Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018), but it was not seen without its challenges. As literature shows, it has been seen as impacting work across physical, social as well as psychological dimensions (Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018). It can act as a challenge stressor, potentially leading on one hand to engagement and to creation of a stimulating environment, but on the other hand to increased strain and burnout (Gómez, Mendoza, Ramirez and Olivas-Lujan, 2020; Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018). The negative influencers of remote work can be the increased time spent on coordinating with the rest of the team, no immediate socio-emotional support, dealing with ambiguity, as well as dealing with non-work stressors that may be present in the remote environment (Gómez, Mendoza, Ramirez and Olivas-Lujan 2020; Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018) (Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). With the amplified reality of remote work during the pandemic, new phrases such as "pandemic fatigue," "work/life blur," and "endless wait," have been used to capture the remote workplace environment (Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020).

Newman and Ford (2021) suggest that 64% of respondents within their study had no policies within their company on remote working and only 41% of respondents had a clear understanding of their current responsibilities (Newman and Ford, 2021). Employees reported feelings of lost trust, loss of connection to the company culture and values, as well as loss of informal communication channels (Newman and Ford, 2021). At the same time, workers reported a shift of focus to urgent short-term matters, accompanied by a lack of excitement for long-term strategy (Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). The lack of motivation was described to have been motivated by staff's isolation in home offices, concerns relating to health, job security, heavy workloads, and changing priorities (Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). The forced homework, in many cases in not suitable environment, also led to rise in additional stressors including social isolation, family-work conflict, unsuitable technological resources, digital privacy (or the lack of), as well as distracting environments (Galanti, Guidetti, Mazzei, Zappala and Toscano, 2021).

These issues concern team members as well as leaders working remotely. However, there are also specific challenges to leadership linked to remote work, particularly during the pandemic. When surveyed, team leaders, whose vital role was to provide leadership and support to their teams during the pandemic, reported that their leadership strategies were being side-lined and the value they were adding to the teams was decreasing (Verstandig, 2020). Team managers leading virtual teams expressed that team members were more likely to question team rules, leadership abilities of their supervisors, and the company strategy and mission (Verstandig, 2020). Other specific issues reported included team leaders appearing to have lost their ability to be in control of the team and thus causing the team members to question their broader abilities and their role as a leader (Verstandig, 2020). The team leaders

also alluded to increased challenges of hitting set deadlines and working towards given timelines (Verstandig, 2020).

The pandemic has had an impact on teamwork and team leadership, and this has become a force for the leaders to revisit their practices (Comella-Dorda, Garg, Thareja and Vasquez-McCall, 2020; Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020).

2.1.4 Leading remote teams

Remote leadership, or e-leadership, should not be looked at as a pure extension of the traditional leadership strategy. It suggests a critical change in how leaders and teams interact and relate to one another (Comella-Dorda, Garg, Thareja and Vasquez-McCall, 2020; Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020). E-leadership has been defined as "social influence process mediated by advanced information technology to produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and/or performance with individuals, groups, and/or organisations" (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000, p. 617). E-leadership applies to leaders and their teams, one-to-one interactions, or relationships across more complex units (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000). This makes it key for leaders to not simply apply the strategies they know, but to change their practices. This is true due to the different environment that the virtual office presents, the need to go beyond the known face-to-face communication strategies, as well as the ability to master leadership via the ever changing and expanding virtual platforms, whilst ensuring their teams' well-being (Comella-Dorda, Garg, Thareja and Vasquez-McCall, 2020; Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020).

The information technologies can support and enable leadership, however, they can also undermine or, in extreme cases, disable leadership strategies, if not mastered (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000). However, this is not to say that the traditional leadership strategies are to be ignored. As Liu *et al*. (2020) argues, many aspects of the traditional leadership strategies can be used and applied in e-leadership. Contreras, Baykal and Abid (2020) believe that there is a need for a genuine e-leadership theory. This thought was expressed already prior to the pandemic with the highlighted need to develop a new theory to help organisations to successfully lead virtual teams, as the focus of the field of the study of leadership has largely focused on organisations with employees on site full time (Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017).

The authors show that e-leadership is defined by the team virtuality, as well as the heightened need to use information technologies (Garcia, 2020). Van Wart, Roman, Wang and Liu (2019) have offered a definition of a successful e-leadership based on the leader's communication, social, team building, change management, and technological skills, as well as trustworthiness. Through a review of the existing literature, Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison (2021) argue that much can be learnt from the existing research and that the consequences

of Covid-19 will not lead to a complete overhaul of what we know. They argue that there are themes that can be taken away from the existing, pre-Covid literature, linked to trust and engagement (Germain and McGuire, 2014; Zander, Mockaitis and Butler, 2012), themes that were known prior to the pandemic but their meaning has deepened, and new themes that emerged specifically during the Covid-19 crisis such as work-life boundaries and digital well-being (Gómez, Mendoza, Ramirez and Olivas-Lujan, 2020; Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021; Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). In more concrete terms, Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison (2021) argue that leaders should avoid creating replicas of old practices, they should consider the followers digital well-being, they should foster team member engagement on an on-going basis, set clear work-life boundaries, and they should foster creativity and new ideas generation (Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021). There is also an argument that the e-leadership is more shared in nature, and whilst a central leader figure is still desired, it may be more effective to implement alternative leadership styles (Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021; Charlier, Stewart, Greco and Reeves, 2016; Larson and DeChurch, 2020).

Furthermore, they rise in hybrid work and therefore the need for hybrid leadership demonstrates the need for leaders in the workspace to not think purely about the virtual teams and purely about the face-to-face teams, but to understand that hybrid teams will need to be led face-to-face as well as virtually which brings yet another layer of complexity to managing teams in the current workspace (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021). Moreover, the hybrid set up could pave way for divisions between those who work more in the office and those mostly (or fully) in the remote setup, where those coming to the office more often get more opportunities for development or promotion, and those working remotely may start falling behind (Ellsworth, Imose, Madner and van den Broek, 2020). Another potential risk could be the access to virtual or hybrid work being open as a privilege only accessible to certain employees, thus creating or broadening the divisions within the organisation (Ellsworth, Imose, Madner and van den Broek, 2020). Therefore, whilst it is important to focus on the overall leadership strategies dependent on the team set up, it is also important to take into consideration the specific unique attributes of the team and how they impact the team's work (Homan, Gundemir, Buengeler and van Kleef, 2020) and create a strategy that reflects all such realities (Homan, Gundemir, Buengeler and van Kleef, 2020).

Remote leadership also requires leaders to possess specific skillset and the published literature on this topic, to enhance the understanding of remote leadership and its specifics, will be explored next.

2.1.5 Remote leaders' characteristics

Research suggests that, whilst teams work at a distance, and the leader may not be present with their teams, this is not a barrier to completion of tasks, and the technological means and

the leaders' skills can bridge the gap in physical presence (Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh, 2011). However, as found by Savolainen (2014), leaders working in the remote environment should be open and honest in relation to their teams, and they should be considerate of their staff location, culture and behaviour. Whilst leading at a distance, the leaders should show empathy and humanism and show interest in the team and the team members (Savolainen, 2014). Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh (2011) specifically highlight the need for people skills to be developed in the leader, in order to listen to their team, display patience and the ability to manage conflict and to communicate effectively. There are some further skills that studies have found particularly advantageous for remote leaders (Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh, 2011). In fact, Poulsen and Ipsen (2017) found that remote team leader's capabilities bear an importance for the staff and their well-being, as well as for organisational performance.

Neufeld, Wan and Fang (2010) found that physical distance between the leader and their staff did not have an influence on the performance of the leader and their communication effectiveness. They suggest, however, that the ability to communicate effectively was associated positively with the leader's perceived performance (Neufeld, Wan and Fang, 2010). Marstand, Epitropaki and Kapoutsis (2025) found that vision communication reduced perceptions of psychological distance in remote work environments. Newman, Ford and Marshall (2020) also observed a correlation between the leader's perceived communication effectiveness and their team's performance (Newman, Ford and Marshall, 2020). According to Taylor, Santuzzi and Cogburn (2013), trust within the organisation has a positive relation to a contact of staff with the leader, where trust is positively related to the quality of the contacts (Taylor, Santuzzi and Cogburn, 2013). Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema and Vartiainen (2013) found that the clarity of communication and the rules surrounding it, goal setting, the leader's competence, as well as trust within the team, were all important for success of remote team projects (Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema and Vartiainen, 2013). Gan, Zhou, Tang, Ma, and Gan (2023) found that leader support and control can both be helpful to telecommuters, with supervisor support being the driving force in promoting telecommuter task performance. According to Caniëls (2023) remote leadership can significantly boost employee vigour, which refers to the enthusiasm employees feel towards their work.

Furthermore, Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh (2011) found that leaders of teams working at a distance should possess leadership and communication skills, as well as technical skills. They should also be focused on building trust and respect among the members of their team (Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh, 2011). In connection to the technical skills, whilst the remote work has been initially attributed mostly to platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams, this is now shifting to text-based platforms such as Slack, Flock, and Ryver, requiring the leader to be able to effectively operate in the different dimensions of the virtual space including verbal, as

well as text-based interactions (Soga, Bolade-Ogunfodun, Islam and Amankwah-Amoah, 2022). Soga, Bolade-Ogunfodun, Islam and Amankwah-Amoah (2022) suggest that to be successful in this space, leaders should possess technology fluency, as well as social adeptness in a tech environment.

When working in the hybrid format, Hooijberg and Watkins (2021) believe leaders should be able to operate in the 'virtual coordination mode' as well as in the 'face-to-face collaborative mode'. They suggest that the crucial aspect of the virtual mode will be the ability to successfully establish goals, monitor progress, share information effectively, and crucially to sustain connections among team members and colleagues who are working remotely (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021). According to Hooijberg and Watkins (2021), in the face-to-face mode, the leaders should focus on deep engagement during times when teams come together physically, nurturing innovation, dedication and deep learning (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021), they conclude that tasks that are characterised by independent working, such as reporting, updating knowledge, administrative, analysis, and sharing information, can be managed virtually; this also include regular catch ups with team members (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021) (Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020) . However, processes that require knowledge integration, dealing with difficult issues, interacting in dialogue in safe environment, and forming emotional connections, i.e., collaboration, innovation, acculturation, dedication and caring for others, would be more effective in the face-to-face mode (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021; Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020).

Remote leadership requires leaders to possess specific skillset, and while there may be a variation in emphasis across different studies, the above highlights the most commonly cited skills in academic literature (Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh, 2011; Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021; Neufeld, Wan and Fang, 2010; Newman, Ford and Marshall, 2020; Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020; Savolainen, 2014; Soga, Bolade-Ogunfodun, Islam and Amankwah-Amoah, 2022).

Following from the review of remote work and remote leadership, the thesis shall move onto the understanding of the non-profit nature of teams that are the focus of this research, in order to bring the topic of remote leadership to the relevant context.

2.2 Non-profit sector

2.2.1 What is the non-profit sector

The concept of non-profit organisations, as we understand them today, has been formalised since the 1950s (Herman and Renz, 1998). The non-profit sector has been created as a result of varying societal pressures and from individuals outside of governments and institutions (Salamon, 1994). It is difficult to define what non-profit organisations are precisely, as the sector is very diverse in terms of scope and scale (Herman and Renz, 1998). The sector can be described as comprising of "non-governmental organisations which are value-driven, and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organizations, charities and social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals" (NAO, 2009).

Salamon and Anheier (1992) introduced a classification of the sector as "a set of organisations that are formally constituted; non-governmental in basic structure; self-governing; non-profit-distributing; and voluntary to some meaningful extent" (Salamon, Lester and Anheier, 1992, p.268). To explain this notion, we can describe non-profit organisations as being organised, therefore in possession of some form of an institutional reality. The organisations are private, meaning that they are separate from the government (Salamon and Anheier, 2013). Moreover, the organisations are non-profit-distributing, i.e., as not distributing any form of profit to the organisation's governors (Salamon and Anheier, 2013). Non-profit organisations are further defined as units fully equipped to be in control of their own activities, i.e., self-governing (Salamon and Anheier, 2013). And finally, Salamon and Anheier (2013) view the organisations as voluntary at least to some extent, which is demonstrated by some degree of voluntary participation, which can refer to the actual charitable activities, as well as to the management of the organisation's affairs (Salamon and Anheier, 2013).

There are also number of terms used to describe the sector including non-profit sector, charitable sector, third sector, independent sector, voluntary sector, or non-governmental organisations (Morris, 2000; Salamon, Lester and Anheier, 1992). These terms are often used interchangeably, however, there may be possible issues with using these terms, for example, the term charitable sector puts emphasis on the private charitable donations the organisations receive, even if these are not the major source of their income. Voluntary sector puts emphasis on the need for volunteers, even though some organisations don't use volunteers to carry out their work. And the term non-profit sector emphasises the fact that such organisations don't usually earn profits, but in some cases the organisations earn more revenue than they spend in any given year (Salamon, Lester and Anheier, 1992). Term 'third sector' was first used in 1973 and it represented the distinction of this sector from the market and the state (Etzioni,

1973). More modern literature uses the term third sector to make a distinction from the public sector, or government, and the private sector, or businesses (Corry, 2010). Like Salamon and Anheier (1992) this thesis will be using for its majority the term non-profit sector. However, should other terms be used in some literature sources, such as charitable or voluntary sector, these terms will be understood as interchangeable and referring to the same organisational landscape.

2.2.1.1 UK non-profit sector

According to the UK Charities Act, an institution can become a 'charity' if "it is established for charitable purposes only and is subject to the control of the High Court's charity law jurisdiction (Charity Commission, 2013b)." Furthermore, the Charity Commission for England and Wales adds that, "to be charitable, the charity's purpose must fall within the descriptions of purposes and be for the public benefit (Charity Commission, 2013b)." The Charity Commission for Norther Ireland further states that a charitable organisation "must have exclusively charitable purposes, and it is an organisation that is an independent body, the hallmarks of which include having control and direction over its governance and resources (Charity Commission NI, 2019)." Finally, the Charity Commission for Scotland also states that a charity organisation "must show it has only charitable purposes and benefits the public (Charity Commission Scotland, 2019)." The focus of the non-profit organisations in the UK ranges from social services, culture, education, development, religion, health, environment, law, housing, employment and research (Martin, 2021).

The sector includes various types of organisations, and these can be registered charities, community groups, as well as membership organisations (Morgan, 2013). An analysis by Statista (2023) reported over 168,00 charities operating in England and Wales in 2023 (Statista, 2023). The sector has seen a steady increase in the number of new charities during the 2000s (Statista, 2023). The exception to this was the period of the financial crisis in 2008, when the sector recorded a steep drop in the number of charities, however the number has seen a rise to almost the same levels as pre-crisis by the year 2017 (Martin, 2021). Between the years 2022 – 2023 there has been a slight drop in the number of charities in England and Wales by approx. 2000, it is too soon to tell if this is a long-term trend and a monitoring over a longer of period of time will reveal the development in this area (Statista, 2023). The Scottish Charity Sector amounts to almost 24,000 charities (Charity Commission Scotland, 2023) and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland reports over 7,500 registered charities (Charity Commission, N. I., 2023). The non-profit sector in the UK therefore amounts to approx. 200,000 charitable organisations registered with their respective Charity Commissions (Charity Commission, N. I., 2023; Charity Commission Scotland, 2023; Statista, 2023).

When understanding the value of charity in society, this can be measured by economic output, which in the case of the UK would be over 950,000 paid workforce and £56b of annual income (Martin, 2021). However, the value of charity can also be viewed from the perspective of meeting public expectations of what they achieve and how they do it (Stowell and O'Donnell, 2019). There has also been a recorded perception by the general public that charities spend too much money on executive salaries (O'Halloran, 2022). Overall, however, there is a wage gap between non-profit sector employees and their counterparts in other sectors (O'Halloran, 2022). Over the course of their working life, non-profit sector employees in the UK are paid on average 7% less per hour comparing to similar people working in other sectors (O'Halloran, 2022). This gap grows as the non-profit employees age with those between 46-50 experiencing gap of 9.4% compared to similar people in other sectors (O'Halloran, 2022).

The UK charities can be categorised into small, medium, large, major and super major organisations (Amar and Ramsay, 2022; Martin, 2021). Small organisations can be identified as having an annual income of below £100,000 (Martin, 2021), medium organisations have an annual income of above £100,00 and up to £1 million (Amar and Ramsay, 2022), and large institutions would typically have an annual income of between £1 - £10 million per annum (Amar and Ramsay, 2022; Martin, 2021). Another classification type can also be added, that of a major and super-major organisation (Amar and Ramsay, 2022), where the major organisation would have an annual income of between £10 - £100 million, with the super-major organisations' annual income reaching beyond £100 million per annum (Amar and Ramsay, 2022).

Figure 2.1 Charity size by annual income

| SMALL | MEDIUM | LARGE | MAJOR | SUPER MAJOR |
| £0 - £100,000 | £100,000 - £1m | £1m - £10m | £10m - £100m | £100m+ |
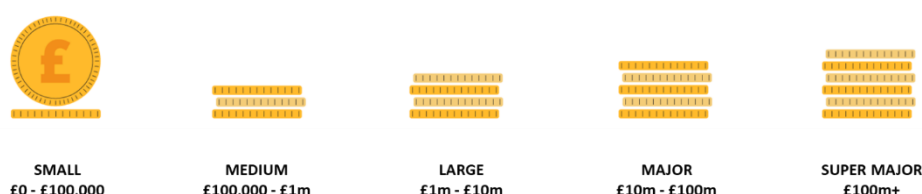
Adapted from Amar and Ramsay (2022)

Over 70% of the charity organisations in the UK have an income of below £100,000 and therefore can be classified as small; on the other side of the spectrum, there are approximately 60 super major organisations with an annual income of over £100m (Martin, 2021). The whole

sector amounts to a workforce of over 950,000 paid staff and £56b of annual income (Martin, 2021).

Figure 2.2 UK charities by size (in %)
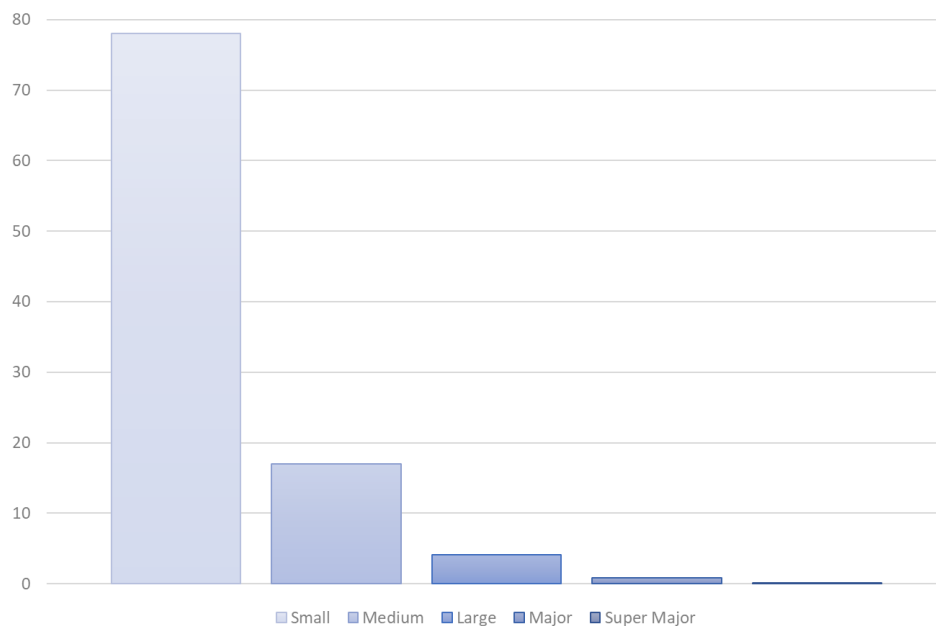
The UK charities can also be classified based on their area of focus using the Charity Commission for England and Wales guidance (Charity Commission, 2022). With that, based on their charitable purposes, UK charities can be broadly classified as follows:

- Education and Training
- Health and Social Care
- Disability
- Accommodation and Housing
- Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Science
- Environment and Animal Welfare
- Economic, Community, and Social Development
- Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Promotion of Peace
- Religious Activities
- Amateur Sport
- Other Charitable Purposes

The non-profit sector has its specific characteristics, but this is also true for the individual non-

profit organisations, as they may differ to organisations in other sectors, these characteristics will therefore be explored in the next section.

2.2.2 Characteristics of non-profit organisations

According to Moore (2000) all organisations, regardless of their type, are established to produce some type of value. What differentiates non-profit and commercial organisations is whether they develop their product or their service to make money or to attain social value (Herman and Renz, 1998). For-profit organisations measure the value in financial terms and non-profit organisation measure the value by the achievement of social purposes (Moore, 2000). Through the non-profit organisations' focus on social and charitable purposes, these organisations can also secure special operational conditions, an example of which can be a tax-exempt status or a receipt of tax benefits (Herman and Renz, 1998; Osula and Ng, 2014). Through their role in the society, and the social focus, non-profit organisations are likely to be governed by a board, or a community sector, rather than being owned by a businessperson. This set up may lead to diffusion of accountability and control (Herman and Renz, 1998). Non-profit organisations have to navigate various challenges, including fiscal challenges, where their access to funds may be restricted due to economic downturn, challenges linked to their competition with other bodies requesting funds from private donations, or other sources (Salamon, 2010). There are also challenges linked to effectiveness and accountability, where non-profit organisations are increasingly scrutinised to demonstrate their performance against measurable performance metrics (Salamon, 2010). Finally, the access and use of technology also represents a challenge to the non-profit sector, as there are often limited resources to be spent on technological development, whilst the pressure to implement technological solutions is growing (Salamon, 2010; Osula and Ng, 2014).

Non-profit organisations are often expected to deliver high-quality services, or products, despite the possible lack of resources (Osula and Ng, 2014). This underlines the notion that non-profit organisations are increasingly using business like practices and techniques, such as marketing, performance measurement and strategic planning, in their operations (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004; Osula and Ng, 2014). Whilst this has been viewed as potentially positively contributing to organisational efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability, there are also views suggesting that this shift may lead the organisation to a drift away from the organisation's core social mission, undermining the focus on social values (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). However, despite the application of some business style techniques and the supposed business orientation, there is a difference in how the organisations are managed in comparison to the for-profit sector (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004). Budget limitations are common within the sector and there is therefore a tendency within the organisations to focus on bottom-line results. This can result in a disconnect between the values of the organisations

and their actual delivery, which can further result stakeholder and staff dissatisfaction (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004). Behn (1998) suggests that non-profit organisation's mission is often broad or even vague, and that the organisations are not supported with enough resources, which leads to the importance of a leadership that can deliver on the broader mission whilst being able to deal with the challenges and the sector complexities (Behn, 2004). Nevertheless, the increased demands on the non-profit organisations dictate the use of some business-like processes, without which the organisations could face the threat of obsolescence (Osula and Ng, 2014).

Whilst non-profit organisations operate across geographies, there are differences in the areas of legal framework and funding models (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013). To demonstrate this, a clear distinction can be drawn between the US and the UK (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013. Non-profit organisations in the US are typically exempt from tax and they are regulated by the Internal Revenue Service (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013). In the UK, non-profit organisations are registered as charities and receive tax benefits (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013). There is a long-standing tradition of philanthropy and individual giving in the US, with non-profit organisations seeking funds from individuals, corporations and foundations (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013). Whilst there is also a growing trend in individual and philanthropical giving in the UK, non-profit organisations rely more often on government funding (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013).

Whilst characteristics and practices of non-profit organisations may differ across geographies, local contexts, and legal frameworks, the common themes characterising a non-profit organisation include the mission-driven orientation, non-profit-distribution, stakeholder engagement, governance, reliance, at least to some extent, on non-governmental resources, public or social benefit provision, and stakeholder or public accountability and transparency. These key characteristics contribute to the distinct nature of for-profit organisations (Etzioni, 1973; Morgan, 2013; Salamon Lester and Anheier,2013).

The unique circumstances of teamwork and team leadership manifest themselves differently in different sectors, this is also true for the non-profit sector (Brimhall, 2019), the specifics leading teams in the non-profit sector will therefore be explored in the following section.

2.2.3 Leading teams in the non-profit sector

Non-profit leadership is key for managing the commitments and changes needed to ensure non-profit organisations' long-term viability and it has been a subject of considerable debate (Lane and Wallis, 2009). There are unique challenges faced by non-profit leaders (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018). Although leaders in the commercial and the non-profit space share certain aspects of leading (Allen,

Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018; Akingbola, 2013), non-profit leadership has its unique characteristics, due to the focus on the organisations' mission, instead of profit, focus on donations, volunteers, as well as limited resources and competition for staff with other sectors (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020;Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson 2018; Bittschi, Pennerstorfer and Schneider, 2015; Suarez, 2010). However, whilst, this is the dominant view in the literature, some scholars challenge it and argue that there is a universality to leadership and management across sectors and that there are aspects of effective leadership that are applicable across different sectors, including the non-profit sector (Hamlin, Sawyer and Sage, 2011). It is true that studies on successful leadership strategies tend to use results of for-profit organisation analysis across different sectors (Thach and Thompson, 2007)

Number of scholars have approached the question of leading in the non-profit sector through the lens of identification of specific qualities that define an effective non-profit leader. The qualities particularly highlighted as effective included charisma, vision, and strong personal skills (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2020). In more detail, the skills associated with effective leadership have been described as drive, persistence, focus, strong values, networking (Chambers and Edwards-Stuart, 2007), as well as personal humility, resilience, influencing, and strategic thinking (Cormack and Stanton, 2003). However, such studies have limitations, as the definition of a good leader cannot be captured through a definitive set of skills and characteristics (Buckingham, Paine, Alcock, Kendall and Macmillan, 2014; Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2020).

As mentioned above, there is no universal set of characteristics of an effective non-profit leader (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004). Throughout the literature concerning this topic some key themes have however emerged, and they tend to centre around governance and services to the community (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004). Non-profit leaders are expected to have a strong commitment to the mission and vision of the organisation and to be able to communicate these effectively in order to inspire others (Bryson, 2003). Non-profit leaders should also be able to navigate the challenges of limited budgets and resources in general and be able to operate within these parameters (Herman and Renz, 1998). Given the diverse nature of stakeholders within the sector, including not only staff and the board members, but also volunteers, donors, beneficiaries, community members and more, non-profit leaders should be able to build and maintain effective relationships across these groups of stakeholders (Bryson, 2003). Finally, non-profit leaders must be able to navigate and resolve possible ethical dilemmas stemming from the work of the organisations and ensure that decisions made are in line with the organisational mission and values (Bryson, 2003).

The challenges faced by non-profit organisations, as described in the previous section, also impact the work of non-profit leaders (Salamon, 2010; Osula and Ng, 2014). Due to the fiscal challenges and the pressure to raise the necessary funds, non-profit leaders must navigate and balance the financial challenges and the organisation's focus on their social goals. There is danger of the organisation forgetting their social function as a result of the fiscal pressures (Salamon, 2010). Furthermore, due to the increased pressure and demands for the organisations' accountability and the need to meet expectations of various key stakeholders, which can sometimes be competing, there is a possible danger that the focus on accountability may divert the leader's focus on the value and mission of the organisation (Salamon, 2010).

When surveying leaders, both from for-profit and non-profit organisations, they rated the following skills as key, honesty and integrity, collaboration, and developing others (Thach and Thompson, 2007). However, for-profit leaders tend to prioritise time management, self-knowledge and sales competencies, whilst the non-profit leaders prioritise conflict management and the ability to be inspirational (Thach and Thompson, 2007). Thach and Thompson (2007) suggest that there is an importance of being inspirational in the non-profit sector, as the social purpose in the sector is more salient, there is a pay gap between the for-profit and non-profit sectors, services must be delivered on often limited budgets, and some leaders must also encourage high performance from volunteers who remain unpaid. Lane and Wallis (2009) suggest that the non-profit leaders must make decision on the appropriate leadership style to implement in order to support successful interactions and to encourage staff, and other stakeholders, to invest their emotional energy to the organisation's cause.

Lane and Wallis (2009) believe that non-profit leaders should play a role of an inspirer, developer and a change agent. They suggest that it is imperative for the non-profit leaders to choose an appropriate style of leading in order to sustain a climate of hope among the stakeholders (Lane and Wallis, 2009). Furthermore, Lane and Wallis (2009) also highlight the application of emotional intelligence by non-profit leaders. They suggest that the acknowledgment of individual emotions is critical in determining motivations behind decision, as well as in understanding the impact of decisions, which relate to both internal staff and stakeholders as well as external stakeholders. Applying the model of Salovey and Grewal, they suggest that skills of perceiving emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions and managing emotions play critical role in the leader's ability to lead effectively and to make critical decisions (Salovey and Grewal, 2005).

Whilst there may be a variation in emphasis across different studies, the above highlights the most commonly cited characteristics of team leadership in the non-profit sector in academic literature (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; (Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018;

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Akingbola, 2013; Bryson, 2003; Osula and Ng, 2014; Lane and Wallis, 2009; Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004; Salamon, 2010; Salovey and Grewal, 2005; Thach and Thompson, 2007).

Leaders of non-profit teams implement their strategies to increase workplace commitment, and other team attributes, over time. However, with the abrupt shift in the workplace dynamics, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these have been affected by further factors (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021; McMullin and Raggo, 2020; Shi, Jang, Keyes and Dickie, 2020). In order to understand how the pandemic has impacted the sector, the leaders and the staff, the topic will be explored in detail in the following section.

2.2.4 The non-profit sector, pandemic and beyond

The non-profit sector felt intense pressure during the pandemic, especially as the mission of many organisations in this area is to provide support and services to those in need, vulnerable, or on low-income (Shi, Jang, Keyes and Dickie, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the strategic and organisational spheres in non-profit organisations heavily, including increased demand for services when at the same time dealing with reduced funding streams (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021; McMullin and Raggo, 2020; Shi, Jang, Keyes and Dickie, 2020). However, alongside the organisational challenges, the pandemic also impacted the workforce and caused many to experience a career shock, altering their way of thinking about a career within the industry and for some even threaten their commitment to the non-profit sector as a whole (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021). Whilst non-profit organisations are often called upon to assist in crisis, the unique situation of Covid-19 meant that they were not only assisting in various aspects of help to their communities, but they were also going through and enduring the crisis themselves (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021; McMullin and Raggo, 2020; Shi, Jang, Keyes and Dickie, 2020). To ensure the continued ability to deliver their services and programmes, many non-profits introduced cost-saving strategies which included changes to staff structures, layoffs, furlough, as well as reduced working hours (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021; Santos and Laureano, 2021).

Salamon and Newhouse (2020) show that between March and May 2020 in the US alone 1.6 million non-profit jobs had been lost, representing 13% of the total of non-profit jobs in the country, with some being recovered later in the year, but still in late 2020 the sector had 900,000 jobs fewer than in February of the same year (Salamon and Newhouse, 2020). Looking at the UK, despite the furlough scheme being available and used by the non-profit organisations, 19% of non-profits had made redundancies and many others reduced working hours and put recruitment activity on hold (Hogarth, 2021). Covid-19 has been viewed as a critical incident altering the landscape of the non-profit sector's workforce (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021). There is subsequently an urgent need to review how the sector can sustain

the commitment of workers. There is also a need to review how it can refocus on leadership development, to positively impact the workers' success and career advancement, whilst supporting the core mission of the organisations (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021).

As other industries, the non-profit sector had to endure the fast-paced move to remote work at the start of the pandemic. However, non-profit organisations were slow at the beginning in adoption of digital technologies supporting work in virtual environment, partially in fear of the lack of in-person contact, on which they often heavily relied for provision of services and raising of funds (Kunzler, 2021). This was supported by a recent study (Blackbaud, 2021) where only 60% of the UK non-profit workforce respondents believed that their organisations adapted well to the pandemic driven changes in 2020, this has however improved in 2021. And whilst over 80% of respondents believed that their organisation demonstrated care and concern, majority (almost eighty percent) had severe concerns over their health and well-being and the effect of the situation on their life (Amar and Ramsay, 2021) (Blackbaud, 2021). The workers reported in majority that they were working longer hours in the remote set up, that boundaries between home and work became somewhat blurred, they felt isolated, and that the often-insufficient workspace had been a challenge (Amar and Ramsay, 2021; Blackbaud, 2021).

Looking forward, a survey by Charities Aid Foundation (2023) showed that over 40% of charities in the UK were providing services to their maximum capacity, with around 12% of surveyed charities turning people away, as they don't have sufficient capacity (CAF, 2023). The increased demand in services was reported by nearly 60% of the surveyed charities, this however is being coupled with a slow decrease in the number of donors, causing the charities to worry about their future (CAF, 2023). This increased pressure is the result of the challenges charities faced during the Covid-19 pandemic not going away. These challenges have instead worsened due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis in the UK (CAF, 2023).

From the perspective of the remote work, most non-profit workers in the UK would like to work from home at least some of the time, however only 22% would want to work mainly from home long-term (Blackbaud, 2021). However, they believe that additional training in areas including virtual brainstorming, team management, and technical training would be beneficial in order to help them work more successfully remotely; subsequently, majority of decision makers in the UK non-profit now plans to invest more in technology (Blackbaud, 2021). In 2021, 67% of the organisations reported their continuing to deliver work remotely (Amar and Ramsay, 2021). Moreover, around 37% of UK non-profits have reported the implementation of online induction processes (Hogarth, 2021) with the public sector and non-profits being more likely to use online processes in their induction than private sector organisations (Hogarth, 2021). Over two

thirds of organisations are planning to implement a hybrid model of work going forward (Amar and Ramsay, 2021) and only 7% of the organisations are planning for everyone to come back to the office full time (Amar and Ramsay, 2021).

With the understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the non-profit sector, as well as the remote teams, this thesis will now focus on the role of leadership within this context. The following section will therefore focus on leadership strategies and their studied application within the remote team and the non-profit team context.

2.3 Leadership theory

2.3.1 What is leadership

It has been suggested that leaders are key in shaping work experiences of teams despite the challenges that their team is facing (Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). However, to lead effectively, they should be aware of their own leadership strategy, or approach, and whether this is suitable to be used in their specific circumstances (Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). Leadership within teams is not confined to the formally designated team leader or manager (Morgeson, DeRue and Karam, 2010). There can be other formal sources of leadership impacting the team which can include advisors, coaches, or sponsors (Morgeson, DeRue and Karam, 2010). The teams are also inevitably impacted by sources of informal leadership including shared leadership functions, or external mentors, and champions (Morgeson, DeRue and Karam, 2010).

Whilst these influences are important (Morgeson, DeRue and Karam, 2010), it is essential to have an understanding of what can be learnt from the traditional leadership theories and crucially, what should be the learning for moving forward. Furthermore, the known models of leadership are often presented free of context, i.e., with no mention whether they are suitable for teams in, for example, the for-profit or non-profit sectors, which has led to recommendations to consider the context as an important part of the core research (Gupta, Huang and Niranjan, 2010; Graça and Passos, 2015; Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Avolio and Jung, 2002).

Studying leadership is not a new concept. In fact, leadership theories and leadership styles have been the focus of an extensive body of research over the last more than 70 years (see Table 1), as they are seen by researchers as vital to the success of teams and organisations (Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). There is however not a single unified definition of leadership (Busse, 2014), it has been described as a capacity to influence others (Vroom and Jago, 2007), as an interaction where leaders act as agents of change and the way they act affects

others more than how acts of those people affect them (Bass and Bernard, 1995), as well as an ability to start change processes that are revolutionary and more adaptive (Schein, 2010). Ciulla (2014) understands leadership as a moral relationship between people, rather than a specific person or a position. They believe that this relationship is based on a shared vision of the good (Ciulla, 2014). O'Toole (1996) views leadership as a values-based sphere which on one hand accommodates the interests of followers, but at the same time directs the followers towards the common good (O'Toole, 1996). Leadership has also been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984). This approach emphasises that leadership is not simply a position of authority but a socially constructed phenomenon (Bass and Bass, 2008; Day, Gronn and Salas, 2006; Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012). This perspective suggests that leadership emerges through interactions and relationships, rather than being inherently tied to formal status or power (Bass and Bass, 2008; Day, Gronn and Salas, 2006; Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012).

To gain understanding of the foundations of these perspectives, it is important to trace how leadership theories have evolved over time. The following section explores this development. It outlines the key schools of thought that have formed understandings of leadership across different organisational and sectoral contexts.

2.3.2 Development of leadership theories

Leadership styles have been considered as an important indicator of a team or organisational function, as well as a predictor of performance (Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016). It is therefore important to understand how have researchers approached the issues of leadership theories when applied in the context of this thesis, namely the remote workplace, as well as the non-profit sector. This will serve as a basis for understanding of the richness of the leadership theory and its development. Firstly, therefore, to understand the background of leadership studies, the development of leadership theories will be examined in detail.

Table 2.2 Development of leadership theories

Theory	Description	Limitations
Early trait theories		
Bernard's (1926) Theory of a Great Leader	Associates successful leadership with characteristics a person is born with (Bernard, 1926).	Disregard to specific situations (environment) in which leader is operating. No traits generally related with active leaders (Horner, 1997).
Behavioural approach to leadership		
Michigan and Ohio State University Leadership Studies (1940s)	Seek to understand leadership through the relationship between the leader, their team, and the team's performance and satisfaction (Kerr,	Don't find a leadership approach applicable across different environments and scenarios (Hollander, 1971; Ionela, 2021).

		Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974).
Lewin's (1939) Leadership Styles	Identify authoritarian (or autocratic), democratic (or participative), and laissez-faire (or delegative) leadership styles (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939).	Lacks the ability to incorporate leader-follower relationship dynamics (Bartunek and Woodman, 2015).
Transactional and transformational leadership		
Weber's (1948) Transactional Leadership	Identify charismatic, bureaucratic, and traditional leadership styles (Wach, 1948).	Limited identification of the impact variables of context and situation have on leadership (McCleskey, 2014; Yukl, 1999).
Bass' (1990) Transformational Leadership	Finds that a leader can be transformational through focus on individual followers' success rather than purely focusing on a company strategy (Seltzer and Bass, 1990).	Limited identification of the impact variables of context and situation have on leadership (McCleskey, 2014; Yukl, 1999).
Greenleaf's (1977) Servant Leadership	Finds that servant leaders seek to develop followers, prioritise their well-being, which in turn makes the followers more engaged and effective at work (Greenleaf, 1977).	Not all leaders will be able, or will be willing, to adopt this style, and consequently not all staff would be willing to accept this form of leadership (Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018).
Situational approach to leadership		
Fiedler's (1964) Contingency Theory	Finds that situation controls (leader-member relations, task structure, and leader's position of power) determine the suitable leadership style to apply (Fiedler, 1964).	Lack of flexibility as the leadership styles are fixed. The person chosen for the LPC (least-preferred co-worker) scale may affect the results (Mitchell, Biglan, Oncken and Fiedler, 1970). Limited in fully capturing the reciprocity of leadership interactions (Hollander, 1971).
Blanchard and Hersey's (1969) Situational Leadership	Suggests leadership style's adaptation to the follower's development level with directing, coaching, supporting and delegating styles (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969).	There is an argument that leader assessment provides a more appropriate basis for the identification of the relevant support, rather than the follower self-assessment, in case of discrepancies (Thompson and Glasø, 2018). Situations shape leader's behaviour as they also influence the consequences of the leader behaviour (Vroom and Jago, 2007).

Hollander's (1971) System of Relationships in Leadership	Views leadership as a reciprocal process formed by the interaction of three interdependent elements: relational behaviour, organisational structure, and external setting. Emphasises leadership as a socially constructed relationship. (Hollander, 1971).	Its broad conceptual scope, spanning leader traits, organisational structure, and external environment, may make practical application and measurement complex (Graeff, 1997).
Recent theories of leadership		
Cox's (1996) Shared Leadership	Shows that power can be shared among individuals with the aim of individuals leading others to lead themselves (Cox and Sims Jr, 1996).	Contradictory findings on how shared leadership relates to team performance (Fausing *et al.*, 2013) and the performance benefits in relation to the shared leadership construct (Pearce, Manz and Sims Jr, 2008).
Brown, Trevino, and Harrison's (2005) Ethical Leadership	Finds that ethical leaders encourage ethical behaviour in followers by communicating their standards and reinforcing appropriate behaviours (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005).	Narrow definition of ethical leadership, the differing questionaries in use to measure ethical leadership, and findings of both positive and negative consequences of ethical leadership (Shakeel, Kruyen and Van Thiel, 2020).
Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) Authentic Leadership	Find that when a leader knows and acts upon their true values, beliefs, and strengths this can have a positive impact on the follower performance (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson, 2008).	The theory itself refers to leadership only in a limited fashion. The theory shares only limited information about how the authentic leader is supposed to act (Alvesson and Einola, 2019).
Gilbert's (2017) Compassionate Leadership	Finds that compassion in leaders can help ease distress and facilitate recovery and coping in followers (Gilbert, 2017).	The leader's compassionate response depends on the follower legitimization that reinforces their ability to, through conserving and replenishing resources, alleviate followers' distress (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021).

2.3.2.1 Early approach to studying leadership

Leadership has been typically looked at through understanding of a person, the leader, and it has been defined by their qualities, traits, and behaviours (Horner, 1997). Researchers were interested in studying leadership as early as in the 1920s. In the early studies, it was believed that a 'great leader' was born with certain qualities and if these could be identified and assessed early in person's life, this person could be then put in a suitable position of leadership

(Bernard, 1926). However, there was no clear and consistent answer to what given traits were associated with great leadership (Horner, 1997) and the theory was not considering other important aspects such as the leadership environment etc.

The focus of the leadership theory research had subsequently shifted, and a new stream of research aimed to look at leadership through the relationship between the leader and their team and the team's performance and satisfaction (Ionela, 2021). Well known and widely cited examples of this shift in focus were the Michigan and Ohio State University studies which took place in the 1940s (Ionela, 2021). The Ohio State University Leadership studies looked at how the leader behaved when they were interacting with and leading their team (Ionela, 2021). The studies brought two types of leader behaviour, consideration and initiating structure. Depending on the degree of the two types of behaviour, the study found that there were four possible types of leadership style, (1) high degree or (2) low degree of both consideration and initiating structure, (3) high consideration and low initiating structure, and (4) low consideration and high initiating structure (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974; Ionela, 2021). The research concluded that all types of the leadership styles can be effective and through the studies was unable to identify the most effective style (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974; Ionela, 2021).

The Michigan State studies identified three types of behaviour that can determine whether a leader will or will not be successful (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974). These types were named as the task-oriented behaviour, relationship-oriented behaviour, and finally the participative behaviour (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974). The behaviours indicated that when the leader is more oriented on one of the areas, they will spend less time focusing on the other for example the task-oriented leader will focus less on the employees' support etc (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974). However, neither of the studies has brough a definitive result in the form of a unified leadership approach that would be applicable across different environments and scenarios. This has prompted a new interest in contingency theories (Ionela, 2021; Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974), as well renewed look at behavioural characteristics to understand leadership styles (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939).

A group of researchers, led by Kurt Lewin, focused on the leader's distinguishing behavioural characteristics, how they influence their style of leading, and their approach to managing, motivating, and directing their team (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939). This highly influential leadership study set the core of Lewin's Leadership Styles, which have been widely used and since also developed into further leadership style theories and models (Ionela, 2021). Through their work, the group of researchers have identified the authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-

faire (delegative) leadership styles (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939). Lewin does not simply describe the behavioural characteristics of leaders, but also further shows in what circumstances is each of the styles most effective to apply. These styles can be observed individually, but a leader may choose to apply aspects of each style depending on the task, the environment, and the present situation. According to Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939) the authoritarian leaders focus on providing clear instructions on what, when and how should be worked on and completed.

This leadership style shows a clear differentiation between the leader and the team members and where the leader makes decisions independently on the team. It is suggested that this style of leading is best applied in circumstances where key decisions need to be made quickly and decisively, and in environments where the leader is the key source of knowledge. The downside of authoritarian leadership can be a negative impact on creativity and can even lead a creation of a hostile and controlling environment (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939). Unlike the authoritarian leader, the democratic or participative leader tends to look for and seek feedback and ideas from their team. They guide, encourage and are open to new ways of thinking, however, they do retain the final decision-making position. This style supports creativity and engagement. However, the openness to feedback from team members can lead to poor decision making as it can be influenced by an unskilled group of workers. Moreover, it can lead to issues in communication and marginalisation of minority opinions (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939). Delegative leaders provide very little or no guidance and leave the decision making upon their team. This approach can be highly effective if leading a group of experts, it can be, however, problematic in team where roles are not clearly defined or teams which are lacking expertise. It can lead to teams lacking sense of direction and aspirations, which can result in the team completing fewer tasks and demonstrating less progress (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939). However, critics point out that the model lacks the ability to incorporate the leader-follower relationship dynamics (Bartunek and Woodman, 2015).

2.3.2.2 Leadership through the socio-economic lens

Another important viewpoint on leadership was set by Max Weber, who looked at organisations and leaders through socio-economic considerations, which resulted in his creation of the three types of leaders (Wach, 1948). His transactional leadership formed an important inspiration for later work by Bernard Bass (1995) introducing the transformational leadership. In his work, Weber (1948) introduces bureaucratic (or transactional) leaders, traditional leaders, and charismatic leaders (Wach, 1948). According to Weber (1948), bureaucratic or transactional leaders introduce normative rules, systematic controls, and tightly observed discipline to their leadership. Followers of such leader are strictly limited to the obligations set to them. Matters of remuneration are defined by hierarchy (Wach, 1948).

This contrasts with the traditional leader who relies on the personal loyalty of the followers, with this leadership having aspects of arbitrariness (Wach, 1948). The third type of a leader, applying charismatic leadership, is then defined by the trust of the followers in the leader's intentions. Charismatic leader has the trust of the followers who believe their charisma, vision, and mission (Wach, 1948).

Weber stated that none of the three types of leadership is perfect. He also showed that there can be a combination of leader traits from across the three models. Weber believed that the leadership approach should move away from charisma and towards a more democratic approach which values the voice of followers (Wach, 1948). This theory was further expanded by James Burns, who stated the importance of the leader having higher purpose and morals, so that there is a clear move from authoritarian style of leading to a more democratic set up (Burns, 1979). Critics point out, however, that the theory utilizes 'one size fits all' approach to constructing the leadership theory and disregards contextual and situational factors related to challenges faced by the organisations (Beyer, 1999; McCleskey, 2014; Yukl, 1999).

Whilst looking at ways to understand leadership, other researchers have also discovered that the leaders may not be purely focused on the set goals. As a result of research in this areas, transformational leadership, as introduced by Bernard Bass (1995), focuses on a leader who motivates and inspires rather than purely gives orders. It defines as a leader not solely motivated by company strategy and targets but also focuses on the individual team members' success. This in turn can lead to team members' higher job satisfaction and higher productivity through their feelings of being motivated, guided, and recognised for their achievements (Seltzer and Bass, 1990). The theory thus suggests that leaders can be transformational in the effect they can have on the team members and the business, however this happens to a certain extent. For this the model offers four dimensions: (1) Idealized influence of a leader (including role modelling behaviours and attributes), (2) inspirational motivation (including articulation of inspiring visions for the future), (3) intellectual stimulation (including challenging existing assumptions and stimulating new ideas and ways of thinking), and (4) individualised consideration (including responding to the followers' concerns and needs) (Bass and Avolio, 1995). Recent studies show that there is still strong relevance between transformational leadership and the company's desire to innovate (Asbari, Santoso and Prasetya, 2020). Criticism however points to an insufficient identification of the impact the variables of context and situation have on the leadership effectiveness and the little empirical work examining the effect of transformational leadership on teams, work groups, and organisations (McCleskey, 2014; Yukl, 1999).

But leaders may not be set purely on goals. In fact, research by Greenleaf (2002) shows that servant leaders do engage followers in various dimensions. This includes relational, ethical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions (Greenleaf, 2002). Servant leaders seek to develop followers, prioritise their well-being, which in turn makes the followers more engaged and effective at work. At the same time, however, the servant leader doesn't ignore the organisational goals and seek to grow the organisational resources and fulfil the set goals, and at the same time support followers' personal development i.e., they don't sacrifice followers in order to achieve company goals (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck and Liden, 2019). The servant leader has got ten key characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community (Spears, 2010). The study of servant leadership has grown in popularity in recent years, critics however claim that there is a conceptual and empirical overlap between servant, transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck and Liden, 2019). The field is also restricted in presenting new findings due to the limits in research design (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck and Liden, 2019).

2.3.2.3 Situational approach to leadership

Like Weber, Fred Fiedler (1964) believed that there was no one best leadership style. Rather, he concluded that for a leader to be effective two factors come into play: leadership style and situational control (originally called situational favourableness) (Fiedler, 1964). In his work, Fiedler believed that leadership style is given and fixed and it can thus be measured on the Least-Preferred Co-worker (LPC) Scale, where one uses a scale to rate how they feel about the given person across several factors. This scale can reveal whether a person is either a task-oriented or a relationship-oriented leader (Fiedler, 1964). Task oriented, or low LPC-leaders, would see their LPC more negatively. These leaders were assessed as quick at completing tasks. The relationship-oriented, or high-LPC leaders, would see their LPC more positively. These leaders were assessed as more focused on connections, as better at making complex assessments, and good and conflict management (Fiedler, 1964). Once the leadership style is determined, the situational control must be added. This is dependent on leader-member relations (such as level of trust, where more trusted leader has more influence), task structure (structured vs. unstructured tasks, where unstructured tasks are seen less favourably), and finally leader's position of power (the more power a leader has, the more favourable their situation). By assessing the situational control, the most appropriate leadership style can be applied (Fiedler, 1964). The biggest criticism of the theory evolves around the lack of flexibility. Fiedler sees leadership style as fixed, thus if change of leadership is needed, the natural solution would be to change the leader, rather than look at other

approaches to lead. Moreover, the person chosen for the LPC scale may affect the results (Mitchell, Biglan, Oncken and Fiedler, 1970).

Hersey and Blanchard also implemented the need to take into consideration the specific situation the leader and their followers are exposed to into their work on leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). They argued that the leader must tailor their leadership style to the group's situation, this includes the level of knowledge within the group, style of working, dynamics, and even group aspirations (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). With the specific situation in mind, the leader must make a judgement whether to apply directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating style of leading (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). In the above, the directing style refers to a leader who gives specific orders and then expects these to be completed as instructed. Limited assistance is provided in this scenario. The coaching style contains aspects of directing, where the leader gives orders but, unlike directing, the leader also provides support and assistance when needed. Supporting leader then move further with support, where there is a significant time spent helping, assisting, and supporting, however only little direction is given. The final style, delegating, where the leader provides only little support and little directions (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969).

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) show that a leader may use aspects of each model, they can also choose to switch between the styles as their team's situation develops. They don't offer one dominant leadership styles, rather they suggest that the leader is observant, flexible and adjust their style to the needs of the team (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). To identify the appropriate approach to leading, ratings and self-ratings of leaders and followers are used (Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer, 1979). Recent studies show that the principles of situational leadership are supported when the rating of the leader and the self-rating of the follower are compatible (Thompson and Glasø, 2018). However, criticism of the theory argues that available research doesn't support Blanchard's (1979) view that, where there are discrepancies in the ratings, the followers' self-assessment would provide a better basis to identify the relevant direction and support (Thompson and Glasø, 2018). Evidence have been found, however, that the leader assessment provides a more appropriate basis for the identification of the relevant support (Thompson and Glasø, 2018).

Hollander (1971) proposed a more integrated view of leadership. He argued that leadership is not simply a matter of matching style to situation, but a dynamic system of interactions between the leader, the organisational structure, and the external environment. Unlike Fiedler (1964) and Blanchard and Hersey (1969), who focused on leadership adaptability to context, Hollander positioned the leader within an interactive system. In this system, influence is earned, not assumed, and leadership emerges through reciprocal relationships (Holladner,

1971). In Hollander's model, three interdependent dimensions shape leadership: style (how the leader interacts with others), structure (the organisational context), and setting (the external environment). He argued that these must be understood together, as they operate reciprocally, not in isolation. Hollander (1971) highlights that leadership is co-constructed. It depends not only on a leader's actions, but also on how these are interpreted and responded to by followers (Hollander, 1958; 1971). While Hollander's framework offers an alternative to linear models of leadership, its broad conceptual scope, which spans leader traits, organisational structure, and external environment, can make practical application and measurement difficult (Graeff, 1997).

Vroom and Jago (2007) have set to explain in greater detail the relationship between a leader and the situation they and their followers are in (Vroom and Jago, 2007). Vroom and Jago (2007) reviewed the body of work on leadership and concluded that leadership can be defined as "a process of motivating others to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things" (Vroom and Jago, 2007, p. 23). They have built upon the situational leadership research and have shown that rather than leaders behaving in a specific way across situations, it is the situation that plays a vital role in leadership and has an impact on what decision leaders make at certain times (Vroom and Jago, 2007). The leadership process is not a property of an individual and it involves motivating (as a form of influence). The motivating then has a consequence of a collaboration to achieve a common goal (Vroom and Jago, 2007). They conclude that organizational effectiveness is affected by situational factors not under the control of a leader and they thus believe it is important to understand that may be varying degrees of the leadership influence on organisational effectiveness (Vroom and Jago, 2007). Secondly, they show that situations shape the behaviour of leaders. Thus, it is not always possible to generalise how a leader is going to act in a certain situation, as it is the situation that impacts their behaviour. Following on that, they also conclude that situations influence the consequences of leader's behaviour. Again, they show that it may not be possible to generalise on what consequences there may be to a leader behaviour, as these will differ based on the situation (Vroom and Jago, 2007).

2.3.2.4 Recent theories of leadership
Whilst expanding the knowledge of leadership and the notion that the leader may not be purely focused on setting goals and then directing, a body of research has focused on the idea of the leader sharing some of the leadership aspects with their team in order to achieve the common goal (Cox and Sims Jr, 1996). The concept of shared leadership was described by Cox and Sims Jr (1996) as a set up in which power is shared among a number of individuals with the aim to instil the idea of individuals leading others to lead themselves (Cox and Sims Jr, 1996). This has been further described as members of a team leading each other towards achieving

of a common goal (Day, Gronn and Salas, 2004). Recent study by Han, Yoon, Choi and Hong (2021) that a high level of shared leadership can positively influence team performance, moreover, relationship oriented shared leadership is positively associated with team performance. On the other hand, task-oriented shared leadership is negatively associated with team performance (Han, Yoon, Choi and Hong, 2021). As Han, Yoon, Choi and Hong (2021) argues, a significant number of available studies shows that shared leadership achieves greater team performance benefits than traditionally structured leadership (or vertical leadership) (Han, Yoon, Choi and Hong, 2021). However, some issues with shared leadership have also been presented. Mainly the contradictory findings on how shared leadership relates to team performance (Fausing, Jeppesen, Jonsson, Lewandowski and Bligh, 2013) and the performance benefits in relation to the shared leadership construct (Pearce, Manz and Sims Jr, 2008).

Researchers have however not stopped at the role of a leader as only a motivator. Whilst researching the aspects of leadership, leadership styles and approaches, Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) stated that leaders should be sources of ethical guidance for employees. They described ethical leadership through behaviour as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005, p. 120). Through their studies, they have created a social learning theory which shows that ethical leadership is related to consideration of behaviour, honesty, and trust in the leader, as well as interactional fairness, socialised charismatic leadership, and abusive supervision (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005). Ethical leaders role model and encourage ethical behaviour in followers demonstrating and communicating their own standards and by using rewards and discipline to reinforce the appropriate behaviour (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005). Ethical leadership can predict outcomes including perceived leader effectiveness, job satisfaction and dedication of the followers, as well as willingness to report management issues (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005). Some issues with this model include the relatively narrow definition of ethical leadership, the differing questionaries in use to measure ethical leadership, and findings of both positive and negative consequences of ethical leadership (Shakeel, Kruyen and Van Thiel, 2020).

The available literature demonstrates the focus of researchers not only on the person of a leader, but also their relationship with the followers, position within the organisation, their ethical role, and the situations them and their teams operate in. With the varying influences that may impact on the leadership, Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson (2008) research the basis for authentic leadership. They argue that it is not enough to simply

expect the leader to posse certain positive attributes, especially as there was a lack of tools to measure such aspects of leadership (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson, 2008). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson (2008) finds that when a leader in an organisation knows and acts upon their true values, beliefs, and strengths and, at the same time, help others to act similarly, this can lead to improved employee wellbeing, which has shown a positive impact on the performance of followers (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson, 2008). The authors have developed the Authentic Leadership questionnaire focusing on four areas: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson, 2008). Some criticism of the theory has been since voiced. This includes the concern that the theory itself refers to leadership only in a limited fashion, and it shares little about how the authentic leader is supposed to act (Alvesson and Einola, 2019).

Another recently developed concept looks at leadership and how this challenges compassion in organisational relations. In his book, Paul Gilbert (2017) looks at compassionate leadership as one that focuses on developing and maintaining relationships through careful listening, empathising, and supporting others, which makes the followers feel valued and respected, so they can reach their full potential at work setting (Gilbert, 2017). Compassion in leaders can help ease distress and facilitate recovery and coping in followers (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021). During times such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which has inflicted suffering and distress, can be a source of an ease in distress in such high-pressure time period (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021). Recent research however shows that compassionate leadership is more complex than often presented in literature (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021). The leader's compassionate response depends on the follower legitimization that reinforces their ability to, through conserving and replenishing resources, alleviate followers' distress (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021). Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha (2021) demonstrated on a case of Jacinda Ardern how compassion and leadership can be integrated while cultivating dimensions of legitimacy which create paradoxical combination of inclusiveness and rationality and idealism with pragmatism, i.e., "compassionate leadership is supported through utilizing the paradoxical legitimacy dimensions that build followers' resources and alleviates their distresses" (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021).

With the understanding of how the study of leadership has developed, the literature review will now focus on whether and how have these theories been studied through the lens of the remote and non-profit contexts.

2.3.3 Leadership theories and the remote workplace

Several leadership strategies have been studied with a focus on leadership within the remote workspace and this section will focus on these in more detail.

Table 2.3 Leadership strategies studying from the perspective of the remote environment

Leadership style	Identified advantages	Criticisms
Laissez-faire	Supports proactiveness and the ability to find opportunities in the fast-changing virtual environment (Gross, 2018). Supports autonomy and work creativity (Gross, 2018).	Negatively associated with trust which mediates the effect on wellbeing (Kelloway, Turner, Barling and Loughlin, 2012).
Transactional	Continuity between different tasks (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018). Alleviate any ambiguity of tasks between the leader and the team member (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018). Enhance the virtual absorptive capacity (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018).	With its reliance on rewards and punishments, may be less effective in the virtual space, due to the absence of the face-to-face contacts and the reliance on communication platforms, which may diminish the effectiveness of the methods applied by transactional leaders (Liao, 2017).
Situational	Interacts more efficiently and effectively (Farmer, 2005). Effective relationship and trust building, efficient work, and continuous development of the workforces (Farmer, 2005).	The virtual set up may limit the leader's ability to assess the team's readiness because of a lack of interactions and observations that would have otherwise happened in the face-to-face set up (Hertel, Konradt and Orlikowski, 2004).
Transformational	Creation, building, and sustaining of meaningful relationships within the virtual space (Gross, 2018). Coaching, intellectual stimulation, and goal and vision sharing (Gross, 2018). Stronger effect on performance when applied in virtual context, due to the heightened need for social and emotional leadership forms in the virtual context, as greater uncertainty exists, and the modes	Inspiration and motivation, relied upon by transformational leaders, may be harder to achieve in the virtual set up, due to the lack of non-verbal and other social cues, which may limit the ability of the transformational leader to inspire the team effectively (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000). Transformational leader's influence, in highly dispersed teams, on team communication decreases progressively and the team

	of communication are leaner (Purvanova and Bono, 2009).	becomes more and more dispersed, which may have a negative impact on the team's performance (Eisenberg, Post and DiTomaso, 2019). Relationship between transformational leadership and leader-member exchange becomes negative, when electronic dependence and task interdependence are on a high level (Wong and Berntzen, 2019).
Authentic	Enhances trust and relationship building within virtual teams (Avolio, Kahai and Doge, 2000). Leads to higher levels of team engagement and team commitment (Walumbwa, Avolio., Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson 2008).	In the virtual context, where the access to nonverbal cues may be limited, leaders may find it challenging to convey authenticity through digital communication channels, leading to potential misinterpretations and reduced effectiveness (Liu, Gong, Zhou and Huang 2017). The absence of face-to-face interactions may limit the depth of relationships that the leader establishes with their team and therefore make it more difficult to establish authenticity (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram and Garud, 2001).
Servant	Positive impact on wellbeing within virtual space (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck and Liden, 2019; Vito and Sethi, 2020). Staff has access to the appropriate support with continued focus on effective work and goals (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck and Liden, 2019; Vito and Sethi, 2020).	In the virtual work set up, the reliance of digital communication streams may impact the leader's' ability to provide individualised attention to the team members (Vito and Sethi, 2020).
Shared	Emphasis on interactive influence processes between the team members (Han and Hazard, 2022; Pearce, Manz and Sims Jr, 2009).	With its emphasis on collective decision making, shared leadership may experience challenges in the virtual set up, due to the lack of opportunities for spontaneous interactions and due to the reduced

	Better influences team projects and reply to challenges more promptly (Muethel and Hoegl, 2010). Atmosphere of support within the virtual teams (Han and Hazard, 2022; Muethel and Hoegl, 2010). Knowledge transfer, better coordination of activities (Han, Yoon, Choi, and Hong 2021; Han and Hazard, 2022; Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017).	social cues (Shin, Kim, Lee and Bian 2012).
Ethical	Acts as a demonstrator of an appropriate conduct through the actions of the leader (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Mehtab, Rehman, A., Ishfaq, S. and Jamil, 2017). Promotes ethical conduct, strengthening of the communication between leaders and their team (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019). Provides a clear framework for the decision-making process in cases of a breach of ethical standards (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019).	Ethical leaders may face challenges in the virtual set up in ensuring ethical conduct, as the virtual environment limits some of the aspects of direct supervision (Shin, Kim, Lee and Bian, 2012).

Firstly, whilst the laissez-faire style has been discussed in literature mainly from the face-to-face application perspective, Gross (2018) has suggested that laissez-faire leadership can provide particularly valuable advantages to managing in the virtual set up. Whilst it has been described as a style that lacks leadership in the face-to-face context (Hambley, O'Neill and Kline, 2007), in the virtual setup it can be understood as not lacking leadership, but as leading at a distance, providing leadership virtually, where it would have otherwise been difficult to apply a hands-on approach (Gross, 2018). This approach allows for innovative and entrepreneurial practices to be expressed at a distance, as it supports proactiveness of team members and their ability to find opportunities in the fast-changing virtual environment (Gross, 2018). It therefore supports autonomy and work creativity (Gross, 2018). However, Kelloway Turner, Barling, and Loughlin (2012) showed that the laissez-faire leadership style was

negatively associated with trust which mediates the effect on wellbeing (Kelloway Turner, Barling, and Loughlin, 2012).

Another leadership style scrutinised from the perspective of virtual space is transactional leadership. Transactional leaders can influence allocation, communication, and completion of tasks in virtual environment. This can be achieved through the specific dimensions. The dimension of active management by exception (Bass, and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018) can bring continuity between different tasks and it can help to alleviate any ambiguity of tasks between the leader and the team member, especially in the distant and often complex virtual set up (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018). The dimension of contingent reward, offering praise and rewards for performance, can enhance the virtual absorptive capacity (i.e., the ability to assimilate external information) through the team members' virtual skills (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018). However, some scholars believe that this form of leadership, with its reliance on rewards and punishments, may be less effective in the virtual space, due to the absence of the face-to-face contacts and the reliance on communication platforms, which may diminish the effectiveness of the methods applied by transactional leaders (Liao, 2017).

Furthermore, research suggests that another leadership style, situational leadership, allows for a better communication with the workforce transitioning from the face-to-face to the virtual set up (Farmer, 2005). The leaders, focusing on the core competencies of shared leadership including diagnosis, flexibility, and partnering with the staff for performance, continually reassess the situation of their workforce (Farmer, 2005). Through a cooperative work, the situational leaders interact more efficiently and effectively with virtual workforce, as well as in the face-to-face setting, thus being applicable in the hybrid set up (Farmer, 2005). This leads to effective relationship and trust building, efficient work, and continuous development of the workforces (Farmer, 2005). Some scholars however suggest that, as this theory proposes that leaders adapt their style based on the readiness level of their team, the virtual set up may pose challenges to this, as it may limit their ability to assess the team's readiness as a result of a lack of interactions and observations that would have otherwise happened in the face-to-face set up (Hertel, Konradt and Orlikowski, 2004).

Gross (2018) suggests that transformational leaders can contribute to the creation, building, and sustaining of meaningful relationships within the virtual space (Gross, 2018). It can also enrich the virtual teams through coaching, intellectual stimulation, and goal and vision sharing (Gross, 2018). In fact, Purvanova and Bono (2009) show that transformational leadership has stronger effect on performance when applied in virtual context, rather than traditional face-to-face context. They argue that this is due to the heightened need for social and emotional leadership forms in the virtual context, as greater uncertainty exists, and the modes of

communication are leaner (Purvanova and Bono, 2009). Research also shows that transformational leaders, who display acts of loyalty and confidence in their staff, can inspire deeper purpose in their employees through a communication style of preciseness, i.e. structuredness, thoughtfulness, and conciseness (Crews, Brouwers and Visagie, 2019). This can lead to staff satisfaction and heightened commitment (Crews, Brouwers and Visagie, 2019). Some scholars suggest that inspiration and motivation, much relied upon by transformational leaders, may be harder to achieve in the virtual set up. This is mainly due to the lack of attributes such as non-verbal and other social cues, which may limit the ability of the transformational leader to inspire the team effectively (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000). Moreover, Eisenberg, Post and DiTomaso (2019) found that transformational leadership is not always helpful in highly dispersed teams, as the transformational leader's influence on team communication and performance in such teams is weaker than in collocated teams. In fact, transformational leader's influence, in highly dispersed teams, on team communication decreases progressively and the team becomes more and more dispersed, which may have a negative impact on the team's performance (Eisenberg, Post and DiTomaso, 2019). Moreover, Wong and Berntzen (2019) found that positive relationship between transformational leadership and leader-member exchange became negative, when electronic dependence and task interdependence were on a high level (Wong and Berntzen, 2019).

Avolio, Kahai and Doge (2000) suggest that by applying authentic leadership, the leader can enhance trust and relationship building within virtual teams. They highlight that those leaders, who display authenticity and authentic leadership traits in the virtual setting, can establish trust with staff and foster stronger relationships (Avolio, Kahai and Doge, 2000). The authenticity is represented by open and transparent communication and care for team members, which are displayed as consistent behaviours (Avolio, Kahai and Doge, 2000). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) also suggest that authentic leadership, when applied in the virtual context, can lead to higher levels of team engagement and to team commitment. Their research suggests that, when leaders display authenticity, they can inspire and motivate their teams, create a sense of purpose, and therefore enhance team engagement and commitment (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson 2008). Some scholars suggest that, as authentic leadership relies on nonverbal cues in order to establish trust and connection, in the virtual context, where the access to such cues may be limited, leaders may find it challenging to convey authenticity through digital communication channels, leading to potential misinterpretations and reduced effectiveness (Liu, Gong, Zhou, and Huang 2017). Moreover, the virtual context and the absence of face-to-face interactions and informal conversations may limit the depth of relationships that the leader establishes with their team

and therefore make it more difficult for the leaders to establish authenticity (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram and Garud, 2001).

Servant leadership has been shown to have positive impact on wellbeing within virtual space (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck, and Liden, 2019; Vito and Sethi, 2020). We can see that this may be achieved through the focus on building a work environment where the staff has access to the appropriate support (developmental as well as wellbeing) with continued focus on effective work and goals (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck, and Liden, 2019; Vito and Sethi, 2020). This is crucial in the remote environment, where the staff may suffer from isolation and loss of clarity (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck, and Liden, 2019; Vito and Sethi, 2020). Some scholars however suggest that the ability of the leader to provide personalised support to the team members, and to build strong relationships with the team, may be limited by the virtual work set up, where the reliance of digital communication streams may impact the leader's' ability to provide individualised attention to the team members (Wang, Waldman and Zhang, 2014).

Further studies, focusing on shared leadership, suggest that shared leadership puts emphasis on interactive influence processes between the team members working together towards a goal (Han and Hazard, 2022; Pearce, Manz and Sims Jr, 2009). Distributing leadership to virtual team members allow them to better influence their projects and reply to challenges more promptly, which is key for virtual teams where individuals are often making independent decisions due to the remote set up (Muethel and Hoegl, 2010). Focusing on positive links between leadership and wellbeing in the virtual space, shared leadership has been viewed as having some positive attributes (Han and Hazard, 2022; Muethel and Hoegl, 2010). Shared leadership can also create an atmosphere of support within the virtual teams (Han and Hazard, 2022; Muethel and Hoegl, 2010), and can contribute to knowledge transfer, better coordination of activities, which consequently improves performance (Han, Yoon, Choi and Hong, 2021; Han and Hazard, 2022; Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017). Some scholars suggest that shared leadership, with its emphasis on collective decision making, may experience challenges in the virtual set up, due to the lack of opportunities for spontaneous interactions and due to the reduced social cues (Shin, Kim, Lee and Bian 2012).

Research into ethical leadership highlights the need to go beyond managing talent, connecting, engaging and motivating employees, as there is also the need for the leaders to be accountable for addressing any ethical concerns arising from the way in which the teams are operating (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019). Those issues range from the previously discussed points such as the overworking of employees, blurred lines between personal and professional life, or the access to appropriate equipment to use for work (Blackbaud, 2021;

Gómez, Mendoza, Ramírez and Olivas-Luján, 2020; Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018; Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). However, with the use of ever advancing technology, other ethical concerns arise including the collection and use of sensitive personal data. This can refer to data concerning the employees and their behaviour in the (virtual) workplace and the use of such data to improve processes (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019). Other issues include the use of technology for purposes other than for which it has originally been intended, which may result in security breaches, unethical behaviour, or the use of superficial codes of conduct (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Lee, 2009). Ethical leadership can provide guidance and act as a demonstrator of an appropriate conduct through the actions of the leader (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq, and Jamil, 2017). This then leads to the promotion of ethical conduct, strengthening of the communication between leaders and their team and it provides a clear framework for the decision-making process in cases of a breach of ethical standards (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019). Ethical leadership can therefore contribute to an increased job satisfaction and therefore to increased efficiencies in employees (Lee, 2009). Some scholars suggest that ethical leaders may face challenges in the virtual set up in ensuring ethical conduct, as the virtual environment limits some of the aspects of direct supervision (Shin, Kim, Lee and Bian 2012).

As demonstrated above, leadership theories have been studied in connection to the remote setting and several advantages have been shown. However, there have also been criticisms regarding the implementation in the remote context. It also must be taken into consideration that these studies focused on the exploration of the strategies across different sectors, without a purposeful focus on the non-profit organisations. The following section will therefore focus on the study of leadership theories within the non-profit sector context.

2.3.4 Leadership theories and the non-profit sector
Number of leadership strategies have been studied with a focus on leadership within the non-profit sector and this section will focus on these in more detail.

Table 2.4 Leadership strategies studying from the perspective of the non-profit teams

Leadership style	Identified advantages	Criticisms
Transformational	Encourages affective commitment, team to become better aligned with the values and goals of the organisation (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020). Can increase the feeling of empowerment by using messages and stories to reinforce the employees'	The theory focuses less on the contextual and situational factors related to challenges faced by individual and organisations (Beyer, 1999; McCleskey, 2014; Yukl, 1999).

	perceived work impact (Peng, Liao and Sun, 2020)	
	Can be implemented to inspire the teams and appeal to their values and motivations (Shakely, 2004).	
Authentic	Enhances trust and strengthens team relationships (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May 2004).	The strong emphasis on authenticity may lead to subjective judgements and biases, leading to inconsistencies and a potential favouritism in the leader – staff relationships (Hannah, Avolio and May, 2011).
	Has a positive impact on the development of organisational culture, through open communication, engagement and a shared sense of purpose (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa, 2005).	Non-profit organisations operate within a specific and complex environment and authenticity itself may not sufficiently account for this unique set of circumstances (Shamir and Eilam, 2005).
Servant	Creates structurally empowering working environments (Allen Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018).	Not all leaders will be able, or will be willing, to adopt this style, and consequently not all staff would be willing to accept this form of leadership (Allen Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018).
	Sustainment of empowering work conditions, and psychological empowerment among workers (Allen Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018).	
	Can empower staff through their involvement in decision-making, development of their capacity, and provision of required resources (Ebener and O'Connell, 2010).	

Study by Aboramadan and Dahleez (2020), suggests that transformational leaders can impact the perceived performance of their team in the non-profit sector both directly and indirectly, by creating inclusive work groups, encouraging affective commitment, and by striving for their team to become better aligned with the values and goals of the organisation (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020), which can also lead to a strong link between the work engagement and affective commitment (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020). Jaskyte (2004) argues that transformational leadership has a positive impact on the innovative culture of non-profit organisations. According to Peng, Liao and Sun (2020), transformational leaders can also increase the feeling of empowerment, especially within non-profit teams, by using messages

and stories to reinforce the employees' perceived work impact (Peng, Liao and Sun, 2020). It has also been suggested that, with application of transformational leadership, leaders can inspire their teams and appeal to their values and motivations, instead of using influencing and rewarding strategies that would have been more available for for-profit leaders (Shakely, 2004).

According to Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson (2018), focusing specifically on the non-profit sector, servant leaders has been shown as able to create structurally empowering working environments. They can achieve this through the creation and sustainment of empowering work conditions, and the support of psychological empowerment among workers (Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018; Ronquillo, 2011). Winston and Fields (2015) also make a clear distinction between servant and transformational leaders, described above, where they point out that the focus of transformational leadership is on the organisation and, on what they describe as, organisational wellbeing. In contrast with servant leaders, who are seen as focused on the wellbeing of their staff (Winston and Fields, 2015). In their work, Greenleaf (2002) focused some of the work on organisations such as hospitals, churches, and universities. According to Ebener and O'Connell (2010), servant leaders can empower their non-profit organisation staff through their involvement in decision-making, development of their capacity, and provision of the required resources (Ebener and O'Connell, 2010).

Whilst servant and transformational leadership have received a significant attention from the perspective of non-profit leadership, there have also been some criticism of their application in this setting. These points do not represent a critique of the leadership theories per se, rather it is related to their application in the non-profit sector. One of the key points regarding servant leadership highlighted by Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson (2018) is that not all leaders will be able, or will be willing, to adopt this style, and consequently not all staff would be willing to accept this form of leadership (Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018). Further to this, Eikenberry and Kluver (2004) suggest that the nature of servant leadership, which focuses on serving the team primarily, may conflict with goals and objectives set by the non-profit organisations and therefore a more balanced approach may be needed to respond to the complexities of the non-profit sector (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). Concerning transformational leadership, DeHoog (DeHoog, 2015), points out that it is not possible to automatically assume that, through the nature of transformational leadership, it can be universally applied in the non-profit sector. They argue that, due to the nature of the sector, different approach to leadership may be needed to address the challenges of the non-profit sector (DeHoog, 2015).

Another leadership style studied within the context of non-profit sector is authentic leadership. According to Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May (2004) and their study of authentic leadership, authentic leaders can foster trust among team members, and other stakeholders within non-profit organisations. Those leaders displaying authenticity are seen as genuine and honest, which can enhance trust and can strengthen the team relationships (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May 2004). Furthermore, authentic leadership, in the non-profit setting, may have a positive impact on the development of organisational culture, through open communication, engagement and a shared sense of purpose, having a positive impact on team morale and the staff job satisfaction and commitment (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa 2005). Some scholars, however, suggest that the strong emphasis on authenticity may lead to subjective judgements and biases, leading to inconsistencies and a potential favouritism in the leader – staff relationships (Hannah, Avolio and May, 2011). Further to this, Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggest that as non-profit organisations operate within a specific and complex environment, including the uniqueness of the mission, stakeholders and resource constraints, this may require additional leadership considerations, and therefore authenticity itself may not sufficiently account for this unique set of circumstances (Shamir and Eilam, 2005).

Furthermore, some scholars also propose a hybrid model of approach to leadership in the non-profit sector (Stone, Crosby and Bryson, 2010), presenting the argument that it may be necessary to combine different leadership theories and their elements in order to provide a more comprehensive model of leadership for the non-profit sector (Stone, Crosby and Bryson, 2010).

As demonstrated above, leadership theories have been studied in connection to the non-profit environment and several advantages have been shown. However, there have also been criticisms regarding the implementation in the non-profit environment. It also must be taken into consideration that these studies focused on the exploration of the strategies in a face-to-face context and therefore not covering the aspect of remote leadership.

2.4 Literature review conclusions

The literature review has revealed several important factors relevant for this study. It has shown that, already prior to the global pandemic, there had been an increase in people working remotely to at least some extent (Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018), with the numbers rising sharply during the pandemic (Taneja, Mizen and Bloom, 2021), and with this trend continuing post pandemic (Probert, 2022). This has led to the hybrid work set up becoming especially prominent within the workplace (Probert, 2022). This new reality of work has become an opportunity for leaders to review their practices going forward (Ahern and Loh, 2020; Stoller, 2020).

The literature review has highlighted challenges surrounding these trends, including the lack of understanding of staff of the company policies, loss of trust, loss of connection, social isolation, unsuitable technological resources, as well as impact on work-life balance (Galanti, Guidetti, Mazzei, Zappalà and Toscano, 2021; Newman and Ford, 2021; Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). Moreover, the literature has also demonstrated that team leaders of remote teams experience their staff being more likely to question their abilities, rules, and company mission and vision (Verstandig, 2020). There is a clear emphasis in the literature on the need of the leaders to look beyond existing strategies and change their practices accordingly (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000), with the aim to be able to operate in the varied environment that the remote workplace represents (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021), with the emphasis being put on the ability of the leaders to operate to a high technology fluency and social adeptness in a tech environment (Soga, Bolade-Ogunfodun, Islam and Amankwah-Amoah, 2022), whilst being able to successfully work with their team in the face-to-face set up (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021). It has also been emphasised that the leaders need to take into consideration the concrete team attributes and context (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021).

This is especially true for the non-profit sector, where the literature has shown the increased pressures on the sector during and post-pandemic (Hogarth, 2021; Kunzler, 2021; Shi, Jang, Keyes, and Dicke, 2020). This was, among other factors, due to the nature of the sector, with many organisations in this area providing support and services to those in need (Shi, Jang, Keyes, and Dicke 2020). During the pandemic, large redundancies in the sector were recorded (Hogarth, 2021), workers reported working longer hours, feelings of isolation, and struggles with the often-insufficient workspaces at home (Amar and Ramsay, 2021; Blackbaud, 2021), with significant changes such as the move to virtual fundraising affecting the sector as well (Kunzler, 2021). Despite that, and with the non-profit sector in the UK growing (Clark, 2022), with almost one million jobs in the UK (NCVO, 2024), non-profit workers experience a pay-gap compared to similar employees in other industries (O'Halloran, 2022). This is also underlined by the public scrutiny of the organisations' spending and the public perception that the sector is spending too much particularly on senior leaders (O'Halloran, 2022). The importance of understanding of how leaders can work with non-profit teams remotely is particularly important, as the literature shows that 40% of organisations plan to retain a remote model of work going forward (NCVO, 2024).

With the understanding of remote work and the non-profit sector established, the literature review has subsequently focused on leadership. It has shown that leadership has been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984), however much leadership research continues to focus on how individuals are recognised as leaders by others, rather than how they themselves understand their role (van Knippenberg

and Hogg 2005). Following from the exploration of what leadership is, the review has turned to understanding of specific leadership theories and associated styles, specifically in the context of remote work and the non-profit sector.

The literature review has revealed that several leadership theories have been studied from the perspective of leading at a distance (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq, and Jamil, 2017). This includes Lewin's laissez-faire style being shown as providing autonomy in such space (Gross, 2018), transactional leadership has been studied from the perspective of providing continuity between different tasks performed virtually (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Gross, 2018), situational leadership has been analysed for its ability to improve virtual interactions and promote continuous team development (Farmer, 2005), transformational leadership has been analysed for the ability to create, build and sustain meaningful relationships in the virtual space (Gross, 2018), authentic leadership has been explored an shown to enhance trust within virtual teams (Avolio, Kahai and Doge, 2000), servant leadership has been analysed for its positive impact on wellbeing (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, Van Dierendonck and Liden, 2019), ethical leadership has been shown to strengthen relationships between the leaders and their teams (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq, and Jamil, 2017), and shared leadership has been shown to promote the distribution of leadership in the virtual space (Muethel and Hoegl, 2010).

These leadership theories have, however, also received criticism for their negative impact on teamwork when connected to several attributes associated with the virtual workspace, such as the limited abilities of the situational leaders to assess the teams' readiness virtually (Hertel, Konradt and Orlikowski, 2004), the decreasing influence of transformational leaders on highly dispersed teams' communication (Eisenberg, Post and DiTomaso, 2019), the limited ability to provide individualised attention to team members by servant leaders (Vito and Sethi, 2020), or challenges for shared leadership's ability to make collective decisions, due to the lack of spontaneous interactions in the virtual space (Shin, Kim, Lee and Bian 2012). Further to this, the above studies do not address the specifics of applying the leadership theories when operating in the non-profit space. These limitations highlight the need for a leadership framework that considers not just leader-follower relationships, but also organisational constraints and external conditions. Hollander's (1971) system of relationships offers a valuable perspective in this regard, positioning leadership as a co-constructed and situationally responsive process.

The application of leadership theories in the non-profit space is addressed by a number of further studies, they analyse servant leadership for its ability to contribute to the creation of an

environment of structural empowerment within the non-profit space (Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018), transformational leadership has been shown to encourage teams to become better aligned with the values and goals of the organisation (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020) and authentic leadership has been studied for its positive impact on the enhancement of trust and its ability to strengthen relationships within the non-profit organisations (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May 2004). These leadership theories have however been criticised for the negative impact they may have on the work of non-profit organisations. Crucially, specifically with the transformational leadership, it is not possible to automatically assume that it can be applied in the sector, when it may have had positive associations with the commercial sector (DeHoog, 2015), furthermore, the strong emphasis on authenticity, in authentic leadership, may lead to subjective judgements and biases, leading to inconsistencies and a potential favouritism in the leader – staff relationships (Hannah, Avolio and May, 2011), and finally, the nature of servant leadership, focused on serving the team primarily, may conflict with goals and objectives set by the non-profit organisations (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). Further to this, the leadership theories' impact, when applied in the non-profit sector, has only been analysed from the face-to-face perspective (Jiang and Men, 2017). This gap can be addressed by building upon our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984) to provide a more contextually relevant understanding of non-profit leadership in remote settings.

The literature review has confirmed that, whilst there is a rich body of literature on the topic of leadership within the remote work set up context, the combination of remote work and non-profit team leadership offers much more limited output. Studies on remote leadership published in the post-pandemic period (since 2023) focused primarily on remote leadership in the for-profit sector (for example Davidson, 2023; Ding, Ren and Lin, 2024; Dologa, 2024; Flood, 2023; Gan, Zhou, Tang, Ma and Gan, 2023; Gaan, Malik, and Dagar, 2024; Shi, Feenstra, and van Vugt, 2024) and in healthcare and home care (Hurmekoski, Häggman-Laitila, Lammintakanen, and Terkamo-Moisio, 2023; Laaksonen and Backstrom 2023).

With the non-profit sector in the UK growing (Clark, 2022) and moving towards the remote work set up (NCVO, 2024), there is a clear need to address the gap in non-profit leadership practice, as well as the non-profit leadership theory (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). By building upon our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984), this study focuses on leadership as a lived experience, exploring how non-profit leaders actively shape their leadership identity within the remote work environment.

Following these findings, the below research question has been formed:

- How does remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership?

To answer the research question, the following points will be addressed:

- How do non-profit leaders understand their roles and adapt to the unique challenges of the remote work environment while maintaining alignment with organisational mission and values?
- How do non-profit leaders define their role and leadership practices in response to the complexities of remote work?
- What strategies do non-profit leaders employ to ensure organisational alignment in the remote work context?

The following chapter will outline how is this empirical research, answering the above research question, going to be carried out.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Philosophical perspective

As the initial step, it was important for the researcher to focus on the exploration of philosophy, as a crucial step when forming the research methodology (Easterby-Smith, 1997). As research methods can be considered on several levels, it was important for the researcher to also focus on the foundation, the deepest philosophical level, representing general world views including the nature and proof of knowledge, reasoning, the reality, mind, as well as matter (Clark, 1998; Crossan, 2003; Hughes, King, Rodden and Andersen, 1994). The knowledge of philosophy aided the researcher in the evaluation of different methodologies and methods, and the identification of their possible limitations at early stages of the research (Crossan, 2003; Easterby-Smith, 1997). It also aided the researcher with the clarification of the research strategy, including the type of studied evidence, its source, interpretation, and the research questions posed (Crossan, 2003; Easterby-Smith, 1997). Finally, it enabled the researcher to adopt a creative approach and innovative methods, by allowing the researcher to select methods that might have previously been outside of their scope of expertise (Crossan, 2003; Easterby-Smith, 1997).

When applying specific research method, the researcher did make assumptions about the philosophical level, both through conscious and unconscious thought processes (Hughes, King, Rodden and Andersen, 1994). The adopted method in itself contains the researcher's perspectives related to world views, and concepts and adoption of these methods does consequently have an implication for the research and its results (Hughes, King, Rodden and Andersen, 1994). The researcher understands that research methods' categorisation into paradigms is rooted in philosophy (Kuhn, 1970), first emphasised by Thomas S. Kuhn (1970), who highlighted the critical role of paradigms when expressing ideas, methods, language, and theories, all of which to be accepted by the broader scientific community (Kuhn, 1970). Alongside the research paradigms, the researchers' own experiences, and the understanding of philosophy, have had an impact on the methods selected (Crossan, 2003). The researcher has considered the following aspects when choosing the research method, the paradigm, research goal, the phenomenon of interest and its nature, as well as the research question and its nature, the practical research considerations, and finally the use of resources (Crossan, 2003) (Shih, 1998). To achieve a consistency between the research goal and questions, the researcher's own understanding of philosophy and the selected method was of a high importance to understand the research philosophy (Crossan, 2003; Proctor, 1998).

3.1.1 Philosophical assumptions

It was critical for the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the research paradigms through familiarisation with different scientific perspectives. The researcher has studied the perspective of Kuhn (1970) who showed that paradigms represent "the shared complex of group commitments along the spectrum from preferred analogies and metaphors, to shared exemplars, to heuristics, to ontological models, or accepted hypotheses of laws of nature, which influence what would be accepted as a warranted explanation and as a puzzle solution (Kuhn, 1970, p. 174-191)." The work of Burrell and Morgan (2017) describing research paradigms as a "commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together" (Burrell and Morgan, 2017, p. 23) was also of interest to the researcher. The researcher also studied Saunders et al (2019) who defines the paradigms as "a way of examining social phenomena from which particular understandings of these phenomena can be gained and explanations attempted" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 118). Guba and Lincoln's (1994) view on research paradigms as "representing a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 107) also influenced the researcher in the process. Following the investigation, the researcher observed that the research methodology selection was dependent on the research paradigm, which in itself contains the fundamental assumption (Bernard and Bernard, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Following this, the researcher focused on the question of the classification of the paradigms to gain a deeper understanding of the questions that define these. These philosophical assumptions, classified as ontological, epistemological, and methodological (Bernard and Bernard, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994), with another crucial aspect of consideration being axiology (Guba and Lincoln, 2005), guided the researcher in the process of the exploring the philosophical perspective. The researcher studied these assumptions, including ontology, which is concerned with worldview and the nature of reality, it asks the question of what the nature of reality is, it studies the nature of being, the nature of reality and human existence. It represents the researcher's own belief of what is factual, what is real (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The researcher then focused on understanding epistemology, directly influenced by ontology, which studies the relationship there is between knowledge and research, where the researcher's own ontological belief has had an impact on what we know and how that relates to the researcher themselves. It is concerned with questions of how knowledge is acquired and how do we know the given outcomes, or what is the relationship between the researcher and the would-be knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The researcher then focused on methodology, which is also closely related to epistemology, however it is more practice based in its nature, is directly influenced by the researcher's belief, both ontological as well as epistemological. It focuses on the practice of discovering knowledge and its systemic nature. It is concerned with the question of how the researcher can obtain the knowledge to bring understanding into the studied questions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Guba and Lincoln (1994) show that the assumptions (ontological, epistemological, as well as methodological) are closely interrelated, and they have had a direct impact on the researcher's choices and directions within their study. Furthermore, axiology, which is concerned with values and ethical behaviour and with the researcher's own belief of what is ethical (Guba and Lincoln, 2005), has directly impacted the researcher's decisions related to their values, as well as other ethical considerations, such as the research conduct (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). These assumptions have shaped the research process at all stages, and they have been the building blocks of the research paradigm, as explored above, which has been directly formulated by the philosophical assumptions (Bernard and Bernard, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

3.1.2 Research paradigm

The researcher has familiarised themselves with the varying views and classifications by scholars of the research paradigms and their impact on the research practice (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Bernard and Bernard, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Through the process, the researcher has identified paradigms with a high relevance for business studies as positivism, interpretivism, critical realism, and pragmatism (Biedenbach and Müller, 2011; Bryman, 2007; Collis and Hussey, 2021; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Following the in-depth understanding of the philosophical positions, the researcher was able to confirm that the guiding research philosophy of this study is the interpretivist approach. This is due to the researcher's deep focus on factors related to context of leadership, viewed as an interpersonal and relational process (Parker, 1984), within the non-profit sector and the remote work set up and the challenges they face, and the belief that humans are different to physical phenomena and therefore cannot be explored in the same way (Crotty, 1998; Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Interpretivism stresses the importance of meaning that is created by individuals and groups, as opposed to them being purely observed without any emphasis on their role in creating the meaning of the interpretivists study (Crotty, 1998; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Interpretivists focus on the study of social context, and they use their research to enrich the understanding of these social constructs. This means that interpretivist researchers collect insights from the participants with the emphasis on what is meaningful to them (Crotty, 1998; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This can have a

form of the participants' lived experiences and their interpretation of it (phenomenology), focus on stories and imagery (hermeneutics), or interactions between participants and focused observation (symbolic interactionists) (Crotty, 1998; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Within this study, the researcher is guided by the belief that varying circumstances will lead to the development of varying social realities and the research study will therefore focus on providing richness in the studied information, rather than being driven by the aim to create universal laws (Crotty, 1998; Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, the approach of the research will be further shaped by the approach of phenomenology in interpretivism (Schutz, 2012), where the focus is placed on the interpretation of people's experiences and the aim to gain understanding through a phenomenon being experienced (Wilson, 2014). Through the interpretivist approach to the study, the aim is to bring a deep understanding of the studied context and to present findings with deep insight and conclusions, which may differ from studies conducted with different guiding philosophical principles (Myers, 2019).

The advantages of using interpretivism include the ability of the researcher to consider different aspects and factors based on the research participants' experiences (Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). It also enables the researcher to view the context and situation of the studied phenomena as unique within the circumstances of the participants involved. Interpretivism further enables deeper focus and would steer away from broad generalisations. This approach would therefore lead to a high-validity data generation, through the considerations for specific participant contributions and differing variables (Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). However, it is also important to be aware of the criticism of the interpretivist approach. Namely, its rejection of previously acquired knowledge shared in the form of universal laws and the subsequent questioning of their validity. It therefore requires different criteria to make the conclusions and might therefore produce vastly different results (Scotland, 2012). Another related point of criticism is the assumption of interpretivism that reality is subjective, and therefore differing between people and their individual experiences, and thus leading to the understanding that research participants cannot contribute with general interpretations (Scotland, 2012). Finally, the above points culminate in the criticism of studies following the interpretivist paradigm as not being open to generalisation, due to the deep focus on specific context and individual experiences (Scotland, 2012).

However, despite the criticism, interpretivist research can generate high-quality and high-validity results (Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The key strengths of the interpretivist approach include the ability to bring knowledge based on a deep understanding of specific experiences, rather than focusing on generalisations, and the ability to bring further

depth in the results through focused interviews (or conversations, or discussion) (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, the research focuses on the full depth of the given circumstances rather than isolated aspects. Finally, it highlights the importance of experiences as a highly relevant aspect supporting scientific research (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.1.3 Research approach to theory development

Adoption of the research paradigm has a direct impact on the next element of the research design, where the focus of the study on either theory testing or on theory building guides the adoption of the deductive, inductive, or alternatively the abductive approach (Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Following the findings of the literature review, it has been shown that there is a need to re-evaluate standard practices and look beyond the existing structures, in order to address the challenges for leadership, with focus on the non-profit sector and the remote set up (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). This has been shown to have implications for the leadership practice as well as leadership theory (Tourish, 2020) and this notion has been reinforced through the literature review and when looking at the traditional leadership theories. The literature review has demonstrated that, whilst the existing leadership theories provide valuable guidance in these areas, this guidance is fragmented and to some extent diverged (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq and Jamil, 2017). Whilst some theories may offer guidance and theoretical background on leading remotely (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq and Jamil, 2017), these may not offer guidance for the non-profit leaders (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Jiang and Men, 2017; Men and Stacks, 2014). Whilst leadership theories that are bringing applicable knowledge for the non-profit sector may not be covering the aspect of remote work (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Jiang and Men, 2017; Men and Stacks, 2014). The literature review has also shown that leadership has been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984).

As this research is deeply concerned with the specific context of the leaders within the non-profit sector and the remote work set up, and it aims to understand the interpretation of the social world by the study participant, the leaders, in order to make its conclusions, it has been felt that the inductive approach is the most suitable for this study. This is due to the nature of the inductive reasoning which is strongly concerned with the context that surrounds the research problem (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) and it thus allows for a deep

understanding of the problem through the data analysis and a subsequent formation of a theory (Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Induction works with a collection of data and using these to gain a better understanding of the problem through the data analysis and a subsequent formation of a theory (Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This approach has been developed to contrast the deductive reasoning, i.e., to contrast the belief we can make conclusions about a certain problem without understanding the interpretation of the social world by the study participants (Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This is one of the key strengths of the inductive approach. Inductive approach is strongly concerned with the context that surrounds the research problem. Inductive research would often collate smaller sample of data than in the case of deductive approach and apply a deep analysis of those. The interpretivist philosophy is likely to inform inductive research (Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Using the inductive approach, the study will aim to collect data, acquire a deep understanding of the problem through the data analysis and finally to formulate a theory as a result of this deep understanding (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Due to the concern with the outlined context, a small sample of subjects is going to be more appropriate than large sample numbers typically used when applying the deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.2 Methodological approach

A plan of the research journey, that enables the researcher to answer the chosen research question(s), is referred to as a research design (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). There are number of choices that researchers had to take to construct a strong research design. One such aspect is the methodological choice. The primary methodological choices include the qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research design (Denzin, 2018; Molina-Azorín, 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Secondly, the research design also has a particular nature, in other words in can be descriptive, explanatory, exploratory, or evaluative. It can also possess a combination these characteristics (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Finally, the researcher had to make a choice of a researcher strategy, which is directly linked to the described research characteristics and design choices (Denzin, 2018; Molina-Azorín, 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.2.1 Qualitative research design

Focusing on the research design methods, researchers are faced with the consideration of the use of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research design approach (Denzin, 2018; Molina-Azorín, 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

In the previous chapters, it has been established that this research is going to be guided by the interpretivist approach, due to the researcher's focus on factors related to context, more specifically the study's focus on leaders within the non-profit sector and the remote work, and how they construct and make sense of their role, and the belief that humans are different to physical phenomena and therefore cannot be explored in the same way (Crotty, 1998; Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, as the research is aiming to understand the interpretation of the social world by the study participants, and it puts emphasis on the context that surrounds the research problem, it has been felt that the inductive approach is the most suitable for this study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Following these decisions, the qualitative design will be applied to compliment the research paradigm and approach. The data gathered using the qualitative approach will have a form of meanings expressed through words and will require subsequent categorisation during the data analysis process (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Qualitative design is closely connected with the interpretivist paradigm (Denzin, 2018), as it focuses on the understanding of the research problem through the meaning expressed by the study participants, where this meaning, which is shaped by the social world and the participants' experiences within the social world, is therefore socially constructed (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The research would traditionally use methods which are either unstructured or alternatively semi-structured and it is likely apply non-probability sampling (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Using the qualitative approach, the person of a researcher is viewed as not independent from the researched participants (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Through the use of the qualitative approach, the study will focus on the meanings expressed by the participants and will aim to develop a deep understanding of those meanings, their relationships and connections, and will conclude with a development of a conceptual framework (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The study will gather data using the mono method qualitative study, i.e., the data will be collected through a single technique (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), namely semi-structured interviews, which will be discussed in detail in the data collection technique chapter. Key consideration for the use of the qualitative approach includes the person of a researcher not being independent from the research participants. The ability of the researcher to access the relevant research participants and to build rapport, in order to establish not only physical but also cognitive access to the relevant data, will be an important factor determining the success of the research (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.2.2 Research strategy

The guiding philosophical assumptions, paradigms and the research approach explored in this chapter will play a critical role in the research strategy development. This study aims to answers the question 'How does remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership?' The 'how' in this research question suggests that this is an explanatory study as it seeks explanatory answers (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

This explanatory study aims to analyse a specific problem, namely that of how non-profit remote leaders construct and make sense of their role. As the literature reviewed demonstrated, whilst some existing leadership theories may offer guidance and theoretical background on leading remotely (Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq, S. and Jamil 2017), these may not offer guidance for the remote non-profit leaders and the specific challenges they face (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Jiang and Men, 2017; Men and Stacks, 2014). Moreover, theories that are being analysed from the perspective of application in the non-profit sector are not focusing on the aspect of remote work (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Jiang and Men, 2017; Men and Stacks, 2014). Moreover, leadership has been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process, (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984), much leadership research continues to focus on how individuals are recognised as leaders by others, rather than how they themselves understand their role (van Knippenberg et al., 2005). This therefore suggests the need for an application of a theory building methodology (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) to address the gap in the leadership literature, focusing specifically on the remote non-profit context, as well as the leadership practice, with the same focus (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020).

There are several strong theory-building methodologies that could be used within the research, with the key including a case-study, ethnography and the grounded theory approach. To establish the most suitable approach, the possible advantages and issues of the methodologies have been first explored by the researcher. A comparative overview of these methodologies is shown in Table 3.3, summarising their key strengths and limitations.

Table 3.1 Advantages and possible issues of selected theory building methodological approaches

	Case study	Ethnography	Grounded Theory
Advantages	Can capture emergent changes in a fast-changing environment (Noor, 2008).	Relevance for organisations, as it provides an in-depth understanding of the customer	Provides theoretical explanation of social phenomena in a wide range of contexts (Saunders,

	Can bring understanding of complex issues (Dooley, 2002).	experience (Arnould and Cayla, 2015).	Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).
	Results of multiple case studies can be replicated to some extent (Noor, 2008).	Prevents the simplification of the studied phenomenon (Atkinson, Delamont, Coffey, Lofland and Lofland, 2007).	It can interpret complex social phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005).
	Allows for the use of mixed-methods approach to acquire rich analytical data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).	Results reflect the perspective of those studied (Atkinson, Delamont, Coffey, Lofland and Lofland, 2007).	It does not require creation of previous assumptions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005) It allows for a creative research process (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).
Possible Issues	Theory building process arduous (Dooley, 2002). Not well suited for generalisation (Dooley, 2002). Blurred line between the main subject of a research and other adjacent subjects brought into the study in a less structured manner (Gerring, 2004). Access to the case study environments in required on many occasions through the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).	Researcher remains the teller of the story, and their own interpretation may influence the findings (Denzin, 2018). Issues of gaining access to the relevant groups (Atkinson, Delamont, Coffey, Lofland and Lofland, 2007). If trust is not gained by the researcher, the results may be impacted (Atkinson, Delamont, Coffey, Lofland and Lofland 2007). Labour intensive and time-consuming (Goulding, 2005).	Requires a deep understanding of the approach and the subsequent debates on the research conduct and data analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005; Locke, 2015; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The conclusion of the research project may reveal results that have little significance or that are purely descriptive (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Time consuming, requires a certain level of competence, and access to data (Kenealy, 2012). Difficult to anticipate the length of the research and the accurate time scale (Goulding, 2005).

Case study, as a possible methodological approach to this research, has been considered, due to its ability to capture emergent changes in a fast-changing environments and its ability to understand complex issues (Dooley, 2002; Noor, 2008). However, this research is concerned with the question of how remote work as a phenomenon shapes the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership. Case studies aim at understanding of 'what' has occurred and what has happened (Denk, Kaufmann and Carter, 2012). Using a case study approach, it would not be possible to provide the answer to the question 'how', i.e., a case study would not enable the researcher to bring the understanding of how the complex processes of changes in the non-profit organisations, leading their teams remotely, are relevant for the individuals involved in the research, namely the team leaders. This has therefore led to the decision not to use the case study as a method for this research study.

Ethnographic research has also been considered as a possible approach to this study. However, its focus on small-scale groups and the immersion and contagion in one culture (Atkinson, Delamont, Coffey, Lofland and Lofland, 2007; Goulding, 2005) was not seen as appropriate for this study. This is due to the nature of this study the non-profit team leaders and their teams, operating in a remote setting, and from across a varied group of organisations based on the size, focus and the location of the organisations. The research topic is therefore too broad in nature for the expected scope of an ethnographic study was therefore not deemed appropriate for use.

Given the study's emphasis on meaning-making, context, and theory development grounded in participant experience, Constructivist Grounded Theory was selected as the most appropriate methodological approach. The rationale for this decision is discussed in detail in Section 3.2.2.1.

3.2.2.1 Grounded Theory approach – critical analysis

Constructivist Grounded Theory was selected as a methodological approach of the study due to its belief that it is not possible to unveil a pre-existing reality from a theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory sees reality as socially constructed and it focuses on the analysis, explanation, and interpretation of the meanings of the day-to-day experiences in social situations constructed by the social actors (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Its goal is to generate a theory grounded in data, which is established with the use of the social actors' accounts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Using the Grounded Theory approach, the researcher starts the process by conducting an initial interview and proceed to analyse the data as soon as possible after conducting this interview and prior to the next interview, i.e., the researcher uses a simultaneous approach to data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The analysis is built upon coding of the data. The codes are used to mark or

label pieces of information within the data of similar or the exact same meaning. These codes therefore summarise the meaning of the data and they allow for data fragmented across different interviews to be linked together (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The researcher understands that while Grounded Theory was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), both founders have subsequently developed different approaches for the application and use, and two schools of thought have emerged, Glaserian and Straussian (Denk, Kaufmann and Carter, 2012). With Glaser focusing on the creative potential of the approach and the ability to allow theory to emerge from the data (Glaser, 1999). Strauss continued to develop a strictly prescriptive approach focused on the technical coding procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This approach has been viewed as an objectivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Within objectivist Grounded Theory the collected data represent an external reality which is to be discovered throughout the process (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) believes that the objectivist grounded theory is based on positivist foundations. The researcher was however highly interested in the application of Grounded Theory in connection with the interpretivist approach.

According to Charmaz (2014), when using the interpretivist approach, it is the constructivist grounded theory that should be used (Charmaz, 2014), as it views the role of the researcher as having an impact on the data interpretation and the subsequent development of a theory, with the theory being constructed, rather than discovered (Charmaz, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Constructivist grounded theory assumes that reality is socially constructed, and that people make sense of the world through their understanding of social interactions (Gardner, McCutcheon and Fedoruk, 2012). Using this approach provides a way for the researcher to understand how people engage with and negotiate social structures, as well as how meaning is developed through those social structures and interactions (Gardner, McCutcheon and Fedoruk, 2012). It opens a way for the researcher to focus on social processes that may not be immediately apparent, but that may emerge overtime from the data analysis (Gardner, McCutcheon and Fedoruk, 2012). Constructivist grounded theory focuses on asking critical emergent questions and it is based on a deeply reflexive stance, a methodological self-consciousness (Charmaz, 2017). Methodological self-consciousness scrutinizes the position, priorities, or privileges of the researcher and how these may impact the research process and the researcher's relationship with the participants (Charmaz, 2017). Charmaz (2014) views that research process as a dynamic one and as an interaction between the participants of the research and the researcher, with the final theory representing these interactions and incorporating both the participants' and the researcher's views (Charmaz, 2017). It is crucial to position the researcher as the partner of the participants, rather than a distant analyst of the participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2017).

The researcher also understands that one of the key questions when using the Grounded Theory is the role of existing published theory (Locke, 2015). It is possible to use existing published theory to inform the research prior to its commencement and during the process, as the idea of the research study may come from an existing published theory and the knowledge of it may inform the research project. However, no published theory should in any way influence the process of coding, analysis, or sampling (Goulding, 2005; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). It is crucial that theoretical sensitivity is applied, i.e., the focus is on the meaning in the data and developing a theory from (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

When analysis the advantages and disadvantages of the Grounded theory, the researcher has summarised that Grounded Theory provides theoretical explanations of social phenomena in a wide range of contexts, and it provides a deep understanding of complex social phenomena (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Some of the key issues with the use of Grounded theory stem from its misuse by not following the key principles, including theoretical sampling, inductive coding, as well as constant comparison (Goulding, 2005). Another area of concern when using the Grounded Theory is the conclusion of the research project revealing results that have little significance or that are purely descriptive (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Grounded Theory is very time consuming and requires a certain level of competence, as well as access to data (Kenealy, 2012). Moreover, it can be difficult to anticipate the length of the research and therefore anticipate the accurate time scale (Goulding, 2005).

3.2.2.1.1 Grounded Theory application

To established even deeper understanding of Grounded Theory, the researcher studied the application process in depth. From his, it is understood that the coding process in the Grounded Theory is key and it has developed together with the development of the Grounded Theory, with Strauss and Corbin (1998) describing three stages, namely open, axial, and selective coding stages, where open coding refers to the initial allocation of data into categories, axial coding refers to the recognition of the specific relationships between those categories, and lastly selective coding refers to the integration of those categories in order to produce a theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This categorisation was later revised and streamlined by Corbin, with axial coding being undertaken within, and combined with, the open coding, and with the selective coding being revisited as a process of integration (Service, 2009). Another approach to the Grounded Theory coding, presented as part of the constructivist grounded theory, works with two stages, the initial coding stage and a focused coding stage (Charmaz, 2014).

Alongside the coding process itself, there are other key components that must be implemented, namely the constant comparison, which refers to the continuous comparison of each piece of data with the other collated pieces and codes are being compared, categorised or re-evaluated and added, when necessary, this process uses both inductive and deductive thinking (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This ensures that there is a consistency in the coding and analysis procedures. As the data is being coded into categories, some relationships may start to appear between certain codes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). These themes then need to be tested, by collecting more data and evaluating codes emerging from these new pieces of data and deciding whether these also fall into such emerging relationships (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Using deductive thinking, if the relationship continues to emerge, higher-level codes would then be created (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Another important aspect of the Grounded Theory is a memo writing (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Memos can capture the used codes, the changes to the assigned codes, the relationships between codes and the emerging higher-level codes, as well as other ideas that the researcher decides to capture, to help in the process of analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). When reviewing the memos, these can provide a chronological overview of how the researcher's thoughts has developed throughout the process, and it can provide a clear indication of how the researcher has developed the theory (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). It is also an important tool for the sampling process, as the goal is to follow theoretical lines of enquiry, not to work towards a representation of a population. The sampling process begins by talking to such participants that are most likely to provide early information (Coyne, 1997). Therefore, the core themes guide the sampling process, this is called theoretical sampling, and it directs the sampling towards new cases to collect to further focus on the emerging themes and relationships (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Such process continues until theoretical saturation, or conceptual saturation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), or conceptual density (Glaser, 1992), is achieved, i.e., until data collection no longer continues to provide new information to enrich the existing categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This leads to the culmination of the process by creating a theoretical explanation with contextual basis (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

3.2.2.2 Justification of the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach use

The uniqueness of the situation faced by remote non-profit leaders in the UK, particularly in terms of the lack of comparable previous experiences with a shift to large-scale, rapid, remote work set-up and a subsequent transition to a long-term alternative, based on the remote work set up models (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020), invites the application of a theory-building methodology. This will also allow

the researcher to explore leadership not just as a set of strategies, but as a lived and evolving identity, centring around how leaders construct and make sense of their own roles (Charmaz, 2017). Upon reviewing the possible theory-building methodologies, the Grounded Theory approach has been identified as the most appropriate for this study. The key strengths lie in its ability to provide theoretical explanation in a wide range of context and its ability to interpret complex phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005). The grounded theory will allow the researcher to explore leadership as a lived and evolving identity (Charmaz, 2017), and as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984), which is shaped by the nature of the non-profit sector, and the remote environment (Amar and Ramsay, 2021).

With this research focused on a context of non-profit leaders operating in the remote work set up, the applicability from the point of view of a specific context is critical. Moreover, upon reviewing the existing literature, it transpires that the published literature is fragmented and to some extent diverged (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq and Jamil, 2017). Moreover, leadership research continues to focus on how individuals are recognised as leaders by others, rather than how they themselves understand and internalise their leadership identity (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2005). It is therefore pertinent that a theory-building methodology is applied, which allows the researcher to explore this particular context.

Moreover, as the Grounded Theory can interpret complex phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005), it has been felt that the Grounded Theory would be the most appropriate to bring understanding of the challenges that the non-profit team leaders in the remote work set up face and the need for these leaders to re-evaluate standard practices and look beyond the existing structures, and how they themselves construct and make sense of their roles (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). As the non-profit sector in the UK is growing (Clark, 2022), and moving towards the remote work set up, without comparable previous experiences (Amar and Ramsay, 2021), it is also important that the Grounded Theory doesn't require a creation of previous assumptions (Glaser and Srauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005), as it allows the researcher to analyse, explain and interpret the non-profit leaders', and their teams', day-to-day experiences, obtained through the leaders', and their teams', own accounts, in order to bring a theoretical explanation with contextual basis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The open-ended nature of the Grounded theory will enable the researcher to adapt, as new themes emerge from data, and to provide a more

comprehensive understanding of the topic, which will be contextually grounded (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

As mentioned above, the existing published literature has contributed to the research study and the knowledge of the literature will inform this research prior to its commencement and during the process, which is in line with the Grounded Theory principles (Locke, 2015). Without understanding the existing literature, it would not be possible to identify the clear trend in the UK non-profit sector of implementing the remote work in the current practice (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Amar and Ramsay, 2021), the challenges that the team leaders face in such work set up and the need for leaders to re-evaluate standard practices and look beyond the existing structures, as well as the need to understand how they themselves construct and make sense of their roles (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). Moreover, when looking to the published research, it was critical to understand that whilst the existing theories provide valuable guidance in these areas, this guidance is fragmented and diverged (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq and Jamil, 2017). Without the study of the existing literature, it would have not been possible to formulate the focus of this research study. However, it is important to note that the literature will in no way influence the process of coding, analysis, or sampling, with maintained focus throughout the process being on the theoretical sensitivity (Goulding, 2005; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Moreover, the researcher believes that researchers themselves do have an impact on the data interpretation and the subsequent development of a theory, as well as that people make sense of the world through their interpretation of social interactions (Charmaz, 2017). It has therefore been felt that the constructivist grounded theory approach would be the most appropriate to use (Charmaz, 2017). The constructivist grounded theory recognises the position of the researcher, as well as of the participants, in developing a new theory (Charmaz, 2017). Moreover, the constructivist grounded theory approach views 'a priori' knowledge as useful for the research (Charmaz, 2017). Throughout the study, the researcher will focus on asking critical emergent questions and will apply a deeply reflexive stance and a methodological self-consciousness, with the researcher scrutinizing their own position, priorities and how these may impact the research process and the relationship with the participants (Charmaz, 2017). As the researcher themselves come from a background of a non-profit leadership, it is critical that the researcher continues to self-reflect on how their own experiences and background may be impacting the relationship with remote leaders from within the sector and how their own lived experiences may be impacting their interpretation of the data and the research process as a whole.

In summary, the constructivist grounded theory approach is well suited in the context of this study, as it possesses flexibility, adaptability and it puts emphasis on the participants' perspectives. It enables the researcher to examine the personal and relational aspects of leadership, that are not central in strategy-driven approaches. Through its use of iterative data collection and data analysis processes, and the focus on generating theory from data, it presents a suitable methodology to explore the evolving landscape of non-profit leadership in the remote environment. By focusing on leadership self-understanding, the use of constructivist grounded theory ensures that the resulting model will not only address the practical challenges but will also advance academic understanding of the topic.

3.3 Research process

Throughout this chapter it has been established that this research study will be guided by the interpretivist approach, due to the researcher's deep focus on factors related to the context of leaders within the non-profit sector, the remote work set up and the challenges they face, the belief that humans are different to physical phenomena and therefore cannot be explored in the same way, and the understanding of leadership as a interpersonal and relational process (Crotty, 1998; Holladner, 1964; Myers, 2019; Parker, 1984; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Furthermore, due to the nature of the inductive reasoning, which is strongly concerned with the context that surrounds the research problem (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), and it thus allows for a deep understanding of the problem through the data analysis and a subsequent formation of a theory (Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), it has been felt that the inductive approach is the most suitable for this study.

Following this, the qualitative design will be applied to compliment the research paradigm and approach. The data gathered using the qualitative approach will have a form of meanings expressed through words and will require subsequent categorisation during the data analysis process (Denzin, 2018; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Furthermore, the 'how' in the research question suggests that this is an explanatory study, as it seeks explanatory answers (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Finally, the Grounded Theory approach has been identified as the most appropriate for this study. The key strengths lie in its ability to provide theoretical explanation in a wide range of context and its ability to interpret complex phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005). More specifically, as the researcher believes that researchers themselves do have an impact on the data interpretation and the subsequent development of a theory, as well as that people make sense of the world through their interpretation of social interactions (Charmaz, 2017), it has been felt that the constructivist grounded theory approach would the most appropriate for this research study (Charmaz, 2017).

The literature review has revealed several important factors relevant for this study. Namely, that there is a clear trend in the non-profits sector of implementing the remote work in the current practice (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Amar and Ramsay, 2021). However, the challenges that the team leaders face in such work set up call for the need for leaders to re-evaluate standard practices and look beyond the existing structures (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). When looking to the traditional leadership theories, the literature review has demonstrated that, whilst they provide valuable insight into these areas, this guidance is fragmented and diverged and does not offer specifics for the context of the non-profit leaders (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq, and Jamil, 2017). Moreover, whilst leadership has been acknowledged as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984), leadership research continues to focus on how individuals are recognised as leaders by others (van Knippenberg et al., 2005). This study offers an opportunity to shift away from external recognition of leadership (van Knippenberg and Hogg 2005) to examining how leaders are perceived by others, it centres on how leaders themselves construct and make sense of their role.

With the theoretical gaps identified, it has been decided to proceed with the research using the means of semi-structured interviews with non-profit remote team leaders and non-profit remote team members and other key stakeholders. In order to do so, initial interview protocols were designed to help guide the interview process. These protocols remained open and were continuously reworked throughout the process, as the knowledge has been developed through the initial codes and the subsequent emerging themes. The interview process has been supported by regular mem writing and initial codes were regularly assigned after each of the interviews. The interview protocols were designed in a non-prescriptive manner for the researcher to be able to develop these, as the interviews progressed, and new themes emerged. The protocols can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 3.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory research process
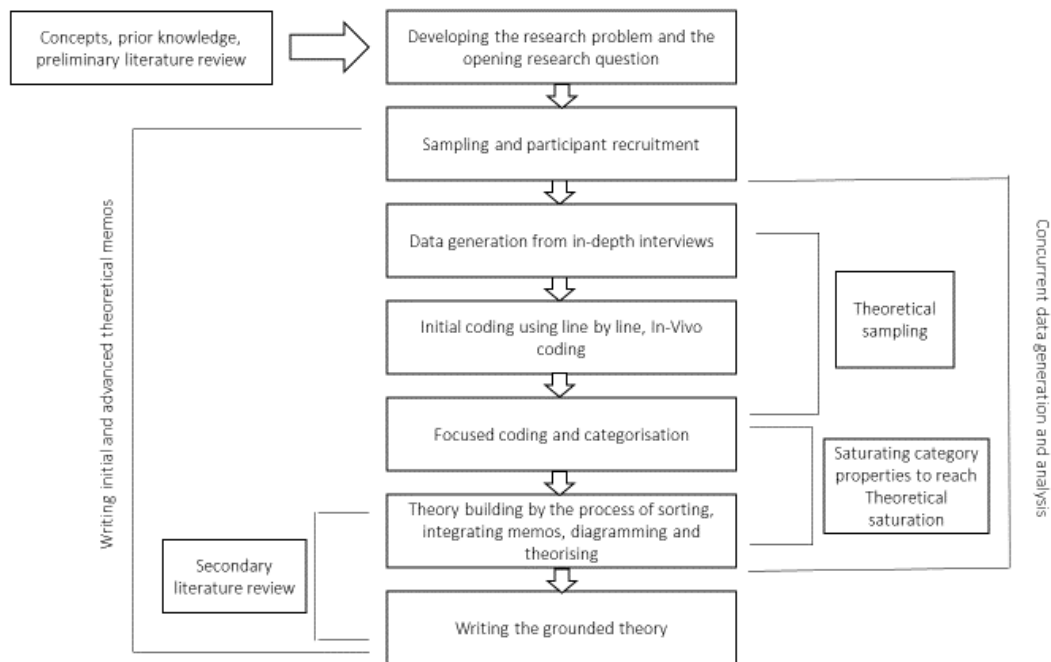
Adapted from Giles, de Lacey and Muir-Cochrane (2016)

3.3.1 Sampling and sample size

The sampling process of this study will be guided by the Grounded Theory. The sampling process using grounded theory, including the constructivist grounded theory, uses the non-probability sampling technique (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Morse (2019) believes that the process starts with convenience sampling, where the first participant, or a group of participants, is chosen based on their accessibility to conduct interviews (Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley, 2020; Morse, 2019). The focus then shifts to purposive sampling, which focuses on selection of participants based on the initial analysis of the available interviews (Charmaz, 2014; Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley, 2020; Morse, 2019). Only then the process moves to theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014; Morse, 2019). Theoretical sampling is put in place when emerging theories can be seen developing through the gathered data (Charmaz, 2014; Morse, 2019). There are key differences between the purposive and theoretical sampling, where the purposive sampling is used to saturate the breath of studied cases and theoretical sampling is applied to further interrogate emerging categories and codes (Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley, 2020).

The shift to theoretical sampling takes place when there is a clear need to focus on the construction of a theory (Charmaz, 2014; Morse, 2019). There is however no clear agreement

on when exactly the move from purpose sampling to theoretical sampling should occur. Broadly, when the researcher is starting to focus on the developing process and patterns within the available data, and when they start to actively pursue key emerging concepts, this is a clear signal that the study is starting to shift from purpose sampling to theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014; Morse, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Service, 2009). This shift also supports the researcher's exercising of the theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2014; Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley, 2020, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The move to theoretical sampling is not and doesn't have to be a discrete stage of the processes, and the sampling methods may intersperse throughout the collated data (Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley, 2020). It is important to note that the shift to theoretical sampling doesn't have to come at the closing stages of the data collection process, the deciding factor should be the need to pursue and further study the emerging key concepts (Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley, 2020). Moreover, another important point to make is the fact that theoretical sampling is applied in order to develop the study conceptually and theoretically, it is not the purpose of theoretical sampling to represent a specific population, or to aim at statistical generalisability of results (Charmaz, 2014).

For all non-probability sampling techniques, there is an ongoing discussion in the literature of determining the sample size (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Mostly the literature suggests that data collection continues until the data saturation is reached (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), where data saturation refers to the point when newly collated data provides little or no new information, or it doesn't contribute to the creation of new themes (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). However, there is also a view that once the data saturation is reached, there is still the need to further explore the studied themes and the findings to ensure these are still valid (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013). Nevertheless, the data saturation point itself doesn't answer the question of how many participants will be needed to answer the research question (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that key themes were observable within 6 - 12 interviews with participants from a homogenous group. Saunders (2019) suggests that between 4 – 12 participants for a homogenous group, i.e., participants form a single organisation or a group, would be sufficient, and between 12 – 30 participants for a heterogeneous group, i.e., participants from multiple organisations and groups, would be sufficient. However, this differs between research strategies, research questions and the complexities of the research itself (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017) make a distinction between code saturation and meaning saturation, where the code saturation is referred to as the researcher has 'heard it all,' but at the point of the

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meaning saturation the researcher has 'understood it all.' They found that 9 interviews of a study of 25 individuals were sufficient to identify 91% of the codes. However, only at a point of 16 – 24 interviews the meaning saturation was achieved, i.e., the researchers felt that understood all the studies codes, themes and their dimensions (Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017). Hagaman and Wuitch (2017) observed that if three repetitions of a certain theme occur, this is sufficient for a confirmation of that theme. They found that they needed 16 interviews to confirm the themes in a homogenous group and between 20 – 40 interviews for a cross-cultural group (Hagaman and Wutich, 2017). To support the above findings, Young and Casey (2018) provide evidence that small sample sizes in qualitative research studies can provide meaningful findings and adequately identified codes and themes in the selected areas of research (Young and Casey, 2018).

This research study focuses on the experiences of non-profit remote leaders, and their teams, from organisations across the UK, this means that this study focuses on a heterogenous group of participants, as they do not come from one institution or one geographical area of the UK, or one type of a charitable institution. It can be therefore assumed that there will be a need to conduct between 12 – 40 interviews in order to identify the key codes, themes, as well as to fully understand those themes and all their dimension (Hagaman and Wutich, 2017; Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). However, these numbers are in no way prescriptive, they key indicator for this study of the sample size will be the identification, through theoretical sampling, of the key codes, themes, and the researcher's full understanding of those and the readiness to develop a substantial theory based on those findings.

3.3.2 Ethics and ethical considerations

In order to ensure that this research is ethical one and that it adheres to the ethical standards of Brunel University London, an ethical research approval was sought and obtained from the Brunel University College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. This research is compliant with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat and the researcher has adhered to the highest level of integrity during the course of this research.

The ethical principles followed include integrity, fairness and open-mindedness of the researcher, researcher's respect for others, avoidance of harm, privacy of those taking part, voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw, informed consent of those taking part, ensuring confidentiality of data and maintaining anonymity of those taking part, responsibility in analysis of data and reporting of findings, compliance in the management of data, as well as ensuring the safety of the researcher (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Prior to the commencement of the study, a risk assessment was completed to ensure all possible hazards are considered and appropriate actions are taken to mitigate those risks. These possible hazards included personal safety when interviews take place face-to-face, risk of distress and anxiety where the interview questions touch upon any issues in the workplace, protecting participants' anonymity, and Covid secure measures. Appropriate actions were taken to mitigate any of the hazards from occurring.

To inform participants about the purpose of the study and the ethical considerations, they were provided with a participant information sheet, which included information on the purpose of this research, the voluntary nature of the research and the ability of participants to withdraw from the study, confidentiality, how the data will be managed and how the results will be used, as well as contacts of the researcher and the appropriate individuals, that can be contacted in case of complaints or the need for further information. The participant information sheet can be found in Appendix B.

As it is important to gain full consent of those participating, the participants were also provided with an interview consent form which they were able to sign, electronically or as a hard copy, prior to the commencement of the interview. The consent form can be found in Appendix B. Those that agreed to take part in the interview had the option to partake either virtually or in-person and, with their consent, the interviews were recorded for the purpose of creating anonymised transcripts for data analysis. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study even after the commencement of the interview and there would be no consequences should they choose to do so.

Moreover, protocols of semi-structure interview questions were created (Appendix A). These protocols were important for maintaining the research transparency, for ensuring that the researcher keeps the aim and objectives of the research at the forefront, and they also supported the deeply reflexive stance required by the constructivists grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2017). The protocols underlined the need to pursue any emerging themes and readdress the questions asked accordingly, to provide further data for analysis of those themes (Charmaz, 2017).

Finally, the methodological self-consciousness, with the researcher scrutinizing their own position, priorities and how these may impact the research process and the relationship with the participants, was applied constantly throughout the duration of the study (Charmaz, 2017). It was critical for the researcher to continue to self-reflect on how their own experiences and background may be impacting the relationship with remote leaders and team members from within the non-profit sector and how their own lived experiences may be impacting their interpretation of the data and the research process as a whole. Such self-reflection contributes

to the reduction of a research bias, and it also supports the validity of the research. Furthermore, in order to reduce bias, a constant comparison of the data was put in place, as well as respondent validation (Charmaz, 2017).

3.4 Data collection process

The preceding sections have established that this research study will be guided by the interpretivist approach, due to the researcher's deep focus on factors related to the context of leaders within the non-profit sector and the remote work set up and the challenges they face, and the belief that humans are different to physical phenomena and therefore cannot be explored in the same way (Crotty, 1998; Myers, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, the use of the Constructivist Grounded Theory for this research has been clearly explained and justified. As the Grounded Theory can interpret complex phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; (Goulding, 2005), it is an appropriate approach to use, to bring understanding of the challenges faced by non-profit team leaders in the remote work set up (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). As, upon reviewing the existing literature, it became apparent that the published literature is somewhat fragmented, and to some extent diverged (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq and Jamil 2017), the pertinence to apply a theory-building methodology, which allows the researcher to explore this particular context from a new angle, has been highlighted.

Moreover, it has been explained that, to proceed with the research, the means of semi-structured interviews, with non-profit remote team leaders and non-profit remote team members, will be used. The interview process will be supported by regular memo-writing and the process of regularly assigning initial codes after each of the interviews. The participant selection will be guided by the theoretical sampling process (Charmaz, 2014; Morse, 2019; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Service, 2009) and the sample size will be governed by reaching the point of theoretical saturation, which includes saturation of codes as well as meaning and therefore a point where all codes, themes and dimensions are understood (Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017).

The following sections offer more clarity on the context of the research, focusing on the situation in the non-profit sector in the UK during the period of time of the research, detailed overview of the participants involved in the study, as well as details on the specific procedures implemented during the data collection stage, and limitations of the use of interviews as a data collection method.

3.4.1 Research participants

This research study focuses on the experiences of non-profit remote leaders from organisations across the UK, this means that the researcher involves a heterogenous group of participants, as they do not come from one institution, come from one geographical area of the UK, or one type of a charitable institution. Prior to the commencement of the study, it was therefore reasonable to assume that there would be a need to conduct between 12 – 40 interviews to identify the themes and to fully understand those themes and their dimensions (Hagaman and Wutich, 2017; Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The research took place over a period of one year between April 2023 – March 2024. A total of 34 participants were interviewed, representing a rich group of participants including team leaders, team members, volunteers, trustees, and an HR professional from various non-profit organisations in the UK (full participant details can be found in Appendix C). Given that the study involves heterogeneous participants from multiple organisations across the UK, the final sample of 34 participants falls well within the recommended range for qualitative research in diverse settings (Saunders, 2019), this contributes to both saturation of key themes and a comprehensive understanding of their dimensions (Saunders, 2019).

The sample covers a range of team focuses and charity classifications. This sample was not predetermined but it was the result of an iterative process of theoretical sampling, which is central to the Constructivist Grounded Theory. Theoretical sampling allows researchers to select participants based on their potential to provide information that can deepen the understanding of emerging themes and categories as the research progresses (Charmaz, 2014). This approach goes beyond purposive sampling, which focuses on maximisation of diversity, theoretical sampling instead focuses on refining categories and theoretical constructs as they develop (Charmaz, 2014). The inclusion of these 34 specific participants reflects the point at which key themes were not only identified but also fully understood, which lead to reaching what Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi (2017) describe as "meaning saturation," rather than just "code saturation."

For hybrid arrangements, participants include team leaders, team members and volunteers focused on support and programme delivery, stakeholder engagement, marketing and communications, volunteer engagement, project management, HR, and income generation and fundraising. These participants come from charities classified under Accommodation and housing; Arts, culture, heritage, and science; Economic, community, and social development; Education and training; Health and social care, and Human rights, conflict resolution, and promotion of peace.

In virtual arrangements, participants include team leaders, team members, and trustees and board members engaged in support and programme delivery, income generation and fundraising, marketing and communications, and stakeholder engagement from charities involved in Amateur sport; Arts, culture, heritage, and science; Economic, community, and social development; Education and training; Health and social care, and Human rights, conflict resolution, and promotion of peace.

The diversity of participants, covering multiple functional areas, as well as different charity classifications and sizes, provides a strong basis for theoretical generalizability within the non-profit sector. While the study does not seek statistical generalisation, the richness of perspectives strengthens the applicability of the theoretical framework across a broad spectrum of remote non-profit leadership contexts.

Participants were spread across major regions in the UK, including London, Southeast of England, Southwest of England, Midlands, Northeast and Northwest of England, Wales, and Scotland.

Figure 3.2 Research participants – geographical locations (no. of participants per location)

The years of experience among the interviewees have ranged from newly appointed staff with less than a year of experience to highly experienced leaders with over 20 years of experience within the sector.

Figure 3.3 Research participants – experience (years)
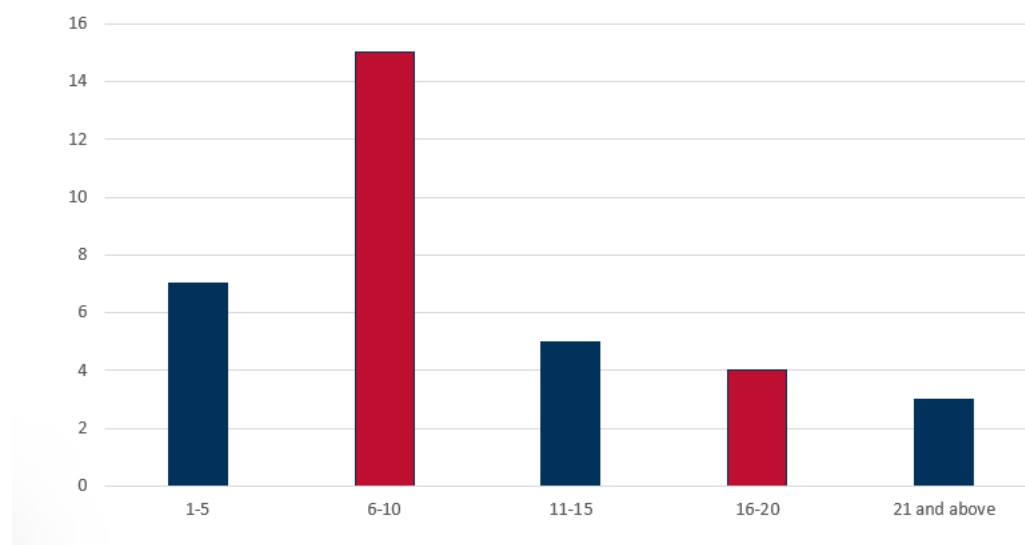
Team sizes also varied from small teams of 5-10 members to large teams exceeding 50 members, reflecting the diverse set up, organisational structures and scales of operation of UK non-profit organisations.

Figure 3.4 Research participants – team size (no. of team members)
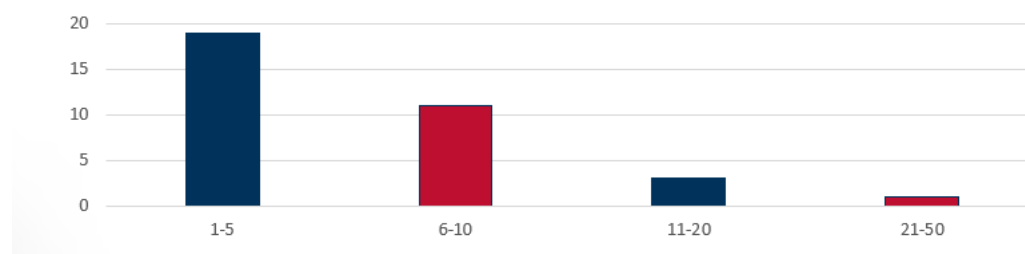
The research participants were selected using theoretical sampling, in accordance with the principles of the Constructivist Grounded Theory. The aim of the theoretical sampling process was identifying individuals who could deepen the understanding of the emerging themes. This approach ensured that the emerging themes were explored comprehensively and reflecting the spectrum of experience and perspectives within the non-profit sector. Following the theoretical sampling process, the study captured a diverse group of participants, which further enriched the insights and robustness of the theoretical framework developed as a result of this study. The sample size is supported by previous research on qualitative sufficiency. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that key themes become observable within 6–12 interviews for homogeneous groups, while heterogeneous studies require a larger sample. Studies have

demonstrated that 16–24 interviews may be required for a full understanding of themes (Hennink, Kaiser & Marconi, 2017), and 20–40 interviews for cross-organisational groups (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). The 34 participants in this study align well within these ranges, reinforcing the study's methodological rigor. For a full overview of participant demographics and roles, see Appendix C: Full participant details.

3.4.2 Collecting data

Prior to the commencement of data collection, potential participants were reached in two ways. Firstly, using the researcher's own network of professional contacts within the UK non-profit sector, the researcher had posted via LinkedIn to their professional network (over 250 professional connections), inviting the interested individuals to reach out to the researcher, as well as to share the message with the relevant contacts in their respective networks. Secondly, the researcher had also posted in relevant professional LinkedIn groups, inviting the interested individuals to reach out to the researcher. The professional groups included 'Charity UK', a networking group for those involved with the charity sector in the UK, 'Chartered Institute of Fundraising', a group for practicing fundraisers in the UK non-profit organisations to network, share fundraising expertise and discuss not-for-profit news, and 'Third Sector', a group designed to give not-profit sector professionals platform to discuss trends across the sector.

The initial interviewees were selected from the pool of interested individuals through purposive sampling. The selected individuals, in line with ethical considerations, received the participant information sheet, to familiarise themselves with the interview process, to understand that they would be part of a research study, to be made aware that participation if voluntary, and to learn about steps taken to protect their anonymity. If, after familiarising themselves with the documents, they agreed to take part, a date for a meeting, during which the interview would be conducted, was set and the participants were sent an interview consent form which they could sign virtually, there was also an option given to provide consent via a hard copy, or to provide a verbal consent at the start of the interview, which would be recorded in the interview transcript. The researcher made themselves available to the participants for any possible questions, or requests and the communication took place predominantly via email.

Following the initial selection of participants, or primary contacts, via the researcher's purposive sampling, referral sampling was employed to identify further potential participants (Charmaz, 2006). Referral sampling refers to the identification of further potential participants through recommendations from the primary contacts, or key informants, who are already part of the study and who possess knowledge of the topic (Charmaz, 2006). It is important to note that the referral sampling was not used as a stand-alone technique, rather it was used by the researcher as a part of the theoretical sampling process and it has enabled the researcher to make a conscious decision about what data to collect in the next steps and where such data

can be found (Charmaz, 2006). Referral sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, is in line with the principles of qualitative research more broadly, and the constructivists grounded theory more specifically (Charmaz, 2006).

In the early stages of research, initial research protocols were designed to help guide the interview process. These protocols remained open and flexible and were continuously reworked throughout the process, as the knowledge had been developed through the initial codes and the subsequent emerging themes. The protocols were designed in a non-prescriptive manner for the researcher to be able to develop these, as the interviews progressed, and new themes emerged. The ability to work with the interview protocols, and make changes throughout the research process, is in line with the semi-structured interviewing approach as it allows for in-dept investigation, as well as an information and conversation flow (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This in turn enables the themes and ideas to emerge from the process and it informs the theoretical framework formation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

As explained in previous chapters, constructivist grounded theory, approach used for this research, recognises the position of the researcher, as well as of the participants, in developing a new theory (Charmaz, 2017). Throughout the process of data collection, the methodological self-consciousness, with the researcher scrutinizing their own position, priorities and how these may impact the research process and the relationship with the participants, was applied constantly (Charmaz, 2017). The researcher self-reflected on their own experiences and background, and how these may be impacting the relationship with remote leaders and team members from within the non-profit sector and how their own lived experiences may be impacting their interpretation of the data and the research process as a whole. However, it is important to note that, in line with the constructivist grounded theory principles, the position of the research within the research is recognised and the data collected reflect the context in which they have been gathered (Charmaz, 2017).

The interviews took place online, using the Zoom or Teams platforms. The participants were given the option to take part in an in-person interview, but all have chosen the online format. The meetings had a form of one-to-one interviews, with the interviewees making the decision on the location (online or in-person). When the interviews took place online, the interviewees were predominantly attending from home, or from a quiet location (such as a meeting room) in their place of work. The times of the interviews were agreed with the participant in advance, to help minimise any disruptions, and to take place at a time and location that is convenient to the participant. The interviewees were made aware that should the interview be interrupted by another person entering the dedicated space, an immediate break can be taken, and the

interview can be postponed or cancelled. If the interviewee felt that their contribution was impacted too severely by such event, their contribution would be deleted, removed from the research, and the interview would be cancelled. However, such situation had not occurred during the process.

The interviews lasted between 45 – 60 minutes and were recorded, either using the Teams or Zoom platform (when online), or using the MS Word audio to text recording function, when taking place in person. Alongside the recording, the researcher also took their own notes to support the information gathered from the interview and the subsequent recording. All interviewees agreed to have their interviews recorded. The recordings were subsequently used to produce interview transcripts. Transcripts play a crucial role in a grounded theory research, as they provide access to the original source data, even if the initial protocols change and new themes emerge, or the focus of the themes shifts (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The step of producing a transcription took place as soon as possible after each interview, to enable the researcher to proceed with the initial coding stage, to review the interview protocol and make any changes if deemed necessary, and to allow for the identification of further research participants.

3.4.3 Interview as a data collection method and its limitations

In constructivist grounded theory research, by utilising the interviewees' own experiences and perspectives, the process of interviewing is seen as emergent interactions (Charmaz, 2014). Interviewers' own approach to asking questions, their listening, as well as their following up on what the interviewees are sharing, is critical for the co-construction and for the quality of data (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021). However, when using interviews as a data collection method, several weaknesses have been identified (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Firstly, as interviews rely on human interaction, they can be prone to subjectivity and bias, where, on one side, the interviewer's understanding of participants' responses may influence the data collated. At the same time, participants may provide responses influenced by the interviewer's bias (Charmaz, 2014), or responses that can be deemed socially desirable, i.e., responses the participants believe are generally acceptable, rather than those expressing their real experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). Moreover, interviews may provide a limited scope and depth of information, where the interviewer may not capture the full scope of the participant's experience, or the participant may provide limited or incomplete responses (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Finally, meaning or nuances may be not truly reflected, due to researcher's interference or participant's limited articulation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Several steps have been taken to mitigate the weaknesses of interviews as described above. Firstly, deep reflexivity has been applied (Charmaz, 2017). As previously alluded to, the constructivist grounded theory recognises the position of the researcher, as well as of the participants, in developing a new theory (Charmaz, 2017). Therefore, in line with the constructivist grounded theory, the researcher has applied deeply reflexive stance and a methodological self-consciousness, with the researcher scrutinizing their own position, priorities and how these may impact the research process and the relationship with the participants (Charmaz, 2017). As the researcher themselves come from a background of a non-profit leadership, it was critical that the researcher continued to self-reflect throughout the duration of the research on how their own experiences and background may be impacting the relationship with remote leaders from within the sector, and how their own lived experiences may be impacting their interpretation of the data and the research process as a whole (Charmaz, 2017).

Moreover, to encourage participants to provide more detailed and focused responses, probing and follow up questions were used during the interviews to help address concerns on limited scope and depth of responses (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Further to this, member checking was applied, where on several occasions the interview transcripts had been shared with the participant to seek their feedback and to confirm the accuracy of their responses and the completeness of information that they had provided (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). During the interviewing process, the researcher moved back and forth between gathering data from interviews and analysing these. This process prevented gathering of superficial data in a random way, it prevented the researcher from being overwhelmed by the large amount of unanalysed data, it allowed the researcher to remain focused for long periods of time, and it also prevented the researcher from uncritical adoption of the participants' own views (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021). Finally, the researcher applied triangulation to increase the credibility of the data and the findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2017)

3.4.4 Process of triangulation

When referring to the process or triangulation, it points to the use of different sources, perspectives and methods to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Triangulation is key in ensuring that potential biases of the researcher are addressed and overcome, and it helps to ensure that the research outcomes are trustworthy and robust (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Triangulation types can be categorised as methodological triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and finally time triangulation (Denzin, 2012). Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple research methods, data triangulation involves the use of different types and sources of data, investigator triangulation refers to

multiple researchers or investigators being involved in the study, theory triangulation involves the use of multiple theoretical lenses, and finally time triangulation involves the study of the same phenomena at different points in time (Denzin, 2012).

In the context of this study, the research works heavily with the data triangulation (Denzin, 2012), as the data encompasses variety of views on the topic of remote team leadership in the UK charity sector. To achieve this, views were sought from team leaders from UK charities of different sizes, different geographical locations, as well as of different charitable purposes. Moreover, interviews were also conducted with HR professionals, as well as with charity team members, to confirm, as well as challenge, the gathered data. Focusing on the question of time triangulation (Denzin, 2012), the study took place over a period of one year, between April 2023 – March 2024, which allowed for views to be sought over a longer period of time and therefore capture the evolving nature of the UK charity sector, as well as the evolving attitudes of the workforce to the remote workplace. Moreover, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, during 2020-2021, organisations across the UK, and across the world, faced forced move to remote work. By allowing a period of time to pass between the enforced home-working, and the new practices in the workplaces, the study allows for a balanced view on the remote team leadership practice in the charity sector, including an opportunity for the participants to reflect on the period of lock-down work, as well as a reflection of their current practices in the evolved workplaces.

Moreover, although this research study applies a mono-method approach, this is not understood as a barrier to the achievement of complex results relying on rich data (Charmaz, 2014). By applying the constructivist grounded theory approach, its comprehensive framework attending to these aspects of qualitative research can be utilised (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). Applying the process of constant comparison of data, with comparing concepts, categories, and perceptions, to ensure that these accurately represent the participants' views and experiences, the study promotes credibility, as it ensures that the findings are grounded in data (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). With the use of constant comparison, as well as the use of theoretical sampling, the study also strives to accurately represent and reflect the participants' voice and lived experiences, in order to resonate with their realities, with which it aims to achieve resonance (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). Moreover, with the researcher approaching the data with an open mind, not relying on, or replicating, predetermined theoretical frameworks, the researcher can discover context-specific concepts, patterns, and relationships (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). This process supports originality in the development of a theory (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). Finally, this study aims to generate a theory that is applicable in practice and open to future academic discussion (Charmaz, 2014, 2017). By maintaining a close connection between the development of the theory and the context of the real-world of the UK charity

sector, this study is grounded in data, but also rooted in practical implications and it has relevance for the practices of the UK charity sector, which now actively utilises the remote work set up.

Finally, remote work is becoming a largely accepted practice across industries, and particularly in the charity sector. As a result, an increasing number of organisations is likely to be addressing the issues arising from remote work and remote team leadership. Therefore, whilst the issue of generalisability is not necessarily aimed for in this type of study, as it would be in other types of research studies, it is possible to argue that the theory generated by this research may be applicable to contexts of charitable remote team leadership in other geographies and contexts (Charmaz, 2014). This notion of transferability is supported by rigorous testing of the emerging theoretical context (Charmaz, 2014). By applying theoretical sampling and using constant comparison and analysis, the study captures the complexity of the phenomena of charitable remote team leadership (Charmaz, 2014).

3.5 Data analysis process

As explored in detail, this study aims to analyse a specific problem, namely that of the challenges to team leadership of non-profit remote leaders, through the research question of 'how does remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership'?

The 'how' in the research question suggests that this is an explanatory study, as it seeks explanatory answers (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), consequently the grounded theory approach has been identified as the most appropriate for this explanatory study, as its key strengths lie in the ability to provide theoretical explanation in a wide range of context and its ability to interpret complex phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005). Moreover, as upon reviewing the existing literature, it was shown that the published literature is fragmented and to some extent diverged (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Cortellazzo, Bruni and Zampieri, 2019; Farmer, 2005; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Gross, 2018; Mehtab, ur Rehman, Ishfaq and Jamil, 2017), it was therefore pertinent that a theory-building methodology was applied, grounded theory in this case, which allowed for the exploration of this particular context.

With the steps taken to design this research explained in the previous sections, the following section will explore in detail the process of data analysis, which was undertaken with the use of constructivist grounded theory methods.

3.5.1 Process of theoretical sampling

As previously explored, using the constructivist grounded theory approach, this study will be applying theoretical sampling, where theoretical sampling is implemented to further interrogate

emerging categories and codes (Conlon, Timonen, Elliott-O'Dare, O'Keeffe and Foley 2020). Theoretical sampling is used in order to develop the study conceptually and theoretically, it is not the purpose of theoretical sampling to represent a specific population, or to aim at statistical generalisability of results (Charmaz, 2014). Typically, sampling is associated with research design. However, in constructivist grounded theory research, sampling plays an important role in the data analysis process, as well as in the research design stages of the research (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

The key reasons why theoretical sampling is an integral part of the data analysis process in constructivist grounded theory research include the emergent nature of the theory (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz, 2006). By applying the theoretical sampling, the researcher is enabled to collect data iteratively, focusing on the emerging concepts. This enables the researcher to refine and validate these concepts throughout an ongoing analysis (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Theoretical sampling also contributes to the researcher's theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). This is achieved by selecting participants purposefully and with the emerging concepts in mind, and therefore exploring, challenging and refining the theoretical framework in a focused and systematic manner (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Theoretical sampling is also key in reaching the theoretical saturation, or theoretical completeness, as it contributes to the creation of a comprehensive theory and the inclusion of wide-ranging perspectives within the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Glaser, 1999). Furthermore, by applying theoretical sampling, the researcher can collect data that contribute to the creation of theoretical codes and categories and data that further expand these categories and provide deeper understanding, which leads to the development of theoretical constructs that are robust in nature (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Finally, theoretical sampling plays a crucial role in the researcher's contextual understanding, as it enables the research to include and explore various diverse perspectives on the studied phenomena, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

As previously alluded to, the data collation continues until the data saturation is reached (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). Most commonly, data saturation refers to the point when newly collated data provide little or no new information, or it doesn't contribute to the creation of new themes (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). However, it is also important to note that once the data saturation is reached, there is still the need to further explore the studied themes and the findings (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013). According to Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017) there is a distinction between code saturation and meaning saturation, where the code saturation is referred to as the researcher has 'heard it all,' but at the point of the meaning saturation the researcher has 'understood it

all.' The point of theoretical saturation for this research was therefore governed by saturation of codes as well as saturation of meaning (Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017).

3.5.2 Process of coding

As previously alluded to, the coding process in the grounded theory is its key component (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Alongside the coding itself, constant comparison must be also implemented, to ensure that there is a consistency in the coding and analysis procedures (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Through the process of coding, the data is being sorted in categories, and relationship may start to appear between certain codes. Any such findings must be tested by collecting more data, and evaluating codes emerging from the new data, and deciding whether these also fall into the emerging relationships (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Should the relationships continue to emerge, these would then be sorted into newly created higher-level codes using deductive thinking (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Alongside coding, it is also instrumental that the researcher uses memos. Memos can capture the used codes, the changes to the assigned codes, the relationships between codes and the emerging higher-level codes, as well as other ideas that the researcher decides to capture, to help in the process of analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

It has been previously shown that there has been an academic debate concerning the process of coding in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Service, 2009; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Initially, Strauss and Corbin (1998) worked with three stages of coding, namely open, axial, and selective coding stages. The open coding refers to the initial allocation of data into categories, axial coding refers to the recognition of the specific relationships between those categories, and selective coding refers to the integration of those categories to produce a theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Corbin later revised this coding process, with axial coding being undertaken within, and combined with, the open coding, and with the selective coding being revisited as a process of integration (Service, 2009). One of the criticisms of the coding structure, as introduced by Strauss and Corbin, concerns the predefined categories and the process of axial coding, or hierarchical coding scheme. This is believed to be limiting the emergence of new and unexpected concepts. This process may therefore negatively impact the results by imposing a structure and theoretical assumptions on the data prematurely (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

This study uses the constructivist grounded theory approach, and it does so also in relation to the coding process. Charmaz (2014), using the constructivist grounded theory approach, suggests the use of two stages of coding, the initial coding stage and a focused coding stage (Charmaz, 2014), which have been adopted by this study.

3.5.2.1 Charmaz's initial and focused coding

Charmaz's approach to coding is critical for this study. Charmaz focuses on the iterative and reflexive nature of coding, which allows for the development of rich theories that are contextually sensitive (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The first level of coding within the constructivist grounded theory is the initial coding (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Initial coding's focus is to identify and code, or label, meaningful emerging concepts from within the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). These concepts should be capturing key ideas, events, actions, interactions etc. and should exercise sensitivity to variations, similarities and differences within the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The goal of this stage is to create a wide-ranging spectrum of codes which, within themselves, reflect the complex nature of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The created codes are typically more descriptive as they represent the raw data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Charmaz (2021) advocates for line-by-line coding as the first step, as this process forces the researcher to look at the data with a fresh outlook, to compare individual aspects of the data, and to ask analytic questions (Charmaz, 2021). Charmaz (2021) believes that line-by-line, word-by-word, or incident-by-incident coding helps the researcher to understand the participants' experiences and perspectives, which can lead the researcher to rethink existing disciplinary concepts, they might have believed would fit the data under investigation (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021). Line-by-line coding refers to attributing each line of the data a code, word-by-word coding focuses on specific images and meanings, and incident-by-incident coding allows for coding at the level of individual incidents or segments of data, enabling the researcher to identify wide range of concepts and ideas (Charmaz, 2006).

This study uses the incident-by-incident approach to coding, to capture the diversity and richness of the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). This approach to coding has helped the research to maintain a close connection to the data, and it helped to ensure that the analysis remains grounded in the data, by thoroughly examining the individual incidents (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). It also assisted the researcher in their application of inductive reasoning and eliminated the use of preconceived notions or theoretical frameworks (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The process of incident-by-incident coding enabled the researcher to identify patterns and relationships from across different incidents, which was critical in identifying themes and categories from within the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

The researcher utilised the NVivo12 software to aid in the process of coding, to store relevant data, and to document the coding process at its different stages. NVivo was selected as an appropriate software to aid in this research, as it provides a platform to organise and store data in a centralised manner, including different types of data such as interview transcripts, memos, or other documents. The software also enables the application of codes to different

segments of data, groping codes into categories and organisation of the coded segments of data. The software also offers the option to flexibly modify and reorganise existing codes, by which it supports the ability of the research to capture new emerging patterns in the data. Data within NVivo can also be visualised, which is a helpful tool in the process of identification of emerging themes.

Using the software, initial themes were identified in the interview transcripts and organised into five categories and the associated subheadings. These included themes around the areas of team collaboration, wellbeing, remote work, non-profit characteristics, organisational culture, and leadership and management. Following the process of analysis in the constructivist grounded theory, which is interactive in its nature, the initial categories were subsequently synthetised and the emergent core concepts refined. As the themes repeatedly emerged over time, this has led to a theoretical cohesion, and the researcher was able to define relevant codes and attach meaning to them, as suggested by Charmaz (2014).

The subsequent stage of the coding process is the focused coding (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). This process is more selective, and it aims to identify core categories, which will lead to the development of a theory or a theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The key component of focused coding is a constant comparison, where the researcher compares the existing codes and from this comparison seeks emerging patters, relationships and connections (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The researcher aims at the identification of the central categories, which are providing an explanation of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The codes, produced through focused coding, are more abstract, as they represent the higher-level concepts that represents the connections, relationships and processes from within the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

At a subsequent point following the focused coding, it is possible to apply theoretical coding to guide the process (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1992). Using theoretical coding, the researcher considers existing theories and frameworks that might provide further insights into the emerging data. Using the theoretical coding, the researcher can purposefully identify and select data that can provide deeper insights into the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1992). Charmaz (2014) suggests that, whilst this process may be helpful to apply, it may also hinder the process by imposing an existing framework on the data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) also believes that it can create tension between the notions of emergence and applicability. For the purpose of this research, and with the use of constructivist grounded theory approach, the use of theoretical coding was not deemed necessary and robust results were achieved using initial and focused coding, supported using memoing (Charmaz, 2014).

When applying the focused coding, which has allowed the researcher to further develop and analyse the themes emerging from the data (Charmaz, 2014), where theoretical sampling allowed for additional data to be collated to support or challenge these emerging themes, the following central categories emerged Connecting staff, culture, and mission, Personalising leadership approach, Advocating for career and professional development, Maintaining visibility, Showcasing the value of work.

To achieve the stage of the research of building a theory or a theoretical framework from the data, it was important to ensure that the saturation of codes and meaning was reached (Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017).

3.5.3 Reaching the point of theoretical saturation

As previously highlighted, the emerging themes guide the process of theoretical sampling towards new cases to collect, to provide deeper understanding of the themes and relationships, and this process ultimately continues until theoretical saturation, also referred to as conceptual density (Glaser, 1992) is achieved (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The key point of saturation is the data no longer providing new information to enrich the existing categories and not leading to creation of new themes (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This is different to other qualitative techniques, where the point of saturation refers to the simple reoccurrence of a pattern or information (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Expanding on that, Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017) believe that the point of saturation is guided by code and meaning saturation, which together lead to a full understanding of the studied codes, themes, and dimensions (Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) as well as Charmaz (2006, 2014) highlight the importance of the researcher's ongoing data collection, analysis, constant comparison, as well as the researcher's subjective judgment, to determine theoretical saturation, with the point of saturation being described as a stage where the analysis feels comprehensive, and there are no new significant insights emerging from the data (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Charmaz (2006, 2014) recognises that theoretical saturation may occur at different points of the process and suggests that iterative cycles of data collection and analysis are undertaken, to help constantly refine the researcher's understanding of the emerging theory. This process also leads to sampling adequacy (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Charmaz (2006) also believes that researchers should fully engage in sorting, diagramming, and memo-writing processes. These processes lead to the identification of conceptual relationships and generation of theoretical insights (Charmaz, 2006).

The process of sorting allows the researcher to visually identify emerging patterns, and similarities and differences in the data. Sorting involves organising and categorising the data, through physical or digital manipulation of meaningful segments, to facilitate the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Diagramming allows the researcher to see the big picture, to identify gaps in the analysis, and to refine the understanding of the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006). Diagramming refers to the creation of a visual representation of the categories, concepts, and relationships between them (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, memo-writing helps the researcher maintain their reflexivity (Charmaz, 2006). Memos capture initial impressions, but also emerging theories, connections, and potential interpretations. Memos can serve as a tool to provide deeper engagement with the collated materials and document the researcher's thinking as well as their analytical decisions (Charmaz, 2006).

These processes enable the researcher to construct rich and nuanced understanding of the studied topic and develop a theory that captures the complex and diverse perspectives collated during the research process (Charmaz, 2006).

3.6 Limitations and criticisms of a grounded theory approach

This chapter has explained in detail why constructivist grounded theory has been selected as a methodological approach to this study and why it is believed to be the most appropriate one. It is, however, important to also acknowledge some of the limitations and criticisms of this approach cited in literature.

The role of researcher's subjectivity is cited as one the criticisms of grounded theory research, where it is believed that the researcher's subjectivity may introduce bias in the data analysis and therefore limit the objectivity of the results (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). As previously addressed, the constructivist grounded theory recognises the position of the researcher, as well as of the participants, in developing a new theory (Charmaz, 2017). Therefore, in line with the constructivist grounded theory, the researcher must apply deeply reflexive stance and a methodological self-consciousness, with the researcher scrutinizing their own position, priorities and how these may impact the research process, relationship with the participants, and the data analysis (Charmaz, 2017).

There is also an existing concern of forcing a theory, which refers to the researcher prematurely forcing or imposing a preconceived theory on the analysis, rather than allowing for the concepts and relevant categories to emerge from the data (Thomas and James, 2006). Glaser (1992) cautions against early closure or imposing preconceived ideas on the data and highlights the importance of the researcher's openness. To address this, Charmaz (2006) promotes the use of reflexivity, sensitivity to emergent concepts, collaborative engagement, and methodological transparency. These processes ensure that the researcher remains open

to the data guiding the development of a theory, and through the collaborative and transparent approach, the researcher enables others to evaluate the credibility of findings, by providing a form of an audit trail, that can be used to trace the developing concepts from the data (Charmaz, 2006).

There is also a discussion surrounding the implementation of a grounded theory (Bryman, 2007; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Suddaby, 2006), with the criticism including a lack of clear guidelines for its implementation, the possible ambiguity of the analysis, leading to questions of completeness of the theory, as well as the potential research bias (Bryman, 2007; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Suddaby, 2006). To address the potential bias, as previously mentioned, Charmaz (2006) promotes the application of reflexivity, sensitivity to emergent concepts, collaborative engagement, and methodological transparency (Charmaz, 2006). Another step, suggested by Charmaz (2006), is the implementation of detailed coding procedures, where the key emphasis is on a systemic and inductive coding to identify relevant concepts. This addresses the issues of ambiguity in data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, by offering detailed explanation of the process of a grounded theory researcher, including instructions and examples, there should be a strong foundation for researchers to be able to implement grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Despite the possible challenges, using grounded theory approach offers several valuable contributions. Firstly, it provides a rigorous approach to theory development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), it provides a holistic understanding of the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2014), it allows new insights and theories to emerge from data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), and finally it results in theories that are applicable and relevant in the real-world context (Charmaz, 2014).

3.7 Full process of investigation

The following section will focus on exploration of the full process of this investigation, starting with the inception and concluding with the theoretical saturation. Therefore, to methodically outline the process and the development, the core categories and the assumptions stemming from the analysis will be explored.

3.7.1 Initial categories and analytical assumptions

In the initial coding phase, each interview transcript was examined case by case to identify significant phrases and concepts. These codes were recorded using NVivo12 and initially sorted into six broader categories, including themes such as team collaboration, wellbeing, remote work, non-profit characteristics, organisational culture, and leadership and management. With each of the tentative broad categories, relevant subheadings were formed and attributed to the relevant tentative codes. This was an ongoing process, and the initial

broad categories and subheadings were formed as data were emerging. As an example, within the broader category of wellbeing, subheadings such as isolation, mental health, or work-life balance were formed.

To navigate the extensive number of references linked to the broader categories and subheadings, the NVivo software was utilised. To identify all instances of specific phrases, text search query was used. To start the exploration of how different codes intersect, coding queries were utilised. Further to that, matrix coding queries were used, to examine the relationships between different codes, also referred to as nodes in NVivo. During this process, the researcher attached memos to nodes and references, to document their analytical decisions and to record the reasoning process.

For illustration, using again the broad category of wellbeing, the initial codes included: "Increased pressure on staff due to multiple levels of accountability," "Difficulty in setting boundaries," as well as "Increased vulnerability due to a strong sense of philanthropy."

The following quotes illustrate these initial codes:

- "*I think there was a lack of understanding of the emotional impact"* (Team leader 14).
- "*Your work becomes part of your home life*" (Team leader 12).
- "*I've always been a very philanthropic person. Sometimes it can affect your ability to set boundaries, or you want to go beyond what is recommended. And sometimes that can make you vulnerable to risks*" (Volunteer 3).

As a result of this process, relationships between constructs, which emerged as significant themes, were further explored with interview participants, sourced through theoretical sampling, as the interview protocol has developed, in close relation with the observed codes and themes. As a result, concrete notions, identified as significant and interrelated have formed the basis of further investigation. An example of this can be the notions of trust, rapport and collaboration, which led to the investigation of the role of a leader in providing the connection of staff, culture and the organisation mission.

This process also contributed to the important aspect of challenging the researcher's pre-existing assumptions formed through a priori knowledge of the researched topic. An example of the importance of visibility can be used to demonstrate this. The node focused on the importance of visibility in remote leadership initially included themes such as check-ins, constant availability and the need for a direct oversight. Whilst visibility is shown to play a critical role in the remote team leadership dynamics, this construct has evolved significantly during the process of the investigation.

At the initial stages, the captured codes suggested that frequent interactions would be paramount in the remote setting to ensure team's engagement and their accountability. However, through the process of continuous evaluation of the participant interview data, it had become evident that there was a need to revisit these initial assumptions. Although the importance of visibility has been discussed, the expectation that it would be a dominant force within the area of successful remote leadership was not fully met. Instead, the question of visibility was more closely connected to the themes of trust and team empowerment. The ongoing analysis has shown that successful remote non-profit team leaders should be less focused on constant oversight of their staff and more focused on fostering trust and providing autonomy to their team.

Using a specific example, one interviewee suggested, "*I outlined for them exactly what my expectations are*" (Team leader 6), which initially led to the notion of highlighting the importance of close oversight. However, through the process of further analysis it became apparent that the clarity mentioned by the interviewee was more closely linked to the notions of setting boundaries, trusting the team and providing the team with more independence in completing their tasks, rather than being linked to constant supervision. This development in understanding eventually led to the development of a core category of 'Maintaining visibility' which puts emphasis on the leader's strategic presence without any form of micromanagement.

Moreover, the construct of visibility was also reframed within the context of building trust and promoting empowerment among team members. As noted in an interview, "*They trust you enough to do your own job*" (Team member 8), which highlights the trust in team members and their capabilities and the crucial role this has for effective leadership in remote setting. This specific finding has aligned with the core category of 'Personalising leadership approach', which emphasises the need for the team leaders to support and trust their teams and empower them to become more autonomous in completing the given tasks.

The selection of quotes below illustrates the refined understanding of visibility and trust, as described above.

1. This quote initially suggested the need for the leader to be constantly present. However, through further analysis, it has underlined the importance of proactive support and trust:

   > "*You have to reach out to people much more. You can't just rely on the fact that you'll look up and realize that one staff member might be stuck with something. You have to reach out to people the whole time*" (Team leader 5).

2. This quote is pointing to the need for the leader to adopt personalised leadership strategies that balance the question of visibility and trust:

   "Managing a virtual team is very different than seeing people every day and working together with them" (Team leader 10).

3. This quote highlights the shift from a rigid oversight by the team leader to more personalised and trust-based interactions:

   "It's about trying to eliminate the script...turn it a bit more person-centred" (Team leader 8).

Through challenging these pre-existing assumptions, and by exploring the close and nuanced relationships between the themes of visibility, trust and empowerment, the researcher has developed a deeper understanding of this area, which has contributed to the development of a more robust theoretical framework within the area of non-profit remote team leadership. This process aligns with the ethos of the constructivist grounded theory, which aims to refine theoretical constructs, leading to a deep understanding of the studied phenomena.

This example of the analytical examination clearly demonstrates the process of development of the key categories. This iterative procedure was applied to all initial data categories, and it has culminated in the formation of the core categories and the theoretical framework. The framework focuses on the deep interrelations and the constructs that have emerged from the continuous process of evaluating of the participants' insights. The following section will focus on the specifics of these core categories and their interrelations explaining the rational for their formation.

3.7.2 Core categories' development

As outlined in the previous section, the identified codes and classifications had been continuously analysed compared and reworked, until the core categories have been formed. To verify the importance of the identified categories and the emerging constructs, data was moved from the NVivo software to Excel. The move to Excel allowed the researcher to better visualise the data and to facilitate further exploration of the themes and the existing relationship identified between the individual constructs. NVivo however remained an important reference tool through the process of data analysis, it was one of the key features in ensuring that the reflective and iterative nature of the research process is maintained.

The data analysis process involved explanation of patterns and uncovering details, subtle inferences and meanings, that were not immediately apparent. As previously mentioned, an example of this can be the reworking of the assumption that visibility required constant oversight to show the more important emphasis on strategic presence and trust.

Initially, the research focused on understanding of transitional challenges faced by non-profit teams as they moved from traditional, physically co-located teams to, at least some extent, digitally dispersed ones. This understanding then led to inform the stages of the team's digital disembodiment, which consequently illustrated the changing roles and responsibilities of the team members and team leaders. This process has ultimately led to the identification of five core categories: Connecting staff, culture, and mission; Personalising leadership approach; Advocating for career and professional development; Maintaining visibility; and Showcasing the value of work.

The research initially uncovered the transitional challenges of non-profit teams in the remote setting. These challenges included maintaining team cohesion, ensuring effective communication, and adapting leadership styles to a remote environment. Central themes such as the emotional impact of remote work and the need for proactive communication were outstanding from the data. For illustration, one interviewee noted, "*I think there was a lack of understanding of the emotional impact*" (Team leader 14), highlighting the initial shock and adaptation required.

Understanding the transitional challenges led to the understanding of the individual stages of the non-profit team's digital 'disembodiment', in other words the transition from physically co-located teams into digitally dispersed ones. This phase of analysis involved a deep examination of the process of transition, and it has highlighted the sense of displacement and the perceived loss of spontaneous interactions. One of the interviewees stated: "*They found this transition quite difficult to sort of connect in the same way especially because with how the project operated*" (Team leader 6), which demonstrates the need for team leaders to maintain connections with the individual staff members and to adapt their communication and outreach. The identified stages of the team's 'digital disembodiment' included initial displacement and disconnection, adjustment and adaptation, building digital trust and community, and reinforcing organisational culture.

The research then analysed the transitional challenges deeper and this has uncovered the changing nature of the roles and responsibilities of the team members and team leaders in the non-profit remote teams. For illustration, a quote from an interviewee "*There's that trusting, trusting us to do our jobs*" (Team member 8), alludes to the importance of trust in remote setting. While investigating the changing roles, the themes of the need for flexibility and adaptability in leadership, as well as the importance of maintaining personal connections despite physical distance became dominant in the analysis.

Through the continuous analysis and reworking of the codes, the following core categories have been identified:

- Connecting staff, culture, and mission
- Personalising leadership approach
- Advocating for career and professional development
- Maintaining visibility
- Showcasing the value of work

The category of 'Connecting staff, culture, and mission' shows the need for leaders to build rapport and trust with the team, to promote collaboration and to communicate effectively the organisational culture. The importance of this category was highlighted by the initial challenges of maintaining a team cohesion and the later uncovered need for proactive efforts. The category of 'Personalisation of leadership approach' highlights the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the leadership approach, to support the team members' different working styles. The theme of leader's trust was one of the core themes recurring across different dimensions of the research.

The category of 'advocating for career and professional development' points to the challenges of career growth and professional development in non-profit remote teams. It therefore suggests the need for team leaders to actively advocate for the team members to provide possible opportunities for growth. The category of 'maintaining visibility', which has been previously alluded to when exploring the initial assumptions, show the need for team leaders to be approachable in remote setting. One of the core findings through the data analysis was the detrimental impact of micromanagement and the importance for leaders of maintaining visibility without resorting this practice. Finally, the theme of 'showcasing the value of work' refers to the challenges for non-profit staff to maintain their sense of achievement and their connection to the organisation's mission in remote set up. It shows the need for leader's to actively highlight the impact of the team's work.

The process of analysis has involved the determination of the relationships between individual constructs. These relationships were identified by the application of logical analysis to explain and highlight patterns. This process has shown that, for example, the category of Connecting staff, culture, and mission' has a strong connection to the impact of improved team cohesion and embedded organisational culture. Another example can be the category of 'Maintaining visibility' which has demonstrated strong relationship with the impact of increased trust and reduced micromanagement.

As new observed relationships emerged through the analysis these were considered for each of the preliminary categories, but only those that demonstrated strong relationships were maintained. The final analysis reflects the detailed process and the careful considerations of possible explanations of the characteristics, observed relationships and preliminary, and later

core, categories. This has eventually led to the creation of the theoretical framework for remote non-profit team leadership.

With the process of analysis and the core categories determination outlined, the following section will focus on the research findings, and it will explore in detail how the core categories were identified and formed to create the final framework for non-profit remote team leadership.

3.8 Research methodology summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the research design and procedures employed by this study. It discussed the philosophical perspective the underpins the research, including the philosophical assumptions, the research paradigm, and the research approach to theory development. It then focused on the methodological approach, including the qualitative research design and the chosen research strategy. The chapter further justified the selection of the constructivist grounded theory approach and highlighted its suitability for the exploration of the research topic. The researcher process section outlined the key considerations for the study, including the sampling and sample size, as well as ethics and ethical considerations. The data collection process section outlined the research environment, characteristics of the research participants, as well as data collection techniques, with the emphasis on interviews, where limitations of interviews, as a data collection method, were also discussed, as well as strategies to mitigate these limitations. The triangulation process was also outlined in this section. The data analysis section explained how theoretical sampling was employed, it described the coding process, and it discussed reaching point of the theoretical saturation. Finally, this chapter also addressed the limitations and criticisms associated with the constructivist grounded theory approach and how these limitations were mitigated, and it also highlighted the value the constructivist grounded theory approach for this study.

The methodology chapter has provided a roadmap for conducting the study, ensuring rigorous and systematic research with valid and reliable findings.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction
This chapter focuses on how the data collected through in-depth interviews were analysed using Constructivist Grounded Theory. The purpose of this analysis was to explore how remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership. Through a structured coding process, starting with initial codes, moving through focused codes, and culminating in core categories, this chapter shows how theoretical insights were developed from participant accounts.

The research was based on 34 interviews conducted between April 2023 and March 2024. Participants included team leaders, team members, trustees, volunteers, and an HR professional, each working within a UK-based non-profit organisation. The participants were selected through theoretical sampling, which allowed for a flexible and iterative approach to participant selection as new concepts emerged during analysis (Charmaz, 2014). This method ensured that the sample reflected a wide range of views and leadership experiences within both hybrid and fully remote teams.

The coding process followed the principles of Constructivist Grounded Theory and did not conclude in a fixed sequence. It involved constant comparison between data and emerging insights. The analysis began with initial coding, then moved through stages of identifying observed relationships, clustering into preliminary categories, and condensing concepts through focused coding. These were further synthesised into analytical relationships. This led to the formation of five core categories, which support the theoretical model presented in Chapter 6.

Memo-writing supported reflexive engagement, and quotations from participants are included throughout the chapter, to ground the analysis in real experiences. The remainder of this chapter outlines this process in detail. Section 4.2 presents the initial coding and emerging categories, followed by section 4.3, which traces the development of focused codes and their contribution to the final theoretical framework.

4.1.1 Overview of participants
This study involved 34 participants working in a range of roles across the UK non-profit sector. The sample included team leaders, team members, trustees, volunteers, and an HR professional. Participants were selected using theoretical sampling to ensure that emerging ideas and concepts were further explored during the data collection process (Charmaz, 2014).

The participants represented a diversity of organisational types and operational contexts. Some worked in hybrid teams, where virtual and in-office work were blended, while others

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operated in fully virtual environments. Their roles were placed across programme delivery, stakeholder engagement, income generation, volunteer management, HR, and governance. To support clarity, a full overview of participant demographics and roles have been created, see Appendix C: Full participant details. This mix allowed the analysis to capture leadership practices across the sector, without being restricted to a single organisational type or function.

4.1.2 Analytical approach

The data were analysed using principles of Constructivist Grounded Theory, as outlined by Charmaz (2014). This approach focuses on the co-construction of meaning between researcher and participants and involves a systematic, iterative process of coding, memo-writing, and constant comparison. The analysis began with initial coding, identifying early insights from each transcript, closely following the language and assumptions of participants. These codes were then examined for observed relationships, which are early conceptual links that helped inform the formation of preliminary categories. In the next stage, the initial codes were revisited to ensure clear alignment with emerging patterns. This reassignment process led to a more coherent set of code clusters feeding into focused coding, where key recurring concepts were consolidated. Analytical relationships were then identified across these focused codes and categories, synthesising the findings into higher-level conceptual groupings. These ultimately led to the development of five core categories, which are explored in Chapter 5.

Theoretical sampling guided interviewee selection and follow-up questioning, allowing the researcher to expand and deepen the emerging analysis. Memo-writing was central throughout the process, supporting reflexive thinking and analytic clarity. NVivo was used during the early coding phases to organise and explore co-occurring themes, while Excel supported later-stage mapping and comparison across categories. The combination of digital tools and manual analysis was used to ensure rigour and flexibility. This process allowed the final theoretical model, presented in Chapter 6, to remain grounded in lived experiences, while also drawing out broader conceptual insights into remote non-profit leadership.

4.1.3 Sectoral context for analysis

This research took place during a period of significant change for the UK non-profit sector. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to virtual and hybrid working, forcing many organisations to reimagine how they deliver services and manage staff (Amar and Ramsey, 2023; NCVO, 2024). By the time interviews began in April 2023, remote working was no longer an emergency response, it had become a structural feature of many non-profits (Amar and Ramsay, 2023; NCVO, 2024).

At the same time, organisations were dealing with increasing financial strain (Amar and Ramsey, 2023; NCVO, 2024). The cost-of-living crisis had deepened, affecting not only service users but also employees and volunteers (Amar and Ramsey, 2023; NCVO, 2024). Many charities had reduced their office space to save costs, and staff wellbeing had become a concern (NCVO, 2024). These pressures created an environment in which leadership practices had to evolve quickly and often without precedent.

One participant captured this dynamic well:

> *"... I do think, because of the challenges we're facing in the [non-profit] sector, that we're missing a lot of the income. I think it's going to be harder to set up charities, I think it's going to be harder to get people involved, because they're already struggling with the cost of living, and just having a supportive enough income, or reliable enough job, where they can donate additional time freely, that's going to become harder..."* (Team leader 8).

And it is within this challenging context, the team leaders are navigating their remote leadership strategies, with focus on work experiences of their staff:

> *"... After going through the pandemic, we are trying to understand the meaning of why we do things, and we have a different way to value work. Remote work has many advantages, but there are also cons, that complicate the way you live your normal working life..."* (Team member 6).

Understanding this context is important to interpreting the data. It highlights the need to view leadership not simply as a function, but as a practice formed by values, relationships, and real-world constraints.

4.2 The process of coding

This section outlines how coding was applied to explore the core research question: How does remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership? Guided by Charmaz's Constructivist Grounded Theory (2014), the process began with case-by-case initial coding and evolved iteratively through memo-writing, theoretical sampling, and focused coding. As previously explained, the coding journey was not linear. It included an interpretive layer between raw codes and final categories, where the researcher mapped emerging relationships, grouped codes into preliminary categories, and then revisited and reassigned some codes to better reflect their emerging conceptual fit. These revised code sets were then developed through focused coding, helping to refine the most significant and recurring concepts. Each stage made the analytical direction clearer, culminating in the

development of five core categories. The table below outline the phased structure of the data analysis.

Table 4.1 Process flow stages with descriptions

Stage	Description
Initial codes	Data-driven codes from transcripts
Observed relationships	Short narratives or conceptual links between codes
Preliminary categories	Early pattern recognition
Revised initial codes	Refining and reassigning initial codes to better align with emerging categories
Focused codes	Condensed concepts from clustered codes
Analytical relationships	Synthesized insights across codes and preliminary categories
Core categories	High-level, abstracted concept to support theory

This framework supports transparency in the analytical process and demonstrates how the final core categories were grounded in the participants' narratives. The remainder of this chapter follows this structure, illustrating how each level of interpretation emerged through systematic engagement with the data.

4.2.1 Initial coding

The initial coding revealed that remote work led to a broad reconfiguration of non-profit work life, including leadership, team culture, and personal identity.

4.2.1.1 Revaluation of work

One of the earliest preliminary categories was the revaluation of work, or how remote work prompted staff to reassess their motivations, roles, and identity. The process of revaluation was captured through several codes. These codes were consolidated into the preliminary category of revaluation of work. The changes forced many employees to reconsider the fundamental reasons behind their reasons to work in the sector and for the chosen organisation. The following quote captures the existential reassessment that some participants experienced:

> "After going through the pandemic, we are trying to understand the meaning of why
> we do things, and we have a different way to value work and remote working has
> many advantages, but then there are some cons that complicate the way you live
> your normal working life. So why are you doing this? If you're talking about working
> in a charity, or a not-for-profit, then sometimes it can be even tougher, because of

the sense of isolation where self-motivation may not be enough to keep you going"
(Team member 6).

This statement indicates the process and the importance of revaluation of values. This was driven by the changing circumstances of the workplace. The interviewee was based in a fully virtual set up and we can see the impact of the move to a fully virtual set up. This was coded as 'reflection of work values' and 'shifting work priorities', to reflect the process of reassessment of the significance of one's work and the underlying motivations.

Additionally, the following quote illustrates further the change in values,

"*I think there was a view that sometimes people cannot be relied upon to do their work autonomously without constant visual supervision so in many ways I think the pandemic was a good thing and so to change in some mindsets over putting more trust in staff*" (HR Professional).

This quote, from a hybrid workplace-based HR Lead, shows that there was a move in the mindset not only in fully virtual teams, but also hybrid teams. Linking to the developing relationships between the team leaders and team members. This was coded under 'trust in autonomy' and 'changing mindset'.

However, participants also described facing new emotional challenges which led to their revaluation of work. Quotes like,

"*I had to step away from some areas of passion in order to manage the challenges of personalities and daily arguments. I believe it was due to people's fears and difficulties with the situation at the time*" (Team leader 1),

indicated the shift in the emotional dynamic of work and these findings were coded under 'emotional dynamics' and 'increased personal burden'. This quote, originating from a virtually based team leader, demonstrates that hybrid teams were not removed from the transitional emotional challenges.

Interviewees were also faced with the immediate need to reflect on their workload illustrated by quotes such as,

"*I think many people experienced an increase in their workload. While some may have found ways to do less work, I think many people especially those in senior positions found themselves doing a lot more work because they couldn't say no to requests*" (Team leader 1).

These observations were coded as 'need to reevaluate workloads' and 'increased time commitment'. As these quotes represent the hybrid work set up, we can see that, the hybrid set up is not removed from the overarching challenges of remote work.

Table 4.2 Initial codes within the preliminary category of revaluation of work

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Reflection on work values	Revaluation of values	Revaluation of work
Shifting work priorities		
Trust in autonomy	Leader member relationships	
Changing mindset		
Emotional dynamic	Emotional challenges	
Increased personal burden		
Need to reevaluate workloads	Workload and commitment	
Career progression support		

4.2.1.2 Increased communication efforts

Another preliminary category, that emerged early in the coding process, was the need for increased communication efforts. Remote work disrupted many informal channels and routines for communication, and this disruption was felt by both leaders and team members, in both hybrid and fully virtual settings. Participants consistently pointed to the shift from spontaneous, in-person cues to more deliberate outreach:

> "*You have to actually reach out to people much more. You can't just rely on the fact that you'll look up and realize that one staff member might be stuck with something*" (Team leader 5),

highlight the need for an increased effort around communication. The interesting aspect is that these quotes come from both the staff members (Team member 6), as well as the team leaders (Team leader 5), showing that the change in communication impacts both the teams and their leaders. Similarly, the quotes originate from both hybrid and virtual teams and therefore confirming again that the hybrid teams deal with similar challenges to fully virtual teams. These observations were initially coded as 'proactive communication efforts' and 'increased outreach'.

However, it wasn't only the increased effort to open communication channels that was seen in the data. It was also the need to adjust the communication style when operating in the remote set up. This was particularly prominent with the angle of non-profit organisations, as the following quote demonstrates:

"*It's looking at your audience really and thinking how can I communicate with them in different ways that they're going to respond? ... I would adjust my language and my way of speaking to different people*" (Team member 4).

These struggles alluded early in the process to the challenges of multiple stakeholders within the non-profit teams' work and how these create the sense of multiple accountabilities of staff. This topic will be further explored in the following sections. Initially, these findings were coded under 'audience-specific language' or 'tailored communication needs.' These codes has also observer relationships to the broader question of clarity of communication, which led to the creation of an additional code of 'clarity of communication'.

Participants also noted that the pandemic accelerated expectations around transparency, which reshaped leadership dynamics:

"*I've noticed that there was a lack of transparency prior to the pandemic. And since then, there's been much more of an element of transparency making people more aware*" (Team leader 10).

This can be perceived as a positive change. It can also cause issues when the expected level of transparency is not delivered. This is also adding further considerations for the preliminary category of increased communication efforts. Moreover, the increased autonomy of staff can be viewed as a positive change for teams, but it is also adding further considerations for this preliminary category. These areas have been captured under the codes of 'trust in autonomy' and 'changing levels of transparency'.

Table 4.3 Initial codes within the preliminary category of increased communication efforts

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Proactive communication efforts	Need for clear frequent communication	Increased communication efforts
Increased outreach		
Communication needs	Adjusting communication styles	
Audience specific language		
Clarity of communication		
Changing levels of transparency	Transparent and trusting communication	
Changing levels of autonomy		

4.2.1.3 Emotional impact and connection difficulties
Another important area that has been identified was the emotional impact and connection difficulties. This has impacted the newly formed remote teams in the non-profit sector in the early stages of their transition. But it is also a theme that will be discussed again in some further categories, as the emotional impact is not limited to only the initial stages of non-profit remote teams' development and work.

The teams initially felt a strong sense of isolation, which is illustrated by the following quote from a team leader:

> "*It's not healthy for me to be working on stuff by myself all the time*" (Team leader 6), as well as "*Specifically with one member of my team I sometimes get the impression that she feels quite isolated. And it's difficult to do anything about that to be honest*" (Team leader 5).

This demonstrates that team leaders and team members dealt with the sense of isolation, which was suddenly felt when transitioning to the remote set-up. The quote represents views of staff working in the hybrid set up, demonstrating again that the hybrid set up can also create the sense of isolation among the team members and leaders. These statements were coded as 'feelings of isolation' and 'perception of isolation'.

Another aspect that has been identified was the increased level of sharing of personal challenges and mental health issues by the staff with the team leaders. There was a lack of understanding of the emotional impact, as highlighted by an interviewee:

> "*Your work becomes part of your home life, and I think there was a lack of understanding of the emotional impact of that and almost the assumption, well, it's been a year [since the pandemic] therefore it doesn't make a difference, but I think mentally it made a difference*" (Team leader 14).

This was coded under 'increased emotional burden' and 'work-related stress'.

Finally, the teams also found challenging to keep their connections active. As observed by one of the team members:

> "*I felt a bit out of the loop in terms of what other teams were doing, it felt like we were segmented and siloed into our little teams*" (Team member 1).

This demonstrates the impact on the paid non-profit staff, as well as on other stakeholders, such as the volunteers. Volunteers form an important part of the non-profit organisations' structure. The code 'feeling out of the loop' was formed to capture this. This can create a sense of disconnect, as pointed out by a hybrid-based team member:

> "*Even though people are trying to be nice to you, I'm always like, keep a distance because I knew the only way to really talk was on the keyboard*" (Team member 3).

The code 'sense of disconnect' was added to capture this aspect of the emotional and connection difficulties.

Table 4.4 Initial codes within the preliminary category of emotional impact and connection difficulties

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Feelings of isolation	Isolation	Emotional impact and connection difficulties
Perceptions of isolation		
Increased emotional burden	Emotional and mental health	
Work-related stress		
Feeling out of the loop	Disconnection	
Sense of disconnect		

4.2.1.4 Difficulties in building rapport

Another important preliminary category captures the difficulties in building rapport. This has a high importance within the early stages of teams transitioning to remote, it will also be shown also in the further analysis, as it impacts the running of well-established remote teams, as well as the relationships between teams and the team leaders.

The interviewees have highlighted the need for greater emotional intelligence and empathy when transitioning to the remote set up, as demonstrated by the following quote,

> "*I think it is different to manage a hybrid or remote team than it is to manage one that's sitting all around you. You do have to find ways to trust people. You do have to be more empathetic, more emotionally intelligent*" (Team leader 12).

These experiences show the required heightened awareness in the remote set up, to maintain interpersonal connections. These observations were coded as 'heightened emotional intelligence' and 'empathy in remote interactions.' They were made by team leaders from both virtual and hybrid teams, confirming again that hybrid teams also face these challenges.

These observations were also linked to the highlighted need of more prolonged efforts to build trust when working remotely. To illustrate this, we can examine the following quote:

> "*I've gone through this twice trying to establish myself and my team in a mainly virtual world. It takes effort to start building trust, but you can't fast forward the process*" (Team leader 13).

This emphasises the observed slower pace of building-trust in the remote environment and the need to spend more time on this area. These areas were initially coded under 'slow trust-building' and 'intentional effort in trust building'. This is also important, as these observations were made by team leaders of smaller teams (up to 5 people). This means that such challenges are not exclusive only to large teams.

Challenges of maintaining presence and visibility were also discussed in relation to building rapport. This was particularly highlighted in relation to the person of the leader. As pointed out by one of the leaders:

> "*Your team doesn't see as much of you. I wonder if I'm looking for someone who is that little bit more outgoing perhaps, just because that then translates into potentially, not better communication, because that's not the way it works, but just translates into someone being more physically present almost*" (Team leader 14).

This statement was shared by a team leader of a large virtual team (21-50 employees). Equally, a team leader of a small hybrid team (1-5 employees) remarked,

> "*It's harder to be a visible leader when you're not physically there. You have to find new ways to show you're available and supportive*" (Team leader 15).

This highlights the concerns of team leaders to maintain their visibility, and the perception of being an accessible leader, when working in the remote set up. These areas were initially coded as 'difficulty in maintaining visibility' and 'strategies to show support'.

Table 4.5 Initial codes within the preliminary category of difficulties in building rapport

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Heightened emotional intelligence	Emotional intelligence and empathy	Difficulties in building rapport
Empathy in remote interactions		
Slow trust-building	Trust-building process	
Intentional effort in trust building		
Difficulty in maintaining visibility	Presence and visibility	
Strategies to show support		

4.2.1.5 Information sharing and team cohesion

Another area emerging as a preliminary category is information sharing and team cohesion. There is a link within this preliminary category and the preliminary category of increased communication efforts, emotional impact and connection difficulties, and difficulties in building rapport. However, there are some specific points that were better suited to this specific preliminary category, but the close link to the above-mentioned must be stated at this point.

This preliminary category captures performance when working remotely, which can have an important impact on the team. This has been felt by both, team leaders and team members. As a team member shared,

> "*It's definitely more difficult to convey enthusiasm and emotion over video calls compared to in-person meetings. The lack of physical presence affects how we communicate and connect*" (Team member 6).

This demonstrates the challenges of adapting communication and performance in the remote setting, which can have an impact on the ability to share information and work effectively as a team. These observations were initially coded as 'impact on performance' and 'impact on sharing information'.

But it is not only the performance that could impact the team's effective work, but also the perceived impact on interactions of the team through the remote channels. A phrase that was frequently mentioned within this area was the absence of spontaneity in the team interactions, specifically in the informal interactions. As shared by a team leader of a large virtual team (21-50 team members),

> "*I think the one of the things that you missed from being together is the people chat as a team. When you do Teams meetings, it starts, and it ends. And you and the people don't get to know each other anymore*" (Team leader 14).

A team leader of a small hybrid team (1-5 staff) shared similar thoughts:

> "*We don't have those water-cooler conversations anymore, where you can just casually catch up with someone. Everything feels more formal now*" (Team leader 2).

These perceived observations demonstrate how structured nature of the remote interactions can limit more casual, informal team conversations. These observations were initially coded as 'loss of casual conversations', 'lack of spontaneity'.

This lack of casual connections and spontaneity was also felt when returning to the office after periods of remote work, whether this is relating to a one-off team building events, or the in-person side of hybrid teams' interactions. This manifests itself in the initial disconnect felt when returning to the physical office or engaging in physical meetings. As a hybrid team member observed,

> "*I can definitely see within the organisation that it creates distance when we come into the office together. And you can feel that it always takes a minute to warm up and to be able to do that introduction to get familiar with each other again*" (Team member 2).

These experiences highlight the sense of distance and the need to re-acclimatise to physical presence after periods of virtual work. These areas were initially coded as 'need for re-acclimatisation' and 'distance in physical space'.

Table 4.6 Initial codes within the preliminary category of information sharing and team cohesion

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Impact on sharing information	Remote environment and performance	Information sharing and team cohesion
Measuring performance		
Lack of spontaneity	Informal interactions	
Loss of casual conversations		
Need for re-acclimatisation	Physical presence and disconnect	
Distance in physical space		

4.2.1.6 Blurring of work and home life balance

The transition to remote work has also shown to impact the team members' perceived boundary between professional life and responsibilities and their personal life. The interviews have shown the creation of blurred work-life balance or harmony for many non-profit teams.

The key observations within this space coming through from the interviews was the difficulty of maintaining a separation between work life and home life. As revealed by an interviewee,

> "*I'm quite bad. I'm quite bad at setting boundaries. Sometimes I'm sitting at my desk at 1 o'clock in the morning working, sometimes at the weekend I'm doing things as well to make sure that things get done on time*" (Volunteer 6).

The very interesting factor here is that this quote comes from one of the volunteers, demonstrating that not just paid staff in charities feels the pressure coming from remote work, but it is also the volunteers who encounter these challenges. One of the interviewed team members adds,

> "*When you're at home you need to find work and home balance. So, you need to draw the line somewhere, stop, put your laptop away at some point because it does happen that you forget that you need to log off and you carry on with work*" (Team member 8).

These quotes reflect the tendency of remote staff to work for extended hours and their struggle with work taking over their personal life as well. These findings were initially coded as 'difficulty in setting boundaries' and 'extended working hours.'

There is also a link between the preliminary category of blurring of work and home life balance and emotional impact and connection difficulties. The blurring of work life and home life has been revealed as also impacting the remote staff's wellbeing. This was demonstrated by the continuous engagement and a lack of downtime that the staff have been experiencing, such as,

"Some individuals had to attend back-to-back Zoom calls for up to six hours. Even though they may have had only a 5 or 10-minute break between calls no one seemed to understand the importance of those short breaks" (Team leader 1).

This is demonstrating the need for the team leader to encourage healthy work practices. These findings were coded as 'impact on wellbeing' and 'need for healthy work practices.'

The important role of the leader has been discussed extensively. As the team leaders observed

"*I think as a team leader I have to be mindful of my staff not logging off working long hours because I think that contributes to negative well-being and negative practices*" (Team leader 14).

These findings show that the team leader can play an important role in ensuring healthy work practices and can make a difference in the remote set up. The role of the leader within this area will be discussed in the future sections in further detail as the themes are further analysed. Initially, these observations were coded as 'leader as a role model' and 'leader's support strategies.'

Table 4.7 Initial codes within the preliminary category of blurring of home and life balance

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Difficulty in setting boundaries	Separating work from home	Blurring of work and home life balance
Extended working hours		
Need for healthy work practices	Impact on wellbeing	
Importance of downtime		
Leaders' support strategies	Leader's involvement	
Leader as a role model		

4.2.1.7 Maintaining organisational culture

An observation made by newly formed remote teams, that has been discussed during the interviews, was silo working or the isolation of teams and departments. This can have an impact on the remote teams, but it is also an area critical from the perspective of the non-profit sector, as this perceived disconnection can affect team member's connection to the organisation's mission.

This is further deepened by the impact of this disconnection on volunteers. As a volunteer observed:

> *"It feels like we are working in a silo. We have an organization, but we sometimes feel quite separate, and it does feel like sometimes you're working in a silo and you're trying to have to create something by yourself "* (Volunteer 5).

This was echoed by core team members sharing:

> "*There's a lot of structure that I never see. I see my manager and I see the manager of our service. But then in terms of the broader team, I don't have any contact with them, we don't sometimes feel like we're a part of bigger organisation. We are our service, and we keep our service going. But in terms of the full charity, we don't always feel like we're a part of it*" (Team member 5).

These findings were initially coded as 'separation within the organisation', 'disconnect from broader organisation', and 'individual efforts.'

But the organisational culture is affected not only by the sense of silo working, but also by the limited opportunities for staff interactions. As clearly explained by one of the hybrid team members:

> "*In my previous work experience, I would talk to a lot of people, I would see a lot of people, not necessarily knowing who they are, but I would see them and then I could sense the overall culture of the company. Whereas when I started with the charity, I was limited to speaking to a few people so I couldn't read or judge the company as a whole*" (Team member 3).

This was supported by a virtual team member who has shared,

> *"I must say I hardly see my colleagues usually probably once a week we try to meet up for a little catch up. But as you can imagine the workload is so high you just don't see each other that often. So you're on your own most of the time"* (Team member 8).

Similar experiences have been shared also by a hybrid team leader who have observed that:

> *"The culture I think definitely changes because you're not in the same room and I guess it can be quite difficult to keep engaged with everyone and have that regular engagement with everyone"* (Team leader 9).

These quotes highlight the challenge of sustaining an organisational culture when teams are dispersed and it also reveals that the lack of physical interactions can make it difficult for teams to stay engaged with each other, but also with the wider organisation. These findings were initially coded as 'self-reliance of staff', 'invisible culture due to isolation', and 'disjointed connection efforts.'

Table 4.8 Initial codes within the preliminary category of maintaining organisational culture

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Separation within the organisation	Silo working	Maintaining organisational culture
Disconnect from broader organisation		
Individual efforts		
Self-reliance of staff	Limited informal interactions	
Invisible culture due to isolation		
Disjointed connection efforts		

4.2.1.8 Impact on connection to beneficiaries

The area identified through the data analysis is specific to the remote teams within the non-profit sector, as it is linked directly to the staff's connection to the beneficiaries. This connection forms an important aspect of their role. The transition of teams to remote has impacted how non-profit staff interact with the beneficiaries and how they provide support to them.

An important aspect in this area have been the reduced interactions with beneficiaries. These are viewed as critical to non-profit work by many staff and the lack of interactions can lead to their feelings of disconnection. As highlighted by the interviewees,

> *"It's definitely the beneficiaries that I am thinking about all the time, how different things would be for them if they received the support that we're giving. But now, I don't really have any interaction with the beneficiaries, I haven't been able to go to the programs we have put on. But I know that from the meetings and from reports that the charity does a really good work"* (Board member 1).

These observations were initially coded as 'loss of personal connection' and 'reduced face-to-face contact'.

The work of charities goes far beyond a contact with the beneficiaries, as in its core lies the ability to provide support. This ability has also been impacted by the move to remote and the teams have experienced the need to reevaluate effective strategies for supporting the beneficiaries. As explained by a virtual team member:

> *"You're thinking all the time how to improve? I'm always thinking to myself anyway, how to improve? And that's what makes me constantly think, because it is a big project, which needs to be handled with care, and you're talking to people whose lives you can change, and who need to change. So, it's quite a big thing. And you are thinking about all that"* (Team member 8).

This perception was also supported by hybrid team members:

"How we can support young people and families that we work with who maybe don't have technology. And I think that's a little bit harder to get money and funding for" (Team member 2).

This again shows that the hybrid teams also face challenges of connection and service provision to the beneficiaries. However, as observed by one of the volunteers, the ability of hybrid services has its benefits:

"*Sometimes you can't reach people virtually. And then in some cases you can't really help people in person. So, we use both to balance services that we provide*" (Interviewee W). These observations were initially coded as 'limits to service provision' and 'pressure to find alternative solutions.'

Table 4.9 Initial codes within the preliminary category of impact on connection to beneficiaries

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Loss of personal connection	Impact on direct interactions	Impact on connection to beneficiaries
Reduced face-to-face contact		
Limits to service provision	Service provision	
Pressure to find alternative solutions		

4.2.1.9 Summary

This section has presented the results of the initial coding stage, which formed the foundation of the analytical process. Through close, case-by-case reading of interview transcripts, a set of initial codes was developed to reflect participants' early experiences of remote and hybrid non-profit work. These codes were then grouped through observed relationships, or short analytical links and conceptual patterns that emerged across interviews. From these relationships, a set of preliminary categories began to take shape, capturing key areas of change brought on by the shift to remote work. The most prominent preliminary categories include:

Revaluation of work
- o Staff reassessed their purpose, workload, and emotional connection to their roles.

Increased communication efforts
- o Remote teams required greater clarity, proactivity, and tailored approaches to communication.

Emotional impact and connection difficulties

   o Participants described increased feelings of isolation, stress, and disconnection.

Difficulties in building rapport

   o The move online slowed trust-building and challenged leader visibility and accessibility.

Information sharing and team cohesion

   o Teams struggled with the loss of spontaneity and informal knowledge exchange.

Blurring of work and home life

   o Participants reported difficulty setting boundaries and maintaining well-being.

Maintaining organisational culture

   o There was a strong sense of fragmentation, especially in relation to the wider mission.

Impact on connection to beneficiaries

   o Reduced face-to-face contact weakened service delivery and emotional ties to beneficiaries.

These preliminary categories provided the analytical base from which focused coding could develop, and from which the core categories would later emerge. They reflect the early development in perception and relational dynamics impacted by the remote work transition.

4.2.2 Focused coding

The previous section introduced the initial codes and observed relationships, which formed the basis for a set of preliminary categories. These reflected the transitional challenges experienced by non-profit staff and leaders adapting to virtual and hybrid work. The next stage of analysis involved focused coding. In this phase, selected initial codes, those most conceptually significant, were refined and grouped to form more abstract analytical concepts. These focused codes were compared and connected to explore their explanatory power. Importantly, not all initial codes appear in focused coding tables. Codes were included based on their conceptual weight and relevance to emerging categories. However, no codes were discarded arbitrarily. Where codes did not feed directly into focused categories, they were either conceptually nested within the relevant codes or helped refine analytic memos. This section makes these relationships visible, showing how the coding process contributed to the development of higher-level conceptual understanding.

Each focused coding table below includes:

  o The initial codes relevant for deeper analysis

  o The focused codes developed through comparison and abstraction

  o The emerging analytical relationships that link codes and show theoretical movement

  o The core category that this contributes to

4.2.2.1 Flexibility and trust – Personalising leadership approach

One of the first conceptual areas to emerge during focused coding was labelled 'flexibility and trust.' This working category developed from earlier codes that captured how leaders responded to the shift away from constant physical oversight. Instead, they needed to show emotional awareness, trust their staff's autonomy, and adjust their leadership styles to fit individual and team needs. This shift reflected a deeper redefinition of leadership—not as control, but as relational responsiveness.

This early category drew on several initial codes: trust in autonomy, increased outreach, changing mindset, changing levels of autonomy, slow trust-building, and leaders' support strategies. These codes formed the foundation for three focused codes:

- Trust-based autonomy - giving staff space to self-manage while still offering guidance.
- Empathy-driven flexibility - adjusting to emotional and practical needs in leadership.
- Leader's flexible support - providing consistent, visible encouragement without micromanaging.

These patterns were observed across participants, both in virtual and hybrid teams. As one team member described:

> *"Well, to be fair, I've got a brilliant manager, who puts his trust in us. And with anything, he backs you up with anything. So as long as it's justified, he'll back you up. And that's what you want, you need that support. It's great when someone has so much trust in you and doesn't check up on you all the time. You know what you're doing with your job anyway* (Team member 8).

Another participant noted the deeper role trust played in building effective relationships:

> *"I think you've got to give people the time and the kind of respect and the kind of space that they need to do a job and to support them as you come. We do keep in touch quite a lot. Building trust is ensuring that we're not just focusing on the work involved. We build that trust with each other. We get to know each other, what are the strengths and weaknesses of each other as well"* (Team member 7).

These reflections show how trust, adaptability, and emotional presence are becoming to be seen as central leadership competencies in the remote setting. During later analysis, this cluster of ideas developed into the core category of Personalising Leadership Approach, introduced in Chapter 5. It highlights the importance of relational sensitivity and individualised support in remote and hybrid team leadership.

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Table 4.10 Focused codes leading to Personalising leadership approach

Initial codes	Focused codes	Analytical relationships	Core category
Trust in autonomy	Trust-based autonomy	Leaders create trust by stepping back from control	Original label: Flexibility and trust Core category title: Personalising Leadership Approach
Increased outreach		Mindset allows leaders to respond with empathy	
Changing mindset	Empathy-driven flexibility	Greater openness supports trust	
Changing levels of autonomy		Leaders balance outreach and distance	
Slow trust-building	Leader's flexible support	Trust is cultivated over time, not imposed	
Leaders' support strategies		Support strategies are relational	

Together, these analytical relationships suggest that in remote non-profit settings, leadership becomes less about control and more about personalised engagement. The focused codes show a move toward leaders recognising the individual needs of their team members, focusing on trust through flexibility, and offering consistent support without micromanagement. These ideas formed the conceptual foundation for the core category of Personalising Leadership Approach, referring to a relational and adaptive response to the challenges of remote work.

4.2.2.2 Communication clarity – Maintaining visibility

As focused coding progressed, the need for clearer and more intentional communication began to stand out. In the absence of spontaneous interactions and non-verbal cues, remote leaders faced pressure to be more transparent, explicit, and responsive in their communication. The early working category for this cluster of ideas was communication clarity, which later contributed to the development of the core category Maintaining Visibility (introduced in Chapter 5).

Several initial codes contributed to this cluster: proactive communication efforts, clarity of communication, tailored communication needs, changing levels of transparency, and audience-specific language. Together, these captured how leaders learned to communicate not just more often, but with greater thoughtfulness about tone, expectations, and individual preferences.

As one team leaders shared:

> "*I've had meetings with every single member of my team, even ones I don't directly supervise regularly, and I outline for them exactly what my expectations are and exactly what my ways of working are. And I talked to everyone about the exact same points. I explained that this is my preference, if this does not work for you, you need to*

tell me, and we can make an adjustment. And I think that in the context of working remotely with people in both directions, you have to be a little bit more explicit than you would be otherwise. I find that being explicit is not something I previously would have done. But I find that it's really important, because in my experience it's also easy for people to misread statements and gestures on a call, more than they would do in person. I find that it eliminates that kind of interpretation mistakes when you are explicit about things" (Team leader 6).

This quote represents how clarity is not simply about giving instructions. It is about anticipating ambiguity, making space for feedback, and building mutual understanding. Leaders are not just transmitters of information. They also ensure that communication is inclusive and responsive to varied working styles.

Table 4.11 Focused codes leading to 'Maintaining visibility'

Initial codes	Focused codes	Analytical relationships	Core category
Proactive communication efforts	Transparent communication	Clarity builds trust and reduces room for misinterpretation	Initial label: Communication clarity Core category: Maintaining visibility
Clarity of communication			
Communication needs	Tailored communication style	Communication must adapt to team members' individual needs and working preferences	
Changing levels of transparency		Reduced informal interaction increases the need to clearly define goals and intentions	
Audience specific language	Explicit articulation of goals and expectations		

These focused codes suggest that communication in remote settings becomes an active and deliberate leadership practice. Leaders not only deliver information but also make space for individualisation, clarity, and transparency. These efforts contribute to maintaining visibility, not just being seen, but being understood and trusted across dispersed teams.

4.2.2.3 Making work visible – Showcasing the value of work
As remote working formed daily interactions, participants highlighted a particular challenge of work often becoming invisible. Without informal feedback or hallway conversations, team members lacked the immediate reinforcement that their efforts mattered. For non-profit organisations, where work is tied to mission, this invisibility risked weakening motivation and connection to purpose.

This focused coding cluster developed from several initial codes, including difficulty in maintaining visibility, loss of personal connection, reduced face-to-face contact, leader's support strategies, and proactive communication efforts. Together, they pointed to a common concern: without leader effort, meaningful work risks going unrecognised.

As a team leader shared:

> ""You have to actually reach out to people much more. People can be invisible remotely. You don't get the visual cues that you normally get. And the feedback that you normally get" (Team leader 5).

Staff, too, expressed a desire to reconnect with why they do their work:

> "You are talking to people whose lives you can change, and who need to change. You have the intention, I'm doing it to help people. And that's my intention for the day. I want to help people, it doesn't matter who they are, I want to help people" (Team member 2).

These quotes demonstrate that beyond productivity, leaders are also focusing on reinforcing purpose and impact. In remote environments, this requires effort both in noticing team contributions and helping staff see the results of their work.

Table 4.12 Focused codes leading to Showcasing the value of work

Initial codes	Focused codes	Analytical relationships	Core category
Difficulty in maintaining visibility	Recognition of contributions	Leaders need to highlight unseen work and outcomes	Initial label: Making work visible Core category: Showcasing the value of work
Loss of personal connection	Purpose reinforcement	Maintaining team connection requires affirming why the work matters	
Reduced face-to-face contact	Visualising impact	Remote work demands active linking of daily tasks to organisational goals	
Leader's support strategies	Active acknowledgement	Regular, thoughtful feedback reinforces team motivation	
Proactive communication efforts	Intentional presence	Visibility is not just availability, but recognising effort and intention	

This focused coding analysis led to the core category Showcasing the Value of Work, introduced in Chapter 5. It emphasises the leader's role in making work visible, affirming contributions, and helping teams stay connected to mission in dispersed settings. Rather than assuming staff will feel purposeful by default, leaders actively construct those connections, through structured feedback and informal visibility.

4.2.2.4 Balancing performance, development, and wellbeing - Advocating for career and professional development

An area that has emerged during focused coding was the need for leaders to manage the tension between staff performance, wellbeing, and career development. In virtual and hybrid settings, this balancing act becomes more complex. Staff described increased workload, emotional strain, and uncertainty about their career visibility. This was especially true for those not regularly seen or heard in physical office spaces.

This early conceptual category developed from a range of initial codes, including increased personal burden, work-related stress, leader's support strategies, need for healthy work practices, extended working hours, career support progression, measuring performance, and importance of downtime. Together, these pointed to a leadership challenge that required both structure and sensitivity.

One team leader reflected on the risk of staff dissatisfaction when their contributions and development are not recognised:

> *"Having a good management structure and having people who are confident in those roles is really important, because it's very easy if there are issues within the management structure for that to filter down to lower levels and people become very unhappy. Particularly if they feel like their work is not being valued. And if that's not being communicated to them sufficiently"* (Team leader 6).

Another participant highlighted the problem of career invisibility for those in underrepresented groups:

> *"I worry about women becoming invisible online as well. I think, you know, it's hard enough to remain physical in an office situation, but I think online there's a danger of just not progressing much in careers. For people at the lower end, I think there isn't that opportunity to hear that something's needed and say actually I could do that, I'm around, I can do that. But people can be invisible remotely. You don't get to know people outside your team. And that's how you find out what people are good at. For people like the CEO, they need to take a note of you and to push you forward for tasks.*

They need to know you a little bit, and you could be utterly invisible to her quite easily" (Team leader 5).

These reflections revealed a layered leadership challenge, which includes ensuring accountability while also supporting the personal and professional growth of remote team members. The focused codes that developed from this cluster are proactive monitoring of work-life balance, referring to the leader's role in noticing early signs of stress or burnout; introducing wellbeing initiatives and mental health support, which captures the move toward structured, intentional support; facilitating internal skill-sharing, highlighting how development can happen even within limited budgets; encouraging open discussions about career aspirations, reflecting the need to create space for staff to express their goals; and regular performance check-ins with empathy, showing how oversight must also acknowledge the emotional realities of remote work. These codes led to the development of the core category Advocating for career and professional development, explored in Chapter 5.

Table 4.13 Focused codes leading to Advocating for career and professional development

Initial codes	Focused codes	Analytical relationships	Core category
Increased personal burden	Proactive monitoring of work-life balance	Leaders need to observe and respond to signs of stress or burnout	Initial label: Balancing performance, development, and wellbeing Core category: Advocating for career and professional development
Work-related stress			
Leader's support strategies	Introducing well-being initiatives and mental health support	Supporting wellbeing requires proactive, structured actions, not just ad hoc check-ins	
Need for healthy work practices			
Extended working hours	Facilitating internal skill-sharing	Peer learning and internal mentoring can support development in low-resource settings	
Career progression support	Encouraging open discussions about career aspirations	Visibility must be intentional in remote contexts, especially for underrepresented groups	
Measuring performance	Regular performance check-ins with empathy	Leaders must balance expectations with empathy to support long-term staff engagement	

In summary, this category highlights the strategic importance of leadership practices that actively support staff wellbeing and development. Rather than separating performance from

care, leaders integrate both. They ensure that staff feel seen, supported, and able to grow in their roles, even in dispersed work settings.

4.2.2.5 Linking to the cause and the organisation, and culture - Connecting staff, culture, and mission

The final area developed through focused coding highlights the importance of maintaining strong emotional and cultural ties between dispersed teams and the broader purpose of the organisation. The shift to remote work has made it harder for staff to experience organisational culture or see the tangible impact of their contributions. For non-profit teams, where purpose and values play a central role (Moore, 2000), this disconnection can weaken engagement and satisfaction.

This focused category builds on several initial codes: reflection on work values, sense of disconnect, invisible culture due to isolation, disconnect from broader organisation, need for re-acclimatisation, and audience-specific language. These codes revealed staff dealing with blurred organisational identity, weaker internal networks, and a diminished connection to the charity's mission and community.

One HR professional articulated this clearly:

> *"I think the main thing is to try instilling in people what their contribution means to the broader picture, and that due to the tasks that they've done, they have enabled next steps. Sometimes it could be something incredibly meaningful, even if it's not the most impressive... But often you are enabling someone else to do their job, which then enables something else to happen. This is where a gratification for your work must come from, so I think there needs to be a lot more verbal feedback to people on their own performance. So that they know that what they're doing does matter and contributes to something bigger, even if there are no immediate tangible results"* (HR professional).

Leaders also spoke about the way organisational culture had to be intentionally communicated in the absence of in-person immersion:

> *"It [remote work] doesn't change the core values, if that is for us let's say, hard work, and being flexible, and all of that, these things remain, in our specific case, the same. But yes, the culture has changed a little bit. If I have to use an example, I think before the pandemic working from home was seen as something exceptional, a benefit, something that you had to justify and almost fight for and almost prove that you did work while at home. Now that has changed. It's a more trusting environment. It [remote work] does make it a bit more a longer journey to communicate the culture and for*

them [staff] to establish the right relationships with people outside of their teams"
(Team leader 3).

These quotes demonstrate the evolving responsibilities of leaders in remote settings. Not only they communicate tasks and goals, but they also act as stewards of organisational culture and values. This is especially important when cultural norms are no longer experienced through everyday office interactions.

The focused codes that emerged highlight three key leadership functions in remote non-profit settings. First, intentional efforts to embed mission and vision into daily work describe how leaders reinforce the connection between individual roles and broader organisational goals. Second, reinforcing the unique value of working in the non-profit sector reflects the importance of highlighting emotional purpose and social impact through regular communication and storytelling. Finally, cultivating organisational culture remotely points to the need for leaders to actively promote shared values, strengthen team identity, and maintain internal connection, especially in the absence of everyday, in-person interactions.

These codes created the basis for the development of the core category Connecting staff, culture, and mission, explored further in Chapter 5. They reflect a leadership task that is both symbolic and relational: helping dispersed teams feel part of something greater than their immediate tasks.

Table 4.14 Focused codes leading to Connecting staff, culture, and mission

Initial codes	Focused codes	Analytical relationships	Core category
Reflection on work values	Intentional efforts to embed mission and vision into daily work	Leaders actively connect daily work to organisational purpose	Linking to the cause and the organisation, and culture
Sense of disconnect		Disconnection from mission weakens motivation	
Invisible culture due to isolation	Reinforcing the unique value of working in the non-profit sector	Culture is not absorbed passively—leaders must actively maintain it	
Disconnect from broader organisation		Remote setup fractures broader organisational understanding	
Need for re-acclimatisation	Cultivating organisational culture remotely	Staff require intentional reintroduction to team culture	
Audience specific language		Communication tailored to reflect cause, donors, and social impact	

4.3 Summary

This chapter presented the data analysis process, which followed the structured principles of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014). The analysis moved through several interpretive layers, from data-driven initial codes, through observed relationships and preliminary categories, into focused coding, understanding the analytical relationships and finally to the formation of core categories. These analytical steps aimed to explore how remote work is shaping leadership practices and perceptions in the UK non-profit sector.

The process began with a detailed round of initial coding, derived directly from participants' interview transcripts. These codes focused on key experiences across virtual and hybrid non-profit teams. Staff and leaders described challenges such as blurred work-life boundaries, emotional fatigue, isolation, unclear communication, and shifting perceptions of organisational culture and leadership. From these codes, patterns and observed relationships were mapped and grouped into preliminary categories such as revaluation of work, communication clarity, emotional impact, and shifting team dynamics.

In the second phase, focused coding was used to distil and link related ideas across cases. These codes moved beyond surface-level issues to identify deeper changes in leadership. For example, trust-based autonomy and flexible support emerged as crucial components of a leadership mindset. Focused coding also captured the evolving expectations around communication, culture, performance, and staff development. These insights showed how remote leaders balance relational sensitivity with structural clarity and often without physical oversight. This process concluded with establishing five core categories:

- o Personalising leadership approach
- o Maintaining visibility
- o Showcasing the value of work
- o Advocating for career and professional development
- o Connecting staff, culture, and mission

These categories reflect the leadership practices, but also, importantly, how leaders interpret and adapt their roles in a changing work environment. Each core category is grounded in lived experience, formed by experiences and individual reflections. They form the basis of the theoretical model introduced in Chapter 6. The next chapter will explain each of the five core categories in greater depth and show how they interconnect to form a model of remote leadership within the non-profit sector.

5. Findings: Core categories

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study, building on the core categories that have emerged from the Constructivist Grounded Theory process, following the steps of initial and focused coding. This process has led to the creation of core categories, which represent the research findings. Each one of the categories reflects an aspect of the embodied leadership of a remote leader within the non-profit sector. The findings, through the core categories, highlight the strategies that are directly connected to the challenges of remote non-profit environments. These challenges were observed and identified during the data analysis process and explored in detail in the previous section. Through a detailed analysis of each of the core categories, this chapter will focus on the approach to leadership, which addresses the challenges of the non-profit remote environments. The core categories offer an insight into ways in which leaders lead their teams, to support the organisational vision, and to support the individual needs of team members at the same time. The five core categories explored in this chapter include Connecting staff, culture, and mission; Personalising leadership approach; Advocating for career and professional development; Maintaining visibility; and Showcasing the value of work.

5.2 Core dimensions of the remote non-profit leadership

The move to remote work has brought with it significant challenges and changes to team dynamics, communication, and to the overall experience of work within the non-profit sector. These challenges were discussed in detail in the Data Analysis chapter, as they originated from the process of initial and focused coding. To address these emerging challenges, a perspective on leadership, through lived experiences, is being introduced in this chapter. Each of the categories introduced below is rooted in the focused codes, explored in detail in the data analysis section, and each of these categories represents themes and concepts arising from this analysis using the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach. Each category refers to an important aspect of the non-profit remote leadership.

The first category, 'Connecting staff, culture and mission', which has emerged from codes such as *intentional efforts to embed mission and vision into daily work, promoting collaborative projects, and mitigating silos through culture-sharing initiatives*, highlights the importance of the sense of community and share purpose, with leaders acting as bridge between the staff, the organisation, and the mission. 'Personalising leadership approach', as a second category, has emerged from codes such as *trust-based autonomy, tailoring leadership approaches to individual needs, and flexibility in work preferences*. It refers to the perceived need for the leader to understand diverse working styles and adapt their style of leading to support them. The category 'Advocating for career and professional development', emerging from codes

such as *encouraging open discussions about career aspirations, mentorship and peer learning, and creative development opportunities*, focuses on the leader's role in identifying opportunities for staff's development, despite limited sources of funding, or limited career trajectories. 'Maintaining visibility', the fourth category, emerging from codes such as *consistent communication and engagement, open-door policy for virtual teams, and balancing support with autonomy*, highlights the leaders' focus on being present and accessible for the staff to feel supported and connected. Finally, the fifth category, 'Showcasing the value of work', emerging from themes such as *recognising contributions and reinforcing purpose, connecting staff with beneficiaries and stakeholders, and advocating for representation and accountability*, refers to the leader's role in acting as a connecter between the team's effort, their sense of purpose, as well as the external stakeholders, such as the beneficiaries and funders.

Together, these categories create a clear path for understanding of the nature of leadership through the lived experiences of non-profit remote leaders and their teams.

5.2.1 Connecting staff, culture and mission

In the remote work environment, promoting the sense of community, the shared purpose, and the connection the organisational culture doesn't happen spontaneously. On the contrary, it requires a deliberate promotion and proactive efforts by the leaders. At the same time, building rapport and building trust within remote teams is also not a spontaneous or an accidental act. It is a carefully implemented process that requires the leader's active role in becoming the bridge between the physically dispersed team members, the organisation and the wider organisational purpose. As explained by a hybrid team leader:

> *"I think managers and leaders have to put conscious effort into keeping in touch with their team. Most of my team is currently remote. It's a very remote setup, so I don't even see them on a weekly basis in-person. I see them virtually, so it's an effort to keep the contact with most of them. I feel that this is important to keep connected and keep them engaged, showing them that you're there for them. It's not about control, because you can't control people. Really, it's not. That's not even the point. It's just for them to see my face, and for me to see them. I think it's a conscious effort to stay in touch managing virtual teams and the hybrid teams. You need to have certain human skills like empathy and listening skills and make them trust you. I think it's quite helpful, especially in the non-profit environment, where the organisation is small, and you do want to feel some sort of culture and connection"* (Team leader 3).

It is the leaders who understand their role, through their intentional efforts, as creating a cohesive team. The core category of 'connecting staff, culture, and mission' highlights how

leaders can effectively connect the gaps between these areas and how they can connect team members with each other, connect them with the organisation's mission and the organisational culture. This all happens whilst leaders deal with the challenges of remote work and the challenges of work in the non-profit sector. As shared by a charity volunteer:

> "I think it's become more important that you try and stay connected to your team, because most of it [work] is now virtual. So, I think there's more importance to make sure that people feel that they're still connected to one another. They [team leaders] should check at the beginning of that week. And then ask you, are there any difficult cases, anything you want to ask me? And then also, you'd have a team meeting at the beginning of the working week as well. That would just be a chance for everyone to see everyone online and just have a bit for a catch up. My manager says, 'if you ever need to ask me anything, just ring me', but then when I do, they don't pick up. And then when you do send a message, it takes a couple of days for them to get back to you. So, I suppose, I want the opposite of that, the one that responds quite quickly, if you've got a question, if you ring them, they pick the phone up, especially when you can see that they won't read your email" (Volunteer 6).

As already explained, building rapport within remote teams requires a conscious, deliberate and a proactive approach from the leaders. In contrast to the traditional full-time office-based teams, informal communication and spontaneous interactions don't happen as easily and as naturally. These acts would traditionally contribute to the creation of closer connections among team members and also broadly within an organisation. Remote leaders however intentionally reach out to, and engage with, their team members, to make sure that trust is being built between them and their teams, as well as between the team members. The leaders also focus on team members' connection to the organisation as a whole. As suggested by an experienced team leader:

> "It takes effort to start building trust, but you can't fast forward the process. There's definitely more opportunity to build those relationships and trust if you occupy the same physical space. When I say it's easier to build relationships and trust by sharing physical space, I think it's because as humans, we still value physical interactions. However, if you're a remote worker, it's still possible to build trust through effective communication. Some things that I believe are crucial in building trust and include active listening, transparency, and consistency in our actions. And getting people to make space for you is an interesting thing to try and encourage when everybody's already got their ways of working. Working out how and where do we fit into to this is a real challenge. I'm still trying to piece my way through some of that here. Work out

how to do better. Being able to see what people are up to in a virtual world" (Team leader 1).

This active communication approach can support the team members' feeling of inclusion and value within the team and the organisation. Leaders who focus on regular check-ins with their staff, who provide tailored feedback, and who provide consistent recognition of their team's work can, through these actions, create a supportive environment and they can balance the isolation that remote work can create. Moreover, if team members feel encouraged by the leaders to share concerns, but also to celebrate success, and to engage with each other, such environment can promote a culture of trust and mutual respect. As explained by a member of a team:

"I have a really good manager here. She's very approachable. And she gives me a lot of trust. So, it's not like, go to do a task and then I'll check on you, it more checking if there's any issues, but she's very available. She writes back to ask if there are any issues, it's just the feeling that she's always there" (Team member 3).

As well as:

"I think my motto is that I will give you 100% trust and then it's up to you what you take away from that. Understanding people's workstyles and communication is super key. Understanding someone's trajectory, where they want to go, where they see themselves in the future, where they see themselves in the organization in short intervals, because there can be appraisals that happen every six months, or maybe annually, but I think more of constant check-ins are important, and not just talking about the tasks and the roles they have to do, which I think is quite valuable to that team member leader relationship" (Team member 2).

Remote work can also, even if unintentionally, promote a more individualistic approach to work. Team members may be unintentionally applying self-motivation, be reliant on self-determination, and may be focused on personal goal setting. This individualistic approach may be coming from the isolated nature of remote work, especially where the place of work is one's home. Team members may feel more disconnected from the collaborative nature of the workplace and therefore rely on their own motivation and approaches to work. This reality is being acknowledged by the leaders, who aim to take a proactive stance to counteract it. As explained by a team leader:

"I found that work was a lot quieter in fully virtual. I found that it was functional, the work got done, but it did mean that my day times were quite quiet. I was working on a

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project with only one other person. I didn't, have a lot of opportunities to interact with the other team members. For that first couple of months and I found that really difficult in terms of being new, but also, I didn't know any of my colleagues. Communication is probably the most important thing. Just because I think that you have to be more conscious of how often and the way in which you're communicating to people" (Team leader 6).

As well as a reflection from a virtual team member:

"They trust you enough to do your own job. And we perform better like that, too. Because the manager has trust in you. So, you do more, because you want to show that yes, your trust is fulfilled. I've got a brilliant manager, who puts his trust in us. And he backs you up with anything. So, as long as it's justified, he'll back you up. And that's what you want, you need that support from your manager" (Team member 8).

This can be done through intentional creation of collaborative projects, that would require teamwork and would promote collective achievements. Leader can become an important bridge between individual autonomy and collaborative engagement. Through this, they can help the team members to understand their individual contributions and how do they fit within the broader organisational mission. This is particularly important for non-profit organisation, where the staff's connection to the mission creates an important aspect of the organisational dynamics (Morgan, 2013). As highlighted by a member of a hybrid team:

"I think that's quite an interesting challenge for charities because perhaps sometimes people don't get as much of a salary. But part of the remuneration is the feeling of fulfilment" (Team member 2).

As well as a reflection by a team leader:

"We're very much being a not for profit, we haven't gotten targets as such, we still very much want to be embedded in the community. We've got our core values. I think that that's definitely stayed the same. I think from the very start, it's embedded in you these are our core values" (Team leader 7).

Very closely related to this is also the sense of silo working, which can be created by the reduced physical proximity of remote teams to the larger organisation. This feeling of being fragmented can also impact the collaborative spirit within the team and the organisation. This is being addressed by the leaders through the organisation of cross-departmental meeting, through knowledge sharing and through opportunities for the team to interact informally across departments. As reflected upon by a charity volunteer:

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> *"It feels like we are working in a silo, we have an organization, but we sometimes feel quite separate. But it does feel like sometimes you're working in a silo and you're trying to have to create something by yourself"* (Volunteer 5).

The understanding of the organisational culture in the remote work set up also requires an intentional approach by the leader. In the physical workspaces, organisational culture can be understood and absorbed through aspects like visible behaviours and shared experiences (Newman and Ford, 2021). This is different in the virtual space, where culture is being intentionally communicated to the staff. As noted by an experienced team leader:

> *"The culture I think definitely changes because you're not in the same room and I guess it can be quite difficult to keep engaged with everyone and have that regular engagement with everyone. I would say the biggest culture challenge would be for everyone to be the same in a sense, and to have the same work ethic and motivation. I think, you might have policies, but at the same time, I think that it's important to make sure that people know where they can go for help"* (Team leader 9).

As a result, the leaders purposefully communicate the organisational values and its purpose with their team. This can be done through actions such as sharing stories of the team's impact and putting emphasis on the organisation mission during team meetings. Leaders also focus on highlighting and promoting the team members' contributions within their work and how these align with, and how they reflect, the core cultural values of the organisation. As reflected upon by an experienced team member:

> *"How we operate also reflects on the young people we work with and the organisations we work with. It is even just little things, where there are certain participants and I can engage via our organisational social media, I can see what they're doing. What progress they are making; you can see through little things the effect we may have on their lives"* (Team member 2).

To promote the connection to the organisation mission, the leaders also keep in mind the stakeholders that are external to the organisation, but who play an important role within non-profit organisations. Those are the beneficiaries. Many team members will feel strong motivation and increased sense of connection through the relationships with the beneficiaries (Morgan, 2013). As highlighted by the following observation:

> *"It's definitely the beneficiaries that I am thinking about all the time, how different things would be for them, if they received the support that we're giving, or with the*

programmes that we're running, and how to get the best out of the charity and ensure that everyone who comes into contact with the charity gets the best out of it, even if they don't necessarily get what they initially wanted" (Trustee/Board member 1).

This supports the notion that many team members experience motivation when they see a clear link and a connection between themselves and the services the charity provides (Morgan, 2013), and between those that benefit from those services. Leaders work on strengthening these connections by drawing links between the team's effort and the impact of these in real life. As reflected upon by a team leader:

"Perhaps we need to schedule workshops or direction meetings to keep everyone on the same page and focused on the mission of the charity. I think it's important for people to understand the value of what they are doing and for the charity's mission to be pushed at certain times. My advice would be to understand the value of the work you're doing and how you can offer value to the cause. These are the fundamental building blocks for success in this field, and everything else can be learned and acquired through training and education" (Team leader 1).

Looking beyond the elements of connecting the staff to the organisational culture and mission, the non-profit leaders also play an important role in connecting volunteers to the organisation and its mission. This may not be part of all non-profit leaders' roles, but it is important to acknowledge that some of the interactions of the non-profit leaders may be aiming at volunteer, unpaid staff. Volunteers contribute significantly to the sector and are often driven by their personal motivation and commitment. As shared by a long-standing charity team member:

"I like to be out and about and keeping in contact with the volunteers. There are volunteers that have got my direct work number, that will just give me a call. We've tried to keep it as informal as possible, because they are unpaid staff. They're coming in from the kindness of their heart, and they're giving their time. We have wellbeing support online for staff. But we don't offer all those things to volunteers, but I like to keep in touch. I think it's a fine balance, really, because our volunteers, we've got people from all different backgrounds. They're not paid staff, you have to be a little bit more sensitive to their needs, to be very open minded because you deal with a lot of different people" (Team member 4).

The remote set up can however create a feeling of disconnection, removing some of the traditional channels to engage with the organisation's mission. The role of the leader, in

creating the link between volunteers and the organisation, is seen as critical. However, unlike paid staff, the volunteers balance their personal commitments and the organisational expectations. As explained by a charity volunteer:

"I didn't think that there was any difference in treatment of volunteers and paid staff. I thought that everybody was treated with the same amount of respect. And I'll definitely say that, because one is a volunteer, it made the organisation become even more grateful for you, because where they can't afford the labour costs of hiring more people, you help them to fill that gap at no extra cost to them. So, there's a level of gratitude that is seen through the interactions" (Volunteer 3).

The leaders not only share the organisational goals with the volunteers, but they also acknowledge their personal efforts and how they contribute to the overall shared objectives. This is being done whilst respecting the unique role of the volunteers in contributing to the sector. It highlights the importance of the leader's understanding that staff, as well as volunteers, are connected in their commitment to making a positive impact. As explained by a long-standing charity volunteer:

"So many of the people that volunteer, they also work full-time. I find that about half of the people that volunteered have used the service, they've had to use it before, and they don't have to use it anymore. They see people struggling with the cost of living, it's not just a problem that affects people that are unemployed, it affects everybody. And people want to give back that have used it [the service] before. There are also people that just want to volunteer to help people, and they feel powerless" (Volunteer 2).

Finally, and specifically to the non-profit sector, connecting externally with the funders and the members of the public creates an important part of the non-profit organisations' relevance to the broader community (Newman and Ford, 2021). However, the remote work, in many cases, changed how these connections occur. Such connections go beyond simple updates. They require the leaders to focus on storytelling that brings the mission of the organisation to life and can showcase how the team and the organisation contribute to positive social outcomes. As reflected upon by a charity volunteer:

"In the world of charities, there is a board of trustees, you're answerable to those who are on the board, and also to your members, volunteers as well. Charity work is something that is quite democratic as well. So, it's a platform for people to give their feedback, whether it's that of displeasure or satisfaction. So, when you do work within a charity, you're always sensitive to the fact that you have eyes on you and from both

ends. And then it makes you act with much more integrity, with much more caution, because there's quite a huge level of accountability" (Volunteer 3).

It is viewed as critical by the leaders to consider this aspect of their work in their day-to-day activities. It is not viewed as removed from their other duties due to the nature of the non-profit sector. This is reinforced in the following observation:

"I think the sector is amazing and they pick up so much work that nobody else would do, for example the government, if they don't provide the funding, the charity sector has to persist and do good work" (Team member 9).

In summary, leaders understand a critical aspect of their role being a focus on connecting staff, culture, and mission, within their remote non-profit teams, the organisation, the volunteers, as well as the external stakeholders. They focus on this by being intentional with their actions. Leaders regularly and proactively engage with their teams, they provide feedback, promote open communication. They also promote an environment where each team member feels recognised as a part of the team, but also as a part of the larger organisation, and feels connected to the beneficiaries and the wider community. To balance the observed individualistic tendencies of remote teams, it is important for the leaders to continue to promote collaborative projects. They focus on team-oriented goals and promote the sense of belonging. The organisational culture, values, and mission is also being consistently and intentionally promoted by the team leaders. This is done not only internally, but also externally, to highlight the broader impact of the team's work within the organisation as a whole, and to showcase the organisation's contribution to the broader community.

Through these actions, the leaders create a remote work environment where the team members feel connected to the leader, to each other, as well as to the organisation and its mission and the wider community. This is a critical aspect for the non-profit organisations and their ability to function in this work set up. This approach can contribute to the team's motivation, but it can also create a strong team identity. This is key for achieving the non-profit organisations' goals and its impact on the wider community, and it is also important for the contribution to the communities' social needs.

5.2.2 Personalising leadership approach

The move to remote work has also highlighted the view of the leaders, that them and their leadership style, should be flexible and adaptive. It is viewed as key that the leader has an understanding of the individual team members' needs. A leadership approach that is personalised is seen as fostering engagement, supporting team motivation, and inspiring

connection. Leaders focus on a creation of an environment where team members feel that they can meaningfully contribute using their own strengths. As shared by a team leader:

> "It's also important to find ways to have non-transactional conversations and learn about each other outside of work. We can get stuck in transacting the business only and the side conversations don't happen, you don't necessarily get to learn much about people. But you have to put yourself out there and be willing to be exposed. And getting people to make space for you is an interesting thing to try and encourage when everybody's already got their ways of working. It is also important to be able to work across an organization as well, to be connected to your peers and understand what they're up to in their worlds. I think it's quite easy as a remote employee to lose connection with the whole team and the leaders. It's a responsibility in part to keep rooting it back to what we're all trying to achieve. I talk about shared endeavour non-stop, and I think it's so fundamentally important" (Team leader 12).

The first aspect that defines the category of personalised leadership approach is the understanding of the varied working styles among the team members. Remote work has eliminated many physical 'cues' that would guide leader-team collaboration in physical setting (Newman and Ford, 2021). As already mentioned in the previous section, this requires the leaders to adopt a more intentional approach, to understand how the team members prefer to work. Trust and the sense of autonomy are seen particularly important, as explained by one of the team members:

> "I really like being able to take ownership and autonomy. I think there's also something about having to do a little bit more personal research when things come up, instead of things being deadline focused, I'm able to actually take a moment to gather a bit more information about this and then come back to it" (Team member 2).

It is important to note that, particularly in the non-profit sector, the staff shared that they do not want to feel like 'cogs in wheels'. This metaphor refers to a workplace culture where individual contributions are not valued, and the staff is looked at as means to run the organisation as a 'large machine'. As described by an interviewee with an experience in both the non-profit as well as the private sector:

> "I would say private sector is probably a little bit less personal or interpersonal, you feel like you're a cog in a system. If the organisation became too rigid, that would absolutely throw off the equilibrium and the balance, and the sense of community and group, I think for sure. I don't think, in many charities, we ever really get a linear work environment. But what we can try to create is less of a hierarchical structure because

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I've personally seen it creating more efficient teams, and people just feel way more valued" (Team member 2).

As well as another reflection:

"I think, for me personally, I enjoy the experience of the not-for-profit sector more because, what I found in private sector is that you have a lot of rules, you have a lot of guidance, you have a lot of specific processes and legislation that you have to follow. And it's quite rigid, there's no sort of common-sense aspect. From my experience in the nonprofit sector, I had a lot more autonomy. Obviously, you still have to abide by legislation, etc. But I found that I could make decisions, I had more control on which direction I wanted to take something in" (Team leader 15).

The previously discussed context of the non-profit sector, where staff is driven by mission, values, and the impact they are having (Morgan, 2013), goes in contrast to such work environments. The role of the leader is seen as standing in opposition to such perception. Leaders feel that it is important to respect the individual contributions of the team members, and through that, to contribute to staff engagement and retention. As an HR professional explains:

"I think they [staff] have to know that they can be trusted to get on with their work and that you're not going to be checking up on them every 5 minutes, because they're not in your eyesight. I think that, for me, it is probably first and foremost one of the key things in trying to navigate online leadership. Some people might want to do things differently, so try and respect that a little bit, because a blanket uniform group of people underneath you is not good. They're all individuals, who are trying to make their own contributions, in their own ways, so try and meet them a little bit, to understand their work, methodology. Obviously, there are some things that are procedure driven, and they must comply with that, but if they have their own flair, that they bring, and still get the job done, appreciate that" (HR Professional).

This shows the importance for the leaders to actively demonstrate that each member's input is valuable and unique. The intentionality of this is critical, as there is a lack of interpersonal and informal interactions in the remote setting. A rigid approach could be detrimental, as it could negatively impact some of the staff's motivation to contribute to the mission of the organisation. This requires the leaders to be adaptable and able to shift their approach, to meet the changing needs of the team members. These changing needs may not relate only

to the different approaches to work, as mentioned above. These needs can also arise from the different pressures felt by the staff. As explained by a team leader:

> *"Everybody is so different, so you might need to communicate a message to one person differently to how you communicate a message to another person. So, I think it would be understanding the needs of different team members through that communication. And then adapting your style accordingly, rather than saying, this is the rules, this is how we're going to do it. And I expect you to follow suit. I think it all boils down to being a two-way street and having that honest, open accountability, and trust and good quality communication"* (Team leader 15).

The previous section has already explored the perceived importance of the leader acting as a bridge between different key stakeholder, and to focus their work beyond their immediate team. These stakeholder relationships have also a direct impact on the charity staff. The staff are not immune to the pressure of accountability to these stakeholders and, even if they don't work with them directly, they are aware of the responsibility they have towards them, and their responsibility as representatives of the charity. As a team volunteer explains:

> *"You've got some weight of expectation on you, you've got to behave a certain way, because you represent the charity always, you are reflective of the charity, so I've got to make sure that I present myself in a certain way, even when not at work. You're the face of the charity. You've got to be careful, make sure that you have those values in mind always. I do something in public that is not quite right, it might reflect badly on the charity. So, I'm always conscious of that"* (Volunteer 2).

Leaders navigate these pressures, demonstrate their understanding, and offer a specific support to the staff. Therefore, whilst given the staff the independence and autonomy to work on their tasks, the leaders are still able to have an oversight of the work of their team. They do so to be able to recognise issues and areas where the team may need their support. As reflected upon by an HR professional:

> *"Leaders will need to understand where your report might be coming from. And to try and pick up on some of the cues that they might be struggling, that they might not necessarily tell you and to try and have a little bit more of a slightly personal relationship. Just so you can understand what's going on with them, because sometimes there are other things going on, that we don't necessarily take into account, and I should be able to pick up on those sorts of things, and that can make us more understanding as leaders"* (HR Professional).

The pressure of accountability, combined with the pressure contribute to the mission of the organisation, drives many staff members to try and deliver above and beyond at all costs. This often results in blurred lines between personal and work life. Leaders see their role as actively recognising such situations and providing active support to their team, helping them to re-set their boundaries and also to safeguard their wellbeing. Regular check-ins, assessing the work levels, as well as sharing or resources can all contribute to the team's healthy work-life balance. As a team leader explains:

> *"I do tend to maintain a very strong work life balance, however what I have noticed, my staff aren't. I think as a team leader I have to be mindful of my staff not logging off, working long hours, because I think that contributes to negative well-being and negative practices"* (Team leader 14).

An important aspect of the personalised leadership approach area is a consistent seeking of input from the team members by the leader. This can enable the leader to refine their approach and to address team concerns. Leaders can use the feedback to make the team members feel heard, to tailor their support, and to plan for any potential issues. It can also reassure the staff of the ability of the leader to listen and take into consideration the information received. A culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect can be created through regular feedback and actions taken from the information received. As discussed by a long-standing team leader:

> *"I'm here to help you try and get through it, or if you don't know something, and I don't know something, I might know someone who can. And it's about trying to eliminate the script that you would follow traditionally on formal communications throughout the charity and turn it a bit more person centred. It's about making sure that we respect each other's boundaries, and it's a safe space to work. I think the specific first thing is everyone is unique. Everyone is there for a different reason. Everyone requires different things. Everyone has a different experience. Everyone has different outcomes that they want as a result of participating. And if you come in with a fixed or rigid mindset, then you're going to stifle some of the flames that are there. And some of these people, that you work with, have so much to teach you. By following the norm, you're not actually showing any diversity, you're not showing any innovation, and challenging what you expect. It's so healthy to be open, because it's either confirming that you're doing things the right way, or seeing how you could potentially be adaptive, dynamic and progressive to support the team and the charity in the wider context. You need to be a leader not a manager. More so in a charity context. If you lose the trust of your team, and that often comes as a result of being too harsh, if you're too harsh*

as a leader, because that's what you think is expected, you'll lose the sense of collaborative working with your team, you'll lose a sense of leadership" (Team leader 8).

It is also important to note that, whilst many staff within the sector are driven by their personal commitment, or their connection to the organisation mission, this is not the case for every person working within the non-profit sector. As our participants shared, many join the sector through professional aspirations. It is key that the leader recognises this and can balance the motivations in their leadership approach. This area is closely linked to the next core category, advocating for career and professional development. For the staff, where professional development is the main motivator, the leaders prioritise skills and professional development in their approach to those staff members. As explained by an interviewee:

"I think many people are in a charity for not just the altruistic reasons. But I also think there is a little bit of a personal gain, development, whether they know it or not, there is something that they're in it for, whether it's to feel satisfied, that they're doing something good for the community, or paying back because they've had something given to them, or it could be that they know that they need to develop certain skills. And this is the opportunity and space that they can receive those skills, there are often many reasons why someone would get involved [in a charity]" (Team leader 8).

To summarise, personalised leadership approach is seen as key for leaders in remote non-profit teams. It can respond to the pressures that the non-profit staff deals with. It can also recognise the diverse working styles that can develop in the remote set up. Moreover, it can address any feelings of 'depersonalisation' that can arise in remote work and that can be detrimental to the non-profit staff. Through the personalised approach, the leaders can recognise individual working styles and preferences, they can balance performance and the staff wellbeing, and they can support a continuous process of improvement within the team. This approach focuses on a strong support of the individual team members. Through that, it also contributes to the team's collective ability to achieve the organisation mission.

5.2.3 Advocating for career and professional development

Another important observed aspect of the non-profit remote leadership is the leader's active role in promoting of, and advocating for, their staff's career and professional development. As discussed in detail in the data analysis section, staff within the non-profit sector often face limited opportunities for career growth, which is due to financial and resource constraints. With the move to remote work, this potential issue has become more prominent, as staff often feels overlooked for professional development opportunities, which is caused by their 'physical distance' from the organisation. As noted by a virtual team member:

"The main thing I'm missing is those informal conversations that I'm not necessarily initiating, but that happens because there there's this thing that you're working on and from there the conversation moves to the next thing… One of the things that I find challenging as a fully remote member of the team is the feeling that sometimes I'm not invested into, it doesn't feel like the organisation wants to invest in me. I feel like I am not getting any career development opportunities, that's one of the things that I feel is lacking" (Team member 6).

It is therefore seen as key for the leader to play a proactive role in their staff's career aspirations, and to find an appropriate approach to bridge the potential resource limitations and the team member's individual needs in the professional development area. This requires the leaders to create opportunities for staff growth, whilst staying connected with the organisation's mission. As shared from a personal experience of a team leader:

"When I started with the charity, I had flagged at that point I was looking for progression. And at that time, my manager actually did mention that eventually he would like to see the team expand and there would be a manager's role put in place. And there were some delays with it. So, it actually came about only this year, rather than shortly after I started, but it gave me space to settle in the charity" (Team leader 11).

The physical distance in remote setting can make staff feel invisible to career progression and personal development. As explained by an experienced remote team member:

"Remote working has many advantages, but then there are some cons that complicate the way you live your normal working life. One of the things that I find challenging, as a fully virtual member of the team, is the feeling that sometimes I'm not invested into, it doesn't feel like the organisation wants to invest in me. I can invest all my time, my professional skills, but I feel like I am not getting any career development opportunities, that's one of the things that I feel is lacking" (Team member 6).

This can be also felt more strongly through the resource constraints that many non-profit organisations face (Salamon, 2010). Remote leaders engage in active conversations with staff to gain understanding of their career aspirations and professional development needs. Regular conversations can provide a strong platform to discuss individual goals and to identify areas for professional growth. As explained by a team member:

"I think professional development can be hard sometimes. We've all got our specialist interests and other knowledge areas. When we see something that appeals to us in

terms of professional development, we can ask if we can attend, but it relies on our specific service having the money that they can allocate to that. Sometimes training can be really expensive and it's really expensive for a charity. So sometimes our professional development can be stunted a bit because of costing" (Team member 5).

Given the specific circumstances of non-profit organisations (Salamon, 2010), the strategies adopted by leaders can focus on internal training, peer mentoring, or shadowing, which are all seen as areas that can provide valuable outcomes, without significant additional cost for the organisation. As shared by a member of a team:

"Understanding someone's trajectory, where they want to go, where they see themselves in the future, where they see themselves in the organisation in say three month intervals, because there can be appraisals that happen every six months, or maybe annually, but I think more of a constant check-ins are important, and not just talking about the tasks and the roles they have to do, which I think is quite valuable to that team member - team leader relationship. I see how career progression could be stagnant in a remote workplace. However, I think it also gives you a lot of flexibility and freedom in a way that wasn't possible before. I would say sit down with them and write down what is it that you want out of this role, being honest with yourself financially, where it is emotionally, where it's mentally, where is your trajectory and really see how much those things align with what you're about to do here" (Team member 2).

However, leaders also actively move beyond one-to-one conversations with their staff. It is seen as critical that they take up a role of an 'advocate' for the staff within the organisation. They facilitate introductions across departments, nominate their staff for high-visibility tasks, and facilitate access to different networks within the organisation. In this role of an advocate, the leader use their leadership influence to highlight the strengths and achievements of their staff. As an experienced team leader explains:

"I think there [in the remote set up] isn't that opportunity to hear that something is needed to be done and say I could do that, I'm around I can do that. People can be invisible remotely. I suspect that people, who come new to the company, have very little idea of who's managing what and how much time it takes to do things, how much of their day is being spent in meetings and how you manage your time when you're doing that. You don't get to know people outside your team. And that's how you find out that people are nice. But it's also how you find out what people are good at. For people like the CEO, they need to take note of you and to push you forward for tasks

and projects. They need to know you a little bit, otherwise you could be utterly invisible to them quite easily" (Team leader 5).

However, the leaders also go beyond the notion of providing support and promoting the staff. Given the specific circumstances of the non-profit organisations (Salamon, 2010), they also actively challenge the existing cultural norms that may lead to undervaluing career growth. To achieve this, leaders make professional development a priority and make it an important part of the organisational success, rather than considering this as an optional possibility. The culture in non-profit organisations often prioritises the mission and the practical impact of the staff's work (Osula and Ng, 2014). This means that professional growth is not being viewed as a priority. This can be felt as a frustration by the charity staff, as demonstrated below:

> *"I just wish more charities would take a broader approach and go, we really value this person, we know they're a good performer, we know that this person over here has got loads potential, let's invest more in them, rather than just thinking well, you know, we need to keep wages at a certain level, because that'll keep the trustees happy"* (Team member 7).

It is important for the leaders to demonstrate that the individual development and the organisation's mission are connected, and that they are not mutually exclusive. They advocate for the idea that well-supported staff will be well-equipped and best placed to advance the organisation's mission. Professional development can also lead to the staff bringing innovative approaches to their work and it can result in a deeper engagement with the work of the organisation:

> *"We've got people that live in Sheffield, Nottingham, Newcastle, everywhere. Those people they aren't as visual as if we were working in person. I have to be mindful of that, because for some people, I'm here today, there's some colleagues that are sitting next to me. And making sure that as a team leader, I'm giving everyone the right time. But there are also some challenges in regard to making sure that we're providing opportunity to everyone, even if they're not there in the room, which is a challenge"* (Team leader 4).

It is important to also acknowledge the challenges of job security in the non-profit sector, created by the dependency on funding, as well as the relative unpredictability of donor contributions (Osula and Ng, 2014). This sense of precariousness may deter some people to enter the non-profit sector, but it can also create a sense of instability in the existing staff. Leaders cannot control the financial stability of their organisation, but they can play an

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important role in supporting their staff when they feel the emotional or professional impact of this uncertainty. As explained by an interviewee:

> *"Working with a charity isn't always as secure, which I think puts a lot of people off working with charities. It is more unreliable. Sometimes you can work for a charity, but if that charity doesn't have enough money to survive and goes under, you are unemployed. Whereas if you work for, for example, a council, and they decide to close that service, they'll put you in another role. And I think it puts a lot of people off the charity sector and it's not necessarily something that your leaders and managers can fix. But I think especially, in terms of recruitment and retention, it needs to be acknowledged"* (Team member 5).

Leaders implement open communication channels to acknowledge such challenges, and also to empower the staff and strengthen their own capabilities within the organisation, as well as in the broader context. Creating an environment of trust and collaboration can mitigate the sense of uncertainty. As shared by an HR Professional

> *"In the non-profit, there aren't so many hierarchical levels, which is a plus and a minus. It's great because you can be someone who might be a little bit more junior, who will have a lot more interactions with people, who are key decision makers, which is great experience, being a younger person coming into an organisation. But on the flip side, that will also mean if there aren't so many hierarchical levels, then actually, maybe the opportunity for career progression isn't necessarily there? So sometimes the challenge can be engaging staff and keeping them interested in the role, and with review to long term retention, that's probably something that we talk about most"* (HR Professional).

Through their work of an advocate for their staff's career growth and professional development, the leaders can have a positive impact on staff's motivation to work with the organisation. It can also serve as a way to increase staff's engagement with the organisation's mission. This role of a career advocate can become important in creating a culture within the organisation, that promote continuous learning and growth. The role of a leaders as an advocate places value on staff progression, and it creates understanding that professional development is not an obstacle to achieve the organisation's mission. It can become an important driver to deepen the staff's connection to the mission. Given the physical invisibility in the remote set up, the leaders do so in a proactive manner, through intentional communication, personalised approach, and innovative ways of thinking about available opportunities. This approach can have a positive impact on the staff's engagement, and it can support the work of the organisation as a whole.

5.2.4 Maintaining visibility

Maintaining visibility is seen as a key part of remote leadership by the leaders, and it refers to the visibility of the leader in connection to their team. When applied appropriately, the team members can continue to feel supported by the leader, they feel connected to them, and they feel connection to the organisational goals. Visibility, as referred to in this context, is not purely focused on the leader's presence, it goes beyond that. It refers to a created sense of proximity and availability of the leader for their team. As an experienced team leader explains:

> *"I will always make sure I'm available on the phone. So, I think you have to make sure you've got that availability, and people can get hold of you. We've got electronic timecards, to see when people clock in, but I haven't needed to do that, because I do trust all my staff. [It is important] to always be available for your staff, and always be at the end of the phone, to have that communication and to be open and honest as well, I feel that staff members can come to me, and I think I do manage the difficult conversations quite well. I think you definitely need to know what cases your staff are dealing with. I think if any of my team come to me [and says] I need help with this case, we can talk it through because I remember that case"* (Team leader 7).

By being visible, the leaders can continue building trust with the team, work on engagement and they can continue to communicate effectively. This visibility is understood to occur despite the absence of physical presence and physical interactions. Through this identified key approach, the leaders work on strategies to stay approachable to the team and accessible by the staff. Their active visibility can provide a bridge between the organisation and the individual team members. Through this intentional approach, the leaders can minimise the danger of isolation of team members and the potential disengagement of staff. As explained by another experienced team leader:

> *"It does require a different set of skills in terms of being creative, and not because you want to micromanage people. I think the most important thing is just communication and being honest with people. I would like to think that I found that balance. And it was down to that communication. Asking the team what works for you, what do you need, rather than me imposing something and saying, let's do this. It was more a case of me saying how can I help you, what's going to be useful for you. I think the person [leader] needs to be trustworthy so that you can go to them with concerns, questions, etc."* (Team leader 15).

One of the important identified aspects of maintaining visibility is the setting of clear expectations by the leader. It is important to the remote staff to have a clear understanding of

the scope of their roles, their specific responsibilities and objectives. Through clearly defining these expectations with the team, the leader can create a sense of clarity, which can be also supported by regular and consistent feedback to the team. This is particularly important in the non-profit sector context, as the team often includes not only paid staff, but also volunteers. As reflected upon by a team leader:

> *"I didn't find her [former senior manager] to be very communicative about what was actually happening and what was actually being required of me. I found my [more recent] manager to be the opposite of that and I really appreciated that, it was always clear to me what was expected of me and ways in which I could achieve that. I was comfortable with asking questions and I had space to ask as many questions as I needed to. That kind of communication style, making it [expectations] clear, I took forward into this role. I've had meetings with every single member of my team, even ones I don't directly supervise regularly, and I outlines for them exactly what my expectations are and exactly what my ways of working are. This is my preference, if this does not work for you, you need to tell me and we can make an adjustment. And I think that in the context of working remotely with people in both directions, you have to be a little bit more explicit than you would be otherwise"* (Team leader 6).

If there is a lack of clarity on expectations, it is understood that it can result in deeper issues and the staff and volunteers may not feel supported, or they may not feel valued. As previously discussed, the charity staff also feel the sense of personal accountability when facing external stakeholders, like the funders or the public. With clear understanding of the expectations, they can engage in the external-facing conversations with more confidence. As an experienced team leader explains:

> *"It means allowing people to have access to you [the leader] as a human. I will touch base with people and say, these are my expectations that I'm hoping that we talk through, what are you hoping to get out of it? What are their aims? What are their targets? What did they want to support with what do they feel comfortable with? And what are their anxieties around? And is there anything that we can do on the day, and then we try and have an informal catch up, it can just be five minutes, let's arrive early and just catch up on certain things"* (Team leader 8).

Another helpful aspect of the visibility of the leader in the remote workplace is adoption of an 'open-door policy', figuratively speaking. It refers to the identified importance for the leader to create an environment where the team members feel comfortable to reach out to them with issues. This is particularly important in the non-profit sector. The team members within the

sector often face a specific set of pressures (Osula and Ng, 2014). As discussed previously, these pressures can relate to the limited resources, the sense of personal accountability, as well as a potential emotional burnout. The visibility of the leader in the remote space can support the feeling of psychological safety. As shared by an experienced HR professional:

> *"Leaders will need to understand where your report might be coming from. And to try and pick up on some of the cues that they might be struggling, that they might not necessarily tell you, and to try and have a little bit more of a personal relationship. I think that is something that's been quite apparent. There's a lot of talk around mental health generally. And I think some people would reject almost any talk about mental health. And then there are other people that will take it on board, but I think we do need to be aware of how much work can be affected by our mental health, or obviously how work can affect our mental health if the workload is too much. We need to also see what we can do to support them and let them know that it's okay if you're struggling with something at the moment. I think if you have those sorts of conversations, employees will know that you have trust in them, because I think they have to know that they can be trusted to get on with their work"* (HR Professional).

As alluded to in the above quote, visibility does not mean micromanagement. It is understood as important that leaders understand how to balance their visibility and remote presence with the team members' autonomy to perform their roles. In the context of the non-profit sector, staff, as well as volunteers, are often highly self-motivated and want to deliver results towards the organisation's mission. The weight of the commitment can sometimes lead to burnout or overextension. It is therefore seen as key that leaders maintain their visibility and make the support structure available and clear to their team. As a member of a team reflected:

> *"I've worked with some managers who impose communication on you, whether that's time, style, it's very much we need to do XYZ, at these times, and this frequency, without any consideration as to whether that benefits you or the relationship, it's almost something that's done because it's something that maybe they've been taught, that that's how you should manage people, or that's something that leads to better productivity. But that rigid way of working to me is more of a micromanager style than good leadership"* (Team member 7).

Whilst the staff should feel empowered to work towards the organisation's mission, they mustn't feel isolated or unsupported. Such situation can occur in the non-profit sector, due to the often-present lack of resources and the high-emotional pressure of some of the non-profit roles (Osula and Ng, 2014). As explained by the interviewee:

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"I really like being able to take ownership and autonomy. I think there's also something about having to do a little bit more of personal research when things come up, instead of things being deadline focused, I'm able to actually take a moment to gather a bit more information about this and then come back to it. But I do think leader's presence is important. But I also think micromanaging can come up very quickly, especially when you don't have people in physical presence, so they can get a bit sensitive about what's happening. And actually, for me, that's one thing, which is a really good key bonus, I think it [remote work] offers flexibility, but there's also this sense of proximity, because somebody can be just a Zoom call away" (Team member 2).

Finally, the leaders see a key importance in utilising the available virtual tools for engagement. These tools serve as much more than a way to assign and monitor tasks, they can be also used to create streams of communication and promote the leader's 'just a call away' approach. Virtual tools are being adopted for regular check-ins, formal and more informal, but also to promote team achievements and celebrate success of the team. As reflected upon by a virtual team leader:

"The pandemic has given us a kind of technology boost that we wouldn't have had if it hadn't been for the pandemic. Overnight things were able to happen that people have been arguing about for a decade or more. We couldn't possibly do a Skype video call with a parent and suddenly it was all adopted. I think there's advances to be made in how we deliver our services as well, in turn that will have an impact on how people do their jobs" (Team leader 12).

Whilst it may not be immediately apparent, such virtual interactions can create a deeper sense of belonging. They can also serve as a platform to connect the organisation and the external stakeholders. Within the non-profit sector, there are often resource constraints that may prevent the leaders from being able to use the best tools. As shared by a team leader:

"We do use many different platforms, and one of the reasons that it's a bit fragmented is because we're always going for the most value for money option. And the most economical one, so it's not necessarily the best one, or the most user-friendly one. Ideally, it would be amazing to have a system like Salesforce, where you can automate most of your day-to-day activities, or personally in my team, I would love to have a project management software that does most of the work for you and eliminates mistakes. But it's not the sector where this is possible" (Team leader 3).

It is therefore seen as important that the leaders can utilise platforms creatively, to achieve team engagement, whilst not straining the available budget. Such virtual engagement can have a lasting positive impact on the team. As explained by a team leader:

> *"It's also important to have better ways of sharing information beyond just meetings, as everyone is already overwhelmed with them. I think there needs to be more creativity around how we use technology to facilitate communication and collaboration, especially in remote teams. It's not just about providing tools, but also about encouraging communication and the wellbeing of the staff"* (Team leader 13).

As well as the following HR professional's reflection:

> *"I think it took a little bit of time to get into knowing what was best for what. Because Teams is great for immediacy and a quick prompt and for a quick question that doesn't need much thought to respond to. Email is good for longer passages or texts that you might need to communicate or it's sometimes easier to be able to refer to because you can file things in folders and so on. And I think it took a little bit of work as an organisation to have understand what and when should be used. But I think we could probably do a little bit more internal guidance, different mediums that we use for communications"* (HR Professional).

However, it is also important to note that visibility may not be seen as a neutral act. Research on power conceptualises leadership influence as grounded in the capacity to asymmetrically shape outcomes, with leader power operating through both formal and informal channels (Sturm, Herz and Antonakis, 2021). In this context, practices that "make work visible" can inadvertently become selective amplification. The data points to these risks as participants noted that "people can be invisible remotely", and that "some people get recognised quite instantly", (see 4.2.2.3 and 5.2.5). The leader-power research shows that power can move toward exclusionary uses unless it is constrained by accountability and legitimacy (Sturm, Herz and Antonakis, 2021). Research also shows that follower perceptions of power and fairness form whether or not leader influence is accepted (Sturm, Herz and Antonakis, 2021; Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra and Haslam, 2011). This study shows that, in remote non-profit organisations, leaders act as advocates for their staff. This therefore suggests they have a level of power over who and what is seen. Without deliberate checks, this may privilege high-visibility roles or those already known to leaders. Moreover, leaders can champion team contributions externally while unintentionally obscuring others (Sturm, Herz and Antonakis, 2021; Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra and Haslam, 2011; Tost, Gino and Larrick, 2013).

To summarise, the leaders' maintaining their visibility in the remote non-profit teams is not purely about them being present. It refers to the leaders' ability to create an environment where team members feel supported and connected to each other, to the leader, and to the organisation as a whole. To achieve this, the leader focus on setting clear expectations for the staff, which creates a strong sense of structure. The leaders also promote autonomy of the team members, building trust and strengthening the staff's independence. At the same time, leaders also focus on a balanced approach to the autonomy, which is being achieved by the leader's open-door policy and their approachability. Through the leader's visibly, the non-profit staff can feel a sense of connection to the organisation's mission. Leaders, who maintain their visibility, can create an environment where the staff feels supported and connected with the organisation's mission.

5.2.5 Showcasing the value of work

Final aspect seen as critical by the leaders is ensuring that the staff maintain a sense of purpose and that they feel connected to the mission of the organisation. This is critical in the non-profit sector (Morgan, 2013). The criticality is even more highlighted when the teams move to the remote environments, as the visibility of the impact can be blurred by the physical disconnection (Newman and Ford, 2021):

> *"To understand the value of the work you're doing and how you can offer value to the cause - these are the fundamental building blocks for success in this field, and everything else can be learned and acquired through training and education. In today's world, measuring impact and demonstrating value has become increasingly important, with some consultants charging significant fees for advice on this topic. It is essential to be aware of the impact you're making and how to measure it effectively. Unfortunately, not everyone appreciates the hard work and dedication that goes into nonprofit work, and some may undervalue it compared to more flexible job options in the private sector"* (Team leader 1).

The first important aspect of showcasing the value of work is seen through the recognition of contributions and through reinforcing the purpose. As we know, in the non-profit organisations, the individuals are often driven by their personal commitment to the mission. If such personally driven staff is unable to see any tangible outcomes of their work, it can lead to their disengagement, or to feelings of not having a strong role within the organisation. As demonstrated by the following reflections:

"It can sometimes feel like some people get recognised for their work quite instantly. And then for some other people it doesn't work like that, or it feels like you're a bit disengaged. I think that's quite an interesting challenge for charities because perhaps sometimes people don't get as much of a salary. But part of the remuneration is the feeling of fulfilment" (Team leader 7).

As well as a volunteer's reflection:

"I think they don't realise the value they bring, and we do make sure we say that to people, that they see that value every day. I just feel that that makes people feel valued. If you tell them, and their coworkers, they are doing a good job, you add value to the charity, but also to yourself" (Volunteer 2).

Leaders believe that an environment, where the individual contributions are celebrated, can create a culture of acknowledgement. They believe that private, as well as public, recognition of success can make an impact on the staff's perception of the importance of their role. Moreover, with the reinforcement of how the team's work contributes to the overall mission, this can highlight the sense of purpose. As highlighted by the following reflection:

"I think the main thing is to try instilling in people what their contribution means to the broader picture, and that due to the tasks that they've done, they have enabled next steps. Sometimes it could be something incredibly meaningful, even if it's not the most impressive. Even when it comes to doing things such as budgets. If you can pull off a report of information, in the grand scheme of things, you might come at the end and ask what does this mean? Does it even contribute to something? But often you are enabling someone else to do their job, which then enables something else to happen. This is where a gratification for your work must come from, so I think there needs to be a lot more verbal feedback to people on their own performance. So that they know that what they're doing does matter and contributes to something bigger, even if there are no immediate tangible results" (HR professional).

However, it is important to note that the ability to witness the direct impact of their work on beneficiaries is seen as a source of motivation for the non-profit staff. It has already been mentioned that the interactions in the remote environment may become more obscured and, although the leader is highlighting and celebrating the team's accomplishments, providing a direct link to the beneficiaries can make a difference. As shared by a team member:

"In remote working I've been able to hear stories from people directly or youth workers, who I wouldn't have met before, because they're from different parts of the country" (Team member 7).

The leaders therefore focus on facilitating possible opportunities for the staff to interact with the beneficiaries. The leaders bring in innovative approaches to identifying such opportunities and they utilise the virtual tools to enable these connections. Whilst direct conversations may not be available, paths such as testimonials or sharing of personal stories can provide the experience of connection. These narratives can provide a bridge between the day-to-day and

the wider mission, but they can also contribute to a deeper sense of purpose. As explained by an interviewee:

> *"I don't think I'm going to save the world or anything like that, but it's more just in your own little bubble, the minimal way that you can contribute to the planet, I think, for someone like me, who's been involved in organisations like this for so long, I think I've just always been someone that's like, if I'm doing something, then when I go to bed at night I think I did good today, then I find that a little bit conflicting in my head and I think I need to feel valued. When you've made an impact on either an individual's or a group of people's day, then it's easier to feel fulfilled"* (Trustee/Board Member 2).

It has already been discussed that non-profit staff often feels the pressure of representing the charity in all aspects of their lives, not only when working (O'Halloran, 2022). The leader's active and intentional work to promote the staff's achievements is seen as having a positive impact on their feeling of empowerment and preparedness to act as the face of their charity. This can be achieved with the leader's promoting the sense of ownership within the team. As reflected upon below:

> *"I have to look at ways to encourage staff and harness them more, as opposed to simply liking the charity and being involved with its causes. People need to work and be on board with it; otherwise, it hinders the mission of what the charity is trying to do"* (Team leader 1).

As well as:

> *"I definitely was really keen to get involved on behalf of the beneficiaries, because I see myself as someone who has benefited from a charity just like this. I always think to myself, what would we get out of this for the beneficiaries? Is it that we could get a great new contact, that we could include in a workshop or something like that? So, the beneficiaries are always front of mind for me. I think a lot more could be done in terms of promoting the work that is done"* (Trustee/Board Member 1).

This can reduce some of the pressures the staff feels as the representatives of the charity. The leader's role is understood as balanced between their providing support to the staff, whilst continuing to be accountable for the key responsibilities and actions of the team. The leaders not only reinforce the staff's confidence, but they also highlight any unfair or unrealistic expectations placed on the staff by external stakeholders, or by the staff themselves. With setting realistic boundaries and clear expectations, the leaders can protect their staff from possible burnout or disengagement. As explained by a team volunteer:

> *"I've always been a very philanthropic person. Sometimes it can affect your ability to set boundaries, or you want to go beyond what is recommended. And sometimes that can make you vulnerable to risks. So that is difficult for me, because I want to help, but I can't in every single situation. Because that's not permitted. So, these are the boundaries and the of guidelines. You have time where a lot of people will reach out. But you have to know that you can't please everybody, within the prescribed boundaries of what we can and can't do, you need to have peace within yourself to know that I've done what I can and can't overextend myself because that can put you at risk or that can create a bad precedence" (Volunteer 3).*

In summary, showcasing the value of work by the leader to their non-profit remote teams is understood as one of the critical functions. It addresses the unique challenges that the non-profit teams face. These are linked to the sense of purpose, motivation, and their connection to the mission of the organisation. Through the showcasing the value of the team's work and by celebrating the team contributions, the leader can make the staff feel valued and connected with the broader organisation, despite the lack of physical presence. This approach can strengthen the staff's emotional and motivational connections, which are seen as some of the key drivers within the non-profit sector. However, it is also seen as critical that the leaders recognise the pressures and risks for the staff. Whilst the leaders promote confidence in staff to represent the charity, they also closely monitor and address any unreasonable expectations. Using the tools of showcasing the value of work, the leaders can create an environment where recognition, connection, and confidence acts to promote the staff's connection with the organisation and to create a sense of purpose.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has explored in detail the core categories that have emerged from the data analysis, applying the Constructivist Grounded Theory. It has provided a detailed narratives story of the importance of these categories for remote non-profit leaders and leadership. These categories represent a detailed framework for understanding of the challenges and

strategies that leaders understand and apply to lead their remote non-profit teams.

The category Connecting staff, culture and mission has shown the important role of leaders in creating an environment, where there is a shared sense of purpose and community, and where the staff is connected to the organisational mission and values. The second category, Personalising leadership approach, has shown how important it is for leaders to tailor leadership to the individual needs of the staff. It has specifically highlighted the importance of flexibility, autonomy based on trust, and also adaptability of the leadership approach. All of this is to respond to the diverse working preferences of staff members. Advocating for career and professional development, as the third category, has shown the importance of the leaders'

perceived role in supporting staff' growth, despite the potential constraints of financial or logistical nature, that can arise in the non-profit sector. The category focused on *Maintaining visibility* has shown that there is an importance in the leader's view of balancing their presence and the autonomy of their staff's work. It has shown the need seen by the leaders to remain accessible and approachable, whilst at the same time allowing the staff's independent working. Finally, the category *Showcasing the value of work* has highlighted the importance leaders see in recognising achievements of their staff and in connecting them to the real-world impact. They do that through the beneficiaries, funders, and other key stakeholders.

Together, these categories create a metaphorical lens that provides an understanding of the remote leadership in the non-profit sector. It shows leadership as a relational process. These categories combine the knowledge of the challenges of remote work and leadership, together with the understanding of the work of non-profit organisations and their sector-specific challenges. These categories provide a basis for the creation of a theoretical framework, which builds upon the emergent themes. It uses the findings to create a structured model which offers practical insights, as well as theoretical contributions, to the question of how does remote work shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership.

6. Theoretical framework and discussion

6.1 Introduction

Following on from the data analysis chapter, which identified the initial and focused codes, and the subsequent findings chapter, which has explored in detail the emergent core categories, this chapter focuses on the development of a theoretical framework. Through the analysis, the challenges of non-profit remote team leadership have been identified. These focused on how leaders' identities and roles evolve in response to these contexts. The emergent theoretical framework further develops these insights. It introduces a theoretical model, which provides insights into the leadership self-identity, as well as the strategies within the non-profit remote work environment.

The study has shown several adverse consequences of remote work that impact leadership practice in charities. First, participants reported reduced informal interaction and loss of spontaneity, which undermined everyday collaboration and left "work becoming invisible (codes: "loss of personal connection", "reduced face-to-face contact", "lack of spontaneity"). Second, there was isolation and fragmented organisational connection, including silo working and "disjointed connection efforts", which weakened connection to the broader organisation and its culture (codes: "disconnect from broader organisation", "feelings of isolation", feeling out of the loop"). Third, respondents described work-home boundary blurring, extended hours, and difficulty switching off, with leaders noting a need for "healthy work practices", proactive monitoring of stress, and attention to "importance of downtime" (codes: "extended working hours", "difficulty in setting boundaries", "work-related stress").

The model addresses these negative aspects. Through relational foundations and purpose-driven connection, leaders make work visible and reinforce purpose to counter invisibility and disconnection from mission (core category: showcasing the value of work). Through supportive guidance and empowerment, leaders personalise support, combine trust-based autonomy with communication clarity, and structure recognition to rebuild day-to-day connection and collaboration (core categories: personalising leadership approach; maintaining visibility). Through systematic monitoring and reflection, leaders proactively monitor wellbeing, establish healthy boundary practices, and conduct performance check-ins to address overload and difficulty switching off (core category: advocating for career and professional development).

The emergent theoretical framework is introduced in detail in this chapter. The framework puts emphasis on the two key elements critical for leadership of remote teams in the non-profit sector. Firstly, it is the dimension of relational connections of the leader and their team.

Secondly, it is the dimension of adaptive strategies within the leadership approach. The individual elements of the theoretical framework draw from the core categories, which were identified through the data analysis process and introduced in the findings chapter. The conceptual foundation of this framework is grounded in the data, with theoretical insights emerging through participants' accounts of remote leadership. While the theory is data-driven, it is informed by Hollander's (1971) model, which conceptualises leadership as an interpersonal and relational process. This perspective supports the understanding that remote non-profit leaders construct their leadership role through dynamic interactions with their teams, organisational structures, and the broader remote work environment.

This chapter will firstly introduce the objectives of the emergent framework, and it will highlight the relevance for both the academic knowledge, as well as the non-profit leadership practice. The chapter will then explain the theoretical foundation for the model, it will explain its position within the context of broader leadership research, and finally, each component of the model will be explained in detail.

6.2 The emergent theoretical framework

The emergent theoretical framework aims to provide a structured model, through which the unique challenges of the non-profit remote leadership can be addressed. It addresses the central theoretical problem: "How does the phenomenon of remote work reshape the practices of non-profit leadership?"

The model has been created through the iterative process of a data analysing and theoretical integration. Through this process, it aims to create a framework guiding leaders in this environment. The model is grounded in two key dimensions: relational connections and adaptive strategies. Both of these dimensions are critical for understanding of the remote non-profit leadership.

The dimension of 'relational connections' focuses on the importance of the leader building trust, promoting collaboration, and creating a bridge between the staff and the organisational culture and mission. This dimension, grounded in the leadership transformation, demonstrate how leaders intentionally build their role in a space with limited physical interactions. This impacts how leaders and teams interact and relate to one another (Comella-Dorda, Garg, Thareja and Vasquez-McCall, 2020; Contreras, Baykal, and Abid, 2020). It builds on the relational perspective of leadership (Hollander, 1971; Parker, 1984). It shows the leader building meaningful relationships with their teams, even in the absence of physical presence. This reflects a change in how leaders see their role, as relationship-builders in virtual and hybrid settings, not just as decision-makers.

This dimension is also supported by Hollander's (1971) system of relationships, which positions leadership as an interactive and evolving process. Hollander (1971) argues that leadership is granted, not imposed. This means that leaders continually reinforce their legitimacy through engagement, responsiveness, and trust-building behaviours (Hollander, 1971). As highlighted by Newman and Ford (2021), leaders who understand the needs of their employees, and accordingly adapt their strategies, build higher levels of trust. We also know that leaders and their leadership strategies have been crucial in ensuring positive work experiences for teams (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020), especially as they experience the need to look beyond the existing structures and re-evaluate standard practices (Verstandig, 2020).

The dimension of 'adaptive strategies' focuses on the necessity of adaptive strategies in leadership practices, to effectively navigate the diverse needs and circumstances of the remote non-profit teams. The non-profit sector feels intense pressures, as the mission of many organisations is to provide support and services to those in need, vulnerable, or on low income (Shi, Jang, Keyes and Dicke, 2020). This is critical as, due to the increased pressure and demands for the organisations' accountability, as well as the need to meet expectations of various key stakeholders, which can sometimes be competing, there is a possible danger that the focus on accountability may overshadow the focus on the value and mission of the organisation (Salamon, 2010). This aspect of the model highlights the evolving self-understanding of non-profit leaders as adaptive and responsive actors working in an evolving environment. As argued by Lane and Wallis (2009), the non-profit leaders make decisions on the appropriate leadership in order to support successful interactions and to encourage staff, and other stakeholders, to invest their emotional energy to the organisation's cause. This aspect of the model is supported by Hollander's (1971) view that leadership is not fixed but shaped by external conditions and organisational structures.

These two dimensions reflect the important factor of an intersection of the leadership identity transformation and the operational demands. These are created by the remote work environments and the challenges of the non-profit organisations. This is critical, as we know that non-profit organisations have to navigate various challenges, including fiscal challenges and challenges linked to their competition with other bodies (Salamon, 2010). Due to such challenges, non-profit leaders navigate and balance the financial focus and the organisation's focus on their social goals (Salamon, 2010). As mentioned, this model expands on the understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1971; Parker, 1984), and it demonstrates that leadership strategies are not reactive, but that they are a key function of leadership formation in remote environments.

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The model is grounded in the core categories identified during the data analysis process and explored in detail in the findings chapter. The categories are connecting staff, culture, and mission; personalising leadership approach; advocating for career and professional development; maintaining visibility; and showcasing the value of work. Each category corresponds to certain levels within the framework. Each of the categories therefore represents an element of a non-profit remote leadership with its specific characteristics, as well as the interconnected nature. As Hollander (1971) suggests, leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon, and these categories reflect the interdependent nature of leadership style, structure, and setting.

Figure 6.1 A practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations
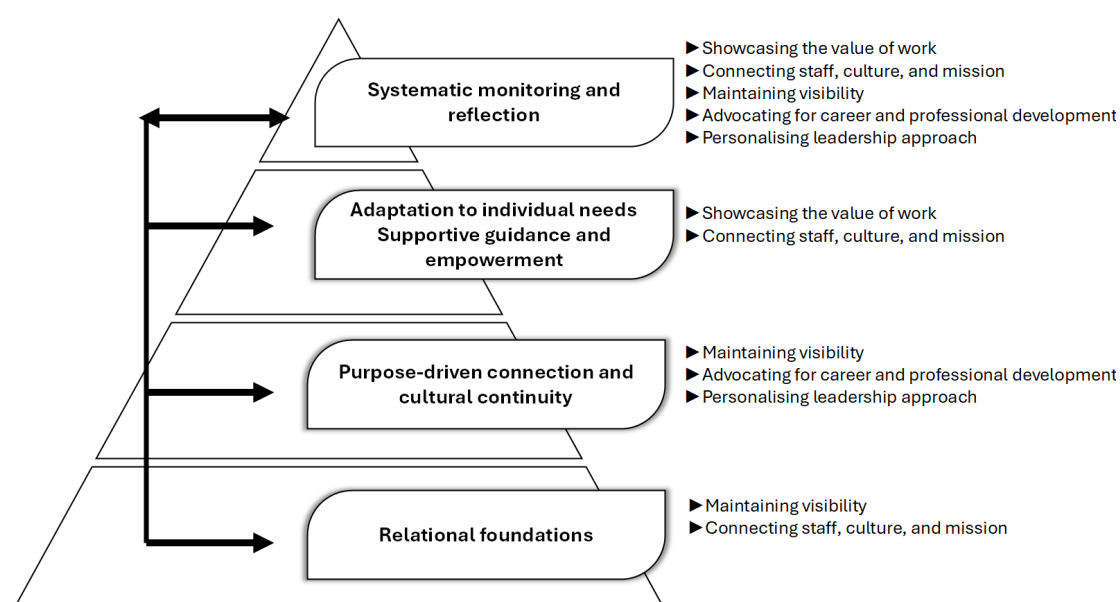
Figure 6.1 refers to leadership as something people do in everyday work, formed by context and relationships, not just by individual traits or predefined stages (Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2010; Raelin, 2019). This theoretical framework, developed from Constructivist Grounded Theory, explains how leadership is accomplished in remote charity settings. It integrates five practice based categories from the findings: connecting staff, culture and mission; personalising leadership approach; advocating for career and professional development; maintaining visibility; and showcasing the value of work. It integrates these categories across four interconnected levels: relational foundations; purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity; supportive guidance and empowerment with adaptation to individual needs; and systematic monitoring and reflection. The framework is explanatory and practice oriented, rather than a prescriptive style, and it shows how leadership practices are enacted in the charity context.

At the base of the framework lies the 'relational foundations' level. This level, arising from the core categories of '*connecting staff, culture, and mission*' and '*maintaining visibility,*' represents the role of the leader in promoting trust and connection among team members. Having this foundational level in place enables the leader to create a supportive environment. Building on the relational foundations is the level of 'purpose driven alignment and cultural continuity.' This level, arising from the core categories of '*connecting staff to mission and culture* and '*showcasing the value of work,*' represents the need for the leader to promote the mission and values of the non-profit organisation. The person of the leader plays critical role in being the communicator of the mission's relevance.

At the next level, leaders balance providing 'supportive guidance and empowerment' with 'adapting to individual needs' of their staff. This level highlights the importance of the leader in providing clear direction to staff in the remote environment, together with the recognition of their staff's skills and ability, as well as their appropriate response to the staff's needs. Finally, at the top of the model lies the level of 'systematic monitoring and reflection.' This level links back to *all* core categories, it focuses on a continuous improvement and on the role of the leader in implementing feedback and reflective practices.

The model builds upon insights from the findings of this research study. The aim of the model is to provide understanding of leadership within the remote environment and the specific context of the non-profit sector. This model sees leadership as a process that is dynamic, as well as adaptive, and that is shaped by the human-centred relations and the sectoral and operational context. It builds on the recognition of leadership as interpersonal and relational (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984). This model argues that leadership should be actively constructed and redefined, in response to the challenges of remote workspaces and mission-driven nonprofit organisations. By applying these perspectives, the model responds to the need to look beyond the existing structures and re-evaluate standard practices (Verstandig, 2020). This chapter will now focus on each level of the framework in detail, it will examine the theoretical foundations, as well as the practical implications for non-profit remote leadership.

6.2.1 Relational foundations

The level of relational foundations within the framework focuses on the importance of trust, collaboration, and meaningful connections. It forms the basis of the model. In remote non-profit leadership, the relational foundations provide the basis for strong relationship between the leader and their team. This level draws from the understanding of the core categories of '*connecting staff, culture, and mission*' and '*maintaining visibility.*' These categories specifically focus on the role of the leader being understood as having meaningful relationships with their team especially in the absence of permanent or occasional physical presence.

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This is supported by Hollander's (1971) view that leadership is not solely dependent on the leader's individual traits, but that it emerges through the interactions with followers and the organisational setting.

The leaders work intentionally to ensure that their team feels connected to them personally, but also to the broader organisation. This is also supported by existing literature which recognises leadership as relational and interpersonal (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984). Hooijberg and Wakings (2021) suggest that leaders will need to possess the ability to sustain connections among team members and colleagues who are working remotely. Savolainen (2014) also believes that leaders working in the remote environment should be open and honest in relation to their teams. Whilst leading at a distance, the leaders should show interest in the team and the team members (Savolainen, 2014). Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh (2011) specifically highlight the need for people skills to be developed in the leader, in order to listen to their team, display patience and the ability to manage conflict and to communicate effectively. Newman and Ford (2021) find that leaders who understand the needs of their employees build higher levels of trust, and through appropriate communication of organisation updates, these leaders can also sustain the company culture and values. Finally, Bryson (2003) comments specifically on the non-profit sector, where there is a diverse nature of stakeholders, including not only staff and the board members, but also external stakeholders. Trust is a central component of relational foundations, and in the non-profit sector, as was shown, it extends beyond the leader-follower dynamic to include donors, volunteers, members of the board, and beneficiaries (Bryson, 2003). This makes relational foundations a structural necessity for maintaining long-term engagement withing the non-profit teams.

Some scholars believe that there is a need for physical aspect in the leader–team relationship, in order to build those deeper connections (Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021; Lund, Madgavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020). However, as demonstrated by Al-Ani, Horspool and Bligh (2011), whilst teams work at a distance, and the leader may not be present with their teams, this is not a barrier to completion of tasks, and the leaders' skills can bridge the gap in physical presence. Hollander's (1971) model supports these perspectives by emphasising the adaptability of leadership to different settings. The findings have shown that in those situations, without the permanent physical presence, the leaders apply a proactive effort to create a sense of proximity through the virtual visibility. Leaders who intentionally prioritise presence in digital environments, who create informal connection opportunities, and who promote shared organisational values, can ensure that physical absence does not result in relational distance. The relational foundations level of this model extends beyond physical interactions, as it focuses on connection in remote non-profit teams.

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The level of relational foundations is closely linked with the overrunning theme of leadership self-understanding. Remote leaders within the non-profit sector do not understand their role as simply 'managers,' but also nurturers of the relationships. Face-to-face interactions were shown as most important to create and maintain workplace-based friendships, mentoring relationships and networks in general (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015; Sias, Pedersen, Gallagher and Kopaneva, 2012). In the absence of the physical connections, the leaders focus on intentional interactions, to maintain the relationships and connections. The leaders also use their role to encourage staff, and other stakeholders, to invest their emotional energy to the organisation's cause (Lane and Wallis, 2009).

The above may suggest that there could be a link with elements of compassionate leadership, as outlined in the literature. Gilbert (2017) looks at compassionate leadership as focused on developing and maintaining relationships through careful listening, empathising, and supporting others, which makes the followers feel valued and respected, so they can reach their full potential at work setting. Compassion in leaders can help ease distress and facilitate recovery and coping in followers (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg, and Pina e Cunha, 2021). Compassionate leadership can be a source of an ease in distress in high-pressure time period (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg, and Pina e Cunha, 2021). Strategies of compassionate leadership can meaningfully contribute to the level of relational foundations of the remote non-profit leadership model, but whilst compassionate leadership can show some valuable relevant points, this framework extends beyond the existing theory by recognising the nuances of leadership identity in remote non-profits. There are also possible limitations of the compassionate leadership. As discussed by Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg, and Pina e Cunha (2021) leader's compassionate response often depends on the follower's legitimisation. This means that the leader's ability to alleviate possible distress is dependent on the followers reinforcing that ability, potentially creating barriers to acknowledging deeper team dynamics.

The level of relational foundations, on the other hand, shows that the leaders are not only understanding their role as responding to distress (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg, and Pina e Cunha, 2021). They also proactively shape the relationships and create meaningful connections, even if there is absence of immediate need for relational reinforcement. Relational foundations also extend beyond individual emotional support. They focus on trust-building, leader visibility, and the maintenance of organisational identity in a dispersed workforce. Where compassionate leadership relies on follower legitimisation (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg, and Pina e Cunha, 2021), relational foundations focus on an independent and continuous leadership presence, even in the absence of direct validation.

The findings and discussion in this section highlight the important role of the level of relational foundations, in the emergent model of leadership in remote non-profits. This level highlights the importance of trust, collaboration, and the creation of meaningful relationships. The relational foundations represent the base of this model, and they are critical in environments where physical presence is either limited or fully absent. By applying the principles of relational foundations, the leaders understand their role through the lens of team connections, trust and alignment with the broader organisation. It reflects the leaders' understanding of their role as not just managers, but as key actors in sustaining the team cohesion. This is supported by Hollander's (1971) argument that leadership is not defined by formal authority alone, but by the leader's ability to cultivate relationships and mutual expectations.

In summary, the relational foundations level shows how leaders understand their role and how they enact this role through the promotion of trust, team relationships, and how they maintain their visibility to form a strong foundation. The base level of the model provides an important starting point to the model. It sets the initial principles for the subsequent levels, of which the one following immediately is the level of purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity.

6.2.2 Purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity

The level of purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity goes beyond individual relationships. This level focuses on connecting staff to the organisation's mission, to help promote alignment with the organisational identity. It highlights the role the leaders have taken to connect the staff with the organisation's mission, to promote shared purpose, and to promote organisational culture. This is supported by Hollander (1971), who understood leadership as a process shaped by the leader's ability to navigate structural and contextual demands. All of these aspects have high relevance in the environment of the non-profit sector. As explained by Bryson (2003) non-profit leaders are expected to have a strong commitment to the mission and vision of the organisation and to be able to communicate these effectively in order to inspire others. They also navigate and resolve possible ethical dilemmas stemming from the work of the organisations and ensure that decisions made are in line with the organisational mission and values (Bryson, 2003). Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) also argued that leaders should be sources of ethical guidance for employees. They argue that leaders should demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Brown, Treviño and Harrison, 2005). Finally, Lane and Wallis (2009) suggest that non-profit leaders support successful interactions and encourage staff to invest their emotional energy to the organisation's cause. Hollander's (1971) framework highlights that leadership is continuously negotiated, reinforced, and adapted through relational exchanges. This level is grounded in the core categories of '*connecting staff to mission and culture'* and '*showcasing the value of work.'* From these categories, this level

focuses on the role of the leader as a bridge between the individual members of the team and their contributions, as well as the broader organisational focus and goals. This level is important to the promotion of organisational identity and to ensure that the organisational culture is preserved in the remote context.

As confirmed by the findings of the literature review, the common themes characterising a non-profit organisation include the mission-driven orientation, non-profit-distribution, stakeholder engagement, governance, reliance, at least to some extent, on non-governmental resources, public or social benefit provision, and stakeholder or public accountability and transparency (Etzioni, 1973; Morgan, 2013; Salamon, Lester and Anheier, 2013). Moreover, non-profit leadership has its unique characteristics, due to the focus on the organisations' mission, instead of profit, focus on donations, volunteers, as well as limited resources and competition for staff with other sectors (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018; Bittschi, Pennerstorfer and Schneider, 2015; Suarez, 2010).

Within this context, there is the possible issue of the organisation forgetting their social function (Salamon 2010). Furthermore, the increased pressure and demands for the organisations' accountability, and the need to meet expectations of various key stakeholders, which can sometimes be competing, adds to the possible issue that the focus on accountability may divert the leader's focus on the value and mission of the organisation (Salamon, 2010). Team leaders, leading virtual teams, expressed that team members were more likely to question team rules, leadership abilities of their supervisors, and the company strategy and mission (Verstandig, 2020).

Non-profit remote leaders understand their role as participatory and critical in promoting the organisational values and embedding the culture in their staff. As supported by the literature, Lane and Wallis (2009) believe that non-profit leaders should play a role of an inspirer, developer and a change agent. They suggest that it is imperative for the non-profit leaders to sustain a climate of hope among the stakeholders (Lane and Wallis, 2009). The literature also shows that the relationship between the leader and the team is based on a shared vision of the good (Ciulla, 2014). O'Toole (1996) believes that leadership should direct the followers towards the common good. Finally, Newman and Ford (2021) demonstrate that through appropriate communication of organisation updates, leaders can sustain the company culture and values (Newman and Ford, 2021).

Leaders therefore act in a role of a proactive and intentional communicator of the cultural and organisational values. Transformational leadership principles can offer some insights in this area. It suggests that leaders can be transformational through focus on individual followers' success rather than purely focusing on a company strategy (Seltzer and Bass, 1990).

Transformational leaders motivate and inspire rather than purely give orders (Bass, 1995). It suggests that leaders can be transformational in the effect they can have on the team members (Seltzer and Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders can provide inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised considerations (Bass and Avolio, 1995). However, critics argue that transformational leadership does not sufficiently reflect specific contextual and situational nuances, as is the remote environment and the non-profit sector focus (McCleskey, 2014). The emergent model also goes further, as it recognises the practices of the leaders within the specific context of the non-profit sector and the remote work environment.

Unlike transformational leadership, which often relies on the leader's personal influence and charisma (Bass and Avolio, 1995), this model understands cultural continuity as a part of a routine leadership practices. Through this understanding, it promotes an ongoing connection with organisational values, even in the absence of physical presence. The model also sees the leader as a proactive and intentional communicator of mission and culture, rather than solely as an inspirational figure.

The findings and discussion in this section highlight the important role of the level of purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity within the model of the remote non-profit leadership. This level focuses on the important aspect of the leader's role in connecting the team members with the organisation's mission, it suggests the importance of sense of purpose, and the organisational culture, being intentionally shared with the team by the leader. Hollander (1971) highlights the reciprocal nature of leadership and setting: leaders influence culture, but they also navigate structural limitations to ensure alignment with strategic goals. This is particularly important in the non-profit leadership, which, as has been shown, is driven by the shared values and the alignment to the mission of the organisation.

To summarise, leaders act as a bridge between the individual contributions of their team and the organisational mission, values, as well as the culture. This level continues from the base built by the existing relational foundations. It shows that with the trust and effective collaboration in place, the leader's focus moves onto creating a team that is connected to the core values and the organisational culture.

6.2.3 Supportive guidance and empowerment & adaptation to individual needs

The level of supportive guidance and empowerment and adaptation to individual needs, focuses on the identified need of the leader to act in a dual role. Firstly, to empower the team members by adjusting their leadership approach to the circumstances and skills of the individuals. Secondly, by recognising the professional paths of the staff, and by supporting the individuals' professional development. Leaders advocate staff's skills within the team, but also

beyond the team. This level is grounded in the core categories of '*personalising the leadership approach,*' '*advocating for career and professional development,*" and '*maintaining visibility*.'

As previously mentioned, Newman and Ford (2021) find that leaders who understand the needs of their employees and accordingly adapt their strategies, build higher levels of trust. Moreover, remote staff with functioning supervisory relationships, experience the high levels of job satisfaction and job performance (Golden, Timothy and Veiga, 2005). Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison (2021) argue that remote leaders should avoid creating replicas of old practices, they should foster team member engagement on an on-going basis and foster creativity and new ideas generation. This is supported by Hollander's argument (1971) that leadership is adapted to evolving relational and organisational demands. Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema and Vartiainen (2013) found that the clarity of communication, the rules surrounding it, and goal setting were important for success of remote teams (Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema and Vartiainen, 2013).

Lane and Wallis (2009) suggest that the acknowledgment of individual emotions is critical in determining motivations behind decision, as well as in understanding the impact of decisions, which relate to both internal staff and stakeholders as well as external stakeholders. However, transitioning to remote work also caused many to experience a career shock, altering their way of thinking about a career within the non-profit industry (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021). Covid-19 has been viewed as a critical incident altering the landscape of the non-profit sector's workforce and it has created the need to refocus leadership to support the workers' career advancement (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021). The data analysis indicated that the non-profit sector presents both opportunities and challenges in career progression, particularly due to flatter organisational structures. This is paired with the concern that the hybrid set up could pave way for divisions between those who work more in the office and those mostly (or fully) in the remote setup, where those coming to the office more often get more opportunities for development or promotion, and those working remotely may start falling behind (Ellsworth*,* Imose, Madner and van den Broek, 2020).

This level therefore focuses on the important role of the leader in adapting their leadership style to the needs of their staff, but also in advocating for their teams' career development and progression. The leaders see themselves as having a role to recognise and address the specific circumstances of their team members. This may include the individual's different working styles, as well as their personal challenges, or their specific aspirations within their role or their career more broadly. The leaders also recognise their role in advocating for their staff's career progress, in face of the challenges of possible diminished career options within the non-profit sector (Kuenzi, Stewart and Walk, 2021), paired with the 'invisibility' of staff in

the remote setting (Ellsworth, Imose, Madner and van den Broek, 2020). Finally, the leaders also recognise their role as being approachable and visible, in the environment which is specific for its lack of physical presence. Without resorting to micromanagement, leaders' provide support to their team and make sure that there is a sense of approachability.

We can identify some parallels with this level of the model and the situational leadership model. Hersey and Blanchard (1969) have highlighted the need to take into consideration the specific situation the leader and their followers are exposed to into their work on leadership. They argued that the leader tailor their style to the group's situation, this refers to the level of knowledge, style of working, dynamics, and group aspirations (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). Instead, they suggest that the leader is observant, flexible and adjust their style to the needs of the team (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). However, the model suggests that where there are discrepancies in the identified needs, the followers' self-assessment provides basis to identify the relevant direction (Thompson and Glasø, 2018).

The critics suggest the leader assessment provides a more appropriate basis for the identification of the relevant support (Thompson and Glasø, 2018), this is in line with the findings of this research study. This model acknowledges that leadership decisions should not be determined solely by follower self-assessments. They should also integrate leader-driven insights and contextual considerations. Moreover, unlike situational leadership, which primarily focuses on task-based adjustments (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969), this model focuses on continuous and proactive engagement with team members. It understands leadership presence and development as remaining visible and robust in the leader's interactions with their teams.

The two dimensions of this level, supportive guidance and empowerment, and adaptation to individual needs, are closely connected and they mutually influence each other. Leaders who act within this level of the model are creating trust and openness to adapt to the individual's needs. Through the individualised approach, they empower the team members and their contributions to the goals of the organisation. They recognise their team as individuals with their own unique perspectives and potential. This level focuses on the evolving identity of teams who are working in the non-profit remote environment. The leaders become advocates for their team's growth and well-being. This reflects Hollander's (1971) argument, that leadership is not simply about authority, but it is about sustaining influence through mutual recognition and trust. This level builds on the two previous levels, the relational foundations, followed by the shared purpose and culture.

In summary, this level shows that leaders see the importance in balancing flexibility, autonomy, and support. Leaders who adapt to the individual needs, and who empower their

staff to be innovative and interested in professional growth, can create an environment, where staff feels part of the organisation and motivated to grow professionally. This level provides an important foundation for the top level of the model's pyramid the systematic monitoring and reflection.

6.2.4 Systematic monitoring and reflection

The final level of the model, and the top of the schematic triangle, is the level of systematic monitoring and reflection. It focuses on the role of the leader in reflective and evaluative processes. The understanding of this level refers to continuous feedback, to assessment, self-reflection, and to the subsequent actioning of strategies, that reflect the findings of the above processes. This level allows the leader to adapt to the specific challenges of their teams. These are directly influenced by the non-profit sector position and the remote work environment, as discussed throughout this chapter. This is supported by Hollander's (1971) perspective that leadership is not static, but that it emerges through an ongoing process of relational adjustment, organisational responsiveness, and contextual adaptation. It builds on all preceding levels of the model, and it is grounded in all the identified core categories. It directly reflects the complexity of the non-profit remote leadership.

As rgued by Hooijberg and Watkins (2021) a critical aspect of virtual leadership the ability to successfully establish goals, monitor progress, share information effectively, and sustain connections among team members who are working without physical connections to their colleagues. Lane and Wallis (2009) believe that non-profit leaders should play a role of an inspirer, developer and a change agent, which leads to the creation of a climate of hope. The need to focus on continuous reflection and monitoring is also supported by Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli (2004), who argue that limitations, such as budgetary ones, are common within the non-profit sector and there is therefore a tendency within the organisations to focus on bottom-line results. This can result in a disconnect between the values of the organisations and their actual delivery. Therefore, showing that the role of the leader, in continuous reflection and connection plays an important role. Hollander (1971) highlights the importance of leader adaptability, as leadership is contingent on the ability to reassess and refine approaches, based on shifting organisational and environmental demands. This is also connected to the argument that non-profit leaders navigate and resolve possible ethical dilemmas, due to the nature of the non-profit sector, and to ensure that those decisions are made in line with the mission and values (Bryson, 2003). This again shows the importance of the leader's continuous reflection and monitoring and acting upon these processes.

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There are also challenges linked to accountability within the sector, where non-profit organisations are increasingly scrutinised to demonstrate their performance (Salamon, 2010). This links to the leader's ability to understand the work of their team, to be able to reflect upon it and communicate it. Behn (1998) suggests that non-profit organisation's mission is often broad, and it is therefore important for the leader to be able to understand their team and how their work can be linked to the broader mission, and at the same time being able to deal with the challenges and complexities of the non-profit sector work (Behn, 2004). This shows that the leader's role is understood through their role as a central connecting figure between the autonomy of their staff and their collective and connected purpose. The leaders identify the need to act as a bridge between the staff, the mission and the organisation's culture. The level of systematic monitoring and reflection represents the highest point of the model.

Theoretically, there is also an argument that remote leadership is more shared in nature, and whilst a central leader figure is still desired, it may be more effective to implement alternative leadership styles (Chamakiotis, Panteli and Davison, 2021; Charlier, Stewart, Greco and Reeves, 2016; Larson and DeChurch, 2020). Shared leadership theory focuses on the distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities, with the aim to empower to individual to lead themselves while collectively working towards the organisational goals (Cox and Sims Jr., 1996). Such approach would be well suited to promote innovation within the teams. However, in the remote work environment, the findings suggest that the position of a leader stays important, due to their role as a 'connector', as grounded in the core category of 'connecting staff, culture, and mission.' The absence of regular physical interactions in remote work settings can hinder the spontaneous collaboration and social cues that shared leadership relies upon (Shin, Kim, Lee and Bian, 2012).

This level draws from all preceding levels of the model, which include relational foundations, purpose-driven connection, and supportive guidance. These four levels brought together represent a holistic approach to leadership. This leadership is grounded in the relational, as well as the adaptive aspect. This top level focuses on using the processes of continuous reflection, monitoring and feedback, to form the day-to-day practices, as well as long-term strategies.

In summary, this level demonstrates the evolving role of the non-profit remote leader. They identify the need to integrate feedback and reflection into their practices. This is to contribute to continuous adaptability of themselves and their team. Through that they can contribute to their team staying aligned to the organisational culture and contributing to the organisation's mission. This level also shows how leaders balance the relational foundations with the mission-driven nature of non-profit organisations. 18

6.3 Summary

This chapter has provided an in-depth discussion of the practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations. It has connected the findings of the research study with existing knowledge, and it has demonstrated the theoretical and practical contributions of the framework, which has been developed as a result of the research analysis. The theoretical basis for the model was discussed, linking it to the aim of the research, to understand how remote work reshapes leadership practices in the non-profit sector.

This research study is bringing new insights to the study of virtual and hybrid work, as it specifically focuses on the non-profit sector. This study moves away from the use of for-profit environment to study leadership, and it also moves away from strategy-based leadership approaches. The study rather highlights the importance of leadership which is relational and adaptive in its core. It introduces leadership grounded in self-understanding. Through this, it expands the perspective that leadership is continuously shaped by dynamic exchanges, rather than fixed strategies or hierarchical authority. It is important to note that, whilst existing strategies provide valuable knowledge and perspectives, this study provides a framework which is focused on the unique challenges of the non-profit environment, including emotional and operational challenges, which can be further amplified by the remote environment. Through this approach, the study addresses gaps that current theories leave little explored.

The proposed framework acts as a bridge between the theoretical knowledge and the practical application. It suggests that leadership self-understanding can provide key insights into leading in the remote non-profit context. The framework focuses on several key aspects of leadership. It suggests the importance of relational foundations, purpose driven connection and cultural continuity, supportive guidance and empowerment, adaptation to Indvidual needs, and systematic monitoring and reflection. These levels of the framework reflect the leaders' building trust and collaboration, focus on the creation of an alignment of staff with the organisational mission and culture, and their focus on continuous improvement of their staff and themselves.

The study also acknowledges the important contributions of the existing leadership theories, and it discusses their strengths, but also highlighting limitations in the context of the non-profit remote environment. As the proposed framework moves beyond the existing theories, it provides a more flexible and more context sensitive model, which is grounded in the lived experiences of non-profit leaders, team members, volunteers, and other key stakeholders, through the use of the constructivist grounded theory. It reimagines leadership not as a fixed strategy, but as an evolving concept, which is formed by the personal experiences, and the evolving practices. 19

To conclude, the chapter has presented a theoretical framework which can be understood as a bridge between the challenges of remote work and the unique challenges presented by the non-profit leadership. The chapter has highlighted the theoretical and practical implications of the suggested framework, which can lead to new directions of academic research and professional application. The framework contributes to both academic debates, as well as leadership practices, through its new angle for understanding leadership within the context of remote non-profit work.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research has examined how remote work as a phenomenon has shaped the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership. It has explored the lived experiences of non-profit leaders who navigate the virtual and hybrid work environments. They focus of the study was on the question of how remote work as a phenomenon shapes the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership. The study aimed to address a space in the literature, where the intersection of non-profit leadership and remote work remains underexplored, particularly taking into consideration the challenges and opportunities introduced by the rise of remote models of work. With studies on remote leadership published in the post-pandemic period (since 2023) focused primarily on remote leadership in the for-profit sector (Davidson, 2023; Ding, Ren, and Lin, 2024; Dologa, 2024; Flood, 2023; Gan, Zhou, Tang, Ma and Gan, 2023; Gaan, Malik, Dagar, 2024; Shi, Feenstra, and van Vugt, 2024), remote leadership in higher education (Glover, 2024), remote leadership in healthcare and home care (Hurmekoski, Häggman-Laitila, Lammintakanen and Terkamo-Moisio 2023; Laaksonen and Backstrom 2023), as well as the links between remote leadership and psychological concepts (Caniels, 2023; Marstand, Epitropaki, and Kapoutsis, 2025).

Through a review of the literature, the study has shown that, while remote work and leadership have been studied (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Kaul, Shah and El-Serag, 2020), the specific characteristics of leading non-profit teams in remote settings, with its mission-driven nature of work and the intersection with constraints of the non-profit sector, opened space for a specific approach (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020). The application of our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984) provided a relevant foundation for this study. It aimed to develop a theoretical framework, that reflects the relational and adaptive dimensions of leadership in this setting. With the recognition of the limits of the research in this area, theory building was identified as a key method of this study.

To meet its aim, a constructivist grounded theory methodology was applied. This approach enabled the study to explore the lived experiences of non-profit leaders and their teams. It examined how they perceive and understand their roles in the remote environment. The study used reflective processes, directly required by the constructivist grounded theory, for an understanding of how non-profit leadership is shaped, as well as how leaders address challenges such as social isolation, maintaining team connection, and promoting connection with organisational mission and values by (Lane and Wallis, 2009; Salamon, 2010). Hollander's (1971) emphasis on leadership as a system of relationships further supports this perspective. By analysis of the data, which has involved initial coding, focused

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coding, and the ongoing development of core categories (Charmaz, 2014), as well as through debate of existing academic literature, a practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations was developed.

The model consists of four interconnected levels: relational foundations, purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity, supportive guidance and empowerment with adaptation to individual needs, and finally systematic monitoring and reflection. These levels represent the core dimensions of leadership in remote non-profit contexts and are theoretically supported by Hollander's (1971) conceptualisation of leadership. Each level addresses specific aspects of the leadership experience. The model reflects on existing leadership theories (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Cox and Sims Jr., 1996; Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021), but advances beyond these frameworks, as it uses leadership self-understanding as central to the discussion. This perspective puts emphasis on the lived experiences of leaders. It focuses on how they understand and navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by remote work, whilst at the same time focusing on the continued connection of their staff to the organisation's mission and values.

This chapter synthesizes the study's contributions to academic theory and leadership practice. It provides insights that extend beyond the immediate context of non-profit organisations. By grounding its findings in the real-world experiences of non-profit leaders and their teams, this research advances academic understanding, but it also offers practical guidance for practitioners in the sector. Building upon, and expanding beyond, our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984), the study highlights the importance of non-profit leadership as a relational concept. This concept evolves in response to the demands of remote work, and it puts emphasis on relational connections, adaptability, and mission alignment.

7.2 Meeting the research aim and objectives

This research aimed to explore how remote work as a phenomenon shapes the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership. Its goal was to provide insights into leadership self-understanding within the context of non-profit organisations, who operate within the remote work environments. The overarching aim was to contribute to both the academic theory, and to professional practice. To achieve this, four key objectives were established. These objectives were systematically addressed throughout the thesis. This section will focus on a detailed explanation of how each objective was met.

Objectives 1 and 2 were to examine how leaders understand their role in response to the challenges of remote work, and how the unique circumstances of the non-profit

sector ffect the work of leaders. These objectives were achieved through qualitative analysis presented in chapters 4 and 5. The findings reveal that remote non-profit leaders understand their role as connectors, who maintain relational connections, trust, and promote alignment with organisational mission and culture. Leaders described how remote work challenged traditional notions of leadership, and how they identified their roles as grounded in relational and adaptive approaches.

Objective 3 was to evaluate and develop a framework in order to generate theory and contribute to the existing literature on remote leadership. The focus being on leadership as an embodied concept, which is shaped by the leader's understanding and personal experiences. The practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations, which was presented in chapter 6, addresses this objective. It discusses a conceptual framework grounded in the lived experiences of non-profit leaders. The model highlights relational connections, purpose-driven connection and cultural continuity, supportive guidance and empowerment, and systematic monitoring and reflection, as key dimensions of non-profit leadership in remote work contexts. The framework builds upon, and expands beyond, our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984). The framework contributes to advancing leadership theory and it provides foundations for future studies in the field.

Objective 4 was to provide contributions to the non-profit sector and support organisations in continuing to provide invaluable services to those in need. The practical implications of the study are detailed in chapter 6, where the model suggests actionable points for non-profit leaders. The framework offers a perspective to navigate the complexities of remote work while maintaining organisational alignment and while ensuring mission-driven practices in the non-profit organisations. The framework hopes to inform non-profit leaders, and through this process, to support non-profit organisations in providing their important services.

By systematically addressing the set objectives, this research has met its aim of advancing understanding of how remote work shapes leadership identity and practices in non-profit organisations. The findings, with the theoretical framework, provide a foundation for further research and practical application in the area of remote non-profit leadership.

7.3 Contributions

Theoretical contributions are key to the progression and development of academic understanding and practical applications in any given research area. Corely and Gioia (2011 argue that theoretical contribution should advance knowledge through originality, incremental insights, revelatory insights, and utility. Through the originality, the researcher demonstrates their ability to provide advancements of current understanding of the research area (Corely

and Gioia, 2011. This understanding revolves around incremental insights and revelatory insights. With incremental insights referring to the progressive advancement of understanding and revelatory insights referring to making revelations which were previously not seen, or not known, or not conceived" (Corely and Gioia, 2011, p. 17. The last dimension of theoretical contribution, utility, suggests that the research should have the potential to contribute to scholarly as well as practitioner knowledge (Corely and Gioia, 2011. To demonstrate the contribution of this research, direct parallels were drawn to these characteristics.

7.3.1 Originality: Contributions to the leadership theory

The practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations offers originality through its people-centred focus, grounded in the characteristics of the non-profit sector, as well as the remote work environment contexts. It recognises leadership as relational and interpersonal (Hollander, 1964; Parker, 1984. It builds upon the view that leadership is a co-constructed and adaptive process, shaped by relational interactions, organisational constraints, and external environmental factors (Hollander, 1971. It responds to the need to look beyond the standard leadership styles and practices and to set up new work structures and updated strategies for effective working (Verstandig, 2020. It also responds to the question to what extent can the existing leadership theories help to navigate the unique set of circumstances following the pandemic crisis and if and how they can inform leaders when they are deciding what approaches they should adopt (Tourish, 2020.

Whilst existing theories have been studied leadership in relation to the remote context, the literature review has demonstrated limitations when applying the knowledge of remote leadership on the non-profit context (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tourish, 2020; Verstandig, 2020. The literature review has shown that virtual and hybrid work is prevalent in the non-profit sector, leading to challenges including loss of connection, trust and connection (Allen, Golden, and Shockley, 2015; Galanti, Guidetti, Mazzei, Zappala and Toscano, 2021; Newman and Ford, 2021. The remote leaders have experienced their leadership abilities being questioned, as well as the organisational mission and culture (Verstandig, 2020. The literature review has also shown the evidence of heightened pressures on the non-profit sector, paired with increased demands for services and remote adaptability (Amar and Ramsay, 2021; Hogarth, 2021; Kunzler, 2021. The model challenges the existing leadership theories and their applicability for these complex nuances, with few studies explicitly examine the application of these theories within the non-profit sector without a sole focus on the face-to-face interactions (Jiang and Men, 2017. The model critiques these theories, including shared leadership, which advocates for sharing power among the team, with the model arguing for the leader instead being a central figure and a connecting bridge for staff, mission, and culture (Cox and Sims Jr., 1996. Situational leadership is discussed

through its focus on identifying leadership needs, where the theory suggests follower-focused approach (Thompson and Glasø, 2018), whilst the model incorporates the recognition of how context, self-identity and lived experiences shape the leaders and their practices and it suggests that the leaders-centring approach provides more suitable basis for the identification of relevant support. In connection with compassionate leadership (Simpson, Rego, Berti, Clegg and Pina e Cunha, 2021), the model suggests creating meaningful connections even in the absence of immediate need for relational reinforcement. And finally, the model recognises the practices of the leaders within the specific context of the non-profit sector and the remote work environment, as opposed to the transformational leadership approach, which doesn't reflect closely on the specific context (McCleskey, 2014).

The emergent model acknowledges the known insights, but moves beyond the existing theories, by the application of a people-centred approach, which is grounded in the lived experiences of the team leaders, their staff, and closely connected non-profit stakeholders. This is through the understanding of leadership as relational and interpersonal (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984) and through building upon, and expanding beyond, our understanding of leadership as continuously redefined through relational exchanges and shaped by both internal team dynamics and external organisational constraints (Hollander, 1971). The model examines leadership, not through the perspective of strategies, but through the lens of who leaders identify as, in response to the complex challenges of leading remotely, in the unique mission-driven environment of the non-profit organisations. It focuses on a people-centric perspective. The model examines what leaders see their role being and how they act in their role, how they understand the challenges of remote environment, and the specific circumstances of the non-profit sector. Central questions to be answered include 'how does remote work as a phenomenon shape the understanding and practices of non-profit leadership? and 'how do non-profit leaders understand their roles and adapt to the unique challenges of the remote work environment while maintaining alignment with organisational mission and values?

The study focuses on leadership as an embodied practice. The model provides revelatory insights into the relational and adaptive nature of the strategies applied by the leaders when navigating their roles. It recognises the role of the leader being understood through relational foundations, purpose-driven connections and cultural continuity, adaptation to individual needs, supportive guidance and empowerment, and systematic reflection. It builds upon the view that leadership is based on sustaining influence through mutual recognition, trust, and responsiveness to change (Hollander, 1971).

Through this approach, and by contextualising the leadership practices within the non-profit remote setting, the model provides understanding of leadership that is people-centred as well as context-specific. The model introduces the concept of relational-adaptive leadership. This concept emphasises the dynamically evolving interaction between relational connections, including building trust, collaboration and alignment, and adaptive strategies, including the flexible response to individual needs and continuously reflecting and improving based on feedback).

In summary, the emergent practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations contributes to the originality in the leadership theory through framing leadership as an embodied role, grounded in the context of the remote non-profit space. It contributes to the existing theories by addressing their limitations within this context. It offers a context-specific framework which contributes to our understanding of leadership in mission-driven, resource-constrained and physically dispersed environments. By bringing this understanding, the study opens possibilities for future research into leadership as an embodied practice, which takes into account the intersection of individual, organisational, and environmental factors (Hollander, 1971).

7.3.2 Utility: Contributions to the leadership practice

Following the exploration of theoretical contributions of the proposed model, this section focuses on the model's utility. Utility refers to the contributions that improve both theoretical knowledge as we as having practical real-world applications (Corely and Gioia, 2011). The practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations suggests a move from strategy-driven approach to leadership to a people-centred, self-reflective approach. Through this, the model proposes actionable framework for leaders to reflect on their own practices.

The model puts emphasis on the role of the leader as a connector, who bridges the connection between the staff members, themselves and the organisation's culture. Through this identified role the leader can address challenges prevalent in the remote workspace such as social isolation or staff and disengagement (Allen, Golden, and Shockley, 2015). The leader's visibility and a proactive and intentional approach are key within this framework. They allow the leader to maintain these built connections, whilst reinforcing the organisational identity and mission which can be impacted by the remote environment (Newman and Ford, 2021) and which is critical in the non-profit sector driven by mission instead of profit (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020; Allen, Winston, Tatone and Crowson, 2018; Bittschi, Pennerstorfer and Schneider, 2015; Suarez, 2010).

An important aspect of the model is also the focus on systematic monitoring, feedback and reflection. This aspect promotes adaptability within the leadership practices,

making the leadership approach relevant and responsive to the evolving nature of the remote non-profit environment. This is especially important as the non-profit sector forces the leader to balance the financial constraints that can impact on the feeling of job security, opportunities for professional development, and the approaches of delivering on the core mission of the organisation (Salamon, 2010). With the integration of the systematic reflection into the leader's self-understanding, they can respond to the ethical dilemmas and possible tension that originate in the challenges faced by the sector, as well as by the nature of the work of the non-profits (Bryson, 2003). The leaders can apply this approach to respond to the need to inspire, motivate and maintain a climate of hope (Lane and Wallis, 2009).

While grounded in the work of charitable organisations, the model can also be relevant to other organisations within mission-led contexts, where remote work is being implemented. Social enterprises offer a close comparison. Social enterprises share the focus on mission with charities but add a stronger commercial logic (Ko and Liu, 2021). Social enterprise' transformation requires leaders to introduce commercial practices and build professionalised structures, while at the same time legitimating their socio-commercial model to stakeholders (Ko and Liu, 2021). These domains can link closely to the framework. Leaders can use the purpose and visibility practices (e.g., making contributions explicit, connecting tasks to mission) to justify revenue-seeking, while they are safeguarding identity and values in dispersed contexts (Ko and Liu, 2021). Moreover, as social enterprise transformations focus on communicating both social and commercial performance (Ko and Liu, 2021), the level of the model focused on monitoring and reflection speaks directly to practices of ensuring that performance is being made visible in remote settings, and at the same time, mitigating reliance on purely commercial metrics.

In summary, the model demonstrates utility by introducing a people-centred framework of leadership that specifically addresses the challenges of non-profit remote work. The model focuses on the relational and adaptive identities of leaders and through this focus it provides a practical framework for non-profit leaders to lead with connection, with purpose, and with adaptability.

7.4 Research limitations

Care was taken in the design and execution of this research, and a variety of methodological choices were considered, specifically to ensure that the investigation met its aims and objectives, however, it is important to acknowledge the existing limitations of this study.

Firstly, there were some practical limitations identified. This research was conducted within the constraints of time and resources associated with doctoral research.

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While every effort was made to ensure comprehensive data collection and analysis, certain limitations should be addressed. This includes the geographical focus of the study. This has been exclusively on the UK non-profit sector. This may limit the generalisability of the findings to other geographical contexts or sectors. It is however important to stress that through this specific focus, detailed exploration of leadership in the UK's non-profit remote work environment was achieved. However, similar studies in other national or cultural contexts could provide different insights, this is due to possible variations in work practices, organisational structures, and cultural norms.

The study applied a constructivist grounded theory methodology. The adoption of constructivist grounded theory in this study does not reflect a superiority of the methodology, it reflects its suitability as the best fit for the aims and objectives of this research. This methodological approach is appropriate for exploring a phenomenon as complex as leadership identity. However, it has its own limitations. Theoretical sampling was a key component of the process using the constructivist grounded theory. This sampling method involves iterative sampling based on emerging categories and themes (Charmaz, 2014). This enables the researcher to refine and expand the data as the theory develops (Charmaz, 2014). A potential limitation of this approach is that the focus on specific emerging categories or concepts may unintentionally exclude perspectives that fall outside these areas. Theoretical sampling also relies on the researcher's judgement when theoretical saturation has been reached. This process risks being influenced by the researcher's own biases or priorities (Charmaz and Thornberg, 2021). To mitigate these issues, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance throughout the process, utilised a reflexive journal and consulted regularly with the supervisory team. These steps were taken to make sure decisions around sampling and saturation were grounded in rigorous methodological practice.

Interviews were the primary data collection method used in this study. They have provided deep understanding of the studied topic and provided insights into the he lived experiences and leadership identities of participants. However, interviews as a method, have several possible limitations, including subjectivity, bias, and potential limitations in scope and depth (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Rubin and Rubin, 2011). The co-construction data, between the researcher and participants, can produce interviewer, as well as participant, bias (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). The interviewer's own interpretation of responses may shape the direction of the conversation and participants may tailor their responses based on perceived expectations (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). Moreover, the depth of information obtained during interviews can vary. This is dependent on the participant's ability to articulate their experiences, and on the

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researcher's skill in probing for further details (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). To address these limitations, several measures were implemented. The researcher applied a deeply reflexive stance throughout the study. The researcher continually scrutinised their own position and potential biases (Charmaz, 2017). The researcher also maintained methodological self-consciousness, and regularly documented reflections in a research journal. Moreover, the researcher used probing and follow-up questions, to encourage participants to provide more detailed. The researcher also applied member checking on several occasions, by sharing the interview transcripts with participants, to make sure that their responses were captured accurately (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Further to the area of interviewing, the interviews were conducted virtually, using platforms such as Zoom and other similar tools. The virtual interviews provided practical advantages. These include enabling access to participants from different geographical locations and providing more flexibility in scheduling. This approach, however, also introduced certain limitations. The video interview approach may limit the researcher's ability to interpret the participants' emotions or reactions (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). This can be especially pronounced, when the researcher or the participant are experiencing connection issues. To mitigate this, the researcher maintained careful observation of participants' tone and their expressions. The researcher asked follow-up or clarifying questions. This was done to ensure that key points were not being overlooked. Virtual interviews can also pose a challenge in building rapport between the researcher and participants. The physical distance may create a sense of formality or detachment, which may potentially limit the depth of responses shared by participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). To mitigate these effects, the researcher dedicated time at the start of each session to establish a conversational and welcoming tone. The researcher engaged with the participants in an engaging manner, to make sure participants felt comfortable, and their contributions valued throughout the process.

Furthermore, this research specifically examines the non-profit area. This sector faces unique challenges, including resource constraints, public scrutiny, and connection to values and mission (Etzioni, 1973; Morgan, 2013; Salamon, Lester, 2010). The findings offer important insights into remote leadership in this sector, however, they may not fully translate to the for-profit sector. The for-profit sector is characterised by differing priorities, organisational dynamics, and resource availability (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli, 2004). Further to this, the research commenced in 2022, at a time when the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic were still being strongly felt. This could have influenced leaders understanding of remote work.

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However, with the interview process concluding in 2024, it mitigates this limitation through capturing both the immediate responses to the pandemic, and the view capturing the approaches to remote work that have evolved since. This provides an understanding of leadership in non-profit remote workspaces during and after a period of significant transition.

In summary, this study's limitations are acknowledged, and every effort was made to ensure the research process was rigorous and contextually grounded. Despite some inherent weaknesses in qualitative research, it is shown that the data gathered from this approach outweigh these limitations. This is particularly true because of the study's focus on leadership through lived experiences. This is a complex phenomenon that can be explored well through engagement with participants' lived experiences. This approach has allowed the study to uncover relational and contextual factors, that are critical to understanding leadership through lived experiences. These factors could have stayed uncovered, if explored using quantitative, or less interactive research designs. Some of the outlined limitations also point to opportunities for further research, which can expand understanding of leadership in remote work settings, and in particular in the non-profit sector.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

This research contributes to understanding of leadership through experiences of leaders and staff in remote non-profit workspaces. The findings have revealed the relational and adaptive approach to leading by the non-profit leaders navigating the remote environments. This study brings a novel perspective to our understanding of non-profit remote leadership, both academically and practically, however, there are several related areas that would benefit from further exploration.

Firstly, future studies could focus on an expanded geographical scope. This study focused specifically on the UK non-profit sector. However, non-profit organisational operate globally, and therefore non-profit leadership is a global phenomenon. Moreover, remote work, by its nature, crosses different geographies and cultures. One possible approach could be a comparative study across different regions, which could provide deeper understanding of the contextual factors of the non-profit environments, which can include social norms or cultural norms (Etzioni, 1973; Morgan, 2013; Salamon, Lester and Anheier, 2013), and the context of remote work, and how these factors influence the leaders' understanding of their roles.

Secondly, a longitudinal study could build on the scope of this research. This study began during a time period when the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were still felt very strongly (Probert, 2022). At the point of the conclusion of this study, the remote work practice, initially accelerated by the pandemic, have become more established (Amar and Ramsay, 2023).

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A longitudinal research study could track how the understanding of leadership, and the leadership practices, are evolving over time, as the virtual and hybrid work continues to evolve. This is particularly relevant for the non-profit organisations, as new challenges emerge, and at the same time, technology continues to develop (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020).

Closely linked to the question of technology is a possible area of future research focusing on how technology is going to shape leadership. An important element, relevant for the area of remote leadership, is how are the leadership practices, and the leader identities, going to be impacted by the use of artificial intelligence and virtual realities. Can these changes impact organisational cultures and the leaders' role in providing the bridge between the staff and the wider organisational values? Moreover, specifically within the non-profit context, what are going to be the ethical implications and challenges posed by these technologies when providing charitable services, and how these could impact the role of a leader in navigating potential ethical dilemmas (Bryson, 2003).

The findings of the study also open up an opportunity for future research focusing on the connection between leadership identity and emotional well-being. Remote work can directly impact emotional well-being through the lack of socio-emotional support, feelings of isolation, and the heightened impact of non-work stressors (Gómez, Mendoza, Ramírez and Olivas-Luján, 2020; Perry, Rubino and Hunter, 2018; Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2020). The leaders are expected to provide emotional connections with their team to mitigate these impacts

(Hooijberg and Watkins, 2021; Lund, Magavkar, Manyika and Smith, 2020). Non-profit leaders are also expected to invest their emotional energy to the organisation's cause (Lane and Wallis, 2009). The research findings support this and show that it is also what the leaders understand to be part of their role. As presented by one of the remote team leaders:

> *"I had to step away from some areas of passion in order to manage the challenges of personalities and daily arguments. I believe it was due to people's fears and difficulties with the situation at the time"* (Team leader 1).

Future research on how these leaders manage their emotional well-being, whilst continuing to support their teams, could provide valuable insights not only for the non-profit sector, but also the leadership practice more broadly, as well as for the academic understanding of leadership. The research could explore the impact of emotional labour on leadership, as well as roles of organisational support. These findings could also inform best-practices for non-profit governance.

The research study introduces leadership as a practice, which is shaped by lived experience, and understood as a self-concept by the leaders. It builds on, and expands beyond, our understanding of leadership as an interpersonal and relational process (Hollander, 1964, 1971; Parker, 1984. There is scope into this topic for future research, which could focus more deeply on the process of becoming a remote leader. The becoming referring to how has the leadership self-understanding formed, reshaped, and enacted over time. The future research could explore questions such as what emotional and psychological dimensions are involved in leadership identity formation; what expectations did the leaders have when transitioning to remote leadership and how did those evolve; as well as how have the leaders develop, to show those around them who they see themselves as being.

Finally, the study has contributed to the understanding of leadership through lived experiences with the application of the practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations. Future research could explore application of the model in other organisational contexts. For example, it could investigate how the principles of relational connections and adaptability in leadership apply to sectors with different organisational structures, such as governmental institutions, universities, or social enterprises. This could broaden the theoretical and practical implications of the model.

In summary, this study provides foundations for further research into leadership, leadership practices, and leadership identity through the remote work lens, as well as the lens of the non-profit context. Understanding leadership through lived experiences has opened up areas for future research. Future studies could build on these findings and expand the geographical and temporal scope of the study. They could also examine the roles of technology, including the artificial intelligence, in leadership. Another area of focus could include an investigation into emotional well-being and the leadership concept development in leaders. Finally, the proposed practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations can be broadened to different organisational contexts. These areas of research could further expand the knowledge provided by this study into both the academic knowledge, as well as the practitioner understanding of leadership.

7.6 Concluding remarks

This study's aim was to provide a detailed understanding of non-profit leadership in remote work settings. It has done so by focusing on the experiences of leaders themselves, and by exploring leadership as an embodied identity, which is shaped by lived experience. Much of existing literature on leadership in remote environments has focused on strategies, efficiency, and organisational outcomes. This research moves the focus to the leaders' own perspectives and experiences, as the ways in which they make sense of their roles.

The study doesn't want to suggest a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to leadership, and it also doesn't want to suggest that existing leadership frameworks are irrelevant. This study, instead, highlights the unique challenges faced by leaders in the studied area. It demonstrates that leadership in remote non-profits is not purely defined by strategic oversight, but it is defined by connection, adaptability, and alignment with mission and values. The findings also show that leadership in the non-profit sector extends beyond operational management. It is personal, shaped by trust, it requires emotional investment, and a commitment to organisational purpose.

In close, by developing the practice framework for remote leadership in charitable organisations, this research presents a conceptual framework grounded in the lived experiences of leaders. The model offers insights that are both theoretically and practically applicable. It is hoped that these insights will contribute to the academic discourse and will provide valuable guidance for leaders, who are navigating the complexities of virtual and hybrid work.

This PhD thesis hopes that the findings can provide meaningful contribution to the important sector, and through the shared knowledge, help the non-profit organisations to continue to provide the invaluable services to those in need.

Appendices

Appendix A: Initial interview protocols

Initial interview questions – team leaders:

1. *Opening questions:*

Can you tell me a little bit about:

- Your organisation
  - Mission, location & area of operation, size.
- Your team
  - Areas of focus, how many members.
  - How long have you been with the company and with your team?

2. *You and your experience*

- Why did you decide to work in the non-profit sector?

- Have you ever worked in a private (commercial) sector or in the public sector?

- Do you think that leaders in the non-profit sector face different challenges to the commercial space? If so, how would you describe these challenges?

  - *If relevant, would you be able to compare leading in non-profit with your previous experiences in the commercial/public sector? What are the advantages/disadvantages of working in a non-profit organisation?*

  - *If relevant, how do you tailor your leadership style to these challenges?*

- Are you aware of your own leadership style or approach in relation to your team and would you be able to describe it?

3. *Leading during the pandemic*
- In what mode of operation was your team during the pandemic (stayed in office, virtual, some form of a hybrid set up)? What challenges did it bring?

- How did you manage the transition period?

- Did you have to adapt your style of leading during the pandemic?

- Do you think your leadership style would be different if you were working in a private/commercial organisation?

- How did you keep your team committed to their work despite the circumstances?

- What strategies did you adopt to communicate effectively and stay connected with your team?

- Did you adopt any specific strategy to protect the team's wellbeing in the remote (virtual/hybrid) set up?

4. Leading post-pandemic

- Is the situation within your organisation and team post pandemic 'back to normal' or has your mode of operation changed long term (are you back to face-to-face, virtual or some form of a hybrid set up)?

- How did you manage the transition 'back to the office' or the new mode of operation?

- Have you changed your approach to team leadership as a result?

- Are questions or effective communication and connection with your team still pertinent?

- *If relevant, if you are still working remotely for at least a period of time, how do you ensure the team's wellbeing in the remote (virtual, hybrid) set up is protected?*

- *If relevant, do you think that hybrid work may create divisions within the team/organisation (as an example, if remote work is offered only to some staff, or if those in office have more privileges than those working remotely etc.)?*

5. Moving forward

- Do you think the pandemic has changed you as a leader? If so, how?

- Do you think there are lessons we should carry with us for team leadership?

- What do you think about the future of teamwork in non-profit organisations, is the situation now the new normal or do you envisage further developments and changes?

- Do you think that the commercial sector is in a similar or a different position to the non-profit sector post-pandemic? Can you share your thoughts?

- Do you think that remote work, for at least a period of time, is the future of work, or are we going back to the office full-time?

- What would be your advice to new non-profit team leaders?

6. Final thoughts and reflections

- Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked you?

Initial interview questions – team members:

1. Opening questions:

Can you tell me a little bit about:

- Your organisation
    - Mission, location & area of operation, size.
- Your team
    - Areas of focus, how many members.
    - What is your role within the team.
    - How long have you been with your team?

2. You and your experience

- Why did you decide to work in the non-profit sector?

- Have you ever worked in a private (commercial) sector or in the public sector?

- Do you think that non-profit teams face different challenges to the commercial space? If so, how would you describe these challenges?

    - *If relevant, would you be able to compare working in non-profit with your previous experiences in the commercial/public sector? What are the advantages/disadvantages of working in a non-profit organisation?*

3. Working during the pandemic

- In what mode of operation was your team during the pandemic (stayed in office, virtual, some form of a hybrid set up)? What challenges did it bring?

- How did your team leader manage the transition period? How would you evaluate their strategy?

- Did you have to adapt your approach to work during the pandemic?

- Do you think your team leader's approach kept the team committed to work despite the circumstances?

- What strategies did they (the team leader) adopt to communicate effectively and stay connected with you?

- Did they (team leader) adopt any specific strategy to protect the team's wellbeing in the remote (virtual/hybrid) set up?

4. Working post-pandemic

- Is the situation within your organisation and team post pandemic 'back to normal' or has your mode of operation changed long term (are you back to face-to-face, virtual or some form of a hybrid set up)?

- How did your team leader manage the transition 'back to the office' or the new mode of operation?

- Are questions or effective communication and connection with your team leader and other team members still pertinent?

- *If relevant, if you are still working remotely for at least a period of time, is the team leader focusing on the team's wellbeing in the remote (virtual, hybrid) set up? And if, how?*

- *If relevant, do you think that hybrid work may create divisions within the team (as an example, if remote work is offered only to some staff, or if those in office have more privileges than those working remotely etc.)?*

5. Moving forward

- Do you think the pandemic has changed your team?

- Do you think your team leader has changed as a result of this?

- What do you think about the future of teamwork in non-profit organisations, is the situation now the new normal or do you envisage further developments and changes?

- Do you think that the commercial sector is in a similar or a different position to the non-profit sector post-pandemic? Can you share your thoughts?

- Do you think that remote work, for at least a period of time, is the future of work, or are we going back to the office full-time?

- What would be your advice to new non-profit team leaders?

6. Final thoughts and reflections

- Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked you?

Appendix B: Participant information sheet and the interview consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Petra Buresova, and I am a Doctoral Researcher at Burnel Business School. I am currently conducting a research study, as part of my PhD degree, focused on the changes to the leadership strategies in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and specifically in the context of the UK's non-profit space. I am looking for current and former non-profit leaders and team managers who would be willing to talk about their experiences in managing diverse teams within virtual and hybrid workspaces and I would like to invite you to take part. This document explains the various aspects of this research and is designed to aid with your decision whether you would like to be involved or not. Should you have any further questions after reading it, contact details for further queries can be found at the end of the document. Thank you for considering this invitation.

What is the purpose of the study?

Over the last couple of years, we have endured many workplace changes, including the abrupt large-scale move to virtual working, later followed by the introduction of hybrid working, followed by (partial) return to the office. The way we work with our teams has changed and this has been particularly challenging for those working in the non-profit organisations and within diverse work environments.

The aim of this research is therefore to identify successful leadership strategies, which would have a positive impact on the functionality and results of diverse teams within the UK's non-profit sector, in the unique set of circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The results will be beneficial to non-profit practitioners, as well as the academic researchers.

Why have I been invited to participate?

We are inviting current and former non-profit leaders and team managers who would be willing to talk about their experiences in managing diverse teams within virtual and hybrid workspaces. As we believe you fall withing these criteria, your contribution to the research would be of a significant value in helping us identify successful leadership strategies for the post-covid era.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time up until 31.3.2024 and without having to give a reason. You can also withdraw your data after your involvement has ended by the 31.3.2024.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree, you will be taking part in a one-to-one semi-structured interview to capture your experiences in managing diverse teams within virtual and hybrid workspaces. The interview will take place either virtually via Zoom or in person and at a mutually agreed convenient time. The interview will last for approximately 60 minutes and will not exceed 90 minutes. The interview will be recorded for the purpose of transcription, pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity and recordings will be destroyed once transcriptions have been produced.

Are there any lifestyle restrictions?

No, there are no lifestyle restrictions.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated risks or disadvantages associated with taking part in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

If successful, the research study will provide valuable source of information for current and future leaders of diverse teams within virtual and hybrid workspaces, as it aims to identify successful leadership strategies, which would have a positive impact on the functionality and results of diverse teams within the UK's non-profit sector, in the unique set of circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Your contribution would provide valuable insights into forming this innovative strategy.

What if something goes wrong?
No issues are anticipated with this study. However, should that become the case, you can withdraw from the study at any point. If relevant, you can make a complaint to the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee, details can be found at the end of this document.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
All information gathered as part of the research study will be kept strictly confidential. Any identifying information will be removed. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity of research participants. Anonymised data may be used in future research. However, you can indicate whether or not you give permission for this in the interview consent form.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?
The interviews will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. The recordings will be destroyed immediately once transcriptions have been produced. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity of research participants. Data from the interview transcriptions will be used to analyse research findings.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results will be included in the PhD thesis on the topic of leadership, diversity, and virtuality. The evolution of leadership in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of UK's non-profit sector.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This research is organised by Petra Buresova, Brunel Business School Doctoral Research, as part of the PhD degree. This research is not funded.

What are the indemnity arrangements?
Brunel University London ensures that an appropriate insurance is in place for research which has received the ethical approval.

Who has reviewed the study?
The Research Ethics Committee of College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences.

Research Integrity
Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research.

Contact for further information
Dr Raffaella Valsecchi, Research Supervisor, Raffaella.Valsecchi@brunel.ac.uk
Petra Buresova, Doctoral Researcher, Petra.Buresova@brunel.ac.uk

For complaints, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee:
Professor David Gallear, cbass-ethics@brunel.ac.uk

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN
01/01/2023 AND 31/03/2024

The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet.		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	☐	☐
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	☐	☐
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	☐	☐
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?	☐	☐
Do you understand that:		
• You are free to withdraw from this study at any time	☐	☐
• You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing	☐	☐
• Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your rights?	☐	☐
• You can withdraw your data any time up to 31/03/2024	☐	☐
I agree to being interviewed	☐	☐
I agree to my interview being audio recorded	☐	☐
I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published	☐	☐
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me	☐	☐
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects	☐	☐
I agree to take part in this study	☐	☐

Signature of research participant:	
Print name:	Date:

Appendix C: Full participant details

Interviewee	Position	Base location	Experience (years)	With the charity (years)	Team focus	Team size	Charity classification	Operational area	Charity annual income	Charity size classification	Charity staff no
					Hybrid set up						
Interviewee A	Team Leader 1	London	11-15	< 1	Income generation/Fundraising	1-5	Health and Social Care	Local	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	10 - 50
Interviewee C	Team Leader 2	South East	26-30	11-15	Support/programme delivery	1-5	Health and Social Care	Local	£0 - £100,000	Small	1-10
Interviewee C2	Team Member 1	South East	26-30	< 1	Marketing/Communications	1-5	Health and Social Care	National	£1m - £10m	Large	50 - 100
Interviewee D	Team Leader 3	London	1-5	1-5	Project management	6-10	Education and Training	National	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	10 - 50
Interviewee E	HR Professional	London	11-15	6-10	Human Resources	1-5	Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Science	National	£1m - £10m	Large	10 - 50
Interviewee G	Team Leader 4	London	6-10	1-5	Support/programme delivery	11-20	Accommodation and Housing	National	£100 mil +	Super Major	Over 1000
Interviewee I	Team Leader 5	London	11-15	6-10	Marketing/Communications	6-10	Economic, Community, and Social Development	National	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	50 - 100
Interviewee J	Team Leader 6	London	6-10	1-5	Project management	1-5	Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Promotion of Peace	International	£10m - £100m	Major	50 - 100
Interviewee K	Team Leader 7	South West	16-20	6-10	Stakeholder engagement	11-20	Accommodation and Housing	National	£100 mil +	Super Major	500-1000
Interviewee L	Team Member 2	London	6-10	1-5	Support/programme delivery	1-5	Economic, Community, and Social Development	Local	£1m - £10m	Large	10 - 50
Interviewee M	Team Member 3	London	1-5	1-5	Income generation/Fundraising	1-5	Health and Social Care	National	£100 mil +	Super Major	500-1000
Interviewee O	Volunteer 1	South West	1-5	< 1	Income generation/Fundraising	1-5	Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Promotion of Peace	International	£100 mil +	Super Major	500-1000
Interviewee P	Team Leader 8	Scotland	6-10	1-5	Volunteer Engagement	6-10	Economic, Community, and Social Development	Local	£1m - £10m	Large	50 - 100
Interviewee Q	Team Leader 9	London	11-15	6-10	Support/programme delivery	6-10	Accommodation and Housing	National	£10m - £100m	Major	100 - 500
Interviewee R	Team Member 4	South East	6-10	1-5	Volunteer Engagement	1-5	Health and Social Care	National	£1m - £10m	Large	100 - 500
Interviewee T	Volunteer 2	Scotland	6-10	1-5	Support/programme delivery	1-5	Economic, Community, and Social Development	National	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	100 - 500

Interviewee W	Volunteer 3	London	1-5	< 1	Support/programme delivery	6-10	Economic, Community, and Social Development	Local	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	10 - 50
Interviewee Y	Volunteer 4	North East	6-10	1-5	Stakeholder engagement	1-5	Economic, Community, and Social Development	Local	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	10 - 50
Interviewee Z	Volunteer 5	North West	6-10	1-5	Support/programme delivery	6-10	Health and Social Care	National	£10m - £100m	Major	100 - 500
Interviewee ZA	Volunteer 6	London	16-20	1-5	Marketing/Communications	1-5	Education and Training	Local	£0 - £100,000	Small	1-10
Interviewee ZB	Team Member 5	Wales	6-10	1-5	Stakeholder engagement	6-10	Health and Social Care	National	£100 mil +	Super Major	500-1000
Interviewee ZC	Team Leader 10	North West	11-15	6-10	Income generation/Fundraising	11-20	Health and Social Care	National	£100 mil +	Super Major	500-1000
Interviewee ZE	Team Leader 11	North East	6-10	1-5	Income generation/Fundraising	1-5	Health and Social Care	Local	£1m - £10m	Large	50 - 100
Virtual set up											
Interviewee B	Team Leader 12	South East	16-20	11-15	Income generation/Fundraising	1-5	Economic, Community, and Social Development	National	£10m - £100m	Major	Over 1000
Interviewee B2	Team Leader 13	London	16-20	< 1	Income generation/Fundraising	1-5	Education and Training	National	£1m - £10m	Large	10 - 50
Interviewee F	Team Member 6	London	6-10	1-5	Marketing/Communications	1-5	Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Promotion of Peace	National	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	10 - 50
Interviewee H	Team Leader 14	London	6-10	6-10	Income generation/Fundraising	21-50	Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Science	National	£100 mil +	Super Major	Over 1000
Interviewee N	Team Leader 15	Midlands	1-5	1-5	Support/programme delivery	1-5	Amateur Sport	Local	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	10 - 50
Interviewee S	Team Member 7	North West	1-5	1-5	Income generation/Fundraising	6-10	Education and Training	National	£1m - £10m	Large	100 - 500
Interviewee U	Team Member 8	North East	1-5	< 1	Support/programme delivery	1-5	Economic, Community, and Social Development	Local	£100,000 - £1mil	Medium	100 - 500
Interviewee V	Trustee/Board Member 1	South East	6-10	1-5	Board	1-5	Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Science	Local	£0 - £100,000	Small	1-10
Interviewee X	Team Member 9	South West	6-10	1-5	Income generation/Fundraising	6-10	Health and Social Care	National	£10m - £100m	Major	100 - 500
Interviewee ZD	Trustee/Board Member 2	Scotland	6-10	1-5	Board	6-10	Health and Social Care	Local	£0 - £100,000	Small	1-10
Interviewee ZF	Team Leader 16	Scotland	26-30	16-20	Stakeholder engagement	6-10	Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Promotion of Peace	International	£100 mil +	Super Major	Over 1000

Appendix D: Initial codes, observed relationships, and preliminary categories

Initial codes	Observed relationships	Preliminary category
Reflection on work values	Revaluation of values	Revaluation of work
Shifting work priorities		
Changing levels of autonomy	Leader member relationships	
Changing mindset		
Emotional dynamic	Emotional challenges	
Increased personal burden		
Need to reevaluate workloads	Workload and commitment	
Career progression support		
Proactive communication efforts	Need for clear frequent communication	Increased communication efforts
Increased outreach		
Communication needs	Adjusting communication styles	
Audience specific language		
Clarity of communication		
Changing levels of transparency	Transparent and trusting communication	
Trust in autonomy		
Feelings of isolation	Isolation	Emotional impact and connection difficulties
Perceptions of isolation		
Increased emotional burden	Emotional and mental health	
Work-related stress		
Feeling out of the loop	Disconnection	
Sense of disconnect		
Heightened emotional intelligence	Emotional intelligence and empathy	Difficulties in building rapport
Empathy in remote interactions		
Slow trust-building	Trust-building process	
Intentional effort in trust building		

Difficulty in maintaining visibility	Presence and visibility	
Strategies to show support		
Impact on sharing information	Remote environment and performance	Information sharing and team cohesion
Measuring performance		
Lack of spontaneity	Informal interactions	
Loss of casual conversations		
Need for re-acclimatisation	Physical presence and disconnect	
Distance in physical space		
Difficulty in setting boundaries	Separating work from home	Blurring of work and home life balance
Extended working hours		
Need for healthy work practices	Impact on wellbeing	
Importance of downtime		
Leaders' support strategies	Leader's involvement	
Leader as a role model		
Separation within the organisation	Silo working	Maintaining organisational culture
Disconnect from broader organisation		
Individual efforts		
Self-reliance of staff	Limited informal interactions	
Invisible culture due to isolation		
Disjointed connection efforts		
Loss of personal connection	Impact on direct interactions	Impact on connection to beneficiaries
Reduced face-to-face contact		
Limits to service provision	Service provision	
Pressure to find alternative solutions		

Appendix E: Focused codes, analytical relationships, and core categories

Initial codes	Focused codes	Analytical relationships	Core Category
Trust in autonomy	Trust-based autonomy	Leaders create trust by stepping back from control	Original label: Flexibility and trust Core category title: Personalising leadership approach
Increased outreach		Mindset allows leaders to respond with empathy	
Changing mindset	Empathy-driven flexibility	Greater openness supports trust	
Changing levels of autonomy		Leaders balance outreach and distance	
Slow trust-building	Leader's flexible support	Trust is cultivated over time, not imposed	
Leaders' support strategies		Support strategies are relational	
Proactive communication efforts	Transparent communication	Clarity builds trust and reduces room for misinterpretation	Initial label: Communication clarity Core category: Maintaining visibility
Clarity of communication			
Tailored communication needs	Tailored communication style	Communication must adapt to team members' individual needs and working preferences	
Changing levels of transparency		Reduced informal interaction increases the need to clearly define goals and intentions	
Audience specific language	Explicit articulation of goals and expectations		
Difficulty in maintaining visibility	Recognition of contributions	Leaders need to highlight unseen work and outcomes	Initial label: Making work visible Core category: Showcasing the value of work
Loss of personal connection	Purpose reinforcement	Maintaining team connection requires affirming why the work matters	
Reduced face-to-face contact	Visualising impact	Remote work demands active linking of daily tasks to organisational goals	
Leader's support strategies	Active acknowledgement	Regular, thoughtful feedback reinforces team motivation	
Proactive communication efforts	Intentional presence	Visibility is not just availability, but recognising effort and intention	

Increased personal burden	Proactive monitoring of work-life balance	Leaders need to observe and respond to signs of stress or burnout	Initial label: Balancing performance, development, and wellbeing Core category: Advocating for career and professional development
Work-related stress			
Leader's support strategies	Introducing well-being initiatives and mental health support	Supporting wellbeing requires proactive, structured actions, not just ad hoc check-ins	
Need for healthy work practices			
Extended working hours	Facilitating internal skill-sharing	Peer learning and internal mentoring can support development in low-resource settings	
Career support progression	Encouraging open discussions about career aspirations	Visibility must be intentional in remote contexts, especially for underrepresented groups	
Measuring performance	Regular performance check-ins with empathy	Leaders must balance expectations with empathy to support long-term staff engagement	
Reflection on work values	Intentional efforts to embed mission and vision into daily work	Leaders actively connect daily work to organisational purpose	Linking to the cause and the organisation, and culture
Sense of disconnect		Disconnection from mission weakens motivation	
Invisible culture due to isolation	Reinforcing the unique value of working in the non-profit sector	Culture is not absorbed passively—leaders must actively maintain it	
Disconnect from broader organisation		Remote setup fractures broader organisational understanding	
Need for re-acclimatisation	Cultivating organisational culture remotely	Staff require intentional reintroduction to team culture	
Audience specific language		Communication tailored to reflect cause, donors, and social impact	

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